

Revised guidance on student charters

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Noddir gan
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Introduction

1. This circular provides revised guidance on developing Student Charters. It applies to all regulated and funded institutions. Students of franchise HE in further education (FE) provision will be covered by the franchising HEI's Charter.
2. Institutions and student unions will need to communicate effectively to ensure students are aware of the revised guidance and how their interests are protected. They must also ensure that the revised student charter is accessible to the whole student body.
3. Institutions and student unions will need to take account of this guidance in the next annual review of their Student Charter.

Student Charters

4. We expect all regulated institutions provision to have a Student Charter or equivalent document in place. Institutions and their Student Union may choose to call it something else, eg Partnership Agreement, but for ease of reference we will refer to it as the 'Student Charter' throughout this circular.
5. The Student Charter should be a high level document which is applicable to the diverse body of students¹, including those with protected characteristics. It should provide signposts and links to more detailed information, such as regulations, student support, and course information.
6. Institutions should take account of this guidance within the next annual review of that document.
7. HE institutions should have a single Student Charter covering all of their students and staff, including those undertaking HE study at FE institutions via franchise partnerships. They should include a diverse range of students, including student representatives and student union officers as well as institutional staff from franchise partnerships in the development and review of the Charter to ensure that it is relevant to all of their students.
8. Regulated FEIs with more than one franchise partner will need to ensure each set of students is aware of the HEI Charter which applies to them; they may also invite students to be aware of any Charter specific to, and developed by, the FEI.
9. Regulated FEIs should develop a Charter regardless of the number of HE credits covered under their Fee and Access Plan. This could be as part of a document covering all the FEI's students, if appropriate. These FEIs may also

¹ part-time, full-time, international, European, UK, postgraduate, undergraduate, mature and non-traditional students, and students of franchise HE in FE

have franchise HE in FE provision, which will be covered by the franchising institution's Charter².

10. Where a HEI has a complex structure resulting in different expectations across the institution, it should still provide a single Charter covering all students of the institution. The Charter should link to additional information as appropriate, to provide the detail of where expectations vary.
11. The Charter should be reviewed jointly by students, student representatives, student union officers and institutional staff on an annual basis to ensure it is still being used and remains relevant. Both the incoming and outgoing SU officers should be involved in reviewing the Charter, with responsibility for sign off resting with the incoming officers. The review should involve staff who deal directly with students (both teaching and support roles) if substantive changes are being made. Both partners are expected to promote awareness of this document among all their stakeholders.
12. We expect the charter to be provided in a location where it is readily accessible by prospective students, should they wish to use it in informing their choice of where to study.
13. The [Higher Education Academy](#) is able to provide support to subscribing regulated institutions in the revision and/or implementation of Student Charters on request.

Specific guidance

14. The charter guidance builds on the work of the Student Charter Group (SCG) in England, which produced a report and recommendations for the development of Student Charters in January 2011³. We continue to endorse the recommendations of the SCG, and expect institutions to take account of these in developing their Charter.
15. The conclusions and recommendations of the SCG (with references) included that:
 - a) Each institution should have a single Student Charter or similar high level statement, covering all students (undergraduate and postgraduate, taught and research) and all staff, to set out the mutual expectations of universities and students; (3a, 3b(a))
 - b) The Charter should be jointly written by the institution and the student union. It should involve student-facing staff, students and student representatives from the outset; senior staff should demonstrate buy-in at strategic committees; (3a, 6.1)
 - c) The Charter should be short and clear, informing students of what they should be able to expect, what is required of them, and what to do if things do not meet expected standards; (3b(b), 3b(d))
 - d) The Charter should focus on current students; (3a)

² This could be either as part of a document covering all the students of the FE institution, or a specific HE document

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/student-charter-group-final-report>

- e) The Charter should be a summary document, providing signposts and links to more detailed regulations and course information, and should not be a legal contract. It should be as short as possible, preferably no more than two pages; it should be accessible to all students and staff; (3a, 6.5)
- f) The Charter should emphasise the importance of belonging to a learning community and the importance of partnership working between staff and students; (3a)
- g) The Charter should be reviewed jointly by students, student union officers and institutional staff on an annual basis to ensure it is still being used and remains relevant. Reviews should incorporate other feedback from students; (3a, 6.4)
- h) There should be a clear communication and dissemination strategy, which is also reviewed annually, to ensure that the whole student body and all staff are informed and engaged, and that awareness of the Charter is not limited to SU representatives and senior staff; (2.11), 6.5)
- i) Institutions should monitor student opinion after delivery to ensure that it has maximum impact. (3a, 6.2, 6.4)

16. In addition, we expect Charters for institutions in Wales to include the following:

- A high level statement on the institution's responsibilities under the Welsh Language Act and taking account of the Welsh Language Standards. This can include providing opportunities where appropriate for assessing student performance in Welsh, regardless of the language of tuition. The Quality Assurance Agency is in the process of revising its guidelines for institutions on this.
- Signposting to where students may find information on opportunities to study through the medium of Welsh (eg on course web pages).
- A high level statement on the institution's engagement with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, including a link to the Coleg's website.
- A high level statement (or a link to one) on how the student interests are protected, eg in cases where a course or institution ceases to exist⁴;
- A statement (or a link to more detailed information) confirming that the institution complies with their responsibilities under consumer protection law, as set out by the [Competition and Markets Authority](#);
- Information on how students can complain about academic matters, including information on the Office of the Independent Adjudicator;
- A high level statement on the institution's provision of information on the cost of study, including signposting to full information (eg on course pages);
- Signposting to where students may find information on opportunities for them to study overseas;
- Information on how to contact offices (eg the student union, registry office etc) in relation to relevant elements of the charter.

⁴ This could be agreed collectively by regulated institutions if they wished

Monitoring the Charter

17. We expect institutions and their student unions to continue to monitor the impact of the guidance annually, as part of the process of updating the student charter. Information on revisions made could be included in annual quality reports produced by institutions.
18. Institutions and student unions should check links periodically to ensure they remain live, and should have processes to enable them to be notified of any links which need to be updated.