October 2026

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. This paper provides a report of the Quality Assessment Committee (QAC) meeting held on 13 July 2026.

Issue

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

Discussion

3. The committee welcomed OfS Chair Edward Peck and joint Chief Executive, Ruth Hannant to the meeting. Ruth emphasised the importance of a more collaborative approach to sector engagement while maintaining a focus on protecting students and addressing lower-quality provision.

4. Members discussed the proposed Stage 2 consultation on the OfS's integrated approach to quality assessment, following publication of the Stage 1 consultation outcomes in June 2026. The feedback informed the proposed version for board consideration. [Exempt from publication].

5. The committee considered a quarterly data report on the progress of quality and standards assessments across different assessment types. Members welcomed a revised format which focuses on performance against assessment timescales, causes of delays, findings and regulatory outcomes, providing greater insight into the effectiveness of quality assessment activity. [Exempt from publication]. The committee requested that there be future analysis of the performance of providers that have recently been granted degree awarding powers (DAPs). Information about quality and standards assessors and their training would also be brought to a future meeting.

6. The committee was reminded about the findings of a November 2025 OfS report which examined degree classification algorithms. The report identified concerns about two practices: discounting students' lowest marks and using multiple algorithms to award the most favourable classification. The OfS considers that providers using these approaches may struggle to demonstrate compliance with Condition B4. As part of its follow-up work, the OfS is surveying providers with degree awarding powers about their use of classification algorithms. The OfS had discussed these issues with sector bodies, including Universities UK (UUK), GuildHE, University Alliance, MillionPlus and the Academic Registrars Council. While there was broad acceptance of the report's concerns, some stakeholders defended discounting because they saw it as important for access and participation and questioned the focus on discounting and multiple algorithms rather than other algorithmic practice.

7. The committee considered a paper laying out future DAPs cases for consideration at QAC meetings during 2026 and 2027, in addition to assigning lead readers for upcoming cases. Timelines are based on the expected progress of the assessments and are subject to change, particularly if cases are not started when expected, for example due to complexity in our eligibility and suitability checks at the start of any assessment. Members were supportive of robust pre-commencement work.

Paper publication

8. To be published externally along with the board papers subject to appropriate redactions.

For further information, please contact Simon Levine, Chair of the Quality Assessment Committee or Jean Arnold, Interim Director of Quality and Access; jean.arnold@officeforstudents.org.uk.