

Meeting	Agenda Item	Reference No
13/03/09	23	HEFCW/09/28

1 Issue

- 1.1 This paper attaches the final report of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) on progress towards meeting the activities for 2007/08 as set out in the Service Level Agreement (SLA) between QAA, Higher Education Wales (HEW) and HEFCW. Council is invited to note this report.
- 1.2 Through the SLA, HEFCW is able to meet its statutory remit to 'secure that assessment is made of the quality of education provided in institutions for whose activities it provides, or is considering providing, financial support'.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 The Council is invited to:
 - i. Note the final report of the QAA on progress towards meeting the activities for 2007/08 set out in the SLA;

3 Timing for decisions

- 3.1 There are no timing implications for this paper.

4 Council members' interests

- 4.1 Professor Tony Hazell is a member of the QAA board

5 Further information

- 5.1 Contact Dr Cliona O'Neill (Tel 029 2068 2283 E-mail: cliona.oneill@hefcw.ac.uk)

6 Background

- 6.1 Since the establishment of the QAA in 1997, HEFCW has operated an annual SLA with the Agency and through this is able to meet its statutory remit.
- 6.2 From 2003/04 a Memorandum of Understanding was operated between HEFCW, HEW and the QAA to provide a framework for working relationships, with the aim of ensuring efficient and effective cooperation in relation to the Institutional Review (IR) process for Wales, and confirming the scope of activities to be undertaken in Wales. Based on this, a SLA was drawn up between the QAA, HEFCW and HEW covering the period 2006/07 to the end of the current review cycle (2008/09).
- 6.3 The annual report of the QAA for 2008/09 will be provided to Council in 2009/10 and will be the last for the current process. The QAA is in the process of producing a publication on the outcomes of the IR cycle in Wales, which will also be provided to Council in 2009/10.

7 QAA Progress Report 2007/08

- 7.1 **Annex A** presents the 2007/08 annual report of the QAA towards meeting the activities set out in the SLA for 2006/09 and the annual agreement for 2007/08. This includes a report on the achievement of QAA in delivering its services in Wales and a breakdown of expenditure against the headings of the payment schedule for Wales for 2007/08. The breakdown of expenditure indicates an overspend for Wales in 2007/08, the cost of which is borne by the QAA.
- 7.2 Activities undertaken by the QAA in 2007/08 included:
 - 7.2.1 three IRs: University of Wales Institute, Cardiff; Cardiff University; and Swansea University (reports are available at <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/reports/instIndex.asp>);
 - 7.2.2 two reviews of directly funded higher education provision in further education institutions: Coleg Llandrillo Cymru and Coleg Sir Gâr;
 - 7.2.3 one mid-cycle review: University of Wales, Newport;
 - 7.2.4 introduction of procedures for identifying and handling causes for concern in higher education in Wales.
- 7.3 The annual report has been discussed by HEFCW's Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) and is available on the QAA website (<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/progress/hefcwReports.asp>). No separate meeting of the Quality Assessment Committee was held to discuss the report, but as it is a subcommittee of the LTC, members were invited to comment at the LTC meeting.

Council is invited to note the final report of the QAA on progress towards meeting the activities for 2007/08 set out in the SLA
- 7.4 HEFCW, HEW and the QAA are working jointly to develop a SLA to cover 2009/10 to 2014/15. This will be provided to the new Learning and Teaching Committee and Council when available.

8 Financial implications

- 8.1 The cost to HEFCW for the QAA's services in 2007/08 was £226,100. This was paid from the Learning and Teaching Fund.
- 8.2 Council was informed at its September 2008 meeting that the cost to HEFCW for the QAA in 2008/09 would be £214,329 (item HEFCW/08/CE5 refers).
- 8.3 The Chief Executive's report requests funding for the QAA with a ceiling value of £180,000 for 2009/10 (item HEFCW/09/CE2 refers).

9 Communications implications

- 9.1 There is press interest in the outcomes of reviews for individual institutions and their partners.
- 9.2 There was substantial press coverage in summer 2008 on 'Outcomes of institutional audit' publications for England, and the standards of higher education provision. The work of the QAA is therefore under scrutiny and is of interest to the press.

10 Diversity and Equal Opportunities implications

- 10.1 The QAA is required, under the terms and conditions of the SLA, to have an appropriate equal opportunities policy and take account of the requirements of the HEFCW Equality Scheme, seeking opportunities to promote equality in line with the requirements placed on the UK funding councils.
- 10.2 It is also required to meet the requirements of its own, HEIs' and the HEFCW Welsh Language Schemes, including ensuring that it establishes and maintains an appropriate organisational capacity in the Welsh language.

11 Risk Assessment

- 11.1 Details of identified risks arising from the issues covered by the paper are provided in the table below:

RISK	ACTION TO ADDRESS RISK
If the QAA were not funded the Council would be unable to meet its statutory remit to 'secure that assessment is made of the quality of education provided in institutions for whose activities it provides, or is considering providing, financial support'.	Provision of funding to the QAA; discussion with the QAA regarding minimisation of costs.
The QAA does not deliver its services effectively	The QAA has an observer on our learning and teaching committee, submit progress reports to that committee, and also submit annual reports. We hold regular liaison meetings with the QAA, in addition to Chief Executive

	meetings, which provide opportunities to discuss any issues and concerns as they arise.
Provision in Wales is of lower standard than that in the remainder of the UK	The annual report enables an evaluation of the performance of the QAA in Wales over the previous year. We request them to keep us updated on developments internationally and in other countries of the UK, so that we can take account of them as they arise (eg Causes for Concern policy).