

# Quality Assessment Framework for Wales

July 2022



## Introduction

1. 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.
2. The Framework will continue to be updated as appropriate, taking account of consultation, so ***it is the responsibility of users to ensure that they are using the most recent version***. We will clearly indicate on our [website](#) when we publish updates.
3. HEFCW has received confirmation that the Framework meets the Home Office requirements for educational oversight. This means that regulated institutions meet the quality requirements for [student sponsor licences](#).
4. It has been proposed that [the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research](#) (CTER) be established from 2023, with responsibility for overseeing the post-16 sector in Wales (ie further education (FE), higher education (HE), apprenticeships and other work-based learning, sixth forms) and Welsh Government funded research and innovation in the PCET sector. HEFCW will be dissolved. The design of this framework has taken account of Welsh Government priorities for the new Commission. However, we anticipate that it will need to be revisited in due course, in order to ensure that it aligns with any framework for post-16 provision set out by the Commission.

## Background

5. The [Higher Education \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) (the 2015 Act) sets out interventions that apply where HEFCW is satisfied that the quality of education or a course provided by or on behalf of a regulated institution is, or is likely to become, inadequate to meet the reasonable needs of students. These are detailed in HEFCW's [Statement of Intervention](#).

## Areas of UK comparability

6. The Quality Assessment Framework will achieve UK 'read-across' through the following shared mechanisms:
  - Shared degree standards, through alignment with the [European Qualifications Framework](#);
  - Alignment of provision in all nations with part 1 of the [European Standards and Guidelines](#);
  - The use of external and independent assurance regarding quality and standards;

- A shared overarching approach to regulatory and oversight arrangements that ensure UK higher education delivers a high quality educational experience and excellent outcomes for students.
7. In addition, Welsh institutions may participate in the Office for Students' Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), if they wish, while recognising that the regulatory framework in England is very different to that in Wales, and therefore approaches underlying the TEF do not align with the QAF.
  8. In developing this Framework HEFCW has monitored, and will continue to monitor, developments in other parts of the UK to evaluate any impact on Wales. We will also work to ensure that any changes to Quality Assessment (QA) in Wales do not impact adversely on the reputation of provision internationally.
  9. A [UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment \(UKSCQA\)](#) brings together the four funding bodies with sector and student representative bodies. This committee provides UK-wide consideration of quality assessment arrangements, including the shared approach to regulatory and oversight arrangements across the UK.

## Key features

10. The key features of the quality assessment framework for Wales are as follows:
  - (i) Alignment with the [European Standards and Guidelines for Higher Education](#);
  - (ii) A focus within providers' own review processes on improving student outcomes and the student academic experience;
  - (iii) Emphasis on the role of governing bodies for providing assurances about quality and standards matters;
  - (iv) The systematic use of student and other data by funding and regulatory bodies to monitor the performance of providers;
  - (v) Effective linking between, and minimisation of duplication with, other HEFCW assurance mechanisms;
  - (vi) An increased focus on enhancement, particularly through the external quality reviews.

## Principles

11. The principles of the framework are as follows. The quality assessment system:
  - (i) Is based on the autonomy of higher education providers with degree awarding powers to set and maintain academic standards, and on the responsibility of all providers to determine and deliver the most appropriate academic experience for their students wherever and however they study;
  - (ii) Uses peer review and appropriate external scrutiny as a core component of quality assessment and assurance approaches;
  - (iii) Has students integrated as partners in the design, implementation, monitoring and reviewing of processes to improve the quality of their education;

- (iv) Provides accountability, value for money, and easily understood assurance to students, and to employers, government and the public, in the areas that matter to those stakeholders, both in relation to individual providers, staff, and across the sector as a whole;
- (v) Embeds a culture of enhancement, with institutions regularly evaluating the impact of institutional and collaborative quality enhancement activities;
- (vi) Works well for increasingly diverse and different missions, and types of providers, and ensures that providers are able to experiment and innovate in strategic direction or in approaches to learning and teaching;
- (vii) Adopts a risk- and evidence-based approach to co-regulation to ensure that regulatory scrutiny focuses on the areas where risk, or the potential for risk, to standards and/or to the academic experience of students or the system is greatest;
- (viii) Intervenes early and rapidly but proportionately when things go wrong;
- (ix) Provides support for new or less mature providers, while ensuring that the threshold for entry into the sector is set at a level sufficient for an appropriately high quality academic experience and secure degree standards;
- (x) Uses a robust evidence base to ensure that opportunities for continuous improvement are identified and exploited by all providers;
- (xi) Maintains, as far as is possible in a devolved system, a UK-wide approach;
- (xii) Protects the reputation of the Welsh higher education system in a global context;
- (xiii) Ensures that the overall cost and burden of the quality assessment and wider assurance system is proportionate.

### **Baseline regulatory requirements**

12. The baseline regulatory requirements are a core component of the approach to assessing the quality of higher education in Wales. The baseline will be kept under review to ensure it remains appropriate in response to developments in the different countries of the UK.
13. The baseline requirements are as follows:
  - (i) The frameworks for higher education qualifications, as set out in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#);
  - (ii) The Expectations, Core and Common practices of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education; together with characteristics statements and subject benchmark statements, where appropriate;
  - (iii) Alignment with the [Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales](#);
  - (iv) Welsh language requirements;
  - (v) The [Higher Education Code of Governance](#) or [ColegauCymru code of good governance for institutions in Wales](#), as appropriate;
  - (vi) HEFCW's financial sustainability, management and governance requirements, and mission and strategy for higher education provision.
  - (vii) The providers' obligations under consumer law, as set out by the [Competition and Markets Authority](#);
  - (viii) The guidance set out in the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's [Good Practice Framework](#).

14. Requirements (i) to (iii) are tested via the external quality review in relation to both English and Welsh medium provision of institutions (and therefore incorporates some aspects of requirement (iv), which also falls within the remit of the Welsh Language Commissioner). HEFCW assesses requirements (v) and (vi) through its assurance processes. Institutions are reminded of their obligations in relation to consumer law and the student experience (requirements (vii) and (viii)).

### **Cross-cutting issues**

15. Cross-cutting issues include the:
- Need to preserve the sense of a UK-wide quality system, as far as is possible in a devolved environment with increasingly diverse policy positions;
  - Need to ensure the continued compliance with international quality expectations, in particular in Europe;
  - Essential role of students as partners in the design and operation of quality assessment arrangements.

### **The Framework**

16. The Framework includes:
- A gateway for entry for institutions wishing to become regulated for the first time, or apply for a Fee and Access Plan;
  - Arrangements for established providers, building on established and tested approaches to data benchmarking and analysis, intelligence gathering (including from students), risk assessment, and assurance;
  - Strengthened arrangements to secure degree standards and their reasonable comparability across the UK, led by the sector representative bodies;
  - Tailored but rapid intervention where necessary;
  - Protection of the international reputation of the UK higher education brand, including through the review of transnational education.
17. A representation of the framework is available at Figure 1. Providers wishing to become regulated need to undergo a Gateway review in order to become regulated for the first time, or apply for a Fee and Access Plan. Once regulated, providers are subject to all aspects of the Framework. The processes are not in any specific order. More information on each aspect is provided below.

**Figure 1. Quality Assessment Framework for Wales**

Quality Assessment Framework				
Gateway	Arrangements for established providers	Tailored but rapid intervention	Degree Standards and Comparability	International Reputation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gateway Quality review: Wales</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk-based review arrangements</li> <li>• Scrutiny of data</li> <li>• Annual assurance from the governing body</li> <li>• Triennial visits</li> <li>• Working in partnership with students</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• HEFCW complaints process</li> <li>• Guidance</li> <li>• HEFCW's Quality Assessment Committee</li> <li>• Statement of Intervention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work on Degree standards</li> <li>• Academic integrity</li> <li>• External examining, professional development and calibration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment</li> <li>• Transnational provision oversight</li> </ul>

**A gateway for entry for institutions wishing to become regulated for the first time, or apply for a Fee and Access Plan**

- From 2017/18, institutions are required to undergo a [Gateway Quality Review: Wales](#) by a body specified by HEFCW, currently the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education<sup>1</sup>. An institution that successfully completes a gateway review might wish to apply for [specific designation](#), which enables students to access student support for named HE courses, provided they meet other requirements for this process.
- Normally, four years<sup>2</sup> after the initial gateway review, the institution can commission a further gateway review. If this review is successful, then the institution is deemed to have met HEFCW's quality assurance requirements prior to applying for a Fee and Access Plan<sup>3</sup>. If an institution is successful in applying for a Fee and Access Plan then its students on all full-time HE programmes will have access to the full package of undergraduate student support.

**Arrangements for established providers**

- In Wales, regulated institutions are deemed to be established providers. Arrangements for these providers incorporate: risk-based review arrangements; scrutiny of data; annual assurance from the governing body; triennial visits; and monitoring the partnership arrangements between the student body and higher education. Scrutiny may include quality of provision at programme or course level, where appropriate and practicable.

<sup>1</sup> See [Circular W17/40HE](#). Any updates to this will be available at [Course designation](#).

<sup>2</sup> If an institution has a previous QAA review, this may meet some of the requirements – further information is available in circular W17/40HE

<sup>3</sup> [Fee and Access Plan](#): Fee and Access Plan applicants have to be an institution in Wales that provides higher education and is a charity. Applicants also have to provide information relating to its financial viability and the arrangements for the organisation and management of its financial affairs.

## Risk-based review arrangements

21. From 2022/23 HEFCW will commission cyclical external quality reviews for regulated higher education providers from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) in the first instance. In the future, CTER will have to determine its own arrangements for assurance.
22. The review cycle will have a fallow year, to facilitate reflection, and a focus on quality enhancement, at institutional level, pan-Wales, and in collaboration with Scotland and Northern Ireland.
23. Regulated institutions are normally required to undergo an external quality review at least every five years. The review seeks to evaluate changes from the baseline, rather than continually re-testing against the baseline, and also has an increasingly strong focus on enhancement, building on previous arrangements.
24. The requirement for external quality review addresses HEFCW's statutory responsibilities to ensure the quality assessment of education provided by and/or on behalf of regulated institutions. It provides the assurance required under the 2015 Act with regards to quality, to enable Fee and Access Plans to be approved, and therefore for regulated institutions to access student support for full-time undergraduate and PGCE courses. The focus on enhancement builds on current practice but addresses statutory obligations regarding quality enhancement which it is expected will be introduced under CTER.
25. The external quality review must comply with the ESG requirements for such reviews. The ESG enable higher education providers to demonstrate quality and increase transparency, helping to build mutual trust and better recognition of their qualifications, programmes and other provision. The ESG are used by institutions and quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area as a reference document for internal and external quality assurance systems in higher education.
26. Regulated institutions will need to keep HEFCW informed of any unfavourable outcomes from Professional, Statutory, and Regulatory Bodies (PSRB) review/inspection. HEFCW will determine on a case by case basis, in line with our published processes, whether these outcomes should trigger our inadequate quality procedures. This will include HEFCW considering:
  - the findings of these bodies where they make judgements which give us cause to believe that the quality of higher education provision is inadequate, or likely to become inadequate<sup>4</sup>;
  - whether there are implications for the institution as a whole, and also the volume of provision that is impacted by this outcome<sup>5</sup>;

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<sup>4</sup> In so doing, HEFCW will use those bodies' definitions of quality (ie what they define as in/adequate quality or the equivalent).

<sup>5</sup> In some cases the issues may be relevant at subject level only, but in other cases there could be institution-wide implications.

- whether it is appropriate for HEFCW to take further steps, depending on the scale of the problem, and the impact of this in relation to the mission and sustainability of the institution<sup>6</sup>.
27. If we think there are serious institutional implications, we will consider whether the provision of the institution falls under our statutory responsibilities regarding quality which is inadequate, or likely to become inadequate, and therefore whether we need to follow our Procedures for assessing the quality of education, and/or implement the Statement of Intervention.
28. Further information on the review requirements is available on our [website](#). Circular [W19/05HE](#) sets out the means by which the review judgements inform the assessment of risk.

#### Scrutiny of data

29. HEFCW scrutinises data, student views and other intelligence, and the information collected through HEFCW's annual accountability processes. Much of this is done via HEFCW's [assurance processes](#), as set out within the [Financial Management Code](#).
30. The data which HEFCW considers in relation to its regulatory responsibilities includes:
- Over/under-recruitment patterns;
  - Non-progression rates;
  - Non-completion rates;
  - National Student Survey outcomes;
  - Degree outcomes
  - Differential outcomes for students with different characteristics;
  - Employment outcomes.
31. Analysis will also include the identification of trends in data, together with institutions' track records, and the context in which higher education is operating. However, any judgements about the quality of provision will not be made solely on the use of data.
32. The use of data in this way will enable issues relating to protected groups under the Equalities Act 2010 to be identified. Our Quality Assessment Committee (QAC) considers this data for regulated institutions and provides advice on issues arising. This includes considering where institutions have achieved outcomes which are above benchmark, and where good practice might be shared. Advice from QAC will inform judgements in HEFCW's institutional risk review (IRR) process and Council decision-making.

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<sup>6</sup> It may be appropriate for us to remain engaged with what the reviewing/ inspecting body does next (re-review, re-inspection, etc).

### Annual assurance from the governing body

33. The governing bodies of regulated institutions are required to provide annual assurance to HEFCW in relation to quality. They will be asked to confirm the following statements annually.
- 1 The governing body has received a report taking account of the external quality review, and an action plan has been put in place and implemented as appropriate, in partnership with the student body.
  - 2 The methodologies used as a basis to improve the student academic experience and student outcomes are, to the best of our knowledge, robust and appropriate.
  - 3
    - a) *For providers with degree awarding powers*: The standards of awards for which we are responsible have been appropriately set and maintained.
    - b) *For providers without degree awarding powers*: The standards of awards for which we are responsible have been appropriately maintained.
  - 4 The governing body has considered a report on the annual dialogue between the institution and the Students' Union or equivalent, scrutinised student survey outcomes and confirmed that action plans had been put in place and implemented, in partnership with the student body.
  - 5 The governing body has received a copy of the relationship agreement between the institution and the Students' Union or equivalent, and a copy of the student charter, both of which have been reviewed within the past year.
  - 6 The governing body has effective oversight of degree outcomes and academic integrity.<sup>7</sup>
34. These statements collectively are designed to ensure that the institution maintains an appropriate focus both on enhancement and on working in partnership with the student body. If a governing body is unable to provide this assurance, then this may indicate that the provision is (likely to become) inadequate.<sup>8</sup> HEFCW will triangulate these statements as part of the triennial assurance visits (see below), and outcomes will be considered within the Institutional Risk Review process and Fee and Access Planning process.

### Triennial visits

35. HEFCW operates a quality assurance element as part of the triennial assurance visits to institutions.<sup>9</sup> This informs Council institutional visits and other engagement and assurance processes. It also informs our institutional risk review process, advised by QAC, and the subsequent annual risk letter to the provider. HEFCW also uses information from these visits in assessing Fee and

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<sup>7</sup> Applicable to returns made from 2021/22 onwards, reporting on activity in the previous academic year.

<sup>8</sup> Information on this is available at [Quality assessment, assurance and enhancement](#)

<sup>9</sup> Further information is available at [Quality assessment, assurance and enhancement](#)

Access Plans and monitoring information. Our engagement with institutions following this analysis is risk-based and proportionate.

36. The triennial visit involves visiting the institution and holding separate meetings with:
- The Students' Union and representatives;
  - Members of the Governing Body;
  - Members of the senior management team, including staff with responsibility for quality.
37. The visit provides an opportunity for the institution to provide information on its enhancement activities, in order to demonstrate how it meets the changing needs of students. HEFCW subsequently produces a report, which is provided in draft to the institution to enable them to highlight matters of accuracy. The final report is provided to QAC for advice, to Council to inform its engagement with institutions, and to QAA to inform the external quality review.
38. HEFCW expects the institutional governing body to consider this report at the earliest possible opportunity.

#### Working in partnership with students

39. Partnership arrangements between the student body and higher education providers in Wales are well developed. This provides a range of opportunities for students to raise issues relating to quality, including via institutional review, the institution's own processes, the governing body, or directly with HEFCW.
40. Gathering student views should be the role of the governing body, and it must demonstrate how it has done this at the point of submitting a Fee and Access Plan application.
41. In Wales, student partnership is achieved through:
- (i) Representation of students on the governing body and relevant institutional committees;
  - (ii) A report on the annual dialogue between the institution and the student body, eg via the annual quality report (AQR). It is good practice for the student body to define within the document how it perceives quality and the reasonable needs of students<sup>10</sup>;
  - (iii) A requirement for every regulated institution to have a student charter;
  - (iv) Confirmation that the National Student Survey results have been scrutinised and action plans put in place in partnership with the student body;
  - (v) Inclusion of students as peer reviewers in external quality reviews, and through engagement with the student body through the external review;
  - (vi) Engagement with the student body through the HEFCW triennial assurance visits.
- In addition, together with England and Northern Ireland, students are:
- (vii) members of the UKSCQA to oversee UK-wide approaches to quality;

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<sup>10</sup> HEFCW may request copies of these documents prior to triennial visits

- (viii) able to report concerns about an individual provider for investigation through HEFCW's [complaints](#) mechanism<sup>11</sup>.
42. Student organisations need to ensure that they represent the diverse student body, in order to ensure that the needs of all types of students are appropriately considered in their engagement with these processes, and with the development of Fee and Access Plans.

### **Tailored but rapid intervention where necessary**

#### Complaints procedures

43. The baseline regulatory requirements include the guidance set out in the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's Good Practice Framework. This ensures that individual complainants who are not content with the outcome of complaints or appeals to their institutions can take them to an independent body.
44. HEFCW has developed a procedure for [Complaints about institutions \(including concerns about standards and quality\)](#). The process enables anyone who is aware of issues relating to the quality of education as defined under Section 18(2) of the 2015 Act (ie quality which is, or is likely to become, inadequate) to raise these directly with HEFCW.
45. This covers matters relating to standards and student academic experience. The issue must also affect, or have the potential to affect, a group of students rather than an individual. The issue should also normally have been raised through the institution's own procedures, prior to raising a HEFCW complaint.
46. In the first instance, HEFCW officers will undertake whatever work is considered necessary in relation to complaints regarding quality. This may include a preliminary investigation of the issue, if deemed appropriate. Should a full quality investigation be considered necessary, then HEFCW will normally refer the matter to the QAA. The investigation will lead to a report, which will normally be published on HEFCW's website within 30 days of issue. HEFCW is working with the QAA to align unsatisfactory quality investigations with approaches in Scotland and Northern Ireland.
47. Where institutions think there is reason to believe that the quality of provision is inadequate or likely to become inadequate as identified through their own processes including via complaints, they must treat this as a notifiable event, and inform HEFCW as soon as possible.

#### Guidance

48. In addition, under the 2015 Act, HEFCW is empowered to issue or approve guidance about matters relevant to improving or maintaining the quality of

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<sup>11</sup> Complainants will normally need to complete the institution's complaints procedures before raising any issues with HEFCW. HEFCW's powers cover systematic issues regarding quality. Students may raise any other concerns with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

education provided by (or on behalf of) regulated institutions. This includes guidance on matters HEFCW will consider in determining whether the quality of education is (likely to become) inadequate. HEFCW must consult on such guidance, which must subsequently be taken into account by the governing bodies of regulated institutions.

#### HEFCW's Quality Assessment Committee

49. HEFCW's Quality Assessment Committee (QAC) advises HEFCW on matters relating to quality which is (likely to become) inadequate as set out in Circular W19/05HE. This includes advising on guidance prior to consultation, and on issues arising through other processes such as Fee and Access Planning, triennial review, or other engagements with institutions. Where relevant, our QAC may provide assurance to other committees such as the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and the Regulation Committee, which have oversight of linked regulatory processes.

#### HEFCW's Statement of Intervention

50. HEFCW's [Statement of intervention](#) outlines interventions that apply where HEFCW is satisfied that, the quality of education, or a particular course of education, provided by or on behalf of a regulated institution is inadequate or likely to become inadequate. This includes formal and informal interventions. Formal interventions include the ability to issue a Direction in Respect of Inadequate Quality to the governing body, directing it take steps (or not to take steps) to improve the quality of the education or course, or to prevent the quality of the education or course from becoming inadequate. In addition, HEFCW may take action to rectify the situation via Other Measures in Respect of Inadequate Quality. These Other Measures may be used to provide the governing body of the institution with advice or assistance in order to improve the quality of the education or course, or to prevent the quality of the education or course from becoming inadequate.

### **Strengthened arrangements to secure degree standards and their reasonable comparability across the UK, led by the sector representative bodies**

#### Degree standards

51. Work in this area is considered by the UKSCQA, which advises on progress and outcomes, and aims to ensure that the value of qualifications across the UK is maintained. This includes attempting to understand grade improvement vs grade inflation. To date work on this area has included:
- Universities UK and GuildHE work on [Understanding Degree Algorithms](#);<sup>12</sup>
  - [Principles for Effective Degree Algorithm Design](#);

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<sup>12</sup> With an example of analysis provided: [Degree classification in 2019-20](#)

- Publication of the [UK Degree Classification: Statement of intent](#);<sup>13</sup>
  - Publication by the QAA of Annex D to the [Qualifications Frameworks](#), which provides outcome classification descriptions for at level 6 qualifications.
52. The UK statement of intent expresses a commitment to protecting the value of UK degrees, signed by sector representative groups and endorsed by the UKSCQA. Through this statement institutions commit to:
- Ensure assessments continue to stretch and challenge students;
  - Review and explain how final degree classifications are calculated;
  - Support and strengthen the external examiners system;
  - Review and publish data and analysis on students' degree outcomes.
53. The document confirms that in Wales the statement is secured via the Quality Assessment Framework and elements of the external quality review. Regulated institutions in Wales have published statements articulating the outcomes of an internal review of degree standards. HEFCW encourages institutions to prepare degree classifications profiles setting out any quantitative trends in degree outcomes over five years, analysing student characteristics and subject mix, and to include this in further iterations of institutional degree outcomes statements, together with taking into account the most up to date QAA guidance. The statements should be published, and reviewed following any substantive changes noted in degree outcomes and/or degree algorithms.

#### Academic integrity

54. The QAA has coordinated work on essay mills, contract cheating, and plagiarism, including the [Academic Integrity Charter](#), to which all regulated Welsh higher education providers have signed up. This includes endorsing the Charter's 7 principles, to help providers develop their own policies and practices. The principles are:
- All members of a higher education provider's community are responsible for embedding and upholding academic integrity.
  - Taking a holistic 'whole community' approach, covering all provision.
  - To work together as a sector.
  - To engage with and empower students.
  - To empower and engage with staff.
  - To have consistent and effective institutional policies and practices.
  - To take responsibility as autonomous institutions for promoting and maintaining the quality and integrity of provision, and securing the academic standards of awards.
55. The QAA is also providing support to the Wales Integrity and Assessment Network, which is Chaired by the sector, and contributes to the QAA's UK Academic Integrity Network.

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<sup>13</sup> And reviews of progress, eg [Protecting the value of UK degrees: reviewing progress](#), as well as case studies

## External examiners

56. HEFCW, the Office for Students, and the Department for Employment in Northern Ireland have funded [Advance HE](#) work on external examining, including information on professional development and calibration. This resulted in the development of a professional development course for external examiners. HEFCW encourages institutions to engage with this professional development programme.
57. Universities UK, GuildHE and the QAA are working to support institutions in reviewing and improving their [external examining practices](#). This includes aspects such as:
- More consistent use and reference of sector recognised standards and national frameworks
  - Increased use of data and contextual information, supported by training
  - Review of the eligibility criteria and qualifications required for appointment of external examiners;
  - Increased transparency and consistency for institutions in processes for responding to external examiner reports;
  - Advice on a minimum specification of activities that external examiners should undertake and be consulted on;
  - Setting content and format requirements for training and development of external examiners.
58. UUK and GuildHE have also developed a set of external examiner principles, to which institutions are encouraged to sign up.

## **Protection of the international reputation of the UK higher education brand, including through the assurance of transnational education**

59. This is achieved partly through the convening of the UKSCQA, which provides UK-wide oversight of the common baseline regulatory requirements.
60. The QAA has developed a method for [quality evaluation and enhancement of UK transnational education](#). All regulated Welsh institutions with higher education provision in any country being reviewed by the QAA have committed to participating in international review. This will be proportionate to the type of provision, and so participation could vary, including options such as review visits, case studies, and desk-based evaluation. In exceptional cases HEFCW may agree that a provider should not be included, for example due to provision not yet being fully established.

## **Additional information**

61. HEFCW will keep the Quality Assessment Framework under review. This will include taking account of UK-wide developments in relation to quality, where they impact on HEFCW's regulatory role. This will enable evaluation of whether:
- the Framework meets the needs of Wales;

- any changes are required;
  - there should be an increased focus on continuous improvement;
  - elements of the Framework need to be adapted as a result of changes in other parts of the UK;
  - elements of best practice could be incorporated into the Framework.
62. In addition, HEFCW recognises that the reasonable needs of students will change over time, eg in response to new technologies or forms of provision. This means that the Framework may also need to evolve to take account of these changes.
63. As noted above, the establishment of CTER is likely to result in a review of this framework in due course.