



**Handbook for the review of  
foundation degrees in England  
2004-05**

*Published by*  
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ISBN 1 84482 150 1

All the Agency's publications are available on our web site [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

*Printed copies are available from:*  
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## Introduction

1 The mission of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (the Agency) is to promote public confidence that the quality of provision and standards of awards in higher education are being safeguarded and enhanced. The Agency has been commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to undertake a second review of a sample of foundation degrees in England in the academic year 2004-05. The first special review of a sample of foundation degrees took place in 2002-03. The review method has been developed and refined from existing methods carried out by the Agency for more than a decade. Foundation degree programmes will be reviewed using the method described in this *Handbook for the review of foundation degrees 2004-05* (QAA, 2004). This handbook is an updated version of the *Handbook for the review of foundation degrees* (QAA, 2002) published for the first special review. It has been subject only to minor revisions to reflect the feedback from participants in the first review and the further development of the award, which has taken place since the first handbook was written. The review programme for 2004-05 covers a range of institutions, subjects, size of programme, modes of study and attendance patterns. The major purposes of the review process are:

- to encourage improvements in the quality of foundation degrees through the publication and sharing of good practice;
- to provide effective and accessible public information on the standards achieved by students on foundation degrees;
- to provide public information on the quality of the student learning opportunities in foundation degrees; and
- to secure value from public investment in foundation degrees.

## The context and characteristics of foundation degrees

2 Foundation degrees were introduced in September 2001. The initial terms of reference were set out in HEFCE's *Foundation degree Prospectus* (00/27) (the *Prospectus*). In October 2003, the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) published *Foundation degrees: meeting the need for higher level skills*, which restated the key characteristics of the award. The Agency's *Foundation degree qualification benchmark [FDQB final draft]* encapsulates the principles of the *Prospectus* and sets out the conceptual framework that gives foundation degrees their coherence and identity. Throughout this handbook all references to *FDQB (final draft)* relate to the final draft of the document, published in 2002. A revision of *FDQB (final draft)* is due for publication in autumn 2004 and will provide further contextual background to the review method. The *FDQB (final draft)* also sets out the general expectations about the standard of the award and its defining characteristics.

3 Through foundation degrees, education providers enable students to develop the intermediate higher-level skills that characterise the high-quality graduates needed by the labour market. The qualification is located at Intermediate level on *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), published by the Agency, and at level 5 of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's National Qualification Framework (NQF).

4 These vocational degrees integrate academic and work-based learning throughout. The defining characteristics of the foundation degree include the close and continued collaboration between programme providers and employers, and the development of skills and knowledge and their application in the work place. There is no minimum expectation of the extent of the work-based learning element of the programme, except that it is of sufficient length and quality to ensure that the student attains the intended learning outcomes. It is the centrality of work-based learning and its interrelationship with theoretical studies and transferable skills that distinguish foundation degrees from other degrees and qualifications at the intermediate level.

5 Foundation degrees attract a minimum of 240 credits, of which 120 credits need to be at level I on the FHEQ. The foundation degree is a recognised qualification in its own right. Each degree also makes a valuable contribution to lifelong learning by giving guaranteed articulation to at least one bachelor's degree programme with honours. The time taken by a student to complete an honours degree after a foundation degree should not normally exceed 1.3 years of study for a full-time student, or the equivalent for a part-time student.

6 Foundation degrees also contribute to widening participation by providing an award that aims to attract learners who may not previously have considered studying for a higher-level qualification. Many programmes are designed to meet the needs of local employment markets, although some will be targeted at national and international employment needs.

7 Partnership between employers, higher education institutions (HEIs), further education colleges (FECs) and Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) are central to the concept of foundation degrees. The Agency recognises that, while many foundation degree programmes are delivered by a consortium of institutions, some are provided by only one institution which may also be the awarding body. For the purposes of the review, the term 'provider' refers to both of these arrangements.

8 The responsibility for the academic standards and quality of the students' learning experience belongs to the awarding HEI. Although for all other purposes the partnership between the HEI, FECs and employers for the foundation degree is one of equals, the HEI has primary responsibility for quality and academic standards.

9 The defining characteristics of foundation degrees are:

- the integration of academic studies and work-based learning;
- providing the learner with the opportunity to apply, in the workplace, the skills and knowledge learnt as well as providing opportunities for learning in the workplace environment;
- employer involvement in the design and regular review of the programme, and, desirably, in delivery and assessment;
- accessibility and participation through the provision of opportunities for learners who would not necessarily have engaged with higher-level study;
- guaranteed articulation to at least one honours degree programme;
- articulation and progression to enable students to take responsibility for their own learning and to prepare them to engage in lifelong learning;
- flexibility in terms of responsiveness to changing employment patterns, modes of attendance, progression routes and admission requirements; and
- partnership arrangements between awarding institutions, other providers, employers, SSCs and professional bodies.

10 While none of these attributes is unique to foundation degrees, their clear and planned integration within a single award makes the award highly distinctive.

## Purposes and outcomes of the review

11 The first special review of foundation degrees took place in 2002-03. Thirty-four programmes were reviewed according to the method set out in the *Handbook for the review of foundation degrees* (QAA, 2002). The Agency published an overview report of these reviews in 2003. Because of the newness of the award, there were no graduates from 32 of these programmes at the time of the review. This second review will include a sample of the

programmes that first enrolled students in 2002-03 and 2003-04. Only some of the programmes in the second review will have graduates.

12 The review of foundation degrees will:

- investigate the extent to which the programme meets the defining characteristics of a foundation degree as set out in the *FDQB (final draft)* and whether the programme is likely to meet the standards of a foundation degree award as defined in the FHEQ intermediate level descriptor; and
- establish the quality of the learning experience.

13 The findings from the reviewers' lines of enquiry will result in a published report containing two threshold judgements on the confidence or otherwise they have in the:

- academic standards and the achievements of students; and
- the quality of students' learning opportunities.

For programmes where no students have yet completed the award, the judgements will set out the confidence or otherwise that the reviewers have in the:

- emerging academic standards and the emerging achievements of students; and
- the quality of students' learning opportunities.

Reports will also contain a commentary on the continuing effectiveness of the provider's quality assurance and enhancement arrangements for the foundation degree programme.

14 The review will also seek to identify areas of innovation and examples of good practice that may be worthy of wider dissemination. This activity is intended to enable the provider to build upon strengths and enhance delivery, and to assist in the further development of the foundation degree award.

## Principles and framework of the review method

15 The review method has been designed in accordance with a range of principles common to the other Agency subject-level review methods. In particular, it is an evidence-based process carried out through peer review; it takes the self-evaluation of the provider as the basis for the review and evaluates and verifies the information it contains; it tries to minimise the burden on the provider, for example, by making maximum use of existing documents; and it seeks to achieve transparency and openness in the conduct of the review. Annex A provides an outline timeline for a review. Each review is structured around a series of 11 key questions, to be considered by the provider in preparing a self-evaluation and by the reviewers when summarising evidence to be used to reach the two threshold judgements as set out in Annexes B and C.

16 For the purposes of review, evidence may include published or unpublished documents, notes of meetings held during the review and a sample of student work.

## The use of external reference points

17 In making their judgements, the reviewers will draw upon a range of external reference points, including those contained in the Academic Infrastructure, namely, the FHEQ; the *FDQB (final draft)*, relevant subject benchmark statements and relevant sections of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (the Code)*, published by the Agency. In so doing, the reviewers will not seek evidence of compliance, but rather evidence that the provider has considered the purpose of the reference points, has

reflected on its own practices in the relevant areas, and has taken, or is taking, necessary steps to introduce appropriate changes to develop practice consistent with the intended effect of the *Code*:

- in respect of the FHEQ, the reviewers will be looking for evidence that the provider has related the foundation degree programme to the intermediate level;
- in respect of the *FDQB (final draft)*, the reviewers will enquire how it has been taken into account when designing and running the programme;
- in respect of the *Code*, the reviewers will draw upon all relevant sections and will expect to see evidence of how the intentions of the *Code* have been, or are being, addressed. The Agency has consulted the sector and revised *section 2: collaborative provision* in 2004, but all references to this section in this *Handbook* and during the review process will be to the first version;
- in respect of the subject benchmark statements, the reviewers will look for evidence that the provider has taken account of the relevant subject benchmark statement(s) to ensure that students completing the foundation degree will be able to achieve an honours degree in 1.3 years of study for a full-time student, or the equivalent for a part-time student.

Other external reference points include the *Overview report on foundation degree reviews* (QAA, 2003) and any frameworks established by SSCs or other professional bodies.

18 The reviewers will also evaluate the vocational currency and national occupational standards of the programme in relation to reference points as set out by SSCs, employer organisations and professional bodies.

19 The reviewers will need to know that providers have paid due attention to sector-specific health and safety legislation, equal opportunities legislation and EU employment legislation.

## How the review process works

20 The reviews will normally be completed within a period of six weeks, from the initial meeting between the reviewers and the provider to the meeting at which reviewers reach judgements. A preliminary meeting will normally take place no later than four weeks before the initial meeting.

21 The reviews will be structured around the following activities:

- preparation of a self-evaluation by the provider;
- appointment and preparation of the reviewers by the Agency;
- a preliminary planning meeting carried out between the provider and the Agency's Review Coordinator;
- the review team visiting normally for up to three days, including visits to the provider and sites of work-based learning;
- off-site scrutiny of documents and meeting notes by the reviewers;
- sharing of information among the reviewers;
- a meeting at which the reviewers consider their judgements;
- a letter to the provider containing the judgements;
- a draft review report sent to the provider for comments on factual accuracy; and
- a published report of approximately 4,000 words.

A timeline for the review process is included in Annex A.



## Preparation of the self-evaluation

22 The self-evaluation is the starting point for the review. Detailed guidance on its preparation, including the essential features to be covered and possible format, is provided in Annex B. The central requirements for a self-evaluation are that it is genuinely evaluative, not just descriptive, and that it provides evidence to support claims. The task of the reviewers is to test and verify the claims made and the evidence cited by the provider, in order to arrive at the two threshold judgements and to comment on the quality assurance and enhancement processes.

23 Each review will look at one foundation degree programme. The self-evaluation should cover the entirety of that programme, and include (as applicable) evaluations of the provision of all sites of delivery, varying modes of attendance and the contributions of different employers.

24 In the interests of self-evaluation and to permit as much use as possible to be made of existing documents, the provider may submit its self-evaluation in any appropriate format and adopt any presentational style. The Agency welcomes submission of pre-existing documents in electronic format, particularly CD-ROM. To ensure that there is fairness and consistency between reviews, the self-evaluation should include a 'route map'. This is a guide for reviewers that points to the evidence trail that will provide a clear and unambiguous response to each of the key review questions in Annexes B and C. It may also provide some introduction and analysis to supplement the documents. Providing the self-evaluation meets these requirements, the reviewers should be able to test and verify the responses to the key questions with a minimum of special preparation by the provider.

25. There is no hierarchy in the key questions. The provider should give careful attention to those characteristics that are particular to foundation degree provision and reflect the defining characteristics as described in the *FDQB (final draft)*. This will require the provider to give particular attention to its responses to questions relating to matters such as work-based learning and, where applicable, the operation of the consortium. It should also include the arrangements for ensuring consistency in the attainment of standards and quality across all partners.

26 The intended developmental aspect of the review is addressed in particular through key question 11. The provider should signpost a range of potential areas of good practice by reference to matters that have worked particularly well or to effective solutions to problems encountered. Such references will allow the reviewers quickly to identify and test potential areas of good practice. A subsequent decision by the reviewers that the signposted features do not constitute innovation or practice worthy of wider dissemination will have no adverse implications for the provider, or for the two threshold judgements.

27 In approaching this work, the reviewers will welcome advice from the provider on activities that will enable them to test the claims made in the self-evaluation. This will enable reviewers to judge the academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience in an efficient and largely unobtrusive manner. Similarly, they will welcome advice on the consortium's personnel who might contribute to the review and provide further explanation of the self-evaluation and other documents.

## The review team

28 The Agency will appoint teams of reviewers to undertake these reviews. Each team will comprise at least four specialist reviewers with combined appropriate experience of the sector, and expertise relevant to foundation degrees and the programme under review. The reviewers will be led by a Review Coordinator. The composition of the team will take account of the subject content of the programme and the particular approaches to curriculum delivery. The size of the team will be determined by the size and complexity of the provision.

29 The main responsibilities of the specialist reviewers are to read, analyse and verify the self-evaluation, and to gather whatever further evidence they consider necessary to make the two threshold judgements. The Review Coordinator is responsible, on behalf of the Agency, for ensuring the effective management and administration of the review. The Review Coordinator will usually chair meetings of the reviewers, and meetings between the reviewers and the provider's staff and students, and employers.

30 Specialist reviewers are generally appointed by the Agency from nominations made by institutions that provide higher education programmes. The Agency is actively seeking nominations from SSCs, industry, commerce and the professions. All specialist reviewers and review coordinators are offered training by the Agency before undertaking reviews. Further information about the arrangements for appointing and training reviewers is provided in Annex D.

### **Review facilitation**

31 The Agency invites the provider to appoint at least one facilitator. Facilitators play an important role in ensuring that reviews proceed effectively and smoothly, by providing regular liaison between the reviewers and the provider's staff and employer partners. They will normally establish a close working relationship with the Review Coordinator, who is responsible for negotiating clear protocols for the frequency, nature and methods of communication between them. Facilitators assume a responsibility for supporting the review process by ensuring that the reviewers obtain accurate and timely information and evidence throughout the review. This involves maintaining effective communication with the reviewers over the whole period of the review, both when the reviewers are off-site as well as during visits to the provider and sites of work-based learning.

32 The provider may appoint facilitators at more than one location of their organisation for a foundation degree offered by a consortium. The awarding institution is invited to nominate one Programme Coordinating Facilitator (PCF) for the programme/subject to review. In addition, each of the member institutions or delivery locations, and any employer with a substantial involvement in the design and/or delivery of the programme may identify a Link Facilitator (LF). If the lead institution does not deliver the award, they may wish to discuss appropriate arrangements and the HEI may nominate an LF for one of the delivering institutions to nominate a PCF. The PCF will be the main contact with the reviewers and, unless an alternative arrangement is specifically agreed, the Review Coordinator will direct all general enquiries and negotiations through the PCF. Further details about the roles of the PCF and LFs are provided in Annex E.

### **Review preparation and the preliminary meeting**

33 Reviews will take place between January and July 2005. The Agency will consult the provider about the appropriateness of the timing of the review. An Agency officer will agree with the provider the submission date for the self-evaluation and a date for the initial meeting between the reviewers and the provider. The Agency usually needs to receive the self-evaluation some two months before the beginning of the relevant period. For example, for reviews beginning in January, the Agency will need to receive the self-evaluation in November 2004.

34 The Review Coordinator and the provider should discuss preliminary planning as early as possible. A preliminary meeting will take place no later than four weeks before the start of the review period. It is for the provider to determine who would be most appropriate to attend the preliminary meeting on its behalf. The meeting provides an opportunity for the Review Coordinator to ensure that there is a shared understanding of the review process, and to negotiate and agree the main arrangements for the review. In particular, the Review Coordinator will wish to learn about the locations of the sites of work-based learning and possible times for a meeting with students.

35 The reviewers meet together before the initial meeting to prepare for the review. The PCF also attends this meeting. From their previous analysis of the self-evaluation, the reviewers identify themes to be explored during the review visit. This initial agenda is based directly on the key questions (Annexes B and C) and is used by the reviewers to determine an agreed set of review and evidence-gathering activities. Where the self-evaluation addresses the key questions in a clear and objective manner, the range and level of on-site scrutiny will be reduced. The Review Coordinator will inform the provider of the themes the reviewers wish to explore in advance of each meeting.

### Activities during the review

36 The pattern of the review will be sufficiently flexible to respond to the nature of the programme under review and the sufficiency of the self-evaluation. Although some activities will be common to all reviews, the timetable of events will reflect the particular arrangements of each programme. In some cases, it may be necessary for the reviewers to separate to conduct different activities. No fewer than two members of the review team will be present at each location.

37 The review commences with the initial meeting between the reviewers and the provider. This is held at one of the sites of delivery. After this, the reviewers will engage in a number of other review activities. Reviewers will normally spend part of their second and, where appropriate, third days visiting sites of work-based learning. They will also carry out further off-site scrutiny of evidence. The reviewers will share summaries of evidence using the electronic folders the Agency will dedicate to each review. Towards the end of the six-week review period the reviewers will hold a private meeting to consider all the evidence and to make judgements. This meeting does not necessarily take place at one of the providing institutions.

38 All visits will include:

- meetings with a representative group of current students and, where appropriate, former students;
- **either** a meeting with members of the provider's staff and employers' representatives where there is a single provider who is also the awarding body;
- **or** a meeting with staff from all member institutions of the consortium for the programme under review, including the awarding institution, all institutions concerned with delivery of the programme, and employers' representatives;
- a meeting with staff engaged in teaching the programme;
- a visit to at least one site of teaching and learning. Where there is more than one site of work-based learning, the reviewers will visit at least two sites.

Further meetings may be held as appropriate and by discussion with the facilitator(s).

39 The reviewers are unlikely to observe teaching directly if the provider can supply evidence of good-quality teaching. Such evidence is likely to come from internal peer observation of teaching; from student questionnaires and other arrangements for gathering feedback; from the deployment of learning resources; and from student performance in assessments. Direct observations of teaching will be required if:

- there are questions that reviewers feel would be best addressed by observation;
- observation might help to confirm the identification of an innovative feature;
- the provider does not provide sufficient evidence that teaching is effective; or
- there are indications that the learning opportunities for students are less than satisfactory.

The observations may take place at any stage within the six week review period. The Agency has a protocol for the observation of teaching.

40 In addition to visits to the institution, reviewers typically undertake a range of activities that include:

- scrutiny of a sample of student work;
- analysis of documents;
- sharing summaries of evidence with the rest of the reviewers;
- feedback from the Review Coordinator to the PCF to provide updates of areas on which the reviewers have completed their work and those on which further evidence, such as documents, is sought.

41 The initial meeting is important in ensuring that the reviewers understand the nature of the provision under review, including, where applicable, the consortium arrangement. This meeting is also key to ensuring that the review commences in a spirit that encourages dialogue and openness. It is in this spirit that the reviewers will introduce and explore the initial review agenda.

42 The review includes at least one meeting with students currently registered on the programme under review and with former students when there has been at least one completed cohort. Discussions are crucial to the review and it is important that the reviewers are able to meet a group of students drawn, where applicable, from different institutions in the consortium. This group should be representative in terms of work status and modes of study, as well as age, gender and prior work qualifications and work experience. The topics for discussion will reflect the key questions and areas for consideration, selected and adapted to reflect the review agenda and matters upon which it is reasonable to expect students to have insight. An indicative agenda for use in student meetings is included in Annex F. While time constraints will usually make it preferable to have a single meeting with students, on occasion more than one meeting may be necessary, particularly where consortium institutions are geographically distant or where study patterns are diverse. The timing(s) of the meeting, and the composition of the student group(s), will be negotiated sensitively to take account of the different study modes and the availability of the students concerned.

43 The review will include visits to sites of work-based learning to enable the reviewers to hold discussions with representatives of the employers who have direct responsibility for the work-based element of the programme, and separately to meet the student(s) currently undertaking that element. The topics for discussion will reflect the key questions relating to the work-based elements, including resources, liaison between the workplace and the programme, and student support. The reviewers will do all they can to minimise the interruption to the student(s) and the employer.

44 The Review Coordinator will give the PCF feedback about the progress of the review and, in particular, on questions that have been answered and others on which the reviewers need additional evidence. The need for additional evidence may become apparent to the provider or the reviewers. The Review Coordinator and PCF will agree the precise nature and timing of the presentation of the new evidence. Such requests will be kept to a minimum and will only ask for documents and other types of evidence which already exist. They will not ask for new papers to be written.

## Scrutiny of documents, including student work

45 The reviewers gather evidence through their meetings with staff, students and employers, and through the scrutiny of documents. They will pay particular attention to the documents cited as evidence in the self-evaluation. These documents should be made available to the reviewers both in advance of, and during, the visit. The Review Coordinator may request further documentary evidence on behalf of the specialist reviewers during the course of the review. It is a guiding principle of the reviewers' work that they refine and test their findings and emerging judgements against a range of evidence. Views expressed in meetings will be checked and tested against evidence provided.

46 The provider is asked to make available to the reviewers a sample of student work. The reviewers will consider the student work and use it to contribute to the evidence on:

- the extent to which (emerging) student achievements match the intended outcomes of the stage of the programme studied;
- the extent to which assessment is designed appropriately to measure achievement of the intended learning outcomes; and
- the extent to which the outcomes of the students' work indicate that (emerging) student achievements meet the minimum expectation of the award.

47 Reviewers will use the student work review and assessment note in Annex G to summarise for their own purposes the evidence they gain from their scrutiny of student work.

48 The range and nature of the student work available will be discussed at the preliminary meeting. In general terms, however, the reviewers will wish to see a broad sample of modules from all delivery sites that demonstrates the full range of assessment methods used, accompanied by the relevant assessment criteria, module mark list, evidence of internal moderation in the setting and marking of assessments and feedback to students. Where students have completed the award at the time of the review, the reviewers will wish to see some assessments from the final stage of the award. The Agency recognises that some programmes will not have completed a first full cycle at the time of the review. In these cases, reviewers will accept student work that has been marked but not externally examined. In subjects where assessment results in work that is not in written form, the reviewers will be content to see photographic, video or other records made by the institution.

## Other review activities

49 All reviewers are expected to share and evaluate, among themselves, evidence related to the programme under review. They will keep notes of their meetings with staff, students and employers; their analyses of documents; and their comments on student work and its assessment. The Review Coordinator will collate notes and then circulate them among the reviewers to assist in developing a shared evidence base on which judgements can be made.

50 Where the review is organised as two separate visits, the Review Coordinator will continue to communicate with the PCF between visits, to provide updates on the areas in which reviewers have completed their work and those on which further evidence is sought.

## The judgements

51 At the end of the review period, the reviewers meet to agree their judgements and prepare their report.

52 The reviewers will make two threshold judgements. In the case of programmes where there are students who have graduated, the reviewers will make the following judgements:

- confidence, or no confidence, in the academic standards and achievements of students.

This judgement is based on the findings relating to key questions 1-5. In order to achieve a judgement of confidence, the reviewers need to answer each separate question positively. A negative finding in respect of any one question will result in an overall judgement of no confidence in academic standards and achievements. The reviewers' second judgement is of:

- confidence, or no confidence, in the quality of students' learning opportunities.

This judgement is based on the findings to key questions 6-9. In order to achieve a judgement of confidence, the reviewers need to answer each separate question positively. A negative finding in respect of any one question will result in an overall judgement of no confidence in the quality of students' learning opportunities.

53 In the case of those programmes which have no graduates, the reviewers will make the two following judgements:

- confidence, or no confidence, in the emerging academic standards and emerging achievements of students;
- confidence, or no confidence, in the quality of student learning opportunities.

54 Reports will also contain a commentary on the effectiveness of the provider's arrangements for the quality assurance and enhancement of the foundation degree in response to key question 10.

55 Judgements on the standards of a foundation degree programme reflect the responsibilities of the awarding institution. In circumstances where an individual programme is offered by a number of different providers, there will not be any differentiated judgements on standards. If concerns about standards are identified for individual delivery sites, these will be reflected in the overall judgement and may result in a no confidence outcome. Responsibilities for the quality of learning opportunities, however, may reside with individual delivery sites and in circumstances where the reviewers conclude that the quality of the learning opportunities is significantly different across the consortium, then specific reference to these will be included in the report without necessarily determining the overall judgement for the full range of provision.

## Reporting the judgements and review findings

56 The Review Coordinator will send a letter to the provider setting out the judgements no later than two weeks after the judgement meeting.

57 The Review Coordinator drafts the review report on behalf of the reviewers. The report will discuss the defining characteristics of the award as set out in the *FDQB (final draft)*, and on whether the programme meets the (emerging) standards of a foundation degree award. It will also draw attention to areas of innovation and examples of good practice worthy of further dissemination. A draft copy of the report will be sent to the provider, or the lead institution within a consortium, for comments on factual accuracy. The report will be published fifteen weeks after the judgement meeting. The outline of the report structure is provided in Annex H.

58 In the event of a no confidence judgement in either (emerging) academic standards and (emerging) achievements of students, or in the quality of the students' learning opportunities, the provider will be asked to send an action plan to the Agency within six months of the end of the review setting out how standards and/or quality will be raised. Twelve months after the end of the review an Agency officer will visit the provider to confirm the effectiveness of the action plan.

59 On completion of the review cycle, the Agency will produce an overview report on foundation degrees, drawing upon the reports of all of the individual reviews. The overview report will include a summary of the state of foundation degree programmes, reflecting on their diversity, health and stage of development. It will be a key vehicle for the dissemination of the good practice identified within individual reviews. It is expected that such dissemination will contribute to the continuing development of foundation degrees. The Agency will work with Foundation Degree Forward on the dissemination of the findings of the reviews.

### **Evaluation of the process**

60 The Agency will encourage providers, employers, SSRs and review coordinators to contribute to the evaluation of foundation degree review process by inviting comment on the reviews in which they have participated.

## Annex A: Timeline of review schedule

The initial meeting (IM) is the first visit of the whole review team to the provider. The day will include meeting with the course team(s), and may include other activities including meeting with current and former students, meeting employers, scrutiny of documents and student work, and visits to sites of work-based learning.

This schedule of activity is set out in relation to the IM up to the judgement meeting (JM). Events after the JM are calculated from that.

<b>IM minus 3 to 5 months</b>	The Agency contacts the provider to agree a date for the IM.
<b>IM minus 8 weeks</b>	Submission of the self-evaluation.
<b>IM minus at least 4 weeks</b>	Preliminary meeting between the Review Coordinator and the provider.
<b>During the month before the IM</b>	Submission of any extra documents arising from the preliminary meeting; preparation for visit, including the collection of the sample of student work.
<b>IM</b>	Meeting of reviewers with the course team(s); may include activities such as meetings with current and former students, meeting employers, scrutiny of documents and student work, and visits to sites of work-based learning.
<b>IM plus 1 to 5 weeks</b>	Up to two more days of visits by the reviewers that may involve any of the activities listed above, or elsewhere in this handbook.
<b>IM plus 6 weeks = JM</b>	JM, not necessarily on the provider's premises.
<b>JM plus 2 weeks</b>	Notification of judgements to the provider.
<b>JM plus 4 weeks</b>	Provider receives a copy of the draft report to check for factual accuracy.
<b>JM plus 15 weeks</b>	Publication of the report on the Agency's web site.

This timeline is indicative. Individual events may be varied to accommodate specific circumstances such as Christmas, vacations and examinations. However, the Agency will endeavour to complete the process within 15 weeks of the judgement meeting.



## Annex B

### Guidelines for self-evaluations for foundation degree review

#### Introduction

1 The self-evaluation is the starting point for the review of a foundation degree programme. The task of the reviewers is to test and verify the claims made and the evidence cited by the provider. The reviewers arrive at judgements on academic standards and the achievements of students, on the quality of the student learning opportunities, and comment on the monitoring and enhancement of standards and quality in the programme. These guidelines are intended to help the provider to prepare a self-evaluation.

2 A foundation degree self-evaluation should consist of existing documents accompanied by a route map through the documents. A route map is a guide for the reviewers, which sets out clearly the relevant paragraphs in the self-evaluation that relate the existing evidence to the sections of the self-evaluation. By using detailed references to the documents that make up the self-evaluation, the route map should demonstrate a structured response to each of the key questions. Through this, the provider should demonstrate the extent to which the provision meets the defining characteristics of foundation degrees and provide an evaluation of academic standards, the achievements of students, the quality of student learning opportunities, the monitoring and enhancement of quality and standards of the programme, and any innovative features.

3 If existing documents do not meet all these requirements, then the provider should supply, as part of the route map, an account and evaluation of those aspects not covered elsewhere. All employers, Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) and higher education providers who have assisted in developing, or who now deliver elements of the foundation degree, should contribute to the self-evaluation.

4 Three copies of the self-evaluation, route map and any ancillary documents, or three CD-ROMs, or one electronic copy should be sent direct to the Agency by the date communicated by the Agency in a separate letter.

#### Essential features of the self-evaluation

5 The central requirements for the self-evaluation are that it contains genuinely reflective and evaluative sections, and that evidence for any claims or assertions made are provided within it, or are referenced and made available to the reviewers.

6 High quality, well-organised and evaluative documents that draw upon robust internal and consortium review and validation procedures, together with an accurate and comprehensive route map are likely to lead to a review that limits the burden on the provider. Through existing documents, or otherwise, the self-evaluation should draw attention to the areas of its foundation degree identified by the provider as good practice or as in need of alteration. Where evidence to support claims cannot be included, the self-evaluation should inform the reviewers where the evidence can be found. This could be, for example, in meetings with employers or with subject teams.

#### Format of the self-evaluation

7 The route map and the documents provided are likely to be succinct and the Agency is content for this to be submitted electronically, including by CD-ROM, or in hard copy. If the self-evaluation is entirely in electronic form, the Agency needs to receive one copy only. In the case of hard copy or CD-ROMs the Agency needs to receive three copies.

8 However, the provider may submit the self-evaluation in other formats on condition that the reviewers receive, in coherent form, the information they need to plan and conduct the review.

9 It is essential that through the route map, or other means, the reviewers are provided with a direct and structured response to each of the 11 key questions. Where appropriate, providers may wish to supply a diagram. The evidence cited should be clearly referenced. For example, a numbered listing of documents included and/or cited provides a basis for numbered reference in the text.

10 The self-evaluation should comprise the following:

- an introduction and coversheet (see paragraph 13 below);
- a route map providing concisely referenced sources in direct response to the 11 key questions. These should include a programme specification (see the *Guidelines for preparing programme specifications*) and a short statement about the formal and informal collaborative arrangements between institutions, and between institutions and employers. Where existing documents do not provide evaluation, this may be added to the relevant question in the route map;
- an index of the referenced evidence;
- a student data table. An electronic version is available on the Agency's web site [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk); and
- an index of evidence to be supplied during the visit(s).

11 The route map and referenced documents should not normally exceed 4,000 words and may be much shorter in programmes with few sites of delivery.

## Content of the self-evaluation

### Introduction and cover sheet

12 The self-evaluation should commence with a short statement on the programme to be reviewed, its origins and the process of its development.

13 In particular, it should discuss:

- the context in which the degree was developed;
- the reasons for developing the degree;
- evidence of the relevant skills gap and the potential market;
- the nature and funding status of the providing consortium or institution;
- the foundation degree management structure and personnel involved;
- the occupational/vocational areas covered;
- the rationale behind the approach to work-based learning used in the programme;
- the organisational and quality frameworks within which the foundation degree provision operates;
- the process by which employer and/or SSC consultations have established the need for the foundation degree and helped to determine the content and delivery modes; and
- a clear statement of the overall aims of the foundation degree. This statement will be reproduced at the start of the review report. The statement of aims should be succinct but should convey clearly the parameters and individual characteristics of the programme. The statement may take the form of a narrative or bullet points, or a mixture of the two. It should not exceed 500 words in length.

14 Providers should supply this information in the order below as a coversheet of their own design:

- the title of the foundation degree;
- QA contact details;
- start date of programme;
- modes of delivery (full and/or part-time/distance-learning);
- awarding institution;
- list of employers and employer representative bodies involved in programme design;
- list of work-based learning sites of delivery, including employer involvement in delivery; and
- list of all sites of delivery during each year of its operation.

### **The use of existing documents as an evaluative commentary**

15 In evaluating its provision, the provider should bear in mind that the reviewers will make two threshold judgements on the programme. The first judgement will be made on academic standards and the achievements of students, and the second will be made on the quality of the student learning opportunities. Where no students have completed the programme, the first judgement will be on the emerging academic standards and the emerging achievements of students. Reporting on standards is concerned with the appropriateness of the intended learning outcomes, the effectiveness of the content, design and organisation of the curriculum and the assessment arrangements, and the achievements of students. Reporting on the quality of learning opportunities in a programme is concerned with the effectiveness of teaching and learning, the academic and pastoral support and the learning resources, including staff, available to students. The reviewers will also comment on the consortium's processes for the monitoring and enhancement of standards and quality of the foundation degree programme. In particular, the foundation review method evaluates the following matters:

- the integration of academic studies and work-based learning;
- employer involvement in the design and regular review of programme, and in delivery and assessment;
- accessibility and participation through the provision of opportunities for learners who would not have necessarily engaged with further study;
- articulation with a specific honours degree and opportunities for progression to enable students to take responsibility for their own learning and to make provision for lifelong learning;
- flexibility in terms of responsiveness to changing employment demands, modes of attendance, progression routes and admission requirements; and
- the operation of partnership arrangements between awarding institutions, delivering institutions, employers, SSCs and professional bodies to ensure consistency of experience for all students on the programme.

16 It is likely that existing documents will address the majority of these matters. Primary sources include:

- the programme specification;
- definitive programme documents provided at validation and regulatory information;
- reports of validation events;

- internal review reports;
- module or unit descriptors/guides;
- formal articulation and contractual agreements;
- student handbook(s) including guidance relating to work-based learning;
- communications from employers, professional bodies or the relevant SSC;
- relevant institutional policies and programme-specific policies including those relating to accreditation of prior learning (APL) and staff development;
- records of staff development and training for work-based mentors/supervisors; and
- records of the regular liaison that takes place between the institution(s) and employers.

17 The self-evaluation should also include the provider's evaluation and reflection of the quality and standards of the provision. Documents might include:

- external examiner reports;
- minutes of course team meetings;
- validation documents and reports;
- internal self-assessment/annual monitoring reports;
- reports from the approval processes for minor modifications made to the programme; and
- analysis of, and response to, student opinion questionnaires and surveys.

18 The reviewers will be particularly interested in the effectiveness of quality assurance mechanisms and the use of quantitative data and qualitative feedback in a strategy of enhancement and continuous improvement and should be provided with a clear statement of the mechanism to achieve this. The provider should concisely outline only those institutional quality management arrangements that affect the foundation degree programme and should concentrate on any specific procedures developed and used for the validation and management of the foundation degree programme.

### **Academic standards and the achievements of students**

19 The route map should provide references to sections of the self-evaluation that demonstrate responses to key questions 1-5 (set out below) that address whether the academic standards and achievements of students are of an appropriate level for a foundation degree programme.

20 In addressing these matters, the provider should demonstrate the use made of relevant external reference points, including those of the UK academic infrastructure including: *The Framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)*; the *Foundation degree qualification benchmark [FDQB final draft]*; the appropriate subject benchmark statement(s) and all relevant sections of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code*). The provider should also show use, where appropriate, of reference points relating to the vocational area. The reviewers will not seek evidence of compliance, but rather evidence that the provider has considered the purpose of the reference points, and has taken, or is taking steps to develop practice consistent with the intended effect of the *Code*.

21 The key questions around which this method of review is structured, together with matters to be addressed through the route map, are set out below. Specific areas for consideration by reviewers arising from the questions are set out in the review aide-memoire (Annex C). The provider may wish to use these areas as a checklist for evidence trails, clearly citing supporting evidence. Such an approach should allow the reviewers to follow the questions without requesting a significant amount of further preparation by the provider.

### Key question 1

To what extent are the aims and intended programme learning outcomes clear and appropriate for defining characteristics of foundation degrees and the FHEQ?

Sources of documentary evidence that might be cited include:

- the programme specification for the foundation degree;
- definitive curricular documents;
- validation documents and reports;
- relevant SSC foundation degree framework and national occupational standards; and
- the relevant student/programme handbook(s).

### Key question 2

To what extent do the design and content of curricula reflect the defining characteristics of foundation degrees and what is the likelihood that they will enable students to achieve the programme outcomes?

Sources of documentary evidence to be cited might include the following:

- the self-evaluation and the programme specification;
- definitive curricular documents and institutional regulations;
- module or unit descriptors/guides;
- internal and external monitoring/review reports;
- formal articulation and contractual agreements;
- records/minutes/reports of external consultations;
- the relevant student/programme handbook(s); and
- communications from employers, professional and statutory bodies and/or the relevant SSC.

### Key question 3

To what extent are the arrangements for assessment clear, robust, and capable of systematic testing of students' achievement of programme outcomes?

Sources of documentary evidence to be cited might include the following:

- the programme specification and the relevant student/programme handbook(s);
- assessment regulations;
- a representative sample of student work with assignment briefs, marking criteria, mark lists and feedback comments;
- agreements concerning employers' assessment of students;
- relevant institutional and programme-specific policies, including those relating to APL;
- assessment board terms of reference and minutes;
- policies on moderation/internal verification;
- minutes of subject team meetings where external examiners' reports are considered; and
- staff feedback on the assessment process.

### Key question 4

To what extent do the student achievements, including the results of assessments where available, indicate that programme outcomes are being achieved or, where no students have completed the programme, are likely to be achieved and meet the expectations of the defining characteristics?

Sources of documentary evidence to be cited might include the following:

- the programme specification and relevant student/programme handbooks;
- representative sample of student work with assignment briefs, marking criteria, mark lists and feedback comments;
- feedback from staff on the assessment process;
- internal and external monitoring reports, including, as available, programme monitoring reports, and reports of external assessors/examiners;
- minutes of relevant committees and assessment boards; and
- learning contracts and personal development/learning plans.

### Key question 5

How are employers/employer-related organisations, including SSCs and PSRBs, involved in the design of the curricula, and the assessment and achievement of the students?

Sources of evidence to be cited might include the following:

- SSC foundation degree frameworks;
- sector-specific statements from employer organisations/SSCs/PSRBs;
- validation document;
- relevant institutional policies;
- student/programme handbooks; and
- minutes of meetings with employers and employer-related organisations.

There is no requirement for employers to be involved in summative assessment but, in order to share information across the sector, providers are asked to identify where employer involvement in formative and/or summative assessment occurs. The reviewers will also wish to know whether the involvement of employers in assessment has been discussed or is planned.

## The quality of the students' learning opportunities, including their monitoring and enhancement

The self-evaluation should demonstrate the extent to which the quality of the students' learning opportunities is appropriate for a foundation degree programme, with reference to key questions 6-9 set out below.

### Key question 6

To what extent is the approach to learning and teaching delivery, including the range of learning and teaching methods, effective for achieving the learning outcomes, reflecting the defining characteristics of the foundation degree award and responsive to its students?

Sources of documentary evidence to be cited might include the following:

- the programme specification and relevant student/programme handbooks;
- relevant institutional and programme-specific policies, particularly those relating to learning and teaching;
- students and staff feedback on modules/programmes;
- staff team meetings;
- module/unit descriptions guides and teaching schemes;
- internal and external monitoring reports; and
- schemes for institutional and/or peer observation of teaching, and any available outcomes of those schemes.

### Key question 7

To what extent are the arrangements for providing academic support for students effective and to what extent do they meet the distinctive needs of foundation degree students, whatever their location and mode of study?

Sources of documentary evidence to be cited might include the following:

- the programme specification and relevant student/programme handbooks;
- relevant institutional and programme-specific policies;
- student evaluations/feedback; and
- on-line support systems.

### Key question 8

Is the provision of human and physical resources adequate, and to what extent is it appropriately organised and managed to achieve the foundation degree programme outcomes and meet the expectations of the defining characteristics?

Sources of documentary evidence to be cited might include the following:

- the programme specification and relevant student/programme handbooks;
- relevant institutional and programme-specific policies, for example, the resourcing strategy for the foundation degree;
- staff development strategies and records of the participation of foundation degree staff in staff development events; and
- records of discussions involving employers.

### Key question 9

To what extent do the employers/work-based learning providers contribute to the delivery of the programme and does this reflect the defining characteristics of a foundation degree?

Sources of documentary evidence to be cited might include the following:

- the programme specification and relevant student/programme handbooks;
- relevant institutional policies, including those relating to APL;
- work-based learning handbooks/guidance/learning agreements; and
- formative assessment and/or feedback from employers.

### Key question 10 addresses monitoring and enhancement of standards

#### Key question 10

To what extent is there a robust and understood framework in place for the effective monitoring and enhancement of quality and standards across all parts of the foundation degree provision? To what extent does it address the defining characteristics, and the need for ensuring equivalence of the students' learning opportunities experience between the delivery partners?

Sources of documentary evidence to be cited might include the following:

- the programme specification and relevant student/programme handbooks;
- relevant institutional policies, including those relating to APL;
- internal monitoring reports;
- a diagram of quality assurance procedures; and
- quality assurance manuals.

### Key question 11 addresses examples of good practice and innovative features of the provision

#### Key question 11

Does the evidence in relation to the (emerging) academic standards and the (emerging) achievements of students and/or the quality of the students' learning opportunities, including their monitoring and enhancement, indicate any areas of innovation and/or examples of good practice that may be worthy of wider dissemination?

Matters that providers might address within the supplementary question include:

- innovative features in relation to the design and content of curricula, the arrangements for assessment or the student achievements;
- positive features identified in relation to the design and content of curricula, the arrangements for assessment, student achievements, and good practice that may be worthy of wider dissemination;
- innovative features in relation to curriculum delivery, integration of work-based and academic learning, involvement of employers in formative assessment, academic support, resources or monitoring and enhancement; and
- positive features identified in relation to curriculum delivery, integration of work-based and academic learning, involvement of employers in formative assessment, academic support, resources for monitoring and enhancement, and good practice that may be worthy of wider dissemination.





### Student data table and optional sections

22 The student data table, appended to this annex, is available as an Excel spreadsheet on the Agency's web site. The student data table requests quantitative information for each educational site of delivery, plus programme totals for each cohort recruited in 2002-03 and 2003-04. For example:

- number of applicants (full/part-time);
- number of students who started the year (full/part-time);
- number of students who completed the year (full/part-time);
- entry qualifications;
- gender;
- age;
- progression rates from year one to year two; and
- employment status.

23 If existing documents do not fully provide an evaluative account of matters raised by questions 1-11, additional paragraphs may be added into the route map.

24 Some evidence will only be available during the on-site visit, for example, student work or existing documents that are not available electronically. The provider may wish to identify these in the self-evaluation.

## Annex C

### Aide-mémoire for reviewers

#### The foundation degree review aide-mémoire and its use

1 The aide-mémoire covers the main features of the review process and is intended to ensure that all essential areas are covered in the review, and that there is fairness and consistency between reviews. It sets out the key questions to be considered by the reviewers, and possible areas for consideration arising from those questions. Responses to these key questions form the core of the published report and enable the reviewers to make judgements on academic standards and the achievements of students, on the quality of the student learning opportunities, and to evaluate the monitoring and enhancement of standards and quality. Neither standards nor quality can be reviewed in isolation. They are interrelated and need to be reviewed as such.

2 Reviews are conducted in a spirit of dialogue and cooperation between the institutions, their subject staff, and the reviewers. Reviewers must be able to gather sufficient evidence on the subject provision to allow them to test statements made in the self-evaluation, and to form robust judgements on the quality and standards of the provision.

3 A set of areas for consideration by reviewers is set out under a series of key questions, but they are not to be regarded as either prescriptive or exhaustive. The provider's self-evaluation, the statement of aims or findings during review activity may all raise issues unique to the provision and will lead to alternative lines of investigation. In drafting the report, it is unlikely that all of the given areas for consideration will be addressed individually.

4 The reviewers will endeavour to make use of existing documents used for internal processes related to quality and standards and will not normally ask for specially prepared documents. The pattern of review activity over the six-week period will enable material to be requested in advance of any visit to the provider. In most cases, providers will be able to identify appropriate samples from work completed by students from the current and/or previous academic year or from assignments kept routinely for internal purposes. It is expected that, as part of the review and particularly through the self-evaluation, the provider will offer clear evidence trails for the reviewers, with concise and accurate references to existing documents. Some likely sources of evidence are listed below against each of the key questions. These sources are not intended to be comprehensive or prescriptive; it is expected that the self-evaluation will provide a portfolio of existing documents and a clear guide to where relevant information may be found, and make reference to the job titles of personnel who can provide an explanation. Similarly, while likely review activities are outlined below, it is expected that, where appropriate, the provider, through the PCF, will suggest additional or alternative activities to reflect the particular nature of the provision. This approach is intended to encourage transparency and allow the reviewers to pursue their enquiries with a minimum of special preparation by the provider.

5 However effectively a provider might define the intended learning outcomes for students and the curricular content suitable for their delivery, if the teaching is poor or if there are restricted learning opportunities, the overall student experience will be poor. Reviewers will not normally need to make direct observations of teaching where evidence of good-quality delivery is provided. Such evidence is likely to come from internal peer observation of teaching; from student questionnaires and other arrangements for gathering feedback; from the deployment of learning resources; and from student performance in assessments. Direct observation of teaching may be required if:

- there are questions that reviewers feel would be best addressed by such observation;

- observation might help confirm a judgement about innovative practice;
- there is insufficient other evidence that effective delivery is being achieved; or
- there are indications that the learning opportunities for students are less than satisfactory.

6 All reviewers are expected to identify, share, consider and evaluate evidence related to the programme under review. Reviewers should keep notes of all meetings with staff and students, of their observations, and of comments on the quality of students' work and its assessment. Notes should be analytical rather than merely descriptive, and should refer to sources of information as well as to direct observations. Strengths and weaknesses should be summarised. These notes should be filed in the ARCS folder provided for the review and will assist in developing a collective evidence base on which sound judgements can be made.

7 Review team meetings are used to consider the evidence gathered, form preliminary judgements, and determine which questions require further exploration. Reviewers are expected to evaluate how the evidence gathered compares with the self-evaluation prepared by the provider and to test the strength of the evidence produced to support the judgements. Discussion of the emerging judgements must involve all of the reviewers.

8 The provider is asked in its self-evaluation to demonstrate reflection upon their use of relevant external reference points, including those from the Academic Infrastructure, namely the *Foundation degree qualification benchmark [FDQB (final draft)]*; *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ); all the relevant sections of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code*). The reviewers should therefore:

- enquire into the way in which the *FDQB (final draft)* has been taken into account when designing the programme;
- seek evidence that the provider has related the programme to the appropriate level of the FHEQ;
- seek evidence that the provider has addressed, or is addressing, the intentions of the precepts of the *Code*. The reviewers should not, however, seek information about adherence to the *Code* on a precept-by-precept basis;

Additional external reference points may include:

- the *Overview report of the review of foundation degrees 2002-03*
- Sector Skills Councils' (SSCs) foundation degree frameworks; and
- employer organisations and professional body requirements.

9 Where programs have yet to complete the first full cycle of delivery, the key questions should be interpreted, where appropriate, as asking about likely outcomes.

## Key questions for the review of foundation degrees

### Key questions 1-5 address academic standards and student achievement

#### Key question 1

To what extent are the aims and intended programme learning outcomes clear and appropriate for the defining characteristics of foundation degrees, and the FHEQ?

Areas for consideration:

- the existence of clear aims and learning outcomes, and appropriate links between them;

- programme aims and learning outcomes as a sound basis for achieving the defining characteristics of foundation degrees, namely employer involvement; accessibility; articulation and progression; flexibility; and partnership;
- the existence of programme aims and learning outcomes appropriate to the achievement of the intermediate level of the FHEQ;
- programme aims and learning outcomes as a reflection of current occupational standards and practice;
- the relationship between the learning outcomes for modules, units or courses and those for the programme as a whole; and
- the clear and effective communication of the aims and intended programme outcomes to all stakeholders.

Sources of documentary evidence might include the following:

- the programme specification for the foundation degree;
- definitive curricular documents;
- validation documents and reports;
- relevant SSC foundation degree framework and national occupational standards; and
- the relevant student/programme handbook(s).

Review activities might include the following:

- analysis of the programme specification and other curricular documents in relation to the external reference points; and
- discussions with members of the teaching staff, students, employers and former students.

As a result of these activities, reviewers should be able to judge:

- whether the intended learning outcomes are clearly stated; and
- whether they reflect appropriately relevant subject benchmark statements, other external reference points, and the overall aims of the provision.

## Key question 2

To what extent do the design and content of curricula reflect the defining characteristics of foundation degrees and what is the likelihood that they will enable students to achieve the programme outcomes?

Areas for consideration:

- the credit-rating of the programme (which should be a minimum of 240 credits);
- guaranteed articulation arrangements with at least one bachelor's degree with honours, to be completed, normally within 1.3 years for a full-time student or the part-time equivalent;
- clearly articulated arrangements for progression to other qualifications, both those validated by higher education institutions and, where appropriate, by professional bodies and other educational bodies;
- the design of the curriculum to ensure that students, including those with non-traditional entry qualifications, are able to attain the programme outcomes;
- the design of the curriculum to promote a commitment to lifelong learning, for example, through the use of a personal development plan for each learner;

- the provision in the curriculum of an appropriate integration of vocational skills and their application in a work-based environment with academic knowledge and understanding;
- the design and organisation of the programme to support flexible delivery modes and study patterns;
- where the programme is available in different locations or different delivery modes, the extent to which all versions of the curriculum provide an equivalent programme of learning for students appropriate to the award of a foundation degree;
- the links between the design of the curriculum and the relevant SSC foundation degree framework and national occupational standards and practice; and
- policies to ensure that the conditions of work-based learning comply with relevant health and safety legislation, equal opportunities legislation and EU employment legislation.

Sources of documentary evidence might include the following:

- the self-evaluation and the programme specification;
- definitive curricular documents and institutional regulations;
- module or unit descriptions/guides;
- internal and external monitoring/review reports;
- formal articulation and contractual agreements;
- records/minutes/reports of external consultations;
- the relevant student/programme handbook(s); and
- communications from employers, professional and statutory bodies and/or the relevant SSC.

Review activities might include the following:

- analysis of the programme specification and other curricular documents in relation to the external reference points;
- scrutiny of other relevant documentation, including the items listed above; and
- discussions with members of the teaching staff, employers and students.

As a result of these activities, reviewers should be able to judge the adequacy of the curricula for ensuring that students are able to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

### Key question 3

To what extent are the arrangements for assessment clear, robust and capable of systematic testing of the students' achievement of programme outcomes?

Areas for consideration:

- the existence of assessment arrangements that are clear and understood by all participants;
- methods of assessment and assessment criteria, including appropriate competence-based assessment, that are appropriate for the programme outcomes relating to both academic knowledge and understanding, and vocational skills and their application in the work base;
- assessment that is consistent with and appropriate to the intermediate level of the FHEQ and level 5 of the NQF;
- security of the assessment arrangements to ensure consistent measurement of student achievement, whatever the location or delivery mode;

- formal agreements and training where employers undertake some assessment of students;
- arrangements to provide students with a transcript, validated by the awarding higher education institution, to record their assessed skills and knowledge; and
- robust and transparent arrangements to award credits in recognition of accreditation of prior learning (APL) to gain entry to and/or progress within the foundation degree, and how these are communicated to the students. Information to applicants about the nature and range of evidence considered appropriate to support a claim for the APL.

Sources of documentary evidence might include the following:

- the programme specification and the relevant student/programme handbook(s);
- assessment regulations;
- a representative sample of student work with assignment briefs, marking criteria, mark lists and feedback comments;
- agreements concerning employers' assessment of students;
- relevant institutional and programme-specific policies, including those relating to APL;
- assessment board terms of reference and minutes;
- policies on moderation/internal verification;
- minutes of subject team meetings where external examiners' reports are considered; and
- staff feedback on the assessment process.

Review activities might include the following:

- discussions with staff, students and employers;
- scrutiny of methods for recording the progress and achievement of students; and
- scrutiny of relevant documents and student work, including the items listed above.

As a result of these activities, reviewers should be able to judge whether assessment processes can adequately measure achievement of the intended programme outcomes.

#### Key question 4

To what extent do the student achievements, including the results of assessments where available, indicate that programme outcomes are being achieved or, where no students have completed the programme, are likely to be achieved and meet the expectations of the defining characteristics?

Areas for consideration:

- standards being achieved by learners in relation to the threshold requirements of the award;
- where programmes have yet to produce any graduating students, the extent to which the assessment procedures and the sample of student work confirm that module outcomes can be achieved and that programme outcomes are likely to be achieved;
- whether the work produced by students is at an appropriate level and shows that all students are covering an appropriate range of employment-relevant skills (technical, work-specific, key, generic), that there is an integration of work and academic activities and skills, and that students are benefiting from a broad range of study; and
- whether the work produced by students shows that consistent standards are being achieved whatever the location or delivery mode.

Sources of documentary evidence might include the following:

- the programme specification and relevant student/programme handbooks;
- a representative sample of student work with assignment briefs, marking criteria, mark lists and feedback comments;
- feedback from staff on the assessment process;
- internal and external monitoring reports including, as available, programme monitoring reports and reports of external assessors/examiners;
- minutes of relevant committees and examination boards; and
- learning contracts and personal development/learning plans.

Review activities might include the following:

- discussions with staff and employers;
- scrutiny of relevant documents and student work, including the items listed above.

As a result of these activities, reviewers should be able to judge whether appropriate standards are being achieved.

### Key question 5

How are employers/employer-related organisations, including SSCs and PSRBs, involved in the design of the curricula, and the assessment and achievement of the students?

Areas for consideration:

- the relationship between the learning outcomes for the modules and work-based learning requirements in the programme outcomes;
- the effectiveness of the involvement of employers and employer-related organisations in identifying employment sector needs and in the design and content of the programme;
- the effectiveness of the integration of work-based learning within the programme and its sufficiency in enabling students to develop an understanding of the world of work;
- the achievement or plans for achievement of recognition of the programme from employers/SSCs/PSRBs;
- how employers participate in or contribute to the assessment of work-related skills, and the competence of those involved with the assessment arrangements;
- the effectiveness of arrangements for assessing and recording the achievements of students in work-based learning; and
- where work-based learning attracts credit, the robustness and transparency of the arrangements to demonstrate the recognition of that learning, and the extent to which those arrangements have been agreed between all members of the consortium.

Sources of documentary evidence might include the following:

- SSC foundation degree frameworks;
- sector-specific statements from employer organisations/SSCs/PSRBs;
- validation document;
- relevant institutional policies;
- student/programme handbook(s);



- minutes of meetings with employers and employer-related organisations; and
- other feedback from employers.

Review activities might include the following:

- discussions with employer, SSCs and training organisations.

## Making the judgement

10 The judgement on (emerging) academic standards and student achievement is based on the findings relating to key questions 1-5. In order to achieve a judgement of confidence, the reviewers need to make positive findings on each question separately. A negative finding in respect of any one question will result in an overall judgement of no confidence in academic standards and achievement.

## Key questions 6-9 address the quality of students' learning opportunities

The questions below are designed to enable the reviewers to evaluate whether the quality of the students' learning opportunities is appropriate for a foundation degree programme. This section comprises four key questions, supported by areas for consideration arising from each question.

### Key question 6

To what extent is the approach to learning and teaching delivery, including the range of learning and teaching methods, effective for achieving the learning outcomes, reflective of the defining characteristics of the foundation degree award and responsive to its students?

Areas for consideration:

- the range of learning and teaching methods for the mode(s) of study and their appropriateness for achieving the programme learning outcomes, and the integration and application of academic studies with work-based learning;
- whether the delivery of the curriculum is supported by appropriate learning materials, including those for flexible or distance learning where relevant;
- the effectiveness of teaching and learning for students coming from non-traditional backgrounds;
- the flexibility of teaching and learning to changing student needs arising from employment or other changing circumstances;
- the effectiveness of learning and teaching in promoting independent and lifelong learning; and
- the maintenance of a consistent threshold quality of curriculum delivery in respect of schemes, methods and materials, whatever the location or delivery mode.

Sources of documentary evidence might include the following:

- the programme specification and relevant student/programme handbook(s);
- relevant institutional and programme-specific policies, particularly those relating to learning and teaching;
- student and staff feedback on the modules/programme;
- staff team meetings;
- module or unit descriptions/guides and teaching schemes;
- internal and external monitoring reports; and

- schemes for institutional and/or peer observation of teaching, and any available outcomes of those schemes.

Review activities might include the following:

- scrutiny of relevant documents, including those items listed above;
- scrutiny of student work;
- where deemed necessary, the results of direct observation of teaching and learning; and
- discussions with members of the teaching staff, employers and students.

### Key question 7

To what extent are the arrangements for providing academic support for students effective and to what extent do they meet the distinctive needs of foundation degree students, whatever their location and mode of study?

Areas for consideration:

- whether the information given to prospective students and those joining the programme reflects the defining characteristics of a foundation degree and whether students are given clear and accurate information on the character, content and delivery of the programme;
- whether the available evidence, including retention data, suggests that student expectations are realistic and are being met;
- the arrangements for the recruitment, admission and induction of students to ensure the fair and consistent treatment of applicants, whatever the location, consortium partner and delivery mode;
- appropriate procedures for the consideration of APL which are clearly explained to all applicants;
- the consideration given to personal development plans and, where they exist, their effectiveness in supporting student learning and progression;
- the arrangements for academic and pastoral support appropriate to the needs of the different categories of students;
- the arrangements for academic support to allow the identification of study skills needs and support for their development;
- the arrangements for academic and pastoral support while students are on work-based learning;
- provision of advice and guidance for progressing to honours degree level study; and
- the arrangements for academic support allow students to obtain additional advice and information on the requirements of employment, self-employment and entrepreneurial activity as appropriate.

Sources of documentary evidence might include the following:

- the programme specification and relevant student/programme handbooks;
- relevant institutional and programme-specific policies.;
- student evaluations/feedback; and
- on-line support systems.

Review activities might include the following:

- scrutiny of documents, including those items listed above;
- scrutiny of student work;
- discussions with members of the teaching staff, employers and students; and
- scrutiny of on-line support systems.

Information and guidance materials outlining the process(es) for the assessment of claims for the accreditation of prior experiential and/or previously certificated learning should be clear, accurate and easily accessible. Applicants should be informed fully of the nature and range of evidence considered appropriate to support a claim for the accreditation of prior learning.

### Key question 8

Is the provision of human and physical resources adequate, and to what extent is it appropriately organised and managed to achieve the foundation degree programme outcomes and meet the expectations of the defining characteristics?

Areas for consideration:

- the number and relevant expertise of teaching staff delivering the programme across all locations and modes;
- the number and relevant expertise of work-based staff supporting the students;
- the deployment of teaching staff to ensure that all students receive a satisfactory learning experience, including the facilitation of obtaining work-based learning where necessary, whatever the location or delivery mode;
- the extent to which the range and quantity of learning resources is adequate for the needs of the programme and foundation degree students;
- the strategy for the provision of sufficient specialist facilities, between the institutions and the confirmed workplace settings, for achieving the programme outcomes;
- access by students to appropriate and convenient facilities, particularly for the development of academic knowledge and understanding; and
- access to sufficient and convenient information and communication technology facilities, with appropriate technical assistance, to support the delivery mode at all locations.

Sources of documentary evidence might include the following:

- the programme specification and relevant student/programme handbook(s);
- relevant institutional and programme-specific policies, such as the resourcing strategy for the foundation degree;
- staff development strategies and records of the participation of foundation degree staff in staff development events; and
- records of discussions involving employers.

Review activities might include the following:

- scrutiny of documents, including those items listed above;
- scrutiny of staff lists and curricula vitae;
- scrutiny of appropriate details of staff in the workplace;
- direct scrutiny of relevant facilities; and
- discussions with members of the teaching staff, employers and students.

## Key question 9

To what extent do the employers/work-based learning providers contribute to the delivery of the programme and does this reflect the defining characteristics of a foundation degree?

Areas for consideration:

- the effectiveness of work-based learning and the extent to which it is designed to reflect the relevant learning outcomes and defining characteristics;
- where employers contribute to the delivery of the programme, how those contributions are effectively designed and integrated;
- the policy, and implementation of arrangements, for recognising prior and work-based learning by the provider and all partners;
- an appropriate involvement of employers as mentors with the expertise and experience necessary to ensure that the work-related experience and skills of students is relevant, up to date and matched to programme outcomes;
- the provision, between the provider and the confirmed work-based learning settings, of sufficient specialist facilities for achieving the programme outcomes, with appropriate agreement on their use by students;
- the briefing of employers about the purpose of work-based learning and their role within it;
- the extent of the briefing, monitoring and support of students before and during their period of work-based learning;
- the extent to which relevant staff receive appropriate induction to their role in monitoring the students' work-based learning;
- appropriate and adequate policies concerning health and safety, equal opportunities and risk analysis in the workplace;
- support for employers involved in the assessment of student work; and
- the extent to which the work-based learning is effective in enabling students to demonstrate skills for employment.

Sources of documentary evidence might include the following:

- the programme specification and relevant student/programme handbook(s);
- relevant institutional policies, including those relating to APL;
- work-based learning handbooks/guidance/learning agreements; and
- formative assessment and/or feedback from employers.

Review activities might include the following:

- scrutiny of documents, including those items listed above;
- scrutiny of student work;
- discussions with employers, members of the teaching staff and students; and
- discussions with staff.

The judgement on the quality of students' learning opportunities is based on the findings to key questions 6-9. In order to achieve a judgement of confidence, the reviewers need to make positive findings on each question separately. A negative finding in respect of any one question will result in an overall judgement of no confidence in the quality of students' learning opportunities.

## Key question 10 addresses the monitoring and enhancement of standards and quality for the foundation degree programme

### Key question 10

To what extent is there a robust and understood framework in place for the effective monitoring and enhancement of quality and standards across all parts of the foundation degree provision? To what extent does it address the defining characteristics, and the need for ensuring equivalence of the student learning opportunities between the delivery partners?

Areas for consideration:

- whether mechanisms for the approval/validation of the foundation degree programme have ensured that such programmes meet a clear employment need and meet the defining characteristics;
- any amendments to the actual approval process that were used for the programme under review;
- the existence of a clear statement as to where, within the provider or consortium, responsibility for monitoring and enhancement lies;
- the existence of a clear statement of the responsibility for monitoring, enhancement and support borne by the awarding body;
- whether clear mechanisms are in place for ensuring the programme is monitored systematically against its learning outcomes, with action plans drawn up to promote improvement;
- regular review of the monitoring arrangements to ensure that the programme is meeting, and is responsive to, the defining characteristics and appropriate employment sector organisations;
- whether the provider has identified and addressed issues of concern relating to the programme;
- the extent to which the arrangements for monitoring and enhancement are effectively designed to include work-based learning activities; and
- arrangements to ensure consistency in the monitoring of academic standards and the quality of the student experience, across all locations and delivery modes.

Sources of documentary evidence might include the following:

- the programme specification and relevant student/programme handbook(s);
- relevant institutional policies, including those relating to APL;
- diagram of quality assurance procedures;
- quality assurance manuals; and
- internal monitoring reports.

Review activities might include the following:

- scrutiny of documents, including those items listed above;
- discussions with staff, employers and students; and
- scrutiny of student work.

The report will contain a statement on/about the continuing effectiveness of the consortium's quality assurance arrangements, including those for collaborative provision in response to key question 10.

## **Key question 11 addresses examples of practice worthy of dissemination and innovative features of the provision**

### **Key question 11**

Does the evidence in relation to the (emerging) academic standards and the (emerging) achievements of students and/or the quality of students' learning opportunities, including their monitoring and enhancement, indicate any areas of innovation and/or examples of good practice that may be worthy of wider dissemination?

Areas for consideration:

- innovative features in relation to the design and content of curricula, the arrangements for assessment or the student achievements;
- positive features identified in relation to the design and content of curricula, the arrangements for assessment, student achievements, and good practice that may be worthy of wider dissemination;
- innovative features in relation to curriculum delivery, integration of work-based and academic learning, involvement of employers in formative assessment, academic support, resources or monitoring and enhancement; and
- positive features identified in relation to curriculum delivery, integration of work-based and academic learning, involvement of employers in formative assessment, academic support, resources for monitoring and enhancement, and good practice that may be worthy of wider dissemination.

Review activities might include the following:

- scrutiny of documents, including validation documents, annual monitoring and student feedback;
- discussions with staff, employers and students, and
- scrutiny of on-line systems

## Annex D

### Notes for specialist reviewers

#### Introduction

1 The specialist reviewers' main responsibility is to participate in the Agency's review of foundation degrees, which integrate work-based learning with the acquisition of technical skills, academic knowledge and transferable skills needed for employment. The reviewers make judgements on (emerging) academic standards and the (emerging) achievements of students and on the quality of students' learning opportunities. They also comment on the monitoring and enhancement of standards and quality of the foundation degree programme.

2 In order to facilitate secure communication between reviewers, the Agency has established a system of electronic folders that are accessible through an Agency email account. All specialist reviewers will be expected to make extensive use of the electronic folder system.

3 Specialist reviewers may be drawn from providers of higher education or from industry and the professions with relevant experience of professional education in that subject. Specialist reviewers from higher education providers need to have extensive knowledge of their subject area and sufficient experience of foundation degrees and quality assurance processes to command the respect of institutions. The Agency welcomes specialist reviewers from outside higher education. Such specialist reviewers need to have industrial, commercial or professional experience in their subject area, particularly in relation to work-based learning and a broad knowledge of higher education. All specialist reviewers must be capable of working in small teams, under considerable pressure and against tight timetables. Specific requirements are set out below.

4 Specialist reviewers who have previously participated in Agency review processes have found the experience challenging, stimulating and highly rewarding. Many have indicated that they have gained new insights into the nature of teaching and learning in their subject and into higher education generally.

#### Availability

5 It is expected that those appointed specialist reviewers will be available to participate in at least two foundation degree reviews during the period from January to July 2005. Training will take place from October 2004. Specialist reviewers who have not previously been trained for academic review will take a three-day training course with an additional day's training specifically for foundation degrees. The length of reviews may vary slightly but the average total for a foundation degree review is 5.5 days. Of this 5.5 days, up to three days will usually be spent at the delivery sites of the provider, approximately 0.5 days for the final team meeting, and the remaining two days allocated to reviewing evidence and drafting sections of the report.

6 Specialist reviewers will be expected to follow the published guidelines and methods for the review of foundation degrees.

7 Specialist reviewers will be paid a fee on completion of all stages of the review. The main activities involved are preliminary work, review visits and report drafting. In addition, the fee will recognise the time required for reading documents and travelling.

## **Preliminary work**

8 Reviewers are required to:

- read the self-evaluation and any other documents supplied by the provider in advance of the visit. This is likely to be in electronic format;
- prepare a written commentary by the date specified by the Review Coordinator; and
- share their initial evaluation and commentary with other review team members using the electronic folder provided by the Agency to support the review.

## **Visits to the foundation degree provider**

9 During visits, subject specialists will gather evidence in order to make judgements on the academic standards and achievements of students, the quality of the learning opportunities in the subject area, and on the monitoring and enhancement of standards and quality. Evidence will usually be gathered and tested through:

- reading documents;
- evaluating students' work, including work-based learning;
- meetings and discussion with provider's staff, students and employers;
- evaluating the use of resources;
- meetings and discussion with other reviewers; and
- preparing summaries of evidence for the draft review report.

## **Report drafting**

10 Specialist reviewers may be asked by the review coordinator to concentrate on specific key questions, listed in Annex C, and to draft written summaries of evidence. By the end of a review, specialist reviewers will be required to reach robust shared judgements based on sound evidence and the application of the published criteria for foundation degree reviews. Specialist reviewers will also be required to read the report drafted by the review coordinator, working from the summaries of evidence prepared during the review, to ensure that the report is factually accurate and represents the views of the whole review team.

## **Remuneration**

11 Specialist reviewers will be paid a fee equivalent to £200 each day, inclusive of VAT, for services provided for reviews. Travel and subsistence expenses will be reimbursed at approved rates.

## **Training**

12 New specialist reviewers will be offered a three-day residential training course to prepare them for reviews at the subject level. Each specialist reviewer will be provided with a handbook outlining the procedures relating to the subject-level review processes and a training manual. In addition, specialist reviewers will be offered a further one-day training event that focuses on the review of foundation degrees. Specialist reviewers who have already undertaken the training for the academic review of subjects will only be expected to undertake this single day.



## Specification for specialist reviewers

13 A specialist reviewer will normally have the following:

### Qualifications/knowledge

#### Essential

- educated to at least degree standard or equivalent with current specialist knowledge of one of the subjects/employment sectors to be reviewed;
- a knowledge of higher education;
- an awareness of current teaching and learning methods; and
- an awareness of the academic standards relevant to the subject under review.

#### Desirable

- an awareness of quality assurance methods in higher education and/or in the relevant employment sector;
- a knowledge of the requirements of the relevant employment sector and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies;
- knowledge of the operation of work-based learning, preferably at higher education level; and
- an understanding of the significant developments in higher education over the last five years.

### Relevant experience

#### Essential

- a minimum of five years' experience of teaching at higher education level or equivalent activity in industry, commerce, or the professions; and
- an experience of working within tight timescales and to strict deadlines.

#### Desirable

- experience of liaison with staff at various levels in higher education providers or equivalent industrial/professional experience;
- experience as an external participant in examination, accreditation, validation, quality audit/assessment and other quality assurance activities either in education or the relevant employment sector;
- appropriate professional subject-based work such as with a subject association, professional body or Sector Skills Council;
- a familiarity with work-based and/or distance learning;
- experience of modular/interdisciplinary systems;
- experience of industrial liaison, work experience, scholarly activity, research or consultancy in the subject or employment area;
- experience of student support services; and
- experience of learning resource management and deployment.

**Skills and abilities****Essential**

- an ability to arrive at shared judgements on the quality of, and standards in, higher education drawing on experience and subject expertise;
- an ability to work as part of a small team;
- effective interpersonal skills and management of meetings;
- an awareness of and commitment to equal opportunities issues;
- an ability to produce evaluative written summaries of evidence;
- a familiarity with word processing packages, such as Word for Windows; and
- familiarity with electronic folders and remote communication systems and a willingness to use these.

## Annex E

### Notes for facilitators in foundation degree reviews

#### Introduction

- 1 The awarding institution of the foundation degree will be offered the opportunity to nominate one Programme Coordinating Facilitator (PCF) for each programme under review. In addition, each educational site within a foundation degree consortium will be invited to identify a Link Facilitator (LF) who will liaise with the consortium PCF and will act as a facilitator when a particular college is visited by the reviewers. Employers substantially involved in foundation degree design and/or delivery may also appoint a LF.
- 2 If a delivery site has the main responsibility for the running of a programme, they may nominate the PCF with the agreement of the awarding institution.
- 3 The Agency will offer a one-day training session for facilitators involved in foundation degree review.

#### Role of the Programme Coordinating Facilitator (PCF)

- 4 The organisation and management of the review is the responsibility of the Review Coordinator. Responsibility for ensuring that the reviewers are provided with appropriate evidence to reach their judgements lies primarily with the consortium, represented by the PCF. The PCF's role is to ensure that the channels of communication between the two work effectively. Discussions between the PCF and Review Coordinator should ensure that the provider is aware of issues being addressed by the reviewers and the evidence needed to clarify them. The PCF will need well-developed personal qualities and skills to handle any sensitive matters that may arise during the course of the review. It would be helpful if the provider could supply review coordinators with brief outlines of facilitators' previous experience and current institutional roles.
- 5 Throughout the course of a review, the PCF helps the reviewers reach a clear and accurate understanding of the structures, policies, priorities and procedures of the provider, and the nature of the provision under scrutiny. S/he may wish to bring additional information to the attention of the reviewers and may seek to correct factual inaccuracy.

#### Activities preceding reviews

- 6 Providers may find it helpful to involve PCFs and LFs fully in the preparation for the review, including the preliminary meeting with the Agency. The PCF should receive copies of all correspondence between the Agency and the consortium, and should attend all team meetings with the exception of those involving students or the discussion of judgements.

#### Activities during reviews

- 7 The extended pattern of review requires PCFs to fulfil three main functions in addition to the proactive liaison role outlined above:
  - they should monitor the pattern of visits by the reviewers. If it appears that there is a departure from the agreed pattern, the matter should be discussed immediately with the Review Coordinator;
  - PCFs should maintain regular telephone and/or email contact with the Review Coordinator to ensure that the reviewers are receiving the information or documents that they need, particularly for off-site analysis;

- PCFs should attend all the following:
  - i review team meetings;
  - ii formal meetings held between the reviewers and the institution to investigate matters specific to standards and quality; and
  - iii progress meetings held between the Review Coordinator and subject staff.
- PCFs may not attend:
  - i meetings with current or former students; and
  - ii meetings in which judgements are being discussed by the reviewers.

### **Role of the Link Facilitator (LF)**

8 The LF should liaise closely with the PCF in preparation for the review and throughout the review period. It is important that the LF is aware of all the developments during the review and can provide any information requested by the reviewers. During a visit to a provider, the LF from that provider carries out the same duties as a PCF and is able to attend the same meetings. S/he will liaise closely with the Review Coordinator on matters concerning the visit.

### **Key responsibilities of PCFs and LFs**

9 The facilitator should assist the reviewers in understanding the structures, policies, priorities and procedures of the consortium and the individual institutions, and the nature of the provision being reviewed. Facilitators may wish to bring additional relevant evidence to the attention of the reviewers and should seek to correct factual inaccuracy. It is for the reviewers, however, to decide how best to use the evidence provided. The facilitators are not members of the review team and will not contribute to making judgements about the provision.

10 The role requires facilitators to:

- observe objectively;
- communicate clearly with the reviewers and the consortium or institution as appropriate;
- respect the protocols of confidentiality in the points outlined below; and
- establish effective relationships with the Review Coordinator and the reviewers, as well as with the subject staff.

11 Facilitators should refrain from acting as advocates for the provision under review. However, they may legitimately:

- assist the consortium/institution in understanding issues of concern to the reviewers;
- respond to requests for information and comment;
- draw the reviewers' attention to matters that may have been overlooked;
- identify the location of evidence; and
- provide advice on institutional/consortium matters.

### **Knowledge and skills required**

12 PCFs and LFs should possess:

- extensive expertise of quality assurance procedures in the consortium, institution or work-based learning as appropriate;

- knowledge and understanding of the Agency's review method for foundation degrees in England;
- qualifications and experience in a subject area other than that being reviewed;
- well-developed personal qualities and skills to handle any sensitive matters which may arise during the course of the review; and
- an ability to maintain confidentiality.

In addition, the PCF should possess:

- a thorough knowledge of the structure, policies, priorities, procedures and practices of the structure of the foundation degree consortium.

### **Confidentiality**

13 All facilitators will observe the same conventions of confidentiality as specialist reviewers. In particular, no information gained during a review shall be used in a manner that allows individuals to be identified. Facilitators must exercise care when reporting back to subject staff to maintain the confidentiality of written material produced by the reviewers for the initial team meeting, or at other times during the review. However, facilitators may make their own notes on team discussions in order to help subject staff understand the issues being addressed by the reviewers. This can improve the effectiveness of a review, and contribute to the enhancement of standards and quality within the provider.

## Annex F

### Notes on meetings with students

This meeting is normally chaired by the Review Coordinator, who introduces the specialist reviewers and provides a brief summary of the foundation degree review method. The meeting agenda should cover the items set out below in bold type. The bullet points set out below each item are indicative of the topics reviewers will normally need to raise.

### Design and content of the curriculum

- Reasons for choosing the programme.
- The match between the curriculum and students' expectations (for example, flexibility, choice and content).
- The centrality of work-based learning to the programme.
- The appropriateness of the curriculum content to the development of academic knowledge and skills.
- The appropriateness of the curriculum content to the diverse needs of students.
- The nature of work-based learning integration with academic study.
- The appropriateness of the curriculum to the mode of study, for example, part-time, distance learning.
- The student timetable and workload.

### Assessment and achievement

- Students' understanding of the assessment process.
- The clarity and appropriateness of assessment tasks.
- The use of assessment tasks that integrate academic knowledge and work-based learning.
- The involvement of employers in assessment.
- The effectiveness of the workplace in enabling students to demonstrate work-based skills.
- Students' awareness and understanding of assessment criteria.
- The quality and timing of feedback.
- Students' experience of accreditation of prior learning.
- The extent to which students have achieved the learning outcomes.

### Teaching and learning

- The range of teaching and learning methods.
- The contribution and effectiveness of work-based learning to the programme.
- The involvement of employers with students during the programme.
- Views on the quality of the teaching.
- The extent to which both the academic learning and the work-based learning is relevant, up to date and matched to the programme aims.

### **Academic support**

- Admission and induction procedures.
- Arrangements for academic and personal support, including personal tutorial system and information on articulation with other programmes.
- Academic and personal support for students in work-based learning.
- Guidance and support for independent study.
- Use of personal development logs.
- Advice on careers/further study.

### **Learning resources**

- Programme materials, including learning packs.
- Information technology provision, availability and support.
- Availability of relevant equipment.
- Library facilities and access.
- Access to appropriate facilities in the workplace.

### **Quality management and enhancement**

- Ways in which student views are sought.
- The extent to which student views are influential.
- The effectiveness of communications between the provider and employers.

Students should be given the opportunity to raise points not covered by the reviewers' questions.

### Student work and assessment note

Please complete one form for each batch of student work.

#### Section 1: Source of evidence

<b>Institution</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Programme</b>
Reviewer      Date	Level/year	Module/unit title
<b>Number of items sampled</b>	<b>Total number of students assessed</b>	<b>Diagnostic/formative/summative (please circle)</b>
<b>Type of assessment instrument eg essay</b>	<b>Questions or brief given to students</b>	

#### Section 2: Review of Achievements

This section applies both to Standards and the Quality of Learning Opportunities.

Please comment on the strengths and weaknesses of students' achievements in relation to the intended learning outcomes for the module/unit:

<b>Acquisition of</b>	<b>Strengths</b>	<b>Weaknesses</b>
Knowledge and understanding  Analytical skills  Transferable skills (eg communication, numeracy, IT)  Subject-specific skills (including practical and professional skills)		



## Review of effectiveness of assessment

Please evaluate and comment on the assessment process and indicate strengths and weaknesses in terms of the following:

	Strengths S	Weaknesses W
<p>Does the assessment process enable learners to achieve the intended learning outcomes of the module? eg clarity of design, appropriateness to level.</p> <p>Are there criteria that enable internal and external examiners to distinguish between different categories of achievement? eg are the criteria appropriate and are they implemented?</p> <p>Can there be full confidence in the security and integrity of the assessment procedures? eg moderation, consistency of marking</p> <p>Does the assessment strategy have an adequate formative function in developing student abilities? eg what forms of feedback are used; quality of feedback.</p> <p>Is this assessment instrument appropriate and effective for the intended learning outcomes?</p>		
<p>Do the standards achieved by learners meet the minimum expectations for this assessment?</p> <p>Does this sample suggest there may be innovative features? If so please identify</p>		

## Annex H

### The foundation degree review report template

The report will typically be 4,000 words in length, excluding the aims. Where the consortium is particularly complex, reports should not exceed 4,500 words. Suggested word limits are provided for each section. Review coordinators should bear in mind that the reports will be published for a public readership and will contribute to the Agency overview report on foundation degrees. It is, therefore, important that the consortium, including employers, is clearly described. Specific examples of innovation and good practice, where relevant, should be identified. Where there are differences between the standards and/or quality in delivery sites, but reviewers have overall confidence in the programme, the report should clearly identify the features about which the reviewers were concerned. These should also be included in the recommendations for development in the Conclusion section of the report.

The report should indicate the extent to which the defining characteristics of the foundation degree are met in the programme under review. The text under key question 2, for example, should include references to credit points available on completion of the programme. Some programmes contain more than the minimum 240. Unusual recruitment patterns, designed into the programme, should also be mentioned here. The articulation arrangements, together with any bridging requirements, should also be set out.

### Preface

[A standard summary, common to all reports, of the foundation degree review process and its possible outcomes will be provided by the Agency.]

### The programme reviewed

#### Section A

#### Framework

A statement indicating the consortium membership, the awarding institution and the sites of delivery. Mention should be made of any distance learning or any unusual pattern of delivery. A general statement should be made on the nature, variety and distribution of the work-based learning. The context of foundation degrees is variable, ranging from one awarding institution with no colleges or employers to two awarding institutions, several colleges and many employers. Because of this, it is vital that all the institutions are identified, together with an indication of their geographical spread and the mode of study offered by each. Similarly, the number and types of employers involved should be clearly stated, again with an indication of their proximity to the teaching institutions. There may also be Sector Skills Councils, employer organisations or professional bodies involved. This section should not exceed 600 words and, in the case of simple consortia, may be much shorter.

#### Section B

#### A statement of the overall educational aims of the programme

This should be copied from the information supplied by the provider in the self-evaluation.

## Section C

### **An evaluation of the (emerging) standards of the programme and the (emerging) achievements of students**

This section takes the form of a narrative on each of the key questions 1-5 (see Annex B). Examples of innovative features and good practice will be incorporated where appropriate.

**Key question 1:** To what extent are the aims and intended programme outcomes clear and appropriate for the defining characteristics of foundation degrees, and the FHEQ?

[Free text]

**Key question 2:** To what extent do the design and content of curricula reflect the defining characteristics of foundation degrees and what is the likelihood that they will enable students to achieve the programme outcomes?

[Free text]

**Key question 3:** To what extent are the arrangements for assessment clear, robust and capable of systematic testing of the students' achievement of programme outcomes?

[Free text]

**Key question 4:** To what extent do the student achievements, including the results of assessments where available, indicate that programme outcomes are being achieved or, where no students have completed the programme, are likely to be achieved and meet the expectations of the defining characteristics?

[Free text]

**Key question 5:** How are employers/employer-related organisations, including SSCs and PSRBs involved in the design of the curricula, and the assessment and achievement of the students?

[Free text]

*[The reviewers have confidence/no confidence in the (emerging) academic standards and (emerging) achievements of students.]*

## Section D

### **An evaluation of the quality of students' learning opportunities.**

This section takes the form of a narrative commentary on key questions 6-9 (see Annex B). Examples of innovative features and good practice will be incorporated where appropriate.

**Key question 6:** To what extent is the approach to learning and teaching delivery, including the range of learning and teaching methods, effective for achieving the learning outcomes, reflective of the defining characteristics of the foundation degree award and responsive to its students?

[Free text]

**Key question 7:** To what extent are the arrangements for providing academic support for students effective and to what extent do they meet the distinctive needs of foundation degree students, whatever their location and mode of study?

[Free text]

**Key question 8:** Is the provision of human and physical resources adequate, and to what extent is it appropriately organised and managed to achieve the foundation degree programme outcomes and meet the expectations of the defining characteristics of a foundation degree?

[Free text]

**Key question 9:** To what extent do the employers/work-based learning providers contribute to the delivery of the programme and does this reflect the defining characteristics?

[Free text]

*[The reviewers have confidence/no confidence in the quality of the students' learning opportunities.]*

#### Section E

### **An evaluation of the monitoring and enhancement of quality and standards.**

This section takes the form of a narrative commentary, principally based on key question 10 (see Annex B). Consideration will be given to matters of standards and quality of learning opportunities. Examples of innovative features and good practice will be incorporated where appropriate.

**Key question 10:** To what extent is there a robust and understood framework in place for the effective monitoring and enhancement of quality and standards across all parts of the foundation degree provision? To what extent does it address the defining characteristics, and the need for ensuring equivalence of the student learning opportunities between the delivery partners?

[Free text giving a commentary on the continuing effectiveness of the consortium's quality assurance arrangements, including those for collaborative provision.]

#### Section F (300 words)

### **Good practice and/or innovative features**

Reviewers should comment on the extent to which claims made by the provider in response to supplementary question 11 are justified. If justified, these examples, together with others occurring in earlier sections of the report, should be included here and in the summary of conclusions at the end of the report. Normally this will not exceed 300 words.

#### **Key question 11**

Does the evidence in relation to the (emerging) academic standards and the (emerging) achievements of students and/or the quality of students' learning opportunities, including their monitoring and enhancement, indicate any areas of innovation and/or examples of good practice that may be worthy of wider dissemination?

[Free text]

## Section G

### Conclusions and recommendations

This section will incorporate statements on:

- confidence or otherwise in the (emerging) academic standards and (emerging) achievements of students for the foundation degree programme;
- confidence or otherwise in the quality of the students' learning opportunities; and
- the monitoring and enhancement of quality and standards.

It will summarise the strengths in the consortium, the programme, its monitoring and enhancement, and the liaison with other institutions and employers. The final paragraph of this summary will comment on the features identified by reviewers as representing good practice and any innovative features of the provision. These may have been identified by the consortium in the self-evaluation or they may have been identified by reviewers during the course of the review. There are no specific criteria to be met but arise from the professional judgement of the reviewers. Identification of these features is intended to assist with the development of the award.

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