

Report from the Quality Assessment Committee

Purpose

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 16 September 2024.

Recommendations

2. The board is invited to receive the report of the committee.

Discussion of degree awarding powers applications

3. The Head of Degree Awarding Powers and University Title presented four cases to the committee.

Future plans for temporary extensions on variation of DAPs cases

4. The Head of Degree Awarding Powers and University Title discussed some of the lessons learned in authorising and varying degree awarding powers and how those lessons might improve future assessments. Experience has shown that not all variation assessments can be considered low risk, and assessments can present complexities. In many cases providers have not used their powers for the full period of their existing authorisation, or have undergone structural or other business changes, all of which can mean a fuller assessment is needed.
5. The OfS always considers how to approach assessments in the most effective way. For example, although some assessments have been initially scoped as 'desk-based' in order to reduce the burden on providers, the OfS is finding that assessment teams can sometimes close off lines of enquiry more quickly through short meetings with senior management teams

rather than requesting additional documentary evidence. Members agreed that this approach was sensible.

6. The Head of Degree Awarding Powers and University Title also highlighted a new approach to the timings of DAPs variation assessments that will bring the authorisation and assessment of time-limited DAPs in line with the policy intent of the regulatory framework. The OfS intends to make any time-limited award for four years (instead of the approach currently taken of authorising for three years). This would result in assessments occurring towards the end of the three-year review cycle (instead of after two years of operation), which will allow time for the provider to demonstrate its ongoing compliance with the DAPs criteria.
7. In addition to taking this approach for new time-limited awards, the OfS intends to extend some current time-limited awards to ensure providers have sufficient time to operate their DAPs and build up a robust evidence base, before they are assessed to remove any time limit. This will mean advice being sought from the committee on such cases. The committee was supportive of this approach

Quality compliance assessments: summary report

8. The Head of Quality and Standards presented a paper updating the committee on quality compliance assessments.
9. The committee discussed ongoing recruitment to the assessor pool. The Head of Quality and Standards reported to the committee that the discussion from the March 2024 meeting would feed into efforts to recruit further assessors on the future.

Paper publication

10. To be published with the board papers.