

The Higher Education Quality Assurance and Standards Framework for Wales

To: Heads of higher education institutions in
Wales
Principals of further education colleges in
Wales

Summary: This circular sets out the core principles and
requirements of the quality assurance and
standards framework to be adopted for higher
education in Wales from 2003/04 onwards.

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■ INTRODUCTION

- 1 This circular sets out the core principles, requirements and key features of the quality assurance and standards framework to be adopted for higher education (HE) in Wales from 2003/04 onwards.
- 2 It provides an analysis of the responses to the consultation about the framework (Circular W02/50HE), an indication of HEFCW progress to date, and an outline of preparatory activities planned for 2003.
- 3 The QAA will initiate a consultation process on the detailed operational description/handbook for the framework in Wales, in March 2003.

■ BACKGROUND

- 4 Circular W02/50HE 'Consultation on the Higher Education Quality Assurance and Standards Framework for Wales' was distributed to the sector in July 2002. The Circular was sent to all higher education institutions and further education institutions (FEIs) in Wales, and a range of other interested parties. The Circular set out for consultation the principles and requirements of the new HE quality framework for Wales.
- 5 The framework was developed by the HEFCW Quality Working Group. This group, consisting of representatives from across the HE sector in Wales, including the National Union of Students, was established by the Council, to develop proposals for longer-term arrangements for quality assurance in the higher education sector in Wales.
- 6 The proposed framework emerged from a context where all subject provision in Wales has been found, through a process of teaching quality assessment, to be of at least 'satisfactory' quality, with around 36% designated as 'excellent'. This gave the Working Group a high level of confidence in the quality and standards

of subject provision on offer in Wales and formed the basis for developing a less burdensome process for the future.

- 7 Circular W02/50HE also made reference to a future HEFCW consultation exercise associated with the establishment of mechanisms for rewarding quality enhancement and teaching excellence. Following Ministerial guidance in January 2003, this matter will be the subject of a separate consultation exercise initiated in February 2003.
- 8 The consultation process on the new framework for Wales ended on 18 October 2002. Twenty responses were received. Feedback was also elicited through a seminar held on 9 November 2002, on the proposed quality assurance arrangements for HE provision provided in FEIs. A list of respondents to the Circular is attached as **Annex A**. Recommendations arising from the seminar were considered by the Quality Working Group at its meeting in November 2002, alongside a detailed summary of consultation responses. This informed the deliberations of the Group in making recommendations to the Council.

■ CONSULTATION RESPONSES

- 9 There was broad support from respondents on the proposal for an institutional-review approach to quality assurance and academic standards. In particular, there was universal endorsement for the removal of QAA subject-level reviews in Wales. The proposed core principles and requirements were widely supported, with respondents welcoming the opportunity for a Wales dimension to be explicit in the processes and procedures being established. Repeated emphasis was however placed upon the need for comparability of judgements with England.
- 10 Following extensive consideration by the Quality Working Group of sector comments and responses to Circular

W02/50HE, a detailed list of recommendations to the Council was prepared, [attached as **Annex B**].

- 11 These recommendations were subsequently approved in full by the Council at its meeting in December 2002, subject to the need to undertake a general overview of the new framework arrangements for Wales two to three years following their implementation. Following Council approval, the proposed framework for Wales was submitted to the Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning for consideration and approval.
- 12 In January 2003, the Minister expressed support for the direction proposed by HEFCW in establishing a new quality assurance and standards framework for HE in Wales.
- 13 The Minister confirmed the fundamental importance of potential students and other stakeholders continuing to be able to compare institutions across the whole UK. The proposal for comparability of outcome judgements across the UK, which is central to the new framework for Wales, was therefore welcomed.
- 14 The Minister also confirmed that the quality of individual institutions and the sector as a whole must be beyond reproach. She expressed her contentment that the HEFCW emphasis on 'proportionality' balanced rigorous examination with a light touch approach.

■ **THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AND STANDARDS FRAMEWORK**

- 15 A description of the core principles and requirements of the new quality assurance and standards framework, together with the key features of the process are set out in **Annex C**. As noted above, the detailed operational description/handbook for the framework is currently being developed by the QAA.

- 16 The framework will involve each institution publishing a range of regulated information about quality and standards, which in turn will be verified through the audit process. In addition, a much wider range of information will be routinely available to the auditors to assist the review process. A full list of the information to be published and that to be made available to the auditors is attached as **Annex D**.

■ **AREAS OF DIVERGENCE**

- 17 The framework developed for Wales differs from that in England/Northern Ireland in two key respects:
 - ⇒ The detailed audit trails to be followed in England will be structured around samples of 10% of the subject provision in each institution in such a way as to enable, in time, general statements to be made about subject areas across England. The scale of provision in Wales (with individual subjects often available at only a handful, or fewer, institutions) makes it unrealistic to proceed meaningfully in this way. The framework for Wales will be sufficiently flexible to allow review teams to diverge from the previously identified areas of discussion, to address any emerging or unforeseen areas of concern during the review visit.
 - ⇒ Information requirements in England include the introduction of a new process of preparation and publication of summaries of external examiners' reports. This proposal would not form a requirement of the frameworks adopted in Scotland or Wales. The Minister and the Council have agreed that summaries of external examiners' reports would not add any value to the quality process in Wales. The Council will however closely observe the English experience on this matter, and will consider whether its own position needs review in two years time. It was also agreed that the preparation and publication of summaries of internal annual and periodic monitoring reports would not form a requirement of the framework in Wales.

■ STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

18 Student evaluations will continue to form an integral part of quality assurance and enhancement activities undertaken in all HEIs across Wales. Institutions will be required in the framework to demonstrate evidence of the range and effectiveness of internal student feedback mechanisms, including the use of student representation structures, staff/student liaison groups, student feedback questionnaires, and the involvement of students in internal quality review exercises.

19 In order to meet the need for robust student information, the Council is supporting, in principle, the introduction of a UK wide annual student satisfaction survey, which will be summarised and published. The Council is working with colleagues in the other Funding Councils on its detailed development. We are also supporting the development of additional guidance for institutions across the UK on processes for obtaining feedback from students in an effective and consistent manner.

■ PREPARATORY ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT 2003

20 An extensive programme of activities organised by the Council and the QAA to inform and support the sector to engage with the framework will be undertaken throughout 2003. This will enable the first institutional audits to commence in 2004. The timetable for institutional audits in Wales will be established by the QAA in consultation with the sector.

21 The programme of preparatory activities is currently under consideration between QAA and HEFCW. However, subject to final agreement, the following activities are proposed during 2003:

⇒ A QAA consultation exercise on the operational description/handbook for

Wales will be initiated in March 2003. This process will include a QAA consultation seminar in April 2003 to elicit comments directly from the sector on the detailed operational description/handbook, to be launched by the QAA in May 2003.

⇒ An intensive two-day seminar for key institutional staff in June 2003 to launch the new operational description/handbook in Wales and to assist institutions in their preparations for engagement with the requirements of the new framework.

22 Subject to discussion between the QAA, HEW and HEFCW, the following activities are proposed for the academic year 2003/04 and continuing throughout the cycle:

⇒ institution-specific training and support activities for (i) Institutional staff and students, (ii) and Institutional facilitators, throughout Autumn term 2003. These sessions will be used as a mechanism to enhance a sense of ownership and engagement, at all levels of the institution, with the new framework for Wales.

⇒ QAA training and support for each institution prior to the commencement of the timetabled institutional review during the six-year cycle.

23 Further information about the range of preparatory activities will be circulated, once agreements have been confirmed with the QAA.

24 Further advice on the new framework can be obtained from:

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**LIST OF RESPONDENTS TO CIRCULAR W02/50HE
'CONSULTATION ON THE HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE AND
STANDARDS FRAMEWORK FOR WALES'**

Aberdare College
Cardiff University
Coleg Ceredigion
Coleg Gwent
Coleg Llandrillo
Equality Challenge Unit
Institute of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, Wales
North East Wales Institute of Higher Education
Pembrokeshire College
SKILL: National Bureau for Students with Disabilities
Swansea Institute of Higher Education
University of Glamorgan
University of Wales College of Medicine
University of Wales College, Newport
University of Wales Institute, Cardiff
University of Wales Registry
University of Wales, Aberystwyth
University of Wales, Bangor
University of Wales, Lampeter
University of Wales, Swansea

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES TO CIRCULAR W02/50HE 'CONSULTATION ON THE HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE AND STANDARDS FRAMEWORK FOR WALES'

1 CORE PRINCIPLES AND REQUIREMENTS

- 1.1 Broad support was expressed for the four core principles, identified in the consultation process as being fundamental to the establishment of a new quality assurance and standards framework for Wales. Respondents welcomed the fact that quality enhancement and development featured prominently within the document, providing HEIs with an opportunity to drive this agenda forward on an institutional basis. The intention to base the new review approach on the quality assurance and standards mechanisms that are currently embedded throughout higher education institutions across Wales was considered to be particularly appropriate. Furthermore, the proposed principles were seen to provide an opportunity for HEIs across Wales to measure and publicise 'value added' information that is particularly important given the ongoing commitment in Wales to equality of opportunity, and the recruitment of non-traditional entry students in line with the Welsh Assembly Government's widening participation agenda. The establishment of an efficient and cost-effective process was felt to be particularly desirable. Respondents added that an effective quality assurance framework in Wales should also explicitly foster the sharing of good practice across HEIs in Wales.
- 1.2 Respondents expressed unanimous support for the general requirements of the new framework in Wales, as outlined in the consultation document. The majority of respondents identified support for the proposed framework and welcomed the opportunity for a Welsh dimension to be explicit in the processes and procedures being established. However, repeated emphasis was placed upon the need for confidence in the processes and procedures employed across Wales to ensure comparability of judgements with other parts of the UK. This was regarded as being essential for future competitiveness.
- 1.3 In the case of institutional failure to assure quality and standards following re-audit, many institutions expressed support for HEFCW intervention to be proportionate to risk. It was suggested, that in the first instance, each institution should be given an opportunity to take firm action, with HEFCW intervention required as a second stage of action following failure at re-audit. Furthermore, it was expressed that where significant problems were identified within a review, and it was clear that they were limited to a particular theme or area, a full re-audit of the whole institution would not be necessary, but rather a re-audit would focus attention on specific themes and/or areas.

2 THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AND STANDARDS FRAMEWORK

- 2.1 ***'Departmental, discipline and theme trails will be identified at the time of the audit visit (i.e. with little advanced warning)'***
Respondents felt that the consultation document recognised the maturity of institutional quality assurance systems across HEIs in Wales. Therefore it was agreed almost unanimously that subject engagements were no longer necessary in Wales as the sector itself is accepted as being robust, reliable and rigorous. Greater clarity was however requested regarding the scope and timetable for identifying the discipline and theme trails to be undertaken during the review visit. Respondents maintained that a model, similar to that developed for England, should be adopted, wherein review trails would be identified during the briefing visit that occurs at least four working weeks before the review visit itself. Clarification of the supporting documentation required to be submitted in advance of the review visit, alongside the institutional self-evaluation document, was also requested, as was confirmation that review trailing would not require the production of subject based self-evaluation documents. It was noted that careful attention would also need to be given to the trails which involve both the University of Wales and its colleges.
- 2.2 ***'There will be no reporting of judgements at anything other than institutional level'***
All respondents expressed support that there would be no reporting of judgements at anything other than institutional level. Where auditors identified a weakness within a particular discipline area, it was suggested that the institution should be informed so that it may take specific as well as systemic action.

- 2.3 ***'Non-subject specialist auditors will be trained to scrutinise institutional processes and procedures'***
Respondents generally endorsed the intention to use only non-subject specialist auditors within the new framework for Wales. Emphasis was placed upon the importance of non-specialist auditors receiving training relating to the particular context in Wales and, of course, relating to an understanding of the University of Wales structures. A consensus was expressed that auditor expertise should be at the level of the institutional process and procedures rather than at subject level, with auditors having institutional management experience. The composition of each review team was also seen to be of crucial importance, and should itself aim to meet the highest standards of equality and diversity.
- 2.4 ***'Comparison of judgements with other parts of the UK may be difficult if institutional structures (rather than standard JACS groupings) are utilised'***
The majority of respondents welcomed the desire to follow institutional structures rather than attempting to follow JACS codes. Respondents expressed the view that the sample based subject specific activity proposed for England would not afford consistent subject level judgements across the English HE sector. As a consequence, the use of institutional structures rather than JACS codes should not represent a cause for concern in terms of comparison of judgements with other parts of the UK.
- 2.5 ***'Views are also invited as to whether there are any circumstances whereby a mechanism for reviewing subject level provision would be required at the request and expense of an individual HEI'***
Institutions widely rejected the prospect of a mechanism being available for reviewing subject level provision, at the request and expense of an individual HEI. Respondents did not consider that there would be any occasions where reviewing subject level provision would be appropriate or required. Indeed, many took the view that the Funding Council should underline its confidence in the review approach proposed and not make subject review provision available.

3 INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS

- 3.1 The majority of recipients agreed that the information requirements set out within the documentation were acceptable. The information required in Part A and Part B was seen to be the minimum requirements, and additional information could be provided on institution-specific issues where felt necessary. While respondents seemed to accept the documentation proposed in Part A, some concern was expressed about the requirements of Part B, particularly the validity of external examiner reports, student and employer satisfaction surveys.
- 3.2 The publication of summary statements of the results of periodic programme and departmental reviews was believed to be of limited value to most members of the public, who would lack the contextual knowledge to interpret such reports. However, full original reports would be provided as part of the datasets available to auditors. It was suggested that a requirement for detailed information to be published on Welsh medium provision should also be included.
- 3.3 The issue of whether summaries of external examiner reports should be published in Wales elicited the most diverse response in the consultation exercise. Respondents from HEIs were divided between those who would agree to the publication of external examiner summaries, and those who felt that there was nothing to be gained by summarising and publishing external examiner reports. Respondents in favour of summaries being prepared and published argued the case on the basis that it was essential to ensure consistency of approach with English HEIs in this area. The case against the publication of summary reports focused upon the facts that summaries would do nothing to assist internal or external quality assurance and enhancement practices, would present very little additional information to stakeholder groups, and would place increased pressure upon external examiners who are already asked nationally to do too much for too little. The additional functions implied by publishing external examiner reports, or by preparing summaries of their reports, would provide a serious challenge to the process of identifying, recruiting and retaining external examiners. A strong belief was expressed that the nature of the expectations placed on external examiners if these additional requirements were implemented would present challenges to the external examiner system and the culture would change in the direction of providing a less useful quality check than is currently enjoyed.
- 3.4 Universal support was expressed regarding the involvement of students in quality assurance and enhancement activities, and the proposal to include data on the involvement of students in such activities. Respondents outlined in great detail the range of mechanisms currently employed in each institution to ensure that student feedback forms an integral part of each institution's quality assurance processes. The majority of respondents emphasised the importance of institutional autonomy being upheld regarding the range of student feedback

mechanisms employed within each institution, the results of which should not be published. Many institutions stated that they would welcome guidelines at a national level about the effective use of student evaluations to ensure greater consistency and therefore greater confidence in the outcomes of student evaluations. Support was widely expressed for the participation by students in Wales in a cross-border student satisfaction survey, provided that the administrative burdens were proportionate. A cross-border survey was generally considered to be preferable to an all-Wales exercise, to avoid insularity. It was maintained that if the results of a cross-border student satisfaction survey were to be published in England, they should also be published in Wales, but at a level where the sample size of respondents is sufficiently large to enable reliable conclusions to be reached.

- 3.5 The majority of respondents, particularly HEIs, were unconvinced of the value of an employer satisfaction survey for Wales. It was felt that such a survey would be fraught with methodological pitfalls, the results of which would be unlikely to provide a valid measure of institutional effectiveness.

4 QUALITY ASSURANCE AND STANDARDS IN WALES

- 4.1 Respondents generally felt that the features identified within the document represented the dimension in Wales effectively. Attention was drawn to the need for the new framework in Wales to take account the following specific issues:

- the relationship between the Federal University of Wales and its member institutions;
- Welsh medium provision and the statutory requirements relating to the Welsh Language Act;
- cross-border franchise arrangements;
- the quality and standards process for all HEI provision, including ITT and NHS, and links to professional and statutory bodies;
- the single post-16 credit framework.

5 HIGHER EDUCATION IN FURTHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

- 5.1 Concern was raised by a number of respondents that the categories utilised in the document were based on funding mechanisms, rather than the nature of the provision itself. This categorisation was seen to obscure the more fundamental issue - the ownership of awards. It was maintained that if HE provision was delivered through an FEI, and led to a recognised HE qualification awarded by a HEI, however funded, it was the responsibility of the HEI to assure academic standards. To suggest that directly funded provision is very differently assured, therefore, could lead to a duplication of effort (for the FE provider and then again to the HE awarding body) or to a dangerous disassociation of the HE awarding body from its necessary responsibilities for the quality and standards of its awards. It was suggested that further consideration be directed to this issue of ownership of the award.
- 5.2 With regard to franchise provision, unanimous support was offered to the proposal that franchised courses should continue to be considered the responsibility of an HEI and would consequently form part of its institutional review exercise within the new framework for Wales. These arrangements would reflect the partnership approach, already prevalent across the sector. Institutions did, however, request a clear definition from the QAA and HEFCW of the magnitude of the 'extensive provision' that might warrant a separate QAA collaborative audit. Furthermore, respondents questioned whether franchised activities that fell outside Wales would also be reviewed under the proposed new framework for Wales.

6 QUALITY ENHANCEMENT IN WALES

- 6.1 The group noted that respondents to the framework consultation expressed general support for the range of mechanisms listed below:
- (a) embedding teaching excellence reward mechanisms into human resource strategies;
 - (b) additional funding of strategies for quality enhancement;
 - (c) the utilisation of the English Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF) model;
 - (d) the establishment of teaching fellowships for Wales;
 - (e) the availability of funds to support subject enhancement activities; and
 - (f) the development of a funding model to reward teaching excellence based upon the outcomes of the quality assurance and standards framework for Wales.

- 6.2 Indeed, the notion was widely endorsed, that rewards for teaching excellence could be dependent upon institutions having in place appropriate learning and teaching strategies, procedures for promoting staff on the basis of teaching excellence, and other schemes to promote teaching innovation, rather than a limited snapshot teaching quality assessment approach, as adopted previously in Wales. Furthermore, it was recognised that the absence of any subject specific judgements within the new quality and standards framework for Wales would make it impossible for the HEFCW to identify teaching excellence in the old subject review terms.
- 6.3 Members agreed with respondents that a funding model for rewarding teaching excellence should be developed on the basis of encouraging institutional collaboration rather than competition, with emphasis placed on sectoral collaboration on issues of teaching excellence, innovation, and quality enhancement.

7 IMPLEMENTATION TIMETABLE

- 7.1 Most respondents felt the proposed implementation timetable was tight but feasible, provided that delays did not occur during the forthcoming consultation exercises. Some respondents expressed concerns that, under the proposed timetable, many institutions might be reviewed twice within a relatively short period of time, thus experiencing an accountability overload. It was suggested that consideration should be given to the establishment of a longer timescale period for the first cycle of institutional reviews.
- 7.2 Respondents consistently emphasised the importance of ensuring that the first round of reviews did not take place until there had been adequate time to inform and train institutional staff, including institutional facilitators, on the new framework for Wales. It was suggested that a series of seminars about the new framework should be offered to a range of institutional staff by the QAA and HEFCW jointly. Strong support was also expressed for the establishment of a programme of auditor training to ensure that auditors understand the distinctiveness of the framework for Wales. This would hopefully address institutional fears that auditors drawn from HEIs in England and only familiar with HEFCE requirements might experience some confusion or conflict in executing their review responsibilities in Wales.

THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AND STANDARDS FRAMEWORK

CORE PRINCIPLES AND REQUIREMENTS

- 1 The following core principles have been identified as fundamental to the establishment of a new quality assurance framework for Wales:
 - ⇒ To provide robust assurance of the effectiveness of quality assurance and standards mechanisms embedded across higher education institutions in Wales;
 - ⇒ To make available to a wide range of stakeholder groups accurate and timely data and reliable information about the quality of the learning opportunities and academic standards across Wales;
 - ⇒ To provide clear statements and evidence of continuous quality enhancement and improvement activities being undertaken within higher education institutions in Wales;
 - ⇒ To provide an efficient and cost effective process for the Funding Council to operate and institutions to work within.

- 2 To deliver these principles, the following general requirements of a new quality assurance and standards framework will apply in Wales:
 - ⇒ Continuing commitment by institutions to an external element in quality assurance mechanisms, exemplified through involvement in examining, assessment, curriculum design, course and programme validation, feedback processes, and student complaints procedures;
 - ⇒ Ownership of quality assurance and standards to reside with institutions with a recognition of the need for this to be widespread, particularly in the context of promoting quality improvement and enhancement across the sector;
 - ⇒ An emphasis on 'proportionality', i.e. that intervention should be in proportion to risk but that where problems are identified firm action will be taken by HEFCW;
 - ⇒ Comparability of judgements with other parts of the UK, although this would not necessarily entail identical processes and procedures;
 - ⇒ Recognition of the quality assurance dimension in Wales including, in particular the requirements of the Welsh Assembly Government.

KEY FEATURES

- 3 The key features of the framework are set out below. The features are very similar to the processes adopted in England (and Northern Ireland) and in Scotland.
 - ⇒ A distinct institutional review framework will be established by the QAA in Wales, with effect from the 2003/04 academic year. This will comprise a six-year cycle of institutional reviews, with a requirement for a mid-cycle reporting mechanism built into the new framework for all institutions.
 - ⇒ The framework will focus on the responsibility of each institution (and where appropriate, the University of Wales) to secure the quality and standards of its awards, including an expectation of external involvement in its quality assurance processes and procedures. The soundness of the institution's processes and procedures will be assessed or audited by a team of peer reviewers, which will visit the institution and publish a report on its findings. The team will normally be expected to include at least one member with knowledge and/or expertise of the HE sector in Wales. The review team will take into account the implementation of the QAA 'infrastructure' (benchmark statements, code of practice and programme specifications).
 - ⇒ The framework will also involve each institution publishing a range of regulated information about quality and standards, which, in turn, will be verified through the audit process. In

addition, a much wider range of information will be routinely available to the auditors to assist the review process. A full list of the information to be published and that to be made available to the auditors is attached as Annex D.

- ⇒ The framework for Wales will not require pre-determined timetabled sector-wide QAA subject-level reviews to continue.
- ⇒ Wherever delivered, HE provision will be assured through a single mechanism, and remain the responsibility of the awarding HEI. Thus, HE provision offered in FE institutions in Wales will be assessed via the appropriate HE partner institution. Where relevant, institutional reviews will include representatives from FE partner institutions. Where an institution's collaborative provision is considered by the QAA to be too large or complex to be reviewed under the proposed framework, a separate collaborative audit will be undertaken.
- ⇒ The outcome judgements of the framework for Wales will be comparable with those elsewhere in the UK, despite the differences in processes employed. These will be judgements of 'confidence', 'limited confidence' or 'no confidence' in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of its programmes and the academic standards of its awards, and also on the reliance that can reasonably be placed on the accuracy, integrity, completeness and frankness of the information that the institution publishes about the quality of programmes and the standards of its awards.
- ⇒ Where a judgement of 'no confidence' is expressed by the QAA, a re-audit of the institution will be required. The re-audit process will be initiated no later than twelve months and, normally, no earlier than six months following publication of the institutional review report. Furthermore, the nature, scope and timetable for re-audit will be established in accordance with the principle of proportionality, and be determined through a dialogue between the individual HEI, the QAA, and the Funding Council. (A protocol will be developed for action to be taken by Council in cases where 'no confidence' judgements have been expressed by the QAA).
- ⇒ Logistical arrangements, including the identification of themes to be trailed during the review visit, will be determined during a pre-review briefing, held at the institution at least four working weeks before the actual review visit. The new framework will however be sufficiently flexible to allow review teams to diverge from the previously identified areas of discussion, to address any emerging or unforeseen areas of concern during the review visit. Audit teams will be free to see any institutional documentation relating to the quality and standards of learning and teaching; they will 'dig down' into institutions' processes through audit trails; and will conduct more extensive audit trails where concerns are identified. This could mean an extension in the length of the review visit in some particular cases. The ability to appoint an Institutional facilitator will also be available to institutions in Wales.
- ⇒ The review will be based upon an institutional self-evaluation document (SED), which will be prepared at a sufficient stage ahead of the pre-review briefing to enable the review team to engage with relevant issues during the pre-review visit. Institutions will not be required to submit supporting materials alongside the SED. Institutions should, however, be advised to expect to provide reviewers with a range of standard institutional documentation, upon request, during the briefing and actual review visit. If appropriate, these materials can be made available, either in hard copy or via electronic access.
- ⇒ The mid-cycle review mechanism will involve each institution submitting a report to the QAA on progress since the institutional review, including a consideration of action taken in response to the main review and any subsequent reports of statutory and/or professional bodies. This mid-cycle review will normally take place three years following the main review. However, in the first cycle it will commence at the beginning of the cycle for those institutions scheduled for audit in the latter half of the cycle.
- ⇒ Students will be invited to participate in the key stages of the review process in each institution. The representative body – normally the Students' Union, or equivalent, will have

the opportunity to contribute to the pre-review visit and may make a written submission to the review team in advance of the visit.

- ⇒ The University of Wales will be examined by the QAA in its own right AND as part of the review of institutions that make University of Wales awards.
- ⇒ The framework will not require institutions to prepare and publish external examiner summary reports, or outcomes summaries of internal annual and/or periodic reviews.
- ⇒ The assurance of the quality and standards of all HE provision in Wales, (not just HEFCW funded provision) wherever delivered, will be assured through this mechanism, and remain the responsibility of the HEI concerned.

INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS IN WALES**PART A: INFORMATION WHICH SHOULD BE AVAILABLE IN ALL HEIs FOR AUDIT PURPOSES****1 Institutional context:**

- (a) Mission statement.
- (b) Relevant sections of the HEI's corporate plan.
- (c) Statement of quality assurance policies and processes.
- (d) Learning and teaching strategy and periodic reviews of progress.

2 Student admission, progression and completion:

- (a) Student qualifications on entry.
- (b) Range of entrants classified by age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic background, disability and geographical origin as returned to HESA.
- (c) Progression and retention data for each year of each course/programme, differentiating between failure and withdrawal.
- (d) Data on student completion.
- (e) Data on qualifications awarded.
- (f) Data on employment/training outcomes from the First Destination Survey.

3 Internal procedures for assuring academic quality and standards:

(a) Programme approval, monitoring and review:

- programme specifications;
- a statement of the respective roles, responsibilities and authority of different bodies within the HEI involved in programme approval and review;
- key outcomes of programme approval, and annual monitoring and review processes;
- periodic internal reports of major programme reviews;
- reports of periodic internal reviews by departments or faculties;
- accreditation or monitoring reports by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies.

(b) Assessment procedures and outcomes:

- assessment strategies, processes and procedures;
- the range and nature of student work;
- external examiners' reports, analysis of their findings, and the actions taken in response;
- reports of periodic reviews of the appropriateness of assessment methods used.

(c) Student satisfaction, covering the views of students on:

- arrangements for academic and tutorial guidance, support and supervision;
- library services and IT support;
- suitability of accommodation, equipment and facilities for teaching and learning;
- perceptions of the quality of teaching and the range of teaching and learning methods;
- assessment arrangements;
- quality of pastoral support.

(d) Evidence available to teams undertaking HEIs' own internal reviews of quality and standards:

- the effectiveness of teaching and learning, in relation to programme aims and curriculum content as they evolve over time;
- the range of teaching methods used;
- the availability and use of specialist equipment and other resources and materials to support teaching and learning;
- staff access to professional development to improve teaching performance, including peer observation and mentoring programmes;
- the use of external benchmarking and other comparators both at home and overseas;
- the involvement of external peers in the review method, their observations, and the action taken in response.

PART B: INFORMATION FOR PUBLICATION

4 Quantitative data:

- (a) HESA data on student entry qualifications (including A-levels, access courses, vocational qualifications, and Scottish Highers).
- (b) Performance indicators and benchmarks published by the HE funding bodies on progression and successful completion for full-time first degree students (separately for progression after the first year, and for all years of the programme).
- (c) HESA data on class of first degree, by subject area.
- (d) Performance indicators and benchmarks published by the HE funding bodies on first destinations/employment outcomes for full-time first degree students.

5 Qualitative data:

- (a) Feedback from recent graduates, disaggregated by institution, collected through a national survey.
- (b) Feedback from current students collected through HEIs' own surveys, undertaken on a more consistent basis than now.
- (c) A summary statement of the institution's learning and teaching strategy.
- (d) Summaries of employer links, included in institution's learning and teaching strategy [e.g. how the institution identifies employer needs and opinions, and how those are used to develop the relevance and richness of learning programmes] and in individual programme specifications.