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Policy paper

Accreditation for online education providers

Updated 24 December 2021

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The online education services sector for children in England has grown rapidly in recent years. This type of provision is currently unregulated.

Many providers now offer a full curriculum and may represent a child's main or only source of formal education.

The Department for Education (DfE) is introducing an accreditation scheme to reassure children, parents and local authorities of the quality of education and safeguarding arrangements offered by these providers.

New accreditation scheme

DfE is establishing the Online Education Accreditation Scheme (OEAS) to incentivise online education providers to meet high standards of education and care for their students and, through public reporting, to share best practice across the sector.

We consulted on this scheme in September 2019, with our [response to the consultation](#) published on 10 June 2020.

The scheme will consist of 2 essential elements:

- the establishment of non-statutory standards for online education provision
- inspection of providers against those standards by Ofsted, acting as the quality assurance body appointed by the department

Quality assurance

In June 2021, we appointed [Ofsted](#) to act as quality assurance body and we are working with them to commence the scheme.

Ofsted carried out 'trial visits' on a small number of providers during June and July 2021 to inform any necessary refinements to the scheme before it commences.

On 24 November 2021, Ofsted launched a consultation on how it will fulfil its [role as quality assurance body for the Online Education Accreditation Scheme](#). The consultation will close on 26 January 2022.

How the scheme will work

The scheme will work in a way which is broadly similar to that outlined in the consultation response:

1. Providers will apply for the scheme by submitting relevant information online to DfE. Note: the application process will be made clear in due course.
2. DfE will pass application details to Ofsted to carry out due diligence checks.
3. Subject to the outcome of due diligence checks, Ofsted will carry out an accreditation visit to assess compliance with the standards.
4. Following an accreditation visit, DfE will decide whether to accredit the provider. The provider may then use the term 'DfE accredited provider'.

All inspection reports will be published by Ofsted and accredited providers will appear on the [Get information about schools \(GIAS\) register of schools and](#)

[colleges in England](#).

Providers will pay a fee for the due diligence and accreditation visits. The fee structure for the scheme will be outlined in due course.

Qualifying providers

The scheme will be open to providers that:

- teach online only on a permanent basis
- provide a full curriculum or represent a child's main or only source of education
- have at least one full-time pupil of compulsory school age on roll based in England (irrespective of the number of learners based overseas)
- have a physical presence in England, registered with [Companies House](#) or the [Charity Commission](#)

All qualifying providers are invited to apply for the scheme once it is operational.



It is not yet possible to apply for the scheme - the application process will be made clear in due course.

Next steps

We plan to launch applications for the accreditation scheme in 2022.

Any provider wishing to be kept up to date about the scheme should contact us on OEAS.enquiries@education.gov.uk to be placed on our notification list.

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