



## **Report from the Quality Assessment Committee**

### **Issue**

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. The attached report summarises the outcomes of the QAC meeting held on 12 September 2019. This report will be supplemented by an oral report given by the deputising chair of the committee.

### **Recommendations**

2. The board is invited to receive the report of the Quality Assessment Committee.

### **Further information**

3. Available from Martin Coleman.

## Quality Assessment Committee report

September 2019

### Quality and standards update

1. The committee noted that in June 2019 the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) had adopted a description of sector-recognised standards above the threshold for bachelor's qualifications at level 6 as a 'sector-recognised standard' for the purposes of HERA.
2. The committee was informed that the OfS intended to consult under the provisions of section 75 of HERA on bringing this description into its regulatory framework, following the advice that it had received from the QAC at its May meeting and the board at its July meeting.

### Briefing on OfS regulation in shared spaces

#### *The OfS role in the regulation of technical education and apprenticeships*

3. The committee received a paper on the key developments in the regulation of higher technical education (HTE) as set out in the government's Higher Technical Education consultation.
4. The committee discussed the proposals contained within the HTE consultation and considered that the objectives set out within the consultation could largely be accommodated within the OfS's principles - and risk-based regulatory approach. However, the consultation had expressed a particular wish to signal HTE provision that was of excellent quality. The committee noted that the OfS uses section 25 of HERA to deliver the Teaching Excellence and Student Opportunities Framework (TEF) to promote and signal excellence in teaching and outcomes beyond the high baseline for quality regulated by the conditions of registration. The committee considered that it would be helpful to explore further the extent to which section 25 could be used in the HTE context to similarly signal excellence beyond the baseline.

#### *The OfS role in the regulation of apprenticeships*

5. The committee received a paper on the OfS's approach to the quality assessment and regulation of apprenticeships focusing on 4 main areas of activity:
  - a. The collaborative work being undertaken with Ofsted on the regulation of Levels 4-5 apprenticeships in registered providers.
  - b. The OfS approach to regulating level 6-7 apprenticeships in registered providers.
  - c. The new approach to quality assessment of Level 6-7 apprenticeships in unregistered providers.
  - d. External quality assurance of end point assessments for apprenticeships.

5. The committee was informed that the OfS will undertake a thematic review of apprenticeship provision in higher education during 2019-20. The committee asked the OfS to pay particular attention to the role and experience of the apprentice within the apprenticeship and to the wider value of the qualification beyond the employer offering the apprenticeship.

#### Monitoring and intervention for condition B3 (quality: student outcomes)

6. The committee received a paper on the approach that the OfS is taking in its assessment of whether registered providers continue to meet general ongoing condition B3. Assessment of this condition was taking place because new data had become available since the registration decisions for a large number of providers. In addition, a significant number of providers had submitted improvement or action plans to the OfS as a result of mitigations imposed as part of the registration process.
7. The committee discussed the effectiveness of improvement and action plans in delivering improvements in outcomes for real students. Members suggested that providers might benefit from drawing on external expertise in the development of their action plans, perhaps from providers that had previously faced similar challenges.
8. The committee agreed that whilst it was important for providers to develop clear and credible improvement plans, these alone would not be sufficient. Providers would need to be cognisant of the challenges associated with implementing action plans within their individual contexts and adapt the plan as needed. In this context any guidance issued by the OfS, and the wording of requirements in any specific conditions, could usefully set out expectations about oversight of implementation of a plan. The OfS reiterated that its focus, and that of the provider, must be on the use of a plan as a tool to drive improvements in student outcomes.

#### DQB monitoring

9. The committee received a paper on the progress that the QAA has made in relation to delivery of activities undertaken as the DQB.
10. It was noted that the QAA has undergone significant restructuring to perform its functions as the DQB.
11. The committee received the following information related to the DQB's performance during the period from 1 April to 30 June 2019:
  - a. Schedule 2 of the designation agreement, which lists the activities and milestones for 2019-20.
  - b. The DQB's quarterly report to the OfS for the reporting period.
  - c. The OfS's note of the most recent quarterly meeting between the OfS and the DQB.

- d. The OfS's log of the DQB's progress against the milestones as set out in the current draft of the 2019-20 designation agreement.

Future committee meetings

12. The next meeting will take place on 5 December 2019.