QAA

Handbook for the review of Foundation Degrees in Wales

Draft for consultation

March 2012

Contents

The purpose of this handbook

1   The mission of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is to safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education. QAA has been commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales[1] (HEFCW) to undertake a developmental review of Foundation Degrees in Wales in 2012-13.

2   This handbook explains the QAA review process for Foundation Degrees in Wales. It covers the context and aims of the review process, how it will work, its key features and what happens after a review has been completed. Supplementary information about various aspects of the review process for institutions and reviewers is provided in the annexes to the handbook.

About Foundation Degrees

3   The *Foundation Degree Prospectus* (W01/23HE), published by HEFCW in 2001, describes the framework of core features that define the Foundation Degree and provides guidance for those institutions wishing to offer the qualification. QAA's *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*,[2] published in 2004 and revised in 2010, describes the purpose, distinctive features, general characteristics and generic outcomes of the Foundation Degree. While none of these attributes is unique to Foundation Degrees, their clear and planned integration within a single award makes that award distinctive.

4   In 2008 the Welsh Assembly Government committed to making Foundation Degrees a fundamental element in the delivery of its skills strategy, *Skills that Work for Wales.*[3] Then in 2010 the Welsh Assembly Government's strategy and plan for higher education in Wales, *For Our Future*,[4] set out a key role for Foundation Degrees in the delivery of the twin priorities of social justice and a buoyant economy. In response, HEFCW published its policy on Foundation Degrees[5] in July 2010 (W10/29HE) and, as part of its implementation, commissioned QAA to undertake a developmental review of Foundation Degrees.

5   Foundation Degrees are normally offered and awarded by higher education institutions (HEIs) working in partnerships or consortia with further education institution(s) and/or employer(s) who provide the programmes of study. The HEI typically acts as the **lead institution** with primary responsibility for the quality of the learning opportunities and the academic standards of the awards.

6   The *Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009* has made it possible for further education institutions (FEIs) to apply to the Privy Council for the powers to award Foundation Degrees themselves. Should an FEI gain Foundation Degree awarding powers it will be subject to Foundation Degree review.

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[1] www.hefcw.ac.uk
[2] www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/foundation-degree-qualification-benchmark-may-2010.aspx
[3] http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/skillsthatforwales/?lang=en&ts=3
[4] http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/forourfuture/?lang=en&ts=3
[5] www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publications/circulars/circulars_2010/w10%2029he%20foundation%20degrees%20circ%20and%20annex%20a.pdf

Aims and focus of the review process

7   This review process, which is primarily developmental, relates to all Foundation Degree provision in Wales. This includes both directly funded and franchised collaborative provision. It also includes provision funded by HEFCW, the European Social Fund (ESF), HEFCW funding via One Wales and the University Heads of the Valleys Institute (UHOVI).

8   The main aims of the review process are:

- to provide information about how Foundation Degrees are being developed against the expectations of the QAA *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* (which is now included in Part A of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)
- to encourage improvements in the academic management of Foundation Degrees through the publication and sharing of good practice
- to inform the future development of Foundation Degree programmes in Wales
- to make sure Foundation Degrees offer good value in return for public investment
- to enable HEFCW to meet its statutory responsibility for the quality of the provision it funds
- to involve the awarding body and its partners in the review process
- to involve employers in the quality assurance of Foundation Degrees
- to involve students in the quality assurance of Foundation Degrees
- to ensure that students, employers and others have ready access to easily understood and reliable information about the provision, management and quality assurance of Foundation Degree programmes in Wales
- to provide an unpublished report for each higher education institution reviewed, to be shared with HEFCW. The report will comment on the effectiveness of the quality assurance and enhancement arrangements and will contain overall conclusions and recommendations.
- to provide an overview report summarising the outcomes and making recommendations for the future.

9   The review process will focus on:

- the responsibilities of the lead institution/awarding body for safeguarding academic standards, and the quality of learning opportunities and of the student experience
- how partnerships or consortia ensure that Foundation Degree programmes meet the defining characteristics as set out in the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* and are likely to meet the standards of a level 5 qualification in *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*[6] (FHEQ)
- how the requirements and expectations of the different funders for the provision are met
- areas of innovation and good practice that are worthy of public dissemination

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[6] www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/the-framework-for-higher-education-qualifications-in-england-wales-and-northern-ireland.aspx

Overview of the review process

10   The review method has been designed in accordance with a range of principles common to other QAA review methods. It is an evidence-based process carried out through peer review. Students are central to both the purpose and process of review and are involved in a number of ways (see paragraphs 25-29). Additionally, owing to the particular characteristics of Foundation Degrees, provision will be made for meetings with employers and visits to the workplace.

11   Reviewers will focus on the key areas identified below, with the purpose of ensuring that the academic standards of the Foundation Degree awards and the quality of the learning opportunities are being managed in a manner that maintains public confidence.

Key area one: Design and development of programmes

12   The review team will evaluate whether, and to what extent, programmes are designed and delivered in accordance with the defining characteristics of the Foundation Degree, paying special attention to:

- the aims and intended outcomes of the programmes
- the design and content of curricula, including the integration of academic study and work-based learning within the curriculum
- the involvement of employers and employer-related organisations including Sector Skills Councils[7] and public, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs).

Key area two: Academic standards

13   The team will review the arrangements for assuring the threshold academic standards of Foundation Degree awards, giving consideration to:

- the use made of external examiners
- the use of internal and external reviews
- assessment policies, in particular in relation to students' achievement of the intended learning outcomes
- the use of the Quality Code and other reference points, including the *Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales*[8] (CQFW)
- the use of management information, including entry, progression and completion data
- programme monitoring arrangements (as applicable to academic standards)
- validation and approval of new provision, and its periodic review (as applicable).

Key area three: Quality of learning opportunities

14   The team will review the quality of the learning opportunities, giving consideration to:

- programme monitoring arrangements (as applicable)
- validation and approval of new provision, and its periodic review (as applicable)
- academic guidance, support and supervision, and personal support and guidance

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[7] www.sscalliance.org
[8] www.hefcw.ac.uk/policy_areas/learning_and_teaching/credit_framework.aspx

- student representation and feedback arrangements
- how work-based learning is managed and monitored
- learning support resources (including virtual learning environments)
- staff development, including teaching, research and scholarly activity.

Key area four: Enhancement

15   The team will review the extent to which deliberate steps are taken at management level to improve the quality of learning opportunities. The emphasis is on there being a robust and understood framework in place for enhancement of quality of learning opportunities across all parts of the Foundation Degree provision.

Key area five: Information about higher education provision

16   The team will review how institutions ensure that the information about their Foundation Degree programmes and the academic standards of their awards is fit for purpose, accessible, and trustworthy. They will consider:

- details of the arrangements and the evidence that the lead institution uses to assure itself that the Expectation of the Quality Code is being met, both in respect of the lead institution and its partners
- students' experience of published information and other information relating to their programmes of study and other relevant topics.

While reviewers are not expected to draw conclusions about the statistical accuracy of the detailed information in the Key Information Set (KIS),[9] they will consider the KIS and the Wider Information Set (WIS)[10] in coming to conclusions about whether the institution's information about higher education provision is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

Outcomes

17   The review team will use programme trails (see paragraph 40) to test the evidence. On the basis of the information provided, the review team will come to conclusions about whether the lead institution **meets** or **does not meet** its responsibilities for assuring the standards and quality of the programmes it offers under the five key areas described in paragraphs 12 to 16. The review team will also identify **good practice** and make **recommendations**. The review team's findings will be contained in an unpublished written report for the lead institution, which will be required to produce an action plan in response.

Good practice

18   The review of Foundation Degrees will seek to identify areas of innovation and examples of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination via the overview report. This activity is intended to enable the lead institution to build upon strengths and enhance delivery, and to assist in the further development of the Foundation Degree award.

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[9] www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/infohe/kis.htm
[10] www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/infohe/wider.htm

Recommendations

19   Recommendations will not be graded, but the review team will make clear the level of urgency by indicating the approximate timescale by which recommendations should be addressed, for example, immediately; within six months; before further recruitment to the programme.

The review process in summary

20   Reviews will include the following activities:

- preparation of a self-evaluation document (SED) by the lead institution, in collaboration with partners as appropriate
- preparation of an optional submission by the student representative body of the lead institution
- appointment and training of the reviewers by QAA
- a preliminary planning meeting carried out between the lead institution and QAA's review coordinator
- identification of the Foundation Degree programme to be trailed
- a visit by the review team, normally lasting for up to three days (provision will be made for a four-day visit where the provision is large or complex)
- meetings with staff and employers (and students if applicable) at the lead institution
- a meeting with employers at the lead institution
  a visit to at least one partner college to meet with staff and students
- a visit to at least one site of work-based learning to meet employers and students.
- scrutiny of institutional documentation and reviewers' meeting notes
- a final meeting with the senior staff of the lead institution
- a letter to the lead institution containing the conclusions
- a draft report sent to the lead institution for comments on factual accuracy
- a final report, including an action plan, which is not published but will be shared with HEFCW, the lead institution, and the partners.

Features of the review process

External reference points

21   Reviewers will draw upon a range of external reference points, including: *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*[11] (FHEQ), the *Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales*[12] (CQFW), and relevant sections of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education[13] (the Quality Code) published by QAA, including the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*[14] and relevant subject benchmark statements.[15] In so doing, the reviewers will not seek evidence of compliance, but rather evidence that the lead institution has considered the purpose of the reference points, has reflected on its own practices

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[11] www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/the-framework-for-higher-education-qualifications-in-england-wales-and-northern-ireland.aspx
[12] www.hefcw.ac.uk/policy_areas/learning_and_teaching/credit_framework.aspx
[13] www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/quality-code/Pages/default.aspx
[14] www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Foundation-Degree-qualification-benchmark-May-2010.aspx
[15] www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality/subject-guidance/pages/subject-benchmark-statements.aspx

in the relevant areas, and has taken, or is taking, necessary steps to introduce appropriate changes to develop practice that meets the Expectations of the Quality Code.

- In respect of the FHEQ (and CQFW), the reviewers will be looking for evidence that the lead institution has related the Foundation Degree programmes to the intermediate level.
- In respect of the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*, the reviewers will enquire how it has been taken into account when designing and running Foundation Degree programmes.
- In respect of the Quality Code, the reviewers will draw upon all relevant Chapters (particularly *Chapter B7: External examining*; *Chapter A5: Externality; Chapter A6: Assessment of achievement of learning outcomes*; *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning*; and *Chapter B3, Learning and teaching*) and will expect to see evidence of how the Expectations set out in the Chapters and Parts of the Quality Code have been, or are being, met. (Information about the transition from the Academic Infrastructure to the Quality Code is provided in Annex K).
- In respect of the subject benchmark statements, the reviewers will look for evidence that the lead institution has taken account of the relevant subject benchmark statement(s) to ensure that students completing Foundation Degrees will be able to achieve an honours degree in 1.3 years of study for a full-time student, or the equivalent for a part-time student.
- Other external reference points may include frameworks established by relevant Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) and the National Occupational Standards (NOS) developed by the Sector Skills Councils.

22   The reviewers will need to know that lead institutions have paid due attention to sector-specific health and safety legislation, equal opportunities legislation and EU employment legislation.

The self-evaluation document

23   The self-evaluation document (SED) is the starting point for the review. The SED should consist of a portfolio of existing documents accompanied by an evaluative commentary. The SED should signpost and contextualise the evidence contained in the documents for the reviewers. The principal requirements for an SED are that it is genuinely evaluative, not just descriptive, and that it provides sufficient documentary evidence to support its claims. The task of the reviewers is to test and verify the claims made against the evidence cited. Detailed guidance on the preparation of the SED, including the essential features to be covered and a possible format, is provided in Annex B.

24   Each review will focus on the lead institution's management of its Foundation Degree programmes and the role of further education institutions and employers. The SED should cover the entirety of the provision at all sites of delivery, including varying modes of attendance and the contributions of different employers. The SED should be submitted to the QAA secure electronic folder (SharePoint) no later than 10 weeks before the review.

Students, the student submission and the lead student representative

25   Students are central to the review process. The review team will scrutinise a range of matters including: the quality of the student learning experience; the ways in which students'

learning is facilitated and supported; and the quality of the information provided for students about the programmes, including work-based learning.

26   The students' representative body - normally the Students' Union (or equivalent) of the lead institution, in consultation with students on the Foundation Degree programmes (including at partner institutions) - has the opportunity to make a submission to the review team in advance of the review visit. The **student 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 D. The student submission should be submitted to the QAA secure electronic folder (SharePoint) no later than 10 weeks before the review.

27   The lead institution and its Student Union may agree to appoint a **lead student representative** (LSR). The role of the LSR is to encourage the involvement of students in the review and keep them informed of progress. The LSR may be involved in the preparation of the student submission. The LSR works closely with the institutional contact (see paragraphs 34 to 36). Further details are given in Annex D.

28   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.

29   Each review team will also include an external student reviewer.

Employers

30   Work-based and work-related learning is integral to FDs and therefore the role of employers and employer organisations in these awards is important. The review will include a consideration of the varied contributions of employers to the design, development, implementation and review of the awards. Reviewers will also wish to learn about the benefits and challenges of work-based and work-related learning, understanding that there will be a range of sectors and types of workplace. Reviewers will wish to meet some of the employers involved in FDs and hear their views. This will be arranged through visits to the workplace and by inviting employers to participate in at least one of the scheduled meetings at the lead institution.

The review team and review coordinator

31   QAA will appoint a team of **reviewers** to undertake the review. Each team will normally comprise four reviewers, two with expertise relevant to Foundation Degrees, a student reviewer and a reviewer nominated by the lead institution (hereinafter known as the institutional nominee). The inclusion of an institutional nominee is intrinsic to the developmental method. The main responsibilities of the reviewers are to read, analyse and verify the SED, and to gather whatever further evidence they consider necessary to reach the specified conclusions.

32   The review will be led by a **review coordinator**. The review coordinator is responsible, on behalf of QAA, for ensuring the effective management and administration of the review. The review coordinator will usually chair meetings of the reviewers as well as meetings between the reviewers and the staff and students of the lead institution, partners and employers.

33   Reviewers are generally appointed by QAA from nominations made by institutions that provide higher education programmes. Before undertaking reviews QAA provides all reviewers

and review coordinators with training, which includes both the method and the particular context of the review. Further information about the arrangements for appointing and training reviewers is provided in Annex J. Lead institutions will be advised of the membership of the review team approximately six months before the review. In accordance with QAA's Welsh Language Scheme, the lead institution can request that the review is conducted bilingually (see paragraph 58).

The institutional contact and institutional nominee

34   Approximately twelve months before the review QAA will ask the lead institution to appoint an **institutional contact** who will have day-to-day responsibility for the arrangements for the review and for ensuring that the evidence is made available to the team.

35   At the same time, the lead institution will be invited to identify an **institutional nominee**. The institutional nominee is selected by the lead institution to participate as a full member of the review team. In making their selection, the lead institution will wish to consider the pivotal role the institutional nominee will play in liaising between the review team and staff, and the extent of their knowledge and experience of the lead institution and college policies and procedures. The institutional nominee will need the personal qualities and skills to handle any sensitive matters that may arise during the course of the review. Additionally, nominees 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 review. The institutional nominee also works closely with the LSR (further guidance about the arrangements for institutional nominees is given in Annex E).

36   A lead institution with small provision located on one site may find that the roles of institutional contact and institutional nominee are most effectively combined into one. However, the lead institution should bear in mind the demands that may be placed on an institutional nominee, who may be asked to respond to requests for information from the team as institutional contact while carrying out a full schedule of meetings, some of which may be off-site, as a member of the review team. It is therefore recommended that in consortia with larger, more complex or more distributed provision the two roles should operate separately.

Scheduling

37   Reviews will take place in spring and summer 2013. QAA will consult the lead institution to ensure appropriate timing for the review, and a QAA officer will schedule the review visit twelve months in advance of the visit. A timeline, outlining the key events, is provided in Annex A.

Preparation and the preliminary meeting

38   The review coordinator and the lead institution should discuss preliminary planning as soon as possible after the team is confirmed. A preliminary meeting will take place no later than six weeks before the start of the review period. It is for the lead institution to determine who should attend the preliminary meeting on its behalf. The meeting provides an opportunity for the review coordinator to ensure that there is a shared understanding of the review process, and to negotiate and agree the main arrangements for the review. In particular, the review coordinator will wish to learn about the locations of the sites of work-based learning and possible times for a meeting with students and employers.

39   At least four weeks before the review, the review coordinator will confer with members of the review team, to confirm the programme to be trailed and also to establish any initial lines of enquiry. The review coordinator will then inform the lead institution.

Programme trails

40   As part of the review process, reviewers will be asked to trail one or more specific Foundation Degree programmes, depending on the scope of the provision. The reviewers will identify these programmes from their previous analysis of the SED and the student submission, where available. The lead institution will be asked to make available detailed information (see Annex C) which the team will follow up with scrutiny of documentation and a visit to the site(s) of delivery. The trails are concerned with testing how well institutional processes work and how effective they are in practice at local level and across the institution as a whole.

Activities during the review visit

41   The pattern of the review will be sufficiently flexible to respond to the nature of the programmes under review. Although some activities will be common to all reviews, the timetable of events will reflect the particular arrangements of each lead institution and its partners. In some cases it may be necessary for the review team to separate to conduct different activities, but no fewer than two members of the review team will be present at each location.

42   An indicative schedule for the review visit is provided in Annex G. All review visits will include:

- an initial meeting between the reviewers and the institution
- a meeting with staff from all member institutions of the consortium for the delivery of Foundation Degree programmes
- a meeting with staff engaged in teaching Foundation Degree programmes
- meetings with a representative group of current students and, where appropriate, former students
- a visit to at least one site of teaching and learning, to meet staff and students
- at least one visit to the workplace to meet students and employers
- private meetings of the team
- scrutiny of documentation and notes of meetings
- a final team meeting with the lead institution.

Initial meeting

43   The review visit begins with the initial meeting between the reviewers and the key staff responsible for quality and standards at the lead institution. This meeting is important in ensuring that the reviewers understand the nature of the provision under review, including, where applicable, the consortium arrangement. This meeting is also key to ensuring that the review commences in a spirit that encourages dialogue and openness. It is in this spirit that the reviewers will introduce and explore the initial review agenda.

Meetings with staff

44   Reviewers will want to meet with staff from the consortium for the delivery of the Foundation Degree programmes, including the awarding institution, all institutions concerned with delivery of programmes, and employers' representatives. They will also want to meet with staff engaged in teaching Foundation Degree programmes. The topics for discussion will reflect the key areas, as outlined in paragraphs 10 to 19.

Meetings with students

45   The review includes at least one meeting with students currently registered on a Foundation Degree programme. It is important that the reviewers are able to meet a group of students drawn, where applicable, from the partner institution(s). This group should be representative in terms of work status and modes of study, as well as age, gender and prior work qualifications and work experience. Where partner institutions are geographically distant or where study patterns are diverse, the timing(s) of the meetings and the composition of the student group(s) will be negotiated sensitively to take account of the different study modes and the availability of the students concerned. The topics for discussion will reflect the key areas as outlined in paragraphs 10 to 19, selected and adapted to relate to the student experience.

Visits to further education institutions and employers

46   Reviewers will normally spend part of their second and, where appropriate, third days visiting partner further education institutions (FEIs) and sites of work-based learning. Visits to sites of work-based learning will enable the reviewers to meet representatives of the employers who are directly responsible for the work-based element of programmes, and to meet students separately who are currently experiencing it. The reviewers will make every effort to minimise the disruption to students and employers.

Communication with the institutional contact

47   The review coordinator will give the institutional contact feedback about the progress of the review and, in particular, will inform him/her of matters on which the reviewers need additional evidence. The need may become apparent either to the lead institution or to the reviewers. The review coordinator and institutional contact will agree what type of additional evidence is needed, and by when. Such requests will be kept to a minimum and should only involve supplying documents and other types of evidence that already exist. Only in exceptional circumstances would the review team ask for new papers to be written. The Lead Student Representative may also attend these meetings.

Final meetings

48   At the end of the visit, reviewers will hold a private meeting to consider all the evidence; to reach their conclusions; and to agree an outline of the draft report.

49   The programme for the review visit will include a final meeting between the team and senior staff of the institution and the lead representative. It will not be a feedback meeting but it will be an opportunity for the team to summarise the major themes and issues.

50   No later than two weeks after the end of the review the review coordinator sends a letter to the lead institution setting out the conclusions and recommendations.

The review report

51   The review report:

- draws overall conclusions on the extent to which the lead institution assures the delivery and award of Foundation Degrees to reflect the defining characteristics of such awards.
- draws overall conclusions about the extent to which the lead institution meets or does not meet its responsibilities for:
    - the assurance of academic standards
    - the quality of learning opportunities
    - the enhancement of the provision leading to Foundation Degree awards
    - the accuracy and completeness of the information the providers give about these awards.
- records features identified by reviewers as representing good practice, and any innovative features of the provision
- makes recommendations as appropriate, including a timescale reflecting the urgency of the actions required
- details the team's findings on:
    - the design and development of Foundation Degrees
    - the assurance of the standards of the Foundation Degree awards
    - the quality of the learning opportunities
    - management, monitoring and enhancement of the Foundation Degree awards
    - the accuracy and completeness of information about the higher education provision.

52   The review coordinator drafts the review report based on the agreed findings written up by the reviewers. A draft copy of the report is sent to the lead institution for comments on factual accuracy. The final report will be provided to the lead institution and to HEFCW (in both English and Welsh) fifteen weeks after the end of the review. The outline of the report structure is provided in Annex H.

Action plan

53   When the lead institution receives the draft report, it is asked to complete an action plan in response to its contents. QAA will provide a template for this action plan (see Annex I). The lead institution will need to consult its partners on the action plan, which should set out how it intends to share or sustain good practice, how it plans to address the team's recommendations and how it plans to evaluate these actions. The lead student representative may also be involved in this process. The plan will be checked by QAA.

Briefing
July 2012

Training
Sept 2012

Self-evaluation and student submission sent to QAA
-10 weeks

Preliminary meeting
-6 weeks

Review visit
0 weeks

Draft report to lead institution and partners
+4 weeks

Lead institution and partners produce action plan
+8 weeks

Report and action plan sent to institution and partners
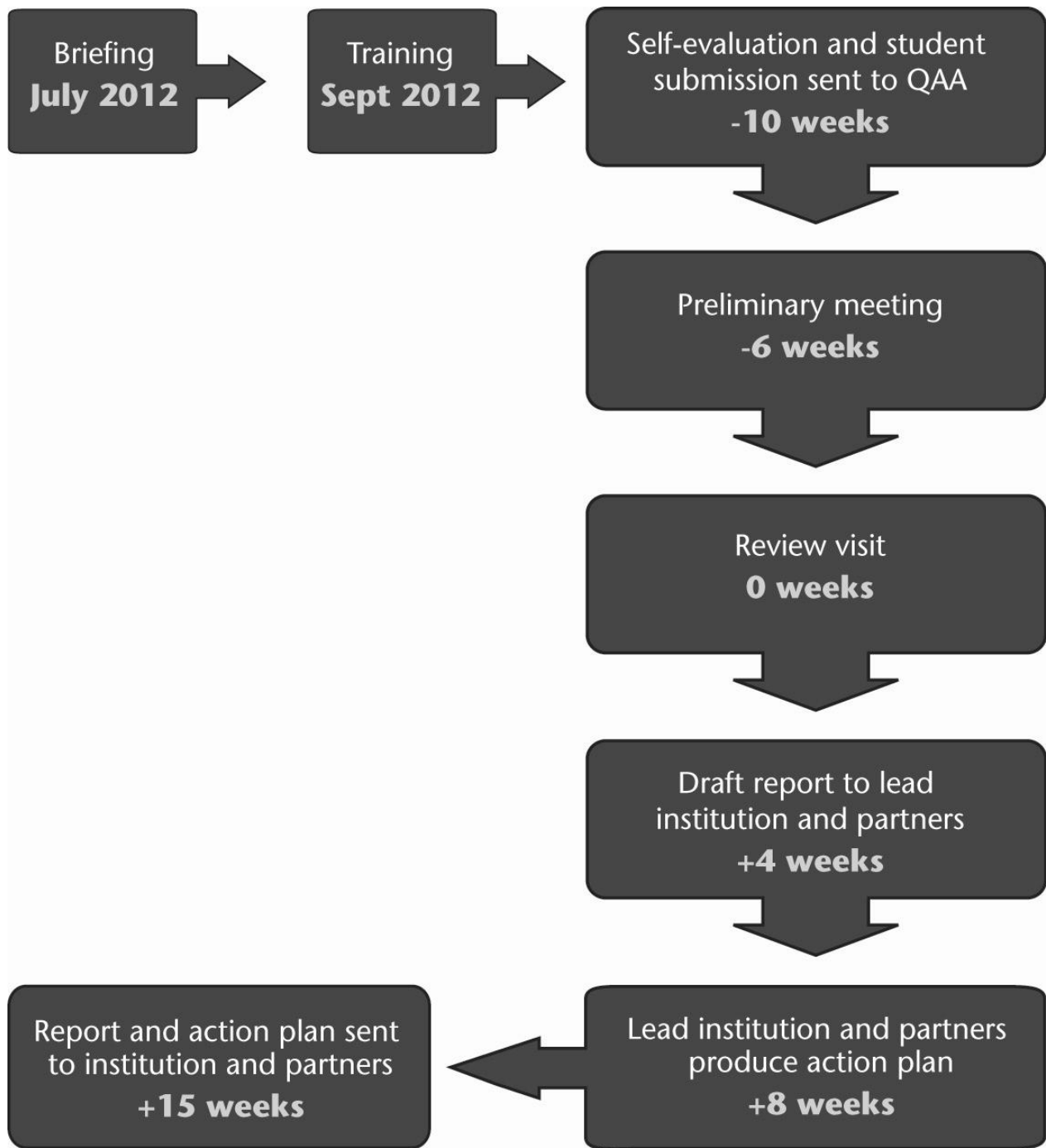+15 weeks

Figure 1: Key stages in the review

Responding to the review

54   Twelve months after the review, the lead institution will be asked to provide a written response to QAA, which may be produced in collaboration with its partners in the consortium. This document will detail progress made on addressing the recommendations of the report and disseminating good practice, through the lead institution's action plan.

55   If there are any recommendations which require immediate or urgent attention, the lead institution will be asked to provide a written report six months after the review on how it has addressed these recommendations and how it is monitoring progress in order to satisfy itself that the actions are effective. This will be followed by a second evaluative report twelve months after the review on how the lead institution has addressed all the recommendations and how it has satisfied itself that the actions are effective.

56   In the event that the review team concludes that the lead institution and its partner(s) do not meet their responsibilities effectively in respect of the Foundation Degrees under review, a second visit will normally take place 12 months after the report has been made available to the institution.

Overview report

57   On completion of all the reviews QAA also will produce an overview report on Foundation Degrees, drawing upon the reports of the individual reviews. The overview report will include a summary of the provision of Foundation Degrees reflecting on the diversity, health and stage of development of the programmes, it will be a key vehicle for the dissemination of the good practice identified within individual reviews. The report will be published by December 2013.

QAA's Welsh Language Scheme

58   In planning, conducting and reporting on the reviews in Wales, QAA is committed to treating the Welsh and English languages equally. The full details of QAAs Welsh Language Scheme are available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/wales/pages/default.aspx.

Evaluation of the process

59   QAA will encourage lead institutions, students, employers, reviewers and review coordinators to contribute to the evaluation of the review process by inviting comment on the reviews in which they have participated.

Annex A: Review timeline

December 2011	A QAA scoping exercise takes place to establish number and location of Foundation Degree programmes being offered in Wales
February 2012	QAA confirms the list of institutions that will be involved in the review programme
12 months before the review visit (from February 2012)	QAA contacts each lead institution to agree a date for the review visit and to request details of the institutional contact and institutional nominee
6-9 months before the review visit	QAA arranges a general briefing for all lead and partner institutions in the review programme
6-9 months before the review visit	QAA arranges training for review teams and review coordinators
4-6 months before the visit	QAA informs the lead institution of the membership of the review team
10 weeks before the review visit	The SED is submitted (and also the student submission, if applicable) to the QAA secure electronic folder (SharePoint)
At least 6 weeks before the review visit	The preliminary meeting between the review coordinator and the lead institution is held
At least 4 weeks before the review visit	The review coordinator confirms programme trails with members of the review team and informs the lead institution; he/she confirms any initial lines of enquiry with members of the review team
During the month before the review visit	Any extra documents required as a result of the preliminary meeting are submitted; preparations are made for the visit
The review visit	Reviewers meet the course team(s) and may also meet current and former students and employers; they scrutinise documents and visit sites of work-based learning. Reviewers meet on the final day of the visit to agree draft conclusions and recommendations
2 weeks after the review visit	QAA notifies the lead institution of the final conclusions and recommendations
4 weeks after the review visit	The lead institution receives a copy of the draft report to check for factual accuracy and prepares the action plan
6-8 weeks after the review visit	The lead institution returns the report and action plan to QAA
15 weeks after the review visit	The lead institution receives the final report and action plan (in both English and Welsh)

Annex B: Guidelines on the self-evaluation document

1   The self-evaluation document (SED) is the starting point for the review of a Foundation Degree programme. The task of the reviewers is to test and verify the claims made and the evidence cited by the provider. The SED should take the form of a portfolio of existing documents accompanied by a commentary, which together provide an evaluative, structured response to each of the key areas.

The portfolio of existing documents

2   The lead institution should select high-quality, well organised and evaluative documents that draw upon robust validation and review processes used by both the lead institution and the provider(s), as the basis of the evidence for the review.

The commentary

3   The commentary should act as a guide for the reviewers to the relevant sections in the existing evidence. If existing documents do not fully provide an evaluative account of the key areas to be considered by the review team (see sections below), additional paragraphs may be added into the commentary.

4   Some evidence will only be available during the on-site visit (for example, existing documents that are not available electronically). It would be helpful to identify these in the commentary and provide a separate index.

5   The commentary should comprise:

- an introductory short statement
- a concise evaluation of the provision under each key area
- an index of the referenced evidence
- an index of evidence to be supplied during the visit(s).

6   The commentary should begin with an introductory short statement on the lead institution's provision of Foundation Degrees. This should contain, where appropriate, a description of how the provision of Foundation Degrees by this consortium or partnership relates to that in Wales overall. The introductory statement should include:

- an explanation of the structure and funding status of the partnership/consortium and, as appropriate, of its constituent institutions including employers
- any specific expectations related to the funding sources for the provision
- the context in which the Foundation Degree programmes have been developed, including reasons for developing the particular provision
- the management structures and personnel involved, including the organisational and quality frameworks within which the Foundation

Degree provision operates
- the process by which consultations with employers and/or other third parties have established the need for Foundation Degrees and have helped determine the content and delivery modes
- a diagram/description of quality assurance and enhancement procedures applicable to Foundation Degrees.

7   Secondly, the commentary should also include a concise evaluation of the provision under each key area, with clear references to the portfolio of documents. Further guidance on each key area is provided below.

8   The commentary should not normally exceed 4,000 words and may be much shorter in programmes with few sites of delivery.

Key area one: Design and development of programmes

9   The institution should evaluate how far the design and delivery of its programmes of study match the defining characteristics of the Foundation Degree. Specifically, it should identify how far the programmes meet expectations about:

- the aims and intended programme outcomes
- the design and content of curricula
- the involvement of employers and employer-related organizations including Sector Skills Councils and PSRBs.

10   Additional sources of documentary evidence that might be cited include:

- the relevant Foundation Degree framework and national occupational standards
- examples of programme SEDs
- definitive curricular documents and institutional regulations
- copies of formal articulation and contractual agreements (for example agreements between the lead institution and individual colleges and between colleges and employers)
- records/minutes/reports of external consultations
- communications from employers, professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) and/or the relevant SSC, including minutes of meetings with employers and employer-related organisations.

Key area two: Academic standards

11   The commentary should contain a description and evaluation of the arrangements for the assuring the standards of Foundation Degree awards. This should cover:

- the criteria for the appointment of external examiners and the use made of them

- the use of internal and external reviews
- assessment policies, in particular in relation to students' achievement of programme outcomes
- the use made of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and other reference points, including the CQFW
- the use of management information
- programme monitoring arrangements (as applicable to academic standards)
- validation and approval of new provision, and its periodic review (as applicable to academic standards).

12   Additional sources of documentary evidence that might be cited include:

- assessment regulations
- agreements concerning employers' assessment of students
- internal and external monitoring reports
- assessment board terms of reference and minutes
- policies on moderation or internal verification
- minutes of subject team meetings where external examiners' reports are considered
- staff feedback on the assessment process.

Key area three: Quality of learning opportunities

13   The commentary should contain a description and evaluation of how the quality of learning opportunities is assured. It should make reference 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
- learning support resources (including virtual learning environments)
- arrangements for work-based learning
- arrangements for mentoring students in the workplace, including briefing and training
- staff development policy as appropriate for Foundation Degrees, including teaching, scholarly activity, work shadowing, updating professional practice.

14   Additional sources of documentary evidence that might be cited include:

- student and staff feedback on modules/programmes and on support
- details of on-line support systems
- documentation of staff team meetings

- internal and external monitoring reports
- schemes of institutional and/or peer observation of teaching, and any available outcomes of those schemes
- records of the participation of Foundation Degree staff in staff development events
- formative assessment and/or feedback from employers about students' progress
- mentor handbooks and training materials
- records of discussions involving employers on support matters.

Key area four: Enhancement

15   The commentary should contain a description of the deliberate steps taken at institutional level to improve the quality of learning opportunities

16   Additional sources of documentary evidence that might be cited include relevant sections of the lead institution's quality enhancement strategy and examples of the development of innovative features. Such features might relate to:

- programme design and content
- curriculum delivery
- integration of work-based and academic learning
- support for students
- support for staff
- resources utilisation
- monitoring arrangements
- any other examples of innovation or good practice worthy of wider dissemination.

Key area five: Information about higher education provision

17   The commentary should contain a description and evaluation of how the lead institution ensures the accuracy and completeness of its information about the higher education it offers, including the Foundation Degree awards to which its courses lead (whether its own awards or those of another awarding body). This includes information provided by its partners.

18   This section should also include evidence of students' experience of this information.

19   Note: Additional sources of documentary evidence that might be cited include examples of the sign-off of information published and otherwise made available to its students by the lead institution and its academic and work-based learning partners.

Annex C: Guidelines for provision of information on trail programmes

1   For each of the trail programmes lead institutions will be asked to provide the following documentation:

- programme specifications
- definitive programme documents provided at the relevant validation event(s)
- reports of validation events
- internal review reports
- module or unit descriptors/guides
- formal articulation and contractual agreements
- learning agreements
- student handbook(s) including guidance relating to work-based learning
- communications from employers, professional bodies or the relevant SSC
- relevant institutional policies and programme-specific policies including those relating to accreditation of prior learning (APL) and staff development
- evidence of the regular liaison that takes place between the institution(s) and employers.

2   In addition, for each trail programme lead institutions will be asked to provide evidence that they have evaluated and reflected on the quality and standards of the programme(s). They should provide a representative sample of documents (for the past two years where available). These might include:

- external examiners' reports
- minutes of programme team meetings
- validation documents and reports
- internal self-assessment or annual monitoring reports
- reports from the approval processes for minor modifications made to programme(s)
- analysis of, and response to, student opinion questionnaires and surveys.

Annex D: Student engagement and guidelines for student submissions

1   Students are central to both the purpose and the process of the review. Every review will present opportunities for students to inform and contribute to the review team's activities.

2   It may be the case that student representatives will change during the period of the review. Where this is the case, QAA requests that the institutional contact ensures that an appropriate handover of information take place and that QAA is informed. The institutional contact should be aware of the name and contact details of the QAA officer responsible for the review.

3   Student representatives and other students will be invited to take part in meetings during the review team's visit to the lead institution and its partners. These meetings provide a means through which students can make sure that the team is aware of matters of primary interest or concern to them.

The lead student representative

4   The lead student representative (LSR) role is designed to allow students to play a more central part in the organisation of the review. The LSR will encourage students to engage with the review process and will keep them informed of its progress. QAA also envisages that the LSR will oversee the production of the student submission. QAA would like to work with the LSR to select the students whom the review team will meet.

5   It might not always be possible to designate the LSR for a particular review very early in the process. The institutional contact should work with student representatives to decide who should take on the role. Where the review will cross over two academic years, appropriate arrangements should be made for handover from one LSR to the next.

6   QAA envisages that normally the LSR will:

- receive copies of key correspondence from QAA
- help the review team to select students to meet
- be present for the first team visit and the review visit
- attend the final meeting in the lead institution
- liaise internally with the institutional contact to ensure smooth communications between the student body and the lead institution during the process
- disseminate information about review to the student body
- organise or oversee the writing of the student submission
- ensure continuity of activity over the review process.

7   We appreciate that the nature of the partnership arrangements may vary and that not all lead institutions, colleges, students' unions and student representatives may feel it appropriate or sustainable to provide the level of engagement envisaged for the LSR, so QAA will be flexible about the amount of time that the LSR can provide, or can consider other arrangements for ensuring appropriate student involvement.

The student submission

8   The student submission provides a means by which students, through their representative body, can inform the review team ahead of the review visit of matters they consider relevant given the purpose of review. QAA encourages the student representative bodies to use this opportunity to inform review teams of their views and evidence, and to work closely with the lead institution.

9   The submission is an opportunity for the representative body to give the review team an impression of what it is like to be a student following a programme within the partnership and how their views are incorporated into the decision-making and quality assurance processes.

10   The student submission should contain a response from students to the lead institution's self-evaluation. This should be brief, but can be narrative text or bullet points.

Format, length and content

11   The submission should not be over-long (no longer than 6,000 words) and should provide an explanation of the sources of evidence that informed its comments and conclusions.

12   The submission must include a statement of how it has been compiled, its authorship and the extent to which its contents have been shared with, and endorsed by, the student body as a whole. If, for example, the submission has been prepared entirely from the perspective of full-time students, then this should be made clear.

13   The review team will welcome a submission that endeavours to represent the views of as wide a student constituency as possible. However, questionnaires conducted specifically for this submission are generally of limited use to the review team. Students are encouraged to make use of National Student Survey (NSS) data and existing internal student surveys. A critical analysis of existing data will be more useful to the review team than a collection of new data.

14   When gathering evidence for and structuring the submission it would be helpful if students take account of the advice given to lead institutions for constructing the self-evaluation (see Annex B), students may particularly wish to focus on their views about how effectively the lead institution:

- delivers the threshold standards of the programmes
- manages the quality of students' learning opportunities
- plans to enhance the quality of students' learning opportunities.
- manages the quality of the information that it provides, including that for students and applicants

15   The submission should not:

- name, or discuss the competence of, individual members of staff
- discuss personal grievances.

16   It should also avoid comments from individual students who may not be well placed to represent a wider group.

17   If the representative body and lead institution wish to present a joint self-evaluation, this is acceptable so long as the document demonstrates that it is a genuine reflection of student views and makes clear the process by which students were involved.

Submission delivery date

18   The submission should be sent to the QAA secure electronic folder (SharePoint) no later than 10 weeks before the review visit.

Confidentiality

19   QAA expects the student body to share its submission with the lead institution, and the lead institution to share its self-evaluation with the student body. This openness is desirable because it enables the review team to discuss both documents freely with the lead institution and students during the review, and to check the accuracy of their contents, and it encourages an open and transparent approach to the review. The student body may, if it wishes, request that its submission be kept confidential to QAA and the team rather than being shared with the lead institution. QAA will respect this wish, but students are asked to bear in mind that the team's use of a confidential submission will inevitably be restricted by the fact that its contents are unknown to the lead institution's staff.

20   If the contents of the submission are not to be shared with the lead institution, this must be stated clearly on the front of the document.

Continuity

21   Activities relating to a review extend over a period of 23 weeks, from the preparatory meeting to QAA's receipt of the lead institution's comments on the draft report. It is likely that both the lead institution and the students' union will have been preparing well before the start of the review and will continue to be involved in action planning afterwards. QAA expects lead institutions to ensure that students are fully informed and involved in the process throughout. Once the review is over QAA expects that the draft report will be shared with student representatives and that they will be given an opportunity to comment on matters of accuracy.

22   To support the regular and consistent internal review of quality management and assist the representative body when they are preparing for external review, the student representative body may wish to develop a means of supporting a regular exchange of information with the lead institution about quality assurance and enhancement, for example, an annual student statement.

Annex E: The role of the institutional nominee

Role purpose

1   The role provides an opportunity for a member of the lead institution's staff to consider the quality and standards of the Foundation Degrees it delivers both independently and with its partner colleges, and to be part of a team testing the effectiveness of the self-evaluation processes.

Key responsibilities include:

- liaising between the review team and the lead institution
- reading, analysing and preparing written commentaries of the SED submitted by the lead institution and any other documents sent in advance of the review
- adhering to the agreed schedule for the review process participating in the review itself in order to gather, share, test and verify evidence
- drawing conclusions and making recommendations on the academic standards achieved and the quality of the learning opportunities provided
- recording evidence gathered from a variety of review activities and submitting this to the QAA electronic review folder in a timely fashion
- drafting sections of the report that are referenced to sound evidence gathered during the review
- respecting protocols on confidentiality
- contributing to and commenting on the compilation of the report of the review to agreed schedules and deadlines
- helping the lead institution to draw up its action plan for implementation of the review team's recommendations
- playing a lead role in the implementation of the action plan within the lead institution
- being available for the whole period of the review and committing to complete all processes of the review once they have embarked upon it.

Person specification

2   Knowledge and understanding include:

- experience, knowledge and understanding of higher education provision in general and within his/her own institution
- experience, knowledge and understanding of Foundation Degrees
- understanding of the lead institution and college structures, policies and procedures for managing and delivering higher education programmes, particularly Foundation Degrees
- familiarity with the Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points relevant to his/her own area of expertise
- understanding of programme entry requirements and the ability to interpret progression statistics including withdrawal, transfer and failure rates and destinations data
- familiarity with academic support strategies and the functions of academic tutorials
- experience of examining and/or verification (and preferably external examining or external verification)

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

3   Skills include an ability to:

- conduct meetings with staff
- conduct meetings with a range of current and former groups of students
- write succinctly and coherently
- meet exacting timescales and deadlines
- work effectively as a member of a review team
- continue to work effectively as part of the lead institution team after the review has been completed
- communicate electronically, including emails, attachments and use of web mail
- maintain confidentiality
- influence colleagues within the lead institution and the colleges and take forward the action plan.

Annex F: An indicative programme for a review visit preliminary meeting

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

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

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

Time	Activity	Suggested participants
1000	Overview of the review of Foundation Degrees in Wales: • a standard presentation about the method • questions from institutional and college staff	• the Principal or a representative and relevant members of the senior management team • staff responsible for managing higher education and/or heads of faculties, schools or sections providing Foundation Degrees from the lead institution and partner colleges • the institutional contact and the institutional nominee
1030	How the review will operate: • clarification of the scope of the review process • questions from institutional and college staff • next steps	• institutional and college staff responsible for managing higher education, particularly Foundation Degrees • the institutional contact and institutional nominee
1130	The role of students: • introductions • purpose of the preparatory meeting • clarification of the review method • clarification of the lines of enquiry and the programme trails	• students • student representatives, eg Students' Union officers • institutional and college staff with responsibility for liaison with students

	• questions from students	
1230	Lunch	
1330	Detailed planning, including confirmation of the team's requirements for the visit: • questions arising from the initial analysis of the self-evaluation • confirmation that the statistical data are correct and accurate • the reviewers' requests for information to date • establishing the programme of review activities • clarification of the availability of evidence, including student work • 'housekeeping' arrangements • remaining questions from institutional and college staff • next steps	• institutional and college staff responsible for managing higher education, particularly Foundation Degrees • institutional contact and institutional nominee
1530	End of meeting	

Annex G: Indicative review visit schedule

This indicative schedule assumes visits to two college providers and one workplace, but can be subject to negotiation.

Day 1

0830	Arrive at lead institution
0900-0945	Private meeting of the review team to confirm lines of enquiry and set agenda for initial meeting with institution
0945-1045	Scrutiny by team of selected evidence
1100-1200	Initial meeting with key staff responsible for quality and standards at the lead institution
1200-1300	Second private meeting of the review team to summarise findings and confirm agenda for afternoon meetings
1300-1400	Lunch
1400-1500	Standards - meeting of the review team with staff involved in the management of Foundation Degree programmes (lead institution and partners)
1500-1530	Private meeting of the review team
1530-1630	Learning opportunities - meeting of the review team with staff involved in the management of Foundation Degree programmes (lead institution and partners)
1630-1700	Private meeting of the review team
Evening	Meeting with employer representatives (including trail programme)

Day 2 (and Day 3 in the case of 4-day reviews)

0830	Travel to partner college
0930-1030	Welcome; private meeting followed by tour of facilities
1030-1130	Meeting with staff delivering the provision
1130-1200	Private meeting of the review team
1200-1300	Working lunch with students
Afternoon	Visit to the workplace
Early evening	Private meeting of the review team to consider emerging findings

Day 3 (and Day 4 in the case of 4-day reviews)

0830	Travel to partner college
0930-1030	Welcome; private meeting followed by tour of facilities
1030-1130	Meeting with staff delivering the provision
1130-1200	Private meeting of the review team
1200-1300	Working lunch with students
1300-1330	Private meeting of the review team
1330-1430	Return to lead institution
1430-1600	Private meeting of the review team
1600-1700	Final private meeting of the review team to consider conclusions and recommendations
1700-1730	Closing meeting with lead institution

(If only one visit to a college is necessary, the team may travel direct to the lead institution for a 0930 start and finish correspondingly earlier).

Annex H: Foundation Degree report template

About this report

1   Introduction explaining the purpose of report. This should be concise and to the point. Background information should be in annexes or on separate dedicated webpages, but cross-referenced from the introduction.

Context

2   A brief description of the consortium arrangements, including funding arrangements, and relating the provision of Foundation Degrees by the partnership or consortium to the context of current Foundation Degree provision in Wales.

Overall conclusions

3   The team will comment on the extent to which the lead institution assures the delivery and award of Foundation Degrees to reflect the defining characteristics of such awards.

4   The team will also come to conclusions about whether the lead institution **meets** or **does not meet** its responsibilities for:

- the design and delivery of programmes in accordance with the defining characteristics of the Foundation Degree
- the assurance of academic standards
- the quality of the learning opportunities
- how it monitors and enhances the provision leading to Foundation Degree awards
- the accuracy and completeness of information about higher education provision.

Good practice

5   Features identified by reviewers as representing good practice and any innovative features of the provision.

Recommendations

6   Recommendations for action (with timescales) by the lead institution and its providers.

Findings

7   The team's findings on

- design and development of Foundation Degrees
- assurance of the standards of the Foundation Degree awards
- quality of the learning opportunities
- management, monitoring and enhancement of the Foundation Degree awards
- information about higher education provision.

Annex I: Guidance notes for the action plan

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

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

3   The action plan forms part of the final version of the report. QAA is contracted by HEFCW to produce its reports in accordance with the published timelines. It is important, therefore, that the action plan be completed by the lead institution, in consultation with its partners, in a timely fashion and returned to QAA by the given deadline. The action plan, its implementation and it impact will form part of the evidence base for any future review activity.

Deadlines for completion of action plans

Number of weeks after the visit to the lead institution	Timeline
+4 weeks	The lead institution receives the draft report and action plan template
+6 weeks	The lead institution returns the draft report to QAA with comments on factual accuracy
+8 weeks	The lead institution returns the completed action plan to QAA, signed by the head of the lead institution
+9 weeks	QAA appends the completed action plan to the final report and proofs the document
+15 weeks	QAA sends the final report including the action plan to the lead institution, and to HEFCW

Notes on the column headings in the action plan template

4   The following column is completed by the review coordinator.

Good practice or recommendation

5   This column repeats precisely the wording of the good practice or recommendations identified in the conclusions of the report.

6   The following columns are completed by the lead institution in conjunction with its partners.

Action to be taken

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

Target date

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

Action by

9   Identify the role of the person responsible for ensuring that the action has been taken by the target date. It is helpful to identify a specific role or committee that can be held accountable.

Success indicators

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

Reported to

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

Evaluation

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

Action plan template

[Participating lead institution] action plan relating to the Foundation Degree (Wales) Review [Month/Year]						
Good practice	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
In the course of the review, the team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the lead institution:						
[EXAMPLE] Close working relationships with employers involved in the delivery and support of the programmes (paragraphs 12, 13)	**[EXAMPLE]** Establish employer forum and review annually Review and enhance mentor and workplace supervisor support packs annually	**[EXAMPLE]** July 2010	**[EXAMPLE]** Lead institutional link person, college coordinators with programme leaders	**[EXAMPLE]** Improved engagement with employers; positive evaluations from students on placements; regular communications between mentors and link tutors	**[EXAMPLE]** HE Forum; Employer forum	**[EXAMPLE]** Annual programme reviews; annual self-assessment report; direct feedback from employers at employer forum; student feedback.
Recommendation	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success Indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The team recommended that the lead institution should take action in the following areas (with a timescale for each recommendation):						

[EXAMPLE]	[EXAMPLE]	[EXAMPLE]	[EXAMPLE]	[EXAMPLE]	[EXAMPLE]	[EXAMPLE]
The programme descriptions in one or more partners' HE prospectuses and online student handbooks should be updated to reflect the current aims and outcomes specified in the 2008-09 programme specification	Within twelve months, (a) ensure all current programme documentation contains accurate information about the programme aims and learning outcomes; (b) ensure all students receive copies of updated information. (c) Institute annual checking and sign-off process to ensure all documentation is updated accurately.	November 2010 July 2010	Programme Leader HE Coordinator	All programme documentation contains accurate information Annual checking process implemented effectively	HE Coordinator Vice Principal (curriculum); HE Forum	Student feedback HE self-assessment report

Annex J: Training and development policy

1   This policy applies to the training and development of review team members and institutional nominees working on QAA reviews in any part of the UK.

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

3   The training and development policy will be published.

Policy

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

- participate in accessible and relevant training and development that is economical in the use of their time
- experience learning methods that take account of individual learning styles
- participate in training that takes due account of prevailing legislation
- participate fully in training activities that will be relevant to all participants irrespective of gender, age, ethnicity or disability
- hone and apply core skills essential for all QAA's methods of review through initial training.

What can reviewers and facilitators expect of QAA?

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

- provide induction to the work of QAA, its mission, standards and values
- train him/her in specialist skills needed to carry out or facilitate review work; for review team members this includes effective use of the electronic communications system set up to support reviews
- assist him/her to develop sufficient confidence to undertake or facilitate his/her first review
- provide training reference material to use after completion of training
- provide the QAA documents needed to conduct the reviews to which he/she is assigned
- add him/her to the QAA's mailing list for receipt of relevant new QAA publications and information about QAA's work
- provide him/her with opportunities to contribute to the evaluation of the methods in which he/she has reviewed.

6   Assuming successful completion of initial training, QAA will:

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

- encourage each team member to engage in the further development of his/her role as reviewer
- take into account experience of prior QAA review training and experience.

Benefits for institutions and other organisations subject to review

7 Adherence to this policy should provide the following benefits:

- confidence that review team members and facilitators are properly trained to undertake review work professionally and confidently
- consistent application of each review method
- consistency in the messages about the review method that the review team members and facilitators take back to their institutions.

Annex K: Succession of the Academic Infrastructure by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education

1   In considering an institution's management of its higher education provision, review teams will be guided by the Expectations set out in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) which succeeded the Academic Infrastructure in December 2011.

2   The Quality Code sets out the Expectations that all providers of UK higher education reviewed by QAA are required to meet. It is the nationally agreed, definitive point of reference for all those involved in delivering higher education programmes which lead to an award from, or are validated by, a UK higher education awarding body. All higher education providers reviewed by QAA must sign up and adhere to the Quality Code. The Quality Code has three parts.

- Part A: Setting and maintaining threshold academic standards.

This includes *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland,* subject benchmark statements, which relate mainly to bachelor's and honours degrees and describe the principles, nature and scope of a particular subject, the subject knowledge, the subject-specific skills, and generic skills to be developed and the forms of teaching, learning and assessment to be expected, as well as setting the minimum (threshold) standard that is acceptable within that subject; award benchmark statements, such as the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* which provides a description of the characteristics of a Foundation Degree; and the guidelines for preparing programme specifications, which guide providers in planning the intended learning outcomes of an academic programme.

- Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality

This consists of 11 Chapters and sets out Expectations that all providers of UK higher education are required to meet concerning the assurance of academic standards and the enhancement of academic quality.

- Part C: Information about higher education provision

Each Chapter sets out an overarching Expectation for the topic (cross-referred to other relevant Expectations if necessary); a series of Indicators which reflect sound practice printed in bold; and explanatory text about why the Expectation is important.

3   The Quality Code continues to serve the purpose of the Academic Infrastructure, and continues to make clear what is expected of all higher education providers, as well as providing guidance on good practice in setting and maintaining academic standards, assuring and enhancing academic quality, and providing information about higher education.

4   Reviews conducted from 2012-13 onwards will be based on elements of any published section of the Quality Code if the published date for implementation by higher education providers has been reached. The implementation date will be stated as some time later than the initial publication, to provide transition time to ensure the effective adoption of each element of the Quality Code as it is published.

Annex L: Glossary of terms

(Threshold) Academic standards	Threshold academic standards are the minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic award. For equivalent awards, the threshold level of achievement should be the same across the UK. Individual awarding bodies are responsible for setting the grades, marks or classification that differentiate between levels of student achievement above the threshold academic standard within an individual award. An awarding body is responsible for the academic standards of all awards granted in its name. The review of FDs in Wales is concerned with how lead institutions exercise the responsibilities they have for the academic standards of the awards that they offer.
Academic quality	Academic quality is concerned with how well the learning opportunities made available to students enable them to achieve their award. It is about making sure that appropriate and effective teaching, support, assessment, and learning resources are provided for them. In order to achieve a higher education award, students participate in the learning opportunities made available to them by their higher education provider. A provider should be capable of guaranteeing the quality of the opportunities it provides, but it cannot guarantee how any particular student will experience those opportunities. By ensuring that its policies, structures and processes for the management of learning opportunities are implemented effectively, a higher education provider also ensures the effectiveness of its outcomes.
Action plan	After a review, the lead institution will be asked to develop an action plan, set out in a format provided by QAA, describing how the institution plans to take action in response to the conclusions of the review. The action plan forms part of the final version of the report. QAA will check the action plan, and the implementation and impact of the plan may form part of the evidence base for any future review activity.
Awarding body	Awarding bodies have responsibility for the academic standards of all awards granted in their names and for ensuring that the quality of learning opportunities offered through partnership arrangements are adequate to enable students to achieve the academic standards required for their awards.
Briefing	The purpose of the briefing is to describe the review in more detail, to allow lead institutions and partners to ask any questions about the method, and to give further advice and guidance on programme trails, preparing a self-evaluation, and on helping students to prepare a written submission. The briefing also offers an opportunity for lead institutions and partners to meet the review coordinators and to talk to other institutions who are preparing for a review.
Briefing note	The briefing note is a compendium of publicly available information about a college which QAA will collate and provide to review teams at the beginning of the review process. The digest mainly comprises contextual information about the lead institution and its partner colleges, including the numbers of higher education students and the types of programmes

	provided.
Conclusions	Review teams are asked to reach conclusions about the lead institution's management of its responsibilities for the design and development, academic standards, quality of learning opportunities, and enhancement of its programmes and the information provided about them.
Enhancement	The UK Quality Code for Higher Education describes enhancement as the process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. This can take place in different ways and at different levels, but a higher education provider should be aware that it has a responsibility to improve the quality of learning opportunities and to have policies, structures and processes in place to detect where improvement is necessary. Willingness to consider enhancement should be embedded throughout the higher education provider, but should stem from a high-level awareness of the need to consider improvement. Quality enhancement should naturally form part of effective quality assurance.
Evidence	The review of FDs is an evidence-based process. This means that teams conduct their enquiries primarily by comparing evidence about the institution's management of its higher education provision with its own policies and procedures, the agreements it has with its partners, and the Expectations of the Quality Code. Evidence comes in a wide range of forms and will vary from institution to institution. It is likely to include formal agreements with partners, policies and procedures for the management of the student learning experience of higher education programmes, external examiners' reports, validation documents, data about the college on the Unistats[16] website, review reports from other organisations, and any information arising from meetings with staff and students. Some of this evidence, such as review reports by other organisations, will be publicly available. Other elements should be provided by the lead institution as part of its self-evaluation and/or supporting evidence. QAA gives further guidance on developing the self-evaluation, including a list of supporting evidence, in Annex D. Once the team has read the self-evaluation, the coordinator may ask for more evidence to be available at the visit itself. The coordinator will confirm precisely what further evidence is required at the preliminary meeting.
Good practice	Good practice is practice that the review team regards as making a particularly positive contribution to the lead institution's management of academic standards and/or quality in the context of that particular institution and its partners, and which is worthy of wider dissemination within and/or beyond the institution. Features of good practice will be included in review reports. QAA will disseminate good practice identified through reviews in the overview report.
HEFCW	The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales funds higher education in Wales, both directly and indirectly.

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[16] http://unistats.direct.gov.uk

Information about higher education provision	Providers of UK higher education produce information about higher education provision for a variety of stakeholders and for different purposes. In the case of higher education delivered through collaborative partnerships, the responsibilities of partner providers concerning information about higher education provision will be set out in the agreements with their awarding bodies. Stakeholders' confidence in the academic standards and quality of higher education provision hinges upon the trustworthiness of such information. The Quality Code sets out the Expectation that UK higher education providers produce information for their intended audiences about the learning opportunities they offer that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. HEFCE 2011/18 makes it clear that institutions should: • publish Key Information Sets (KIS) for undergraduate courses, whether full or part-time. The KIS will contain information on student satisfaction, graduate outcomes, learning and teaching activities, assessment methods, tuition fees and student finance, accommodation, and professional accreditation • publish a wider information set (WIS). More details about the content of the KIS and the wider information set are given in [HEFCE 2011/18](#).[17]
Institutional contact	The institutional contact acts as a single point of contact between the lead institution and the review team. The contact's responsibilities include liaising with the coordinator to make the arrangements for the review, and ensuring that reviewers have the relevant evidence to enable them to conduct the review (including when the team is off-site).
Institutional nominee	The lead institution is invited to nominate a member of staff to become an institutional nominee. The institutional nominee is a full member of the review team and as such is responsible for analysing and commenting on the lead institution's self-evaluation, participating in the visit, drafting sections of the report and contributing to the team's conclusions. The participation of the nominee is crucial to the development of an open and collegial framework within which the review team can seek to enhance a particular area of the lead institution's provision. To fulfil the role effectively, the nominee should have a thorough working knowledge of the management and delivery of the institution's higher education provision, particularly its Foundation Degrees, and the maturity to reflect critically on this provision, including in areas where he/she may have responsibilities in their normal institutional role. A full description of the role is given in Annex E. Nominees will be trained for the role alongside the external reviewers.
Peer review	Review of FDs in Wales is a peer review process. This means that the reviews are conducted by people with current or very recent experience

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[17] www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2011/11_18/11_18_35454121.pdf

	of managing, developing, delivering, assessing, and - in the case of the student reviewer - experiencing higher education in higher education institutions and/or colleges. As a result, review reports reflect a working knowledge of UK higher education and, more specifically, the challenges of managing higher education academic standards and quality effectively in partnership arrangements.
Preliminary meeting	At least six weeks before a review visit, there is a preliminary meeting for the visit between institutional staff, students and the coordinator. The purpose of the preliminary meeting is to develop the agenda for the visit and identify further evidence for the lead institution to supply to the team, based on an analysis of the institution's self-evaluation and the student submission. It also gives the coordinator the opportunity to clarify the method and the institution and partner colleges to ask any questions. An indicative agenda for the preliminary meeting is provided in Annex B.
Programme trails	Depending on the scope of the provision, reviewers will be asked to trail one or more specific Foundation Degree programmes. The reviewers will identify these programmes from their analysis of the SED and the student submission, where available. The lead institution will be asked to make available detailed information (see Annex C) which the team will follow up with scrutiny of documentation and a visit to the site(s) of delivery. The trails are concerned with testing how well institutional processes work and how effective they are in practice at a local level and across the institution as a whole.
QAA	The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's mission is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. QAA does this by working with higher education providers, including universities and colleges, to define academic standards and quality, and carries out and publishes reviews against these standards. QAA was established in 1997 and is an independent body funded by subscriptions from UK universities and colleges of higher education, and through contracts with the main UK higher education funding bodies, including HEFCW.
Quality Code	The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) sets out the Expectations all providers of UK higher education are required to meet. It gives all higher education providers a shared starting point for setting, describing and assuring the academic standards of their higher education awards and programmes and the quality of the learning opportunities they provide. The Quality Code has three parts: • Part A: Setting and maintaining threshold academic standards • Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality • Part C: Information about higher education provision. The Quality Code is currently being developed and will replace the set of national reference points known as the Academic Infrastructure from the 2012-13 academic year. If you would like further information about where components of the Academic Infrastructure can be found in the new Quality Code, please see our guide: Mapping the Academic Infrastructure to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. More information about the

	transition from the Academic Infrastructure to the Quality Code can be found in the [Explanatory notes for the launch of UK Quality Code for Higher Education]().
Recommendations	Review reports will include recommendations for the lead institution about how the institution might improve the management of its higher education provision. The urgency with which the recommendations should be addressed is indicated by a timescale for completion.
Reports	The review culminates in a report of the team's findings. Review reports have three main elements: conclusions, good practice and recommendations for action by the lead institution under each of the five key areas. To facilitate a developmental approach to the review the reports are confidential to HEFCW, the institution, its partners, and QAA. Lead institutions will be invited to provide comments on the draft report and to indicate any areas which they consider incomplete or inaccurate. The coordinator will provide further guidance on the procedures for making comments on reports.
Reviewer	Reviewers are external peers with current or recent experience of managing, developing, delivering and/or assessing higher education in higher education institutions and/or colleges. Each review team will include a student reviewer. Reviewers are not employed by QAA, although they are paid for taking part in reviews. They are trained specifically for the role by QAA.
Review coordinator	Review coordinators are contracted by QAA to manage reviews. Coordinators are selected for their experience of the management of higher education. A coordinator is responsible for guiding the lead institution on preparing its self-evaluation; chairing the preliminary meeting; discussing and agreeing the programme for the visit with the institution and the review team; identifying the most effective way of engaging with students; leading the team at the visit; editing review reports; responding to any comments on the reports from the institutions; and keeping in touch with the lead institution. A full description of the role is given in Annex E. The coordinator is the lead institution's first and main point of contact throughout the review process.
Review team	The review team will comprise between three and four reviewers, depending on the size of the provision and the number of partner colleges. Two reviewers will be external, one will be a student reviewer and the fourth will be the institutional nominee. The team is managed by a review coordinator. Review team selection will be made with reference to a lead institution's HEFCW-funded higher education provision. QAA will avoid known conflicts of interest, including having worked in or for the lead institution under review or for its partner colleges during the previous five years; having undertaken validation, external examination or consultancy work for it during the previous three years; having recently applied for a post or having a close relative working or studying there. QAA will send brief details of proposed teams to lead institutions and their partners not less than 12 weeks before each review visit, allowing the lead institution two

	weeks to draw to QAA's attention any conflicts of interest they believe QAA has not identified.
Self-evaluation document	The review is based on a self-evaluation document (SED) prepared by the lead institution. The self-evaluation describes the responsibilities which the lead institution has for the management of its higher education provision and evaluates the effectiveness of the policies and procedures it has adopted for discharging these responsibilities. An effective self-evaluation is key to the institution gaining substantial benefit from the review and to the smooth running of the review. QAA therefore encourages lead institutions to give its preparation due time and attention. The preparation of a self-evaluation is a major focus of the briefing that QAA will arrange for lead institutions and their partners. In order to limit the burden of the exercise, lead institutions should as far as possible describe their responsibilities, processes and procedures by reference to a portfolio of existing documents, with any new material limited to a commentary which signposts and/or contextualises the existing material for the team.
SharePoint	SharePoint is QAA's secure electronic communication system through which review teams can communicate among themselves before and after review visits. QAA will provide training on the use of SharePoint for all review team members.
Student written submission	One of the aims of the review is to support lead institutions in reviewing and improving the management of their higher education provision for the benefit of students. Within this context teams need to draw on students' views about their experiences as learners in developing their conclusions about the lead institution's provision. Teams will meet students at the visit as a matter of course. Teams will also invite students to prepare a written submission before the visit in order to help them make sure that students' views inform the arrangements for the visit, including who they meet. Student submissions may take a variety of different forms such as a summary of responses to recent student questionnaires or a written report of student focus groups. QAA will provide further guidance to students in a separate guidance note. The principle of the submission, irrespective of its form, is that it should reflect the students' own views of their experiences as learners. Lead institutions may, however, have a valuable role to play in helping their students to prepare a submission, for example by sharing information with them. QAA will provide further guidance to institutions during preparations for the review. After the briefing, coordinators will also have the responsibility of discussing with the institution how it might assist students to develop a submission for the review. The student submission is voluntary. If students are not able to make a submission, despite the best efforts of the lead institution and the coordinator, this will not prejudice the outcomes of the review.
Unistats	Unistats brings together authoritative, official information from universities and colleges in the UK in one place, in a way that is not available on any other website. It includes the results of the annual National Student

	Survey. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) owns the Unistats websites and has contracted the Universities & Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) to manage the delivery and maintenance of these websites on its behalf.
Visit	Each review visit normally takes place over three consecutive days. The purpose of visits is to allow the team to scrutinise evidence on-site, meet the lead institution and partner college staff, students and employers, and consider the extent of the lead institution's engagement with the Quality Code. Indicative programmes for the review visit are provided in Annex G. The coordinator will discuss and agree the programme for each visit with the lead institution beforehand. During the visit itself, it is helpful if the institution can make a room available as a workroom for the team and a separate and larger room available for meetings.