

Background

1. This paper provides an overview of the future business for the UK-wide Standing Committee on Quality Assessment.

Discussion

2. Beyond the consideration and approval of the baseline regulatory requirements, the Standing Committee will take a more active role in considering how the quality aspects of the baseline regulatory requirements might develop to remain fit for purpose.
3. The funding and sector bodies have had initial discussions about how the Standing Committee could be utilised as a mechanism for determining the ongoing development of the Quality Code, as an important and shared UK-wide reference point. It will remain important for this process to be owned by the sector, and for work to be undertaken by the QAA. However, including the Standing Committee in the overarching governance arrangements is deliberately designed to allow the funding bodies to satisfy themselves that the code is developed in such a way that each funding body is able to discharge its own statutory responsibilities and to contribute appropriately to broader, UK wide developments in quality assessment.
4. The Standing Committee will also act as a steering group, ensuring there is a strong coordinating mechanism, for the UK-wide programmes of work on degree standards, support for governing bodies and international activities. The HEA, LFHE and QAA have to date been working with officers from the funding bodies to initiate these programmes of work. Progress is summarised briefly below:
 - a) HEA: A project board and an interim Academic Lead have been appointed. A permanent Academic Lead and a full-time project manager will be appointed shortly. Two workshops and follow-up online meetings have been held during September and October to scope and design a generic external examiner course. HEA will meet with piloting institutions (University of Liverpool, Oxford Brookes University and the Royal Northern College of Music) on 17 November 2016 to discuss an initial version of the course plan. The first pilot is likely to run in January 2017. Other providers have already

expressed an interest in early engagement and HEA are therefore considering extending the number of pilot institutions.

Methods for calibrating standards will initially be developed and piloted with the Royal Geographical Society, the English Association, the Health and Care Professions Council and the Veterinary Schools Council. HEA are in discussion with other subject associations and PSRBs about being involved in the pilot work. On 1 November 2016, a meeting will be held involving the Calibration Working Group, PSRBs and subject associations involved in the project work, to consider and explore different approaches to calibration, and consider the methods to be piloted.

- b) LFHE: A baselining exercise looking at existing approaches to academic governance and assurance practice is being initiated in the course of late October/early November, with envisaged completion in March 2017. 16 HE providers have been proposed as a representative sample and agreed with the three funders. The LFHE have identified the core background documentation that they need to draw upon and have prepared set out lines of enquiry for the baselining work. These have all been shared with and agreed by the three funders. Some early consultation has taken place with members of the Quality Strategy Network (QSN) through a QSN national event coinciding with the initiation of this Lot. The LFHE's immediate priority at this time is to make arrangements for the baselining fieldwork.
 - c) QAA: QAA have provided HEFCE with their first quarterly report on Lot 6 activities. Two planned deliverables for this period, a draft handbook on TNE review activities and a report evaluating QAA's current strategic engagement activities, are in progress. QAA suggest that an agreement on International strategic engagement activity, due to commence in quarter one following evaluation of QAA's current activity, should now happen in quarter two. They report current strategic engagement activity is being maintained in anticipation of further direction from HEFCE/Steering Group.
5. Now that the Standing Committee is operational we wish to involve Committee members more closely in the development and direction of the projects. Each organisation will provide more detailed progress reports to subsequent meetings of the Standing Committee, and we are working with each organisation to ensure that the Committee meeting schedule is aligned with their work plans. It is envisaged that the next detailed update from the projects will be discussed at the next meeting in January. If the Committee would find it helpful to have earlier sight of the more detailed project plans and timelines, these could be circulated by email before the next meeting.

6. Additionally, to ensure that the projects are able to maintain momentum, some work may be undertaken by correspondence between scheduled meetings. Where work is undertaken by correspondence, we will work with the Chair to identify which members are best placed to contribute to specific pieces of work. We will ensure that all members are updated on key developments.
7. To ensure that the Standing Committee is supported by an appropriate range of knowledge, experience and expertise, when relevant membership may be supplemented by expert members.
8. The next meeting of the Standing Committee will take place in January 2017. HEFCE staff will be in touch to canvass for dates shortly.