# UK Quality Code
# for Higher Education

# Chapter B3: Learning and teaching

# Draft for consultation

# May 2012

# Contents

## About the Quality Code

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

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

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

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

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

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

## About this Chapter

This publication is a Chapter of the Quality Code. It incorporates and supersedes the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (*Code of practice*), *Section 2*: *Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning* (*including e-learning)* (2010), Part B: Aspects specific to flexible and distributed learning, and the *Code of practice, Section 9*: *Work-based and placement learning* (2007). The evaluation of the Academic Infrastructure and consultation on subsequent changes which resulted in the

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[1] www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality/
[2] www.qaa.ac.uk
[3] www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/quality-code-introduction.aspx

development of the Quality Code identified the need for the introduction of a Chapter on learning and teaching covering all modes of study.[4]

This draft will be subject to public consultation between May and July 2012. The final version of the Chapter will be published in September 2012.

# Chapter B3: Learning and teaching

The Quality Code addresses two concepts of student engagement. This Chapter addresses **students' engagement with learning and teaching activities**. *Chapter B5: Student engagement* considers how higher education providers engage with students through their quality systems.

The Chapter is concerned with the provision of learning opportunities to all students irrespective of the level of study, the mode of study, the location of study and the means of delivery. It also considers how a provider takes account of the individual needs of the student, for example, as a result of a declared disability (both through inclusive design and reasonable adjustments).

The Chapter also addresses the role of staff who teach or otherwise support learning, including those who support learning taking place at locations other than a campus of the higher education provider.

Another theme (also reflected in the Chapter on student engagement) is that of a partnership between providers' staff and their students, enabling students to become active and independent learners who recognise - and take - responsibility for their learning. It acknowledges that while providers are responsible for creating learning opportunities, the effectiveness with which the learning opportunities are used is a matter for students themselves.

The Chapter emphasises the conditions that facilitate learning, focusing on both the opportunities and the resources provided to students and on the opportunities and support provided to staff (those who teach and those who support learning in other ways).

## General principle

> Learning is a partnership between students (who actively engage in a variety of learning activities) and staff (who provide learning opportunities and support and who recognise the diverse needs of their students). The higher education provider, its staff and students are all involved in the co-production and enhancement of transformative learning, inspirational teaching and effective assessment.

This Chapter applies to students at all academic levels covered by *Chapter A1: The national level* [5] of the Quality Code and irrespective of location, mode of study, teaching delivery or discipline. An inclusive environment for learning anticipates the varied needs of learners and aims to ensure that all students have equal access to educational opportunities through inclusive design and by means of reasonable individual adjustments wherever necessary.

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[4] *Changes to the Academic Infrastructure: final report (*June 2011):
www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/changes-to-academic-infrastructure.aspx
[5] www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/quality-code-a1.aspx. Research degrees are addressed in more detail in Chapter B11.

Individuals **learn** when they acquire new (or modify existing) knowledge, behaviours, skills or values. There are many different ways to **teach**, all aimed at helping a student to learn. Recognising effective learning and teaching is complex as many factors influence the process and the factors vary between individuals and learning environments.

# The Expectation

The Quality Code sets out the following Expectation about learning and teaching, which higher education providers are required to meet.

> **Higher education providers, working in partnership with their students, create and systematically review and enhance learning environments and teaching practices to provide opportunities for every student to become an active and independent learner.**

The Expectations in the following Chapters are also relevant:

- *Chapter B1: Programme design and approval*
- *Chapter B4: Student support, learning resources and careers education, information, advice and guidance*
- *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning*
- *Chapter B11: Research degrees*
- Part C: Information about higher education provision.

# Indicators of sound practice

## The basis for effective learning and teaching

**Indicator 1**

**Higher education providers articulate, implement and monitor a strategic approach to learning and teaching, and promote a shared understanding of that approach among all their staff and students.**

A strength of the UK higher education sector is the diversity of its providers in terms of mission and range of provision. Each provider sets out and implements its strategic approach to learning and teaching, indicating how it promotes student learning across all of its provision, across all academic levels, and all organisational levels (for example provider, faculty and department).

This strategic approach clearly addresses the learning opportunities of all the provider's students, irrespective of: location of study (for example whether on a campus or in a work-based or placement environment, in the UK or outside the UK); mode of study (for example part-time or full-time); mode of delivery (for example distance learning supported by technology). All students experience parity in the quality of learning opportunities (see *Chapter B10: Management of collaborative arrangements* of the Quality Code).

Students are uniquely positioned to comment on how the learning and teaching ethos and environment provided enables and supports student learning, and how enhancement of the provider's offerings can benefit their learning. Consequently higher education providers involve students in developing, implementing and monitoring the strategic approach, reflecting the partnership between the provider and its student body (see *Chapter B5: Student engagement* of the Quality Code).

Each higher education provider promotes a shared understanding of its priorities in relation to the enhancement of learning and teaching. Furthermore, providers regularly review their policies, resources and practices in the light of experience and modify them when necessary, to ensure continued enhancement. For example, providers consider how the quality of the provision at programme level, at module level, by the individual teacher, and by the effort of the individual student together contribute to the quality of the student learning experience.

**Further information and additional references**

NUS (2012) *Student Experience Research Part 1: Teaching and Learning*
www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Student-Experience-Research-12-Part-1.aspx

QAA (2011) *Outcomes from Institutional Audit: 2007-09: Managing learning opportunities*
www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/outcomes-audit-learning-opps.aspx

**Indicator 2**

**The design of learning and teaching activities provides every student with an equal opportunity to monitor their progress towards and achieve the intended learning outcomes.**

## Intended learning outcomes

The design of the learning journey for any programme or programme element is founded on an understanding of several things: the starting point for students; the intended learning outcomes; the potential learning and teaching activities; and the planned methods of assessment. The curriculum design, the content and organisation of programmes, and effective learning and teaching activities ensure that students can achieve the intended learning outcomes. Effective design of the learning process covers programmes, modules and individual teaching sessions. It also covers the support required for the transition of students into higher education, their academic and intellectual progression through their programme of study and transition into the next phase of their life (see *Chapter B1: Programme design and approval* of the Quality Code).

Determining the learning outcomes involves consideration of a range of external reference points (including elements of the Quality Code, particularly *Part A: Setting and maintaining threshold academic standards*) alongside the experiences of students and staff. Learning outcomes relate to academic level and mode(s) of study. The means by which learning outcomes are agreed and can be achieved are flexible to accommodate the diversity of students and learning opportunities.

Where relevant, learning outcomes are dependent on placement or work-based learning and on the requirements of any professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB). All learning outcomes are reviewed to ensure that they encapsulate the academic, clinical or professional competence standards that are essential to the programme of study and, at the same time, that they do not introduce unnecessary barriers for particular groups of students. Work-based and placement learning are primarily concerned with identifying relevant and appropriately assessed learning, expressed in the form of learning outcomes, which can be linked to that work or placement. Higher education providers engage students in their internal quality processes to ensure that the intended learning outcomes are achievable (see *Chapter B5: Student engagement* of the Quality Code).

Once determined, the learning outcomes map directly to the summative assessment of students. The assessment methods selected are appropriate for the intended outcomes and to the type and level of work, irrespective of how and where the student has studied (see *Chapter B6: Assessment of students* of the Quality Code).

The planning and design of learning and teaching activities:

- provide breadth, depth, pace and challenge appropriate for the learning outcomes and the level of study
- take an inclusive approach to selecting a suitable variety of teaching methods
- provide effective teaching of subject-specific, transferable, practical and professional skills.

## Ensuring equality of opportunity

Flexible and inclusive approaches to learning and teaching ensure that all students are able to demonstrate that they meet intended learning outcomes, and so minimise the need for reasonable adjustments to be made. By ensuring that learning and teaching practices are inclusive higher education providers enhance the learning opportunities of all students.

All methods of learning and teaching, including group work, seminars, lectures and practical classes, create a variety of challenges for students including those with entitlements under equalities legislation. Staff work in partnership with individual students to understand the implications of any entitlement in the context of their learning in order to help staff adapt their teaching practices. Staff create a positive environment by eliminating discriminatory behaviour from among the peer group within the learning environment.

Where a programme of study includes learning that takes place in a virtual environment, higher education providers ensure that the environment can be accessed fully by all students on the programme, or that reasonable adjustments can be made to ensure that all students, including those with entitlements under equalities legislation, have access to equivalent learning opportunities.

Where a work placement, fieldwork or practical work is part of a programme of study (whether optional or compulsory), higher education providers consider, in advance, the nature and extent of reasonable adjustments that are needed to enable the participation of all students.

Staff consider the variety of their students' language and cultural backgrounds. Providing every student with an equal opportunity means being sensitive to how learning and teaching activities might be received by students from diverse backgrounds.

## Themes which cross subject and discipline boundaries

Higher education providers engage with a number of themes that cross subject and discipline boundaries and inform the design of learning and teaching activities and the currency of the curriculum. These include, but are not restricted to:

- graduate attributes
- education for sustainability
- civic responsibility
- enterprise and entrepreneurship
- internationalisation.

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**Further information and additional references**

QAA (2011) *Explaining contact hours: Guidance for institutions providing public information about higher education in the UK*
www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/contact-hours.aspx

NUS (2012) *Student Experience Research Part 2: Independent Learning and Contact Hours*
www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Student-Experience-Research-12-Part-2.aspx

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QAA Scotland Enhancement Themes: Graduates for the 21st Century
www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/enhancement-themes/completed-enhancement-themes/graduates-for-the-21st-century

Higher Education Academy: Education for sustainable development
www.heacademy.ac.uk/education-for-sustainable-development

QAA (2012) *Enterprise and entrepreneurship education: Guidance for UK higher education providers (draft for consultation)*
www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/EE-draft-consultation.aspx

JISC: Learning Literacies in a Digital Age
www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/projects/elearningllida.aspx

Equality Act 2010
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents

The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011
www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/2260/contents/made

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**Indicator 3**

**An understanding of the learning process informs learning and teaching practices, which use evidence-informed approaches derived from the outcomes of research, scholarship and the evaluation of professional practices.**

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Effective teaching is indicated when staff display a sound understanding and up-to-date knowledge of their subject (including their area of professional practice); bring this appropriately to the design of learning and teaching activities; and communicate enthusiasm, drawing on scholarship, research and professional activity to support students. They use a variety of teaching practices and methods of assessment to promote learning.

Effective learning environments and teaching practices, including curriculum content, design and delivery, are informed by: current developments in learning and teaching practice; current research and scholarship; changes in professional, practice and work-based environments; feedback from students collectively and individually from module level and upwards; and the requirements of PSRBs.

Some of the factors that inform effective learning and teaching activities include recognising:

- that students come from varied backgrounds and have different educational needs and learning styles
- the value of individual and collaborative student learning experiences
- the synergy between learning and teaching, and research
- that timely and effective feedback is a key element of learning (for both staff and students)
- the value of opportunities for creative student learning
- that learning is about interpretation and synthesis, not just the repetition of facts

- the value of learning how to learn
- the value of life-long learning.

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**Further information and additional references**

QAA Scotland Enhancement Themes: Research-Teaching Linkages
www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/enhancement-themes/completed-enhancement-themes/research-teaching-linkages

Higher Education Academy (2006) *Scholarly Activity in the context of HE in FE*
www.heacademy.ac.uk/ourwork/universitiesandcolleges/heinfe/alldisplay?type=resources&newid=resource_database/web0462_scholarly_activity_in_the_context_of_he_in_fe_June_2006&site=york

QAA (2008) *Outcomes from Institutional Audit, Second series: Work-based and placement learning, and employability*
www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-institutional-audit-Second-series-Work-based-placement-learning-employability.aspx

NUS (2012) *Student Experience Research Part 3: Subject Differences*
www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Student-Experience-Research-12-Part-3.aspx

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**Indicator 4**

**Information is collected, analysed and used to assure and enhance learning and teaching activities and the learning and teaching environment.**

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Higher education providers have policies and associated procedures for assuring the academic standards and quality of their programmes and awards and for continual enhancement based on robust evidence (see further *Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review*). This evidence includes feedback from students on their learning experience, which may be collected at various levels (for example for individual modules or whole programmes). Higher education providers take deliberate steps to enhance continuously the quality of student learning, including using key performance indicators agreed and shared with their students.

The involvement of students in the development and monitoring of such policy and procedures is covered in *Chapter B5: Student engagement* of the Quality Code.

Higher education providers consider:

- how students influence their curriculum and learning experience - for their own benefit and that of their peer group and future cohorts
- how students are engaged as partners in the design and review of their learning experience
- how feedback from students is collected at module, programme and other levels, analysed and used effectively in enhancement
- how students are informed of enhancements made

- how those who support the higher education provider in making learning opportunities available (for example, employers who provide placement learning settings) can provide feedback
- how feedback is collected from alumni of the higher education provider and employers of alumni
- the ongoing review of the effectiveness of their quality assurance and quality enhancement systems.

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**Further information and additional references**

QAA (2008) *Outcomes from Institutional Audit, Second series: Programme monitoring arrangements*
www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-institutional-audit-Second-series-Programme-monitoring-arrangements.aspx

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# Enabling active and independent learners

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**Indicator 5**

**Students are supported to understand their responsibility to engage with the learning opportunities provided.**

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A key characteristic of UK higher education is the emphasis placed on the responsibility of students for their learning, working in partnership with the higher education provider. Higher education is designed to develop students as active and independent learners. Higher education providers make clear and help students to understand the provider's expectations for students to engage in their learning. Providers help students make the transition towards the independent learning style expected of all undergraduates and postgraduates.

Enabling students to be active members of a learning community depends on interactions between staff and students, and student interactions with their peers. As well as engaging in their learning students are encouraged to maintain a culture of dignity, courtesy and mutual respect with staff and their peers.

Higher education providers recognise that effective learning occurs when students:

- engage actively in learning, and participate fully in the learning opportunities that are presented to them
- understand their learning environment, its culture and resources
- embrace the aims and expectations of their chosen programme of study
- demonstrate understanding of, and ability to reflect upon, the ways in which their skills and knowledge are developing
- recognise and value their existing knowledge and skills, and build on them
- make effective and responsible use of advice, guidance and feedback from assessment that is provided during their programme of study
- avail themselves of the opportunities to acquire and develop learning skills
- contextualise and apply their developing knowledge and skills to their wider experience and plans for the future

- work together in an informal environment as well as in formal classes
- act responsibly in planning their use of the resources available to support learning, including the effective use of their own time in independent study
- give constructive feedback on their perception of the quality of their learning experience
- are engaged in monitoring and influencing the curriculum
- show commitment to attaining the academic standards that have been defined for their programme of study.

Students undertaking work-based or placement learning have responsibilities towards the learning provider, and to others such as customers, clients, service users, other employees and the general public. This includes the responsibility to meet the norms and expectations for professional conduct in the particular field of work or study that they are undertaking through the work-based or placement learning. For those students using their existing workplace for their work-based learning, such norms, expectations and responsibilities are often covered in an employment contract and may be more obvious than for students joining a workplace to undertake a placement.

How higher education providers engage with students through their quality systems is considered in *Chapter B5: Student engagement* of the Quality Code.

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**Further information and additional references**

QAA (2009) *Personal development planning: guidelines for institutional policy and practice in higher education*
www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Personal-development-planning-guidance-for-institutional-policy-and-practice-in-higher-education.aspx

Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA)
www.recordingachievement.org

NUS (2012) *Student Experience Research Part 4: First Year Student Experience*
www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Student-Experience-Research-12-Part-4.aspx

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

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**Indicator 6**

**Every student has opportunities to engage with feedback to further their development as an active and independent learner.**

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The design of learning and teaching activities, including assessment (often referred to as 'assessment for learning'), provides opportunities for feedback that promotes learning.

The purpose of summative assessment is to summarise student attainment at a particular time, whereas the purpose of formative assessment is development and to promote further

improvement in student attainment. In reality most assessment tasks have elements of both formative and summative assessment. To derive maximum benefit students need to receive feedback in a timely fashion and in a manner that is supportive, yet includes some personal challenge. Effective feedback is the result of agreeing and communicating clear criteria in advance of students completing the task; it makes use of those criteria and is timed so that students can use it constructively for their learning. It also takes into account the need to build confidence as well as to communicate where and how improvements can be made. Effective feedback for learning is the result of students' ongoing engagement with teachers and their peers (and with employers for example, where the student is in a work-based or placement learning environment), not infrequent 'one off' events.

Assessment in a programme, module or session has an appropriate balance between formative and summative assessment in order to support effective student learning as well as ensuring, when required, that the learning outcomes have been achieved.

Assessment of student learning is addressed in more detail in *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning* of the Quality Code.

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**Further information and additional references**

QAA Scotland Enhancement Themes: Integrative Assessment
www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/enhancement-themes/completed-enhancement-themes/integrative-assessment

QAA Scotland Enhancement Themes: Assessment
www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/enhancement-themes/completed-enhancement-themes/assessment

QAA (2011) *Understanding assessment: its role in safeguarding academic standards and quality in higher education*
www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/understanding-assessment.aspx

Higher Education Academy: Assessment and feedback
www.heacademy.ac.uk/assessment

NUS: Ten Principles of good feedback
www.nus.org.uk/en/advice/course-reps/feedback/feedback-what-you-can-expect-/

sparqs (Student Participation in Quality Scotland)
www.sparqs.ac.uk

Wales Initiative for Student Engagement
www.wisewales.com

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**Indicator 7**

**Students receive clear information that specifies the opportunities for learning available to them; this information is monitored, reviewed and evaluated by students and staff working in partnership.**

Higher education providers make clear to students the learning opportunities and learning and teaching support available to them and how to access these. When information is provided at different levels (for example organisational, programme or module level) care is taken to give students a coherent picture across their whole experience.

Providers ensure that information reflects the specific nature of the opportunities and support provided, indicating any study undertaken at a location that is not a campus of the provider (for example in a work-based or placement environment) or through a virtual learning environment.

Higher education providers actively engage students to monitor, review and evaluate this information.

The provision of information for prospective and current students is addressed in Part C: Information about higher education provision of the Quality Code.

**Further information and additional references**

The Student Charter Group Final Report (January 2011)
www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/higher-education/docs/s/11-736-student-charter-group.pdf

HEFCW W11/31HE: Guidance on the development of student charters
www.hefcw.ac.uk/documents/publications/circulars/circulars_2011/W11%2031HE%20Guidance%20on%20the%20development%20of%20student%20charters.pdf

## Facilitating and supporting effective learning and teaching

**Indicator 8**

**Staff involved in teaching and supporting student learning are qualified, supported, and adequately resourced.**

Student learning is facilitated by interaction with staff who teach and support learning. Consequently, higher education providers determine whether those who teach:

- have qualifications appropriate to the teaching they are delivering
- have knowledge and understanding of the subject they are teaching
- have the necessary skills and experience to facilitate learning and understanding in students using a range of techniques
- reflect, and act, upon feedback on their own performance in supporting student learning, and upon that of colleagues with whom they share this responsibility.

## The appointment and support of staff

Staff recruitment and appointment procedures include a means of making certain that new staff have at least the minimum necessary level of ability for the teaching or learning support role to which they are appointed. Higher education providers assure themselves that all staff engaged in such roles are suitably qualified, whether they are staff employed by a partner higher education provider, a work-based learning or placement provider or a member of visiting staff. New staff are provided with, and engage in, induction and mentoring.

Once appointed and throughout their career, staff are provided with opportunities to develop and extend their capabilities, to engage in appropriate development activities and to reflect upon their practice. Effective continuing professional development is planned as a strategic activity that is adequately resourced.

Staff are offered guidance and support to understand what current equality legislation means for them in their roles, and they have access, on a continuing basis, to information about creating an inclusive institutional culture for which there is a shared responsibility. Staff design inclusive learning and teaching activities and seek training and ongoing support where necessary. Individual staff members are given appropriate and timely support in developing inclusive forms of learning, teaching and assessment.

Staff are encouraged to value their own and others' skills, and higher education providers have in place recognition and reward processes.

Higher education providers have effective processes to identify weaker staff and provide them with opportunities to improve their skills.

## The UK Professional Standards Framework

The UK higher education sector has endorsed the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF), published by the Higher Education Academy. The purpose of the Framework is to help individuals and higher education providers enhance the learning experience of their students, by improving the quality of their teaching and learning support. It provides a general description of the main dimensions of the roles of teaching and supporting learning within UK higher education and helps higher education providers demonstrate that their professional development programmes and activities meet expected professional standards. The Higher Education Academy supports and guides both institutions and individuals as they engage with the UKPSF.

## The Institute for Learning

The Institute for Learning (IfL) is the professional body for teachers in the further education and skills sector in England and Wales. Its main role is to support professional development and excellence in order to enable teachers to deliver the best possible teaching experience. All IfL members are required to undergo 30 hours of continuing professional development each year. This gives staff teaching higher education programmes in further education contexts a platform on which to build their staff development activities, albeit within a framework that will cover both further and higher education needs.

**Further information and additional references**

UK Professional Standards Framework
www.heacademy.ac.uk/ukpsf

The Institute for Learning
www.ifl.ac.uk

Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA)
www.seda.ac.uk

Association for Learning Development in Higher Education (ALDinHE)
www.aldinhe.ac.uk

ASET (The Placement and Employability Professionals' Body)
www.asetonline.org

ENQA (2009) Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance within the European Higher
Education Area (3rd edition)
www.enqa.eu/pubs_esg.lasso

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**Indicator 9**

**Higher education providers assure themselves that for every student both the physical
and virtual environments they provide are safe, accessible, reliable and usable and that
their use is characterised by dignity, courtesy and respect.**

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## The physical environment

In order to meet students' entitlements to access learning opportunities, higher education
providers consider the accessibility of the physical environment including the suitability of the
learning spaces for the nature of the learning activities provided. For example, this includes the
physical accessibility of resources and their usability (such as the availability of different seating
arrangements, lighting and acoustic backgrounds, usability of equipment, and the presentation
of materials using audio-visual technology).

Higher education providers decide how to access specialist advice on accessible and inclusive
design that best meets their needs and suits their own context. Higher education providers
involve students in the process for developing a fully accessible environment, especially
students with entitlements under equalities legislation. Higher education providers
systematically review their facilities and do not rely on making adjustments on an ad hoc basis.

Full access to learning environments (both on the campus and elsewhere, and including formal
and informal learning spaces), equipment and other resources used to support learning are
provided as far as possible. Where specific individual adjustments to learning and teaching
practices are required, they are based on a consideration of the particular entitlements of the
student.

Students learning in a work-based or placement environment are made aware of their entitlements to, for example, work in a safe environment and be treated in accordance with applicable legislation.

## The virtual environment

The use of information and communications technology (ICT) can be an important means of enabling all students to engage fully in their programmes of study. Higher education providers develop ICT facilities and services (including virtual learning environments and library systems) that are fully accessible and inclusive and cater for a wide range of potential student entitlements. Systematic consultation with students and staff about the accessibility of ICT facilities enhances standards of usability.

Assistive technology can make methods of learning and teaching accessible to students with certain disabilities. Wherever possible, assistive technologies are available through integrated organisation-wide systems, rather than accessed through segregated facilities.

## The inclusive environment

All engagement between staff (including those who contribute to learning through placements and work-based learning) and students reflect the following characteristics:

- mutual dignity and respect
- robust academic interaction and debate within a courteous and respectful environment
- a safe environment for exploring new ideas and for providing feedback even where that is negative
- support for students' engagement in collaborative learning, group and team work
- partnership between staff and students.

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**Further information and additional references**

QAA Scotland Enhancement Themes: Flexible Learning
www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/enhancement-themes/completed-enhancement-themes/flexible-delivery

Higher Education Academy: Flexible learning
 www.heacademy.ac.uk/flexible-learning

JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee)
www.jisc.ac.uk

Association of Learning Technology
 www.alt.ac.uk

Equality Act 2010
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents

The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011
www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/2260/contents/made

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**Indicator 10**

**Accessible, adequate and appropriate resources are provided to support the learning of every student.**

In addition to their teachers and other staff who support learning, students rely on a range of resources - such as libraries and computing facilities - to assist their learning. Learning resources and systems for student support are readily accessible to students, designed with their needs in mind, and are responsive to feedback from those who use them. (See *Chapter B4: Student support, learning resources, careers information, advice and guidance* of the Quality Code.)

For example, higher education providers consider whether:

- the resources provided support effective learning
- suitable teaching and learning accommodation is available for both formal and informal learning
- subject-specific book and periodical stocks are appropriate and accessible
- suitable equipment and appropriate information technology facilities are available and accessible, and anticipate entitlements of students under equalities legislation
- technology enables, rather than directs, learning
- appropriate technical and administrative support is available
- materials are drawn from a sufficiently broad range of sources, cultures and viewpoints.

Providers create and use learning resources that are accessible, and are prepared to make reasonable individual adjustments where necessary.

When students study at a location that is not a campus of the higher education provider (for example, when engaged in fieldwork, placement or work-based learning, or studying through a virtual learning environment) or are only able to access the facilities of the provider at particular times, there is a clear strategy for the provision of accessible learning resources. For example, this strategy addresses:

- the division of responsibility between the higher education provider and its partner(s) to provide, manage and evaluate learning resources
- how the quality of these learning resources is monitored
- the parity of experience for, and between, students in different locations.

Higher education providers routinely monitor, review and enhance the effectiveness of the learning resources and systems for student support provided, to assure themselves that the resources provided are having a positive effect on student learning.

This topic is covered in more detail in *Chapter B4: Student support, learning resources and careers education, information, advice and guidance* of the Quality Code.

**Further information and additional references**

QAA (2008) *Outcomes from institutional audit Second series: Learning support resources (including virtual learning environments)*
www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-institutional-audit-Second-series-Learning-support-resources-including-virtual-learning-environments.aspx

ENQA (2009) Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance within the European Higher Education Area (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)
www.enqa.eu/pubs_esg.lasso

JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee)
www.jisc.ac.uk

SCONUL (Society of College, National and University Libraries)
www.sconul.ac.uk

# Appendix 1: The Expectation and Indicators

## Expectation

The Quality Code sets out the following Expectation about Learning and Teaching, which higher education providers are required to meet.

**Higher education providers, working in partnership with their students, create and systematically review and enhance learning environments and teaching practices to provide opportunities for every student to become an active and independent learner.**

## Indicators of sound practice

**Indicator 1**
Higher education providers articulate, implement and monitor a strategic approach to learning and teaching, and promote a shared understanding of that approach among all their staff and students.

**Indicator 2**
The design of learning and teaching activities provides every student with an equal opportunity to monitor their progress towards and achieve the intended learning outcomes.

**Indicator 3**
An understanding of the learning process informs learning and teaching practices, which use evidence-informed approaches derived from the outcomes of research, scholarship and the evaluation of professional practices.

**Indicator 4**
Information is collected, analysed and used to assure and enhance learning and teaching activities and the learning and teaching environment.

**Indicator 5**
Students are supported to understand their responsibility to engage with the learning opportunities provided.

**Indicator 6**
Every student has opportunities to engage with feedback to further their development as an active and independent learner

**Indicator 7**
Students receive clear information that specifies the opportunities for learning available to them; this information is monitored, reviewed and evaluated by students and staff working in partnership.

**Indicator 8**
Staff involved in teaching and supporting student learning are qualified, supported, and adequately resourced.

**Indicator 9**

Higher education providers assure themselves that for every student both the physical and virtual environments they provide are safe, accessible, reliable and usable and that their use is characterised by dignity, courtesy and respect.

**Indicator 10**

Accessible, adequate and appropriate resources are provided to support the learning of every student.

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

| Name | Position | Affiliation |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Dr Mark Atlay | Director of Teaching and Learning | University of Bedfordshire |
| Alex Bols | Assistant Director (Research) & Head of Higher Education | National Union of Students |
| Professor Alan Davidson | Dean for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Assessment | Robert Gordon University |
| Dr Ian Giles | Emeritus Fellow, formerly Director of Learning & Teaching Enhancement Unit | University of Southampton |
| Julie Hall | Director of Learning & Teaching Enhancement Unit | Roehampton University |
| Katya Hosking | Inclusive Curriculum Officer | Cardiff University |
| Professor Sharon Huttly | Dean of Studies | London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine |
| Matthew Kitching | Representation and Development Manager | Bucks New University |
| Sarah MacDonald | Director of Standards and Quality Assurance | Pearson Higher Education Awards |
| Dorothy McElwee | Head of Higher Education and Training Programmes | North West Regional College |
| Dr Christine MacPherson | Assistant Director | QAA Scotland |
| Dr Alan M Jones | Director of Education (Architecture) | Queen's University Belfast |
| Professor Rose Luckin | Professor of Learner Centred Design | Institute of Education |
| Dr Jenny Naish | Assistant Dean (Learning, Teaching and Quality), Teesside University Business School | Teesside University |
| Dr Kathleen M Quinlan | Head of Educational Development (Oxford Learning Institute) | University of Oxford |
| Dr Simon Rouse | Principal Lecturer, Faculty of Health & Life Sciences | York St John University |
| Professor Jon Scott | Academic Director, College of Medicine, Biological Sciences & Psychology | University of Leicester |
| Dr Jo Smedley | Director, Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching | University of Wales, Newport |
| Ellen Thinnesen | Dean of Higher Education | Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher |

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| | | Education |
| Helen Thomas | Head of Teacher Excellence | Higher Education Academy |
| Professor Mary Thorpe | Professor of Educational Technology | Open University |
| Dr Tim Burton | Assistant Director | QAA |
| Harriet Barnes | Development Officer | QAA |