



# **UK Quality Code for Higher Education**

## **Chapter B4: Supporting student achievement**

**Draft for consultation**

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## About the Quality Code

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) is the definitive reference point for all UK higher education providers.<sup>1</sup> It makes clear what higher education providers are required to do, what they can expect of each other, and what the general public can expect of them. The Quality Code covers all four nations of the UK and all providers of UK higher education operating overseas. It protects the interests of all students, regardless of where they are studying or whether they are full-time, part-time, undergraduate or postgraduate students.

Each Chapter contains a single Expectation, which expresses the key principle that the higher education community has identified as essential for the assurance of academic standards and quality within the area covered by the Chapter. Higher education providers reviewed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) are required to meet all the Expectations. The manner in which they do so is their own responsibility. QAA carries out reviews to check whether higher education providers are meeting the Expectations.<sup>2</sup>

Each Chapter has been developed by QAA through an extensive process of consultation with higher education providers; their representative bodies; the National Union of Students; professional, statutory and regulatory bodies; and other interested parties.

Higher education providers are also responsible for meeting the requirements of legislation and any other regulatory requirements placed upon them, for example by funding bodies. The Quality Code does not interpret legislation, nor does it incorporate statutory or regulatory requirements. Sources of information about other requirements and examples of guidance and good practice are signposted within the Chapter where appropriate. Higher education providers are responsible for how they use these resources.

The Expectation in each Chapter is accompanied by a series of Indicators that reflect sound practice, and through which providers can demonstrate they are meeting the relevant Expectation. Indicators are not designed to be used as a checklist; they are intended to help providers reflect on and develop their regulations, procedures and practices to demonstrate that the Expectations in the Quality Code are being met. Each Indicator is numbered and printed in bold and is supported by an explanatory note that gives more information about it, together with examples of how the Indicator may be interpreted in practice.

The *General introduction*<sup>3</sup> to the Quality Code should be considered in conjunction with this document. It provides a technical introduction for users, including guidance concerning the terminology used and a quick-reference glossary.

## About this Chapter

This publication is a new Chapter of the Quality Code. It incorporates and supersedes the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*), *Section 8: Careers education, information, advice and guidance* (2010). It also incorporates and supersedes those parts of the *Code of practice, Section 3: Disabled students* (2010) relating to supporting student achievement. The evaluation of the Academic Infrastructure and consultation on subsequent changes which resulted in the development of the Quality Code identified the need for the introduction of a Chapter on supporting student achievement.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/qualitycode](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/qualitycode)

<sup>2</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/institutionreports/types-of-review](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/institutionreports/types-of-review)

<sup>3</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/quality-code-introduction.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/quality-code-introduction.aspx).

## **Supporting student achievement**

This Chapter of the Quality Code focuses on the support higher education providers give to students throughout their student experience to enable them to achieve their objectives in their learning. One aspect of this is to equip graduates to meet the fluctuating demands of the current and future employment market, but higher education also offers opportunities for students' wider development. The guidance in this Chapter seeks to ensure that higher education providers have given thought to and developed an approach to supporting student achievement whose quality is adequately assured and which meets the needs of every student. In this endeavour, the quality of the provider's partnership with students will be demonstrated by its students' experience of the support they receive. In this context, support for student achievement includes the services offered by a range of professional services and academic staff beyond the classroom, and provision and deployment of learning resources.

### **Delivery of support through the student journey**

The range of organisations providing UK higher education is diverse, in both nature and size; the student body is also varied, with many different needs and expectations of higher education. Arrangements to support student achievement therefore need to be fit for purpose for the students concerned, and delivery arrangements vary between higher education providers.

This Chapter stresses the importance of integration, coherence and internal collaboration as part of a provider-wide commitment to enabling students to achieve their learning objectives and to develop more broadly from the opportunities offered by higher education. This will be reflected in organisational strategies and will include links between professional support services and academic departments, individual tutors, and wider welfare services, including those supported by student representative bodies.

Students pursue a wide range of subjects in higher education, at different points in their lives, and proceed to an increasingly diverse range of post-study destinations. Consequently, the support and guidance needs of students are diverse and require staff with high-level appropriate skills to provide the necessary services. Students in higher education benefit from clarity about how to access the support and guidance they need. The expansion and diversification of higher education means that the commitment to equality of opportunity and to meeting the needs of students from different backgrounds is an important consideration in terms of accessibility of support provided. This consideration extends to the different modes of study used to engage students, including postgraduates and those who are part-time or learning from a distant location.

### **Moving towards independent learning**

The provision of support is part of assisting students through their educational experience. Enabling and empowering students to achieve and become increasingly independent in their learning is important. An organisational support strategy that focuses on enabling students to overcome barriers that they experience in their learning will effectively prepare them for the transition into higher education and later into the world of work.

Two features are crucial in developing an effective strategy for supporting and guiding students towards developing as independent learners. Firstly, support needs to be targeted towards the needs of every student as an individual. Secondly, providers need to address the substantial challenge posed by the great diversity of students in higher education.

The availability of support for every student is critical. School leavers, mature students and those with dependents, disabled students, and those from overseas, all have different needs for support, guidance and assistance at different stages of their student journey. Requirements of students change through the different stages of their learning programmes as they become increasingly independent in their learning. Successful achievement of the individual student's learning objectives means they are prepared for whatever next steps they choose to take.

## **A holistic approach to support**

Taking account of the great variety of student support needs benefits from a holistic organisational approach to the management of the provision of these services. This means the development, involving senior management and students, of strategies focusing on the removal of impediments to learning and the appropriate deployment of learning resources and, thereby, the building of individual student confidence and unlocking of individual potential.

It is helpful to recognise the continuum of need, from that for generic support for a particular cohort of students, through to the essential, targeted support for particular individuals at risk. Individual students with quite specific needs come from across the whole range. The focus in this Chapter is upon supporting every student in their development. Reference is made to specific groups of students only where particular considerations apply.

Higher education is an instrument for personal change and development. Focusing on the diversity of needs for individual student support necessitates thinking about what is reasonable and proportionate. Modern society has created expectations of 24-hour access and responsiveness, but higher education providers need to seek ways of managing student expectations. Instant responsiveness can encourage students not to take the necessary responsibility as independent learners. Higher education providers find ways to identify, for both staff and students, what support is timely and appropriate.

## **Effectiveness of support**

Students' experience of the support they receive has generally been found to be positive in external reviews of higher education providers. Nevertheless, higher education providers face the challenge of determining why and in what ways their provision of support for higher education students is effective and can be made more so. It is important to target support appropriately and proportionately at both the individual and cohort level. Equally, it is important to consider where the boundaries of responsibility lie between staff and the individual.

Clear communication of the availability of support is crucial in helping individual students to achieve their learning objectives. There may be a temptation to overload students with information at the start of their programme of study; support provision needs to be communicated in a timely manner. The notion of a process of orientation and a series of transitions taking place throughout a student's programme is an important one. Individuals have changing needs for support at each stage.

## Expectation

The Quality Code sets out the following Expectation about supporting student achievement, which higher education providers are required to meet.

**Higher education providers have effective arrangements in place to support all students appropriately in achieving their learning objectives.**

## Indicators of sound practice

### Indicator 1

**Support for student achievement is included in higher education providers' strategic planning.**

A key motivation for participation in higher education is the opportunity it presents to students to fulfil their potential. An organisation-wide commitment to preparing students to identify and make choices in the immediate and long-term is demonstrated through a comprehensive strategic approach to student support.

While the approach to provision of student support by a higher education provider may vary at different levels of the organisation and in different situations, the development and maintenance of a collective understanding of the provider's overarching approach is assisted by clear, defined priorities and objectives. Identifying a member of staff at a senior level with responsibility for student support may be advantageous. This helps to ensure that student support is routinely represented in internal decision-making processes. The provider's approach may be expressed in documents such as corporate plans and strategies for learning, teaching and assessment; employability; widening participation; and research and enterprise. Representation of staff involved in student support, and of students, in associated decision-making forums enables realistic goal-setting and monitoring of progress.

**Higher education providers are responsible for ascertaining which laws and regulations apply to them. To meet the Expectation of this Chapter of the Quality Code, higher education providers may wish to consider the indicative list of reference points, guidance and examples of good practice below.**

QAA (2011) *Outcomes from Institutional Audit: 2007-09: Managing learning opportunities*  
[www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/outcomes-audit-learning-ops.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/outcomes-audit-learning-ops.aspx)

QAA (2011) *Outcomes from Institutional Audit: 2007-09: Student engagement and support*  
[www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/outcomes-from-audit-student-engagement.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/outcomes-from-audit-student-engagement.aspx)

### Indicator 2

**Higher education providers have in place policies and procedures in which responsibilities for student support are clearly defined.**

It is important that all students in higher education have access to appropriate support. Higher education providers are clear about who is responsible for different aspects of delivery, including any partners involved in collaborative arrangements.

It is beneficial to explain within policies and statements the roles of staff involved in different aspects of student support. In formulating policies for student support, higher education providers draw upon the expertise and knowledge of their dedicated staff, as well as students themselves and external stakeholders. Student support policies also provide a vehicle for clarifying how provision can be coordinated so that it is offered consistently and makes optimum use of resources and expertise. Policies and procedures consider fully the diversity of students so that every student can benefit from the provider's provision for support.

Students are made aware of all choices open to them. Impartial advice and support helps students to understand their aptitudes and preferences. It also helps them to reflect on their learning, as well as challenging their ideas about education and work. Students wishing to change programme, discontinue, or transfer to other higher education providers are signposted to clear and explicitly impartial and confidential personal guidance and advice.

Student support is designed to meet students' individual needs. This includes deciding how best to ensure that it is made available at key points in the student experience and in ways that meet the diverse needs of a particular student population. This diversity of student needs is also a reflection of study options becoming broader and more complex. Discussion with students inevitably involves the disclosure of personal information. Such discussion is conducted in an environment where the individual's need for privacy is respected.

### **Indicator 3**

#### **The provision of student support is guided by a commitment to equitable access and outcome.**

The provision of student support is guided by the principle that students are given equitable access to support. Client-centredness and impartiality are particularly important in certain specific areas of support services, such as careers guidance, where the principles are clearly embedded in professional codes of practice and quality frameworks.

Higher education providers recognise that certain students are flagged up at the admissions stage for additional essential support. Another major task is to identify the needs of disabled students who do not formally declare them. Current legislation is based on the principle that educational disadvantage and exclusion are not an inevitable result of impairments or health conditions, but stem from attitudinal and environmental barriers. Higher education providers consistently apply processes for assessing the impact of current and proposed access policies and procedures for disabled students and students disadvantaged because of a protected characteristic.

To identify organisational barriers to learning and achievement, higher education providers involve disabled students and students disadvantaged by other protected characteristics. Potential applicants and current and past students could usefully be included in these discussions in order to anticipate the range of adjustments that may be needed. Higher education providers make available an appropriate level of resource for this engagement.

Higher education providers recognise that students come from a wide range of backgrounds. Students with the same disability may in reality have different requirements and require different support or adjustments. Higher education providers therefore implement their duties in a flexible way that allows students to give their views at different points during the time they are studying at the higher education provider and in a variety of ways.

**Higher education providers are responsible for ascertaining which laws and regulations apply to them. To meet the Expectation of this Chapter of the Quality Code, higher education providers may wish to consider the indicative list of reference points, guidance and examples of good practice below.**

Equality Challenge Unit (2010) *Disability legislation: practical guidance for academic staff (revised)*

[www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/disability-legislation-practical-guidance-for-academic-staff-revised](http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/disability-legislation-practical-guidance-for-academic-staff-revised)

Equality and Human Rights Commission: Guidance for providers of further and higher education

[www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/further-and-higher-education-providers-guidance](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/further-and-higher-education-providers-guidance)

Higher Education Academy (2010) *Inclusive Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*

[www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/inclusion/ltsummit\\_final\\_report](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/inclusion/ltsummit_final_report)

Higher Education Academy and Equality Challenge Unit: Ethnicity, Gender and Degree Attainment

[www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/inclusion/ethnicity/ethnicity](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/inclusion/ethnicity/ethnicity)

Higher Education Academy and UK Council for International Student Affairs: Teaching International Students Project

[www.heacademy.ac.uk/teaching-international-students](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/teaching-international-students)

Higher Education Academy and Equality Challenge Unit (2011) *Improving the degree attainment of black and minority ethnic students*

[www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/improving-attainment-of-bme-students](http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/improving-attainment-of-bme-students)

Equality Challenge Unit (2012) *Student services: supporting LGB students*

[www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/student-services-supporting-lgb-students](http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/student-services-supporting-lgb-students)

Equality Challenge Unit (2012) *Male students: engagement with academic and pastoral support services*

[www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/male-students-engagement-with-academic-and-pastoral-support-services](http://www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/male-students-engagement-with-academic-and-pastoral-support-services)

JISC TechDis: Teaching Inclusively Using Technology

[www.jisctechdis.ac.uk/pages/detail/online\\_resources/teaching\\_inclusively\\_using\\_technology](http://www.jisctechdis.ac.uk/pages/detail/online_resources/teaching_inclusively_using_technology)

#### **Indicator 4**

**Higher education providers promote internal collaboration, collaboration with external partners, and understanding of individual responsibilities in order to provide student support.**

Clarifying the respective responsibilities of programme and dedicated professional services staff will help to meet programme objectives and the needs of individual students in achieving their learning objectives. Clarifying the responsibilities for different aspects of delivery of student support may also extend to policies covering staff who provide pre-entry information, advice and guidance.

The challenge for higher education providers is to ensure joined-up thinking in the provision of support. This means enabling staff to be clear about their individual responsibilities and how these relate to other staff and support services, and the role of student representative bodies. Appropriate and effective support arrangements arise from a coherent and well-understood network of responsibilities, clarity of communication, oversight, monitoring and review.

Collaboration with external partners involves both support agencies and providers of work-based learning, among other bodies. Their roles are clearly defined. Higher education providers make available to partners sufficient, appropriate and timely information. Partners need to be informed fully enough to understand the diverse needs and expectations of students. Enabling partners to provide feedback on their experience of involvement in the student learning experience contributes to the provider's own monitoring and evaluation of its provision. (For more detail, see *Chapter B10: Management of collaborative arrangements.*)

#### **Indicator 5**

**Higher education providers make information available to students about the extent and range of support services provided before, during and after their registration.**

Higher education providers have strategies for communications that ensure that information about student support is provided in a structured and timely way. To target support and guidance effectively, careful consideration is given to principles governing when and how it is given, and to whom. From a student perspective, the approach needs to be seamless between all those within the provider who contribute, including professional services, academic departments and student representative bodies, with work in partnership with students to enhance it. Using student feedback effectively helps to inform the provision of appropriate support and information about it.

Students who are fully informed about the support available to them are more likely to make effective use of the services and resources available. Students benefit from being clearly informed about how to access and utilise the support services available to them. Consistent information about the level of service and resources available within the higher education provider is given to both prospective and registered students. Consistency, impartiality, timeliness, accuracy and confidentiality are important principles that apply to student support and guidance.

A starting point for the higher education provider is the data it has about the variety of students completing an application. Information about a provider's programmes and processes to support potential and current students is needed to enable informed decisions on appropriate applications and the routes and options taken during the programme. Support is required to varying degrees during the whole of the student's time in higher education. A clear division of responsibilities between information providers will help students to be effectively directed towards different sources of support appropriate to their needs and circumstances.

Electronic communication is becoming increasingly complex. It is a vital component of communicating with students, supporting them and providing them with the information they need. Higher education providers develop protocols governing the use of electronic communication, including what is and what is not appropriate between staff and students. Increasingly, students expect to receive information electronically rather than in paper form. While this can be more efficient and direct, there may be problems of consistency of

practice, particularly at programme and module level, of which higher education providers need to be aware.

The provision of information is addressed in Part C: Information about higher education provision. *Chapter B2: Admissions* addresses student recruitment and admission in more detail.

**Higher education providers are responsible for ascertaining which laws and regulations apply to them. To meet the Expectation of this Chapter of the Quality Code, higher education providers may wish to consider the indicative list of reference points, guidance and examples of good practice below.**

Teachability project: Creating accessible information about courses or programmes of study for disabled students

[www.teachability.strath.ac.uk/chapter\\_1/tableofcontents1.html](http://www.teachability.strath.ac.uk/chapter_1/tableofcontents1.html)

Action on Access (2011) *Disability Focus Guide - Widening participation and disability*

[http://actiononaccess.org/wp-content/files\\_mf/wpdisfocusguide.pdf](http://actiononaccess.org/wp-content/files_mf/wpdisfocusguide.pdf)

#### **Indicator 6**

**Higher education providers have policies, practices and systems to actively support students in making a successful transition into higher education.**

The student's experience of enrolment is likely to colour their feelings about the decision they have made to apply and be admitted to the provider and their commitment to it. A sense of having a recognised identity and of being welcomed as an individual is an important component of making an effective transition into higher education. At best, this can lead to a rapid adjustment to the provider's learning and social environment and to academic progress.

Higher education providers have information systems in place that are accessible to all staff with responsibilities for welcoming, registering and informing students of essential next steps they need to take. Particular consideration is given to the experience of students studying at a partner organisation through a collaborative arrangement. Many students have a dual identity with both the organisation with whom they study, such as a further education college, and the body which awards their degree, diploma or certificate. Any access to services and resources at the degree-awarding body's facilities for students studying at collaborative partners is made clear at enrolment, as are the rights and responsibilities of the individual student. (For more detail, see *Chapter B10: Management of collaborative arrangements*.)

Higher education providers commonly set aside specific time for induction programmes. The precise nature of induction programmes is appropriately varied according to subject and organisational needs. The identity of place for students is important in enabling their appropriate use of facilities and resources. It is easy for students to feel excluded if they are unclear about where they need to go to access the support they need.

Support at the induction stage includes the provision of clear and accurate timetables for students' academic commitments at this stage. The information is available in time for students to take steps to manage the competing demands on their time. Students need to know where to go, when and for what. Appropriate staff are able to articulate and explain timetabling intricacies to all students, and when and how timetable changes are notified.

Responsibilities for induction will be delegated by the higher education provider in different ways. However, the way in which students are informed about the academic and personal support available to them needs to be given careful consideration. Higher education providers consider the issues of timeliness and what is proportionate; what is required by the student now, in order for them to manage their transition. It is important not to overload students with information they do not need. Consideration is also given to managing the induction of students who arrive too late to take part in existing induction provision.

Induction is an ongoing process for students and is unlikely to be complete within a defined period of time at the start of their programme. Effective induction is most likely to result in the student's successful adaptation to their new environment and their ability to stay to complete their programme.

See also *Chapter B2: Admissions* and *Chapter B3: Learning and teaching*. For further discussion of induction arrangements for research degree students, see *Chapter B11: Research degrees*.

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National Union of Students (NUS) (2012) *Student Experience Research Part 4: First Year Student Experience*  
[www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/student-experience-research-12-part-4.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/student-experience-research-12-part-4.aspx)

QAA Scotland Enhancement Themes: First Year: Engagement and Empowerment  
[www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/enhancement-themes/completed-enhancement-themes/first-year](http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/enhancement-themes/completed-enhancement-themes/first-year)

#### **Indicator 7**

**Higher education providers ensure that academic progression and completion are actively supported.**

The provision of academic support for every student is treated as a partnership between the staff and students involved, with information on individual cases and organisational facilities and procedures shared appropriately. Responsibilities for student support within a higher education provider are inevitably dispersed through a complex network of services and individual staff. Effective coordination of this support is a challenge that will involve all staff, in both professional services and academic departments.

A changing environment for individual students is managed with care and sensitivity. In developing academic support and guidance structures and procedures, higher education providers ensure that there are accessible and clearly communicated systems in place to enable students to discuss any specific issues in relation to their learning objectives and academic progression. There is effective partnership and communication between programme-based staff giving academic support and specialist services to ensure that relevant expertise is harnessed for the benefit of individual students.

It is usually in the best interests of both the individual student and the higher education provider that students complete their programme of study. However, for a variety of reasons some students may wish to take time out from their programme or change their mode of

study, while others leave before completing their studies. Higher education providers develop clear strategies to manage individual cases. Most commonly, students who leave do so in the early stages of their programme, again for many different reasons. However, early identification of an individual's dissatisfaction, for whatever reason, provides the possibility of appropriate intervention with support and guidance. For this reason, robust systems for academic and personal support are important. Personal contact with individual members of staff helps students to make sound decisions about their future.

Higher education providers have systems for academic and personal support that facilitate ongoing support at the level of the individual student. These systems are supported by clear communication strategies, enabling the harnessing of additional sources of guidance, both from within an academic department and from specialist services elsewhere in the higher education provider.

As is emphasised under Indicator 6, induction is an ongoing process. It becomes particularly important again during the student's transition between semesters and years of their programme when academic demands are likely to change. Higher education providers consider how best to foster this successful ongoing adaptation. Strengthening and encouraging networks among peer groups to bridge terms and years may be assisted through electronic communication. Timely provision of clear and accurate timetabling information helps students prepare for the demands of their programme.

The provision of services supporting student health and wellbeing forms part of a suite of support for students to enable them to achieve their learning objectives. In many larger higher education providers these services will be in-house, while in smaller ones they may be outsourced.

Higher education providers ensure that both students and staff are fully informed about the nature of these services and how to access them. Staff know how and when to refer students to these services. There are clear lines of communication between academic departments and providers of services supporting student health and wellbeing, with due regard to issues of confidentiality.

**Higher education providers are responsible for ascertaining which laws and regulations apply to them. To meet the Expectation of this Chapter of the Quality Code, higher education providers may wish to consider the indicative list of reference points, guidance and examples of good practice below.**

Universities UK (2002) *Student Services: Effective approaches to retaining students in higher education*

[www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/publications/documents/services.pdf](http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/publications/documents/services.pdf)

Higher Education Academy (2012) *Building student engagement and belonging in Higher Education at a time of change: final report from the What Works? Student Retention and Success programme*

[www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/retention/what\\_works\\_final\\_report.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/retention/what_works_final_report.pdf)

QAA (2009) *Personal development planning: guidelines for institutional policy and practice in higher education*

[www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/personal-development-planning-guidance-for-institutional-policy-and-practice-in-higher-education.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/personal-development-planning-guidance-for-institutional-policy-and-practice-in-higher-education.aspx)

Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA)

[www.recordingachievement.org](http://www.recordingachievement.org)

QAA Scotland Enhancement Themes: Responding to student needs  
[www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/enhancement-themes/completed-enhancement-themes/responding-to-student-needs](http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/enhancement-themes/completed-enhancement-themes/responding-to-student-needs)

## Indicator 8

### **Higher education providers' support facilitates student progression to employment and further study.**

The employability of graduates is commonly used as a measure of organisational success. Higher education providers have clear, coordinated, well-communicated strategies for developing students' employability. In developing such strategies, they will be clear about what they want their students and graduates to accomplish. The strategies adopted by a higher education provider depend on its specific student profile, programme portfolio and geographical location, and are likely to involve a mix of curricular, co-curricular and extra-curricular approaches.

Delivery of these employability strategies is adequately resourced, managed and monitored. Identifying a member of staff at a senior level with responsibility for employability and careers education, information, advice and guidance can help ensure a holistic approach, realistic goal-setting and the monitoring of progress. Higher education providers ensure that careers and employability specialists, academic and professional services staff, employers, professional bodies, and students and graduates, including alumni, contribute as appropriate to the development and delivery of the strategies for employability.

Careers education, information, advice and guidance are important components of a higher education employability strategy. Staff and external agents who design and deliver education, information, advice and guidance are appropriately informed about the local, regional, national and international graduate labour market and educational theory, and have access to education and training or continuous professional development appropriate to their role. Students are able to access appropriate, well-informed careers advice and impartial, student-centred, confidential careers guidance. Higher education providers may also want to consider the role of careers coaching.

Careers education may be taught via discrete modules or embedded across a programme of study. It may be led, supported and delivered by professional careers and employability staff, academics, other support staff, and external agents, as appropriate. Programme designers consider defining learning outcomes that are cognate with the aims and objectives of both the academic programme and the higher education provider's employability strategy.

Personal development planning (PDP) is an important part of skills development. PDP helps students identify their personal, academic and employability development needs, reflect on their experiences and record their achievements. When embedded into academic programmes, it is most effective when explicitly linked to becoming successful in the workplace. Higher education providers consider how employability activities may be recognised.

Contact with employers and experience of the workplace can help develop employability skills, inform career planning, showcase students' skills to employers, and improve both confidence and academic grades. Higher education providers consider how they can best facilitate interaction with the world of work, which might include the use of technology, campus presentations, alumni careers events, employer input into the curriculum, mentoring, recruitment fairs, work shadowing, term-time and vacation work, work-based learning in the curriculum, and graduate internships.

Extra-curricular activities and volunteering can also develop skills and experiences that employers value highly and which are of importance in a wider context after graduation. The involvement of student representative bodies and societies and the local community helps to maximise the opportunities available to students.

Higher education providers consider the development of enterprise skills by students. Such skills are relevant for graduates planning to enter employment, as well as those who intend to develop a business. Providers may also consider what additional support is available to those who do wish to set up an enterprise, such as business mentoring or the provision of start-up facilities.

Higher education providers determine how best to make services, resources and opportunities available to those who need them. This includes the role of technologies in ensuring that careers information, careers education, careers advice, employer contact and information about opportunities are accessible, as appropriate, to all students, to specific groups, and to the provider's graduates.

Higher education providers may consider how they can best demonstrate the quality of their employability, careers education, advice and guidance provision.

**Higher education providers are responsible for ascertaining which laws and regulations apply to them. To meet the Expectation of this Chapter of the Quality Code, higher education providers may wish to consider the indicative list of reference points, guidance and examples of good practice below.**

Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS)  
[www.agcas.org.uk](http://www.agcas.org.uk)

Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR)  
[www.agr.org.uk/](http://www.agr.org.uk/)

ASET - the Placement and Employability Professionals' Body  
[www.asetonline.org](http://www.asetonline.org)

Council for Industry and Higher Education  
[www.cihe.co.uk](http://www.cihe.co.uk)

Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR)  
[www.hear.ac.uk](http://www.hear.ac.uk)

The matrix Standard  
[www.matrixstandard.com/the-standard/the-standard](http://www.matrixstandard.com/the-standard/the-standard)

QAA Scotland Enhancement Themes: Employability  
[www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/enhancement-themes/completed-enhancement-themes/employability](http://www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/enhancement-themes/completed-enhancement-themes/employability)

Higher Education Academy (HEA)  
[www.heacademy.ac.uk/employability](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/employability)

### Indicator 9

**Higher education providers ensure that all members of staff who provide students with support and guidance, as appropriate to their role, are trained, supported and resourced.**

Staff from across the higher education provider are involved in providing student support at various stages of the student experience. The range of staff involved include, for example, recruitment and admissions staff, academic teaching staff, administrators who have contact with students, personal tutors and research supervisors, and the staff of specialist services, such as librarians. Staff need to recognise and understand their particular involvement in giving support and guidance. The higher education provider ensures that all providers of support have clear, effective and appropriate mechanisms for liaising with, and referring students to, other internal or external expert/professional sources of information and assistance.

Appropriate expertise can be supported through continuing professional development offered through induction programmes, teaching and learning support courses, staff development programmes, and through networking systems such as discussion groups. Staff whose primary role is the delivery of student support are properly trained and up to date in the latest developments. In this respect, higher education providers benefit from encouraging and supporting staff to obtain an appropriate professional qualification and to maintain their expertise through continuing professional development.

Induction programmes for all new academic staff include information about the entitlements of disabled students and students with other protected characteristics, and the support that staff can expect in contributing to the development of an inclusive organisational culture.

Continuing professional development for staff who teach and support learning is covered in more detail in *Chapter B3: Learning and teaching*.

**Higher education providers are responsible for ascertaining which laws and regulations apply to them. To meet the Expectation of this Chapter of the Quality Code, higher education providers may wish to consider the indicative list of reference points, guidance and examples of good practice below.**

Association for Learning Development in Higher Education (ALDinHE)  
[www.aldinhe.ac.uk](http://www.aldinhe.ac.uk)

### Indicator 10

**Higher education providers ensure there are appropriately maintained physical and virtual learning resources and learning environments.**

Higher education providers devise strategies for the provision and deployment of learning resources that are fit for purpose and accessible in meeting the academic needs of their wide variety of students. This includes the provision and maintenance of adequate computing and library facilities; physical and digital information resources; the range of necessary specialist facilities such as laboratories, practice rooms, sports equipment and facilities; and social space. Higher education providers need to use resources of capital and estate effectively.

Higher education providers assure themselves that they have taken properly into account the needs, not only of full-time, residential students without specific requirements, but those

of students who are part-time, mature, with families and with disabilities. Careful consideration is given to the issue of access to services and resources from off-campus and to the opening hours of on-campus facilities in the case, for example, of part-time students for whom weekend and evening access to resources may be necessary.

The development of information and communication technology facilities and services, the virtual learning environment and other learning resources systems are fully accessible and inclusive and cater for a wide range of potential entitlements.

Formal links exist between academic departments and providers of learning resources, such as the library, to ensure that appropriate resources are provided in the correct format, quantity and at the right time to meet students' learning objectives, and that staff from the professional services are able to contribute to programme development, monitoring and evaluation.

#### **Indicator 11**

**Higher education providers ensure that students are supported to acquire appropriate skills to support their learning and transferable skills which will enable their progression into the workplace or into further study.**

Higher education providers ensure that all students have the opportunity to enhance their academic learning skills to support retention and progression and lifelong learning requirements. This includes support in effective use of the physical and digital learning resources provided, how to manage and use information, research skills and how to study; for some students, support in numeracy and literacy will also be required.

Higher education providers consider how the virtual learning environment can be used to offer support to students who are based away from the campus for part or all of their time.

Responsibility for ensuring that opportunities for additional support are signposted at appropriate times and taken up is shared between professional services and academic staff; partnership working is essential.

Higher education providers support students in the safe and effective use of specialist facilities and laboratories.

**Higher education providers are responsible for ascertaining which laws and regulations apply to them. To meet the Expectation of this Chapter of the Quality Code, higher education providers may wish to consider the indicative list of reference points, guidance and examples of good practice below.**

JISC: Learning Literacies in a Digital Age  
[www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/projects/elearningllida.aspx](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/projects/elearningllida.aspx)

Universities and Colleges Information Systems Association (UCISA) (2011) *Engaging hearts and minds Best Practice Guide*  
[www.ucisa.ac.uk/publications/engaging.aspx](http://www.ucisa.ac.uk/publications/engaging.aspx)

JISC (2010) *Digital information seekers: How academic libraries can support the use of digital resources*  
[www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/briefingpapers/2010/bpdigitalinfoseekerv1.aspx](http://www.jisc.ac.uk/publications/briefingpapers/2010/bpdigitalinfoseekerv1.aspx)

## Indicator 12

**Higher education providers ensure that the provision of student support forms part of its quality assurance processes and management of enhancement activities.**

Support for student achievement will be incorporated within the higher education provider's quality assurance processes as part of both the academic and professional services provision. Quality assurance and enhancement enable the higher education provider to take account of relevant external benchmarks and national quality frameworks.

The data available to higher education providers include both those generated internally and externally. These are valuable in informing the development of support services and making changes to the existing provision. Higher education providers ensure that diversity data and equality impact assessments are used to inform the development of its student support provision, noting in particular its use by students disadvantaged by protected characteristics and their views of its services.

The provision of student support is dynamic and in need of continuous updating if it is to meet the aspirations of students. Higher education providers review student support provision regularly to promote continuous improvement. To this end, providers have clear procedures explaining when and how this is to happen. Guidance is given about who will be involved and how feedback and participation by key stakeholders - including students, employers, academic staff and professional bodies - contribute to the review process.

Reviews of provision may result in explicit action plans being published which identify responsibilities and a timeline against which progress is monitored. To enable services to continue to meet the changing needs of students, the outcomes of any review are discussed at an organisational level. Higher education providers have a clear definition of responsibilities so that support needs can be met in terms of resource allocation.

To ensure that provision of support services meets the needs of students, higher education providers may collect data centrally and/or through academic departments. Students in different subject disciplines will have differing needs of support. Higher education providers explore provision which is tailored to meet these needs.

Quality assurance and enhancement may be used to contribute to and strengthen the practices identified in the Indicators. In order to foster a culture of quality enhancement, higher education providers reflect on the ways that they identify and disseminate good practice in the provision of student support.

The involvement of students in quality systems is addressed in *Chapter B5: Student engagement*.

**Higher education providers are responsible for ascertaining which laws and regulations apply to them. To meet the Expectation of this Chapter of the Quality Code, higher education providers may wish to consider the indicative list of reference points, guidance and examples of good practice below.**

AMOSSHE - the Student Services Organisation: Value and Impact Toolkit  
[www.amoshe.org/viptoolkit](http://www.amoshe.org/viptoolkit)

# Appendix 1: The Expectation and Indicators

## The Expectation

The Quality Code sets out the following Expectation about supporting student achievement, which higher education providers are required to meet.

**Higher education providers have effective arrangements in place to support all students appropriately in achieving their learning objectives.**

## The Indicators of sound practice

### Indicator 1

Support for student achievement is included in higher education providers' strategic planning.

### Indicator 2

Higher education providers have in place policies and procedures in which responsibilities for student support are clearly defined.

### Indicator 3

The provision of student support is guided by a commitment to equitable access and outcome.

### Indicator 4

Higher education providers promote internal collaboration, collaboration with external partners, and understanding of individual responsibilities in order to provide student support.

### Indicator 5

Higher education providers make information available to students about the extent and range of support services provided before, during and after their registration.

### Indicator 6

Higher education providers have policies, practices and systems to actively support students in making a successful transition into higher education.

### Indicator 7

Higher education providers ensure that academic progression and completion are actively supported.

### Indicator 8

Higher education providers' support facilitates student progression to employment and further study.

### Indicator 9

Higher education providers ensure that all members of staff who provide students with support and guidance, as appropriate to their role, are trained, supported and resourced.

### Indicator 10

Higher education providers ensure there are appropriately maintained physical and virtual learning resources and learning environments.

**Indicator 11**

Higher education providers ensure that students are supported to acquire appropriate skills to support their learning and transferable skills which will enable their progression into the workplace or into further study.

**Indicator 12**

Higher education providers ensure that the provision of student support forms part of its quality assurance processes and management of enhancement activities.

## Appendix 2: Membership of the advisory group for this Chapter

<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Affiliation</b>
Jayne Aldridge	Deputy Director Student Services	Kingston University
Dr John Barkham	Specialist writer	
Harriet Barnes	Development Officer	QAA
Julie Berry	University Librarian	University of Salford
Janet Bohrer	Assistant Director	QAA
Dr Claire Carney	Head of Enhancement	QAA Scotland
Allison Cole-Stutz	Dean of Students	Richmond University, the American International University in London
Caryl Davies	Acting Director of Student Support	Aberystwyth University
Ruth Drysdale	Programme Manager, e-learning	JISC
Julie Garrigan	Higher Education Advanced Practitioner	Accrington and Rossendale College
Carl Gilleard	Chief Executive	Association of Graduate Recruiters
Dr Michael Gilmore	Academic Registrar	Durham University
Dr Sarah Gilroy	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)	University of Chichester
Nicola Hannam	Director, Education and Skills	The Science Council
Chris Jackson	Communications and Marketing Manager	Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services
Dr Karen King	Senior Teaching Fellow	Queen's University Belfast
Gary Loke	Head of Policy	Equality Challenge Unit
Rob Macpherson	Network Leader: Business and Leisure	University of the Highlands and Islands
David Malcolm	Head of Social Policy	National Union of Students
Maja Maricevic	Head of Higher Education	British Library
Dr Janette Myers	Senior Lecturer in Student Learning and Support	St George's, University of London
Alyson Twyman	Manager, Career Development Services	Cardiff Metropolitan University
Dr Andrew West	Director of Student Services Chair - AMOSSHE	University of Sheffield

**QAA 500 10/12**

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education  
Southgate House  
Southgate Street  
Gloucester  
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000  
Fax 01452 557070  
Email [comms@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:comms@qaa.ac.uk)  
Web [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)