Degree Awarding Powers

Handbook for Applicants in England

September 2016

Contents

Introduction

The right to award UK degrees is a highly prized and legally protected privilege. This handbook outlines the processes for applying for degree awarding powers in England and explains the role played by QAA.

QAA's mission is to safeguard standards and improve the quality of higher education, and the scrutiny of applications for degree awarding powers is one of our most important responsibilities. In undertaking this work, we are mindful of the need to uphold the worldwide reputation of UK higher education and the good standing of UK higher education qualifications.

This handbook has been designed to make the processes involved as clear as possible. Please note that, throughout, 'we' refers to QAA (including the Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers and the QAA Board) and 'you' refers to the provider applying for degree awarding powers.

The handbook covers:

- foundation degree awarding powers (FDAP)
- taught degree awarding powers (TDAP)
- research degree awarding powers (RDAP).

A general outline of what these powers signify, who is suitable to apply for them, and how the application process works, is given in our guide, *The Right to Award UK Degrees* (2014).[1]

Legislative context

The status of all English universities and degree-awarding bodies is recognised and protected by UK law. The term 'degree' is similarly protected. In order to be able to award a recognised degree in England, a higher education provider must be authorised to do so by virtue of a Royal Charter, by Act of Parliament, or by the Privy Council. Older (pre-1992) universities operate under Royal Charters, some of which go back many centuries.

In 1992 Section 76 of the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992*[2] (FHEA 1992) empowered the Privy Council to specify institutions as competent to grant awards: in other words, to award their own taught and research degrees.

Subsequent legislation enabled further education institutions to be granted the right to award foundation degrees. Section 19 of the *Further Education and Training Act 2007*[3] amends Section 76 of the FHEA 1992 to enable the Privy Council to make Orders specifying institutions in England within the further education sector (namely those bodies incorporated under Section 15 or 16 of the FHEA 1992 or designated under Section 28 of the Act) as competent to grant foundation degrees.

To understand what these powers mean in practice see Table 1.

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[1] www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2871
[2] www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/13/section/76
[3] www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/25/section/19

Table 1: UK degrees and the powers to award them

Type of degree	Level in UK frameworks for higher education qualifications		Level in European qualifications framework	Powers necessary
	England, Wales and Northern Ireland	Scotland		
Doctoral degree (or doctorate)	Level 8	Level 12	End of third cycle	Research degree awarding powers (RDAP)
Research master's degree	Level 7	Level 11	End of second cycle	
Taught master's degree				Taught degree awarding powers (TDAP)
Bachelor's degree with honours	Level 6	Level 10	End of first cycle	
Ordinary bachelor's degree		Level 9		
Foundation degree	Level 5		Short cycle	Foundation degree awarding powers (FDAP)

Guidance and criteria

Applications must be in accordance with the Guidance published by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (see Annex 1: Government Guidance and criteria). The Guidance states the prerequisites for an application and specifies the information and evidence that must be provided. It contains, and explains, the criteria to be satisfied, and the further evidence that will be required.

Foundation degree awarding powers (FDAP)

Applications for the grant of FDAP are considered in accordance with the *Guidance for Higher Education Providers: Criteria and Process for Applying for Foundation Degree Awarding Powers* (October 2015).

The criteria for FDAP focus on:

- governance and academic management
- academic standards and quality assurance
- scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of staff
- the environment supporting the delivery of foundation degree programmes.

An FDAP scrutiny includes visits to work-based learning sites to understand how the provider manages the standards and quality of off-site foundation degree provision.

Taught degree awarding powers (TDAP)

Applications for the grant of TDAP are considered in accordance with the *Guidance for Higher Education Providers: Criteria and Process for Applying for Taught Degree Awarding Powers and Research Degree Awarding Powers* (September 2015).

The criteria focus on:

- governance and academic management
- academic standards and quality assurance
- scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of staff
- the environment supporting the delivery of taught higher education programmes.

A TDAP scrutiny may also include visits to work-based learning sites, where such activity is significant.

We have published guidance on the TDAP process specifically for further education colleges previously granted FDAP (see Annex 1).

Research degree awarding powers (RDAP)

Applications for the grant of RDAP are considered in accordance with the *Guidance for Higher Education Providers: Criteria and Process for Applying for Taught Degree Awarding Powers and Research Degree Awarding Powers* (September 2015).

Applicants seeking RDAP following the successful grant of TDAP are expected to provide evidence that they continue to satisfy the criteria governing the grant of TDAP, and that they are exercising appropriate stewardship of those powers.

The additional criteria for RDAP focus on:

- staff capacity and expertise to supervise and teach at doctoral level
- satisfaction of relevant Guidance relating to the award of research degrees
- the number of doctoral degree conferments received by their students through existing validation arrangement(s) (30 as a minimum).

QAA's role

QAA advises the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) on degree awarding powers applications. This work is the responsibility of the **Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers (ACDAP)**, an expert committee of the QAA Board[4] which considers each application passed to QAA by HEFCE and decides whether a case has been made to proceed.

If the application does proceed, ACDAP:

- agrees that a team be appointed to conduct a detailed scrutiny of the evidence submitted by the applicant
- gives close and careful consideration to the scrutiny team's reports, together with the application and supporting evidence, and forms a judgement on them
- makes a recommendation to the QAA Board as to whether the applicant meets the relevant criteria for the powers it seeks.

Having received ACDAP's recommendation, the QAA Board then determines the nature of the advice to be given to HEFCE. Further information is available on our website[5] and in Annex 1.

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[4] www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/daput/ac-dap
[5] www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/daput; www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/daput/ac-dap; www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/daput/further-information.

Process chart showing main stages

Letter of application sent to HEFCE, which refers application to QAA

Applicant uploads critical self-analysis (CSA) and evidence to QAA SharePoint site

Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers (ACDAP) considers application

QAA scrutiny team appointed Applicant informed	**or**	**Application unsuccessful** Applicant informed

Preliminary meeting with QAA Coordinating Officer at applicant organisation

QAA scrutiny team studies CSA and evidence, and meets to discuss requirements

Applicant informed of initial schedule and asked for any further documentation

Visit to applicant by QAA scrutiny team to test evidence (one to two days)

Further visits as required (agreed with applicant in advance)

QAA scrutiny team considers findings; may arrange further visit

Applicant receives draft report for factual check and
amended report for comments

Final report and applicant's comments submitted to ACDAP

Further visits by ACDAP appointees if needed

ACDAP considers report and applicant's comments

ACDAP makes recommendation to QAA Board

ACDAP satisfied that **criteria are met** and makes positive recommendation	**or**	ACDAP decides that **criteria are not met** and makes negative recommendation

QAA Board gives confidential advice to HEFCE

Advice passed to Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and Privy Council

Privy Council makes decision

Application successful Privy Council informs applicant that degree awarding powers have been granted	**or**	**Application unsuccessful** BIS informs applicant that degree awarding powers have not been granted

Your application

As a prospective applicant you are advised to approach HEFCE at an early stage to ensure that you meet the pre-application criteria relevant to the powers you seek. You are also advised to approach QAA for informal discussions, and before you make a formal application, to ensure that you have a clear understanding of:

- the relevant Guidance and the evidence requirements
- the importance of a robust evidence base to inform and support your application
- the scrutiny process
- the obligations placed on a body holding UK degree awarding powers.

These initial discussions with HEFCE and QAA should help you to make an informed decision about the likely timing of any future application, should you decide to proceed. Before submitting an application, you should consider carefully what internal resources will be needed during the preparation and subsequent consideration of your application.

Although it is not a requirement, it may be helpful to establish an external advisory group to provide advice and guidance on organisational development, both as part of the application process and subsequent to it. In this context, you should bear in mind the important contribution that can be made by representatives from your degree-awarding partners or other external bodies. You should also be aware that, in the interests of obtaining a full and frank appraisal of your capacity to discharge the significant responsibilities associated with the powers you seek, QAA will contact the head of the degree-awarding body or bodies with whom you are in partnership for comment on the nature and efficacy of the collaborative relationship that has been established with you.

Documentary requirements

Critical self-analysis

The Guidance refers to the need for an applicant to demonstrate 'a self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to quality assurance supported by effective quality and enhancement systems'.[6] Consequently, in making an application, the onus is on you to demonstrate this in the form of a **critical self-analysis** (CSA).

It is for you to determine how you wish to structure your CSA, but you should bear in mind the need to make close reference to the government Guidance (see Annex 1), and to provide evidence to support your case. The CSA should describe, analyse and comment clearly and frankly on your ability to meet the criteria associated with the powers you seek. It should include clear references to the evidence that supports your claims. The evidence should be listed in your application.

An effective CSA is likely to be approximately 60 pages in length, although there is no penalty for longer or shorter submissions.

The CSA, and the evidence on which it is based, should be uploaded to the QAA SharePoint folder allocated to your application, and you are also asked to submit 20 printed copies of it. In addition, you will need to complete the relevant templates for the powers you are seeking, as detailed in the following subsection.

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[6] TDAP/RDAP Guidance, page 7, paragraph 2; FDAP Guidance, Annex A (see Annex 1).

Templates

Your application must be submitted using the relevant completed templates, which can be found on our [website](#).[7] Please upload the completed templates with your CSA into the SharePoint folder allocated to you.

The templates to be completed for foundation degree awarding powers (FDAP) are:

- evidence mapping template (indicating where in the CSA and in the uploaded evidence you address the criteria and evidence requirements)
- staffing template
- applicant profile.

The templates to be completed for taught degree awarding powers (TDAP) are:

- evidence mapping template (indicating where in the CSA and in the uploaded evidence you address the criteria and evidence requirements)
- staffing template
- applicant profile.

The templates to be completed for research degree awarding powers (RDAP) are:

- evidence mapping template (indicating where in the CSA and in the uploaded evidence you address the criteria and evidence requirements)
- data tables.

If you have any queries about the templates please [contact us](#).

To help us plan observation visits by the scrutiny team (see page 9) you should upload a copy of your academic calendar, setting out the dates and times of board and committee meetings, including governing body and subcommittee meetings, and key academic decision-making meetings. If the calendar does not cover other major activities (for example, validation and review events, away days and assessment boards) please provide details of these too.

Submitting your application

At least five weeks before the ACDAP meeting at which you expect your application to be considered (see QAA website for ACDAP meeting dates[8]), you should submit the following to HEFCE (gateways@hefce.ac.uk):

- letter of application from the Chair of your Governing Body
- a description of your corporate structure and UK Provider Reference Number.

A summary of what is required can be found on the HEFCE website.[9] Once HEFCE has received your application they will inform us, and we shall allocate you a SharePoint site where you will be asked to upload your application and evidence. We shall let you know how to use the site and what happens next.

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[7] www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/daput
[8] www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/daput/ac-dap
[9] www.hefce.ac.uk/reg/daps

Four weeks before the ACDAP meeting at which you expect your application to be considered you should send us your application fee and upload the following to your allocated SharePoint site:

- your critical self-analysis (CSA)
- evidence on which you have based your application
- completed templates (available on our [website](#)).[10]

At least three weeks before the relevant ACDAP meeting we shall also require 20 printed copies of the CSA.

QAA fees

Initial application fees
We charge an application fee of £2,500, which should be paid by cheque at the time of application. If you need us to raise an invoice first, or if you wish to make the payment via BACS, please [contact us](#) to arrange this in advance.

Where ACDAP determines that a fact-finding visit is necessary, prior to the detailed scrutiny, a fee of £5,000 will be charged in advance of the visit.

Detailed scrutiny fees
Once your application has reached the detailed scrutiny stage, fees are payable as follows.[11]

Powers sought	Fee structure
FDAP	£90,000
TDAP	£90,000
T&RDAP	£97,000
RDAP	£60,000

These fees cover the costs of a typical scrutiny incurred up to, and including, the scrutiny team's final report to ACDAP. Where the number of visits by members of the scrutiny team exceeds that of a typical scrutiny, additional fees will be payable at a rate of £750 per individual observation and will be notified to you in good time.

Additional fees
If a visit from an ACDAP sub-panel or another form of follow-up visit is required, a further charge of £2,000 will be made. Should any substantial additional expenditure be incurred as part of a detailed scrutiny, a further charge may be made to cover costs. Any such additional charges will be set individually per institution and notified to you in good time. All additional fees are payable before the end of the process.

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[10] www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/daput
[11] To check for updates see our website: www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/daput/fee-structure.

Initial assessment by ACDAP

Your application will be considered by ACDAP, which will decide, on the basis of what you have submitted, whether the application should proceed to the detailed scrutiny stage.

If ACDAP decides that you have not made a sufficiently strong case to proceed, we shall write to you to explain why.

If ACDAP makes a decision to proceed we shall write to you to confirm this. The next stage is that we establish a scrutiny team to consider your application and supporting evidence (see next section).

Detailed scrutiny stage

If your application does proceed, ACDAP will ask that a team be appointed to conduct a **detailed scrutiny** of your application. The team will include senior members of the academic community. We will let you know who they are, asking you to inform us of any conflicts of interest.

We will also identify a QAA Coordinating Officer to manage and coordinate the detailed scrutiny and ensure you are clear about what to expect, and what is expected of you. Further details about the Coordinating Officer's role and responsibilities are given in Annex 2.

The scrutiny team and its role

Scrutiny team members have first-hand experience of existing universities or other degree-awarding bodies. They typically also have experience of QAA review work. We always ensure that the team contains sufficient seniority, knowledge and experience to conduct the detailed scrutiny to the highest professional standard. Where possible, subject to experience, and in the interests of continuity, we aim to include individuals who have previously been part of a QAA review team at your organisation. Teams always include a student member.

Normally, there are:

- five team members for FDAP
- five team members for TDAP
- four team members for RDAP

with one member of the team acting as Scrutiny Secretary.

Scrutiny team members will read the CSA and the evidence you supply, and familiarise themselves with your organisation. They will consider the detail of your application against the relevant criteria contained within the Guidance. This involves:

- examining documentary evidence
- conducting on-site observations of meetings and events
- meeting students, staff, governors and other stakeholders
- visiting employers where appropriate for FDAP (and TDAP where there is a significant element of work-based learning).

As the scrutiny progresses, they will hold confidential team discussions about their findings. For more on their role see Annex 2.

Aims and duration of the detailed scrutiny

The detailed scrutiny stage is intended to establish:

- whether an applicant meets the criteria for the powers it seeks
- whether an applicant has the ability and sustained capacity to assume the powers it seeks
- that there can be public confidence in any powers granted.

In considering these matters, the scrutiny team will be actively seeking manifestations of 'a self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to quality assurance

supported by effective quality and enhancement systems'.[12] To that end, you can expect the team to focus on the internal procedures you have established for setting and maintaining appropriate standards and for assuring and enhancing the quality of your degree programmes. They will also be interested in the relationship between corporate and academic decision making. The team will wish to know about the qualifications and experience of your staff, and how well they support student development and achievement.

We shall be seeking evidence that your organisation has the capacity, self-criticality and organisational maturity to be granted and consistently exercise the powers you seek. We will need to be satisfied that you understand and 'own' the significant responsibilities and obligations that would be invested in you in the event of degree awarding powers being granted, including your contribution to the collective security of the UK degree brand in a global environment.

The detailed scrutiny is not a developmental activity. The onus is on you to demonstrate that you have reached a sufficient level of institutional maturity to warrant the grant of degree awarding powers and that there can be public confidence, both present and future, in the systems and supporting infrastructure you have in place to assure the quality and standards of degrees to be awarded in your name.

The detailed scrutiny is both intensive and extensive. As it is not mechanistic, its nature and length are likely to vary, depending on such factors as your higher education track record, the robustness of your CSA and supporting evidence, and the powers sought. In non-problematic cases the process might be expected to extend over a full academic year (excluding time spent to produce the report). Taking account of the formal procedures that follow, the process is unlikely to be concluded in less than two years.

Preliminary visit by the Coordinating Officer

The Coordinating Officer will contact you at an early opportunity to arrange a preliminary visit. This would normally take place within eight weeks of ACDAP's decision to proceed and provides an opportunity for the Coordinating Officer to establish contact with relevant and key personnel, to discuss the scrutiny process in more detail, including operational considerations, and to answer any questions.

Typically, the preliminary visit will enable you to find out more about the detailed scrutiny process, including:

- its anticipated duration
- the evidence you will need to provide
- meetings and events likely to be of interest
- arrangements for site visits in relation to work-based learning
- your policy on the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults (if individuals within these categories are likely to be present at locations visited by the scrutiny team) and any implications
- your organisation's point of contact for the scrutiny
- how you can provide feedback later.

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[12] TDAP/RDAP Guidance, page 7, paragraph 2; FDAP Guidance, Annex A (see Annex 1).

Planning the visits to your organisation

The scrutiny team will hold a meeting to plan its visit, after which the Coordinating Officer will send you a schedule of proposed meetings and engagements (to be updated as the scrutiny progresses), enabling you to plan the scrutiny team's visit(s). He/she will discuss any particular requirements or practicalities with your representative, for example any necessary safeguarding requirements in relation to children and vulnerable adults during site visits. (For more details and protocols relating to the scrutiny team's conduct see Annex 2.)

Should there be any changes to the timing or date of any engagements to which you have initially agreed, you should let the Coordinating Officer know as soon as possible.

Visits to your organisation by the scrutiny team

Detailed scrutiny typically involves a series of visits to your organisation, and other learning environments that you use, such as work-based settings. These may be undertaken by the scrutiny team as a whole or by individual members of it. All visits have a clear and identified purpose as advised by the Coordinating Officer. Visits are usually planned and agreed with you well in advance.

Team members follow a schedule of planned engagements as agreed with you. These may involve the team visiting as a whole or team members visiting individually. Anything that is likely to be useful for the final report will be recorded in writing. Team members' reports on particular engagements will be shared with other members of the team (and, if relevant, with ACDAP and the QAA Board) but are otherwise kept confidential.

In the interests of maintaining an effective and constructive dialogue, the Coordinating Officer will seek to speak with and/or meet regularly with your representative(s) to discuss progress and identify any matters where further evidence is required. Typically, such meetings or contact would follow the scrutiny team's progress review meetings/discussions.

The Scrutiny Secretary takes notes of meetings and keeps a rolling record of interactions. The Secretary is also familiar with the Guidance and contributes to the planning of scrutiny activities and the preparation of the team's final report.

The first team visit (one to two days) provides an opportunity for the team to meet a representative cross-section of your organisation to place the application in context. To help them evaluate your CSA and supporting evidence, team members are likely to want to meet, and hold structured discussions with all, or some, of the following:

- your head or principal
- governing body members
- members of the senior management team
- academic leaders
- teaching staff and research supervisors
- administrative staff
- students and alumni
- external examiners
- representatives from your degree-awarding body/bodies (past and present)
- employers and other external stakeholders.

Where there is a need to visit sites of work-based learning it is your responsibility to brief the employers/providers on what to expect.

The scrutiny team is also likely to request to observe meetings and other activities that they have identified as significant, including:

- governing body meetings
- internal committee meetings
- validation/review events
- examination boards
- any other activities pertinent to the application.

Before a scrutiny team member attends a formal committee meeting or similar, you may wish to provide them with a short preparatory briefing. Team members will not participate in meetings that they observe, but they will take notes.

The team is also likely to ask to see minutes, agendas and papers relating to internal meetings and any other activities having a bearing on the application, including those of:

- the governing body and its subcommittees
- assessment boards
- validation/review panels.

Scrutiny team members may request additional documentation from you during this and any subsequent visits. Any such documentation should be uploaded to the QAA SharePoint folder that has been allocated to you.

Team members do not provide feedback to you, and you are asked to ensure that all parties involved are aware of this.

The scrutiny team may request additional meetings as the process evolves, and, in some cases, further visits may be necessary. These will be arranged between the Coordinating Officer and your representative(s).

The scrutiny team convenes at key stages in the scrutiny process (for example, after one term or semester), to review progress, establish where gaps in their knowledge remain, and agree next steps. Progress reports of these meetings are submitted to ACDAP.

At the end of the detailed scrutiny, the scrutiny team may wish to arrange a final visit for clarification purposes.

Other evidence

There may be others, including teaching staff, students or other interested parties, who wish to bring information about you and your provision to our attention. Any comments received will be considered as long as the information is relevant and submitted before the scrutiny has ended. Information should be submitted in writing through the contact us webpage or by post using the QAA address given in Annex 1. Relevant information will be forwarded to the scrutiny team for consideration. You should be ready to provide further details on request.

To ensure teaching staff and students are aware of this aspect of the process, and the benefits of raising any issues in advance, we will send you a standard email which you should circulate to staff and students once the detailed scrutiny stage has been approved. We will also send you a standard poster about the protocol for submitting comments, and this should be displayed prominently.

Through our Concerns Scheme we investigate any concerns about serious systemic or procedural problems in relation to academic standards and quality at any UK higher education provider. These may be submitted by students, staff or any other interested party.

Any such investigation relating to your organisation will be taken into account during the detailed scrutiny. Should you be successful in obtaining the powers you seek, any future concerns raised about your institution will also be subject to the Concerns Scheme.[13]

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[13] www.qaa.ac.uk/concerns

Final report and recommendations

The detailed scrutiny culminates in a formal **report** to ACDAP, in which the scrutiny team:

- provides clear evidence-based expert analysis on how your organisation satisfies, or falls short of, the criteria
- explains the critical issues
- indicates areas where further development may be required to secure a successful outcome of your application.

We will send you the draft report at least eight weeks before the ACDAP meeting at which it is to be considered. This gives you the opportunity to inform us of any factual inaccuracies. You will later receive a copy of the finalised report and be invited to submit further written comments for consideration alongside it, should you so wish.

The report, ADCAP's subsequent discussion of it, and your comments (if any), will form the basis of ACDAP's **recommendation** on the nature of the confidential advice to be given to HEFCE, which will be presented to the next QAA Board meeting. We will notify you if ACDAP is **not** in a position to make a recommendation (see section below on insufficient evidence).

On the basis of ACDAP's recommendations and report, the QAA Board will determine the nature of its **confidential advice** to HEFCE, which is the final stage of our involvement in the process. Once the Board has submitted this advice we will write to let you know that this has happened. HEFCE will pass QAA's advice to the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS).

Matters requiring clarification

If, on the basis of the report, ACDAP identifies matters for further consideration or clarification, it may ask the scrutiny team (or a subset of it) to undertake further activity to address these issues, or may convene a sub-panel of its members (supplemented, if appropriate, by additional external expertise) to undertake a short and focused visit to your organisation. Most such visits will be of one day's duration and will normally involve meetings with governors, senior managers, teaching and other staff, students and relevant external interest groups. The visit will result in a further, brief report to ACDAP, to inform its recommendation.

Insufficient evidence that criteria are met

Where ACDAP considers there is insufficient evidence that you satisfy the criteria in the relevant Guidance, it may recommend that your application be rejected.

Alternatively, ACDAP may recommend that your application be placed **in abeyance**, giving you time to take such developmental action as will enable the scrutiny to be resumed at a later date. If this is the case, you will be informed.

ACDAP will determine the period of abeyance, which is no longer than one year, and will inform you of those areas that need to be addressed.

If your application is placed in abeyance but further evidence is not presented by the end of the agreed period, your application will be considered to have lapsed. ACDAP will notify the QAA Board that you have not satisfied the criteria for the powers you seek.

The Privy Council's decision

Having received QAA's advice from BIS, the Privy Council makes the final **decision** on the outcome of your application.

If you are **successful** in obtaining the degree awarding powers that you have sought, you will be formally notified by the **Privy Council**. You should advise us straight away so that we can brief you on requirements pertaining to your new status as a degree awarding body (see next section).

If you are **unsuccessful** you will be notified by **BIS**.

We will publish the scrutiny team's final report on our website once BIS have notified us of either outcome.

Evaluation and follow-up

You will be invited to provide written feedback at two stages: at an interim point and at the end of the process.

We will send you a feedback form at an interim stage which will be four weeks before you are scheduled to have a scrutiny progress meeting with the Coordinating Officer. Please return it within two weeks of receipt. Any issues arising can then be discussed at the scheduled progress meeting.

At the end of the process, when we have considered your application and informed you that we have submitted our advice to HEFCE, you, the Coordinating Officer and the scrutiny team will be asked to evaluate the process. Evaluations will be conducted in confidence by our Research and Intelligence team. The outcomes will be used internally to review and improve the scrutiny process.

Policy on the disclosure of records

Under our *Policy on the Disclosure of Records Relating to Degree Awarding Powers/University Title*,[14] all records are closed until a decision has been reached. After this we will publish the scrutiny team's final report on our website. As specified in the policy, some additional records will be available on request at this time.

Ten years after the notification of your outcome we will give access, on request, to the records pertaining to your application, subject to any enduring issues of commercial confidentiality.

Written representations to the QAA Board

If ACDAP recommends that your application should be rejected we will inform you of this and the reasons for it before the Board considers ACDAP's recommendation. This gives you the opportunity to make written representations directly to the Board. The procedure for this is explained on our website.

Subscription to QAA

If your application is successful and you are granted UK degree awarding powers, then (under the current system of quality assessment)[15] you will be required to subscribe to QAA as a condition of the grant of those powers. Subscriber commitments are set out on our website.[16] We will contact you about subscription once BIS have notified us of the successful outcome of your application.

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[14] www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/daput/further-information; also available at www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/corporate-governance/policies
[15] The government is reviewing the system of quality assessment in England, following publication of a Green Paper in November 2015: www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/474227/BIS-15-623-fulfilling-our-potential-teaching-excellence-social-mobility-and-student-choice.pdf
[16] www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/subscribing-institutions/applying-to-qaa

Annex 1: Contacts, guidance and further information

For pre-application enquiries and general information, please contact us, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA): www.qaa.ac.uk/contact-us

For applications and further enquiries, please contact the Higher Education Funding Council (HEFCE): gateways@hefce.ac.uk

Government Guidance and criteria

Guidance and criteria for foundation degree awarding powers

Guidance for Higher Education Providers: Criteria and Process for Applying for Foundation Degree Awarding Powers (October 2015), available at:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/foundation-degree-awarding-powers

Guidance and criteria for taught and research degree awarding powers

Guidance for Higher Education Providers: Criteria and Process for Applying for Taught Degree Awarding Powers and Research Degree Awarding Powers (September 2015), available at:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/taught-and-research-degree-awarding-powers

HEFCE information

For information about submitting your application to HEFCE, see these web pages:
www.hefce.ac.uk/reg/daps

QAA guidance and information

Information, templates and publications relating to degree awarding powers applications can be found on our website: www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/daput and
www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/daput/guidance-and-criteria

Guidance

The following QAA guidance is available:

- *Guidance on the TDAP Process for Further Education Colleges Previously Granted FDAP*
- *Guidance on Scholarship and the Pedagogical Effectiveness of Staff: Expectations for FDAP and TDAP*
- *Guidance on Applications for the Grant of RDAP: Academic Staff (Criterion 1)*.

Further information

Information about the Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers (ACDAP):
www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/daput/ac-dap

Table of fees:
www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/daput/fee-structure

Disclosure policy and terms of engagement:
www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/daput/further-information
www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/corporate-governance/policies

Podcasts that may be of interest to applicants:
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/podcasts

Details of our Concerns Scheme:
www.qaa.ac.uk/complaints/concerns

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code):
www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code

Annex 2: Roles and protocols

The role of the Coordinating Officer

The Coordinating Officer will:

- pay a preliminary visit to the applicant to ensure they know what to expect
- brief the scrutiny team about requirements, protocols, obligations and responsibilities
- agree the schedule of engagements with the applicant
- coordinate the work of the scrutiny team
- discuss with the applicant any requests for additional information made by the scrutiny team
- provide progress reports to ACDAP
- oversee the production of the scrutiny team's final report to ACDAP.

Scrutiny team protocols and procedures

All communications (written or oral) connected with a scrutiny are treated as confidential to the team and QAA. Written communications are made through QAA's SharePoint site.

Protocols

Scrutiny team members are expected to:

- be courteous and friendly at all times during visits and meetings
- respect organisational sensitivities and practices
- base the views they form on clear and demonstrable evidence
- strictly observe the confidentiality of the scrutiny process.

Team members may not:

- engage in informal discussions that might compromise the validity and independence of subsequent judgements
- participate in formal meetings that they observe (though they may take notes)
- accept gifts or invitations to formal events (such as dinners or award ceremonies)
- engage in consultancy with a provider while engaged in scrutinising their application, nor for up to one year after termination of that contract.

The planning meeting

Prior to the detailed scrutiny, team members are expected to read the CSA and evidence provided by the applicant. The Coordinating Officer and the scrutiny team will hold a planning meeting when the team will:

- review and consider the application and supporting information provided
- share members' understanding of the organisational context
- consider members' responses to the documentation provided
- decide how best to secure the extra evidence needed
- agree a schedule of engagements, including visits to sites of work-based learning where appropriate, to be updated as the detailed scrutiny progresses
- agree a programme of meetings for the initial team visit over one or two days
- agree the indicative agenda to be followed at meetings held during the initial visit
- agree who will lead on particular aspects of the scrutiny and on the corresponding

sections of the final report to ACDAP
- consider measures that might need to be taken in respect of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults in the case of site visits (for example, Disclosure and Barring Service checks).

Members will be briefed about recent developments in relation to degree awarding powers; the provider context; and relevant reference material, templates and communication mechanisms that have been developed to enable them to carry out their roles with consistency and confidence.

Reports on meetings and engagements during the scrutiny visits

After each organisational engagement, team members are required to complete a report detailing their findings about the extent to which the relevant criteria are met. The report is compiled using a template and is uploaded electronically to the dedicated SharePoint site within 10 working days of a visit. Comments made by individuals in discussion sessions are not attributed. These reports identify any outstanding issues, inform the planning of further engagements and form a key resource in the preparation of the team's final report. They are confidential between the scrutiny team and QAA, and are not made available to any other party.

The scrutiny secretary keeps a record of all substantive discussions involving the team as a whole and will circulate them to the team.

The outcomes of any informal meetings and conversations with the applicant's stakeholders must be formally recorded if the information is subsequently to be used as evidence. Team members should exercise discretion and judgement in deciding whether to use information gathered on an informal basis.

Scrutiny teams must balance the value of workplace evidence against the time available and the need to minimise inconvenience to employers.

Interim team meetings and periodic progress reports

The scrutiny team meets at key stages in the scrutiny process (for example, after one term or semester):

- to review progress
- to establish where gaps in the team's knowledge base remain
- to agree the next steps.

Each scrutiny is monitored by way of progress reports submitted to scheduled meetings of ACDAP.