

Council Meeting

For approval without discussion

QAC annual assurance to Council, including QAC annual report and QAA annual report

Agenda: 16
HEFCW/16/98

Disclosable

10/11/2016

1 Issue

- 1.1 This item provides the Quality Assessment Committee's (QAC's) annual assurance to Council, for approval. This includes the annual reports from the QAC and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA).

2 Corporate Planning Implications

- 2.1 The QAC is one of the standing committees of the Council and its purpose is to undertake the Council's statutory responsibilities in respect of quality assessment, and keep arrangements for assessing the quality of higher education under review. The QAC was formed in response to the introduction of the Higher Education (Wales) Act 2015.

3 Recommendations

- 3.1 The Council is invited to:
- i. approve the QAA annual report for 2015/16;
 - ii. note the QAC annual report for 2015/16;
 - iii. note the annual assurance from the QAC.

4 Timing for decisions

- 4.1 There are no timing implications for this decision.

5 Council members' interests

- 5.1 Professor Leni Oglesby is Chair of the QAC, and Bethan Guilfoyle is deputy Chair. No conflicts of interests have been declared in advance of the meeting.

6 Further information

- 6.1 Dr Cliona O'Neill (029 2085 9731; cliona.oneill@hefcw.ac.uk)

7 Assurance from QAC

QAA annual report

- 7.1 **Annex A** provides the annual report from the QAA against the Service Level Agreement (SLA) for 2015/16. The SLA is provided at **Annex B**.
- 7.2 The QAC considered the QAA annual report. They were broadly content, but requested that the report should have an increased focus on Wales, and what had been done during the year. They also asked for some clarification on the headings and sub-headings. These amendments have been incorporated into the version that was provided to Council.

Council is invited to approve the QAA annual report for 2015/16

QAC annual report

- 7.3 **Annex C** provides the QAC annual report for 2015/16. This was discussed by the QAC at its October 2016 meeting, where Members agreed that the report accurately reflected the work of the Committee in that year.

Council is invited to note the QAC annual report for 2015/16

Annual assurance from the QAC

- 7.4 Council was informed at its May 2016 meeting that the QAC had agreed it should advise Council annually on whether it considers HEFCW has discharged appropriately its responsibilities regarding quality (item HEFCW/16/40 refers).
- 7.5 Members considered the QAA and QAC annual reports to assess whether HEFCW had discharged its responsibilities effectively. They noted the breadth of work of the Committee in its first year of business, and considered it would be useful to reconsider the broad implications of the Act at a future meeting, together with the overall quality assessment framework, to determine whether there were any gaps in policy. They also recognised the importance of ensuring that HEFCW's statutory responsibilities regarding provision which was likely to become inadequate were appropriately reflected at each stage of the quality assurance framework.
- 7.6 The Committee was content that HEFCW had discharged its responsibilities effectively in 2015/16, and that it was content to provide this assurance to Council. However, they were keen to emphasise that this assurance was in the context of ongoing change, resulting from the development of the quality assessment framework for Wales, and ongoing implementation of the Higher Education (Wales) Act 2015.

Council is invited to note the annual assurance from the QAC.

8 Financial implications

- 8.1 The cost to HEFCW of the 2015/16 SLA with the QAA was £293,376. This included higher education reviews: Wales of three further education institutions, and one of a higher education institution.
- 8.2 No immediate financial implications arise out of this paper. However, changes to quality assessment could have an impact financially. This was drawn to the attention of Council at its July 2016 meeting (item HEFCW/16/58 refers).

9 Communications implications

- 9.1 Press interest is likely to continue regarding the outcomes of quality assurance activities, and the implementation of the HE Act.

10 Diversity and Equal Opportunities implications

- 10.1 This paper has no implications for age, disability, marital/civil partnership, maternity/pregnancy, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, any other protected characteristic or Welsh Language.

11 Risk Assessment

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

Risk	Action to address risk
Council is unable to meet its statutory responsibilities regarding quality assessment.	The QAC advises Council on its statutory responsibilities in relation to quality assessment.
Council is not fully advised on the breadth of areas covered by the remit of the Committee.	The QAC to advise Council across the breadth of areas