



## **Guidance note for applicants for Review for Specific Course Designation by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)**

This guidance note provides guidance on the application process for review. If, after reading this document, you require further advice, please check the frequently asked questions about the application process at [www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/designated-providers/Pages/faqs.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/designated-providers/Pages/faqs.aspx).

For ease of reference, this section will refer to such providers as 'designated course providers'.

Applicants for review by QAA should see this as the start of a long-term relationship. Initially this involves a full QAA review and an annual return in subsequent years.

Designated course providers that satisfy the 'requirements of providers seeking review' set out in the [application form](#) will undergo a review by QAA during the Academic year 2014-15. This review method is set out in the *Review for Educational Oversight (and for specific course designation): Handbook*, available at [www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/designated-providers/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/designated-providers/Pages/default.aspx)

A successful application at this stage does not guarantee that a provider will ultimately be successful in their review.

**The *Review for Educational Oversight (and specific course designation): Handbook* contains full information about the review process, including details for providers who are inspected by other bodies.**

**The application form must be submitted to QAA electronically with supporting documents by midday on Wednesday 30 April 2014.**

## The application process

QAA will use the application form to:

- determine the eligibility of an applicant for review by QAA
- enable QAA to accept applicants for review and develop a schedule of review activity.

Your summary of how you use external reference points including the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) will be scrutinised against supporting documentation to assess your initial suitability for a Review for Specific Course Designation.

A successful application at this stage does not guarantee that a provider will ultimately be successful.

### How to complete the application form

The application form should be completed in black type and in accordance with this guidance note. It must be submitted electronically.

The submission of this form, together with the application fee and accompanying documentation, is the first stage in the process. It is essential that all information provided in the application form is accurate and complete, otherwise your application will be returned and you may not be eligible for review.

The application deadline for review is midday on **Wednesday 30 April 2014**. Please note that this activity is exempt from VAT and therefore no VAT is chargeable.

There are four parts to the application form:

- Part 1: Information about the provider
- Part 2: Student headcount and higher education programme details
- Part 3: Evaluation of quality assurance arrangements
- Part 4: Supporting information

## Part 1: Information about the provider

All applicants for review must be registered at Companies House or be a registered charity.

<b>Provider's name</b>	This is the published name on the provider's website.
<b>Contact name</b>	The name of the individual who is the primary point of contact for review.
<b>Job title of contact</b>	Full job title.
<b>Email address of contact</b>	Email address of primary review contact.
<b>Telephone numbers of contact</b>	Direct landline and mobile number of primary review contact.
<b>Name and job title of head of provider</b>	Full name and complete job title of Principal.
<b>Provider's name/legal title</b>	Registered company name and/or legal title.
<b>All names by which the provider has been known over the last three years</b>	
<b>Provider's legal identity</b>	Company, partnership, sole trader, and so on.
<b>Registered company/charity address and registration number (if applicable)</b>	Address recorded at Companies House and/or the Charity Commission.
<b>Operating address(es)</b>	UK addresses of all relevant campuses, sites or offices that form a part of the provider. Please identify the main campus address.
<b>First year of operation</b>	First year: any type of student-attended lessons.
<b>Start date of first higher education programme delivered in the UK</b>	The date when teaching for higher education students first started. Providers must normally have taught higher education students for at least one year before applying for review by QAA.
<b>Provider's website address</b>	
<b>Registered charity number (if applicable)</b>	If you are a registered charity please include your charity number.
<b>Have you recently been reviewed/inspected for purposes of educational oversight by another body? If so, please specify body and date, and link to published report</b>	If you have been reviewed or inspected recently by a body for the purposes of educational oversight please include the name of the body and a link to the published report.

## **Part 2: Student headcount and higher education programme details**

### **Programmes and qualifications**

Please provide information about all the programmes and types of qualification you offer, detailing their corresponding level in *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and relevant subject benchmark statements; the awarding body/organisation; and the number of students enrolled on the programme in 2013-14. You may wish to refer to any external reference points, including the Quality Code and relevant subject benchmark statements.

### **Awarding bodies and awarding organisations**

Providers seeking course designation for student support must offer programmes that are validated by a higher education partner. However, please list all awarding bodies and awarding organisations that validate your awards. For each awarding body or organisation, please provide name, email address and phone number for both the principal contact and the provider's local contact at the awarding body or organisation.

## **Part 3: Evaluation of your quality assurance arrangements**

We require applicants to submit a short evaluation of their quality assurance arrangements (no more than 1,000 words) with their application form, and supporting evidence.

The evaluation should show how the provider uses relevant external reference points, including the Quality Code, to assure itself that its higher education provision meets the expectations of the sector in the UK and that its programmes are managed effectively - see, for example, the [Quality Code](#). The evaluation and evidence will be key parts in the initial assessment made by QAA to decide on eligibility for review. This statement will be used for the application process, not for the review itself.

## Part 4: Supporting information

In this section, please provide evidence to support the statements made in Part 3. This should be submitted electronically to [RSCDappl@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:RSCDappl@qaa.ac.uk). Please indicate in the check box that you have included each document. If you are unable to include a document, please explain why.

### Notes

<b>Copy of your Strategic Plan</b>	This is not required, but should be supplied if it is in existence.
<b>Details of your constitution, governance and accreditation arrangements</b>	
<b>If relevant, your most recent accreditation report</b>	For example British Accreditation Council (BAC), Accreditation Service for International Colleges (ASIC). Please note that accreditation by BAC or ASIC is not a requirement for a QAA review.
<b>Evidence that you have been delivering higher education programmes in the UK for at least one academic year</b>	You must provide evidence that you have delivered higher education programmes for at least one academic year.  Evidence might take the form of student registrations with the awarding body/organisation, external examiner reports, annual monitoring reports, attendance records, and so on, which show that you have been delivering higher education programmes for at least one academic year.
<b>Quality assurance procedures/manual (or equivalent)</b>	This does not need to be a single document. It could include (but is not limited to) documents such as policies and procedures for programme design and approval, admissions, annual monitoring, assessment and marking, learning and teaching, external examining, complaints and appeals, academic offences (including plagiarism), and public information.
<b>Signed copies of agreement(s) with awarding body(ies)</b>	Please ensure these are signed copies. You must provide current signed agreements.
<b>Sample of programme annual monitoring reports for 2011-12 and 2012-13 if available (or equivalent)</b>	See the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, <a href="#">Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review</a> .
<b>Programme approval report (or equivalent)</b>	See the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, <a href="#">Chapter B1: Programme design, development and approval</a> .
<b>Student attendance dates during 2014-15</b>	Please inform us of the dates when students will be present at the provider.

	The review team will need to meet a small group of current students.
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## **Fees for reviews for specific course designation**

QAA does not receive any funding to cover the direct costs incurred in reviews for specific course designation. Consequently, the costs of such activity must be borne by applicant organisations. QAA is a non-profit-making organisation.

Fees for reviews for specific course designation are payable in three stages and are non-refundable:

Stage 1: Application fee

Stage 2: Review fee

Stage 3: Annual maintenance fee.

Should a monitoring visit be required, there will be an additional fee.

Should a second visit or a re-review or a Concerns investigation be required, there will be an additional fee.

Fees will be subject to change and will be published on the QAA website.

**Please note that this activity is exempt from VAT and therefore no VAT is chargeable.**

Listed Bodies may opt to become voluntary subscribers to QAA. Details of voluntary subscription can be found at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/subscribing-institutions/pages/default.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/subscribing-institutions/pages/default.aspx).

Listed Bodies are defined as organisations offering a complete degree programme leading to a degree of a Recognised Body. Organisations which offer part of a degree course, 'top-ups' or contributions to a degree programme are not included and would need to apply for a review.

For more information on Listed Bodies and Recognised Bodies, see the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) website: [www.gov.uk/recognised-uk-degrees](http://www.gov.uk/recognised-uk-degrees).

### **Application fee**

The application fee for review includes receipt and processing of an application by QAA. You will receive confirmation as to whether you are eligible for review. Other relevant partner organisations will be notified of the status of your application.

**In the event of an unsuccessful outcome, the application fee is non-refundable.**

### **Review fee**

Designated course providers will be notified of their eligibility for review as soon as possible and normally within four weeks of the deadline date for applications. Successful applicants will be notified of the date of their review at the same time and will be advised of the review fee also. The review fee will be payable in full 12 weeks before the date of review.

The review fee will include a QAA briefing for designated course providers. This will include content on the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and self-evaluation.

**In the event of an unsuccessful outcome, the review fee is non-refundable.**

### **Annual maintenance fee**

Providers seeking a Review for Specific Course Designation are required to pay an annual maintenance fee. QAA reserves the right to visit the provider if circumstances require it, at the provider's cost.

### **How to pay the application fee**

A copy of the application fee must be received with the application form and supporting documentation.

#### **By BACS or bank transfer**

Our bank account details for payment are:

Account name: The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Sort code: 08-90-41

Account no: 65144105

IBAN: GB64 CPBK 0890 4165 144105

**Please ensure that your organisation name is included in the payment reference.**

Please note that this activity is exempt from VAT and therefore no VAT is chargeable.

### **How QAA will process your application**

- 1 QAA will acknowledge the receipt of all applications.
- 2 After the closing date for applications, QAA will notify relevant partner organisations whether providers are eligible to proceed to a review.
- 3 As soon as possible following the close of applications, QAA will advise applicants of the status of their application and the next steps.
- 4 QAA will advise relevant partner organisations and relevant awarding bodies/ organisations of the outcomes of reviews and will publish all reports on our website.

### **Further important information**

#### **Conflicts of interest**

We require those individuals we propose to appoint to a review team to notify us of any connection or interest which might conflict with the work to be undertaken. Since much of QAA's activity is based on peer review, with an expectation that individuals who have worked or are working in the higher education sector will contribute to the maintenance of the reputation and standing of UK higher education, QAA does not consider that an individual working in a similar type of provider would, of itself, preclude that individual from serving as a member of a review team.

## Complaints

QAA is committed to working in an open and accountable way, subject to any limitations placed upon it by external bodies. A complaint is taken to mean an expression of dissatisfaction with actions we have taken. Further information about the complaints procedure can be found at [www.qaa.ac.uk/complaints/pages/default.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/complaints/pages/default.aspx).

## Confidentiality

QAA staff and individuals appointed to conduct work on our behalf are required to manage with care all documentation, papers, records, communications and other materials. Various policies demonstrate our concern for confidentiality, most notably those relating to electronic communications and data protection:

- [www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/corporate/policies/documents/ecomms\\_policy.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/corporate/policies/documents/ecomms_policy.pdf)
- [www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/corporate/policies/documents/data\\_protection.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/corporate/policies/documents/data_protection.pdf).

Individuals contracted by QAA may not at any time during, or for a period of five years after the termination of, a contract:

- divulge or communicate confidential information by any means whatsoever to any person, institution, body, company, business entity, media, or any other organisation
- use confidential information for their own purposes or for any purpose other than those of QAA
- through any failure to exercise due care and diligence, cause any unauthorised disclosure of any confidential information.

These obligations of confidentiality do not extend to information which:

- is in the public domain other than by reason of any act of omission on the part of a QAA member of staff or contractor
- was already known to the contractor prior to disclosure by the QAA
- the contractor is required to disclose by law or by a requirement of a regulatory body.

QAA's Information Publication Scheme sets out how we manage information. Our policy on the disclosure of records can be found on the QAA website.

QAA may disclose such information concerning your provider to another body or person as it considers appropriate to assist with the discharge of QAA's functions to safeguard quality and academic standards in UK higher education or to assist with another body or person's own accreditation, regulatory or public functions, including, but not limited to: the Independent Schools Inspectorate; Bridge School Inspectorate; the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills; the Charity Commission; the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator; and any relevant bodies. QAA appreciates the need for discretion in managing applications for quality assurance, given commercial and other sensitivities involved. Providers should be aware, however, that there is considerable public interest in review by QAA. Consequently, you should be aware that, in applying for quality assurance by QAA, you are taking yourself out of the entirely private arena and into the public domain.



## **Offers of inducements or bribery**

QAA recognises that there is significant commercial and reputational value attached to the granting of quality assurance. QAA staff, assessors, contractors, reviewers, trustees and committee members are not allowed to accept inducements such as hospitality (other than that provided as part of a detailed scrutiny), gifts, contracts, awards, shares or payment from any organisation which is subject or has been subject to an application for review. They are not allowed to trade in stocks and shares of applicant organisations nor divulge information which would advantage others who may do so.

Should applicant organisations offer inducements or attempt to bribe staff, assessors, trustees or committee members, then the application will be suspended pending investigation by the appropriate authorities (for example the police, Serious Fraud Office, Financial Services Authority, and so on).