

Review of Foundation Degrees in Wales

Guidance for lead student representatives



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Introduction

This guidance has been written by students to provide you (the lead student representative - LSR) with information about the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's (QAA's) Review of Foundation Degrees in Wales process. It provides an overview of the review process, with specific guidance about your role. This process aims to place current and prospective students' interests at its heart, so your role is a very important one.

We hope you will find this guidance useful, but you should also remember that the definitive manual about this process is QAA's *Handbook for the Review of Foundation Degrees in Wales*. The handbook should always be taken as the ultimate authority for how reviews will be carried out.

How to use this guidance

We recommend **reading this guidance fully**, as it has been designed with students in mind. It is available in English and Welsh; for more information on QAA's Welsh Language Scheme visit our website: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/corporate/policies/pages/Welsh-language-scheme.aspx.

This guidance supplies background information to the review process, your role within the review and what you can expect from the review as a whole. You will see footnotes in places which refer you to further information, if you are interested in finding out more. Each section also has a 'jargon buster' that explains the key terms used: it may look like a foreign language at times, so we've tried to simplify it! All these terms are also available in the glossary at the back, for easy reference.

Introduction to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)

Higher education in the UK has a world-wide reputation for excellence. High academic standards and quality are crucial to keeping this reputation.

The responsibility for academic standards and quality assurance in UK higher education rests with each university and college, and they have individual ways of guaranteeing quality. All universities and colleges that provide higher education in the UK are independent and self-governing - they are not owned by the state. However, most receive government funding in one form or another.

QAA checks that all UK universities and colleges have met nationally agreed expectations for the quality of the teaching, learning and assessment they provide and for the academic standards they set. QAA also offers guidance on maintaining and improving quality assurance processes and developing course delivery through the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.¹

You can find out more information about QAA by searching our website: www.qaa.ac.uk.

Jargon buster

Higher education - a diverse range of courses and qualifications, such as bachelor's degrees, Higher National Diplomas and Foundation Degrees. Many courses take place in universities, but plenty are also taught in higher education colleges, specialist art institutions and agricultural colleges.

Quality assurance - ensuring that university and college courses are of a certain calibre.

Standards - the level of achievement that a student has to reach to gain a qualification. Qualifications at the same level (for example, Foundation Degrees) should require the same level of achievement by all students across the UK.

Quality - how well the learning opportunities available to students are managed to help them achieve their award. This is about making sure that appropriate and effective teaching, support, assessment and learning opportunities are provided for students.

'Standards' versus 'quality'

Standards are about what the student has to achieve to get a degree, and **quality** is about how well the institution facilitates students to achieve those standards through providing them with appropriate resources and support.

¹ The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) is a set of nationally agreed reference points which gives all institutions a shared starting point for setting, describing and assuring the quality and standards of their higher education courses. The Quality Code sets out the Expectations that all providers of UK higher education are required to meet. More information is available on the QAA website at www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality/quality-code/pages/default.aspx.

The purpose of Review of Foundation Degrees in Wales

Foundation Degrees are normally offered and awarded by **higher education institutions** working in partnership with **further education institutions** or **employers**. The higher education institution is the lead institution, responsible for the academic standards and quality of the Foundation Degree.

The review process will **provide information** on how Foundation Degrees are being developed against agreed UK expectations. It will **encourage improvement** of academic management by publishing findings and sharing good practice.

QAA was asked by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) to undertake a review of how Foundation Degrees are run in Wales. The review's main aim is to provide public information on standards and quality at UK institutions that deliver Foundation Degrees, using a robust **peer review** mechanism to assure the public (including current and prospective students) of the reliability of both the individual institution and of the UK higher education sector.

The review process' main aim is to provide accessible information for the public which indicates whether:

Handbook for the Review of Foundation Degrees in Wales description	What it actually means
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the lead institution/awarding body safeguards academic standards, the quality of learning opportunities and the student experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the institution in charge of awarding your degree sets suitable standards that students need to meet to obtain the degree, and the teaching, feedback, support and facilities are good enough to allow you to meet those standards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> partnerships/consortia ensure that Foundation Degree programmes meet the defining characteristics, as set out in the <i>Foundation Degree qualification benchmark</i>,² and are likely to meet the standards of a level 5 qualification in <i>The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland</i> (FHEQ)³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all the institutions and employers involved in the Foundation Degree ensure that the correct national standards are being met, so that your assessments are not being marked more or less harshly than in other institutions and so that employers are able to treat the same qualifications from different institutions equally
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> requirements and expectations of the different funders for the provision are met 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the organisations providing funding for Foundation Degrees have had their requirements met
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> there are areas of innovation and good practice worthy of dissemination. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> attention is drawn to anything exceptionally good, so that it can be shared publicly.

Table 1: aims of Review of Foundation Degrees in Wales

² *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/foundation-degree-qualification-benchmark-May-2010.aspx.

³ FHEQ: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/the-framework-for-higher-education-qualifications-in-England-Wales-and-Northern-Ireland.aspx.

The review team will gather this information by focusing on:

Handbook for the Review of Foundation Degrees in Wales description	What it actually means
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the design and development of Foundation Degree programmes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the creation and planning of the teaching and assessment of Foundation Degrees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the academic standards of Foundation Degree programmes, including how the programmes are reviewed, assessment policies and the use of QAA publications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> looking at the process for evaluating the success of each Foundation Degree, how all the assessments are set up and marked, and how QAA guidance has been used
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the quality of learning opportunities, considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> how programmes are approved and then monitored guidance, support and supervision student representation and feedback work-based learning learning resources staff development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> how each Foundation Degree began and has been reviewed the teaching and staff support that students are given how students' opinions and feedback are collected and responded to by staff the usefulness of any work placements on the Foundation Degree library, electronic journal and publication facilities, and other electronic resources staff development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> how your course and all its resources are improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> information about higher education provision, ensuring accuracy and completeness of all information available to the public, including prospectuses and student handbooks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> whether websites, handbooks and other information about the Foundation Degrees are accurate and trustworthy.

Table 2: focus of Review of Foundation Degrees in Wales

Jargon buster

Peer review - institutions are reviewed by staff (and a student reviewer) from other institutions, rather than by staff from QAA or inspectors, ensuring consistency and a thorough understanding of the current challenges from an institutional perspective.

Lead institution/awarding body - there may be several different institutions or employers involved in providing a Foundation Degree; one of them will be the lead institution (which has degree-awarding powers) or the awarding body, depending on the type of degree.

Learning opportunities - everything provided to enable a student to achieve what is required to qualify for an award. This includes teaching and learning resources, as well as students' own learning and staff support. We call this 'learning opportunities' rather than 'the learning experience' because institutions can guarantee that all students have opportunities, but they can't guarantee how each student will choose to experience their learning.

Partnerships/consortia - the institutions and employers who are involved in providing the Foundation Degree.

Assessment policies - the mechanisms used to mark students' work, including the marking criteria and feedback.

Learning resources - this is a term that covers all the facilities students are able to access outside of the classroom, including IT, libraries and student support.

The content of Review of Foundation Degrees in Wales

Review of Foundation Degrees in Wales looks at five different key areas. The review team will consider whether a good enough standard has been achieved in each of those areas, and they can make recommendations for improvement or comment on good practice.

The review team

The review team will normally comprise **three to four reviewers**. One will be nominated by the lead institution (the 'institutional nominee'), one will be a student reviewer and the other(s) will be from UK institutions that deliver higher education, including Foundation Degrees. There will also be a **review coordinator** who will coordinate the team, arrange review meetings and draft the final report.

Institutional contact and LSR

Your institution will be invited to nominate an **institutional contact** (a separate role from that of institutional nominee) who will have responsibility for the arrangements of the review and for ensuring that the evidence is made available to the review team.

A **lead student representative** (LSR) is also appointed, either by the institution or by the representative body of students if your institution has one. Your role is to provide students with more direct involvement with the operation of the review process itself, as well as providing a crucial link to the students in the institution so that the review team can have more direct and wider access to students' points of view.

If you leave the institution during the review period or are unable to continue being the LSR, it is very important that you tell the institution so that a new LSR can be chosen and you can hand over the information that you have gathered.

Stages of the review

Preparatory stage

During the preparatory stage, you and your institution will be briefed on the review process. The institution will put together a number of documents for the review team, including a self-evaluation. You will be invited to prepare a student submission to submit alongside your institution's documentation.

The review visit

During the review stage, the review team will visit the institution for a maximum of four days and will request meetings with key people, including students, in order to gain a first-hand understanding of the learning experience at your institution. This also includes meeting with employers and visiting workplaces.

The team will also meet with staff and students to clarify or probe deeper into areas highlighted in the self-evaluation document or student submission.

Review team reporting stage

The reporting stage occurs around four weeks after the visit: a draft report from the review team will be sent to your institution for factual errors to be identified and to enable the institution to

create an action plan in response to the report. Your institution will want you to be involved in the action plan.

The report 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 in five areas:

- design and development of programmes
- academic standards
- quality of learning opportunities
- enhancement
- information about higher education provision.

The report will also make recommendations and comment on good practice.

Timeline

The standard timeline for Review of Foundation Degrees in Wales is given below: this shows you what you need to do and when. All the stages are explained in more detail later in this guide.

When?	Institution/QAA	Lead student representative (you)
12 months before the review visit	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 the review teams and review coordinators	
4-6 months before the review visit	QAA informs the lead institution of the membership of the review team	You will be invited to be LSR by your institution/representative student body
4-6 months before the review visit	The review coordinator contacts the institution to discuss the arrangements for the review	You will have some time to research and draft the student submission (see Appendix 1 for further details)
10 weeks before the review visit	The self-evaluation document is submitted to the QAA secure electronic folder	The student submission is submitted to the QAA secure electronic folder
At least 8 weeks before the review visit	The review coordinator confirms the programme trails with members of the review team and informs the lead institution; he/she confirms any initial lines of enquiry with the review team	The institution may want your help to identify students that the review team can meet with
At least 6 weeks before the review visit	The preliminary meeting between the review coordinator and the lead institution is held	You will be required to attend this initial meeting

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 will 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	The review team will ensure that its programme includes meetings with a wide variety of students, to enable the team to gain first-hand information on students' experiences as learners and on their engagement with the institution's approach to quality assurance and enhancement. The team will meet student representatives who have been involved in the preparation of the student submission, as well as members of the student body who may not have representative functions. This will take into account the variety of students studying on Foundation Degree programmes, including part-time and mature students
2 weeks after the review visit	QAA notifies the lead institution of the final conclusions and recommendations	These should be shared with you
4 weeks after the review visit	The lead institution receives a copy of the draft report to check for accuracy and prepares the action plan	You will be invited to get involved in preparing your institution's action plan
6-8 weeks after the review visit	The lead institution returns the report and action plan to QAA	These will be shared with you and you may be asked to comment on them
15 weeks after the review visit	The lead institution receives the final report	You should have access to the report

Table 3: timeline for Review of Foundation Degrees in Wales

Jargon buster

Programme trails - specific programmes that are identified by the review team and thoroughly considered, as examples of how the lead institution manages Foundation Degrees.

The role of the lead student representative (your role)

The LSR can be any student who is undertaking a Foundation Degree at the institution or at a partner college of the institution. It is likely that you will have been chosen because you're an officer from the students' union, a member of the student representative body or someone who has represented students on your degree course. Any previous representative role that you have had will have given you experience of students' views and how to capture their opinions. You will also provide the crucial link between the review team and the students undertaking Foundation Degrees awarded by the institution.

Your role will depend on the type of institution you attend and how many students are currently studying for Foundation Degrees. We have separated this guidance depending on your institution's size, to make it more applicable for each institution.

Remember - there are a number of ways of producing the student submission, all of them valid, but regardless of the size of the student group you're representing you will need to do the following.

- 1 Understand the purpose of the review, the aims of the review and what will happen as an outcome of the review.
- 2 Take into account the nature of Foundation Degree students. Many of these students are part-time, so not on campus constantly; many are mature students, so often have other responsibilities outside their academic life such as family commitments. For all Foundation Degree students, work-based learning is an essential part of their programmes. It is important to recognise the difference between Foundation Degree students and the 'traditional' full-time, undergraduate student and bear this in mind in your role.
- 3 Get the views of a range of your fellow students about the aspects of the student experience that the review focuses on. These are listed below with some example questions; for further guidance on questions that you could ask students see Appendix 1, which gives you ideas to include in each section of the student submission.
 - Assessment
 - Do students get quality feedback?
 - How do students find out about the marking criteria?
 - Whether students attend meetings where your programmes are discussed
 - How often do students attend meetings?
 - Do students get a say in the decisions in the meetings?
 - How are these students chosen?
 - Feedback you give on your course, either through surveys or student representation
 - How often are students asked to give feedback?
 - What methods are used to gain student feedback?
 - What happens as a result of student feedback?
 - Does each course have a student representative?

- Learning resources - IT and libraries
 - Are students able to access IT and library facilities?
 - What are the best and worst parts of the facilities?
 - How can students give their opinion on the facilities?
 - Teaching
 - Are students satisfied with the quality of teaching?
 - Are different teaching styles used?
 - Do students have input into their tutors' teaching style?
 - Arrangements for work-based/placement learning
 - How well are the academic and work-based/work placement elements of the course integrated?
 - How effective is supervision and mentoring?
 - Personal or academic support given to you by staff
 - Are students able to access personal and academic support?
 - Do students feel comfortable approaching staff?
 - How often are students encouraged to see staff?
 - Information given to you about your course
 - How do students find out information about their course?
 - Are students given a student handbook, and if so is it useful and accurate?
 - Are students fully aware of the course expectations?
 - How do students find out about the course expectations?
- 4 Summarise these views in a student submission.
 - 5 Meet with the review team during the review visit.
 - 6 Work with your institution to develop the action plan once the review team's report has been received.

LSRs in small institutions with fewer than 50 full-time Foundation Degree students

Before the review

You should tell your student body that the lead institution is participating in a review. You may also want to ask your institution about how its quality assurance works: how do students get involved in all aspects of their academic experience?

QAA or your institution may want you to help find students for the review team to meet. They will usually specify a type of student, for example someone from a particular Foundation Degree programme who may be full-time or part-time. If your help is needed, then someone will contact you.

Student submission

(See Appendix 1 for more detail.)

The review teams consider every institution carefully, regardless of size. However, due to the smaller number of Foundation Degree students in your institution, it may be easier to get the views of students.

You must remember to try and get views from a wide range of students on all Foundation Degree programmes, even if they're doing a different degree or at a different college. Why? This ensures that everyone's views are taken into account and that the student submission is truly representative. Remember, the profile of a Foundation Degree student may be different from the average undergraduate student and they have a work-based component to their programmes. Take into account the fact that they might be mature or part-time students who may spend a considerable amount of time off-campus, and make sure their views are fully represented.

You may be able to organise a focus group to gather views, or send out a survey with a variety of questions that students can answer, or both. Look at the information for all LSRs (above) to get an idea of the topics you need to ask questions about. Your institution should help you communicate with other students, so don't be afraid of asking for help. You need to give students enough time to fill in a survey or arrange to attend a focus group, so plan ahead: the more students get involved with the review at this stage, the more accurate your information will be.

Your student submission needs to give a summary of the outcomes and conclusions from your focus group or survey. It doesn't have to be a particular length or in a particular style, but it may be easier to separate different aspects of the student experience. Don't be worried if students give different opinions on the same topic - you can give specific examples or point to something that is working well in one course and not so well in another. Don't worry about giving all the details: the review team just wants to get a flavour of the experience offered to students.

You should finish the student submission with enough time to show it to the students who took part in your survey or focus group - and the wider student body - for them to comment on it. If you have a student committee then you may wish to show it to them and ask for their approval. The student body should feel that the submission accurately reflects their student experience and learning opportunities. Allowing them to see the culmination of the work will also show them what they have helped to create.

The review team wants an accurate reflection of what it is like to be a student at your institution and they want to hear about anything that you have found out from your research that you think is important. The review team will rely on the information you give them, so make sure that your submission can be backed up by student views and give any relevant statistics from your survey.

None of the information that the review team gets from the student submission and meetings with students will be attributed to individuals, and it will all be kept confidential, so it is important that all students are open and honest.

During the review

The review team will want to meet you - along with other students - to ask you about the student experience, and they may have specific questions about the student submission.

After the review

Your institution should share the results of the review team's report with you. They will need to produce an action plan in response to the report, and will probably want you to help them in creating and giving feedback on the action plan.

Once the review is completed, you should tell the student body the outcome of the review and thank students who were involved in the process. This will also help students to understand how important their input was and to feel involved in the review.

LSRs in institutions with between 50 and 300 full-time Foundation Degree students

Before the review

You should tell your student body that the lead institution is participating in a review. You may also want to ask your institution about how its quality assurance works: how do students get involved in all aspects of their academic experience?

QAA or your institution may want you to help find students for the review team to meet. They will usually specify a type of student, for example someone from a particular Foundation Degree programme who may be full-time or part-time. If your help is needed, then someone will contact you.

Student submission

(See Appendix 1 for more detail.)

Your institution may provide many Foundation Degree programmes through a number of partner colleges - you need to be able to access a **wide selection of students' opinions**, taking into account distances between partner colleges and the lead institution. You can get student opinions in a variety of ways: you can hold **focus groups** and **surveys**, and you can also look at the minutes of meetings of your institution's staff that have included students, and **student handbooks**, to find out:

- what students have achieved
- what happens when they ask for an improvement
- how students learn about changes to their programme
- how students are made aware of the expectations of the course.

When dealing with distances between partner colleges and the lead institution, you need to make sure you can access these students. Using online feedback and polls is one way of overcoming the problem. If you need them for a meeting, your institution may be able to help with travel or organising conference phone calls/video calls.

Your institution should help you communicate with other students and give you access to meeting minutes, so don't be afraid of asking for help. You need to give yourself enough time to read the documentation, and give students enough time to fill in a survey or arrange to attend a focus group, so plan ahead. The more students get involved with the review and the more sources you use at this stage, the more accurate your information will be.

Your student submission needs to give a summary of the outcomes and conclusions from your focus group or survey. It doesn't have to be a particular length or in a particular style, but it may be easier to separate different aspects of the student experience. Don't be worried if students give different opinions on the same topic - you can give specific examples or point to something that is working well in one course and not so well in another. Don't worry about giving all the details: the review team just wants to get a flavour of the experience offered to students.

You should finish the student submission with enough time to show it to the students who took part in your survey or focus group - and the wider student body - for them to comment on it. If you have a student committee then you may wish to show it to them and ask for their approval.

The student body should feel that the submission accurately reflects their student experience and learning opportunities. Allowing them to see the culmination of the work will also show them what they have helped to create.

The review team wants an accurate reflection of what it is like to be a student at your institution, and they want to hear about anything that you have found out from your research that you think is important. The review team will rely on the information you give them, so make sure that your submission can be backed up by student views, and give any relevant statistics from your survey. None of the information that the review team gets from the student submission and meetings with students will be attributed to individuals, and it will all be kept confidential, so it is important that all students are open and honest.

During the review

The review team will probably want to meet you - along with other students - to ask you about the student experience, and they may have specific questions about the student submission.

After the review

Your institution should share the results of the review team's report with you. They will need to produce an action plan in response to the report, and will probably want you to help them in creating and giving feedback on the action plan.

Once the review is completed, you should tell the student body the outcome of the report and thank students that were involved in the process. This will also help students to understand how important their input was and to feel involved in the review.

LSRs in institutions with over 300 full-time Foundation Degree students

Before the review

You should tell your student body that the lead institution is participating in a review. You may also want to ask your institution about how its quality assurance works: how do students get involved in all aspects of their academic experience?

QAA or your institution may want you to help find students for the review team to meet. They will usually specify a type of student, for example someone from a particular Foundation Degree programme who may be full-time or part-time. If your help is needed, then someone will contact you.

Student submission

(See Appendix 1 for more detail.)

Your institution may provide many Foundation Degree programmes through a number of partner colleges - you need to be able to access a **wide selection of students' opinions**, taking into account distances between partner colleges and the lead institution. You can get student opinions in a variety of ways: you can hold **focus groups** and **surveys**, and you can also look at the **minutes of meetings** of your institution's staff that have included students, and **student handbooks**, to find out:

- what students have achieved
- what happens when they ask for an improvement
- how students learn about changes to their programme
- how students are made aware of the expectations of the course.

Your institution should help you communicate with other students and give you access to meeting minutes and survey data, so don't be afraid of asking for help. You need to give yourself enough time to read the documentation, and give students enough time to fill in a survey or arrange to attend a focus group, so plan ahead. The more students get involved with the review and the more sources you use at this stage, the more accurate your information will be.

When dealing with distances between partner colleges and the lead institution, you need to make sure you can access these students. Using online feedback and polls is one way of overcoming the problem. If you need them for a meeting, your institution may be able to help with travel or organising conference phone calls/video calls.

Your student submission needs to summarise what you've found out from your enquiries. It doesn't have to be a particular length or in a particular style, but it may be easier to separate different aspects of the student experience. Don't be worried if students give different opinions on the same topic - you can give specific examples or point to something that is working well in one course and not so well in another.

You can give examples of what is available from your institution as part of the student experience, for example a personal tutor scheme, peer support or mentoring in the workplace, and analyse how useful it is.

You should finish the student submission with enough time to show it to the students who took part in your survey or focus group - and the wider student body - for them to comment on it. If you have a student committee then you may wish to show it to them and ask for their approval. The student body should feel that the submission accurately reflects their student experience and learning opportunities. Allowing them to see the culmination of the work will also show them what they have helped to create.

The review team wants an accurate reflection of what it is like to be a student at your institution, and they want to hear about anything that you have found out from your research that you think is important. The review team will rely on the information you give them, so make sure that your submission can be backed up by student views, and give any relevant statistics from your survey. None of the information that the review team gets from the student submission and meetings with students will be attributed to individuals, and it will all be kept confidential, so it is important that all students are open and honest.

During the review

The review team will want to meet you - along with other students - to ask you about the student experience, and they may have specific questions about the student submission.

After the review

Your institution should share the results of the review team's report with you. They will need to produce an action plan in response to the report, and will probably want you to help them in creating and giving feedback on the action plan.

Once the review is completed, you should tell the student body the outcome of the report and thank students that were involved in the process. This will also help students to understand how important their input was and to feel involved in the review.

Appendix 1: How to write your student submission

Your student submission will depend on the number of students studying for Foundation Degrees at your institution. Remember - there are a number of ways of producing the student submission, all of them valid, but there are still some basics you need to cover regardless of your institution's size. The information provided in this guide will help you to understand how detailed your submission needs to be. If you have any questions, then ask either your institution or your QAA review support officer. You should consider the following factors when writing your student submission.

Format

Traditionally student submissions have mostly been written documents (word count will vary depending on the size of the institution, but it should be no more than 6,000 words) detailing student perceptions under the headings suggested on pages 18-20. Written submissions are generally the most informative for the review team, but you may produce a shorter written submission supplemented by a variety of other forms, for example video, interviews, focus group presentations or podcasts - it's up to you!

The student submission **must** include information on:

- how it has been compiled
- the author
- whether the contents have been shared with and endorsed by the student body
- which students' views the document represents
- student groups who you may not have been able to include in the submission (for example, if you haven't been able to reach students at a particular college, despite your best efforts)
- the data that has been used to write the submission, whether it is your own or from other sources.

The student submission **must not**:

- name or discuss the competence of individual members of staff (positive or negative)
- discuss personal grievances
- include specific comments from individual students who may not be well placed to speak as representatives of a wider group.

Sources for the student submission

Good submissions will take into account different sources when drawing conclusions. Depending on the size of your institution, you will need to use a different number of sources for the student submission.

It may be simpler for you to use **existing information** rather than conducting your own surveys specially for the student submission. Why? In the pre-existing surveys all the data analysis has been done for you, and the students have already completed the survey. A description of your understanding of the existing data will be more useful to the review team than a collection of new data.

Here are some ideas of information you could use:

Data	Data type	Use
Focus groups	Qualitative (detail)	In-depth data about your choice of topics
Your survey	Quantitative (statistics)	Statistics you have gathered about topics of your choice
Committee meeting minutes	Qualitative (detail)	Understanding your institution's processes and how they listen to the student voice
Surveys run by your institution	Quantitative (statistics)	Individual to your institution, these surveys may pick up on areas under improvement
Course representatives	Qualitative (detail)	Talking to or gathering the opinion of representatives allows you to easily get the opinion of a wider group of students
Free text survey comments	Qualitative (detail)	Analysing the free text comments of surveys can give you additional insight into statistics

Table 4: possible information sources for the student submission

You can get further support from either QAA or the National Union of Students (NUS) on how to research your student submission.

Student submission deadline

QAA will confirm the deadline for submitting the student submission to the secure electronic folder 16 weeks before your review visit.

Confidentiality

QAA expects you to share your student submission with the institution, and the institution to share its self-evaluation document with you and the student body. This openness is desirable because it enables the review team to discuss both documents with the institution and students during the review and to check the accuracy of their contents, and it encourages an open and transparent approach.

If you wish, you can request that your submission remains confidential and is not shared with your institution. **If the contents of the student submission are not to be shared with the institution, this must be stated clearly on the front of the document.** 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 institution's staff.

Submission headings

While the submission headings you choose are up to you, and may depend on what you have found out, it is helpful if you follow these general headings, which take account of the headings in the self-evaluation document and allow the review team to understand the student experience from the institution's and the student body's point of view.

You do not have to respond to every question within each section - they are there as guidelines, and not all questions will be relevant to your institution. You are encouraged to work with your institution to ensure you have access to existing data and materials.

Section 1: Introduction to the student representative body

This section should outline what type of representation exists within your institution, whether there is a central students' union or student representative body, and whether each programme has its own representation. The information should include the relationship between student representation and the institution. It should also include your role, the methodology you used in researching the student submission and how it was put together. You should give details about whether the submission has been approved by the student body, and about any student groups within the Foundation Degree programme that have not been captured in the submission.

Finally, a statement should be made as to whether you are willing for the student submission to be shared with the institution.

Section 2: How effectively has the institution addressed the recommendations of its last audits/reviews? (if applicable)

- Ask the institution if they have any reports or action plans from previous audits or reviews.
- Ask questions to see if your institution has taken steps to make changes.

Section 3: Design and development of programmes

- Are students able to help change the content of the Foundation Degree or how staff deliver classes?
- Are students' opinions on the course collected by the staff, either through surveys or focus groups, at the end of the year or at the end of modules? What happens with this information? Does change happen as a result of student opinion?
- Do students have any input into how they learn or what type of assessments they have?
- What input is there from employers?

Section 4: Academic standards

- What do students have to do in order to achieve their qualification?
- Are there certain skills that students have to achieve, for example research or analytical skills?
- How do students know how to complete their coursework and what mark they are able to achieve? Are they given marking criteria, and if so, how?

Section 5: Quality of learning opportunities

- What facilities do students have access to in order to complete their studies? Are there IT facilities, is there a library, what is the quality of teaching, and can students access information online about their modules?
- What do students think of their opportunities?
- What support do students get if they are returning to study after a break? Is this enough?
- Does your institution ask students their opinion on the learning opportunities? What has changed as a result? How do you find out about the changes?
- What are the arrangements for mentoring students in the workplace? What is the training you receive like? Do you receive all the materials necessary?

Section 6: Enhancement

- What plans does your institution have for improving the student experience?
- How do students get opportunities to input their opinion? Do students consider that the institution listens to them?

- How do students find out about changes in the institution?
- How well are the academic and work-based elements of the programme integrated?

Section 7: Information about higher education provision

- What information does your institution make public about its Foundation Degrees?
- Is the information in the student handbooks and on the website accurate?

Further support

You can contact your QAA review support officer, or find more information on our website at www.qaa.ac.uk/institutionreports/types-of-review/pages/foundation-degrees-Wales.aspx.

Appendix 2: Top tips for getting students involved

- **Plan ahead** - give yourself plenty of time to get student opinions.
- **Try speaking to students after their classes or in the library** if you're struggling to get student opinions via electronic methods - make it easy for them to give you feedback.
- **Keep students updated with what you're doing** - they'll feel like there is more of a purpose in getting involved.
- **Ask your institution for help** - your institution wants your report to be as accurate as possible, so they will be happy to give you all the information they can to help you write the student submission.

Appendix 3: Frequently asked questions

The majority of students studying for Foundation Degrees are part-time - how do I get them involved?

If students have a lot of other responsibilities, it may be difficult to involve them. You need to find part of the experience that interests them and give them lots of different ways to get involved, either through online surveys or by talking to you straight after their lectures. Make it as easy as possible for them!

My institution doesn't have a students' union - does that matter?

Of course not! Your institution needs to make sure that students' views are represented; this can be done through a students' union, but student views can also be captured using a student representation system or a student committee.

What do I get in return for being LSR?

The position of LSR is fantastic for your CV. You are representing students in a formal situation and creating a report that summarises the entire student experience at your institution: in communicating with senior management, liaising with QAA staff, surveying students and reporting to the review team you have shown that you have the skills to manage challenging situations when you have different views from others, and to critically analyse large amounts of information into comprehensible reports for colleagues.

I've read all the guidance and I've still got some questions - is there someone I can speak to?

Of course there is - you can contact your QAA review support officer, or you can speak to someone in your institution.

Appendix 4: Glossary

Assessment policies - the mechanisms used to mark students' work, including the marking criteria and feedback.

Enhancement - taking deliberate steps at institution level to improve the quality of learning opportunities. This definition means that enhancement is more than a collection of examples of good practice: it is about an institution being aware that it has a responsibility to improve the quality of learning opportunities, and having policies, structures and processes to make sure that it can detect where improvement is necessary - and where a need to improve is detected, that something will be done about it.

Good practice - process or way of working that, in the view of the QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to the focus areas of the review.

HEFCW - the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales promotes and funds teaching and research in universities and colleges in Wales. It distributes public money from the government.

Higher education - a diverse range of courses and qualifications, such as bachelor's degrees, Higher National Diplomas and Foundation Degrees. Many courses take place in universities, but plenty are also taught in higher education colleges, specialist art institutions and agricultural colleges.

Review of Foundation Degrees in Wales - a process of peer review of lead institutions. The purpose is to assure the public, including current and prospective students, of the robustness of the institution's management of the quality and standards of Foundation Degrees, its commitment to enhancement, and the completeness of its public information.

Lead institution/awarding body - there may be several different institutions or employers involved in providing a Foundation Degree; one of them will be the lead institution (which has degree-awarding powers) or an awarding body, depending on the type of degree.

Lead student representative (LSR) – the lead contact on behalf of the student body during the review process. The LSR normally coordinates the student submission and facilitates student engagement with the review.

Learning opportunities - everything provided to enable a student to achieve what is required to qualify for an award. This includes teaching and learning resources, as well as students' own learning and staff support. We call this 'learning opportunities' rather than 'the learning experience' because institutions can guarantee that all students have opportunities, but they can't guarantee how each student will choose to experience their learning.

Learning resources - a term that covers all the facilities students are able to access outside of the classroom, including IT, libraries and student support.

Partnerships/consortia - the institutions and employers who are involved in providing the Foundation Degree.

Peer review - institutions are reviewed by staff (and a student reviewer) from other institutions, rather than staff from QAA or inspectors, ensuring consistency and a thorough understanding of the current challenges from an institutional perspective.

Programme trails - specific programmes that are identified by the review team and thoroughly considered, as examples of how the lead institution manages Foundation Degrees.

Quality - how well the learning opportunities available to students are managed to help them achieve their award. This is about making sure that appropriate and effective teaching, support, assessment and learning opportunities are provided for students.

Quality assurance - ensuring that university and college courses are of a certain calibre.

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) - an organisation that is independent of both government and universities/colleges. We report on quality assurance by visiting universities and colleges to review how well they are fulfilling their responsibilities. We also offer guidance on maintaining and improving standards and quality and on developing course delivery.

Self-evaluation document - a document prepared by the institution to a given template, used as the starting point for review teams' investigations. It provides the institution's perspective on its management of quality and standards, provision of learning opportunities and public information.

Standards - the level of achievement that a student has to reach to gain a qualification. Qualifications at the same level (for example, Foundation Degrees) should require the same level of achievement by all students across the UK.

Student submission - a document prepared on behalf of the student body, usually overseen by the LSR. We would advise you to use the headings given in Annex 1 as a starting point, to ensure all relevant points are covered. The student submission gives the students' perspective on the institution's management of quality and standards, provision of learning opportunities and public information.

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