**Handbook for Integrated quality and enhancement review:
Northern Ireland
2010/11-2013/14**

# Contents

## Introduction

1      The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's (QAA) mission is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. As part of this mission, QAA undertakes reviews of higher education delivered in further education colleges (colleges) on behalf of the Department for Employment and Learning (DEL), which has responsibility for ensuring that provision is made for assessing the quality of education provided by institutions it funds. The process of review used in colleges in Northern Ireland between 2010/11 and 2013/14 is called Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER). Annex A provides details of QAA's purposes, values and standards.

2      The purpose of this handbook is to:

•      state the aims and objectives of IQER

•      describe the programmes of study that IQER covers

•      explain how IQER works

•      provide guidance to colleges and their awarding bodies preparing for, and taking part in, IQER.

3      The handbook is intended primarily for teams conducting IQER and for college staff who are directly involved in IQER. It is also intended to provide information and guidance for other staff in colleges and for colleges' awarding bodies. It is not intended for students, for whom QAA has produced separate guidance. Further information may be found through the web links listed at the end of Section seven. In addition to this handbook, QAA will provide support through briefing and training events.

4      The handbook is divided into eight sections.

# Section one: Overview of IQER

5    This section gives an overview of IQER, including its aims, objectives and scope. A more detailed description of how IQER works follows in Sections two to five. The terms in **bold** signify that they are explained in full in the glossary in Section seven.

## Aims

6    IQER is an **evidence-based peer review** of a college's management of the student learning experience and performance of its responsibilities for the academic standards and quality of its higher education provision. IQER focuses on how colleges discharge their delegated responsibilities within the context of their agreements with awarding bodies. QAA reviews the responsibilities for higher education institution awarding bodies within these relationships through Institutional audit. There is more information about the relationship between IQER and Institutional audit in Section two.

7    Colleges in Northern Ireland do not have powers to award higher education qualifications. They work with a wide range of awarding bodies, including **Edexcel**, higher education institution(s) and **professional, statutory and regulatory bodies** (PSRBs). The awarding bodies retain responsibility for the **academic standards** of all awards granted in their names and for ensuring that the **quality of learning opportunities** offered through collaborative arrangements is at least adequate to enable students to achieve the academic standard required for their awards.

8    Within this context, the overarching aims of IQER are to:

• support colleges in evaluating and improving the management of their higher education, for the benefit of students, and within the context of their agreements with awarding bodies

• foster good working relationships between colleges and their awarding bodies, for the benefit of students

• enable DEL to discharge its statutory responsibility for ensuring that provision is made for assessing the quality of education provided by the institutions it funds

• provide public information.

## Objectives

9    To realise these aims, IQER has three objectives:

• to engage colleges in a process of self-evaluation and peer review focused on reviewing, evaluating and improving the management of their higher education provision

• to produce reports of these review activities

• to contribute to public information about the academic standards and quality of higher education in colleges.

10     IQER takes place in two complementary stages called **Developmental engagement** and **Summative review**. These usually take place a minimum of one year apart. Both stages are conducted in an open and collegial way. The emphasis of the Developmental engagement is on supporting the college in developing its higher education provision and its management of the student learning experience. The Summative review is primarily concerned with reviewing, and making **judgements** about, the effectiveness of the college's procedures for the management of the student learning experience and their implementation. While there are some methodological variations between the Developmental engagement and the Summative review that reflect these different emphases, both share a number of common elements. In particular, both stages of IQER:

- prioritise the interests of students

- focus on a college's management of the student learning experience for its higher education provision

- acknowledge the shared responsibilities of awarding bodies and colleges, and seek to enhance these relationships

- share three **core themes:** academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information

- assume that the college and its **awarding body(ies)** are already managing the provision effectively according to the expectations of the **Academic Infrastructure**

- are carried out by **teams** of peers with current or recent experience of managing, developing, delivering and/or assessing higher education in colleges and/or higher education institutions

- are based on a self-evaluation prepared by the college

- involve a **visit** to the college

- lead to the production of reports.

## Other considerations

11     Other considerations that have informed the development of IQER in Northern Ireland are:

- the opportunity to build on the outcomes of the colleges' engagement with QAA through the Developmental reviews of 2008-09

- the need for a flexible method capable of accommodating and adapting to the diversity of arrangements for the provision of higher education in colleges, which is characterised by different types of delivery, sizes of provision, and awarding and funding relationships

- the benefits of producing review reports which can inform other types of external scrutiny, such as Institutional audits by QAA and college inspections by the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI), and which can be informed by other formal documents such as the Whole college improvement plan.

## Core themes

12    The focus of the IQER teams' enquiries will be on the three core themes: academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information.

- **Academic standards** refers to the level of achievement a student has to reach in order to achieve a particular award or qualification.

- **Quality of learning opportunities** considers the effectiveness of everything that is done or provided by the college to ensure that its students have the best possible opportunity to meet the stated outcomes of their programmes and the academic standards of the awards they are seeking.

- **Public information** is information about the academic standards and quality of learning opportunities that is in the public domain. In some cases the publication of this information is the responsibility of awarding bodies, carried out on the colleges' behalf; some will be provided by the college and published by external organisations like **Unistats;** and for some the college itself will be responsible for publication.

More information about the three core themes is provided in the glossary in Section seven.

## Academic Infrastructure

13    In considering colleges' management of higher education provision against the three core themes, IQER teams will be guided by the expectations of the Academic Infrastructure. The Academic Infrastructure is a set of nationally agreed reference points that inform and support the effective management of academic standards and quality in higher education. It is published by QAA and applies to all higher education courses leading to a qualification listed in *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), wherever these are delivered. It comprises the following:

- the FHEQ, which includes descriptions of the five levels of higher education qualifications (there is a separate framework for Scotland)

- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, which comprises 10 sections and sets out acknowledged good practice

- subject benchmark statements that describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects

- award benchmark statements, such as the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*, which provides a description of the characteristics of a Foundation Degree

- guidelines for preparing programme specifications, which are descriptions of what is on offer to students in individual programmes of study.

A more detailed description of the Academic Infrastructure is provided in the glossary in Section seven.
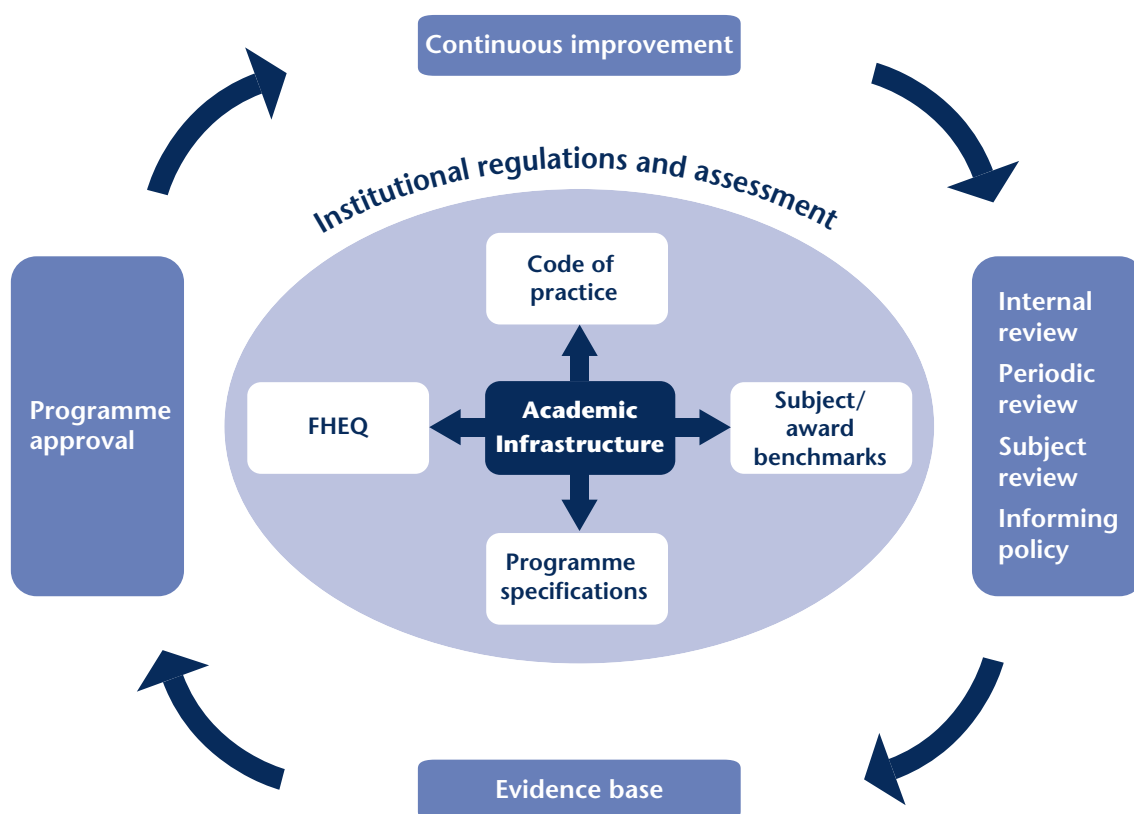
Figure 1: The relationship of the Academic Infrastructure to the continuous improvement of the management of academic standards and quality in higher education

## Scope

14    IQER is concerned with taught higher education programmes of study funded by DEL at levels 4, 5, 6 and 7 of the FHEQ, or levels 4 to 7 of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), with the exception of teacher and tutor education programmes. All colleges funded by DEL to provide higher education programmes at these levels are required by DEL to take part in IQER.

15    IQER does not apply to research degrees funded by DEL at master's or doctoral levels (or level 8 of the Qualifications and Credit Framework).

| Typical higher education qualifications within each level | FHEQ level* | QCF level | Corresponding FQ-EHEA cycle |
|---|---|---|---|
| Doctoral degrees (eg, PhD/DPhil (including new-route PhD), EdD,DBA, DClinPsy)** | 8 | 8 | Third cycle **(end of cycle)** qualifications |
| Master's degrees (eg, MPhil, MLitt, MRes, MA, MSc) | 7 | 7 | Second cycle **(end of cycle)** qualifications |
| Integrated master's degrees*** (eg, MEng, MChem, MPhys, MPharm) | | | |
| Postgraduate diplomas | | | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Postgraduate Certificate in Education(PGCE)**** | | | |
| Postgraduate certificates | | | |
| Bachelor's degrees with honours (eg, BA/BSc Hons) | 6 | 6 | First cycle **(end of cycle)** qualifications |
| Bachelor's degrees | | | |
| Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)**** | | | |
| Graduate diplomas | | | |
| Graduate certificates | | | |
| Foundation Degrees (eg, FdA, FdSc) | 5 | 5 | Short cycle **(within or linked to the first cycle)** qualifications |
| Diplomas of Higher Education (DipHE) | | | |
| Higher National Diplomas (HND) | | | |
| Higher National Certificates (HNC)***** | 4 | 4 | |
| Certificates of Higher Education (CertHE) | | | |

Table 1: The FHEQ (including European developments) and its relationship to the Qualifications Credit Framework

**Notes to table 1**

* Formerly, in the 2001 edition of the FHEQ, the levels were identified as Certificate (C), Intermediate (I), Honours (H), Masters (M) and Doctoral (D) level.

** Professional doctorate programmes include some taught elements in addition to the research dissertation. Practice varies but typically professional doctorates include postgraduate study equivalent to a minimum of three full-time calendar years with level 7 study representing no more than one-third of this.

*** Integrated master's degree programmes typically include study equivalent to at least four full-time academic years, of which study equivalent to at least one full-time academic year is at level 7. Thus study at bachelor's level is integrated with study at master's level and the programmes are designed to meet the level 6 and level 7 qualification descriptors in full.

**** In April 2005, the Universities Council for the Education of Teachers, the Standing Conference of Principals, Universities UK and QAA issued a joint statement on the PGCE qualification title. The full statement may be accessed at: www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/PGCEstatement.asp.

***** Higher National Certificates (HNCs) are positioned at level 4, to reflect typical practice among higher education awarding bodies that award the HNC under licence from Edexcel.

Note: Programmes of study that fall within the scope of IQER, as defined in paragraphs 14 and 15 above, will subsequently be referred to as 'higher education' within this handbook.

## Section two: Role of awarding bodies

16    This section provides guidance on how awarding bodies should be involved in IQER. It should be read in conjunction with the descriptions of the Developmental engagement and Summative review in Sections four and five. More specific information about the role of higher education institutions, Edexcel and public, statutory and regulatory bodies is provided below.

17    IQER assumes no preferred model for higher education provision, other than that it expects that any model must permit the awarding body to assure itself about the standards and quality of its collaborative provision with colleges.

18    IQER is concerned with the way in which colleges discharge their responsibilities within the context of their agreements with awarding bodies. It is not concerned with how awarding bodies manage their responsibilities for collaborative agreements.

19    To enable awarding bodies to manage their responsibilities for their collaborative arrangements and interests in IQER effectively, QAA will make sure that awarding bodies are notified of the review. Initial IQER correspondence between QAA and colleges is copied to the heads of the relevant awarding bodies and/or their nominated contacts. Such correspondence will include confirmation of the dates of any meetings or visits, provisional outcomes of visits and draft reports. In addition, QAA encourages colleges to copy all subsequent correspondence from QAA, and any college responses to QAA, to their awarding body(ies).

20    Awarding bodies may also wish to support their partner colleges through IQER by assisting, for example, with the preparation of the self-evaluation and by attending various IQER events, including review visits. The extent of an awarding body's involvement with IQER should be decided in discussion between the partners taking account of the provisions of the **partnership agreement** and at the discretion of the organisations involved in the collaborative arrangements. The participation of the awarding body should be considered against:

•    the maturity of the relationship between the partners

•    the extent of the responsibilities which the awarding body has conferred on the college

•    the accuracy and completeness of existing written evidence about these responsibilities

•    the number of collaborative partners the awarding body has.

21    As soon as possible after the **briefing** event, or at least 17 weeks before the visit takes place, the college and its higher education partners should write down the details of their agreement of awarding body(ies) involvement in the IQER process and send a copy of this agreement to QAA signed by representatives of each partner institution.

22    IQER teams will be pleased to meet awarding body representatives at any stage of the process. QAA will invite awarding bodies to the briefing, which will provide further guidance on the role of awarding bodies. However, awarding bodies are not

required to attend the briefing, or any subsequent events. QAA has no desire to make unreasonable requests for awarding body involvement in this method, which focuses on the responsibilities of colleges.

## The role of higher education institutions

23    QAA reviews the responsibilities of higher education institutions within collaborative agreements through the process of Institutional audit. Nevertheless, higher education institutions are important stakeholders in IQER for several reasons:

- they are identified in IQER reports in association with those programmes in colleges which lead to their awards

- IQER reports will be used as a source of evidence for the audit of a higher education institution's collaborative provision and may replace the need for partner link visits to colleges (more information is available about this in the *Handbook for Institutional audit: England and Northern Ireland 2009*, paragraph 91, published by QAA)

- judgements, **conclusions**, **recommendations** and **action plans** arising from IQER are not addressed to the awarding body; however, they may have implications for their relationships with partner colleges.

24    Further details of a higher education institution's responsibilities for its awards may be found in the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning).*

## Role of Edexcel

25    There are two distinct forms of Edexcel higher education provision in colleges:

- HNCs and HNDs that are approved directly by Edexcel. At the time of writing, these arrangements are in transition. For further education colleges, these qualifications are offered under the Edexcel FEI (Further Education Institution) Licence Agreement, which will be effective from September 2010 for colleges in Northern Ireland. Students are registered with Edexcel and Edexcel certificates the awards. Where a college offers HNC and HNDs in more than one curriculum area, the college appoints its own external examiners and Edexcel reviews the college's quality assurance procedures in an annual Licence Centre Review. Where the qualification(s) is offered in only one curriculum area, Edexcel appoints its own external examiners. In all cases, Edexcel is the awarding body.

- HNCs and HNDs that are offered under the Edexcel HEI Licence Agreement. The licence allows higher education institutions to validate their own versions of HNC/D programmes as institutional awards. Where such licensed Higher National provision is operated on a collaborative basis in a college, the higher education institution will appoint its own external examiners and provide the certificate. In the case of this provision, the higher education institution is the awarding body. At the time of writing, these circumstances do not apply to colleges in Northern Ireland.

26     The scale of provision will inevitably limit the extent to which Edexcel can support individual colleges and attend IQER events. In order to assist colleges and IQER teams to understand the responsibilities that Edexcel confers on colleges, Edexcel has produced a short guidance note. Further information may be found through the web links listed at the end of Section seven. QAA encourages colleges to draw on this guidance note in describing the policies and procedures they have adopted with respect to Edexcel awards in their self-evaluations. Edexcel will provide further information to colleges about the contribution Edexcel officers will be able to make to the IQER process.

## Role of professional bodies

27     Although each college approves its own courses, individual courses that lead to a professional or vocational qualification, or exemption from a professional examination, are usually accredited by a professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB). It is estimated that there are more than 40 PSRBs operating in higher education in colleges in Northern Ireland.

28     PSRBs are involved in the design, approval, monitoring and review of courses. Some colleges have arrangements for joint accreditation and/or validation events. Members of PSRBs and employer representatives may also be used as external assessors on approval panels. PSRBs provide reports to colleges on the quality of their higher education provision and the period of further accreditation awarded. Colleges will seek to assure themselves that action is being taken to address any matters identified by the PSRBs.

29     The role of the PSRB is therefore important, but as with Edexcel, QAA recognises that the number of colleges involved may make it difficult for PSRB representatives to attend the IQER briefing and visits. Colleges should discuss the extent to which the PSRB(s) can be involved in the IQER process and notify QAA at least 17 weeks before the visit.

## Section three: Role of students

30     This section provides guidance for colleges on the involvement of students in IQER. It should be read in conjunction with the descriptions of the Developmental engagement and Summative review in Sections four and five.

31     One of the aims of IQER is to support colleges in reviewing and improving the management of their higher education provision for the benefit of students. In considering colleges' higher education provision, IQER teams need to draw on students' views about their experiences as learners. Students are involved in the IQER process in two principal ways; the preparation of the **student written submission** and in meetings with the team.

32     Before a visit, students will be invited to produce a student written submission that may take a variety of different forms. The principle of the student written submission, irrespective of its form, is that it should reflect the students' own views of their experiences as learners. Colleges have a valuable role to play in helping their students to prepare a submission, for example by sharing information with them.

33     Teams will meet students during IQER visits as a matter of course. The arrangements for organising these meetings are covered in Sections four and five of this handbook.

34     QAA will provide further guidance to colleges on the involvement of students during the briefing and training events in preparation for IQER. Students will be invited to the briefing event and separate guidance documentation will be provided for students on QAA's website (see web links at the end of Section seven).

# Section four: Developmental engagement

35    This section states the aims and objectives of the Developmental engagement and describes how it operates. A timeline for the Developmental engagement appears at the end of the section.

36    As described in Section one, IQER takes place in two complementary stages: Developmental engagement and Summative review. Each college will have one Developmental engagement and one Summative review within a four year programme, 2010/11-2013/14 (inclusive).

## Aims

37    The Developmental engagement reflects the first two overarching aims:

- to support colleges in reviewing and improving the management of their higher education provision, for the benefit of students and within the context of their agreements with awarding bodies

- to foster good working relationships between colleges and awarding bodies, for the benefit of students.

## Objectives

38    To realise these aims, the Developmental engagement adopts two of IQER's objectives:

- to engage colleges in a process of self-evaluation and peer review focused on reviewing, evaluating and improving their management of higher education provision

- to produce reports of these engagements.

## Overview

39    The emphasis of the Developmental engagement is on supporting the college in developing its management of the student learning experience for its higher education students in an open and collegial way. The Developmental engagement takes full account of the varying roles of awarding bodies and is sensitive towards differences in those roles between different colleges. To facilitate this approach, the Developmental engagement has three important characteristics that distinguish it from the Summative review:

- it focuses on a specific area of the college's management of the students' learning experience for its higher education (see paragraph 40)

- the college nominates members of its own staff to become part of the review team and, as **nominees**, they take part in all elements of the review as full team members

- the report is confidential to the college, its awarding bodies, DEL, ETI and QAA.

40    The Developmental engagement for each college focuses on one of three areas:

- student assessment, or

- parity of experience for students enrolled for different modes of study, such as full-time, part-time, blended learning and work-based learning, or

- staff development for higher education teaching, learning and assessment.

41    These are comparable with the thematic trails in the Developmental reviews of 2008-09, except that only one area is reviewed under the Developmental engagement.

## Briefing

42    In June 2010, QAA held a briefing to which all colleges and their awarding bodies were invited. The purpose of the briefing was to prepare colleges and their awarding bodies for the IQER process, in particular the Developmental engagement, by providing further guidance on:

- how the process works

- selecting the area under review

- identifying lines of enquiry

- preparing the self-evaluation and

- helping students to prepare the student written submission.

43    The briefing also allowed college staff to meet the **coordinators** who will be responsible for managing the Developmental engagements on behalf of QAA. QAA encourages colleges and their awarding body partners to consider jointly how the awarding bodies will be involved in the IQER process and to do this, ideally as soon as possible after QAA has confirmed the dates of the visits.

## Preparation

44    At least 26 weeks before the Developmental engagement visit is scheduled to take place, QAA will notify the college and awarding body(ies) of the dates of the review and invite the college to identify its nominees, so that planning can begin with staff, students and awarding bodies.

45    Around 23 weeks before the visit is scheduled, the college will be notified of its coordinator. The coordinator will contact the college to discuss arrangements for the preparatory meeting, and also to discuss the area under review and possible lines of enquiry. The college should confirm the selected area under review and the lines of enquiry with QAA within a further four weeks.

46    At least 17 weeks before the visit, the college should agree the involvement of each awarding body partner in the IQER process and send details to QAA.

47    At the same time, the college should, with the agreement of its awarding body(ies), complete a checklist of their partnership agreement(s) stating who is responsible for which aspects of the management of the college's higher education provision. This is useful both for the review team in preparing for the Developmental

engagement and for colleges in writing their self-evaluations. A table for this purpose is provided in Annex B.

## Lines of enquiry

48      As discussed in the Introduction, IQER is concerned with reviewing the college's performance of the management of its responsibilities for the student learning experience according to the three core themes: academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information. The Developmental engagement asks the college to select one area of higher education responsibility, from a choice of three, for the team to review.

49      Lines of enquiry provide routes that the team takes within the area under review to consider the evidence to enable it to make evaluations of the core themes. The college is invited to propose three lines of enquiry that it would like the team to use to structure the Developmental engagement. The college may find the Academic Infrastructure a useful point of reference in identifying the lines of enquiry which will be most beneficial, for example the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students (2006)*. More information on lines of enquiry can be found in paragraphs 109-113.
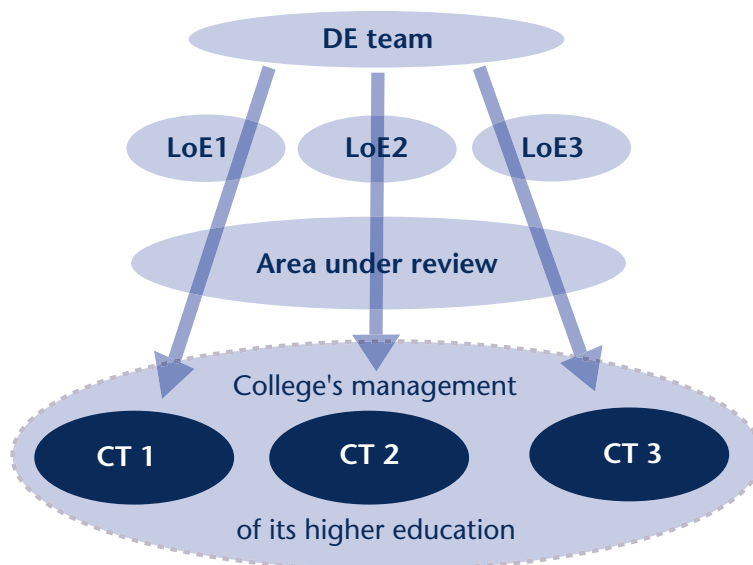


| Key | |
|---|---|
| LoE | Line of enquiry |
| Area under review: | Student assessment, **or** <br> Parity of experience for students enrolled for different modes of study, **or** <br> Staff development for higher education teaching, learning and assessment |
| CT 1 | Core theme 1: Academic standards |
| CT 2 | Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities |
| CT 3 | Core theme 3: Public information |

Figure 2: The relationship between the lines of enquiry, the area under review and the IQER core themes

## Self-evaluation

50     At least 12 weeks before the visit, the college is required to submit a self-evaluation. The purpose of the self-evaluation is to describe the responsibilities that the college has within the area under review. This will need to make reference to the college's agreements with its awarding bodies, and the processes and procedures it has adopted for discharging these responsibilities. The self-evaluation also provides the opportunity for critical self-reflection on the effectiveness of these processes and procedures. The Developmental engagement team will carry out a careful analysis of the self-evaluation prior to the visit. Section six of the handbook provides further guidance on the self-evaluation. As described in Section three, QAA will invite students to provide an optional written submission and to send this to QAA at the same time as the college submits the self-evaluation.

## Preparatory meeting

51     The next stage is a **preparatory meeting** at the college between the college staff, students and the IQER coordinator. This will take place about nine weeks before the visit. The purposes of the preparatory meeting are to discuss the arrangements for the Developmental engagement, to develop the agenda for the visit in light of the college's self-evaluation (and the student written submission, if one is made) and to identify further evidence for the college to make available during the visit. It is also an opportunity for the coordinator to meet key staff and student representatives, clarify the process and provide an opportunity for staff and students to ask questions. Annex C provides an indicative programme for the preparatory meeting. QAA will provide the coordinator with a compendium of publicly available information, the **briefing note**, to help him/her prepare for this meeting.

## Developmental engagement teams

52     In all cases the Developmental engagement team will consist of five people: the coordinator and four team members, comprising two nominees and two **reviewers**. QAA will provide **training** in the IQER method for all team members.

53     The team is led by the IQER coordinator, who is responsible for ensuring that the team's activities are consistent with the published method and that the review is completed on time. The reviewers comprise an equal number of internal college nominees and external peers. One of the external peers will be from another college in Northern Ireland. Colleges and awarding bodies will have the opportunity to check the membership of teams for conflicts of interest.

54     The college nominees are full members of the team. All team members are responsible for analysing and commenting on the self-evaluation, conducting the visit, drafting sections of the report and contributing to the team's findings. QAA will provide each team member with a copy of the briefing note to assist with preparation for the visit. More information about the composition and roles of the team is provided in the glossary.

## The Developmental engagement visit

55      The visit normally takes place over 2.5 consecutive days. The purpose of the visit is to allow the team to pursue the lines of enquiry by scrutinising evidence on site and meeting college staff, students and other stakeholders, including awarding bodies' representatives and employers, if appropriate. Annex D provides an indicative programme for the visit.

56      The team is responsible for gathering, verifying and sharing evidence as a basis for testing the college's self-evaluation and the views of students. It is also responsible for considering the extent of the college's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure. The team will discuss the evidence, check its understanding and interpretation, refine its views and triangulate different sources of evidence to arrive at conclusions. The team will keep notes of all meetings with staff and students, and of any emerging examples of **good practice** and areas for improvement. These will be circulated among the team and collated by the coordinator. Where concerns emerge during the visit, the college will have the opportunity to provide additional evidence to address them.

57      Evidence comes in a wide range of forms and will vary from college to college. It is likely to include formal agreements with awarding bodies; policies and procedures for the management of the student learning experience of higher education programmes; external examiners' reports; validation documents; review and inspection reports by other organisations such as ETI; and any information arising from meetings with staff and students. The coordinator will agree with the college what evidence is required before the visit.

58      The team may also carry out direct observation of some elements of provision, for example learning resources. When a team requires evidence of teaching quality, this will usually be obtained from a documentary study of procedures such as the college's observation of higher education teaching, the analysis of student evaluation questionnaires and other arrangements for gathering feedback. Exceptionally, the team may carry out class observations.

59      At the end of the visit, the team identifies areas of good practice and recommendations. The coordinator, accompanied by the other team members, will make a short oral report about the team's findings to the college.

## Role of students

60      Students are involved in the IQER process in two ways: preparing the student written submission and in meetings with the team.

61      The student written submission is strongly encouraged but voluntary. If students are not able to make a submission, for whatever reason, this will not prejudice the outcome of the Developmental engagement.

62      The team will meet at least one group of students during the visit itself. The college will normally be responsible for identifying a representative group of students

for this meeting within parameters agreed with the coordinator. The coordinator will confirm these parameters to the college at the preparatory meeting, or at least eight weeks before the visit. Students will be invited to meet the coordinator at the preparatory meeting so that they can be briefed on the review process and their role within it. Meetings with students are confidential and their views will not be attributed to individuals. Separate guidance is provided for students and further information may be found through the web links listed at the end of Section seven.

## Draft report

63    The Developmental engagement culminates in a written report of the team's findings. The report has two main elements: good practice and **recommendations** for action by the college. In addition, the team will make evaluative comments about each of the three core themes. The Developmental engagement report will not be published, however, the Summative review report will include a short summary of the findings of the Developmental engagement team and the Summative review report will comment on the extent to which the actions identified in the Developmental engagement action plan have been effective.

## Good practice

64    An important element of Developmental engagement reports is the identification of good practice. In IQER, good practice is defined as practice that the team regards as making a particularly positive contribution to the college's management of the student learning experience of higher education in the context of that college, and which is worthy of wider dissemination within and/or beyond the college.

65    QAA will share the good practice identified in Developmental engagement reports through externally published periodic reports.

## Recommendations

66    Recommendations for improving the college's management of its higher education provision are categorised as **essential**, **advisable** or **desirable** according to priority.

- **Essential recommendations** refer to important matters that the team believes are currently putting quality and/or standards at risk and which require urgent corrective action.

- **Advisable recommendations** refer to matters that the team believes have the potential to put quality and/or standards at risk and require preventative corrective action.

- **Desirable recommendations** refer to matters that the team believes have the potential to enhance quality, build capacity and/or further secure standards.

## Final report

67    The coordinator will send a draft of the Developmental engagement report to the college for its comments four weeks after the visit. This gives the college and its awarding body(ies) the opportunity to draw the team's attention to any areas which they regard as inaccurate or incomplete. The team is then responsible for considering these comments and any supporting evidence that the college may offer at this stage, and for agreeing whether or not any aspect of the report should be amended in response. Teams will only be able to consider supporting evidence that was available at the time of the review visit.

68    The college is also asked at this stage to produce an **action plan** in response to the conclusions of the report, which will be incorporated into the final report. Once the team has considered and responded to the college's comments, a final version of the report is sent to the college, its awarding body(ies), ETI and to DEL.

## Action plan

69    The action plan should be set out in the format provided by QAA and should describe how the college plans to take forward the findings of the Developmental engagement. (A template for the action plan can be found in Annex E.)

70    The action plan is intended to support the college in the continuing development of its higher education provision. The plan, its implementation and impact will form part of the evidence base for any future review activity, particularly the Summative review.

71    QAA is contracted by DEL to produce reports in accordance with the published timelines. It is important, therefore, that the action plan is completed by the college, in consultation with its awarding body(ies), in a timely fashion and returned to QAA by the given deadline.
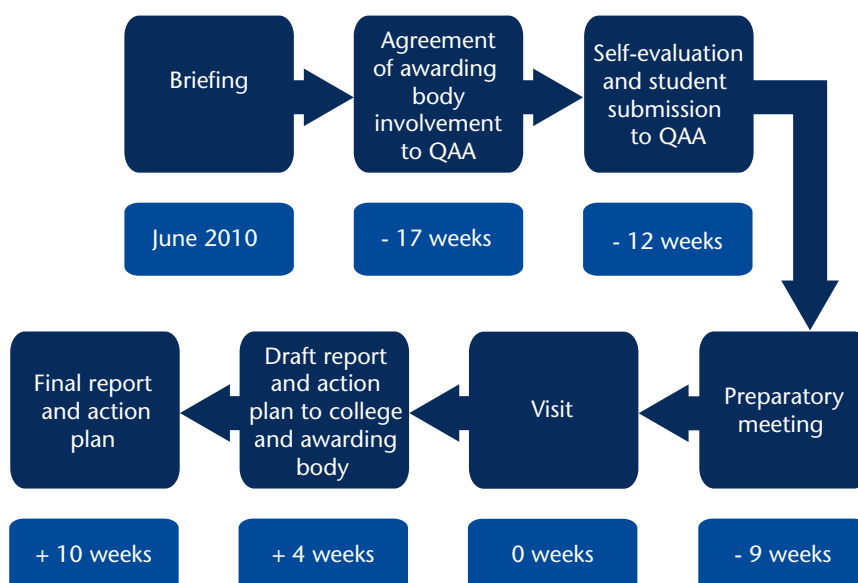


Figure 3: Key stages of the Developmental engagement

## Timeline for Developmental engagement

| IQER stage and process. Time +/- visit (in weeks) | Actions required by QAA, college, coordinator, awarding body(ies) and **Developmental engagement** team. |
|---|---|
| **Briefing event** | |
| June 2010 | **QAA** provides a briefing event on the process: area under review, lines of enquiry, self-evaluation and student written submission.<br>**College** staff and students attend briefing event.<br>**Awarding body(ies)** attend briefing event. |
| **Preparation** | |
| Visit -26 (min) | **QAA** notifies the college of the review and proposed dates for the visit and invites college to identify nominee(s).<br>**College** identifies nominee(s).<br>**QAA** notifies awarding body(ies) of the review. |
| -23 | **College** confirms visit dates to QAA and identifies its nominee(s).<br>**QAA** notifies the college of the coordinator responsible for the review.<br>**Coordinator** contacts the college to discuss the agenda, participants for the preparatory meeting, the area under review and possible lines of enquiry. |
| -17 | **College** and its awarding body(ies) discuss and agree awarding body(ies) involvement in IQER process.<br>**College** agrees to copy awarding body(ies) into all communications from and to QAA.<br>**College** sends copy of agreement to QAA.<br>**College** confirms area under review and lines of enquiry with coordinator and QAA.<br>**College** organises the preparatory meeting and identifies college attendees including staff and students.<br>**Awarding body(ies)** supports the college in the preparation of the self-evaluation if this has been agreed in discussion with the college.<br>**QAA** notifies the college and the awarding body(ies) of the proposed Developmental engagement team and the QAA officer responsible for the review.<br>**QAA** asks the college to check the proposed review team for conflicts of interests. |
| -14 | College collates comments on the proposed review team and reports potential conflicts of interest to QAA. |

| Self-evaluation | |
|---|---|
| -12 | **College** sends self-evaluation to QAA.<br>Students send QAA their written submission, where appropriate.<br>**College** copies both documents to awarding body(ies).<br>**QAA officer** and the **coordinator** scrutinise the self-evaluation, the proposed lines of enquiry, the partnership agreement(s) with higher education awarding body(ies) and the student written submission.<br>**QAA** informs the college if the self-evaluation is a suitable basis for review.<br>**QAA** officer will ask the college to revise if it is not a suitable basis for the review. |
| **Analysis of the self-evaluation** | |
| -11 | **College** sends the self-evaluation to each member of review team.<br>**Coordinator** analyses the self-evaluation.<br>**Review team** analyses the self-evaluation and the supporting evidence and posts a report to ARCS, and includes suggestions for further evidence and the programme for the visit. |
| -10 | **Coordinator** produces a summary of review team's analysis and sends it to the college. |
| **Preparatory meeting** | |
| -9 | **Coordinator** chairs preparatory meeting attended by college staff and students.<br>**Awarding body(ies)** takes part in the preparatory meeting, if this has been agreed in discussions with the college.<br>**Coordinator** sends the college, its awarding body(ies), the review team and QAA a letter confirming the arrangements for the visit.<br>**Coordinator** allocates areas of responsibility to each review team member. |
| -1 | **College** assembles further evidence in accordance with review team's requirements. |
| **Development engagement visit** | |
| 0<br>+2.5 days | **Coordinator** chairs the Developmental engagement.<br>**Review team** conducts the visit.<br>**College** takes part in the Developmental engagement.<br>**Awarding body(ies)** attends meetings in accordance with agreements made in advance with the college.<br>**Coordinator** gives an oral report of the findings of the Developmental engagement to the college at the end of the visit. |
| +1 | **Coordinator** confirms the findings of the Developmental engagement to the college and its awarding body(ies). |

| Reporting | |
|---|---|
| +1 | **Review team** produces draft text and posts it to ARCS (see glossary). **Coordinator** collates and edits the text and sends draft one to review team for comment. |
| +2 | **Review team** comments on draft one of the report. **Coordinator** prepares draft two and submits it to QAA multi media team for proofing. |
| **Draft report to college and awarding body** | |
| +4 | **Coordinator** sends the third draft of the report to the Principal of the college and the awarding body(ies) for comments and provision of further evidence, if required, along with the action plan template. |
| +5 | **College** checks the draft report for factual accuracy. Liaises with relevant staff to discuss and completes the action plan. **Awarding body(ies)** sends any comments on the factual accuracy of the report to the college. Assists the college in developing the action plan, if this has been agreed in advance. |
| +6 | **College** collates and returns the report to QAA with comments on the factual accuracy of the report and submits further evidence (if appropriate). **College** sends a copy of its response to the draft report to its awarding body(ies). |
| +7 | **Review team** considers the comments and further evidence (if appropriate) and posts responses to ARCS. |
| +8 | **Coordinator** incorporates review team's response to the college's comments into the final draft report. **College** returns the completed action plan to QAA, signed by the head of the institution. |
| +9 | Coordinator and QAA officer approve action plan for publication. Multi media team collate action plan into the report. |
| **Report completed** | |
| +10 | **QAA** sends the final report to the college and awarding body(ies), ETI and DEL (for internal use only). |
| +26 | **Coordinator** contacts the college to confirm that action plan is on target and reminds college that the action plan informs the Summative review. |

# Section five: Summative review

72     The purpose of this section is to state the aims and objectives of the Summative review and describe how it operates. This is summarised in a timeline at the end of this section.

## Aims

73     The Summative review reflects all of the IQER aims, which are:

- to support colleges in reviewing and improving the management of their higher education provision, for the benefit of students and within the context of their agreements with their awarding body(ies)

- to foster good working relationships between colleges and their awarding bodies for the benefit of students

- to enable DEL to discharge its statutory responsibility for ensuring that provision is made for assessing the quality of education provided by institutions it funds

- to provide public information.

## Objectives

74     To realise these aims, the Summative review adopts all of the IQER objectives:

- to engage colleges in a process of self-evaluation and peer review focused on reviewing, evaluating and improving the management of their responsibilities for higher education

- to produce reports of these engagements

- to provide public information about the quality of higher education in colleges.

## Overview

75     The emphasis of the Summative review is on reviewing the college's management of the student learning experience of its higher education provision and making judgements about the effectiveness of its procedures. In common with the Developmental engagement, the Summative review takes full account of the varying roles of awarding bodies and is sensitive towards differences in those roles between different colleges. The Summative review differs from the Developmental engagement in five key respects:

- it covers all aspects of a college's management of its higher education provision

- it does not employ lines of enquiry proposed by the college

- QAA appoints all the review team members, although the college is invited to nominate a **facilitator** to act as a single point of contact between the college and the team

- it leads to a judgement about each of the core themes of academic standards and quality of learning opportunities and a conclusion about the core theme of public information

- the Summative review report is published.

76    Each of the Northern Ireland colleges will have one Summative review between 2012/13 and 2013/14.


## Preparation

77    At least 26 weeks before the Summative review visit is scheduled to take place, QAA will notify the college and its awarding body(ies) of the dates of the review and invite the college to identify a facilitator.

78    In order to promote consistency of approach, the coordinator for the Summative review will normally be the same as that for the Developmental engagement. To the same end, QAA aims to ensure that one of the external reviewers from the Developmental engagement will be a member of the Summative review team. QAA also advises that one of the nominees from the Developmental engagement becomes the college facilitator to provide continuity between the two stages. The facilitator needs to be a member of staff who has a thorough understanding of the college's higher education provision. More information about the role of the facilitator is provided in the glossary in Section seven.

79    About 24 weeks before the Summative review visit, the coordinator will contact the college and offer to hold an informal discussion by telephone or email to renew contact and to discuss preparations for the Summative review. This contact is not a formal part of the review. Its purpose is to refresh the college's understanding of the method and to provide further guidance on preparing a self-evaluation and helping students make a written submission.


## Self-evaluation

80    The purpose of the self-evaluation for the Summative review is similar to that of the self-evaluation for the Developmental engagement. It needs to describe the responsibilities that the college has for its higher education provision, making reference to its agreements with awarding bodies, and the processes and procedures it has adopted for discharging these responsibilities as well as to provide a critical self-reflection on its approach. The self-evaluation for the Summative review differs in that it covers all aspects of the college's higher education provision. The Summative review team will carry out a careful analysis of the self-evaluation prior to the Summative review visit. Section six provides further guidance on the self-evaluation for Summative review.

## Preparatory meeting

81      The next stage is a preparatory meeting at the college between college staff and students, representatives of awarding bodies (if agreed between the partners), and the coordinator. The purpose of the preparatory meeting is broadly the same as the preparatory meeting for the Developmental engagement described in the previous section (paragraph 51) and will be used as an opportunity to emphasise the differences between the Developmental engagement and the Summative review. An indicative programme for a Summative review preparatory meeting is provided in Annex C.

## Summative review teams

82      The number of members of the Summative review team will be between five and seven, depending on the number of higher education students and the number of awarding bodies associated with the college's higher education provision. The team comprises the coordinator and four to six external reviewers. To aid continuity, one of the external reviewers will have been a member of the Developmental engagement team. Each team will include one reviewer from another Northern Ireland college. Colleges and awarding bodies will have the opportunity to check team membership for conflicts of interest.

83      Summative review teams do not include members of college staff, but the facilitator will act as a single point of contact between the college and the team both before and during the visit.

## The Summative review visit

84      The visit normally takes place over 2.5 consecutive days. The purpose of the visit is broadly the same as that for the Developmental engagement. It has been designed to allow reviewers to scrutinise evidence on site, to meet college staff, students and other stakeholders and to consider the extent of the college's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure. The responsibilities of the reviewers at the Summative review visit are very similar to those of the Developmental engagement team. The principal difference is that they are responsible for summarising the evidence that leads to making judgements. The role of the coordinator, however, becomes one of leadership and facilitation and the coordinator does not make judgements. Annex D provides an indicative programme for the visit.

## Role of students

85      The Summative review again seeks to identify students' views of their education both before and during the visit. The mechanisms for identifying these views are consistent with those at the Developmental engagement and the coordinator is again responsible for discussing with the college methods of securing a student written submission, which remains voluntary. The team will also expect the college's self-evaluation to explain how the college ensures that students' views inform the management of its higher education programmes.

86     Students will be invited to meet the coordinator at the preparatory meeting and during the visit the team will meet with at least one group of students. The arrangements for these meetings reflect those at the Developmental engagement, as described in Section four.

## Provisional judgement meeting

87     The Summative review team meets again, at an off-site location, normally one week after the visit to agree summaries of evidence and to make **provisional judgements** about the college's management of its responsibilities for academic standards, the quality of learning opportunities and a provisional conclusion about the college's procedures for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the information it is responsible for publishing. The provisional judgements are **confidence**, **limited confidence** or **no confidence**.

- Where a college is found to be managing effectively its responsibilities for the delivery of the academic standards and the quality of its higher education provision; the prospects for the future continuation of this appear good, and it has rigorous mechanisms for the management of its higher education programmes in accordance with awarding bodies' requirements, the provisional judgement will be **confidence**.

- Where significant concerns exist about aspects of a college's current or likely future management of quality and/or delivery of the standards of its higher education programmes, the provisional judgement will be **limited confidence**.

- Where major concerns exist about significant aspects of a college's current or likely future capacity to secure and maintain quality and/or deliver standards of its higher education programmes, the provisional judgement will be **no confidence.**

88     Judgements and conclusions will always be made with due reference to the responsibilities of the college's awarding body(ies).

89     Further details of the criteria for making judgements are set out in full in the glossary in Section seven. Differentiated judgements can only be made where a team regards a college's management of the standards and/or quality of the programmes of study of one awarding body to be substantially different from those of another.

90     For core theme three the team will reach a provisional **conclusion**. The provisional conclusion will be whether or not reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the college publishes about itself.

- Where a college recognises all of the information it is responsible for publishing within the area under review; has rigorous mechanisms for the management of these responsibilities, which ensure that the information it publishes is both accurate and complete; and has evidence that this is the case, then the conclusion will be that **reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness** of all of the public information that the college is responsible for publishing.

- Where a college does not recognise all of the information it is responsible for publishing and/or where there is evidence that this information is inaccurate and/or incomplete, then the conclusion will be that **reliance cannot be placed on the accuracy and completeness** of all the public information that the college is responsible for publishing.

91 At the provisional judgement meeting the team will also identify **good practice** and provisional **recommendations**. These share common definitions with those for the Developmental engagement. When essential recommendations are made, they are likely to be reflected in a provisional judgement of limited confidence or no confidence for core themes one and/or two, and/or a conclusion that reliance cannot be placed on the accuracy and completeness of all the public information that the college is responsible for publishing about itself.

92 The coordinator will inform the college and its awarding bodies in writing about the outcome of the provisional judgement meeting within one week of the meeting. All judgements, good practice and recommendations remain provisional until the report is finalised. Should a second visit be required, the judgements are finalised at the conclusion of the second visit (see paragraphs 98-101).

## Draft report

93 The team is responsible for writing a report of its findings. An early draft of the report provides the focus for the provisional judgement meeting. The next draft sets out the provisional judgements, good practice and recommendations and actions by the college as described above, together with contextual information and supporting evidence.

94 The coordinator will send a draft version of the report to the college and its awarding body(ies) for comment four weeks after the end of the visit. This gives the college the opportunity to draw the team's attention to any areas that it regards as inaccurate or incomplete and, if necessary, submit additional evidence. Teams will only be able to consider supporting evidence that was available at the time of the review visit. The team is then responsible for considering the college's comments and any supporting evidence that the college may offer at this stage. Next, the team agree whether or not any aspect of the report, including the provisional judgements, should be amended in response.

95 If the team finds that it has confidence in the college's ability to manage its responsibilities under each of core themes one and two and concludes that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of public information, the college will be asked at this stage to produce an action plan to accompany the report. If the team does not have confidence, or has limited confidence, or no reliance on the college's ability to manage its responsibilities, a second visit will be scheduled and the preparation of the action plan is deferred (see paragraphs 98-101).

## Action plan

96    The action plan describes how the college intends to take forward the reviewers' findings, and the effectiveness of the action taken will form part of the evidence base for any future review activity. The plan will also constitute a published record of the college's commitment to developing its provision. A template for the action plan can be found in Annex E, with further guidance on how to complete the plan.

## Final report

97    Normally, once the team has considered, and responded to, the college's comments, it will confirm the judgements. QAA will set out these judgements in writing to the college and the awarding body(ies) and QAA will send a final version of the report to the college, its awarding bodies and to DEL and ETI. The final report is subsequently published on the QAA website 15 weeks after the end of the visit.

| Self-evaluation and student submission to QAA | Preparatory meeting | Visit |
|---|---|---|
| - 12 weeks | - 9 weeks | 0 weeks |

| Report and action plan published | Draft report with provisional judgements to college and awarding body(ies) | Provisional judgement meeting |
|---|---|---|
| + 15 weeks from end of visiting | + 4 weeks | + 1 week |

Figure 4: Key stages of a Summative review with one visit

## Second visits and follow-up action

98     After the college has commented on the draft report and had the opportunity to submit further evidence, if the team continues to have limited or no confidence in either or both of the first two core themes, or considers that reliance cannot be placed on the accuracy and/or completeness of the information the college published about itself, then the team will conduct a second visit to the college to review further evidence. This will take place around 10 weeks after the first visit, at a time to be confirmed with QAA during the preparatory meeting. The team for the second visit will normally be the same as for the first. QAA considers it highly likely that the awarding body(ies) will wish to take part in a second visit and QAA will copy the details of the arrangements for the second visit to the awarding body(ies).

99     If the second visit results in judgements of confidence for core themes one and two plus the conclusion that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information the college is responsible for publishing about itself, the review is completed following the process set out in paragraphs 95-97. However, should the second visit confirm a judgement of limited confidence in either or both core themes one and two and the conclusion that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and/or completeness of published information, QAA will publish the report and carry out a formal programme of **follow-up** action, which must be completed by the college within 18 months of the publication of the review report.

100   If the second visit confirms a judgement of no confidence in either or both of the core themes one and two and/or a conclusion that reliance cannot be placed in the accuracy and completeness in public information, and if the college and its awarding body(ies) have cause to disagree with these outcomes, they may consider using the QAA procedure on representations. If one or both of the judgements are confirmed as no confidence, QAA will publish the report and carry out a formal programme of follow-up action. The college would be required to correct immediately any inaccuracy identified in the college's public information and to provide evidence of the effectiveness of the action taken at the time it sends QAA the action plan for publication in the Summative review report.

101   If after the period of follow up activity QAA is still concerned about the effectiveness of the remedial action, QAA may conduct a further visit; and if satisfactory progress has still not been made, the matter will be referred to DEL, which reserves the right to withdraw some or all of its funding.

| Self-evaluation and student submission to QAA | Preparatory meeting | Visit |
|---|---|---|
| - 12 weeks | - 9 weeks | 0 weeks |

| QAA confirms second visit to college and awarding bodies | Draft report with provisional judgements to college and awarding bod(ies) | Provisional judgement meeting |
|---|---|---|
| no later than + 10 weeks | + 4 weeks | + 1 week |

| Second visit | Draft report with judgements to college and awarding body(ies) | Report and action plan | Follow-up action if limited or no confidence judgement(s) |
|---|---|---|---|
| as soon as possible after the first visit | + 10 weeks from end of visiting | + 15 weeks from end of visiting | within 18 months of publication |

Figure 5: Key stages of a Summative review which results in a provisional and/or confirmed judgement of limited or no confidence in one or both of core themes one and two

## Timeline for Summative review where the provisional judgements are confidence and there is a conclusion of reliance in public information

| IQER stage and process. Time +/- visit (in weeks) | Actions required by QAA, college, coordinator, awarding body(ies) and **Summative review** team. |
|---|---|
| **Preparation** | |
| -26 (min) | **QAA** notifies the college of the proposed date for the visit.<br>**QAA** asks the college to identify the facilitator.<br>**QAA** notifies the awarding body(ies) of the review of its partner college. |
| -24 | **College** confirms the facilitator to QAA.<br>**Coordinator** contacts the college to offer an informal discussion to aid the preparation for the review and to discuss the progress on the action plan formed following the Developmental engagement.<br>**Coordinator** copies the invitation to the awarding body.<br>**College** responds to the coordinator's offer of an informal discussion. |
| -23 to -14 (optional activity) | **Coordinator** takes part in the informal discussion with the college if the college requires this.<br>**College** invites awarding body(ies) to take part in the informal discussion with the coordinator, if this has been previously agreed with the college.<br>**Awarding body(ies)** responds to the college about its possible involvement in the informal discussion with the coordinator.<br>**College** sends copy of agreement to QAA. |
| -22 | **Coordinator** contacts the college to discuss the agenda and the participants at the preparatory meeting. |
| -14 | **QAA** notifies the college of the review team and the QAA officer responsible for the review.<br>**College** checks the proposed review team for conflicts of interests.<br>**College** sends details of the proposed review team to awarding body(ies).<br>**Awarding body(ies)** comments to the college on the proposed review team membership.<br>**College** organises the preparatory meeting and identifies college participants, including staff and students.<br>**College** sends details of the preparatory meeting to the awarding body(ies) if this has been agreed in advance. |
| -13 | **College** reports potential conflicts of interest regarding review team members to QAA. |

| Self-evaluation | |
|---|---|
| -12 | **College** submits the self-evaluation to QAA.<br>**Students** submit student written submission, if appropriate.<br>**QAA officer** and coordinator scrutinise the self-evaluation, the partnership agreement(s) for higher education awards and the student written submission, if provided.<br>**QAA** informs college if the self-evaluation is a suitable basis for the review.<br>**QAA officer** will ask the college to revise the self-evaluation if it is not a suitable basis for the review. |
| **Analysis of the self-evaluation** | |
| -11 | **College** sends the self-evaluation and the optional student written submission to each member of the IQER Summative review team and to the awarding body(ies).<br>**Coordinator** analyses the self-evaluation.<br>**Review team** analyses the self-evaluation and the supporting evidence and reports through ARCS, including suggestions for further evidence and the programme for the visit. |
| -10 | **Coordinator** produces a summary of review team's analysis of the self-evaluation and sends it to the college and awarding body(ies). |
| **Preparatory meeting** | |
| -9 | **Coordinator** chairs the preparatory meeting with the college.<br>**Awarding body(ies)** attends if this has been agreed in advance with the college.<br>**Coordinator** sends the college, its awarding body(ies), the review team and QAA a letter confirming the arrangements for the visit. |
| -2 | **Coordinator** sends a briefing and allocates areas of responsibility to each review team member. |
| -1 | **College** assembles evidence in accordance with review team's requirements. |
| **Summative review visit** | |
| 0 | **Coordinator** chairs the Summative review visit.<br>**Review team** conducts the visit.<br>**College** takes part in the Summative review visit.<br>**Awarding body(ies)** takes part in the review visit in accordance with agreements with the college made in advance (during week -24).<br>**Coordinator** offers a verbal update on the progress of the review to the college facilitator at the end of the visit.<br>**Review team** accompanies the coordinator to verbal update. |

| Provisional judgement meeting | |
|---|---|
| +1 | **Coordinator** chairs the provisional judgement meeting with the Review team to agree summaries of evidence, provisional judgments and conclusion, good practice and recommendations. **Coordinator** sends a letter to the college, copied to the awarding body(ies), setting out the provisional judgements and conclusion. |
| **Report writing** | |
| +1 | **Review team** drafts report text and posts it on ARCS (see glossary). **Coordinator** collates and edits the text and sends the first draft report to review team for comment. |
| +2 | **Review team** comments on draft one of the report. **Coordinator** prepares draft two of the report and submits it to QAA multi media team. |
| **Draft report to the college** | |
| +4 | **Coordinator** sends the third draft of the report to the Principal of the college and to the awarding body(ies) for comments and for the provision of further evidence, if required. This report draft includes the action plan template. |
| +5 | **College** checks the draft report for factual accuracy and identifies any additional evidence it needs to submit. Liaises with relevant staff to discuss and develop the action plan. **Awarding body(ies)** provides any comment on the draft report to the college to collate into one response to the coordinator. |
| +8 | **College** collates all comments on the draft report and sends one set of comments on factual accuracy to QAA and provides additional evidence, if appropriate. **Coordinator** considers the college's (and its awarding body(ies)' comments) and any further evidence submitted and posts responses to ARCS. **Review team** confirms judgements of confidence or proposes to QAA that a second review visit to the college is needed. |
| +9 | **QAA** notifies the college of either the final judgements of confidence in standards and quality and reliance in public information to the college and its awarding bodies, or that a second visit is required. (See timelines below) |
| +10 | **Awarding body(ies)** contributes to the development of the action plan, if this has been agreed in advance with the college. **College** returns the completed action plan to QAA. **Coordinator** and QAA officer approve action plan for publication. Multi media team collate action plan into the report. |
| **Report publication** | |
| +15 | QAA publishes the report on its website. |

## Timeline for Summative review if the provisional judgements are no confidence and/or there is a provisional conclusion of no reliance in public information

| Summative review visit | |
|---|---|
| 0 | **Coordinator** chairs the Summative review visit.<br>**Review team** conducts the visit.<br>**College** takes part in the Summative review visit.<br>**Awarding body(ies)** takes part in the review visit in accordance with agreements with the college made in advance (during week -24).<br>**Coordinator** offers a verbal update on the progress of the review to the college facilitator at the end of the visit.<br>**Review team** accompanies the coordinator to verbal update. |
| **Provisional judgement meeting** | |
| +1 | **Coordinator** chairs the provisional judgement meeting. This meeting may be virtual or face to face.<br>**Review team** participates in the provisional judgement meeting with the coordinator to agree summaries of evidence, provisional judgments, good practice and recommendations.<br>**Review team** meeting reaches provisional judgement limited or no confidence in core themes 1 or 2, and/or no reliance on the accuracy and/or completeness of public information, or review team are unable to reach provisional judgements due to insufficient evidence.<br>**Coordinator** informs QAA officer of provisional judgements and conclusion.<br>**QAA officer** in turn advises the Deputy Director (Reviews) of the outcomes.<br>**Coordinator** sends Summative review debrief form, with provisional judgements, to QAA Logistics and Deployment team.<br>**Coordinator** prepares the provisional judgement letter and sends it to the **Review support officer** who telephones the Principal of the college to arrange a time to meet with him/her and deliver the provisional judgement letter. The college should be asked to clarify whether their awarding body(ies) will be at the meeting. |
| **Report writing** | |
| +1 | **Review team** drafts report text and posts it on ARCS.<br>**Coordinator** collates and edits the text and sends the first draft report to review team for comment. |
| +2 | **Review team** comments on draft one of the report.<br>**Coordinator** prepares draft two of the report and submits it to the editing contract reviewer.<br>**QAA officer** meets with the Principal of the college. Explains reason for meeting, outlining the provisional judgement and conclusion, good practice and recommendations. Delivers letter. |

| | |
|---|---|
| +3 | **QAA editing contract reviewer** edits draft two, phones coordinator to explain edit requirements and changes, and sends a note to coordinator with completed editing contract reviewer checklist and the annotated report indicating suggested changes. |
| **Draft report to the college** | |
| +4 | **Coordinator** sends draft three of the report to the QAA officer and multi media team. <br> **QAA multi media team** sign off the draft report. <br> **Coordinator** sends report to the college and its awarding body(ies) with standard covering letter explaining that they can comment on its factual accuracy and present any evidence (existing at the time of the review) in support of their comments. <br> **College** receives the draft report. <br> **Awarding body(ies)** receives the draft report and provides any comment on the draft report to the college to collate into one response to the coordinator. |
| +5 - +8 | **College** comments on factual accuracy. The college (together with its awarding body(ies)) may provide additional evidence that was available at the time of the study but which was not provided to review team. <br> **College** liaises with relevant staff to discuss and develop the action plan. |
| +8 | **Coordinator** acknowledges receipt of comments from college. <br> **Review team** considers the college's (and its awarding body(ies) comments and any further evidence submitted and either confirms final conclusions and judgements, or decides that a visit needs to take place. (A visit will take place if at this point the review team cannot confirm final judgements of confidence in academic standards or quality, or a conclusion of reliance on public information). <br> **Coordinator** revises report and creates draft four in light of college comments and **either** confirms provisional judgements with review team, or review team decides a visit needs to take place. <br> **QAA officer** notifies the college and awarding body(ies) that a visit is to take place and confirms the dates agreed at the preparatory meeting. <br> **QAA multi media team** edits draft four of the report and sends it to the college and the coordinator in preparation for the visit. <br> **Coordinator** confirms the arrangements for the visit with the college and agrees the agenda with the college and its awarding body(ies). |
| +9 | If the provisional judgements were confirmed in week 8 as confidence in academic standards and quality and reliance on public information, **coordinator** notifies the college of the final judgements of confidence in standards and quality and reliance on public information to the college and its awarding bodies. |

## Timeline for a second Summative review visit if first summative review reached no confidence outcome(s)

| IQER stage and process. Time +/- visit (in weeks) | Actions required by QAA, college, coordinator, awarding body(ies) and Summative review (second visit) team if limited confidence outcome(s). |
|---|---|
| **Preparation** | |
| -1 week (min) | The **coordinator** confirms the arrangements for the second visit and agrees the agenda with the college and its awarding body(ies). |
| 0 | **Coordinator, review team, Review support officer** and **awarding body(ies)** (if agreed with the college) visit the college. |
| + 2 days | **Coordinator,** accompanied by **Review team** and **Review support officer** provides an oral report of the final judgements to the head of the college and his/her nominated staff before review team departs, and advises of the representation procedure if a final judgement is of no confidence or if the conclusion for core theme three is no reliance. **Note:** If the final judgement is of limited or no confidence, the **QAA officer** reports this outcome to the **Deputy Director (Reviews)** who reports the outcome immediately to **DEL**. |
| **Report writing** | |
| +1 | **QAA** sends a letter confirming the outcomes to the college and copies this to the awarding body(ies). **Review team** drafts report text and post it on ARCS. **Coordinator** collates and edits review team's text, and sends draft five of the report to review team for comment. |
| +2 | **Coordinator** prepares draft six of the report following the review team's comments and submits it to the multi media team for proofing. |
| +4 | **Coordinator** sends draft six of the report to the Principal and copies it to the awarding body(ies) for comment. |
| +5 | **College** checks the draft review report for factual accuracy. **Awarding body(ies)** provides any comments on the draft report to the college. **College** liaises with the relevant staff to discuss and complete the action plan. **Awarding body(ies)** contributes to the college's development of the action plan to address any recommendations that relate to its awards. |

| | |
|---|---|
| +8 | **College** returns collated comments on the factual accuracy of the report to the coordinator.<br>**Coordinator** acknowledges receipt to college. Sends college response to the review team.<br>**Review team** considers the college's and the awarding body(ies)' comments and posts responses to ARCS.<br>**Coordinator** revises report in light of college comments and sends draft seven to QAA officer and multi media team. |
| +10 | **College** returns the completed action plan to QAA, signed by the head of college and copies it to **awarding body(ies).**<br>**Coordinator** and QAA officer approve action plan for publication. Multi media team collate action plan into the report. |
| **Report published** | |
| +15 | **QAA** combines the draft seven report and the completed action plan and publishes it. |
| **Action plan** | |
| +15 | **College** implements the action plan with its awarding body(ies).<br>**Awarding body(ies)** may wish to help the college to implement its action plan, particularly if the limited confidence judgement(s) relates to its award(s) (see below). |
| **Follow-up action** | |
| Within 18 months of publication of the report | **QAA** carries out a formal programme of follow-up action to check the college's progress in implementing the action plan and the impact of this action on the students' education. The follow-up action plan must be completed by the college within 18 months of the publication of the review report.<br>**Awarding body(ies)** take part in formal follow-up to any limited or no confidence judgement(s) related to its award(s). |

**Timeline for a second Summative review visit if first Summative review reached no confidence outcome(s) and/or a conclusion of no reliance in public information**

| IQER stage and process. Time +/- visit (in weeks) | Actions required by QAA, college, coordinator, awarding body(ies) and Summative review (second visit) team if no confidence outcome(s). |
|---|---|
| **Preparation** | |
| -1 (min) | The **coordinator** confirms the arrangements for the second visit and agrees the agenda with the college and its awarding body(ies). **College, awarding body(ies)** and **review team** receives copies of all correspondence from QAA and the coordinator and prepares for the second visit. |
| 0 | **Coordinator, review team, Review support officer** and **awarding body(ies)** (if agreed with the college) visit the college. |
| + 2 days | **Coordinator,** accompanied by **Review team** and **Review support officer** provides an oral report of the final judgements to the head of the college and his/her nominated staff before review team departs, and advises of the representation procedure if a final judgement is of no confidence. **Note:** If the final judgement is of limited or no confidence, the **QAA officer** reports this outcome to the **Deputy Director (Reviews)** who reports limited or no confidence outcome immediately to **DEL**. |
| **Report writing** | |
| +1 | **QAA officer** sends a letter confirming the outcomes to the college and copies this to the awarding body(ies). **Review team** drafts report text and posts it on ARCS. **Coordinator** collates and edits the review team's text, and sends draft five of the report to the review team for finalisation. **Review team** comments on draft five of the report. **QAA multi media team** notifies editing contract reviewer originally allocated to the review of change of arrangements. |
| +2 | **Coordinator** prepares draft six of the report following the review team's comments and submits it to the multi media team for proofing. |
| +3 | **QAA officer** takes the editing contract reviewer role and edits draft six. Phones coordinator to explain edit requirements and changes and sends a note to coordinator with completed editing contract reviewer checklist and the annotated report indicating suggested changes. **Coordinator** considers and incorporates comments into draft seven of the report, consulting review team if necessary, and sends draft report to the QAA officer. |
| +4 | **QAA officer** reviews the draft and amends if necessary, then passes it to the multi media team, Deputy Director (Review) and Head of Corporate Affairs for review. |

| +5 | **QAA Deputy Director (Review)** and Head of Corporate Affairs review and comment on the report then return it to the QAA officer for any further editing. |
|---|---|
| +6 | **QAA officer** consults with the coordinator to check that the amendments have not changed the meaning of the report. **QAA officer** and Deputy Director sign off draft to be sent to the college and its awarding body(ies). **QAA officer** sends draft seven of the report to the Principal and copies it to the awarding body(ies) for comment. QAA officer also sends written details of the representation process. **College** is advised that they should not submit an action plan until they have decided whether or not to make a representation. |
| +7 | **College** checks the draft review report for factual accuracy only. **Awarding body(ies)** provides any comments on factual accuracy only of the draft report to the college. |
| + 8 | **College** returns collated comments on the factual accuracy of the report to the QAA officer, and a copy to the coordinator. **QAA officer** considers the college's and the awarding body(ies) comments and consults with the coordinator, if necessary, to produce draft nine of the report. |
| +9–10 | **QAA Deputy Director** approves revised draft nine report and passes to Director of Reviews. Sends draft nine to the college, copied to its awarding body(ies) with notice that it has four weeks to decide if it wishes to accept the judgements and conclusion or make a representation. |
| +13 | **College** notifies QAA in writing agreeing with the judgements and conclusion. (If **college** disagrees with the judgements of no confidence and/or a conclusion of no reliance in public information and chooses to make a representation, www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/policy/representationsIQER.asp, refer to timeline below). |
| +14 | **Coordinator** requests completed action plan from college. **Awarding body(ies)** may wish to help the college to prepare its action plan, particularly if the no confidence judgement(s) relate to its award(s). |
| +15 | **College** returns the completed action plan to QAA, signed by the Principal. **Coordinator** and QAA officer approve action plan for publication. Multi media team collate action plan into the report. |
| +17 | Report published. |

| If **college** disagrees with the judgements of no confidence and/or a conclusion of no reliance in public information and chooses to make a representation. | |
|---|---|
| +13 | **College** makes a representation to QAA, which is considered by the QAA Board. (see www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/policy/ representationsIQER.asp) |
| Following conclusion of representation procedure. | Once the representation procedure is completed, **college** notified and any consequent amendments to the report have been made, the college is asked to complete the action plan and the report is published. |

## Section six: Preparing a self-evaluation

102   This section provides more information and guidance on the preparation of the self-evaluation for the Developmental engagement and the Summative review.

103   The self-evaluation makes a fundamental contribution to both the Developmental engagement and Summative review stages of IQER. The purpose of the self-evaluation is to describe the responsibilities that the college has for the management of its higher education provision, making reference to its agreements with awarding bodies' procedures. The self-evaluation also provides the opportunity for critical self-reflection on the effectiveness of the processes and procedures the college has adopted for discharging these responsibilities. In simple terms, the self-evaluation explains:

- what the college is doing

- why the college is doing it

- how the college is doing it

- how the college knows that what it is doing works

- how the college can improve what it is doing.

104   An effective self-evaluation is key to the college gaining substantial benefit from IQER and to the smooth running of both the Developmental engagement and the Summative review. QAA therefore encourages colleges to give its preparation due time and attention. The preparation of a self-evaluation was a major focus of the briefing that QAA arranged for colleges and their awarding bodies in June 2010.

105   The self-evaluation should not involve the production of significant amounts of new material. In managing its higher education provision, colleges will have a range of policies, supported by procedures for implementing these policies and reports of the effectiveness of their implementation. The self-evaluation should therefore take the form of a **portfolio** of existing documents accompanied by a short **commentary** that signposts and contextualises the evidence contained within those documents.

### The self-evaluation for Developmental engagement

106   The self-evaluation for Developmental engagement should focus on the area under review under each of the three core themes of academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information. There are three areas to choose from:

- student assessment **or**

- parity of experience for students enrolled for different modes of study, such as full-time, part-time, blended learning, work based learning **or**

- staff development for higher education teaching, learning and assessment.

107   The college should select one of these areas and also start to consider lines of enquiry with the coordinator approximately 23 weeks before the visit. Further information about areas for review and lines of enquiry were provided at the briefing event. The college should discuss its ideas with the coordinator and confirm

both the area under review and the lines of enquiry with QAA at least 17 weeks before the visit. The self-evaluation commentary should then be written around the area under review and focus on the lines of enquiry.

108   The following guidance and examples are based on the area of student assessment.

## Lines of enquiry

109   Lines of enquiry provide a way of reviewing the evidence and formulating conclusions about the area under review and, ultimately, the college's management of its higher education provision under each of the core themes. To provide the required focus, the college should select three lines of enquiry for the Developmental engagement team to investigate and assign one line of enquiry to each of the core themes. So, for example, where a Developmental engagement is concerned with the area of student assessment, possible lines of enquiry could include:

- how the college uses internal verification processes to assure academic standards

- the contribution of work placements to final assessments

- the match of information on assessment in the prospectus, the programme specification, the student handbook and the assignment brief.

Table 2 shows how the lines of enquiry can be related to the core themes through the area under review.

| Core theme | Academic standards | Quality of learning opportunities | Public information |
|---|---|---|---|
| Area under review | Student assessment | | |
| | ↑ | ↑ | ↑ |
| Line of enquiry | How the college uses internal verification processes to assure academic standards | The contribution of work placements to final assessments | The match of information on assessment in the prospectus, the programme specification, the student handbook and the assignment brief |

Table 2: Examples of lines of enquiry for the area of student assessment and their relationship to the core themes

110   If the line of enquiry is 'the contribution of work placements to final assessments', the college might explain, under the quality of learning opportunities, how it supports students in work placements to enable them to generate information or evidence for final assessments.

111   Although each line of enquiry is aligned with one core theme, the evidence used to support one line of enquiry can also be used to inform another.

112   It is important to remember that lines of enquiry should identify areas that will help the college to develop its higher education provision for the benefit of its students. Colleges will usually find that their internal quality assurance mechanisms reveal the areas that might benefit from scrutiny by the Developmental engagement team. Other points of reference for assisting in identifying lines of enquiry are the Academic Infrastructure (particularly the *Code of practice* and external examiner reports). Section 6 of the *Code of Practice* would be particularly relevant for the area of student assessment.

113   Lines of enquiry should be expressed as simple, self-contained statements or questions, as in the examples in Table 2 above. Lines of enquiry should neither appear to be leading the team to an inevitable conclusion, nor should they be vague. They should lead to recommendations on which the college can take action. The coordinator will help the college to identify and shape the lines of enquiry.

## Structure

114   The introduction to the self-evaluation commentary should provide a brief background to the college and describe the arrangements it has with its awarding bodies for the delivery of its higher education programmes. The main body of the self-evaluation commentary for the Developmental engagement should be structured according to the lines of enquiry, which the college agrees with the coordinator following the briefing and before the preparatory meeting. The self-evaluation commentary must address the lines of enquiry and demonstrate how they will provide evidence for the Developmental engagement team to evaluate how the college manages its responsibilities in respect of the three core themes. A summary, comprising strengths and areas for development is useful, as it provides indicators of potential good practice and recommendations to be followed up in the Developmental engagement.

## Content

115   As described in paragraph 105, the self-evaluation should not involve the production of significant amounts of new material. For example, in considering the contribution of work placements to final assessment, the college may regard its existing policies on work placements as providing a comprehensive description of the college's approach. If so, then it may simply need to include these policies in the self-evaluation portfolio and make reference to them in the self-evaluation commentary, together with evidence of their effectiveness. If these policies are already identified in the whole college improvement plan and evaluated in the whole college self-evaluation, then the self-evaluation commentary should make reference to this evidence. The portfolio is therefore the evidence base for the investigation of the core themes and the commentary signposts and evaluates the evidence.

116   The length of a college's self-evaluation commentary depends on the college's level of responsibility, the lines of enquiry, and the quality and comprehensiveness of existing written evidence, but it is typically six A4 pages long.

117   Table 3 is intended to provide colleges with guidance on the structure and content of the self-evaluation. It should not be regarded as prescriptive, since each college has different responsibilities reflecting individual agreements with awarding bodies.

|   | Sections | Suggested content (commentary) | Possible sources of evidence or references (portfolio) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Introduction to the college and its awarding body(ies) | • the college's mission<br>• brief description of the college, its location, size and higher education programmes listed with their awarding bodies<br>• data showing three year student enrolment and progression across each programme. | • mission statement<br>• prospectus<br>• retention, achievement and progression data tables<br>• higher education annual monitoring reports. |
| 2 | Details of the college's responsibilities for higher education | • partnership agreements with awarding body(ies). | • formal partnership agreement(s)<br>• Edexcel standard note. |
| 3 | Outline of recent changes affecting higher education provision in the college | • brief description of recent changes to higher education programmes<br>• brief description of changes to higher education programmes planned. | • college's strategic plan<br>• higher education annual reports<br>• college's higher education strategy. |
| 4 | Students' contribution to the review | • note whether students sent QAA a submission and, if so, how it was prepared, for example any support or guidance provided by the college | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Outline of assessment policy and practice | <ul><li>use of the Academic Infrastructure.</li><li>effectiveness of procedures for:<ul><li>programme and assessment planning</li><li>programme internal validation</li><li>the regulation and operation of assessment</li><li>marking</li><li>assessment moderation and verification</li><li>staff development and training in assessment</li><li>assessment record keeping</li><li>feedback to students</li><li>the review of assessment regulations.</li></ul></li></ul> | **Depending on the extent of the college's responsibilities for standards in the college's agreement with each awarding body:**<br><ul><li>assessment policy</li><li>assessment planning process</li><li>assessment design</li><li>assessment tasks</li><li>assessment criteria</li><li>assessment records</li><li>assessment review and evaluation reports</li><li>action taken on receipt of external review or inspection reports</li><li>programme specifications</li><li>information for students</li><li>minutes of formal meetings to consider students' achievement and academic progression.</li></ul> |
| 6 | Line of enquiry 1<br><br>Line of enquiry 2<br><br>Line of enquiry 3 | <ul><li>How the college uses internal verification processes to assure academic standards</li><li>The contribution of work placements to final assessments</li><li>The match of information on assessment in the prospectus, the programme specification, the student handbook and the assignment brief.</li></ul> | <ul><li>quality assurance policy</li><li>monitoring and review processes</li><li>admissions policy</li><li>accreditation of prior learning policy</li><li>student support policy</li><li>student assessment policy</li><li>external examiner or verifier reports</li><li>teaching and learning strategy</li><li>work placement policy</li><li>management structure</li><li>meeting structure</li><li>staff development policy</li></ul> |

| | | | <ul><li>college and awarding bodies' regulations for progression</li><li>statistical records</li><li>programme specifications</li><li>national student survey results (if appropriate)</li><li>information for staff managing and delivering higher education</li><li>promotional material</li><li>information for students</li><li>action plans resulting from:<ul><li>awarding body reports</li><li>periodic review reports</li><li>external examiner or verifier reports</li><li>evidence from reviews at subject level, including PSRB accreditation</li><li>ETI inspections</li><li>the use of the Academic Infrastructure.</li></ul></li></ul> |
|---|---|---|---|
| 7 | Summary | <ul><li>strengths</li><li>areas for development.</li></ul> | |
| 8 | Evidence and references | <ul><li>label and number evidence documents</li><li>provide clear references in the text.</li></ul> | |
| 9 | List of documents | <ul><li>provide numbered master list.</li></ul> | |

Table 3: Indicative structure of a self-evaluation for Developmental engagement in student assessment

## Evaluative commentary

118   The commentary on the lines of enquiry should reflect the college's capacity for critical self-reflection on the effectiveness of its processes and procedures for managing higher education. A possible approach is to provide an opening statement containing a judgement, then qualify it with supporting evidence, for example:

> There is a comprehensive, but insufficiently differentiated Assessment Policy (1 Policies: doc 3i). It deals with all aspects of assessment from diagnostic testing to the appeals procedure and describes the responsibilities of key members of staff in detail, but is generic in its application to all of the college's provision.

Such a statement would typically be followed by a clear indication of what is being done to address an area identified for development, for example:

> The college's Quality Manager is currently reviewing the policy and a revised version, with sections specific to higher education and aligned to its higher education institution partner requirements, will be available from the start of the new academic year (6 Minutes: HE Development team meeting, 19/10/09, para 8).

## Referencing

119   Reviewers will value a self-evaluation in which they can readily find the material they need; it will therefore be important for the college to consider the reviewers' needs when compiling the self-evaluation portfolio. It is important to ensure that all evidence documents are clearly labelled and numbered and that there is a numbered master list of the supporting documentation. It is equally important to ensure that each document is clearly referenced to the appropriate text in the commentary using the same labelling and numbering system and providing paragraph numbers and dates of minutes as appropriate (see examples, paragraph 118).

## Drafting

120     The college is encouraged to circulate the draft self-evaluation to higher education students, staff and awarding body representatives for comment as this widens the perspective and helps to keep colleagues informed and engaged in the process. QAA staff can advise, but coordinators or reviewers involved in the Developmental engagement may not comment on the draft self-evaluation.

## Submission

121     The self-evaluation should be sent to the Logistics and Deployment team at QAA 12 weeks before the start of the visit. One electronic copy and three hard copies of the self evaluation commentary are required, accompanied by an electronic portfolio of supporting evidence. Where only hard copy of the portfolio of evidence exists, three hard copies should be provided. Colleges are asked to use a CD-ROM or data stick, with the self-evaluation as a Word file, and not to email individual files to QAA. QAA cannot currently accept self-evaluations in any other format.

122    QAA will send a copy to the coordinator asking for an analysis and evaluation as to whether the self-evaluation forms an appropriate basis for the review. Once this has been agreed by the QAA officer, QAA will notify the college and ask for copies of the self-evaluation to be sent to the team.

123   QAA may return the self-evaluation to the college for further work if it does not enable the team to identify the college's responsibilities and understand how these responsibilities are discharged. In these circumstances, the QAA officer will provide the college with advice.

## Advice

124    Colleges should contact Derek Greenaway (01452 557146, d.greenaway@ qaa.ac.uk) or Barbara Edwards (01452 557190, bea.edwards@qaa.ac.uk) at QAA if advice is required on preparing the self-evaluation. Once the coordinators have been appointed, colleges should refer to their coordinators for guidance, but should note that coordinators may not comment on a draft self-evaluation.

## The self-evaluation for Summative review

125    The Summative review addresses all aspects of the college's management of its higher education provision and the self-evaluation should reflect this. As with the self-evaluation for the Developmental engagement, the college should as far as possible describe its responsibilities, processes and procedures by compiling a **portfolio** of existing documents. Any new material should be limited to a **commentary** signposting and/or contextualising the existing documents and reflecting on the effectiveness of these processes and procedures. Further guidance on the composition of this portfolio is provided in the table below.

## Structure

126    The self-evaluation commentary for the Summative review should be structured according to the three core themes: academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information. The self-evaluation commentary should also include an introduction to the college, with details of any agreements with awarding bodies. This section may be repeated from the Developmental engagement, but it is important to cover these arrangements again to reflect any changes since the Developmental engagement and because the Summative review team will have reviewers who will not have been involved in the Developmental engagement. Also, it will be important for colleges to bear in mind that QAA will only provide the Summative review team with the final Developmental engagement report and not the full set of evidence on which the Developmental engagement conclusions were based. Within each core theme the college should describe the responsibilities that its awarding bodies have conferred on it and explain the processes and procedures it has adopted for discharging these responsibilities. A summary, comprising strengths and areas for development, and indicating what the college is doing to improve its provision, is also useful.

## Content

127     The self-evaluation should identify areas that will help the college to develop its higher education provision for the benefit of its students. Colleges should give careful consideration to ensuring that all three core themes can be addressed adequately. The self-evaluation must provide sufficient evidence for the Summative review team to evaluate the effectiveness of the college's management of its higher education provision. The main points of reference for assisting in developing the self-evaluation are contained within the Academic Infrastructure published by QAA, particularly the *Code of practice*. Colleges will usually find that their internal quality assurance systems and processes reveal the areas that might benefit from scrutiny by the Summative review team.

128   The length of the self-evaluation commentary depends on the college's level of responsibility and the quality and comprehensiveness of existing written evidence. However, where a college feels confident in relying on a portfolio of existing evidence about the management of its higher education provision, it should be able to restrict the commentary to six sides of A4.

129     Table 4 is intended to provide colleges with guidance on the structure and content of the self-evaluation. It should not be regarded as prescriptive, since each college has different responsibilities reflecting individual agreements with awarding bodies. A diagram showing the range of evidence that could be used is provided on page 53.

|   | Sections | Suggested content (commentary) | Possible sources of evidence or references (portfolio) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Introduction and context | Brief contextual information on the college:<br><br>• for example, history, location, number of campuses, total college enrolment, total higher education enrolments, list of higher education programmes plus full and part-time higher education enrolments, spread of provision across campuses, student numbers. | • mission statement<br>• prospectus<br>• retention, achievement and progression data tables<br>• higher education annual monitoring reports<br>• college strategic plan<br>• whole college self-evaluation |

| | | Partnership agreements with the awarding body(ies): <br><br>• include summary of key characteristics of each partnership agreement and the arrangements with Edexcel; note any significant recent changes. <br><br>Recent developments in higher education at the college: <br><br>• include summary of any recent developments, for example, new building work, expansion or decrease in provision, significant changes to the academic structure and/or staffing <br><br>• outline whether students sent QAA a submission and, if so, how it was prepared, for example any support or guidance provided by the college to the student representatives in the event. | • partnership agreements with awarding body(ies) <br><br>• Edexcel standard note. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | Analysis and evaluation of the management of higher education | Core theme 1: Academic standards <br><br>• How are responsibilities for managing and delivering higher education standards delegated within the management structure and what reporting arrangements are in place? <br><br>• What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure? | • quality assurance policy <br>• monitoring and review processes <br>• admissions policy <br>• accreditation of prior learning policy <br>• student assessment policy <br>• meeting structure <br>• internal validation processes <br>• college and awarding bodies' regulations for progression |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | • How does the college assure itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to ensure that the standards of higher education provision meet the requirements of the awarding body(ies)?<br><br>• What are the college's arrangements for staff development to support the achievement of appropriate academic standard(s)? | • action taken on receipt of external review or inspection reports<br>• statistical records<br>• programme specifications<br>• PSRB accreditation reports<br>• student complaints and appeals processes<br>• college student survey analyses<br>• national student survey results (if appropriate)<br>• information for higher education staff<br>• ETI inspection reports<br>• Developmental engagement report. |
| | | Core theme 2: Quality of learning opportunities<br><br>• How are responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities for higher education programmes delegated within the management structure and what reporting arrangements are in place?<br><br>• How does the college assure itself that it is fulfilling its obligations to its awarding body(ies) to ensure that students receive appropriate learning opportunities?<br><br>• What account is taken of the Academic Infrastructure? | • quality assurance policy<br>• monitoring and review processes<br>• resource policy<br>• admissions policy<br>• accreditation of prior learning policy<br>• student support and guidance policy<br>• teaching and learning strategy<br>• management structure<br>• meeting structure<br>• staff development policy<br>• statistical records<br>• programme specifications<br>• college student survey analyses<br>• analyses of college student surveys<br>• student complaints and appeals procedures |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | <ul><li>How does the college assure itself that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced?</li><li>How does the college assure itself that students are supported effectively?</li><li>What are the college's arrangements for staff development to maintain and/ or enhance the quality of learning opportunities?</li><li>How does the college ensure the sufficiency and accessibility of the learning resources the students need to achieve the intended learning outcomes for their programmes?</li></ul> | <ul><li>national student survey results (if appropriate)</li><li>information for higher education staff</li><li>ETI inspection reports</li><li>Developmental engagement report(s).</li></ul> |
| | | **Core theme 3: Public information**<ul><li>What information is the college responsible for publishing about its higher education?</li><li>What arrangements does the college have in place to assure the accuracy and completeness of information the college has responsibility for publishing?</li><li>How does the college know that these arrangements are effective?</li></ul> | <ul><li>publishing policy and procedures for both electronic and paper-based information</li><li>notes of meetings discussing scrutiny and approval of public information</li><li>promotional material</li><li>mission statement</li><li>corporate plan</li><li>programme specifications</li><li>information for students.</li></ul> |

| 3 | Summary | • strengths<br>• areas for development<br>• actions being taken to improve. | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | Evidence and references | • label and number evidence documents<br>• provide clear references in the text. | |
| 5 | List of documents | • provide numbered master list. | |

Table 4: Indicative structure of a self-evaluation for Summative review

## Evaluative commentary

130    The commentary on the core themes should reflect the college's capacity for critical self-reflection on the effectiveness of its processes and procedures for managing higher education. A possible approach is to provide an opening statement containing an evaluation, then qualify it with supporting evidence, for example:

> There is a comprehensive staff development policy (1 Policies: doc 1i) and the college offers a wide range of staff development activities that are systematically recorded (4 Staff development and training: doc 4ii). Although HE and FE activities are planned in accordance with the differentiated requirements of both sets of staff, the analysis of the impact of HE developmental activities on academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities is underdeveloped.

Such a statement would typically be followed by a clear indication of what is being done to address an area identified for development, for example:

> The college's Director of Quality and HR Manager are currently reviewing the staff development policy. It will be strengthened by requiring HE Programme Managers to conduct an annual evaluation of the impact of staff development and training on the standard and quality of HE provision. This will serve to improve the planning and sharpen the focus of future events. The revised policy (2 Draft Policies: doc 2i) will be available from the start of the new academic year, supported by training for Programme Managers and briefings for staff (6 Minutes, HE Development team meeting, 23/07/09, para 2).

## Referencing

131    In order for the team to be able to operate efficiently, both in advance of and during the review, it is important to ensure that all evidence documents are clearly labelled and that there is a numbered master list of documents. It is equally important to ensure that each document is clearly referenced to the appropriate text in the commentary using the same labelling and numbering system and providing paragraph numbers and dates of minutes as appropriate (see paragraph 130).

## Drafting

132     The college may consider circulating the draft self-evaluation to higher education students, staff and awarding body representatives for comment as this widens the perspective and helps to keep colleagues informed and engaged in the process. QAA staff can advise, but coordinators or reviewers involved in the Summative review may not comment on the draft self-evaluation.

## Submission

133     The self-evaluation should be sent to the Logistics and Deployment team at QAA 12 weeks before the start of the visit. One electronic copy and three hard copies of the self-evaluation commentary are required, accompanied by an electronic portfolio of supporting evidence. Where only hard copy of the portfolio of evidence exists, three hard copies should be provided. Colleges are asked to use a CD-ROM or data stick, with the self-evaluation as a Word file, and not to email individual files to QAA. QAA cannot currently accept self-evaluations in any other format.

134     QAA will send a copy to the coordinator asking for an analysis and evaluation as to whether the self-evaluation forms an appropriate basis for the review. Once this has been agreed by the QAA officer, QAA will notify the college and ask for copies of the self-evaluation to be sent to the team.

135     QAA may return the self-evaluation to the college for further work if it does not enable the team to identify the college's responsibilities and understand how these responsibilities are discharged. In these circumstances, the QAA officer will provide the college with advice.

## Advice

136     Colleges should contact Derek Greenaway (01452 557146, d.greenaway@ qaa.ac.uk) or Barbara Edwards (01452 557190, bea.edwards@qaa.ac.uk) at QAA if advice is required on preparing the self-evaluation. Once the coordinators have been appointed, colleges should refer to their coordinators for guidance, but should note that coordinators may not comment on a draft self-evaluation.

Programme specifications

Quality assurance policy

Monitoring and review processes

Student assessment policy

Resourcing policy

Staff development records

Management structure

Admissions policy

College and awarding body regulations for progression

**Self-evaluation of college management and delivery of quality and standards of higher education provision**

Awarding body reports

HE strategy

Accreditation of prior learning policy

Developmental engagements

External and internal reports

Teaching and learning strategy

Information for students

Meeting structure

Publicity materials

Student support policy

Figure 6: Sources of evidence that inform the self-evaluation

# Section seven: A glossary of terms

| Academic Infrastructure www.qaa.ac.uk/ academicinfrastructure | The Academic Infrastructure is a set of nationally agreed reference points relating to effective practice in the setting and management of academic standards and quality in higher education. It comprises: |
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| | • the *Code of practice* www.qaa.ac.uk/ academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice |
| | • the FHEQ www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ and its companion for Scotland |
| | • subject benchmark statements www.qaa.ac.uk/ academicinfrastructure/benchmark/default.asp |
| | • the Foundation Degree qualifications benchmark www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/foundationDegree/benchmark/ FDQB.pdf (all published by QAA) |
| | • Programme specifications www.qaa.ac.uk/ academicinfrastructure/programSpec |
| | • www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/progressFiles also contribute to the Academic Infrastructure and QAA provides guidance on these, and |
| | • Guidelines on the accreditation of prior learning www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/apl/guidance.asp |
| | The Academic Infrastructure is at the heart of the IQER process. IQER teams will draw upon the Academic Infrastructure as a source of reference when considering colleges' approach to the management of their higher education provision. IQER teams will ask colleges about their use of the *Code of practice*, and self-evaluations should include an account of this, drawing attention to any resulting changes in practice that have taken place, any benefits accruing and any areas of difficulty encountered and how they have been addressed. |
| | Reviewers will also explore colleges' use of relevant qualification and award descriptors and subject benchmark statements. As the large majority of subject benchmark statements apply to single subject honours degrees, their general application by colleges will not always be appropriate. However, such benchmarks provide an authoritative reference point, and reviewers are likely to be especially interested in whether, and if so how, they have been used to inform the development of programmes such as HNC, HND and Foundation Degrees. |

| | Programme specifications contain definitive information on the aims, intended learning outcomes and expected achievements of students, and reviewers will explore their accuracy and usefulness to students and staff. In particular, reviewers will wish to see how programme specifications make use of other reference points in the Academic Infrastructure to define expectations for teaching, learning, assessment and achievement. QAA publishes guidance for colleges on the development of programme specifications. |
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| **Academic standards** | Academic standards are defined as the level of achievement a student has to reach in order to achieve a particular award or qualification. There are nationally agreed reference points for the academic standards of the various levels of higher education qualifications set out in the FHEQ, published by QAA. See 'Academic Infrastructure' for more information.<br><br>The first core theme of IQER focuses on academic standards. An awarding body is responsible for the academic standards of all awards granted in its name. IQER is concerned with how colleges exercise any responsibilities they have for the academic standards of the awards that they deliver on behalf of their awarding bodies.<br><br>The Developmental engagement considers academic standards within the area under review. By contrast, the Summative review considers academic standards against all aspects of the college's higher education provision, leading to a judgement that is subsequently published. For more information, see 'Judgements'. |
| **Action plan** | After a Developmental engagement or Summative review, the college will be asked to develop an action plan, set out in a format provided by QAA, describing how the college plans to take action on the findings of the review.<br>The action plan forms part of the final version of the report.<br><br>QAA will monitor the implementation of the action plan through the next review, unless it follows a judgement of limited or no confidence at the Summative review. Details of the follow up to limited or no confidence judgements are provided in 'Follow-up action' below. The action plan, its implementation and impact will, therefore, form part of the evidence base for any future review activity. In the case of the Summative review action plan, it will also constitute a published record of the college's commitment to take forward the findings of IQER. |

| Advisable recommendation | Both Developmental engagement and Summative review reports will include recommendations about how a college might improve the management of its higher education provision. Recommendations are categorised according to priority. Advisable recommendations refer to matters that reviewers believe have the potential to put quality and/or standards at risk and require preventative corrective action. |
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| Area under review | The Developmental engagement focuses on a specific area of the college's management of its HE provision through which the team will review the effectiveness of the college's management of its higher education under each of the three core themes. The college may choose from one of three areas for review:<br><br>• student assessment<br>• parity of experience for students enrolled for different modes of study, such as full-time, part-time, blended learning, work-based learning<br>• professional development for higher education teaching, learning and assessment |
| ARCS | The Audit and Review Communication Service is QAA's secure web-based communication system through which review teams can communicate among themselves before and after review visits. QAA will provide training on the use of ARCS for all IQER team members. |
| Awarding body | Colleges do not have powers to award higher education qualifications. They work with awarding bodies, in particular Edexcel (www.edexcel.com/quals/BTEC/quality/Pages/documents.aspx) and professional statutory and regulatory bodies and/or one or more higher education institutions, which retain responsibility for the academic standards of all awards granted in their names and for ensuring that the quality of learning opportunities offered through collaborative arrangements are adequate to enable students to achieve the academic standard required for their awards. Although IQER is not concerned with how awarding bodies discharge their responsibilities within these arrangements, awarding bodies are important stakeholders in the process. Further guidance on the involvement of awarding bodies in IQER appears in Section two. |

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| **Briefing** | The briefing is the first stage of the IQER process. Its purposes are to describe IQER in more detail; to allow colleges and awarding bodies to ask any questions about the method; and to give further advice and guidance on selecting an area for review, developing lines of enquiry, preparing a self-evaluation and on helping students to prepare a written submission. Normally the briefing is also an opportunity for colleges and awarding bodies to meet the coordinators and to talk to other colleges who are preparing for a Developmental engagement. |
| **Briefing note** | The briefing note is a compendium of publicly available information about a college, which QAA will assemble and provide to IQER teams at the beginning of the review process. The digest mainly comprises contextual information about the college, including the numbers of higher education students and the types of programmes provided. |
| **Conclusion** | Summative review teams are asked to reach a conclusion about the college's management of its responsibilities for public information. The conclusion is whether or not reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information the college publishes about itself and the programmes it delivers. For more information see 'Public information'. |
| **Confidence** | Summative review teams are required to make judgements about colleges' management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities according to core themes one and two respectively. The judgements are confidence, limited confidence or no confidence. |
| | Where a college is found to be managing effectively its responsibilities for the delivery of the academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities; the prospects for the future continuation of this appear good, and it has rigorous mechanisms for the management of its higher education provision in accordance with awarding bodies' requirements, it will receive a judgement of confidence for each of core themes one and two. Such a judgement will be reached on the basis of evidence that the college has sound structures and procedures for assuring and enhancing quality and the delivery of standards, that it is successful in managing them and that they are applied effectively to each higher education programme. This judgement will be accompanied by recommendations considered advisable and/or desirable (but never essential). However, the overall judgement should not be seen as being qualified by such recommendations. |

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| | A judgement of confidence is, therefore, an expression of belief in a college's commitment and ability to identify and address any situation that potentially threatens the quality of student learning opportunities, the delivery of the standards of awards or its ability to meet its contractual obligations. This includes considering and addressing in a mature and engaged manner, through its own procedures and those of its awarding bodies, any recommendations contained in the report. |
| **Coordinator** | Coordinators are contracted by QAA to manage a number of IQER reviews. Coordinators are selected for their experience of the management of higher education.<br><br>The coordinator manages the review on behalf of QAA. A coordinator is responsible for guiding the college on preparing its self-evaluation (although s/he may not comment on the draft); chairing the preparatory meeting; discussing and agreeing the programme for the visit with the college and the rest of the IQER team; identifying the most effective way of engaging with students; if required, discussing with awarding bodies their involvement in IQER; leading the team at the visit; editing IQER reports; responding to any comments on the reports from the college; and keeping in touch with the college between the Developmental engagement and the Summative review. A full description of the role is given in Annex G.<br><br>The coordinator is the college's first and main point of contact throughout the review process. To promote consistency and continuity, the college will normally retain the same coordinator for all stages of IQER. |
| **Core themes** | IQER has three core themes:<br><br>1 Academic standards<br>2 Quality of learning opportunities<br>3 Public information.<br><br>Both the Developmental engagement and Summative review are fundamentally concerned with reviewing the college's management of its responsibilities according to these three themes within the context of the college's agreements with its awarding body(ies). In the case of the Developmental engagement within the area under review; and in the Summative review against all aspects of the college's provision. |

| | The Developmental engagement makes evaluative comments about the three core themes within the area under review. The Summative review leads to judgements about core themes one and two and a conclusion about core theme three. For more information, see 'Judgements' and 'Conclusion'. |
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| **DEL** | The Department for Employment and Learning distributes public money for teaching and research to universities and colleges. All colleges with taught higher education programmes funded by DEL are required to take part in IQER. For more information about the scope of IQER, see Section one. |
| **Desirable recommendation** | Both Developmental engagement and Summative review reports may include recommendations about how the college might improve the management of its higher education provision. Recommendations are categorised according to priority. Desirable recommendations refer to matters that reviewers believe have the potential to enhance quality, build capacity and/or further secure standards. |
| **Developmental engagement** | IQER takes place in two complementary stages: Developmental engagement and Summative review. The emphasis in the Developmental engagement is on supporting the college in developing its management of higher education in an open and collegial way. For more information see Section three. |
| **Edexcel** | Edexcel is the largest awarding body in the UK. It offers a wide range of vocational and general qualifications at all levels of the Credit and Qualifications Framework www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure. IQER is concerned with HNC and HND awards. |
| **Enhancement** | For the purposes of IQER, QAA uses the term enhancement to mean the continuous improvement of a college's management of the student learning experience of higher education provision, for the benefit of students, and within the context of their agreements with awarding bodies. |
| **Essential recommendation** | Both Developmental engagement and Summative review reports may include recommendations about how the college might improve the management of its higher education provision. Recommendations are categorised according to priority. Essential recommendations refer to important matters that reviewers believe are currently putting quality and/or standards at risk and which require urgent corrective action. |

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| | When essential recommendations are made at the end of the Summative review, they will be reflected in a judgement of limited confidence or no confidence against core themes one and/or two, and/or a conclusion that reliance cannot be placed on the accuracy and/or completeness of all the public information the college is responsible for publishing about itself.<br><br>When essential recommendations are made at the end of a Developmental engagement, exceptionally DEL may require the college to have another engagement. |
| **ETI** | The Education and Training Inspectorate 'provides inspection services for the Department of Education, the Department for Employment and Learning and the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure and seeks to promote improvement through Inspection and the dissemination of findings.' (see www.etini.gov.uk/index.htm). |
| **Evidence** | IQER is an evidence-based process. This means that teams conduct their enquiries primarily by comparing evidence about the college's management of its higher education provision with its own policies and procedures, the agreements it has with its awarding bodies and the expectations of the Academic Infrastructure.<br><br>Evidence comes in a wide range of forms and will vary from college to college. It is likely to include formal agreements with awarding bodies, policies and procedures for the management of the student learning experience of higher education programmes, external examiners' reports, validation documents, data about the college on the Unistats website (www.unistats.com), review and inspection reports of other organisations such as the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) (www.etini.gov.uk) and any information arising from meetings with staff and students.<br><br>Some of this evidence, such as review reports by other organisations, will be publicly available. Other elements should be provided by the college as part of its self-evaluation or supporting evidence. QAA gives further guidance on developing the self-evaluation, including a list of supporting evidence, in Section six. Once the team has read the self-evaluation, the coordinator may ask for more evidence to be available at the visit itself. The coordinator will confirm precisely what further evidence is required at the preparatory meeting or at least eight weeks before the visit. |

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| **Facilitator** | For the Summative review, the college is invited to nominate a facilitator. The facilitator acts as a single point of contact between the college and the IQER team. The facilitator's responsibilities include ensuring that reviewers have the relevant evidence to enable them to conduct the review (including when the team is off-site), bringing additional information to the attention of the reviewers and helping to clarify any matters of fact. In addition, the facilitator attends all review team meetings other than those with students and employers, or where judgements are discussed. The facilitator does not contribute to the Summative review report or its judgements.<br><br>A full description of the role is given in Annex G. QAA advises that the facilitator is one of the nominees from the Developmental engagement to provide continuity for the college. Facilitators will be trained for the role alongside reviewers. QAA's policy on the training and development of facilitators can be found in Annex H. |
| **Follow-up action** | If the second visit results in judgements of confidence for core themes one and two plus the conclusion that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information the college is responsible for publishing about itself, the review is completed following the process set out in paragraphs 95-97. However, should the second visit result in a judgement of limited confidence in either or both core themes one and two and/or the conclusion that reliance cannot be placed on the accuracy and completeness of published information, the report is published and there will be a formal programme of follow-up action. The follow-up action must be completed by the college within 18 months of the end of the publication of the review report.<br><br>If the second visit results in a judgement of no confidence in either or both of core themes one and two and/or a conclusion that reliance cannot be placed on the accuracy and completeness of public information, the college and its awarding body(ies) may consider using the QAA procedure on representations. If one or both of the judgements are confirmed as no confidence and/or if the team cannot place reliance on the accuracy and completeness of public information, there will be a formal programme of follow-up action. If after this time QAA is still concerned about the effectiveness of the remedial action, QAA may conduct a further visit; and if satisfactory progress has still not been made, DEL reserves the right to withdraw some or all of its funding. |

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| **Good practice** | Good practice is that which the IQER team regards as making a particularly positive contribution to the college's management of academic standards and/or academic quality in the context of that particular college; and which is worthy of wider dissemination within and/or beyond the college.<br><br>Both Developmental engagement and Summative review reports are likely to include features of good practice. QAA will disseminate good practice identified through IQER review in periodic reports. |
| **Higher education in scope** | IQER is concerned with taught higher education programmes of study funded by DEL at levels 4, 5, 6 and 7 of the FHEQ, (or levels 4 to 7 of the Qualifications and Credit Framework), with the exception of teacher and tutor education programmes. IQER does not apply to research degrees funded by DEL at master's or doctoral levels (or level 8 of the Qualifications and Credit Framework). |
| **Judgements** | Summative review teams are asked to make judgements about the college's management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities against core themes one and two respectively. The judgements are confidence, limited confidence or no confidence. These are defined elsewhere in this glossary.<br><br>Judgements on the core themes may only be differentiated should the team regard a college's management of the quality and/or standards of the programmes leading to the awards of one awarding body to be below the required threshold. In this case, a judgement of limited or no confidence would be awarded to the provision of that awarding body alone. |
| **Limited confidence** | Summative review teams are asked to make judgements about the college's management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities according to core themes one and two respectively. The judgements are confidence, limited confidence or no confidence.<br><br>Where significant doubts exist about aspects of a college's current or likely future management of quality and/ or delivery of the standards of its higher education programmes, the college will receive a judgement of limited confidence. Such a judgement will indicate how widespread the doubts are and which aspects of the college's management of academic standards and/or quality of learning opportunities has given particular cause for concern. Reviewers will make reference to awarding |

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| | body requirements when reaching such judgements and such a judgement, which is likely to have implications for the college's awarding body(ies), will be accompanied by one or more recommendations considered essential and, almost certainly, others considered advisable and/or desirable.<br><br>A judgement of limited confidence will trigger follow-up action. For more information, see 'Follow-up action'. |
| Lines of enquiry | At the Developmental engagement, teams use the lines of enquiry as a way of reviewing the evidence and formulating conclusions about the college's management of higher education in the area under review.<br><br>To facilitate a developmental approach to the Developmental engagement stage of IQER, the college is invited to suggest the lines of enquiry it would like the team to pursue. This gives the college the opportunity to target matters it would like the team to prioritise. The college should select three lines of enquiry for the Developmental engagement and assign one to each of the three core themes. Each line of enquiry should relate to the area under review. For example, where the Developmental engagement is concerned with student assessment, possible lines of enquiry could include: how the college uses internal verification processes to assure academic standards; the contribution of work placements to final assessments; the match of information on assessment in the programme specification, the student handbook and the assignment brief.<br><br>Colleges may find the Academic Infrastructure and the Code of practice useful points of reference in identifying lines of enquiry. QAA will give further guidance about lines of enquiry at the briefing event it provides for colleges and awarding bodies. |
| No confidence | Summative review teams are asked to make judgements about the college's management of academic standards and quality according to core themes one and two respectively. The judgements are confidence, limited confidence or no confidence.<br><br>Where major doubts exist about significant aspects of a college's current or likely future capacity to secure and maintain quality and/or deliver standards, the college will receive a judgement of no confidence. A no confidence judgement will be made with reference to the awarding body requirements of the college. The report will identify |

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| | the main areas of concern, discuss the means by which such a situation was able to arise and be sustained, and advise students and other stakeholders of the existence of failing or unsatisfactory academic standards, or quality of provision. It will contain one or more recommendations considered essential and others considered advisable and/or desirable.<br><br>A judgement of no confidence will reflect serious procedural inadequacies or implementation failures, and will be indicative of fundamental weaknesses in a college's capacity to manage its responsibilities for the delivery of academic standards or for providing higher education of an appropriate quality. It will have serious implications for awarding bodies, which are likely to wish to take urgent action.<br><br>A judgement of no confidence will trigger follow-up action. For more information, see 'Follow-up action'. |
| **Nominee** | At the Developmental engagement stage of IQER the college is invited to provide two or three nominees, depending on the size of the team. Nominees are full members of the Developmental engagement team. They are responsible for analysing and commenting on the college's self-evaluation, participating in the visit, drafting sections of the report and contributing to the Developmental engagement conclusions.<br><br>The participation of the nominee is crucial to the development of an open and collegial framework within which the Developmental engagement team can seek to enhance a particular area of the college's provision. To fulfil the role effectively, the nominee should have a thorough working knowledge of the management and delivery of the college's higher education provision and the maturity to reflect critically on this provision, including in areas where s/he may have responsibilities in their normal college role. A full description of the role is given in Annex G. Nominees will be trained for the role alongside reviewers. QAA's policy on the training and development of review team members can be found in Annex H. QAA advises that, to provide continuity for the college, the facilitator for the Summative review is one of the nominees from the Developmental engagement. |
| **Partnership agreement** | Colleges have formal partnership agreements with their higher education awarding bodies and many of these describe precisely the college's responsibilities for any given higher education programme. These agreements will be very useful to IQER teams in identifying the parameters |

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| | of each particular review. Such agreements will form a key part of the college's self-evaluation. Where an agreement does not identify the college's responsibilities in detail, then it may be appropriate for the college and the awarding body to provide further information or for the awarding body to participate in the visit. Section two provides more information about this. |
| **Peer review** | IQER is a peer review process. This means that the reviews are conducted by people with current or very recent experience of managing, developing, delivering and/or assessing higher education in higher education institutions and/or colleges. As a result, IQER reports reflect a working knowledge of UK higher education and, more specifically, the challenges of managing higher education academic standards and quality effectively in colleges. |
| **Preparatory meeting** | At least nine weeks before a Developmental engagement or Summative review visit, there is a preparatory meeting for the visit between college staff, students and the coordinator. The purpose of the preparatory meeting is to develop the agenda for the visit and identify further evidence for the college to supply to the team, based on an analysis of the college's self-evaluation and the student written submission. It also gives the coordinator the opportunity to clarify the method, and the college to ask any questions. Awarding bodies may also attend this meeting. An indicative agenda for the preparatory meeting is provided in Annex C. |
| **Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRB)** | Although each college approves its own courses, individual courses that lead to a professional or vocational qualification, or exemption from a professional examination, are usually accredited by a professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB). It is estimated that there are more than 40 PSRBs operating in higher education in Northern Ireland colleges. |
| **Provisional judgement meeting** | Summative review teams meet around one week after the visit to agree summaries of evidence, to make provisional judgements and identify provisional good practice and recommendations. The coordinator will inform the college about the outcome of the provisional judgement meeting in writing, usually within one week of the meeting. All judgements, good practice and recommendations remain provisional until the college has had the opportunity to highlight any areas in the draft report that it regards as inaccurate or incomplete and until the team has finalised the report in response to the college's comments. Occasionally, the judgements will remain provisional until the team has completed a second visit. |

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| | See 'Summative review' below for details of second visits. All provisional judgements and conclusions are made with reference to awarding body requirements of the college. |
| **Public information** | Public information is information about the academic standards and quality of learning opportunities that is in the public domain. In some cases, the publication of this information is the responsibility of awarding bodies, carried out on the colleges' behalf; some will be provided by the college and published by external organisations such as Unistats; and for some the college itself will be responsible for publication. |
| | IQER considers whether or not the information the college is responsible for publishing about itself is accurate and complete. An indicative list of this information is provided in Annex F. It should be emphasised that this list is only indicative because different colleges will have different responsibilities for publishing information according to their agreements with awarding bodies. |
| | Where a college recognises all of the information it is responsible for publishing (by reference both to its agreements with its awarding bodies and the expectations of DEL and the Academic Infrastructure); has rigorous mechanisms for the management of these responsibilities, which ensure that the information it publishes is both accurate and complete; and has evidence that this is the case, the team will conclude that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of public information. |
| | Where a team concludes that reliance cannot be placed on public information, the college will need to correct the information immediately. |
| **The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)** | The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's (QAA's) mission is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. QAA does this by working with higher education providers, including universities and colleges, to define academic standards and quality, and carries out and publishes reviews against these standards. QAA was established in 1997 and is an independent body funded by subscriptions from UK universities and colleges of higher education, and through contracts with the main UK higher education funding bodies, including DEL. |

| QAA officer | Each Developmental engagement and Summative review is supported by a QAA officer. The QAA officer's role is to ensure that the process is applied in accordance with the handbook and that the college meets its obligations to provide information in a timely manner. The QAA officer may attend the preparatory meeting and one or more days of a visit for monitoring purposes. |
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| Quality of learning opportunities | Quality of learning opportunities considers the effectiveness of everything that is done or provided (the 'learning opportunities') by the college to ensure that its students have the best possible opportunity to meet the stated outcomes of their programmes and the academic standards of the awards they are seeking.<br><br>Quality of learning opportunities is the second core theme of IQER. It is common to the Developmental engagement and the Summative review. The Developmental engagement considers the quality of learning opportunities within the area under review. The Summative review considers the quality of learning opportunities against all aspects of the college's provision, leading to a judgement that is subsequently published. For more information, see 'Judgements'. |
| Recommendations | Both Developmental engagements and Summative review reports will include recommendations for the college about how the college might improve the management of its higher education provision. Recommendations are categorised as essential, advisable or desirable according to priority. These terms are defined elsewhere in this glossary. |
| Reports | Both stages of IQER culminate in a report of the team's findings. Developmental engagement reports have two main elements: good practice and recommendations for action by the college, both confined to the area under review. In addition, the team will make evaluative comments about each of the three core themes. To facilitate a developmental approach to the Developmental engagement, the reports are confidential to DEL, the college, its awarding bodies, ETI and QAA.<br><br>Summative review reports differ from Developmental engagement reports in three main respects:<br><br>• Summative review reports contain judgements about core theme one, academic standards, and core theme two, quality of learning opportunities, and a conclusion about core theme three, published information<br><br>• Summative review reports cover all aspects of the college's management of its higher education provision rather than a specific area like student assessment |

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| | • Summative review reports will be published on QAA's public website.<br><br>Colleges and their awarding bodies will always be invited to provide comments on a draft report and to indicate any areas that they consider incomplete or inaccurate. The coordinator will provide further guidance on the procedures for making comments on reports. |
| **Reviewer** | Reviewers are external peers with current or recent experience of managing, developing, delivering and/ or assessing higher education in higher education institutions and/or colleges. One of the reviewers for the Developmental engagement and the Summative review will be from another Northern Ireland college. Reviewers are not employed by QAA, although they are paid for taking part in IQER. Reviewers are trained specifically for the role by QAA. QAA's policy on the training and development of reviewers can be found in Annex H. |
| **Self-evaluation** | Both stages of IQER are based on a self-evaluation prepared by the college. The self-evaluation describes the responsibilities that the college has for the management of its higher education provision and evaluates the effectiveness of the policies and procedures it has adopted for discharging these responsibilities. An effective self-evaluation is key to the college gaining substantial benefit from IQER and to the smooth running of both the Developmental engagement and the Summative review. QAA therefore encourages colleges to give its preparation due time and attention. The preparation of a self-evaluation is a major focus of the briefing that QAA will arrange for colleges and their awarding bodies.<br><br>In order to limit the burden of the exercise, colleges should, as far as possible, describe their responsibilities, processes and procedures by reference to a portfolio of existing documents, with any new material limited to a commentary that signposts and/or contextualises the existing material for the team. |
| **Student written submission** | One of IQER's aims is to support colleges in reviewing and improving the management of their higher education provision for the benefit of students. Within this context, teams need to draw on students' views about their experiences as learners in developing their conclusions about the college's provision. Teams will meet students at the visit as a matter of course. Teams will also invite students to prepare a written submission before the visit, to help them make sure that students' views inform the arrangements for the visit, including who they meet. |

|  | Student submissions may take a variety of different forms such as a summary of responses to recent student questionnaires or a written report of student focus groups. QAA will provide further guidance to students in a separate guidance note. The principle of the submission, irrespective of its form, is that it should reflect the students' own views of their experiences as learners. Colleges may, however, have a valuable role to play in helping their students to prepare a submission, for example by sharing information with them. QAA will provide further guidance to colleges during preparations for IQER and students will be invited to the briefing. After the briefing, coordinators will also have the responsibility of discussing with the college how the college might assist students in developing a submission for IQER.

The student written submission is voluntary. If students are not able to make a submission, despite the best efforts of the college and the coordinator, this will not prejudice the outcomes of IQER. |
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| **Summative review** | IQER takes place in two complementary stages: Developmental engagement and Summative review. Summative review evaluates all aspects of the college's management of its higher education provision and leads to judgements about the management of that provision within the context of the college's agreement with its awarding bodies. Each college will have one Summative review between 2012/13 and 2013/14; this will normally take place a minimum of one year after a Developmental engagement. For more information see Section four. |
| **Team** | The Developmental engagement team will comprise five people: the coordinator and four reviewers. The reviewers will include members of the college's staff (the nominees).

The Summative review team will comprise the coordinator and up to six reviewers, depending on the size of the college's higher education provision. One of the college's nominees will become the facilitator for the Summative review. IQER team selection will be made with reference to a college's higher education provision. QAA will avoid known conflicts of interest, including having worked in or for the college under review or in or for its awarding bodies during the previous five years; having undertaken validation, external examination or consultancy work for it during the previous three years; having recently applied for a post or having a close relative working or studying there. |

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| | QAA will send brief details of proposed teams to colleges and their awarding bodies not less than nine weeks before each Developmental engagement or Summative review visit, allowing the college two weeks to draw to QAA's attention in writing any conflicts of interest they believe QAA has not identified. |
| **Training** | QAA provides training for coordinators, nominees, reviewers and facilitators. QAA's policy on training for reviewers and facilitators can be found in Annex H. |
| **Unistats (www.unistats.com)** | Unistats brings together authoritative, official information from universities and colleges in the UK, in one place, in a way that is not available on any other website. It includes the results of the annual National Student Survey. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) owns the Unistats websites and has contracted the Universities & Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) to manage the delivery and maintenance of these websites on its behalf. |
| **Visit** | Each IQER visit normally takes place over 2.5 consecutive days.<br><br>The purpose of visits is to allow the team to scrutinise evidence on site, meet college staff, students and other stakeholders (such as awarding bodies' representatives and employers, where appropriate) and consider the extent of the college's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure. Indicative visit programmes for the Developmental engagement and Summative review are provided in Annex D.<br><br>The coordinator will discuss and agree the programme for each visit with the college beforehand. During the visit itself, it is helpful if the college can make a room available as a workroom for the team and a separate and larger room available for meetings. |

## List of hyperlinks

**Academic Infrastructure:** www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure

**Code of practice:** www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice

**DEL:** www.delni.gov.uk

**ETI:** www.etini.gov.uk. Reports: www.etini.gov.uk/index/inspection-reports.htm

**Edexcel:** www.edexcel.com/quals/BTEC/quality/Pages/documents.aspx

***IQER Self Evaluation Preparation: Guide for Centres. Specialist Paper 12, 2009/2010***
www.edexcel.com/iwantto/I%20want%20to%20%20Tasks/Specialist%20Paper%20
12%20-%20IQER%20Self%20Evaluation%20Preparation%20-%20Guide%20for%20
Centres%20(2009-10).pdf

***Edexcel Standard Note for centres involved in IQER. (Version 2: November 2008)***
www.edexcel.com/iwantto/I%20want%20to%20%20Tasks/Edexcel%20Standard%20
Note%20for%20centres%20preparing%20for%20IQER.pdf

**FHEQ:** www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ

**Guidelines on the accreditation of prior learning**
www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/apl/guidance.asp

**Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)**
www.qcda.gov.uk/qualifications/60.aspx

**Programme specifications:** www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/programSpec

**Progress files:** www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/progressFiles

**Qualifications and Curriculum Development Agency (QCDA):** www.qcda.gov.uk

**Student guides to IQER**

Student involvement in Integrated quality and enhancement review:
IQER and the student written submission:

A brief student guide to IQER: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/IQER/sws/sws_student_guide.pdf

Mini guide: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/IQER/sws/sws_mini_guide.pdf, also available as a
printer-friendly poster: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/IQER/sws/sws_mini_guide_poster.pdf

What have other students written? A resource for producing a student written
submission for IQER: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/IQER/sws/IQER_SWS_examples.pdf

**Subject benchmark statements:** www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark

**Unistats:** www.unistats.com

# Section eight: Annexes

## Annex A: QAA's purposes, values and standards

### Purposes

1 To achieve its mission, QAA works in partnership with the providers and funders of higher education, the staff and students in higher education, employers and other stakeholders, to:

- safeguard the student and wider public interest in the maintenance of standards of academic awards and the quality of higher education

- communicate information on academic standards and quality to inform student choice and employer understanding, and to underpin public policy making

- enhance the assurance and management of standards and quality in higher education and promote a wider understanding of the value of well-assured standards and quality

- promote a wider understanding of the nature of standards and quality in higher education, including maintenance of common reference points, drawing on UK, other European, and international practice.

### Values

2 QAA's work is underpinned by the following core values:

### The importance of higher education

- QAA values knowledge, intellectual challenge, imagination, discovery and achievement in higher education; respects the constitutional, intellectual and operational autonomy of higher education providers, and the diversity of institutional mission within the different legislative and educational contexts across the UK; acknowledges the academic calling and the importance of higher education in the personal, professional and economic lives of citizens individually and collectively; values the high international regard in which UK higher education and its awards are held; and recognises the importance of UK engagement in European and other international developments.

### The entitlements of learners

- Students are entitled to a higher education with academic standards that reflect national expectations and awards that meet published specifications; and to fair and equitable treatment in all aspects of their studies. QAA values the participation of students in the assurance of academic standards and quality.

### The significance of the responsibilities of the providers of higher education

- The providers of higher education have the primary responsibility for protecting academic standards and quality; QAA aims to work with the providers in meeting that responsibility. Effective assurance of academic standards and quality is a key indicator of professionalism in higher education and a key guarantor of the student and wider public interest. It also provides the

foundation for continuous improvement and the enhancement of quality. We take as the starting point for our reviews the belief that providers wish and intend to do a good and professional job in meeting their responsibilities as guardians of their academic standards and quality. QAA is neither a regulator nor an inspectorate, and we value the insights and benefits that peer review brings to our audit and review processes. QAA depends on the valuable contribution made by the many hundreds of colleagues from the higher education sector and professional and subject bodies who work with it. We value their skills and diversity and their contribution to peer processes.

**The validity of the public interest in higher education**

- Higher education in the UK is an important contributor to the well-being, interests and prosperity of the country. The public invests significant resources in higher education, and has a legitimate expectation that the standards of higher education qualifications will be maintained and that the quality of provision - notwithstanding diversity of institutional missions and modes of delivery - will allow learners to achieve the necessary standards.

**Standards**

3    Our standards are integrity, professionalism, accountability and openness.

QAA sets itself high standards in all its undertakings.

- **Integrity:** We aim to show impartiality, fairness, independence and honesty in our work. Decisions and judgements - whether positive or critical, welcome or unwelcome - will be evidence-based and transparent, stated clearly, without fear or favour.

- **Professionalism:** We aim to show high professional standards and provide a cost-effective service. We aim to get it right first time and be prompt, courteous and constructive in all our dealings. Where we get something wrong, we will acknowledge this, learn from it and improve our own work. QAA carries out a range of functions in relation to the work of the providers of higher education. In some cases, our role involves the making of public judgements; in some, it involves guiding and encouraging; in some, it involves advising and commenting. In all cases, QAA will conduct itself in a way that is fitting and proportionate both to the function and to the role.

- **Accountability:** QAA is accountable to its subscribers - the higher education institutions - as well as to a wide range of other stakeholders, partners and users of our services and the information we provide. We aim to demonstrate that we use our resources to good effect and with probity and conduct our work with integrity and impartiality; and to ensure that stakeholders are able to depend on the information and advice we provide.

- **Openness:** We aim to be open and approachable; to be transparent in our work and methods, to build confidence and trust among stakeholders, and to provide information about QAA's work to the wider public. We aim to communicate in a clear, consistent and accessible way.

For more information about QAA, *An introduction to QAA (November 2009)* is available on the website at www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/IntroQAA.pdf.

## Annex B: Responsibilities checklist

**College:** **Awarding body(ies):**

Please identify responsibilities for management or for implementation within partnership agreements using the checklist below. The checklist reflects Section six in the handbook. Where the college is fully responsible, or implementation is devolved, please mark the college column. Where the awarding body has full responsibility, mark the awarding body column. Where responsibility is shared or the college implements under awarding body direction, marked the shared column. Where responsibility is devolved to the college or shared, please give references to the college document(s) that show how this is managed or implemented. These may be available in the self-evaluation portfolio or in documents presented subsequently or available during the visit.

| Item | College | Awarding body | Shared | Documentary references |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Identification of local curriculum needs | | | | |
| 2 Strategic development of higher education | | | | |
| 3 Curriculum development | | | | |
| 4 Programme specifications and learning outcomes | | | | |
| 5 Setting assessments | | | | |
| 6 First marking of student assignments | | | | |
| 7 Moderation or second marking of assignments | | | | |
| 8 Giving feedback to students on their assignments | | | | |
| 9 Student recruitment and selection | | | | |
| 10 Monitoring student admission, retention and completion | | | | |
| 11 Reviewing and responding to annual monitoring reviews and module evaluations | | | | |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 12 Quality review of HE provision | | | | |
| 13 Provision for developing staff teaching and assessing skills at HE level | | | | |
| 14 Provision for staff HE subject updating and scholarship | | | | |
| 15 Monitoring the quality of HE teaching and learning | | | | |
| 16 Student admission guidance and induction | | | | |
| 17 Academic tutorial/ review and monitoring /academic guidance | | | | |
| 18 Library and learning resources available to students | | | | |
| 19 Guidance for progression | | | | |
| 20 Liaison with and involvement of employers | | | | |
| 21 Student appeal system | | | | |
| 22 Collecting and acting upon student feedback/opinion | | | | |
| 23 Programme and module information available to students | | | | |
| 24 Public information - for example, on web or in prospectus | | | | |
| 25 Procedures for ensuring the accuracy of public information | | | | |

### Annex C: An indicative programme for a Developmental engagement or Summative review preparatory meeting

1    The agenda below is indicative and QAA considers it the minimum necessary to enable the college, its awarding body(ies) and the coordinator to establish the requirements of the review. The coordinator, the college and its awarding body(ies) may feel it appropriate to include additional items. In practice, the programme for each college may vary.

2    The coordinator should have the opportunity to meet a wider group of staff than those who will be involved directly as nominees or facilitators. This typically happens during the early part of the day, however the coordinator will expect to meet with a smaller core team for the detailed planning. The coordinator will also want to hold a separate meeting with students. QAA will give further guidance about who might attend the preparatory meeting at the briefing.

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

| Time | Activity | Suggested participants |
|------|----------|------------------------|
| 1000 | Overview of the Developmental engagement or Summative review and its place in IQER:<br><br>• a standard presentation about the method<br>• questions from college staff. | • the Principal or a representative and relevant members of the senior management team<br>• staff responsible for managing higher education and/or heads of faculties, schools or sections providing higher education, other staff who deliver higher education<br>• the college's nominees and the facilitator<br>• awarding body representatives, if agreed in advance. |
| 1030 | • how the Developmental engagement or Summative review will operate: clarification of the scope of the review process<br>• questions from college staff<br>• next steps. | • college staff responsible for managing higher education<br>• the college's nominees and/or the facilitator<br>• awarding body representatives, if agreed in advance. |
| 1130 | • the role of students: introductions<br>• purpose of the preparatory meeting<br>• the clarification of the IQER method and the place of the Developmental engagement or Summative review within the process<br>• the clarification of the lines of enquiry for the Developmental engagement or the scope of the Summative review | • questions from students<br>• students<br>• students' representatives, for example, Students' Union officers<br>• college staff with responsibility for liaison with students. |

| 1230 | Lunch | |
|------|-------|---|
| 1330 | Detailed planning, including confirmation of the team's requirements for the visit:<br><br>• questions arising from the initial analysis of the self-evaluation<br>• confirmation that the statistical data are correct and accurate<br>• the reviewers' requests for information to date<br>• establishing the programme of review activities<br>• clarification of the availability of evidence, including student work<br>• 'housekeeping' arrangements<br>• remaining questions from college staff or awarding body representatives<br>• next steps. | • college staff responsible for managing higher education<br>• college's nominees or facilitator<br>• awarding body representatives, if agreed in advance. |
| 1530 | End of meeting | |

## Annex D: An indicative programme for a Developmental engagement or Summative review visit

Indicative programmes for a Developmental engagement and a Summative review visit are set out below. They are provided here primarily to illustrate the balance between meetings with staff, students and other stakeholders, and the time which teams will spend scrutinising evidence in private. In practice, each visit will have a bespoke programme informed by several factors, including the availability of staff and students, the involvement of awarding bodies and the questions the team wishes to explore. The programme will be discussed at the preparatory meeting and confirmed by the coordinator before the visit.

**Developmental engagement visit: Day one**

| Time | Activity |
|------|----------|
| 0830 | The team arrives at the college. |
| 0900 | A brief presentation by the college about its higher education provision. |
| 0915 | The team confirms a detailed work plan for the visit, including questions for staff and students (team only).<br><br>It is recommended that the following meetings with selected staff and awarding bodies, if required, are held on day one:<br>• meeting to discuss Line of enquiry 1<br>• meeting to discuss Line of enquiry 2<br>• meeting to discuss Line of enquiry 3<br>Each meeting should take around 1.5 hours.<br><br>In between meetings the team will scrutinise the evidence, including student work, in preparation for the meeting with students on day two (team only).<br><br>(Lunch and other breaks to be determined by the team.) |
| 1700 | The team summarises the evidence and confirms the schedule for day two. |
| 1800 | The team departs. |

**Developmental engagement visit: Day two**

| Time | Activity |
|------|----------|
| 0830 | The team arrives at the college. |
| 0900 | A meeting with representative college staff to advise of any changes to the proposed programme. |
| 0930 | It is recommended that the following meetings are held on day two:<br>• meeting with selected higher education students<br>• (a meeting with employers may be required, but only if the team cannot obtain sufficient evidence from secondary sources) |

| | • each meeting should take around one hour. |
|---|---|
| | After these meetings, the team will:<br>• hold any further meetings as required, and agreed with the college<br>• continue to scrutinise the evidence (team only).<br><br>(Lunch and other breaks to be determined by the team.) |
| 1700 | The team summarises the evidence and confirms the schedule for day three. |
| 1800 | The team departs. |

**Developmental engagement visit: Day three**

| Time | Activity |
|---|---|
| 0830 | The team arrives at the college. |
| 0900 | A meeting with college staff to advise of any further meetings or evidence required. |
| 0930 | The team confirms that all areas have been addressed, agrees summaries of evidence and identifies good practice and recommendations (team only). |
| 1100 | The coordinator prepares the oral report; other team members amend sections of draft report. |
| 1230 | The coordinator, accompanied by the team, gives an oral report to the college. |
| 1300 | End of visit; the team departs. |

**Summative review visit (for the first and usually the only visit): Day one**

| Time | Activity |
|---|---|
| 0830 | The team arrives at the college. |
| 0900 | A brief presentation by the college about its HE provision. |
| 0915 | The team confirms a detailed work plan for the visit, including questions for staff and students (team and facilitator).<br><br>It is recommended that the following meetings with selected college staff and awarding bodies, if required, are held on day one:<br>• meeting to discuss the management of academic standards<br>• meeting to discuss the management of the quality of learning opportunities<br>• meeting to discuss public information<br>Each meeting should take around 1.5 hours.<br><br>In between meetings the team will scrutinise the evidence, including student work, in preparation for the meeting with students on day two (team only).<br><br>(Lunch and other breaks to be determined by the team.) |
| 1700 | A team meeting (team and facilitator) to summarise the evidence and agree arrangements for day two. |
| 1800 | The team departs. |

**Summative review visit: Day two**

| Time | Activity |
|------|----------|
| 0830 | The team arrives at the college. |
| 0900 | A meeting with representative college staff to advise of any changes to the proposed programme. |
| 0930 | It is recommended that the following meetings are held on day two:<br><br>• meeting with selected higher education students<br><br>• (a meeting with employers may be required, but only if the team cannot obtain sufficient evidence from a secondary sources.)<br><br>Each meeting should take around 1.5 hours.<br><br>After these meetings, the team will:<br><br>• hold any further meetings as required, and agreed with the college<br><br>• continue to scrutinise the evidence (team only).<br><br>(Lunch and other breaks to be determined by the team.) |
| 1700 | A team meeting (team and facilitator) to summarise the evidence and agree arrangements for day three. |
| 1800 | End of visit; the team departs. |

**Summative review visit: Day three**

| Time | Activity |
|------|----------|
| 0830 | The team arrives at the college. |
| 0900 | A meeting with college staff to advise of any further meetings or evidence required. |
| 0930 | The team summarises the evidence and confirms that all areas have been addressed. (Team and facilitator) |
| 1000 | Additional meeting(s) with college staff if required.<br><br>(Each meeting to last no longer than 30 minutes.) |
| 1230 | The coordinator, accompanied by the team, gives a verbal update to the facilitator and the college contact on the progress of the review and the need for any additional evidence to be provided before the provisional judgement meeting. |
| 1300 | End of visit; the team departs. |

## Annex E: Guidance notes on the action plan

1        After a Developmental engagement or a Summative review, the college will be asked to develop an action plan, set out in the format provided by QAA, describing how the college plans to take action on the findings of the review. A template for the action plan can be found below.

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

3        Each point of good practice and each recommendation must be 'SMART' (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound), so that it is capable of being acted upon. It must also be the responsibility of an individual or group, identified by title/role.

4        The action plan forms part of the final version of the report and QAA is contracted by DEL to produce its reports in accordance with the published timelines. It is important, therefore, that the action plan is completed by the college, in consultation with its awarding body(ies), in a timely fashion and returned to QAA by the given deadline.

5        The action plan, its implementation and impact will form part of the evidence base for any future review activity. In the case of the Summative review action plan, it will also constitute a published record of the college's commitment to take forward the findings of IQER.

6        If the college receives a judgement of confidence in the management of its responsibilities for academic standards, the quality of learning opportunities and an evaluation that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of public information, QAA will monitor the implementation of the action plan through the next review at the college. However, if the college receives a judgement of limited or no confidence for either or both of core themes one and two, or no reliance on core theme three, then QAA will carry out a programme of formal follow-up action. This is described in paragraphs 98-101 of the handbook.

7        Deadlines for completion of action plans:

| Number of weeks after the visit to the college | Developmental engagement timeline | Summative review timeline |
|---|---|---|
| + 4 weeks | The college receives the draft report and action plan template. | The college receives the draft report and action plan template. |
| +6 weeks | The college returns the draft report to QAA with comments on factual accuracy. | |
| +8 weeks | The college returns the completed action plan to QAA, signed by the Principal. | The college returns the draft report to QAA with comments on factual accuracy. |

| +9 weeks | QAA checks that the action plan is SMART and covers all of the points of good practice and recommendations.<br><br>QAA appends the completed action plan to the final report and proofs the document. | QAA checks that the action plan is SMART and covers all of the points of good practice and recommendations.<br><br>The college returns the completed action plan to QAA, signed by the Principal. |
|---|---|---|
| +10 weeks | QAA sends the final report including the action plan to the college, its awarding bodies and DEL. | QAA appends the completed action plan to the final report and proofs the document. |
| +15 weeks | | QAA publishes the final report with the completed action plan on its website. |

8    The column headings in the action plan template (below) are:

**Good practice/Essential/Advisable/Desirable recommendation.**

This column is completed by the coordinator and repeats precisely the wording of the good practice or recommendations identified in the conclusions of the report.

**The following columns are completed by the college in conjunction with its awarding bodies:**

**Action to be taken**

Identify what the college proposes to do in response to the good practice or recommendation identified in the report and listed by the coordinator in the action plan. Actions should be specific. Actions such as 'maintain', 'enhance' or 'continue' are difficult to identify a target date for, and consequently may not be completed or evaluated effectively.

**Target date**

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

**Action by**

Identify the role of the person who has responsibility for ensuring that the action has been taken in accordance with the target date. It is helpful to identify a specific role or committee who will take responsibility for the action so they can be held accountable to the target date.

**Success indicators**

Identify how the college and its awarding bodies will know when an action has been successfully undertaken. Again, if there is a specific action and a clear date for completion, it will be easier to identify the success indicators.

**Reported to**

Identify the role of the person who will monitor the success of the action. This may be an individual role or a committee. A clear designation helps to maintain accountability and ensure successful completion of the action plan.

**Evaluation**

This column **must** be completed **before** returning the action plan to QAA. Identify the processes or evidence that will be used by the college to evaluate the actions. Owing to the timescale for completing the action plan, it is not expected that any actions will have actually been completed by this stage. Therefore, identify the anticipated sources of evidence that will show how successful the action has been and what the outcomes of the action are.

**(Participating college) action plan relating to the Developmental engagement in assessment (Month/Year)**

| Good practice | Action to be taken | Target date | Action by | Success indicators | Reported to | Evaluation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| In the course of the Developmental engagement, the team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the college. | | | | | | |
| (EXAMPLE)<br><br>• The extent of employer engagement in the delivery and support of the programmes (paragraphs 12, 13). | (EXAMPLE)<br><br>Establish employer forum and review annually.<br><br>Review and enhance mentor and workplace supervisor support packs annually. | (EXAMPLE)<br><br>July 2010 | (EXAMPLE)<br><br>HE coordinator with programme leaders. | (EXAMPLE)<br><br>Improved engagement with employers; positive evaluations from students on placements; regular communications between mentors and link tutors. | (EXAMPLE)<br><br>HE Forum; Employer forum | (EXAMPLE)<br><br>Annual programme reviews; annual self assessment report; direct feedback from employers at employer forum; student feedback. |

**(Participating college) action plan relating to the Developmental engagement in assessment (Month/Year)**

| Essential | Action to be taken | Target date | Action by | Success indicators | Reported to | Evaluation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The team agreed the following areas where it would be **essential** for the college to take action: | | | | | | |
| (EXAMPLE)<br><br>• The programme descriptions in the HE prospectus and online student handbook should be updated to reflect the current aims and outcomes specified in the 2008-09 programme specification. | (EXAMPLE)<br><br>Ensure all current programme documentation contains accurate information about the programme aims and learning outcomes;<br><br>Ensure all students receive copies of updated information. | (EXAMPLE)<br><br>November 2010 | (EXAMPLE)<br><br>Programme Leader | (EXAMPLE)<br><br>All programme documentation contains accurate information. | (EXAMPLE)<br><br>HE Coordinator | (EXAMPLE)<br><br>Student feedback. |
| | Institute annual checking and sign-off process to ensure all documentation is updated accurately. | July 2010 | HE Coordinator | Annual checking process implemented effectively. | Vice Principal (curriculum); HE Forum | HE self assessment report. |

**(Participating college) action plan relating to the Developmental engagement in assessment (Month/Year)**

| Advisable | Action to be taken | Target date | Action by | Success indicators | Reported to | Evaluation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The team agreed upon a number of areas where the college should be **advised** to take action:<br><br>• [list areas of advisable action individually paragraph XX] | | | | | | |

| Desirable | Action to be taken | Target date | Action by | Success indicators | Reported to | Evaluation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The team agreed the following areas where it would be **desired** to take action:<br><br>• [list areas of desirable action individually paragraph XX] | | | | | | |

## Annex F: Public information about academic standards and quality of learning opportunities

1      The purpose of this annex is to give colleges and IQER teams an indication of the types of information to be considered within IQER's third core theme of public information.

2      Public information means information about the academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities that is in the public domain. Some information will be published by awarding bodies on colleges' behalf; some will be provided by the college and published by external organisations like Unistats or UCAS; and some will be published by the college itself. Colleges should note that teams are interested in existing public information and that colleges are not required to produce additional documentation for reviews.

3      IQER considers whether or not the college has procedures in place that are effective in ensuring that the information the college is responsible for publishing about itself is accurate and complete. An indicative list of this information is provided below. This list reflects the expectations of DEL and QAA with respect to the availability of information about academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. It should be emphasised that this list is only indicative because different colleges will have different responsibilities for publishing information according to their arrangements with awarding bodies. For more information about how teams reach conclusions about the accuracy and completeness of this information, see 'Public information' in the glossary.

4      In respect of core theme three, IQER teams will consider:

- information on the broad college context, for example:

  - mission statement
  - statement of quality assurance processes and procedures
  - strategy for higher education learning and teaching and assessment
  - information about the college's agreements with awarding bodies
  - details of links with employers.

- information about the academic standards and quality of programmes, for example:

  - prospectuses, programme guides or similar
  - programme specifications
  - student handbooks
  - module/unit guides
  - information about the college's and/or its partners' procedures for programme approval, monitoring and review
  - details of accreditation from professional, statutory and regulatory bodies
  - results of internal student surveys
  - arrangements for assessment and external examination procedures
  - the college's policies for student complaints, appeals and representations.

5      IQER is not concerned with:

- the accuracy and completeness of information that is not available to students or other external stakeholders, such as management information (although teams may be interested in colleges' use of this kind of information in the management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities)

- auditing the accuracy of quantitative information

- information about the college published by other organisations, such as awarding bodies.

## Annex G: IQER role descriptions and person specifications

### Role title: Coordinator

**Role purpose**

1    The coordinator manages the Summative review and all Developmental engagements in each of the colleges to which s/he is assigned.

2    Key responsibilities include:

- leading a programme of reviews for QAA

- providing clear briefings to a wide range of college participants on the IQER method and participants' respective responsibilities

- discussing and agreeing with the college, the lines of enquiry and review agenda that form the basis of the reviews

- discussing and agreeing focused review activities with the college and the reviewers to ensure effective use of time

- organising and coordinating review activities to ensure that conclusions, recommendations and judgements are sound and evidence based

- liaising effectively with all stakeholders through face-to-face, telephone, email and written communications to ensure the smooth running of each review

- providing additional training for reviewers, if necessary

- making effective use of QAA's secure electronic folder system throughout the review to ensure that a full evidence base is available to reviewers and QAA staff in a timely manner and is archived promptly

- respecting protocols on confidentiality

- producing high-quality reports that usefully inform all stakeholders of conclusions, recommendations and judgements, where appropriate.

**Person specification**

3    Knowledge and understanding to include:

- current or recent knowledge and understanding of current issues affecting higher education in colleges

- awareness of current higher education teaching methods and curricula

- knowledge and understanding of the assurance of standards and quality

- awareness of the role of professional statutory and regulatory bodies in programme accreditation

- experience of liaison with senior management and a range of staff at other levels.

4      Skills include ability to:

- manage small teams (with experience either in higher or further education or in other employment)

- work within tight timescales and to strict deadlines

- chair meetings

- communicate effectively in face-to-face interaction

- train others in methods of work

- produce clear and succinct reports on time

- word process

- communicate electronically, including emails, attachments and use of web mail

- be flexible and devise sound plans when situations change with little notice.

## Role title: Reviewer

### Role purpose

5      The reviewers contribute to evaluating academic standards and the quality of higher education provision through a peer review process. They engage in a variety of activities designed to gather and analyse evidence so that they can arrive at considered conclusions, recommendations and judgements. These outcomes help the college being reviewed to prepare an action plan to further enhance higher education provision.

6      Key responsibilities include:

- reading, analysing and preparing written commentaries of the self-evaluation submitted by the college and any other documents sent in advance of a review

- adhering to the review schedule agreed between the college and the coordinator

- participating in visits to the college in order to gather, share, test and verify evidence

- drawing conclusions, making recommendations and judgements on the academic standards achieved and the quality of the learning opportunities provided

- recording evidence gathered from a variety of review activities and submitting this to the QAA secure folder in a timely fashion

- drafting sections of the report that are referenced to evidence gathered during the review

- respecting protocols on confidentiality

- contributing to and commenting on the compilation of the report of the review to agreed schedules and deadlines

- being available for the whole period of a review for which they have been selected and committing to complete all processes of a review once they have embarked upon it.

**Person specification**

7    Knowledge and understanding to include:

- current or recent experience, knowledge and understanding of higher education provision

- knowledge and familiarity with the Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points such as those of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies

- for reviews requiring subject expertise, experience of providing higher education-level teaching and learning delivered in colleges or higher education institutions: in the case of industrially or professionally-based reviewers, familiarity with teaching and learning in higher education

- understanding of programme entry requirements and the ability to interpret progression statistics, including withdrawal, transfer and failure rates and destinations data

- familiarity with academic support strategies and the functions of academic tutorials

- experience with examining and/or verification (and preferably external examining or external verification)

- knowledge of the quality assurance processes employed by colleges providing higher education

- familiarity with the standards of higher education awards in colleges and universities in the United Kingdom.

8    Skills include the ability to:

- conduct meetings and interviews with staff

- conduct meetings with a range of current and former groups of students

- write succinctly and coherently

- meet tight timescales and deadlines

- work effectively as a member of a team

- work courteously and professionally

- maintain confidentiality

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

## Role title: Nominee

**Role purpose**

9     The role provides an opportunity for members of a college's staff to consider the quality and standards of higher education across the college and to be part of a team testing the effectiveness of the college's self-evaluation processes. Where colleges are considering revising internal review processes, participation in a Developmental engagement team may contribute to ways in which processes might be revised.

10    Key responsibilities include:

*   reading, analysing and preparing written commentaries of the self-evaluation submitted by the college and any other documents sent in advance of a Developmental engagement

*   adhering to the Developmental engagement schedule agreed between the college and the coordinator

*   participating in the Developmental engagement at the college in order to gather, share, test and verify evidence

*   drawing conclusions and making recommendations on the academic standards achieved and the quality of the learning opportunities provided

*   recording evidence gathered from a variety of review activities and submitting this to the QAA electronic review folder in a timely fashion

*   drafting sections of the report that are referenced to sound evidence gathered during the Developmental engagement

*   respecting protocols on confidentiality

*   contributing to and commenting on the compilation of the report of the review to agreed schedules and deadlines

*   helping the college to draw up its action plan for implementation of the Developmental engagement team's recommendations

*   playing a lead role in the implementation of the action plan within the college

*   being available for the whole period of a Developmental engagement for which they have been selected and committing to complete all processes of a Developmental engagement once they have embarked upon it.

**Person specification**

11    Knowledge and understanding to include:

*   experience, knowledge and understanding of higher education provision in general and within his/her own college

*   understanding of the college structure, policies and procedures for managing and delivering higher education programmes

*   familiarity with the Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points relevant to his/her own area of expertise

- understanding of programme entry requirements and the ability to interpret progression statistics including withdrawal, transfer and failure rates and destinations data

- familiarity with academic support strategies and the functions of academic tutorials

- experience of examining and/or verification (and preferably external examining or external verification).

- understanding quality assurance processes employed by colleges providing higher education and familiarity with higher education programmes.

12   Skills include the ability to:

- conduct meetings with staff

- conduct meetings with a range of current and former groups of students

- write succinctly and coherently

- meet exacting timescales and deadlines

- work effectively as a member of a Developmental engagement team

- continue to work effectively as part of the college team after the Developmental engagement(s) has (have) been completed

- communicate electronically, including emails, attachments and use of web mail

- maintain confidentiality

- influence colleagues within their college and take forward the action plan.

## Role title: Facilitator

**Role purpose**

13   The facilitator ensures the smooth running of the Summative review by acting as the single point of contact between the college staff and the reviewers.

14   Key responsibilities to include:

- providing effective liaison between the reviewers and the college staff

- ensuring that the reviewers obtain accurate, timely and comprehensive information about the educational provision and the college context

- helping the reviewers to come to a clear and accurate understanding of the structures, policies, priorities and procedures of the college, and the nature of the provision under scrutiny

- ensuring that reviewers are provided with appropriate evidence to allow them to reach conclusions, recommendations and judgements

- bringing additional information to the attention of the reviewers and correcting factual inaccuracy

- observing objectively, and communicating clearly with the reviewers and the subject provider

- respecting protocols on confidentiality

- establishing effective relationships with the coordinator and the reviewers, as well as with the college staff

- participating in the college's preparations for the Summative review

- attending all meetings other than those with students and employers, or where judgements are discussed

- monitoring the pattern of review activities

- maintaining regular telephone and/or email contact with the coordinator to ensure that reviewers are receiving the information or documents that they need, particularly for off-site analysis.

15 Knowledge and understanding to include:

- thorough knowledge of the structure, policies, priorities, procedures and practices of their college

- knowledge and experience of working in higher education at a senior level

- experience of quality assurance

- knowledge and understanding of IQER.

16 Skills include the ability to:

- locate cogent information

- maintain confidentiality

- deal conscientiously with detail

- make accurate records of discussions

- meet exacting timescales and deadlines

- work effectively with reviewers

- continue to work effectively as part of the college team after IQER has been completed

- communicate electronically, including emails, attachments and use of web mail

- influence colleagues within their college and take forward the action plan.

## Annex H: QAA training and development policy for review team members and review facilitators

### Introduction

1 This policy applies to reviews in any part of the UK.

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

3 The training and development policy will be published.

### Policy

4 The training will be designed to enable review team members and facilitators, where appropriate, to:

- participate in accessible and relevant training and development that is economical in the use of their time

- experience learning methods that take account of individual learning styles

- participate in training that takes due account of prevailing legislation

- participate fully in training activities that will be relevant to all participants irrespective of gender, age, ethnicity or disability

- hone and apply core skills essential for all of QAA's methods of review through initial training.

### What can reviewers and facilitators expect of QAA?

5 Each review team member and facilitator can expect QAA to:

- provide induction to the work of QAA, its mission, standards and values

- train him/her in specialist skills needed to carry out or facilitate review work; for review team members, this includes effective use of the electronic communications system set up to support reviews

- assist him/her to develop sufficient confidence to undertake or facilitate their first review

- provide training reference material to use after completion of their training

- provide the QAA documents they need to conduct the reviews to which they are assigned

- add them to QAA's mailing list for receipt of relevant new QAA publications and information about QAA's work

- provide them with opportunities to contribute to the evaluation of the methods in which they have reviewed.

6    Assuming successful completion of initial training, QAA will:

- provide review team members with feedback on their performance on their first review and, where appropriate, guidance on their further development

- encourage each team member to engage in the further development of his/her role as reviewer

- take into account experience of prior QAA review training and experience when training review team members and facilitators to carry out QAA review methods that are new to them.

## Benefits for institutions and other organisations subject to review

7    Adherence to this policy should provide the following benefits:

- confidence that review team members and facilitators are properly trained to undertake review work professionally and confidently

- consistent application of each review method

- consistency in the messages about the review method which the review team members and facilitators take back to their institutions.