

Report from the Quality Assessment Committee

Board's primary role in relation to this paper:

- A. Set strategy
- B. Set risk appetite
- C. Oversee performance
- D. Understand context

Purpose

1. The board is kept informed of the work of its Quality Assessment Committee (QAC) by receiving a report on the outcomes of each meeting. This report summarises the outcomes of the QAC meeting held on 22 September 2023.

Recommendations

2. The board is invited to:
 - a. Receive the report of the committee.

B3 prioritisation categories for the 2023-24 cycle

3. The Deputy Director of Quality presented the possible categories for prioritisation for student outcomes investigations for the 2023-24 year. Those categories included all measures (i.e. continuation, completion, and progression), full-time provision, 'first-degree' and 'other undergraduate' provision (levels four and five), first-degree with integrated foundation years, business and management and subcontracted-in and subcontracted-out students.
4. The Deputy Director of Quality noted that the OfS hopes to publish the prioritised categories in October, and begin the selection process and assessments on a staggered timeline as the 2022 investigations are completed. Provider selection may start as early as November 2023 but could be delayed to accommodate new data due to arrive in April 2024.

Presentation of TEF 2023 outcomes

5. The Head of Student Outcomes presented the committee with an overview of the outcomes of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2023.

6. The committee discussed the communication of the TEF 2023 results, particularly the cases where student experience and student outcomes ratings were different from one another. The Head of Student Outcomes and panel members involved in provider assessment work offered possible explanations for this, including the lag of data used to determine student outcomes, data suggesting finely balanced performance, and contexts where student cohorts face particular challenges affecting student outcomes. The Head of Student Outcomes assured members that providers would not be able to communicate the rating for one aspect alone, but would have to communicate either only the overall rating, or the overall rating along with both of the aspect ratings.

Update on quality investigations and planning for 2023-24

7. The Head of Quality and Standards updated the committee on the progress of quality investigations into compliance with ongoing conditions of registration B1, B2 and B4 for 2022-23. He noted that there had been 11 quality investigations over 2022-23 and that two assessment reports had been published relating to business and management courses at the University of Bolton and London South Bank University. The Head of Quality and Standards noted that the University of Bolton assessment found areas of concern.
8. Exempt from publication.
9. Members of the committee who had been lead assessors on some of these quality assessments reflected on their experience. They felt that there had been good OfS support during the process and that the process had been thoughtful given the complex nature of the B conditions of registration.
10. The committee discussed the importance of communicating these assessment reports. The Head of Quality and Standards noted the positive coverage in sector press and members noted the positive nature of providers' responses to the reports.
11. The Head of Quality and Standards outlined the proposed approach to determining the 2023-24 programme of investigations into compliance with conditions B1, B2 and B4.

DAPs review and provisional timetable for 2024

12. The Head of Degree Awarding Powers and University Title provided an update to the committee on the approach to degree awarding powers (DAPs), as the Quality Assessment Committee (QAC) takes on its role in giving advice on these assessments.
13. The committee discussed a meeting schedule for early 2024. Members expressed a desire to see cases in the context of one another and a subsequent preference for longer and less frequent meetings. However, members remained open to trying new approaches to scheduling meetings depending on the early case load.
14. The committee discussed two proposals relating to how it could approach giving DAPs advice. The first was to take a 'lead reader' approach in presenting cases at committee meetings. The second was for officers to provide summary sheets on assessments, when shared with the committee, for the committee to formulate its advice. Members expressed approval for either of these approaches.

15. The Head of Degree Awarding Powers and University Title asked members to alert OfS staff to any conflicts of interest members may have in relation to the list of upcoming cases. Members discussed the complexities of potential conflicts of interest in upcoming cases, including the requirements for a quorum relating to cases before the committee. The Head of Degree Awarding Powers and University Title explained the requirements under section 46 of the Higher Education Research Act 2017 and agreed to further investigate approaches taken to conflicts of interest relating to the TEF and to present the committee with clear guidance before the committee considers its first DAPs case.

Paper publication

16. To be published with board papers, with shaded sections redacted.