

Summarised consultation responses on the inclusion of an additional governing body assurance statement relating to quality

Number of respondents: 11 (a list of respondents is provided at the end of the document)

General

Key points

- Respondents welcomed the opportunity to comment on the proposal.
- The recent commitment to publish a degree outcomes statement articulating the outcomes of an internal institutional review, would likely be useful evidence in providing assurance to HEFCW.
- Governing bodies should have appropriate oversight of matters relating to academic standards and academic quality. Degree standards are central to academic standards and threats to academic integrity are a threat both to those standards and public trust in higher education awards and graduates.

Question 1: Do you agree that it is appropriate to include an additional assurance statement relating to quality for the governing body, to cover degree standards and academic integrity? (11 respondents)

Agree (including with caveats): 9

Disagree: 2

Points raised:

Agreement

- It would be appropriate to include the statement
- Although most respondents agreed that a statement should be included, it was the view of some respondents that the wording was not appropriate (see question 2 response summary below)

Disagreement

- A number of respondents felt that degree standards and academic integrity were already (implicitly) covered by assurance statement 3a.
- Governing bodies would be able to provide assurance against the existing assurance statements, using the degree standards statement as primary evidence without needing to create multiple parallel processes, so an additional statement would not be necessary.
- One respondent felt that academic integrity was already addressed by institutions through the alignment of provider quality assurance processes with the European Standards and Guidelines 2015.

Question 2. Is the wording of the statement appropriate? If not, how could the wording be amended better to reflect the governing body oversight of these areas? (11 respondents)

Agree (including with caveats): 2

Disagree: 9

Points raised:

Agreement

- One respondent confirmed that they were content with the wording of the proposed statement but that there might be a benefit in making reference to the awarding body, particularly in cases of validated provision.
- One respondent was content with the wording in relation to degree standards but thought that the phrase 'academic integrity' required some unpacking.

Disagreement

- Academic integrity could refer to a range of issues, e.g. personal conduct, research integrity, assessment and regulations. A statement which included this phrase would need to clearly set out what was in scope.
- Rather than create another statement, it might be better to amend the current statement to make this expectation more explicit. The wording of the current statement could be amended to include explicit reference to degree classifications and academic integrity; if it was felt this detail is necessary.
- Academic integrity is a broad term which would be difficult to evidence across the full spectrum of activity.
- The additional statement is not necessary and additional wording could be included in order to strengthen the current statement relating to degree standards.
- It would be more appropriate to narrow the question.
- One response disagreed with the proposal, not because the wording was wrong but because existing statements covered academic standards. Amending existing statements could avoid potential duplication or confusion.
- Academic integrity should be treated separately to degree standards.

Other

- Institutions operating in other parts of the UK would need to give consideration to the statement and how it reflected the approach of the four nations

Suggestions for alternative statements

- The governing body has effective oversight of the standards of awards for which we are responsible, the standards have been appropriately set and maintained, and the governing body has published a degree outcomes statement.

- The governing body is kept apprised of the threats to academic integrity and receives an annual report on incidents of misconduct, on actions to promote academic good practice and to combat academic misconduct.
- The governing body has effective oversight of degree standards and confirms that the University promotes, and supports students in, the achievement of academic integrity in their studies.
The governing body has effective oversight of degree standards and student academic conduct.
- The governing body confirms that systems and process for the management of degree standards and academic integrity enable appropriate and effective oversight.

Welsh Language considerations

No positive or negative impacts on the Welsh language were identified in the responses.

One response noted that work needed to be done to explore the issue of contract cheating through the medium of Welsh as the focus tended to be on contract cheating through the medium of English and this could represent a gap in arrangements.

Respondents

Aberystwyth University
Cardiff University
Cardiff Metropolitan University
Grŵp Llandrillo Menai
Neath Port Talbot Group
Open University
Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Swansea University
University of South Wales
University of Wales Trinity Saint David
Wrexham Glyndŵr University