

International students studying in the UK -

Guidance for UK higher education providers

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Foreword

The decision to develop this new guidance, which is intended to assist higher education providers in the UK in managing international students' experiences, was taken following a scoping group discussion chaired by QAA in April 2011. The scoping group included representative bodies and organisations with a particular interest in or remit for international students' experiences (membership in Appendix 1). Representatives at that meeting acknowledged the considerable good practice in this area and the importance of demonstrating the commitment of UK higher education providers to international students' experiences. They felt that a guidance document produced by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) could play a role in this.

This new guidance was developed through QAA working with an advisory group drawn from, and acting on behalf of, higher education providers in the UK, as well as representatives from higher education organisations with an interest in international students' experiences (membership in Appendix 2). It has also benefited greatly from comments received from higher education providers, students and other stakeholders during consultation on a previous draft version.

The guidance is produced by QAA, an independent body funded by subscriptions from universities and colleges and through contracts with the higher education funding bodies in the UK. QAA's mission is 'to safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education'. QAA visits universities and colleges to review how well they are fulfilling their responsibilities for academic quality and standards. QAA also provides guidance to universities and colleges on maintaining academic standards and improving quality.

1 Introduction

The UK is one of the most popular countries of destination for international students and it has one of the highest percentages of international students in higher education enrolments in the world. The UK is also a world leader in transnational education, with considerable numbers of international students studying on UK higher education (HE) programmes outside the UK.

The popularity of UK HE relies, to a large extent, on the quality of its provision. Large-scale student satisfaction surveys such as the National Student Survey (NSS) and the International Student Barometer (ISB) reveal high rates of satisfaction among international students - in the most recent surveys, eight out of 10 international students are satisfied with their overall experience of studying in the UK.¹

Institutions and policymakers are not complacent however about the quality and reputation of UK HE. The intense and growing global competition for recruitment, and the increasing sophistication of international students in their choice of country and institution, makes it crucial for UK higher education providers to continuously maintain and enhance the quality of international students' experiences.

While international students appreciate the quality of UK HE and their overall learning experience, it is possible to identify from student surveys lower grades of satisfaction in a number of areas, including integration on campus, work opportunities and career advice, and cost and financial support.² Furthermore, the growing intake of international students, while bringing financial benefits and enriching the academic and social experience of all students and staff, poses new and heightened challenges to HE providers. In particular, the great diversity of the international student population requires HE providers to manage an increasingly varied range of expectations and needs.

What is the nature and intention of this guidance?

There is much good practice already in place in support of international students' experiences and the quality of the services provided by institutions.³ This new guidance, reflecting and consolidating existing practice, seeks to establish a UK-wide set of shared principles in support of international students' experiences. It has been developed with a view to assisting HE providers in developing an inclusive environment that meets the challenges associated with an increasingly international student body.

The guidance is not prescriptive in nature and it does not currently form part of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code).⁴ Rather, the principles are intended

¹ Measuring the effect of the Prime Minister's Initiative on the International Student Experience in the UK - 2010 Report (i-graduate 2010) www.britishcouncil.org/pmi-isb_2010_report.pdf.

² Measuring the effect of the Prime Minister's Initiative on the International Student Experience in the UK - 2010 Report (i-graduate 2010) www.britishcouncil.org/pmi-isb_2010_report.pdf.

³ *Outcomes from Institutional audit - Arrangements for international students*, 2006 and 2008, published by QAA: www.qaa.ac.uk/ImprovingHigherEducation/Pages/Published-Outcomes-papers.aspx.

⁴ See www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/quality-code/Pages/default.aspx. The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is intended to protect the interests of all UK higher education students. However, a number of defined groups of students who may have specific needs are highlighted for particular consideration within the context of the topic of each chapter. International students are identified as one such group, and as such this guidance should be seen as complementary to the Quality Code - it provides an additional source of reference for HE providers, which will be signposted as relevant within the chapters of the Quality Code and neither contradicts nor replaces the Expectations contained in the Quality Code.

to act as a point of reference for institutions in reviewing and enhancing their own practices. As such, the guidance is supportive, recognising the diversity and autonomy of individual HE providers, and allowing for flexibility and responsiveness.

How is this guidance structured?

The guidance is structured around the 'typical' international student journey, from the point of first contact with UK HE and its providers, through to orientation and induction, and support for learning and progression into further study or employment. It is set out in the form of principles and recommendations, with signposts to sources of further information, advice or guidance at the end of each section. In addition, a number of overarching principles have been identified which apply throughout the whole student journey. These are set out at the beginning of the document.

Different Chapters of the Quality Code contain Expectations and Indicators which are relevant to the different stages of the international student journey addressed in this guidance. The relevant Chapters of the Quality Code are signposted at the end of each section of the guidance.

Who is this guidance for?

Responsibility for providing an inclusive environment and meeting the needs of a diverse student body rests with all staff within an institution, therefore the guidance may be of practical help to: student advisers, international offices, lecturers, quality assurance practitioners, student service managers, and senior managers. It may also be of direct interest to students and their representatives.

What is meant by an international student for the purpose of this guidance?

Use of the 'typical' international student journey as the organising principle of the guidance should not be taken to infer that international students are regarded as a homogeneous and tightly defined group. On the contrary, the guidance is based around an awareness that international students represent a varied group of individuals with different needs and expectations, and a different degree of familiarity with UK culture and higher education.

Taking into account the diversity between international students, as well as appreciating that many needs and expectations are shared by all students, the guidance is intended to apply to all international students broadly defined as non-UK students.

The guidance is focused on international students who come to the UK to study on HE programmes, or parts of programmes, at UK higher education institutions (HEIs) that are physically based here. However, QAA recognises the significance of transnational education and that many students study outside the UK while registered for UK awards. *Chapter B10: Management of collaborative arrangements* of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education includes guidance on transnational education partnerships⁵. This Chapter should be regarded

⁵ *Chapter B10: Management of collaborative arrangements* is available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-B10.aspx.

as the primary point of reference for HEIs seeking guidance on collaborative provision arrangements with overseas or UK partners, although some of the content set out in this new guidance may also be useful.

A note on UK legislation

A number of topics covered by the guidance are subject to legislation. The guidance does not attempt to interpret legislation nor does it incorporate statutory requirements. Higher education providers have an overriding obligation in all such cases to ensure that they meet the requirements of legislation and any statutory requirements take precedence.

In particular, at the time of writing (January 2012), the UK is responding to a period of change with respect to immigration legislation. Readers are advised to consult the UK's immigration authority (UK Border Agency) for the latest information.⁶ The UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) offers information, advice and guidance for immigration advisers on its website.⁷

Institutions are also reminded that they must comply with the Equality Act 2010, including the public sector Equality Duty, and the Code of Practice for Further and Higher Education (which at the time of writing is awaiting parliamentary approval). The Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) offers information, advice and guidance to support equality and diversity for staff and students in higher education across the UK.⁸

The Prime Minister's Initiative for International Education (PMI)

The Prime Minister's Initiative for International Education (PMI) was originally launched by the UK Government in 1999 as a five-year strategy aiming to increase the number of international students in the UK. In 2006, a second phase of the PMI (known as PMI2) began which had as a key theme the quality of international students' experiences. The projects undertaken as part of this Government initiative, which came to a close in March 2011, have given rise to a considerable volume of resources that staff and students may usefully draw upon. These resources are referenced at various stages of the guidance.

⁶ UK Border Agency: www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk.

⁷ UKCISA: www.ukcisa.org.uk.

⁸ ECU: www.ecu.ac.uk.

2 Overarching principles

The following principles apply throughout the whole of the typical student journey.

An inclusive environment

Institutions should seek to provide an inclusive environment where the needs of international students are considered and met alongside those of other students in an integrated and embedded way.

Continuous improvement

Institutions should continuously reflect on and review their policies and practices, actively seeking and using feedback from students, to make improvements.

Student engagement

Institutions should ensure that international students are represented in student engagement activities and that their feedback is taken into account in making enhancements to existing policies and practice.

Clear and accessible information

Institutions should ensure that the information they provide at all stages of the student lifecycle is clear, accessible, accurate, and consistent across the institution. Where technical terminology is unavoidable, clear explanation should be provided.

Shared responsibility

Responsibility for meeting the needs of a diverse student body should rest with all staff within an institution, not just those with a specific remit for managing international students' experiences.

Staff development

All staff working with international students should have access to appropriate training and development opportunities, which support them in recognising and addressing the needs of an internationally diverse student community.

3 Marketing and recruitment

Marketing and recruitment represents the typical point of first contact between a potential applicant and an institution. How an institution markets its provision and recruits students has implications not only for the quality of students' experiences but also for the reputation of UK HE overseas.

Information for potential applicants

The information that an institution makes available to potential applicants should give a fair and unambiguous picture of the institution, its programmes, and the services and support that it makes available to students.

At the point of marketing and recruitment, the information that an institution makes available should include at least the following, some of which may also be included at later stages:

- an overview of the nature of UK higher education and HE qualifications
- the profile of the institution
- details of registered representatives or agents and expected standards of service
- admissions processes and any variations for international students
- visa requirements and procedures
- entry requirements, including English language proficiency
- acceptance conditions, deposits required and refund policies
- estimated cost of living, including accommodation costs
- study costs (including tuition fees and other costs) and details of whether and how such costs may alter during the course of the programme
- details of any scholarships and other financial assistance schemes
- programme details*
- an indication of student support services that are made available
- information about employability including opportunities for work experience, volunteering and work placements.

Institutions may make this information available in a variety of forms. They might choose to consider using multiple formats, including in electronic and hard copy forms.

*Programme information will be designed to assist potential applicants in making informed decisions about their options. Typically it will include, but will not be limited to:

- the nature and type of qualification
- credit value and level
- course duration
- principal methods of teaching, learning and assessment
- study routes and options available within the programme
- progression opportunities

- opportunities for work experience and internship
- whether or not the programme is externally recognised or accredited, for example by a professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB)
- any other specific requirement which may apply to particular courses, such as immunisations or health clearance.

The form in which programme information is made available may include all or any of: websites, prospectuses, course handbooks, programme specifications and so on.⁹

Institutions may wish to refer to national sources of information for an overview of the national higher education systems and qualifications. The websites of the British Council (Education UK), the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, and QAA provides useful information in this context. Institutions may also find useful the descriptions of the different UK national HE systems, produced by the UK Higher Education Europe Unit for inclusion in the Diploma Supplement.

Institutions may wish to advise potential applicants intending to work outside of the UK upon successful completion of their programme to check the conditions for entry to the profession of interest in that country.

Institutions may also wish to make clear to potential applicants that acceptance onto a course does not guarantee successful completion, or entitlement to residency and employment upon graduation.

The information that institutions provide should be reviewed regularly in order to ensure that it remains up to date. Part of the review process should involve seeking and acting on users' feedback.

Opportunities for potential applicants to obtain further information to assist in making informed choices should be made clear and institutions should have processes in place to ensure that they are able to respond in a timely manner to such requests for information. In this context, institutions may consider providing applicants with access to current students or recent graduates of the course the applicants are interested in.

Where an education agent¹⁰ acts on behalf of the institution, the same principles outlined here apply (see also 'Use of education agents and appointed representatives').

The onus is considered to rest on institutions to satisfy themselves that agents and representatives working on their behalf are acting ethically and responsibly.

⁹ At the time of writing, all higher and further education institutions in England, Wales and Northern Ireland that are subject to QAA review, including all those funded by HEFCE, HEFCW, and DELNI and private higher education providers that subscribe to QAA will, from 2012-13, be expected to provide information in the form of a Key Information Set. SFC has decided that all higher education institutions in Scotland will be required to produce Key Information Sets but the timetable for implementation has not yet been finalised.

¹⁰ The British Council's definition of an agent is used here: 'an education agent is defined as an individual, company or other organisation providing services on a commercial basis to help students and their parents gain places on study programmes overseas' (Education UK - Developing the UK's International Education Agent Network, Education UK, British Council, prepared by Jean Krasocki, 2002).

Recruitment policies and procedures

Institutions should have policies and procedures in place for the recruitment of international students which are fair, clear, explicit and implemented consistently.

The institution should seek to ensure that its recruitment policies and procedures are clearly signposted, accessible, and made available to potential applicants, their advisers, and third party agents. Institutions may wish to consider including in their policies and procedures information about the responsibilities and obligations of applicants. This may include details of how an institution will respond to applications that include fraudulent or false information.

Staff with responsibility for recruitment and an institution's appointed representatives should be appropriately informed, trained and supported to undertake their roles. In particular, they should be conversant in the application and admissions process and understand the implications of student visa applications. They should also be expected to work to high standards of professional conduct. Professional conduct here implies competence, fairness, truthfulness and a primary concern for the best interests of the student.

The position of those who advise international students is distinctive, in that they come into contact with students from a wide range of cultural, social and academic backgrounds and with a wide range of expectations about education and about ethical behaviour and professional conduct. UKCISA and the Association of International Student Advisers (AISA) have produced a Code of Ethics (see 'Sources of further information, advice and guidance') for the guidance of all staff advising international students, which readers may wish to consult.

Use of education agents and appointed representatives

Institutions contracting the services of external agents should ensure that due diligence is undertaken during the selection process and that all reasonable effort is undertaken to ensure that the agency is reputable and competent in UK higher education advising.

Institutions may wish to consider incorporating the British Council Guide to good practice for education agents (see 'Sources of further information, advice and guidance') as part of their legal contracts with agencies.

Institutions should regularly review, support and train their appointed representatives. They may also wish to seek feedback from students who have engaged with external agents and have in place means of acting on this feedback where appropriate.

Institutions may wish to consider making publicly available an up-to-date list of all accredited representatives used by the institution and provide signposted information on appointed agents for international applicants.

Sources of further information, advice and guidance

QAA

Quality Code, Chapter A1: The national level, sections 1 & 2:

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-A1.aspx

Quality Code, Chapter B2: Admissions:

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-B2.aspx

Quality Code, Chapter B3: Learning and teaching:

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-B3.aspx

Quality Code, Chapter B10: Management of collaborative arrangements:

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-B10.aspx

British Council

The British Council offers a range of services to support HEIs in marketing and recruitment, including working with agents. These include:

A professional development training course and a global online database of agents to help institutions searching for agents in specific countries:

www.britishcouncil.org/eumd-services.htm

Guide to good practice for education agents:

www.britishcouncil.org/eumd-agents-good-practice.htm

Education UK website:

Information, advice and guidance aimed at international students coming to the UK:

www.educationuk.org

BIS

The website of the Department for Business Innovation & Skills (BIS) provides information on recognised UK higher education bodies and degrees:

www.bis.gov.uk/policies/higher-education/recognised-uk-degrees

UKCISA

The UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) offers a range of publications and resources aimed at supporting those who support international students.

They include:

Code of Ethics (published jointly with the Association of International Student Advisors):

www.ukcisa.org.uk/join/code_of_ethics.php

Web-based self-study course - 'New to International':

www.ukcisa.org.uk/training/new_to_international.php

Training programme that includes training on marketing and recruitment, training in giving immigration advice, and cross-cultural awareness:
www.ukcisa.org.uk/training/training_programme.php

The UKCISA's website also provides a useful source of advice for international students coming to the UK including on a wide range of issues, including immigration, financial support, and studying in the UK:
www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/index.php

UK Higher Education Europe Unit

The Europe Unit provides descriptions of the UK national HE systems to be referred to in the Diploma Supplement:

www.europeunit.ac.uk/sites/europe_unit2/eu_policy___education/diploma_supplement.cfm

UK Higher Education International Unit

A UK Guide to Enhancing the International Student Experience (March 2010) - a guide for HEIs drawing on data collected through the International Student Barometer on students' experiences:

www.international.ac.uk/home/index.cfm

Irish Higher Education Quality Network

Provision of Education to International Students - Code of Practice and Guidelines for Irish Higher Education Institutions:

www.iheqn.ie/_fileupload/File/IHEQN_62439738.pdf

Education UK Scotland

International Student Recruitment and Support - Good Practice Guidelines for Scottish Tertiary Education Institutions:

www.educationuk.org/scotland

NUS

National Union of Students (NUS) Charter for a global university:

www.nusconnect.org.uk/asset/news/6006/NUS-Charter-Global-University.pdf

HELOA

Higher Education Liaison Officers (HELOA) Code of Practice:

www.heloa.co.uk

4 Admissions

Information for applicants

It is recommended that at the point of admission, the information that an institution makes available includes at least the following, some of which may also be included at the stage of marketing and recruitment, and later stages:

- admissions policies and processes, including any variation for international students and processes for entry part-way through an academic year
- application deadlines and processes for considering applications
- student classification for tuition fee purposes, tuition fees and other compulsory charges
- application fees
- payment deadlines, methods and refund procedures
- living costs
- how students who need a visa should go about securing one, signposting relevant organisations and sources of further information, advice and guidance
- contact point(s) for enquiries
- entry requirements, including English language proficiency
- details of where students may need to satisfy UKBA requirements (including for English language competency) in addition to the entry requirements set by the institution
- details of pre-sessional courses or academic study skills courses that may be available.

Admissions policies and procedures

Institutions should have in place policies and procedures for admission and selection that are fair, clear, explicit and implemented consistently.

Institutions should ensure that any variations in the admission and selection processes for international students, including between EU and non-EU students, for example in regard to interviews, auditions or other selection tests, are highlighted. In particular, institutions should make clear whether applicants are required to come to the UK to attend an interview or audition.

Institutions are encouraged to consider carefully the impact of immigration requirements and timelines for obtaining a visa in the design and operation of their admissions processes for international students.

Institutions are encouraged to make students aware where they may need to apply for an Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) certificate (see 'Sources of further information, advice and guidance') - which applies to courses leading to postgraduate awards in certain subject areas - as the application process may take several weeks in addition to visa application.

Applicants should be advised of the deadline for submission of applications, together with an indication of how long the decision-making process will normally take and how they will be informed of the outcome of their application.

A clear point of contact should be provided for enquiries about the admissions process. All staff involved in the admissions process should have a good understanding of international perspectives and an appreciation of cultural differences.

A contact point should be provided for enquiries about the equivalence and acceptability of qualifications, and about accreditation of prior learning, where applicable, including the transfer of credit. Institutions are responsible for ensuring that staff are appropriately informed, trained and supported in this context.

With regard to entry requirements, institutions may wish to consider identifying examples of equivalent qualifications for entry for the benefit of entrants who have not previously studied in the UK. Institutions may want to consult with UK NARIC (see 'Sources of further information, advice and guidance') on this and other issues related to assessing the equivalency of qualifications.

Institutions should make clear the English language requirements for their programmes, together with the qualifications and tests which will be used as evidence that these requirements are met. Institutions should also make clear to students such cases where language competency upon completion of the programme, or at points within it, is expected to be greater than at the point of entry.

The cost of tuition fees, including any applicable bench fees or other compulsory charges (for example, for course materials, fieldwork, and so on) should be specified in the offer letter or accompanying documentation. This should include a clear explanation of what is and is not included in the fees. If fees may change over the duration of the programme (for example, due to incremental shifts) this should be noted. Indicative information on living expenses should also be provided.

Institutions should be clear about the classification they have arrived at for fee purposes and the process for any appeals against this decision.

Payment deadlines and methods, and any requirements for the payment of deposits, should be specified. Institutions should also be explicit about the consequences of not making payments on time and the circumstances in which refunds may be made.

Institutions should encourage applicants to disclose any disability at an early stage in the admissions process and discuss the requirements of disabled applicants in good time in order to make decisions about reasonable adjustments. In this context, institutions may wish to consider making explicit their definition of disability.

The offer letter should clearly set out the conditions of the offer and the obligations placed on students. Institutions should inform potential students, in good time, of any significant changes to a programme after an offer has been made.

Sources of further information, advice and guidance

QAA

Quality Code, Chapter B2: Admissions:

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-B2.aspx

Quality Code, Chapter B3: Learning and teaching:

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-B3.aspx

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Student support, learning resources and careers education, information, advice and guidance:

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-B4.aspx

Quality Code, Chapter B10: Management of collaborative arrangements:

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-B10.aspx

BIS

The website of the Department for Business Innovation & Skills (BIS) provides information on recognised UK higher education bodies and degrees:

www.bis.gov.uk/policies/higher-education/recognised-uk-degrees

UK NARIC

UK NARIC is the national agency responsible for providing information, advice and guidance on qualifications from overseas countries. It also offers training around fraudulent applications:

www.naric.org.uk

UKNCP

The UK's National Contact Point for Professional Qualifications provides information and guidance on the recognition of professional qualifications:

www.ukncp.org.uk

ECVET NCP

The National Contact Point for ECVET for England provides information and guidance on implementing the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training:

www.ecvet.org.uk

OISC

The Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) is responsible for regulating immigration advisers by ensuring they are fit and competent and act in the best interest of their clients. It provides a number of services to immigration advisers including information and guidance and professional development training:

<http://oisc.homeoffice.gov.uk>

UKCISA

The UKCISA's website signposts PMI2 funded practice case studies in the area of admissions:

www.ukcisa.org.uk/pmi/best_practice.php

SPA

The Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA) programme was established in 2006 and works closely with HEIs and other stakeholders on the continuing development of fair admissions. The SPA website includes good practice guidance in admissions, student recruitment and widening participation:

www.spa.ac.uk/good-practice/index.html

UCAS

The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) offers training and advice to HE staff supporting the admissions process:

www.ucas.com/he_staff

ATAS

Students wanting to pursue courses leading to a postgraduate qualification in the UK may need to apply for an Academic Technology Approval Scheme (ATAS) certificate:

www.fco.gov.uk/en/about-us/what-we-do/services-we-deliver/atas

5 Pre-arrival

Information for entrants

Pre-arrival information is intended to help applicants to settle in as quickly and easily as possible upon arrival in the UK and to facilitate their transition to study in the UK.

It is recommended that at the point of pre-arrival, between acceptance of an offer and arrival in the UK, the information that an HE provider makes available includes at least the following, some of which may also be included at earlier or later stages:

- joining instructions*
- details of any 'meet and greet' services made available by the institution
- what to expect upon arrival from immigration control, including what documents are needed, when, and where students will need to bring them
- details of any accommodation that the HEI makes available or privately-run accommodation
- details of the registration/enrolment process and the documents that entrants will need
- details of any orientation/induction programmes that the HEI makes available
- services and support (academic and non-academic) available to students at the institution, including faith-based, sporting, leisure and social services
- how to open bank accounts, including a recommendation that students make appropriate arrangements to access money upon arrival in the UK and/or to finance themselves until access to a bank can be arranged
- basic guidance on personal safety and British law
- arrangements for healthcare, including students' entitlements
- any insurance that may be necessary
- deadlines for fees and information about how to make payments
- reminders about visa regulations
- signposting to useful sources of information about coming to and living in the UK, including entitlements or restrictions on working while studying, such as from UKBA, the British Council or UKCISA (see 'Sources of further information, advice and guidance')

*Joining instructions should include:

- advice on where students need to go and what they need to do immediately on arrival, including information about late arrivals for those arriving during the evening/night
- guidance on how to arrive safely at the institution or accommodation
- emergency and out-of-hours contact details which, as a minimum, should include the UK's emergency telephone number (999)
- details of how students can contact home upon arrival to confirm that they have arrived safely.

Institutions are encouraged to provide contacts (email and telephone) for international students seeking further information, advice and guidance or for clarification of any of the information provided. It is advisable to provide a university or college contact number for any problems that may arise when entering the UK.

Institutions may wish to direct students to sources of practical help and guidance which they can engage with prior to the start of their programme, such as the 'Prepare for success' web learning tool (see 'Sources of further information, advice and guidance'). Institutions may also wish to consider offering pre-arrival courses around study and language skills.

Institutions may further wish to advise students before arrival about the availability and range of student accommodation, including that managed by the institution or by private suppliers. Such information might include details of the suitability of particular student houses, flats or halls of residence for specific groups of students, such as those with families.

Institutions might consider including information about deadlines for applying for student accommodation, and guidance on whether, when, and how deposits and rent are payable. Institutions are also advised to clarify whether, and to what extent, they are responsible for accommodation that is managed by, or on behalf of, the institution, and draw students' attention to legal agreements, such as rental contracts, which detail mutual obligations.

Institutions should also consider giving advice and guidance to international students concerning the availability of, and the entitlement to use, healthcare services in the UK. This should include an explanation about how healthcare services can be accessed and whether costs are likely to be incurred when using healthcare services in the UK.

The advice and guidance that institutions provide around healthcare arrangements for international students in the UK might include the circumstances in which students should consider taking out insurance cover for incidents of ill health, which make medical treatment necessary, or which may lead to a transfer home.

Sources of further information, advice and guidance

The British Council

Education UK website - information, advice and guidance aimed at international students coming to the UK:

www.educationuk.org

Comfort zone - a guide aimed at international students coming to the UK:

www.ukvisas.gov.uk/resources/en/docs/comfortzone

UKCISA

Information sheets for international students on aspects of life and study in the UK:

www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/information_sheets.php

UKCISA/PMI2

Prepare for Success - an online resource comprising learning activities designed to enable international students to prepare for their studies in the UK:

www.prepareforsuccess.org.uk

The International Student Calculator - an online student lifestyle calculator designed to help international students to plan and manage their finances for study in the UK:

www.studentcalculator.org.uk/international

UKCISA signposts practice case studies in the area of pre-arrival:

www.ukcisa.org.uk/pmi/best_practice.php

6 Enrolment, orientation and student services

Enrolment

Institutions should have clearly explained the process of enrolment and its purpose to entrants before arrival, and should have provided clear information in advance regarding any documents that students will be required to supply for the purposes of enrolment. During the enrolment phase, institutions may wish to consider explaining the institution's and the student's respective responsibilities, including towards UKBA, so that students clearly know what they can expect and what is expected of them during their time at the institution.

Orientation

Orientation programmes should help international students in settling in, providing them with an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the services and support that are made available, and to begin the process of integration with other students.

It is recommended that orientation should cover at least the following, some of which will build upon information provided at previous stages:

- advice on settling in and information on living in the UK
- details of social, sporting, spiritual (faith-based) and leisure facilities on campus
- advice on recognising and dealing with cultural shock and sources of guidance and support
- arrangements for healthcare and personal welfare
- details on safety and personal security
- details of any 'buddying' schemes or other integration opportunities
- academic support, including for language proficiency
- support for employability and careers education and guidance, including any opportunities for short-term employment or work experience
- the institution's definition of disability and the support that is made available for students in this context.

In designing orientation programmes, institutions are encouraged to consider the needs of diverse groups of international students, such as those with dependants, part-time learners, mature students, and students studying at different levels. Institutions should also be aware of the need for orientation for students who join part-way through an academic year and have in place appropriate arrangements.

Institutions are encouraged to consider how best to facilitate integration between international and domestic students. For example, in orientation programmes designed specifically for international students, institutions may signpost 'fresher's week' or similar schemes designed to welcome all new students and encourage international students to attend. Opportunities designed to encourage interaction between international and domestic students, such as 'buddying' schemes, should be explained and information about them disseminated during orientation.

Students' unions/associations can play an important role in facilitating integration between international and domestic students, and institutions are advised to work with the students' union in this context.

Student services

The availability of services and support should be clearly and accessibly communicated to international students.

Institutional staff and contracted external suppliers with responsibility for managing student services and support, and for advising students in such contexts, should be aware of the diversity of the student body and have an understanding of the needs of international students. They should be appropriately trained and supported to understand the perspectives of students from different countries or cultures, in order to meet their needs.

Where possible, services and support for international students should be seen as part of institutions' core service to all students, in order to foster an inclusive environment and promote integration and inclusion of international students in all aspects of university life. Students' unions, as well as institutions' counselling service and faith-based provision, can be a source of advice in this respect.

For international students whose usual residence is outside of the UK, institutions should consider having in place continuity arrangements in the event of a natural disaster or crisis event in the student's home country. Institutions should also be in a position to exercise care and due diligence towards international students in cases of disaster recovery, major incidents, or unexpected closure of a programme, including at partner institutions with whom students may be studying.

Where applicable institutions should also have in place additional support arrangements for international students who are under 18 and make them clearly accessible to applicants and their families or carers.

Institutions are encouraged to make explicit to international students their definition of disability, as some forms of disability may not be regarded as such in different cultures. This is to prevent international students from being excluded from support that may be available to them.

International students will frequently require immigration advice. Provision of immigration advice is regulated by the Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner (OISC) and institutions must ensure that any staff giving immigration advice comply with the OISC Code of Standards (see 'Sources of information, advice and guidance').

The services and support that an institution makes available should include information about financial matters and any support schemes in the case of financial hardship.

Institutions should consider signposting networks and events available via the local community, which can aid further with integration and inclusion and provide opportunities to experience UK culture.

Detailed guidance on the management and provision of accommodation and campus services can be found in the UK HE International Unit's guide to enhancing the international student experience (see 'Sources of further information, advice and guidance').

Sources of further information, advice and guidance

QAA

Quality Code, Chapter B3: Learning and teaching:

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-B3.aspx

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Student support, learning resources and careers education, information, advice and guidance:

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-B4.aspx

Quality Code, Chapter B10: Management of collaborative arrangements:

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-B10.aspx

British Council

Education UK website - information, advice and guidance aimed at international students coming to the UK:

www.educationuk.org

UKCISA

Good Practice Guide series includes guides on planning and running orientation managing accommodation, giving financial advice, mentoring schemes, volunteering schemes, students in crisis:

www.ukcisa.org.uk/about/material_media/good_practice_guides.php.

and international students with disabilities (in association with Skill: the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities):

www.ukcisa.org.uk/about/disability.php

Training programme includes training for HE staff advising international students during orientation:

www.ukcisa.org.uk/training/training_programme.php

Benchmarking survey of student services and support across universities and colleges (2010-11):

www.ukcisa.org.uk/about/material_media/research_reports.php

OISC

The Office of the Immigration Services Commissioner is responsible for regulating immigration advisers by ensuring they are fit and competent and act in the best interest of their clients. It provides a number of services to immigration advisers including information and guidance and professional development training:

<http://oisc.homeoffice.gov.uk>

HOST UK

HOST UK is a PMI supported voluntary organisation, a network of UK residents who welcome adult international students to their homes for a weekend, or Christmas visit, to give students an insight into the way of life in Britain:

www.hostuk.org.uk/

NUS/sparqs

'Supporting International Students' Training Pack:

Funded by the Scottish Government, this is a joint project between NUS Scotland and sparqs (Student Participation in Quality Scotland) to develop a training and support package on international student issues for students' associations:

www.nusconnect.org.uk/campaigns/nations/scotland/withoutborders/sistraining/

UKCISA/PMI2

Good practice case studies in the area of orientation, student support and advice, social integration, and student representation:

www.ukcisa.org.uk/pmi/best_practice.php

Internationalising Students' Unions project run by the NUS aims to support students' unions to increase involvement and engagement of international students with the students' union, including its running and the services and activities it makes available. The project is developing training courses for staff, officers and students, as well as a database of case studies and good practices:

<http://www.nusconnect.org.uk/news/article/33768/2516/>

ECU

The Equality Challenge Unit (ECU) offers information, advice and guidance to support equality and diversity for staff and students in higher education across the UK. These include a number of useful publications on specific issues related to international students, such as:

Joining up agendas: internationalisation and equality and diversity in HE:

www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/files/joining-up-agendas-senior-management-briefing.pdf/view?searchterm=internationalisation.

Attracting international students: equitable services and support, campus cohesion and community engagement:

www.ecu.ac.uk/our-projects/attracting-international-students/?searchterm=international.

Disabled international students in UK universities:

www.ecu.ac.uk/events/materials/International-student-as.ppt/view?searchterm=international.

International students' services: supporting gay students:

www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/international-students-services-supporting-gay-students.

UK Higher Education International Unit

A UK Guide to Enhancing the International Student Experience (March 2010) - a guide for HEIs drawing on data collected through the International Student Barometer on students' experiences:

www.international.ac.uk/our_research_and_publications/index.cfm

Academic Cooperation Association (ACA)

Support Services for International Students:

www.aca-secretariat.be/fileadmin/aca_docs/documents/ACA_Flyer_21_06_FINAL.pdf

7 Academic induction and learning and teaching

Academic induction

Institutions have an opportunity at the point of entry to induct students into the UK HE system and UK academic culture, including further detail on what they can expect from their programme of study, what is expected of them, and the institution's rules and regulations. At previous stages, institutions may already have given some high-level information about higher education in the UK and institutional practice. At the stage of academic induction, this should be followed up and complemented by more detailed information about academic practice (and malpractice).

It is recommended that academic induction should cover at least the following, some of which will build upon information provided at previous stages:

- learning and teaching methods
- assessment methods and criteria for assessment
- grading and classification systems where appropriate
- feedback on assessment - types and usage
- academic practice and malpractice (for example, plagiarism)
- learning facilities, including library resources and laboratories
- the institution's expectations towards students as active and independent learners
- academic support including, the use of tutors and tutorials, and the role of research supervisors
- the institution's rules and regulations governing the academic experience including its complaints and appeals procedures
- opportunities for student representation and feedback.

Institutions may make this information available in a variety of forms, which might include reference to Student Charters, programme specifications, course handbooks, and so on, but it should be clear and accessible.

The process of academic induction should be undertaken in a timely manner and should be ongoing, focusing in particular on key points during the academic cycle, such as soon after arrival and during examination periods. In particular, provision should be made to induct students who enter part-way through an academic year, after the start of a programme.

During academic induction, and beyond, institutions should ensure that international students recognise and understand what constitutes academic integrity and what the institution's regulations are relating to academic malpractice, including its consequences. As understanding of academic malpractice can vary considerably across different national contexts, institutions may wish to refer to examples to make explicit what constitutes deviation from accepted academic practice in the UK.

Induction should prepare international students for an active and engaged student learning experience. As such, institutions should make international students aware of opportunities for giving feedback, for example through completing student surveys and taking part in focus groups, or through engagement with student representatives and the students' union.

To ensure that international students actively and consistently use the information provided during academic induction, institutions should provide guidance as to where and how such information can be accessed throughout the academic year. Students may also benefit from periodic reminders of this information during their programme of study.

When informing students about complaints and appeals procedures, institutions should signpost students' recourse to independent bodies, including the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) (England and Wales) and the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) (Scotland).

Learning and teaching

Staff involved in programme delivery should be encouraged to pay attention to the composition of taught classes and to consider the needs of all students in the class, including international students. The institution should support frontline teaching staff, in particular through professional development opportunities, to assist them in developing inclusive teaching and assessment practices. Personal tutors would also benefit from specific training on supporting international students.

In recognising the particular needs of international students whose first language is not English, institutions should have in place appropriate arrangements to enable students to cope with the demands of the programme in the context of the continual development of their language skills.

All students may benefit from support for the development of study skills and institutions should consider how best to support international students in making the transition to, and coping with the demands of, the particular programme of study.

For students on work placements, institutions should seek to support the placement host in understanding the particular educational and cultural needs of the student.

Institutions should ensure that their quality assurance processes take account of international students' experiences alongside those of domestic students.

For detailed practical guidance in the area of teaching and learning readers are encouraged to visit the web pages of the Teaching International Students (TIS) project, a joint initiative of the Higher Education Academy and UKCISA, with funding from the Prime Minister's Initiative 2 (see 'Sources of further information, advice and guidance').

Sources of further information, advice and guidance

QAA

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Student support, learning resources and careers education, information, advice and guidance:

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-B4.aspx

Quality Code, Chapter A6: Assessment of achievement of learning opportunities:

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-A6.aspx

Quality Code, Chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning:

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-B6.aspx

Quality Code, Chapter B1: Programme design and approval:

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-B1.aspx

Quality Code, Chapter B3: Learning and teaching:

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-B3.aspx

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Complaints and appeals:

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-B9.aspx

Quality Code, Chapter B10: Management of collaborative arrangements:

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-B10.aspx

Understanding assessment: its role in safeguarding academic standards and quality in higher education:

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/UnderstandingAssessment.pdf

UKCISA

Resources and training for HE staff around cross-cultural awareness:

www.ukcisa.org.uk/about/material_media/pubs_crosscultural.php

UKCISA/PMI2

Good practice case studies in the area of teaching and learning:

www.ukcisa.org.uk/pmi/best_practice.php

HEA

The Higher Education Academy (HEA) offers a variety of resources and support to staff in institutions in support of students' learning experiences:

www.heacademy.ac.uk

The Academy's work on internationalisation includes the Teaching International Students Project, which focuses on enhancing the quality of teaching and learning for international students, through providing advice and guidance to lecturers. The TIS project's website includes a range of resources including case studies:

www.heacademy.ac.uk/internationalstudents

The Professional standards framework for teaching and supporting learning plays a role in professional development of teaching staff:
www.heacademy.ac.uk/ukpsf

LearnHigher

The LearnHigher website, managed by the Association for Learning Development in Higher Education (ALDinHE), provides teaching and learning resources for staff and students across the FE/HE sector:
www.learnhigher.ac.uk

BALEAP

The website of the British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes (BALEAP) includes resources and publications that institutions may find helpful in the context of support for students' language skills:
www.baleap.org.uk

SCONUL

The Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) includes information and guidance on Library services for international students:
www.sconul.ac.uk/groups/access/papers

8 Employability and careers education

Support for international students in respect of careers education¹¹ and employability¹² brings with it additional challenges and opportunities for institutions such as being aware of differences in employment sectors and marketplaces in countries other than the UK, and being able to support students to research these issues in their preferred country of employment. There is also a need for institutions to understand the implications of UK immigration rules on opportunities for short-term work experience and longer-term employment during and after a student's studies.

In response to the particular needs of international students, institutions may wish to consider the following:

- providing or highlighting sources of guidance on legislation with regard to working in the UK both during and after study
- providing or signposting access to a database of employers or employment opportunities in the country of interest
- facilitating access to alumni networks which can assist in preparation for employment and employment opportunities
- careers fairs with multinational or virtual recruitment fairs involving overseas employers
- providing specific information, advice and guidance such as on compiling CVs and on the UK style of interviewing.

Institutions will have already managed international students' expectations of careers education, employability and related services during the earlier stages of the student journey. This information should have provided a realistic picture of the opportunities that an institution makes available to students to prepare for entry into employment and the information, advice and guidance that it makes available in respect of careers education. In particular, institutions may wish to consider making clear to international students that the careers service is not intended to function as a job placement service.

Institutions might structure their support for careers education and employability through a variety of means including: in an embedded way as part of academic programmes or modules; through work-based learning and placements; or through access to centrally provided employability information, guidance and events.

Those working with international students in support of careers education and employability should be appropriately trained and supported in respect of the particular needs and perspectives of this group of students. This will include being aware of any restrictions on employment which apply to those on student visas.

¹¹ Careers education is defined in *Chapter B4: Student support, learning resources and careers education, information and guidance* of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education as: 'a range of teaching and learning activities, associated with career contexts, preparation, development and planning. It can be taught through specific modules (generic, customised or bespoke), through cross-curricular integration or outside of the curriculum'.

¹² Employability is defined in *Chapter B4: Student support, learning resources and careers education, information and guidance* as: 'a set of achievements, skills, understandings and personal attributes that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits the workforce, the community and the economy'.

Institutions should encourage international students to develop their transferable skills and to prepare themselves for employment using the resources that the institution provides. Institutions are encouraged to guide students towards such activities that will enhance their employability.

In addition to preparing students for entry to employment, institutions should also offer advice and guidance to all students on options for further study.

Sources of further information, advice and guidance

QAA

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Student support, learning resources and careers education, information, advice and guidance:

www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/quality-code-B4.aspx

NASES and AGCAS

Supported by PMI funding, the National Association of Student Employment Services (NASES) and the Association of Graduate Careers Advisory Services (AGCAS) have developed a range of services and resources aimed at both international students and HE staff advising them:

www.nases.org.uk/content/index.php?page=22962

www.agcas.org.uk/agcas_resources/312-PMI2-Employability-Projects.

These include:

- International Virtual Careers Fairs for institutions, employers and international students from across the UK
- online database of international vacancies and employers available through the University of London Careers Group website (International Job Online) and through the Prospects website (International Graduate Jobs)
- the 'morethanwork' NASES website designed for international students seeking part-time work while studying in the UK
- a series of country guides providing useful information about the labour market and how to find and apply for jobs.

UKCISA signposts practice case studies in the area of employment and work experience:

www.ukcisa.org.uk/pmi/best_practice.php

9 Graduation and departure

Institutions should make clear the regulations and practicalities involved in formally leaving the institution to ensure a smooth departure, so that international students understand what is expected of them and when (for example returning library books, closing of accounts, final payments of accommodation bills, and so on).

Institutions should explain to international students details of the graduation process, and make clear to students what documents they will receive upon graduation, for example, a degree certificate, transcript or diploma supplement.

Institutions should make departing students aware of any services available to them after graduation such as access to alumni associations and employability support.

Institutions should also be aware that international students may experience reverse 'culture shock' upon return to their home country, and should be prepared to offer support and advice to students planning to return home after completing their studies in the UK. In this context, institutions may wish to consider developing programmes or initiatives, such as re-orientation programmes, departure events, or introduction to alumni networks, which may help students in the transition following departure from the institution and the UK.

Sources of further information, advice and guidance

UKCISA

Information sheets for international students including guidance on preparing to return home:

www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/information_sheets.php

UKCISA signposts practice case studies in the area of re-orientation:

www.ukcisa.org.uk/pmi/best_practice.php

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