

UK-wide Standing Committee for Quality Assessment

Minutes of 18 January 2018 meeting at HEFCE Offices, Finlaison House, London

In attendance

Members:

Andrew Wathey (Chair, Northumbria University)
Emma Atkins (University of Manchester)
Douglas Blackstock (QAA)
Ben Calvert (University of South Wales), by phone
Amanda Chetwynd (QARSAC), by phone
Alison Cook (SFC), by phone
Steve Denton (Nottingham Trent University), by phone
Amatey Doku, NUS
Ben Elger (OIA)
Susan Lapworth (HEFCE), by phone
Lorna Milne (University of St Andrews), by phone
Cliona O'Neill (HEFCW)
Ali Orr (Professions Together)
Luke Renwick (Sheffield Hallam University)
Jon Reynard (Arts University Bournemouth)
Sam Roseveare (UUK)
John Rushforth (CUC)
Claire Thompson (Department for the Economy, NI), by phone
Kate Wicklow (GuildHE)

Secretariat:

Scott Court (Secretary)
Jess Bacon (Clerk)

Also attending:

Cathy Kerfoot (QAA)

Apologies

Arti Saraswat (AOC)
Andy Westwood (University of Manchester, University of Wolverhampton)
Alison Wheaton
David Jones

Item 1: Discussion of QAA's proposals for next steps in the Quality Code review, following the sector-wide consultation

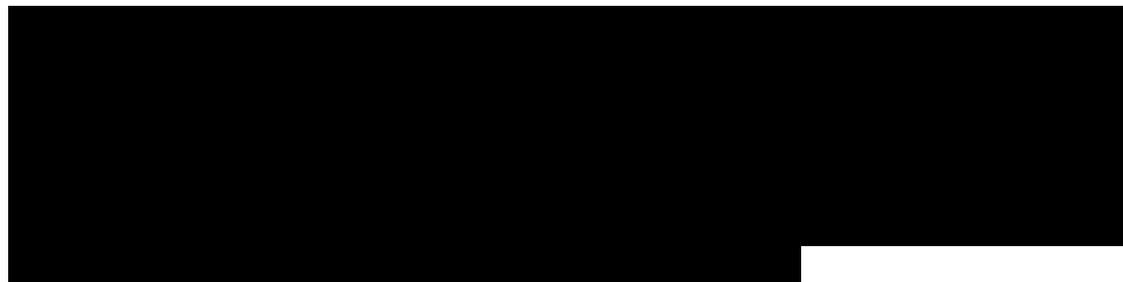
1. The Chair thanked members for their attendance at this extraordinary meeting of the Committee. As had previously been outlined in email correspondence, this meeting was an opportunity for members to offer early feedback on QAA's proposed next steps for revisions to the Quality Code. There would be a further opportunity for comment and discussion at the

next Committee meeting on 14 February, but it was important for QAA to start to firm up wording and structure in the days following this January meeting. The QAA would welcome comment in particular on the draft glossary and narrative, which had been provided as an illustration for the Committee on the form these accompanying documents would take. The Chair further extended his and the Committee's thanks to the QAA, for their hard work in preparing documentation so quickly for this meeting, following the consultation's closing date in December.

2. Cathy Kerfoot from the QAA was welcomed to the meeting, and she offered an introduction to the documentation the Committee was now asked to consider. This included: a cover paper outlining planned next steps; a high-level summary of the responses received from the sector to the consultation; options for remodelling the Code to take account of sector feedback; and a draft narrative on the scope, structure and purpose of the Code, which it is proposed would sit alongside the final iteration of the revised Code.

Summary of consultation responses

3. The Committee discussed the headlines from the consultation feedback, noting that the consultation had received 295 responses, a high response rate for a QAA consultation of this nature. The immediate split of responses between those in favour of the proposals and those less supportive was of interest; however, it was noted that many responses were not firmly in the yes/no camps, rather offering qualified responses which meant there were likely to be more areas of agreement between respondents than some of the data analysis initially suggests. The QAA will offer more detail on these nuanced responses in a report for the next Committee meeting.



Proposals for remodelling of the Code

5. Cathy Kerfoot again introduced the paper, outlining how the original structure had been amended to ensure that enhancement practices were given more prominence. The new structure allowed parity of approach for those providers who would engage with the enhancement practices, and those providers who would engage with the baseline or standard practices. This restructuring ensured that the revised Code remained fit for purpose across the nations. Also included in this paper was a proposed glossary, with the aim of adding some clarity to terms that the sector found problematic.

6. The Committee found the glossary extremely useful, although it was noted that some further discussion may be needed on the terms 'appropriate' and 'sufficient'. It would also be worth clarifying in the documentation that these definitions are those as understood by the QAA for the purposes of the Quality Code and its application, in order to avoid confusion

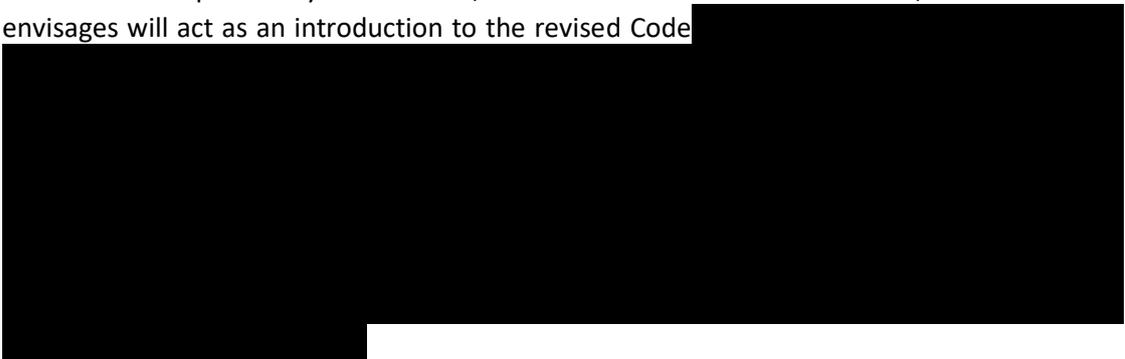
should the funding bodies and regulators use the same terms in different contexts. It was also felt that a definition of 'enhancement' should be included in the glossary.

7. There was some discussion on whether the Code should be making the links with the different nations' regulatory approaches more explicit, for example, in the English context – should the Code be clearer on potential links with TEF. Members concluded that the Code should remain an articulation of high-level principles that underpin HE across the UK. Each individual nation could then issue more guidance and detail on how the Code would be used in its regulatory approach.

8. Student representatives present were particularly supportive of the revised wording on the student engagement area, and the Committee noted that the consultation responses were in support of a proactive and meaningful interaction between provider and student. Representatives from the funding bodies and regulators across the nations discussed the regulatory approach that may be taken in each nation to underpin student engagement in all elements of the sector. The Committee is mindful that the Code must remain effective across all the nations' regulatory approaches. Further discussion will be needed in the area of student engagement in particular, to ensure the reformulated Code meets the needs of the four nations, and also responds to the main concerns raised through the consultation process. QAA agreed to take forward discussions with the funding bodies/regulators, and to keep the Committee members updated on progress.

Narrative on the scope, structure and purpose of the Code

9. As had previously been noted, this narrative is a draft document, which the QAA envisages will act as an introduction to the revised Code



10. The Chair thanked members for a productive discussion, noting that great progress has been made through the hard work of QAA, and contributions of members, to reach a pragmatic and clear set of documentation that responds to the sector's concerns. Thanks were again extended to QAA for providing the Committee with documentation so quickly. The Chair reminded members that the Committee will be asked to formally approve the next iteration of proposals at the upcoming 14 February meeting, and materials may be circulated in advance of this meeting for comment.

Item 2: Any Other Business

11. No other business was raised.

Item 3: Date of next meeting

12. The next meeting is on 14 February 2018, Finlaison House.

Not the original document. This document has been edited for publication.

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