

Cylchlythyr | Circular

Quality Assessment Framework for Wales, July 2022

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To: Regulated institutions in Wales
Response by: No response required
Contact: Name: Dr Cliona O'Neill
Telephone: 029 2085 9731
Email: cliona.oneill@hefcw.ac.uk

This circular provides an updated copy of the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales, July 2022. The Framework will continue to be updated as appropriate, taking account of consultation outcomes, so it is the responsibility of users to ensure that they are using the most recent version.

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Introduction

1. This circular provides a copy of the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales, July 2022.
2. The Framework will continue to be updated as appropriate, taking account of consultation outcomes, so it is the responsibility of users to ensure that they are using the most recent version.

Background

3. The Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) for Higher Education in Wales sets out the mechanisms through which HEFCW will assure itself that the quality of education, or a course of education, provided by or on behalf of regulated institutions meets the needs of those receiving it. It sets out how HEFCW takes account of its statutory responsibility for ensuring that assessment is carried out of the provision offered by or on behalf of regulated institutions, and how we are assured of quality when an institution applies for a Fee and Access Plan. The most [recent version of the QAF](#) was published in April 2020.
4. [Circular W21/32HE](#) provided a consultation on changes to the external quality review, which is one of the elements of the QAF. It also noted other changes that would need to be made to the QAF. This included changes to the UK context, for example the decision by the Office for Students to remove reference to the UK Quality Code from its regulatory framework.
5. The proposed changes were then tested with stakeholders, including the University and College Union, regulated institutions, Universities Wales, and the National Union of Students Wales. The amended version was considered by the June 2022 meeting of HEFCW's Quality Assessment Committee.

The Quality Assessment Framework

6. The updated Quality Assessment Framework is provided at **Annex A**.
7. The Framework needs to be flexible to take account of developments in quality at UK level. The Framework will therefore be kept under review, and consultation will be carried out where substantive changes are proposed.

External Quality Assurance Review requirements

8. The Quality Assurance Agency is currently suspended from the European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR), due to activity in England being non-compliant with the European Standards and Guidelines. The suspension confirmed that the Register Committee had no concerns regarding activities in other countries of the UK. As the QAA has announced that it will no longer consent to be the Designated Quality Body in England after the current term ends on 31 March 2023, it is anticipated that the QAA will be reinstated onto the register

imminently. If this is not achieved by December 2022 then we will consult regarding the requirement for external quality assurance reviews to be carried out by an organisation on EQAR, to ensure that this matter is resolved in time for the review cycle starting in 2023/24.

The Commission for Tertiary Education and Research

9. The Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill is currently in its final stages and is expected to receive Royal Assent in August 2022. The Bill proposes arrangements to establish the new Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER), which will replace HEFCW, and will be responsible for regulating and funding most post-16 provision in Wales currently within the Welsh Government. We expect HEFCW to be dissolved during the 2023/24 academic year.
10. We have confirmed to the Welsh Government that we are proceeding with aspects of our work which we consider to be critical for a smooth and effective transition to CTER. Our remit letter from the Welsh Government for the 2022-23 financial year states that we should assume that HEFCW “can continue to operate and develop its funding and regulatory processes in line with its current powers and processes”.
11. The formation of the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research may result in a need to update the Quality Assessment Framework in due course.

Further information

12. For further information, contact Dr Cliona O’Neill (029 2085 9731; cliona.oneill@hefcw.ac.uk).

Assessing the impact of our policies

13. HEFCW’s Impact Assessment Policy and Procedures set out how we assess the likely impact – positive or negative – of proposed policies and practices with respect to meeting our responsibilities under:
 - The Equality Act 2010
 - The Welsh Language Standards 2018
 - The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
14. An impact assessment has been carried out with respect to the proposals outlined in this circular, which took into account the responses to the consultation. The proposals were found to have a positive impact on the well-being goals of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the five ways of working, as well as in relation to opportunities to use the Welsh language.