

Review for Educational Oversight: Monitoring process

1 Purpose of the monitoring process

1.1 Review for Educational Oversight (REO) consists of periodic reviews, an annual return and interim monitoring visits between reviews. The annual return and the monitoring visit are an integral part of the overall review process; they will serve as a short check on the provider's continuing management of academic standards, the management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities, and the information it publishes about its academic provision. The annual return will be an opportunity to reflect upon developments made in the management of academic standards and quality by the provider since the previous review or monitoring visit, and for QAA to note any matters which will be of particular interest to the team that conducts the provider's next review or monitoring visit.

1.2 The monitoring process has a developmental aspect, in that it will also serve to support providers in working with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code).¹ The Quality Code gives all higher education providers a shared starting point for setting, describing and assuring the academic standards of their higher education awards and programmes and the quality of the learning opportunities they provide.

1.3 Significant changes in circumstances, or complaints or concerns raised about the provider, may trigger a full review instead of a monitoring visit (see sections 4 and 5).

2 Overview of the monitoring process

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

2.2 Based on the annual return, QAA will determine whether a short monitoring visit or a full review visit is necessary (see paragraph 2.14 and section 4). Providers who make commendable progress in one monitoring visit may not be required to receive a monitoring visit the following year.

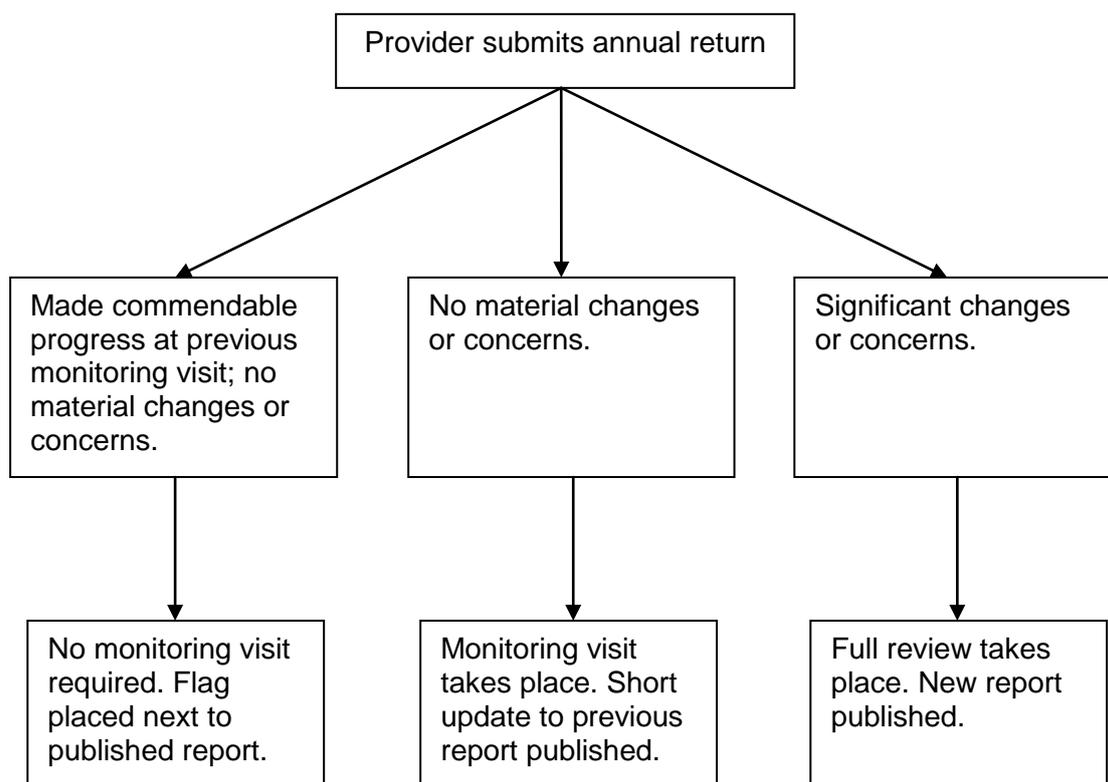
2.3 The monitoring visit will result in a short update to the published report.² If a full review takes place, a new report will be published.

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

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality/pages/default.aspx

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

Flow chart: the monitoring process



The annual return

2.5 The annual return will normally be submitted nine months after the previous QAA visit. However, QAA should be notified immediately of any material changes of circumstances (see section 4 for details of material changes). If a provider does not have a monitoring visit in one year, the annual return will be due one year after the previous return.

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

2.8 The provider is required to update QAA on:

- current programmes offered, awarding bodies/organisations and student numbers
- any major strategic or material changes since the last QAA team visit (see section 4)
- actions taken to address the good practice and recommendations in the action plan, or subsequent developments
- actions taken to address any recommendations in other external reports since the REO (such as awarding organisation or professional, statutory or regulatory body reports)
- progress in working with relevant external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education
- engagement of students in quality assurance processes.

2.9 The annual return will take the form of a short briefing paper, together with links to key documents that provide evidence of any action taken in response to all previous good practice and recommendations (see Annex 2).

2.10 In the first year following a full REO, the annual return should report in detail on how the provider has effectively implemented the action plan in response to the review report. Providers should supply evidence that the actions have been implemented effectively.

2.11 Providers should maintain the action plan on an ongoing basis, to ensure continual monitoring, review and enhancement of their higher education provision. In subsequent years, the monitoring visit will assess the effectiveness of the provider's actions to support continuous improvement. The annual return is the main mechanism by which the provider can communicate to QAA that it is continuing to evaluate and enhance its management of academic standards and quality.

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

2.13 Providers should engage students in their quality assurance processes. Students may be involved in implementing the action plan and/or in measuring the outcomes of actions taken. Providers should reflect on the effectiveness of their processes to support student engagement in the annual return.

2.14 The provider's annual return and supporting evidence will be read by a QAA Officer. QAA may decide that a full review visit is required instead of, or following, a monitoring visit if:

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

The monitoring visit

2.15 The monitoring visit will last for one day, and will normally include meetings with the provider's staff and students. The monitoring team will normally consist of a review coordinator and one reviewer. The team will produce a short update to the existing report that will comment on:

- any changes since the last review
- the progress that has been made against the good practice and recommendations made in the most recent QAA report for the provider
- progress on working with external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education
- any matters that should be followed up in the next monitoring/review visit
- a conclusion on the progress made in responding to the previous review or monitoring visit.

Table 1: Indicative timeline for the monitoring process

Time +/- visit	Actions required
-3 months	Provider submits electronic copies of the annual return and supporting evidence to QAA.
-3 months	The QAA Review Support Officer (RSO) reads the annual return and determines whether a monitoring visit will take place or whether a full review ³ is required. If the monitoring visit is to take place, the QAA administrator confirms the monitoring team to the provider, and agrees the date of the visit. The QAA administrator notifies the provider's awarding bodies/organisations of the visit.
-1 month	The monitoring team analyses the annual return and prepares its agenda for the monitoring visit.
-2 weeks	The review coordinator agrees the arrangements for the visit with the provider, and copies in the awarding bodies/organisations.
0 weeks	The monitoring visit takes place. The monitoring team visits the provider, meets with staff and students, and considers any other evidence provided.
+1 weeks	The monitoring team drafts the update to the report, and the coordinator sends it to the QAA RSO for editing.
+2 weeks	The update is edited by the QAA RSO and proofread by the Multimedia Team. The coordinator then sends the update to the provider and its awarding bodies/organisations for comment.
+4 weeks	The provider returns comments on factual accuracy to QAA. Comments from awarding bodies/organisations should be incorporated into the provider's comments.
+5 weeks	The coordinator discusses the provider's comments with the reviewer and QAA RSO and makes final amendments to the update.
+6 weeks	QAA publishes the outcome on the QAA website as an addendum to the previous review report.

3 Outcomes of the process

3.1 Conclusions reflect the provider's continuing management of academic standards, management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities, and the information it publishes about its academic provision. An overall conclusion will be graded as follows:

- the provider is making commendable progress
- the provider is making acceptable progress
- the provider is making progress but further improvement is required
- the provider is not making acceptable progress.

The requirements for the annual monitoring process are defined in Annex 1.

3.2 Providers should engage effectively with relevant external reference points, including the Quality Code, to manage their higher education. They should actively engage

³ If a full review is required, the process will be followed as outlined in the REO handbook. The review cycle will then begin again.

students in quality assurance processes. Monitoring teams may identify good practice, or may make recommendations if providers are not managing these responsibilities effectively.

3.3 Academic standards and quality must be maintained in order for a provider to pass the monitoring process. Where there is evidence to demonstrate that a provider is making commendable progress (see Annex 1), the next monitoring process will take place in two years' time,⁴ unless the provider undergoes a material change in circumstances or other concerns are raised about the provider's management of its academic provision.

3.4 Where action plans have not been implemented fully or have not been effective in all areas, further action will be required to maintain educational oversight.

- Where the provider is making progress but **further improvement is required**, the provider will be required to submit a new action plan within 30 days of the visit. In order to maintain educational oversight, the provider should request a full review to take place within **six months** of publication of the outcome of the monitoring process.
- Where the provider is **not making acceptable progress**, the provider will be required to submit a new action plan within 30 days of the visit. In order to maintain educational oversight, the provider should request a full review to take place within **three months** of the publication of the outcome of the monitoring process.

3.5 A draft of the monitoring team's findings will be sent to the provider for comment on factual accuracy. The final update will be shared with the UK Border Agency (UKBA) and the provider's awarding bodies/organisations, and will be published on the QAA website.

4 Significant changes in circumstances

4.1 Any of the following material changes will automatically trigger a full review in place of the next monitoring visit. Changes should be reported from the last QAA review or monitoring visit:

- an increase in total student numbers (international and/or domestic) by more than 50 places or 25 per cent, whichever is greater
- merger with another college or acquisition of a new branch that is planned to be included in the existing UKBA sponsorship arrangement
- a change of 50 per cent or more on the type of provision/courses offered, including changes of awarding body/organisation.

4.2 The following changes will be considered at the next monitoring round, which may mean that the monitoring visit requires additional time, at additional cost:

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

Notification of three or more of these changes will trigger a full review instead of the monitoring visit.

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

5 Concerns about the standards and quality of higher education

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

5.2 QAA can investigate concerns about:

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

5.3 Concerns may be followed up through educational oversight reviews or as a separate process. Further information about the concerns process can be found on the QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/complaints/concerns/pages/default.aspx.

Annex 1: Conclusions for the Review for Educational Oversight monitoring process

Teams will draw a conclusion on the progress that has been made by the provider against their action plan and on working with relevant external reference points, following the criteria below. Conclusions reflect the provider's continuing management of academic standards, management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities, and the information it produces about the learning opportunities they offer.

The provider is making commendable progress	The provider is making acceptable progress	The provider is making progress but further improvement is required	The provider is not making acceptable progress
The provider is making commendable progress in response to the good practice and recommendations of the previous review.	The provider is making acceptable progress in response to the good practice and recommendations of the previous review.	The provider is making progress in response to the good practice and recommendations of the previous review but further improvement is required.	The provider is not making acceptable progress in response to the good practice and recommendations of the previous review.
All actions have been implemented fully and have led to improvements in the provider's management of its higher education.	Most actions have led to improvement. Areas that have not been addressed fully do not have the potential to put academic standards or quality at risk.	Areas that have not been addressed fully or effectively have the potential to put academic standards and/or quality at risk and/or	Areas that have not been addressed fully or effectively currently put academic standards and/or quality at risk.
The provider demonstrates highly effective engagement with relevant external reference points, including the Quality Code.	The provider demonstrates appropriate engagement with relevant external reference points, including the Quality Code.	the provider demonstrates insufficient engagement with relevant external reference points, including the Quality Code and/or	
Information produced by the provider for their intended audiences about the learning opportunities they offer is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.	Information produced by the provider for their intended audiences about the learning opportunities they offer is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.	improvement is required to ensure information produced by the provider for their intended audiences about the learning opportunities they offer is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.	

Outcome of the monitoring visit			
<p>The provider will not receive a monitoring visit in the following year, if no material changes have taken place which may require a full review. (If a full review is due the following year, there is no exemption.)</p>	<p>The provider will receive a monitoring visit or full review in the following year.</p>	<p>To maintain educational oversight, the provider must apply for and undergo a full review within six months of the publication of the outcome of the monitoring visit.</p>	<p>To maintain educational oversight, the provider must apply for and undergo a full review within three months of the publication of the outcome of the monitoring visit.</p>

Annex 2: Monitoring process annual return template

Provider name	
Date of submission	

Please complete this form and send to QAA by the date requested (normally nine months after your last QAA review or annual return). All comments in Sections 2-6 should be supported by evidence. Please append all evidence to this document.

Section 1: Student data

Please list all higher education programmes (level 4 and above on one of the UK qualifications frameworks⁵) currently offered, with the number of students currently studying on each programme.

Programme title	Awarding body/organisation	Qualification level	Date programme was approved	Current number of students (headcount)
Example: HND Business Studies	Edexcel	5	2010	25

[insert more rows as required]

Section 2: Recent changes

Please tick if any of the following apply:

An increase of total student numbers (international and/or domestic) by more than 50 places or 25 per cent, whichever is greater.	
Merger with another college or acquisition of a new branch that is planned to be included in the existing UKBA sponsorship arrangement.	
A change of 50 per cent or more on the type of provision/courses offered, including changes of awarding body/organisation.	

Please tick if any of the following apply:

Change of address, acquisition of a new building, or extension of premises with an increase in capacity by 25 per cent or more.	
Change of principal and/or proprietor or equivalent.	
Change of 20 per cent or more of permanent teaching staff.	
Change of 30 per cent or more on the type of provision/courses offered, including changes of awarding body/organisation.	

Please provide details of any major strategic changes that have taken place since the last review or monitoring visit, including the following:

⁵ The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ), Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), or National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

- percentage changes to student numbers
- mergers, acquisitions or change of ownership
- change of premises (please indicate percentage change in capacity)
- changes in educational strategy (please indicate percentage change in type of course offered at each level, and any changes of awarding bodies/organisations)
- changes to permanent teaching staff (please indicate current and previous numbers of permanent and part-time teaching staff)
- change of principal/proprietor or equivalent.

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

Section 3: Update on the Review for Educational Oversight action plan

Please provide an evaluation of the impact of the actions taken in response to the good practice and recommendations from the last review. Each good practice point or recommendation should be accounted for separately. Documentary evidence should be provided to demonstrate the achievement, success and internal evaluation of all actions taken.

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

Section 4: Other external reviews

Please provide details of any other external reviews/accreditations that have taken place since the last QAA review (for example British Accreditation Council (BAC), Accreditation Service for International Colleges (ASIC), professional or statutory body, awarding organisation) along with the outcomes (conditions, recommendations, and so on).

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

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

Please provide details of how the provider has taken account of relevant external reference points, including the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, in managing its higher education provision.

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

Section 6: Any other information

Please note any other information which may be relevant to the monitoring process.

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

Appendices

Please list all evidence appended to this document.

Annex 3: Monitoring process report update template

[Provider name]

Report of the monitoring visit, [date]

Section 1: Outcome of the monitoring visit

1 From the evidence provided in the annual return and at the monitoring visit, the monitoring team concludes that [insert formal name of provider] has made [insert graded conclusion: commendable/acceptable/requires improvement to make acceptable/not acceptable progress].

Section 2: Changes since the last QAA [review/monitoring visit]

2 [Detail any changes that have taken place in the college since the last QAA review, for example changes to programmes delivered, numbers of students, and so on.]

[Add further numbered paragraphs and evaluative commentary as required. Maximum word count: 200 words.]

Section 3: Findings from the monitoring visit

x [Evaluate effectiveness of the provider's actions. Have the actions been completed? Have success indicators been met? Has the provider evaluated the effectiveness of their actions? Identify any matters to be followed up in the next monitoring visit, if applicable.]

[Add further numbered paragraphs and evaluative commentary as required. Maximum word count: 600 words.]

Section 4: The provider's use of external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education

x [Briefly describe the progress the provider has made in working with the Quality Code and other relevant external reference points.]

[Add further numbered paragraphs and evaluative commentary as required. Maximum word count: 200 words.]

Section 5: Background to the monitoring visit

x The monitoring visit serves as a short check on the provider's continuing management of academic standards and quality of provision. It focuses on progress since the previous review. In addition, it provides an opportunity for QAA to advise the provider of any matters that have the potential to be of particular interest in the next monitoring visit or review.

x The monitoring visit was carried out by [insert name of review coordinator and reviewer] on [date].

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, October 2012
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

All QAA's publications are available on our website www.qaa.ac.uk