



**The handbook for developmental review of directly-funded
higher education in further education institutions: Wales**

2007-08

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Introduction

Background

1 The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's (QAA) mission is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education (HE) qualifications and to encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of HE. QAA does this by working with HE providers to define academic standards and quality, and by carrying out reviews of HE provision against these standards. In 2007-08, QAA is contracted to conduct reviews on behalf of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW).

2 The review method, known as developmental review, was devised by QAA in partnership with HEFCW, Higher Education Wales and the further education (FE) institutions to be involved in the reviews and their respective awarding bodies. By awarding bodies, in this context, we mean HE institutions, validating bodies and Edexcel. The operational description for the method has been endorsed by both HEFCW's Learning and Teaching Committee and QAA's Advisory Committee for Wales. In addition, there has been consultation with Estyn¹ in relation to its responsibilities for quality and standards for FE.

3 Developmental review is an evidence-based process carried out through peer review. Review teams will comment on the effectiveness of FE institutions' internal processes and systems for managing the quality and standards of HE provision, drawing on the Academic Infrastructure as a source of external reference points (see paragraph 12 below).

4 The developmental aspects of the process include the opportunity for FE institutions, in preparing for their respective reviews, to target, test, develop and refine internal quality processes and evaluate the information serving these processes; and the inclusion of a member of the FE institution's own staff as a full member of the review team undertaking the review (see paragraph 14 below). Developmental review also actively encourages the involvement of students and student representatives, and assists the FE institutions in identifying good practice for wider dissemination.

Purpose, scope and aims

5 Developmental review is concerned with the effectiveness of the FE institution's quality assurance processes and the extent to which each FE institution, and its awarding body partners, are able to maintain standards and assure and enhance the quality of students' learning opportunities for directly-funded HE provision. Developmental review does not consider directly the responsibilities of awarding bodies. The responsibilities of the awarding bodies, in this context, HE institutions and validating bodies (not Edexcel) are assessed separately by means of the institutional review process.²

¹ Estyn is the office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales. Visit www.estyn.gov.uk for more information.

² More details about institutional review can be found at www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/reviewWales

6 Developmental review will enable each FE institution to demonstrate the effectiveness of its management of the academic standards and quality of its directly-funded HE provision, as set out in the partnership agreement(s) with HE institutions and/or awarding body/bodies. Areas identified for development or enhancement will be covered within the report.

7 In summary, the main aims of developmental review are:

- to provide information about the quality assurance of directly-funded HE in FE institutions
- to provide accountability for HEFCW in respect of directly-funded HE in FE institutions
- to inform the development of the institutional review in the next cycle, to operate from 2009-10.

The developmental review process in summary

Information and evidence

8 The developmental review team (the review team) will have available a variety of information sources, including:

- a reflective statement and portfolio of evidence (see paragraphs 20-22) from the FE institution, outlining its approach to managing academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities
- information submitted by the representatives of students of the institution
- reports by relevant bodies within the six years preceding the developmental review (see paragraph 2)
- a copy of any partnership agreements relevant to the developmental review
- information acquired during the visit. This is likely to include meetings with staff and students; programme handbooks; learner support materials; student handbooks; records of staff-student liaison committees or equivalent; assessment criteria or guidance to markers; examination board minutes; outcomes of consultations or other engagements with students; recruitment and progression data, including entry into employment; staff development documents; and professional, statutory and regulatory body reports.

Key areas and thematic trails

9 The review team looks at the ways in which the FE institution's quality assurance structures and mechanisms work in practice across three key areas: academic standards; quality of learning opportunities; and quality enhancement.

10 The review team will use thematic trails to gather evidence about institutional processes and procedures. The thematic trails are used to consider particular institutional approaches and to evaluate their effectiveness. Thematic trails are a

method for collecting evidence and are not an end in themselves. The findings from the thematic trails will not normally be reported on separately but will be integrated into the main text of the report. The only documentation required by the review team will be that which is already held by the FE institution or its awarding body.

11 An example of a thematic trail is the use made of external examiners' reports by the FE institution. The review team may select a sample of programmes and all documentation/activities relating to these programmes, ie the external examiners' reports; their dissemination; actions resulting from any comments made in the external examiners' reports; the evaluation of any action taken; consideration of the reports at appropriate programme and/or institutional-level committees; any other documentation relating to external examiners' reports, such as annual monitoring reports; and evidence of the 'closing of loops', ie the following year's external examiners' reports (see the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (the Code of practice)*, Section 4: External examining published by QAA)³.

The Academic Infrastructure (or external reference points)

12 The Academic Infrastructure includes the *Code of practice, The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), subject benchmark statements and programme specifications. The review team will consider how each FE institution has engaged with the Academic Infrastructure and the impact that this has had on the HE provision (for more details on the use of reference points see paragraph 32).

Students

13 Students are central to the developmental review process. The review team will scrutinise a range of matters directly relevant to students, including the quality of the information provided for students and the ways in which their learning is facilitated and supported. The students' representative body, normally the Students' Union or equivalent, has the opportunity to make a written submission to the review team in advance of the review visit. The students' written submission, if provided, is used by the review team prior to the visit and helps to inform the focus of the review (for more information see **Annex A**). Students are invited to participate in specified meetings during the review and have the opportunity to ensure the review team is made aware of matters of primary interest or concern to them.

The developmental review team

14 Each developmental review team will consist of two or three reviewers (depending on the size of the provision); and a reviewer nominated by the institution (hereafter known as the institutional reviewer). A QAA Assistant Director (AD) coordinates each review on behalf of QAA and is present throughout the review.

³ See www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeofpractice/section4

15 The review team is selected according to relevant experience, including knowledge and understanding of the Welsh context; HE delivered in FE institutions; quality assurance and management; teaching and learning; academic management; and staff development. For further details on the role of the review team see **Annex B**. The institutional reviewer is selected by the FE institution to participate as a full member of the review team. In making their selection, each FE institution will wish to consider the pivotal role the institutional reviewer will play in liaising between the review team and staff, and the extent of their knowledge and experience of the FE institution's policies and procedures. The institutional reviewer will need personal qualities and skills to handle any sensitive matters that may arise during the course of the developmental review. Also, he/she should be chosen according to their management responsibilities so that once the review is completed they may implement any necessary changes based on the outcomes of the developmental review.

16 QAA sends brief details of the proposed team before the visit begins. Institutions should discuss with the AD any concerns about the suitability of the proposed review team as soon as possible. These concerns may include conflicts of interest of which QAA is not aware.

Conclusion of the review and reports

17 The outcome of each developmental review is a report which includes recommendations for actions. A summary of the evaluative conclusions and recommendations is presented in a brief oral report to representatives of the FE institution at the end of the visit. The written report is not published but will be shared with the FE institution, HEFCW and the awarding bodies.

How the process works

Initial planning and contact with QAA

18 At the start of the developmental review process, QAA contacts the FE institution about the proposed timetable for the visit. Between this time and the actual review, QAA provides a briefing session for the FE institution to prepare the institution for the review. A timeline for the review is provided in **Annex C**.

19 The AD coordinating the review will meet with institutional staff and students approximately six weeks before the visit takes place to plan and agree arrangements for the visit, including discussing the programme of activities and the proposed thematic trails. The discussions at the planning meeting will help inform the evidence required as part of the portfolio.

Reflective statement and documentation

20 Central to the process of developmental review are the reflective and self-evaluative processes that support the management of standards and quality of HE. To facilitate the review, each FE institution is asked to provide a reflective

statement and a portfolio of evidence that addresses each key area and thematic trail. Each FE institution should seek to demonstrate its reflective and self-evaluative processes. Further information is provided in **Annex D**.

21 The reflective statement and portfolio of evidence should be submitted to QAA 10 weeks before the start of the visit. Documentation should be submitted electronically, where possible, with one printed copy.

22 The AD will confirm if the reflective statement and portfolio of evidence forms an appropriate basis on which the review can proceed. Once this is agreed, the FE institution is notified and is then responsible for sending the documentation to the review team members. A location map and any other relevant information should also be sent to team members, no later than four weeks before the visit.

The review visit

23 It is anticipated that the review visit will extend over two days. The detailed programme for the review visit will be agreed between the AD and the review team at the time of the planning meeting.

24 The review visit will provide the review team with opportunities to read the documentation provided to support the review and for discussions with staff and students of the institution. The review will also include consideration of evidence by the team to form conclusions and recommendations. The review visit will conclude with a brief oral report to the FE institution by the AD. Further information on the review visit including an indicative visit schedule and guidance on the conduct of meetings are provided in **Annex E** and **Annex F**.

The selection of thematic trails from the key areas

25 Each developmental review examines a set of three key areas which in turn are explored in further detail by the thematic trails. The thematic trails test important elements of how each FE institution manages its quality and academic standards. The key areas are described in more detail below.

Key area one: academic standards

26 Does the FE institution discharge effectively its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreement(s), for the management of the standards of the award(s) for the directly-funded HE provision it offers on behalf of its awarding body(ies)?

27 Indicative thematic trails may include, but are not limited to:

- assessment of students
- external examiners and their reports
- achievement and completion statistics
- use of the Academic Infrastructure
- programme monitoring arrangements (as applicable to academic standards)

- validation and approval of new provision, and its periodic review (as applicable to academic standards).

Key area two: quality of learning opportunities

28 Does the FE institution discharge effectively its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreements, for the management of the quality of the learning opportunities for directly-funded HE provision to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes?

29 Indicative thematic trails may include, but are not limited to:

- programme monitoring arrangements (as applicable to the quality of learning opportunities)
- validation and approval of new provision, and its periodic review (as applicable to the quality of learning opportunities)
- academic guidance, support and supervision, and personal support and guidance
- student representation and feedback arrangements
- the accuracy, completeness and reliability of the information the FE institution provides for students about the quality of the programmes and the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of an awarding body
- learning support resources (including virtual learning environments)
- staff development, including teaching, research and scholarly activity.

Key area three: enhancement

30 Does the FE institution take systematic steps to continuously improve the management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities of its directly-funded HE provision?

31 Indicative thematic trails may include, but are not limited to:

- the frameworks for managing and delivering quality and academic standards
- the FE institution's strategy for HE
- the responsiveness to internal and external review and assurance processes.

Use of reference points

32 When considering how each FE institution manages quality and standards, the developmental review team draws upon a range of external reference points, including the FHEQ, subject benchmark statements, the *Code of practice* and the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales. In so doing, it is not seeking evidence of compliance, but rather for evidence that the FE institution has considered the purpose of the reference points, has reflected on its own practices in the relevant areas, and has taken, or is taking, any necessary steps to ensure that appropriate changes are being introduced.

- In respect of the FHEQ, the review team considers the FE institution's procedures for relating the awards it delivers to the appropriate level of the FHEQ, where relevant using the thematic trails to gain further insight.
- In respect of the *Code of practice*, the review team does not seek information about adherence on a precept-by-precept basis. It expects to see a statement in the reflective statement about how the intentions of the precepts have been addressed, and to discuss during its visits any key changes that the FE institution has made to its practices and any areas that have caused particular difficulty, where relevant, using the thematic trails to gain further insight.
- In respect of subject benchmark statements, the review team enquires into the way in which the statements have been taken into account when establishing and/or reviewing programmes and awards, as illustrated through programme specifications. It may request evidence of practice during the thematic trails. QAA views the statements as authoritative reference points, but not as definitive regulatory criteria for individual programmes or awards.

Reports and the institutions' response

33 A template of the developmental review report is provided as **Annex G**.

34 The report sets out conclusions and recommendations for the FE institution, but will not contain judgements.

35 The conclusions will be expressed in terms of whether the FE institution discharges or does not discharge its responsibilities as set out in the partnership agreement for the management and assurance of the quality of the standards of the awards, the learning opportunities and enhancement.

36 Recommendations will be at one of three levels:

- **desirable** recommendations refer to matters which the review team believes have the potential to enhance quality, build capacity and/or further secure standards
- **advisable** recommendations refer to matters which the review team believes have the potential to put quality and/or standards at risk and require preventative corrective action
- **essential** recommendations refer to important matters which the review team believes are currently putting quality and/or standards at risk and which require urgent corrective action.

37 Twelve months after the review, the FE institution will be asked to provide a written response to QAA, which may be produced in collaboration with its awarding body/bodies, detailing how it plans to address the report's recommendations, with comments on how it plans to disseminate good practice and address the recommendations in a strategic and operational manner.

38 Should essential recommendations be made, the FE institution will be asked to report on how it has addressed all the essential recommendations during the six months following the review and how it is monitoring progress in order to satisfy

itself that the actions are effective. This will be followed by a second evaluative commentary 12 months after the developmental review on how it has addressed all of the recommendations and how it has satisfied itself that the actions were effective.

39 In the event that the review team concludes that the FE institution does not discharge its responsibilities effectively as set out in its partnership agreement, a revisit will normally take place 12 months from the report production date.

QAA Welsh Language Scheme

40 In planning, conducting and reporting on the reviews in Wales, QAA is committed to treating Welsh and English equally.⁴

Evaluation of the process

41 QAA will encourage institutions and reviewers to contribute to the evaluation of the developmental review process by inviting comment on the reviews in which they have participated.

Complaints

42 Complaints about the conduct of the developmental review will be considered by QAA under the formal procedures published on the QAA website at www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/policy/complaints.asp/

⁴ The full details of QAA's Welsh Language Scheme are available at www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/aboutus/policy/welshlanguage/welshscheme.asp

Annex A: Student involvement in developmental review

Student involvement in approval and review processes may provide evidence to enable review teams to evaluate the level of influence exercised by students, as well as the contribution of students to self-evaluative processes. Evidence of the effectiveness of student support mechanisms will be sought.

Review teams will normally expect to see examples from FE institutions of how students' views are sought. This may be, for example, students' representation on committees and their role and effectiveness within them.

The effectiveness of the FE institutions' processes for securing the wider views of the HE students will be analysed. During meetings with students, review teams will seek students' views of their input and impact on the FE institution's management of academic standards and quality.

Students' written submission

QAA invites a representative body of the students to make a separate written submission of their collective views on their experience as learners and the opportunity to participate in the management and quality of standards. To help student representative bodies to prepare a written submission for developmental reviews, QAA has written a separate briefing note. The note provides the contact details for QAA, who will direct any students' queries about developmental review to the AD managing the review process.

QAA asks that the written submission does not include any information that student representatives would not be happy to discuss with the review team. While QAA will respect any wishes for confidentiality, QAA encourages the student body to share their submission with the FE institution.

Format, length and content of the students' written submission

The written submission should:

- include a statement of how it has been compiled, who wrote it, and the extent to which its contents have been shared with, and endorsed by, the appropriate student group
- contain a maximum of 1,000 words
- refer to sources of evidence that would aid the reviewers, for example, minutes of meetings, copies of correspondence between the students and the FE institution, or reference to questionnaires
- not identify any individual either directly or indirectly.

Student meetings

The students' experience of their education is fundamental to the FE institution and the awarding body, and informs the entire process of developmental review. Meetings with students enables the review team to establish student views on the key areas and/or thematic trails being considered, and informs the team on the quality of the student learning experience.

The review team holds meetings with representative groups of current students. These meetings provide an opportunity to hear the direct views of those present and to establish more generally whether there are effective arrangements for student feedback and representation. The meetings are held in confidence and comments arising are not attributed to any individual.

Annex B: Role of the review team

The role of the review team is to:

Preliminary (after receipt of FE institution's documentation)

- analyse the reflective statement and portfolio of evidence and to identify possible areas for enquiry within the thematic trails
- communicate with the AD on matters arising from this analysis
- post material to QAA's Academic Reviewer Communication Service (ARCS).

Developmental review visit

- agree the main areas of enquiry for exploration during the visit, and to select and study evidence to support that exploration
- participate in discussions with staff and students of the FE institution on areas of enquiry as agreed by the review team as a whole, with due attention to the protocols of discussion as a peer group
- draw conclusions from the areas of enquiry being explored during the visit, with reference to oral and documentary evidence to underpin those conclusions
- contribute to the formation of evaluation on the three key areas and the FE institution's use of the Academic Infrastructure
- keep sufficient notes to subsequently be able to respond to the FE institution's comments on matters of factual accuracy during the report production phase
- keep sufficient notes to subsequently be able to respond to requests from FE institutions for clarity on the insights gained from the developmental review
- post material to ARCS.

After the visit

- prepare a section of the report for the developmental review report, and submit this to the AD within a specified deadline
- comment on the draft report prepared by the AD, responding to any requests for extra text or reference to evidence to agreed deadlines
- post material to ARCS.

Annex C: Timeline for the developmental review process

Timeline of review schedule

This schedule of activity is set out in relation to the date of the developmental review visit.

October-December 2007	QAA contacts the FE institution to agree a date for the visit/QAA briefs staff and students, if appropriate.
January-March 2008	Submission by the FE institution of the reflective statement and portfolio of evidence.
February-April 2008	Planning meeting between the AD and the FE institution.
Developmental review visit	Meeting of the review team with the institutional staff and may include activities such as meetings with current students, employers, and scrutiny of evidence. Visit concludes with oral report to the FE institution.
Visit date plus four weeks	AD sends draft report to the FE institution, requesting comments on factual accuracy.
Visit date plus eight weeks	FE institution returns draft report with comments.
Visit date plus ten weeks	AD confirms report, returns it to FE institution and requests written response.
Visit date plus fourteen weeks	FE institution returns its response for inclusion within the report.
Visit date plus sixteen weeks	Report distributed to FE institution, awarding body(ies), QAA and HEFCW.

This timeline is indicative. Individual events may be varied to accommodate specific circumstances such as Christmas, vacations or examinations. However, QAA will endeavour to complete the distribution of reports within 16 weeks of the visit.

Annex D: Guidance on reflective statement and portfolio of evidence

The reflective statement is the starting point for the review and is centred on the three key areas. The task of the review team is to test and verify the claims made and the evidence cited by the FE institution. These guidelines are intended to help the provider to prepare their reflective statement.

The reflective statement is likely to be no more than four sides of A4. It will be an evaluative account on the FE institution's approach to the management of academic standards and quality for its directly-funded HE provision, and how it satisfies itself about the effectiveness of its approach. The statement will be supported by a portfolio of existing documents to act as evidence to support the statement made. The portfolio should be cross-referenced with the reflective statement.

The central requirement for the reflective statement is that it contains reflective and evaluative sections, and that evidence for any claims or assertions made are provided within the portfolio of information or, if not within the portfolio, are referenced and made available to the review team.

The FE institutions are asked to provide documentation which is well organised and evaluative, and that draws upon robust internal and external review and validation procedures. The supply of documentation which contains an accurate and comprehensive evaluative explanation is likely to limit the burden on the FE institution.

The role of the FE institution's reviewer is critical for gathering information prior to and during the review. The FE institution's reviewer will be familiar with information and also be able to guide the review team to information held by the FE institution and which, for some reason, may not be available within the portfolio. For example, the FE institution's reviewer could guide the review team through relevant areas of the intranet, or would be in a position to assemble small groups of relevant students or staff, should the team be following a particular theme.

The portfolio should comprise at least the following documents to support the thematic trail(s) within the three core areas:

- partnership agreement(s) and/or samples of any reviews of these agreement(s) with the awarding body(ies)
- programme specifications
- sample of external examiner reports (previous three academic years)
- sample of validation documents (latest)
- sample of annual monitoring reports (previous three academic years)
- sample of evidence relating to student course evaluations
- extracts from quality assurance/enhancement handbook/manual
- other evidence that the FE institution wishes to provide in support of their agreed thematic trail(s).

QAA will provide the review team with:

- Estyn reports (to provide contextual information)
- relevant QAA reports.

Annex E: Indicative visit schedule

There are opportunities to tailor the programme to the FE institution. This example is not intended to be prescriptive, but offers an indicative approach to organising the activities.

Day 1

0900-1000	Initial meeting of the review team to agree areas of enquiry
1000-1130	Scrutiny by the review team of selected supporting evidence
1130-1200	Team meeting to summarise findings and confirm agenda for further meetings with staff and students
1200-1300	Meeting between the review team and key staff from the FE institution
1300-1400	Lunch
1400-1500	Meeting of the review team with current students
1500-1700	Further scrutiny of supporting evidence
1700-1800	Team meeting to confirm the record of the activities completed, the range of evidence, the tentative evaluations and the matters that remain outstanding to be completed on day 2

Day 2

0900-1000	Meeting of the review team and the discipline and institutional contacts to confirm the emerging evidence, the agenda for day 2 and the interim evaluations
1000-1100	Meetings with employers/other relevant awarding bodies where appropriate
1100-1200	Further scrutiny of selected evidence and/or any additional meetings that require to be arranged during the visit
1200-1300	Lunch
1300-1530	Final team meeting to form evaluation and reach conclusions on the robustness of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, in relation to the thematic trail(s); to identify significant strengths; to identify any significant recommendations that deserve further attention; and to finalise the key points for the oral report
1530-1600	Oral report by the AD

Annex F: Conduct of meetings

Guidance on the conduct of meetings

During the developmental reviews, institutions and members of the review team may wish to consider the following illustrative approaches to the key meetings held. In applying the guidance to local circumstances, all participants are encouraged to bear in mind:

- the purpose and intended outcome of the review
- the importance attached to open and transparent dialogue between peers
- the need for the review team to prepare a report.

Members of the review team should not normally attempt a comprehensive and exhaustive investigation, but use the reflective statement and portfolio of evidence to inform their scrutiny of the thematic trail(s) and use the meetings to confirm good practice or areas for recommendations, clarify any matters arising from the evidence provided and seek examples of policies and procedures in practice.

Generic illustrative approach applicable to the range of meetings

In preparing for and conducting meetings, the participants may wish to identify the areas of enquiry for discussion using the prompts below.

- In what context does the FE institution operate?
- What are the salient features of the reflective statement and portfolio of evidence that inform the discussion? In particular, what can be readily confirmed as verified evaluation and information? What can be clarified by reference to existing additional documented evidence (perhaps outside the meeting)? What points arise that deserve a focus within the meeting?

Academic standards

- Assessment of students.
- External examiners and their reports.
- Achievement and completion statistics.
- Use of the Academic Infrastructure.
- Programme monitoring arrangements (as applicable to academic standards).
- Validation and approval of new provision, and its periodic review (as applicable to academic standards).

Quality of learning opportunities

- Programme monitoring arrangements (as applicable to the quality of learning opportunities).

- Validation and approval of new provision, and its periodic review (as applicable to the quality of learning opportunities).
- Academic guidance, support and supervision, and personal support and guidance.
- Student representation and feedback arrangements.
- The accuracy, completeness and reliability of the information the FE institution provides for students about the quality of the programmes and the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of an awarding body.
- Learning support resources (including virtual learning environments).
- Staff development, including teaching, research and scholarly activity.

Enhancement

- The frameworks for managing and delivering quality and academic standards.
- The HE strategy.
- The responsiveness to internal and external review and assurance processes.

Suggested protocol for meetings

In optimising the value of the discussions in meetings, it is suggested that for each meeting the following arrangements are made:

- an agenda is shared with all attending
- the AD or another member of the review team chairs the meeting
- another person in the visiting team or a representative of the FE institution takes a record of the meeting and shares it with those attending. The record should include names of persons present, the agenda, the key points raised and any conclusions expressed or key points emerging
- the Chair of the meeting (usually the AD) should briefly introduce the review team and other participants and summarise the purpose of the meeting, the opportunity it provides for the exchange of views within the chosen focus and remind the meeting of this protocol for meetings
- all attending should feel encouraged to put forward their views in the confident knowledge that all perspectives and views are respected in an open discussion
- the timing of the meeting should be controlled within the agreed agenda and timetable. If any of the participants or staff believe that additional attention and time are required to address adequately the agreed agenda or other matters arising, the Chair may, with the agreement of the meeting, either extend the meeting for a short time (15 minutes) or take steps to arrange an additional meeting at a later stage in the visit programme
- in closing the meeting, the Chair will summarise the key points addressed, thank the participants and close the meeting.

Annex G: Indicative report structure

The indicative report structure is set out below.

Preface

The mission of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education (HE) qualifications and to inform and encourage continual improvement in the management of the quality of HE. As part of this mission, QAA undertakes reviews of HE provision delivered in further education (FE) institutions in Wales. This process is known as developmental review.

Purpose of developmental review

HE programmes delivered by FE institutions lead to awards made by HE institutions or Edexcel. The awarding bodies retain ultimate responsibility for maintaining the academic standards of their awards and assuring and enhancing the quality of students' experience. Developmental review focuses on three key areas: academic standards; quality of learning opportunities; and enhancement.

The words '**academic standards**' are used to describe the level of achievement that a student has to reach to gain an award (for example, a Foundation Degree). These should be of a similar level across the United Kingdom.

The quality of learning opportunities is a way of describing the effectiveness of all those things that are done or provided to ensure that students have the best possible opportunity to meet the stated outcomes of their programmes and the academic standards of the awards they are seeking.

Evidence

In order to obtain evidence for the review, the teams carry out a number of activities, including:

- reviewing the reflective statement and portfolio of evidence and its internal procedures and documents
- reviewing the optional written submission from students
- asking questions of relevant staff
- talking to students about their experiences.

Academic Infrastructure

The review teams' expectations of institutions are guided by a nationally agreed set of reference points, known as the Academic Infrastructure. These are published by QAA and consist of:

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* which includes descriptions of different HE qualifications
- *the Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*

- subject benchmark statements, describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects
- *Guidelines for preparing programme specifications*, which are descriptions of what is on offer to students in individual programmes of study.

Developmental review

[Name of participating FE institution]

A Conduct of the developmental review

This report presents the findings of the developmental review conducted at [participating FE institution]. The developmental review was carried out by [developmental review team members] and coordinating the review on behalf of QAA was [insert name, Assistant Director].

The developmental review was conducted by the review team in negotiation with the FE institution and, as with *The handbook for developmental review of directly-funded higher education in further education institutions: Wales*, is published by QAA.

The review team included one institutional reviewer drawn from the FE institution's staff, who was a full member of the team. Evidence in support of the developmental review included [eg, documentation supplied by the FE institution, meetings with staff, students, employers and partner institutions, and from inspections by Estyn]. The developmental review also considered the FE institution's use of the Academic Infrastructure, developed by QAA on behalf of the HE sector.

Students' written submission

Students undertaking HE provision at the FE institution were invited to present a written submission to the developmental review team [outline whether a student written submission was submitted, any support or guidance provided by the FE institution to the student representatives in the event].

Context of the developmental review

[One or two paragraphs detailing facts about the FE institution, including its history, mission, student numbers, and any relevant information on structure and/or relocation.]

Higher education at the institution

[This section outlines the awarding bodies for the FE institution's provision, and the range of provision offered, in bullet list form.]

B Outcomes of the developmental review

[Paragraph number] The following [number] addresses key area one.
Thematic trails?

The following addresses key area two.
Thematic trails?

The following addresses key area three.
Thematic trails?

C Conclusions

Based upon discussion with staff and students, and scrutiny of evidence provided by the FE institution, the review team identified a number of features of good practice in the FE institution's discharge of its responsibilities for learning opportunities and academic standards of the awards offered on behalf of its awarding bodies. The review team also makes some recommendations for consideration by the FE institution. The areas of good practice and recommendations are set out below.

During the developmental review, the review team identified the following areas of **good practice**:

- [referenced bullet list of findings reflecting the broader main narrative addressing the thematic trails].

The developmental review team also agreed the following areas where it would be **desirable** for the FE institution to take action:

- [referenced bullet list reflecting broader findings as detailed in the narrative].

The developmental review team agreed upon a number of areas where it would be **advisable** for the FE institution to take action:

- [referenced bullet list reflecting the broader findings as detailed in the narrative].

[And/or...]

The developmental review team also considers that it is **essential** for the FE institution to:

- [referenced bullet list reflecting broader findings as detailed in the narrative].

[Paragraph number] The developmental review team agreed the following conclusions in respect of the three key areas:

[Paragraph number] Based upon its analysis of the FE institution's reflective statement and portfolio of evidence, other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the developmental review team concludes that, in the context of this developmental review, the FE institution [discharges/does not discharge] its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the partnership agreement, for the management and delivery of the standards of the awards for the directly-funded HE it offers on behalf of its awarding body(ies).

[Paragraph number] Based upon its analysis of the FE institution's reflective statement and portfolio of evidence, other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the developmental review team concludes that, in the context of this developmental review, the FE institution [discharges/does not discharge] its responsibilities effectively, as set out in the partnership agreement, for the management and assurance of the quality of learning opportunities for directly-funded HE to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

[Paragraph number] Based upon its analysis of the FE institution's reflective statement and portfolio of evidence, other documentary evidence and from its meetings with staff and students, the developmental review team concludes that, in the context of this developmental review, the FE institution [discharges/does not discharge] its responsibilities, as set out in its partnership agreement for the enhancement of the management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities of its directly-funded HE.

Annex H: Activity flowchart

