

Meeting	Agenda Item	Reference No
24/01/14	15	HEFCW/14/9

1 Issue

- 1.1 This paper attaches the final report of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) on progress towards meeting the activities for 2012/13 as set out in the Service Level Agreement (SLA) between QAA, Higher Education Wales (HEW) and HEFCW. Council is invited to approve this report.

2 Corporate Planning Implications / Rationale for paper

- 2.1 Our Corporate Strategy notes that we monitor institutional performance through the QAA Institutional Review outcomes. HEFCW has a 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'.

3 Recommendation(s)

- 3.1 The Council is invited to:
- i. approve the final report of the QAA on progress towards meeting the activities for 2012/13 set out in the SLA; and
 - ii. note the QAA programme of services for 2013/14.

4 Timing for decisions

- 4.1 There are no timing implications for this paper.

5 Council members' interests

- 5.1 No conflicts of interests have been declared in advance of the meeting.

6 Further information

- 6.1 Contact Steve Williams (Tel 029 2068 2285; E-mail: steven.williams@hefcw.ac.uk)

7 Background

- 7.1 The QAA is funded by the funding bodies and institutional subscriptions. HEFCW's contribution for 2012/13 was £204K.
- 7.2 The current SLA between the QAA, HEFCW and HEW began on 1 August 2009 and lasts until 31 July 2015. Through this agreement, HEFCW meets our 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'. The SLA provides a framework for working relationships, with the aim of ensuring efficient and effective cooperation in relation to the Institutional Review: Wales (IRW) process and confirming the scope of activities to be undertaken in Wales. It commits to avoiding duplication of effort, identifying activities of mutual interest where collaboration would benefit learners in higher education, and sharing expertise in support of continuous improvement of the quality of education.

8 QAA Annual Report 2012/13

- 8.1 **Annex A** presents the 2012/13 annual report of the QAA towards meeting the activities set out in the SLA for 2009 to 2015. It reports on the achievements of the QAA in delivering its programme of services in Wales and a breakdown of expenditure against the headings of the payment schedule for Wales for 2012/13.
- 8.2 The annual report was circulated electronically to HEFCW's Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee for comments in October 2013. The Committee's advice to Council was that the Annual Report for 2012/13 be approved.
- 8.3 At officers' request, a new annex is included in the report which provides a rolling summary of all review outcomes in Wales during the period of the SLA.

Council is invited to approve the final report of the QAA on progress towards meeting the activities for 2012/13 set out in the SLA.

9 QAA Programme of Services for 2013/14

- 9.1 The QAA programme of services for 2013/14, as agreed by the QAA, HEW and HEFCW, is provided in **Annex B** for information.

Council is invited to note the QAA programme of services for 2013/14.

10 Financial implications

- 10.1 In January 2012 Council approved the cost to HEFCW for the QAA's services in 2012/13 as no more than £204k, including £11k towards the foundation degree review (item HEFCW/12/02 refers). Officers confirmed that the actual cost would be £204k in March (HEFCW/13/19 refers), plus an additional payment of approximately £6k to cover the cost of a Concerns review into the

University of Wales in line with the concerns provision included in the revised Annex to the SLA.

- 10.2 In January 2013 Council approved the funding for the QAA Service Level Agreement in 2013/14, estimated to be approximately £250k (item HEFCW/13/3 refers). The QAA subsequently carried out further work on costings for next year and arrived at a revised figure of £285,167 (item HEFCW/13/CE5 refers). This was due to the foundation degree review, the Cardiff Metropolitan University review being a hybrid review and a shortfall of institutional subscriptions resulting from the mergers.

11 Communications implications

- 11.1 There is press interest in the outcomes of reviews for individual institutions and their partners.
- 11.2 There is continuing press coverage on the standards of higher education provision. The work of the QAA is therefore under scrutiny and is of interest to the press.

12 Diversity and Equal Opportunities implications

- 12.1 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 Plan, seeking opportunities to promote equality in line with the requirements placed on the UK funding councils.
- 12.2 It is also required to meet the requirements of its own, higher education institutions' and the HEFCW Welsh Language expectations, including ensuring that it establishes and maintains an appropriate organisational capacity in the Welsh language.

13 Risk Assessment

- 13.1 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 less 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'.	Provision of funding to the QAA; discussion with the QAA regarding minimisation of costs. Formation of a Quality Assessment and Enhancement SubGroup of SETQC to advise on HEFCW's statutory responsibilities and on enhancement issues.
The QAA does not deliver its services effectively.	The QAA has an observer on our Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee, submits progress reports to that Committee,

	and also submits annual reports. HEFCW operates an SLA with the QAA and HEW, and holds termly liaison meetings, in addition to annual 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 revisions to the 'Concerns about standards and quality in higher education' scheme).
Quality of teaching suffers in context of funding changes.	The QAA undertakes institutional reviews and HEFCW has ongoing work with the QAA on review methods and developments.