

Educational Oversight: QAA Update for Facilitators February 2014

1 Annual returns for 2014

For some providers, 2014 will be the first year they submit an annual return to QAA, but for many, it is the second year. We should like to clarify what is expected for each provider.

The first year following a full review

Providers should provide a detailed evaluation of how they have implemented the action plan in the published review report, and provide documentary evidence that demonstrates the impact of those actions. The provider should also provide an update on how it is engaging with the UK Quality Code of Higher Education (Quality Code) and engaging students in its quality assurance and enhancement activities. These updates are intended to help the Provider to develop a further understanding of and meet the UK expectations for higher education, as defined in the chapters of the Quality Code, as subsequent reviews will look directly at how providers meet these expectations.

For the second and subsequent years after a full review

Providers should account for any actions that remained outstanding at the end of the previous year, and provide evidence that they have been completed and evaluated. In addition, providers should provide a new action plan, which arises from their own quality assurance processes, identifying their own areas for improvement and what action they intend to take as a result. Ongoing quality monitoring and action planning are important aspects of maintaining effective management of standards and quality within the college. Therefore, it is expected that providers will routinely monitor and evaluate their provision; identify and share good practice; identify areas for improvement; and produce an action plan in response.

Providers who received a 'commendable' outcome in one monitoring visit must still submit a [full annual return](#) the following year, but may not receive a further monitoring visit that year providing there have been no significant changes and that they can demonstrate that they are continuing to maintain academic standards, and enhance the quality of learning opportunities and information about higher education provision.

Alerting QAA to significant material changes of circumstance

[The Home Officer Tier 4 sponsor guidance](#) (paragraphs 82-83 in the December 2013 guidance) notes that providers must report any material change of circumstances to their educational oversight body. Changes must be reported to QAA within 28 days of the change taking place. When you report a material change of circumstances, QAA will determine whether you should undergo additional assessment, such as an early full review, or an extended monitoring visit. If you fail to report a material change in circumstances within 28 days, your CAS allocation will be set to zero pending the outcome.

Conversion from a monitoring visit to a full review

Should a provider meet any of the triggers identified in paragraphs 94-95 of the [Review for Educational Oversight \(and for specific course designation\): Handbook, April 2013](#) (the REO handbook), and thus require a full review instead of a monitoring visit, the provider is expected to produce a full self-evaluation in preparation for that full review, following the guidance for self-evaluations set out in the [relevant method handbook](#).

2 The UK Quality Code for Higher Education

[The Quality Code](#) has now been published in full, and all newly-revised chapters will come into force from August 2014. Providers are expected to demonstrate in their annual returns that they are making progress towards meeting any expectations that are not currently met, and that they are using the Quality Code to enhance their management of higher education. In full reviews, providers will be expected to demonstrate that they are meeting all relevant expectations.

3 Transition to the Higher Education Review Plus review method

QAA is introducing a common review framework for all subscribers in England and Northern Ireland, as well as providers with access to funding from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) who are not subscribers to QAA, and for providers registered with QAA for educational oversight. The review method is Higher Education Review (HER). In England the introduction of the common review framework is in line with the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills' (BIS) aim to move towards a level playing field in higher education.

HER is a flexible, risk-based method, developed in response to the higher education White Paper [Students at the Heart of the System](#) (published by BIS in June 2011), and to the subsequent work on the broad principles of a risk-based system undertaken by HEFCE.

Independent providers (except embedded college providers, and study abroad and foreign providers) registered with QAA for educational oversight will undergo HER (Plus) as set out in [Higher Education Review \(Plus\): A handbook for providers](#). The Plus element is detailed in the [further guidance](#) about the checks on financial sustainability, and management and governance.

There will be a gradual transition to HER (Plus) for providers registered with QAA for educational oversight. New applicants for educational oversight in 2013, and in subsequent years, will undergo HER (Plus).¹ All providers needing a full review for educational oversight in 2014, including those transferring from the Independent Schools Inspectorate and other designated bodies, will undergo a Review for Educational Oversight as set out in [the REO handbook](#). From January 2015 all providers needing a full review will move to HER (Plus).

¹ The review methods for the Recognition Scheme for educational oversight (RSEO) and Embedded College review for Educational Oversight (ECREO) will be adapted to align with the common review framework, and revised methods will come into force from 2015 onwards.

4 QAA contacts

If you have any queries about educational oversight reviews, monitoring visits or the annual return, please contact edoversight@qaa.ac.uk or telephone 01452 557098.

Information, handbooks and frequently asked questions can all be found on the QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/educational-oversight.

Guidance and training materials can be found here:
www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/tier-4/Pages/guidance.aspx.

QAA616 - Feb 14

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2014
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB

Tel: 01452 557 000
Email: enquiries@qaa.ac.uk
Website: www.qaa.ac.uk

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786