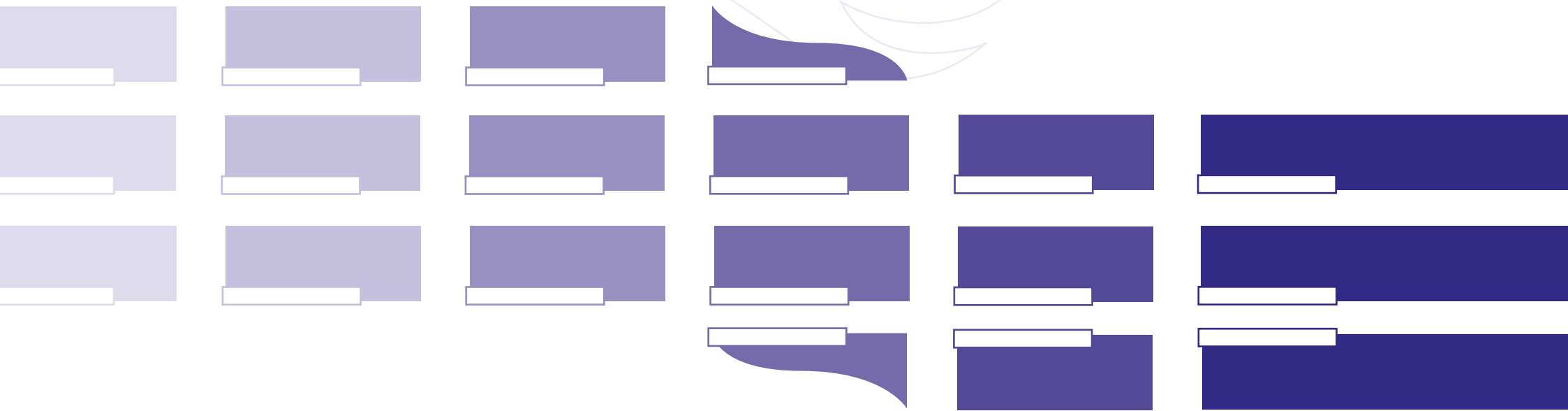


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QAA 214 01/08



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ISBN 978 1 84482 781 7

All QAA's publications are available on our website www.qaa.ac.uk

Printed copies are available from:

Linney Direct

Adamsway

Mansfield

NG18 4FN

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Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

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Introduction

1 The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's (QAA) mission is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. In furtherance of this mission, QAA undertakes reviews of higher education provision delivered in further education colleges (colleges) on behalf of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), which has statutory responsibility for ensuring that provision is made for assessing the quality of education provided by institutions it funds. From 2007-08 the process of review used in colleges in England is called Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER). Annex A provides details of QAA's purposes, values and standards.

2 The purpose of this handbook is to:

- state the aims and objectives of IQER
- describe the programmes of study that IQER covers
- explain how IQER works
- provide guidance to colleges and their **awarding bodies** preparing for, and taking part in, IQER.

3 The handbook is intended primarily for teams conducting IQER and for college staff who are directly involved in IQER. It is also intended to provide information and guidance for other staff in colleges and for colleges' awarding bodies. It is not intended for students, for whom QAA is producing a separate guidance note. QAA has also developed other guidance notes to assist institutions in preparing for IQER and an operational manual for the purposes of administering and managing IQER, for use by QAA staff and coordinators. In addition to this handbook, QAA will provide support for the implementation of IQER through **briefing** and training events.

Structure of the handbook

4 The handbook is divided into eight sections:

Section one provides an overview of IQER, including its aims and objectives.

Section two provides guidance on the role of awarding bodies.

Section three describes the Developmental engagement.

Section four describes the Summative review.

Section five:

- describes the abridged method for colleges with fewer than 100 full-time equivalent students funded by HEFCE
- describes adaptations to the method for colleges in HEFCE-funded consortia
- describes adaptations to the method for colleges undergoing significant changes to their higher education provision
- explains how QAA determines the number of Developmental engagements for each college
- explains how QAA determines when each college's reviews will take place.

Section six provides further guidance to colleges in preparing a self-evaluation.

Section seven is a glossary of terms. This handbook uses some terms and phrases in ways that may differ from common usage. When one of these terms or phrases appears for the first time, it is highlighted in bold type and a definition is provided in the glossary.

Section eight provides a series of annexes.

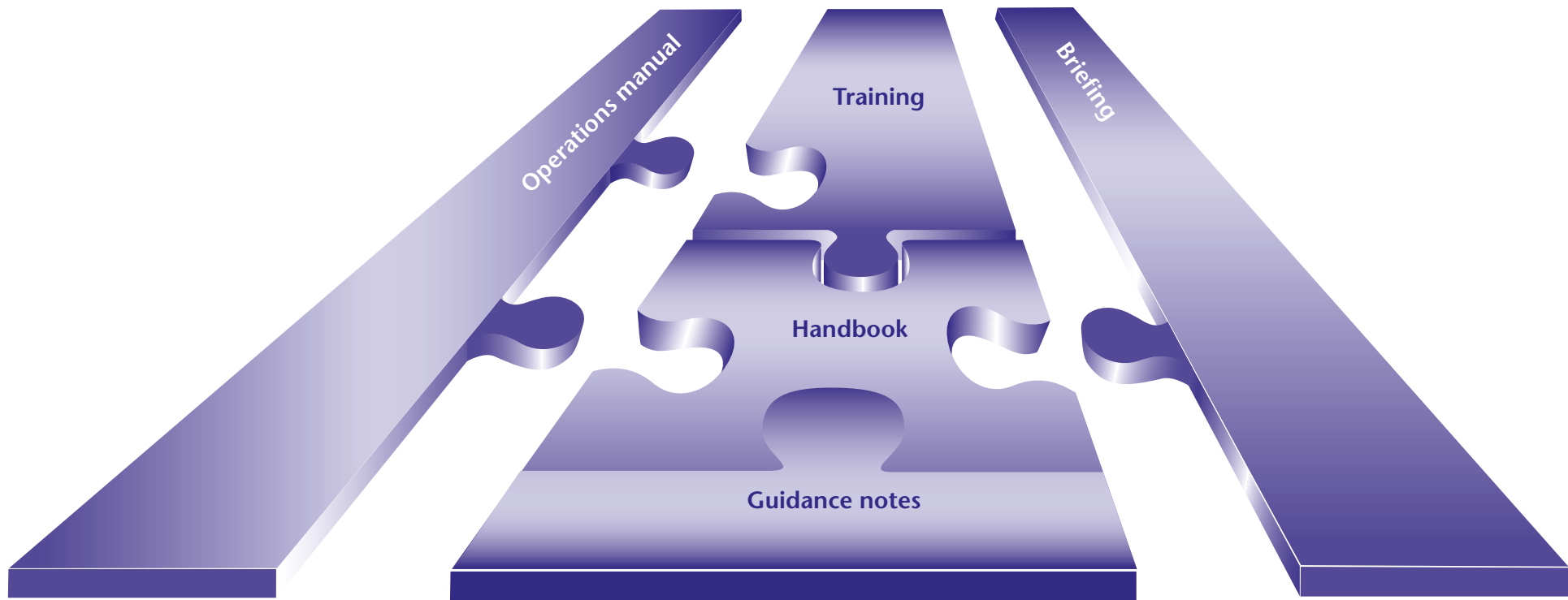


Figure 1: The relationship between the handbook, guidance notes, the operations manual, briefing and training to support IQER

Section one: Overview of IQER

5 This section gives an overview of IQER, including its aims, objectives and scope. A more detailed description of how IQER works follows in sections two to five.

Aims

6 IQER is an **evidence-based peer review** of a college's management of the student learning experience and performance of its responsibilities for the academic standards and quality of its higher education provision.

7 Colleges do not currently have powers to award higher education qualifications¹. They work with awarding bodies, in particular **Edexcel** and/or one or more higher education institution. The awarding bodies retain responsibility for the academic standards of all awards granted in their names and for ensuring that the **quality of learning opportunities** offered through collaborative arrangements is at least adequate to enable students to achieve the academic standard required for their awards. IQER focuses on how colleges discharge their responsibilities within the context of their agreements with awarding bodies. QAA reviews the responsibilities of higher education institution awarding bodies within these relationships through Institutional audit. There is more information about the relationship between IQER and Institutional audit in section two.

8 Against this backdrop, the overarching aims of IQER are to:

- support colleges in evaluating and improving their management of their higher education, for the benefit of students, and within the context of their agreements with awarding bodies
- foster good working relationships between colleges and their awarding bodies, for the benefit of students

- enable HEFCE to discharge its statutory responsibility for ensuring that provision is made for assessing the quality of education provided by the institutions it funds
- provide public information.

Objectives

9 To realise these aims, IQER has three objectives:

- to engage colleges in a process of **self-evaluation** and peer review focused on reviewing, evaluating and improving the management of their higher education provision
- to produce **reports** of these review activities
- to contribute to **public information** about the academic standards and quality of higher education in colleges.

10 IQER usually takes place in two complementary stages called **Developmental engagement** and **Summative review**. The emphasis of the Developmental engagement is on supporting the college in developing its higher education provision and its management of the student learning experience in an open and collegial way; whereas the Summative review is primarily concerned with reviewing, and making **judgements** about, the effectiveness of the college's procedures for the management of the student learning experience and their implementation. While there are some methodological variations between the Developmental engagement and the Summative review which reflect these different emphases, both share a number of common elements. In particular, both stages of IQER:

- focus on a college's management of the student learning experience for its higher education provision
- acknowledge the shared responsibilities of awarding bodies and colleges, and seek to enhance these relationships
- are based on a self-evaluation prepared by the college

¹ The *Further Education and Training Act 2007* provides for colleges to apply for Foundation Degree awarding powers. QAA will write to colleges about the relationship between IQER and Foundation Degree awarding powers, once the process of scrutiny for Foundation Degree awarding powers has been published.

- share three **core themes**: academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information
- assume that the college and its awarding body(ies) are already managing the provision effectively according to the expectations of the **Academic Infrastructure**
- are led by **teams** of peers with current or recent experience of managing, developing, delivering and/or assessing higher education in colleges and/or higher education institutions
- prioritise the interests of students
- lead to the production of reports.

Other considerations

11 Other considerations which have informed the development of IQER are:

- the benefits to colleges of a review method which is comparable to QAA's Institutional audits of higher education institutions in terms of both method and judgements
- the need for a flexible method capable of accommodating and adapting to the diversity of arrangements for the provision of higher education in colleges, which is characterised by an array of different types of delivery, sizes of provision, and awarding and funding relationships. There is more information about adaptations to IQER in section five
- QAA's obligations as a signatory to the Higher Education Concordat on quality assurance arrangements and data collection
- the benefits of producing review reports which can inform other types of external scrutiny, such as Institutional audits

by QAA and inspections by Ofsted. There are more details about this in sections two and four

- the experience of a pilot study of IQER in 2006-07 and, in particular, the results of two separate evaluations of that pilot.

Core themes

12 IQER teams will manage and focus their enquiries within this process according to the three core themes: academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information.

- Academic standards refers to the level of achievement a student has to reach in order to achieve a particular award or qualification.
- Quality of learning opportunities considers the effectiveness of everything that is done or provided by the college to ensure that its students have the best possible opportunity to meet the stated outcomes of their programmes and the academic standards of the awards they are seeking.
- Public information is information about academic programmes, academic standards and quality of learning opportunities which is in the public domain whether in print or electronic form.

More information about the three core themes is provided in the glossary in section seven.

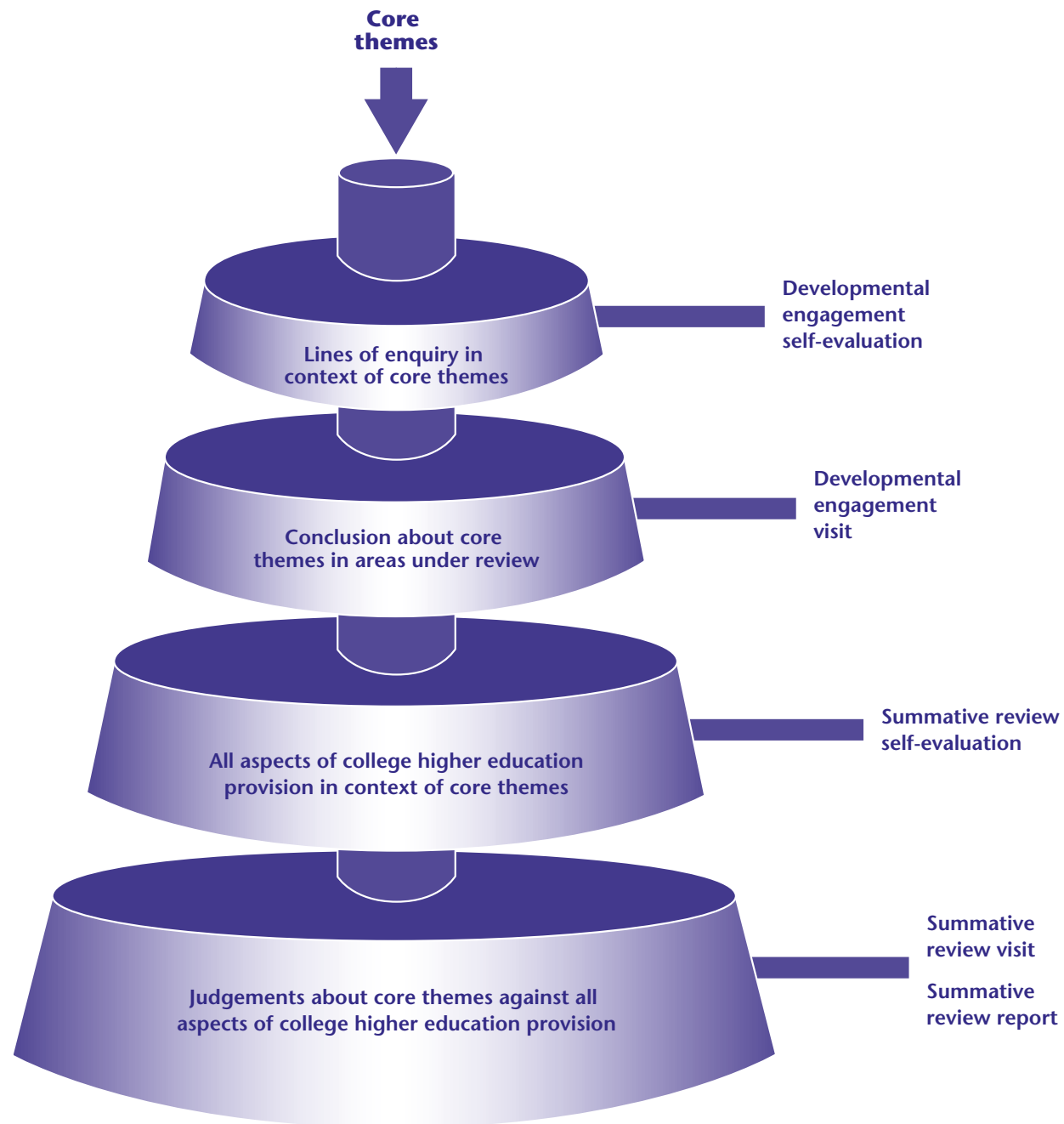


Figure 2: The relationship between the core themes and all stages of IQER

Academic Infrastructure

13 In considering colleges' management of higher education provision against the three core themes, IQER teams will be guided by the expectations of the Academic Infrastructure. The Academic Infrastructure is a set of nationally agreed reference points which inform and support the effective management of academic standards and quality in higher education. It is published by QAA and applies to all UK higher education wherever this is delivered. It comprises the following:

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)* which includes descriptions of the five levels of higher education qualifications (there is a separate FHEQ for Scotland)
- *the Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, which comprises 10 sections
- subject benchmark statements which describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects
- award benchmark statements, such as the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* which provides a description of the characteristics of a Foundation Degree
- guidelines for preparing programme specifications which are descriptions of what is on offer to students in individual programmes of study.

Further reference to the Academic Infrastructure is made throughout this handbook. A more detailed description is provided in the glossary in section seven.

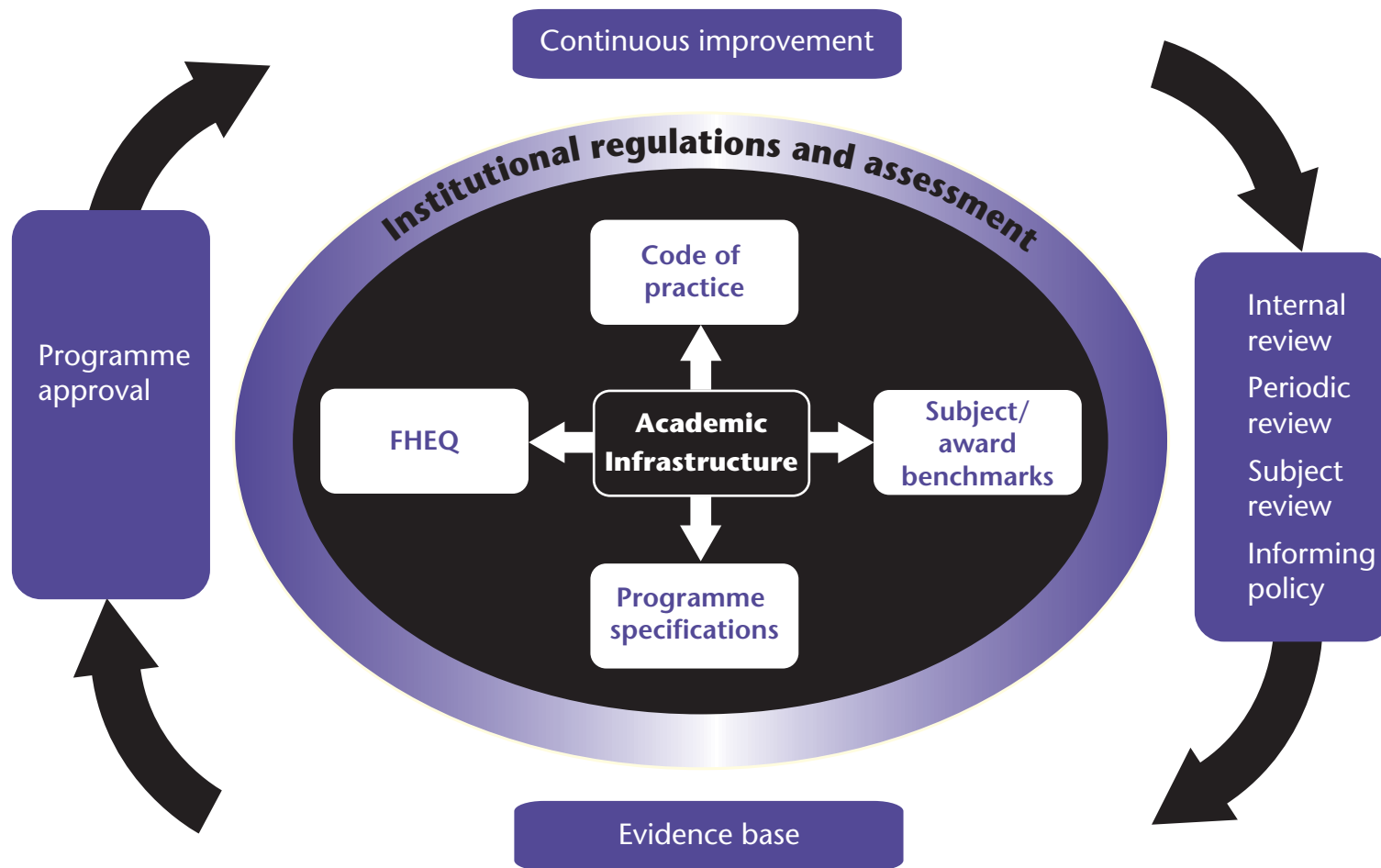


Figure 3: The relationship of the Academic Infrastructure to the continuous improvement of the management of academic standards and quality in higher education

Role of students

14 One of IQER's aims is to support colleges in reviewing and improving their management of their higher education provision for the benefit of students. Within this context IQER teams need to identify students' views about their experiences as learners and to draw on these views in considering colleges' higher education provision.

15 Teams will meet students during IQER **visits** as a matter of course. The arrangements for organising these meetings are covered in sections three and four of this handbook. Before a visit, teams will also invite students to produce a **Student written submission** which may take a variety of different forms. QAA will provide a separate guidance note for students on the preparation of a written submission. The principle of the student submission, irrespective of its form, is that it should reflect the students' own views of their experiences as learners. Colleges may have a valuable role to play in helping their students to prepare a submission, for example by sharing information with them.

QAA will provide further guidance to colleges during preparations for IQER. QAA will also work with colleges and students' representative bodies throughout the cycle of IQER to encourage and support student involvement in the review process.

Scope

16 IQER is concerned with taught higher education programmes of study funded by HEFCE at levels C, I, H and M of the FHEQ (or levels 4 to 7 of the National Qualifications Framework). All colleges funded by HEFCE to provide higher education programmes at these levels are required by HEFCE to participate in IQER, whether this funding is provided directly to the college, indirectly through a different college or higher education institution, or through a HEFCE-funded consortium.

17 IQER does not apply to research degrees funded by HEFCE at master's or doctoral levels (or level 8 of the National Qualifications Framework), nor to higher education programmes funded by other organisations.

FHEQ	Level	National vocational qualification level	National qualifications framework
Doctorates	D Doctoral	5	8 (specialist awards)
Master's degrees, Postgraduate Certificates and Postgraduate Diplomas	M Master's	5	7
Bachelor's degrees with Honours, Graduate Certificates and Graduate Diplomas	H Honours	4	6
Foundation Degrees, ordinary (Bachelor's) degrees, Diplomas of Higher Education and other higher diplomas	I Intermediate	4	5
Certificates of Higher Education	C Certificate	4	4

Figure 4: The FHEQ and its relationship to the National Qualifications Framework

Section two: Role of awarding bodies

18 The purpose of this section is to provide guidance on the role of awarding bodies in IQER, with the intention of helping awarding bodies and colleges to consider how awarding bodies should be involved. It should be read in conjunction with the descriptions of the Developmental engagement and Summative review in sections three and four, which are primarily aimed at IQER teams and colleges taking part in IQER and therefore do not consider the involvement of awarding bodies in detail.

19 Colleges currently do not have powers to award higher education qualifications. They work with awarding bodies, in particular Edexcel and/or one or more higher education institutions, which retain responsibility for the academic standards of all awards granted in their names and for ensuring that the quality of learning opportunities offered through collaborative arrangements are adequate to enable students to achieve the academic standards required for their awards. IQER assumes no preferred model for higher education provision, other than that it expects that any model must permit the awarding body to assure itself about the standards and quality of its collaborative provision with colleges. Further details of a higher education institution's responsibilities for its awards may be found in the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*.

20 IQER is concerned with the way in which colleges discharge their responsibilities within the context of their agreements with awarding bodies. It is not concerned with how awarding bodies manage their responsibilities for collaborative agreements. QAA reviews the responsibilities of higher education institutions within these agreements through the process of Institutional audit. Nevertheless, higher education institutions are important stakeholders in IQER for several reasons:

- they are identified in IQER reports in association with those programmes in colleges which lead to their awards

- IQER reports will be used as a source of evidence for the audit of an higher education institution's collaborative provision and may replace the need for partner link visits to colleges; (QAA will say more about this in the supplement to the handbook for Institutional audit which deals with the audit of collaborative provision)
- Institutional audit reports will inform the number of Developmental engagements that colleges have
- judgements, conclusions, recommendations and action plans arising from IQER are not addressed to the awarding body; however, they may have implications for their relationships with partner colleges.

21 To enable awarding bodies to manage their responsibilities for their collaborative arrangements and interests around IQER effectively, QAA will make sure that all IQER correspondence between QAA and colleges is copied to the heads of the relevant awarding bodies and/or their nominated contacts. Such correspondence will include confirmation of the dates of any meetings or visits, provisional outcomes of visits and draft reports. In addition, QAA will encourage colleges to copy all correspondence they send to QAA to their awarding bodies.

22 Awarding bodies may also wish to support their partner colleges through IQER, by assisting, for example, with the preparation of the self-evaluation and by attending various IQER events, including review visits. The extent of an awarding body's involvement with IQER should be decided in discussion between the partners taking account of the arrangement and the provisions of the **partnership agreement** and at the discretion of the organisations involved in the collaborative arrangements. The participation of the awarding body should be considered against the maturity of the relationship between the partners; the extent of the responsibilities which the awarding body has conferred on the college; and the accuracy and completeness of existing written evidence about these responsibilities. The following examples are provided to illustrate this point:

Example 1

The higher education institution has a mature relationship with its partner college and the college has a significant level of autonomy for assuring the quality of higher education programmes. These responsibilities are set out clearly in a comprehensive formal partnership agreement. In this case the partners may agree that there is little need for the higher education institution staff to be involved in the development of the self-evaluations or to be present at review meetings, including the visit(s).

Example 2

The higher education institution provides frequent and intensive support to the college. In this case, it may be helpful for the higher education institution to be represented at the briefing event and then to consider with the college whether it also needs to be represented at the preparatory meeting and the review visit(s) and/or contribute to the development of the self-evaluation.

Example 3

The higher education institution has a developing relationship with a college and the higher education institution chooses to delegate operational aspects of its responsibilities for the quality of learning opportunities to the college where it is confident that the college has the capacity to accept and discharge that responsibility. This has resulted in the college assuming a growing level of autonomy for the quality assurance of higher education programmes. In this case the partners may need to discuss which elements of the IQER process would be best supported by the awarding body in order to help the college develop the management of its responsibilities. This would lead to agreement as to which events are attended by the awarding body and which are attended solely by the college.

23 QAA encourages colleges and their higher education partners to consider jointly how the higher education institution will be involved in the IQER process and to do this, ideally as soon as possible after QAA has confirmed the dates of the visits. At this stage or just after attendance at the briefing event, the college and its higher education partners should write down the details of their agreement of the higher education institution's involvement in the process and send a copy of this agreement to QAA signed by representatives of each partner institution.

24 Because of the existing pattern of good working relationships between colleges and their higher education partners, QAA expects that each partnership will reach agreement readily. However, in the unlikely event that this is not the case, institutions are invited to contact QAA to arrange for a QAA officer to meet with them to facilitate this process. QAA will provide details of the arrangements for such visit support in a separate guidance note.

25 IQER teams will be pleased to meet awarding bodies' representatives at any stage of the process, and occasionally may encourage awarding body representatives to attend particular events should they regard it as likely to aid their understanding of the college's responsibilities. As a minimum, QAA will make sure that awarding bodies are invited to the briefing, which will provide further guidance on the role of awarding bodies. However, awarding bodies are not required to attend the briefing, or any subsequent events. QAA has no desire to make unreasonable requests for awarding body involvement in this method which focuses on the responsibilities of colleges.

Role of Edexcel

26 There are two distinct forms of Edexcel higher education provision in colleges:

- Higher National Diplomas and Certificates that are approved directly by Edexcel, to which Edexcel appoints its own external examiners and which Edexcel certifies. In the case of this provision, Edexcel is the awarding body
- Higher National Diplomas and Certificates that are offered under the Edexcel Licence Agreement. The licence allows higher education institutions to validate their own versions of HND/C programmes as institutional awards. Where such licensed Higher National provision is operated on a collaborative basis in a college, the higher education institution will appoint its own external examiners and provide the certificate (although the certificate will also carry the Edexcel logo). In the case of this provision, the higher education institution is the awarding body.

27 In 2006-07, there were over 30,000 HEFCE-funded students studying for an Edexcel award at 120 different colleges. The scale of this provision will inevitably limit the extent to which Edexcel can support individual colleges and attend IQER events. In order to assist colleges and IQER teams to understand the responsibilities which Edexcel confers on colleges, Edexcel has produced a short guidance note. QAA encourages colleges to draw on this guidance note in describing the policies and procedures they have adopted with respect to Edexcel awards in their self-evaluations. Edexcel will provide further information to colleges about the contribution Edexcel officers will be able to make to the IQER process.

Section three: Developmental engagement

28 The purpose of this section is to state the aims and objectives of the Developmental engagement and describe how it operates. A timeline for the Developmental engagement appears at the end.

29 As described in section one, IQER takes place in two complementary stages called Developmental engagement and Summative review. Most colleges will have one Developmental engagement and one Summative review within the five year programme, 2007-08 to 2011-12. There will normally be a minimum of one year between a Developmental engagement and the Summative review. Section five provides details of how the programme is scheduled.

Aims

The Developmental engagement reflects the first two overarching aims:

- to support colleges in reviewing and improving the management of their higher education provision, for the benefit of students, and within the context of their agreements with awarding bodies
- to foster good working relationships between colleges and their awarding bodies, for the benefit of students.

Objectives

To realise these aims, the Developmental engagement adopts two of IQER's objectives:

- to engage colleges in a process of self-evaluation and peer review focused on reviewing, evaluating and improving the management of their higher education provision
- to produce reports of these review activities.

Overview

30 The emphasis of the Developmental engagement is on supporting the college in developing its management of the student learning experience for its higher education students in an open and collegial way. The Developmental engagement takes full account of the varying roles of awarding bodies and is sensitive towards differences in those roles between different colleges. To facilitate this approach, the Developmental engagement has three important characteristics that distinguish it from the Summative review:

- it focuses on a specific area of the college's management of the students' learning experience for its higher education and the first Developmental engagement in each college will focus on assessment
- it takes place with the full participation of the college members of staff within the IQER team
- the report is confidential to the college, its awarding bodies, HEFCE and QAA.

31 All colleges with 100 or more full-time equivalent students on HEFCE-funded programmes will have one Developmental engagement. Some may have two or, exceptionally, three. Colleges with fewer than 100 full-time equivalent students may opt for a Developmental engagement but are not required to have one unless they meet one of the risk criteria described in section five.

32 The first Developmental engagement for each college focuses on student assessment. This is because of the significance of assessment for academic standards and because it was the area identified as most in need of improvement in the earlier methods of reviews, such as Academic review. Colleges with more than one Developmental engagement will be invited to suggest a theme for their second (and, where necessary, their third) Developmental engagement. Any other Developmental

engagement should normally focus on a cross-college theme, such as learning resources, placement learning or staff development, although QAA will consider a subject-focused Developmental engagement if there is a strong case for this. Colleges with more than one Developmental engagement will also be able to negotiate the timing of additional engagements to fit in with other external and internal reviews.

Preparation

33 Around 18 weeks before the visit, QAA will hold a briefing to which the college and its awarding bodies will be invited along with other colleges which have a Developmental engagement at about the same time. The purpose of the briefing is to prepare institutions for the Developmental engagement, in particular by providing further guidance on preparing the self-evaluation, identifying **lines of enquiry** and helping students to prepare a written submission. The briefing also allows college staff to meet the **coordinator** who will be responsible for managing the Developmental engagement on behalf of QAA. QAA encourages colleges and their higher education partners to consider jointly how the higher education institution will be involved in the IQER process and to do this, ideally as soon as possible after QAA has confirmed the dates of the visits. At this stage, or just after attendance at the briefing event, the college and each partner higher education institution should write down the details of their agreement of the higher education institution's involvement in the process and send a copy of this agreement to QAA, signed by representatives of each partner institution.

34 IQER is concerned with reviewing the college's performance of the management of its responsibilities for the student learning experience according to three core themes. These core themes provide a focus for the team's enquiries during the Developmental engagement. Lines of enquiry provide routes that the team takes to consider evidence to enable it to make evaluations of the core themes. They provide a way of reviewing

the evidence and formulating conclusions about the area under review. They can be regarded as lenses through which the team views the area in question. So, for example, where the Developmental engagement is concerned with student assessment, possible lines of enquiry could include how work placements contribute to final assessments; how the views of employers inform assessment criteria; how the college's processes for providing formative feedback to students on coursework or the match of information on assessment in the programme specification, the student handbook and the assessment set.

35 The college is invited to suggest lines of enquiry that it would like the team to pursue. Colleges may find the Academic Infrastructure a useful point of reference in identifying lines of enquiry. The *Code of practice, Section six: Assessment of students*, may be particularly useful in identifying lines of enquiry for the first Developmental engagement on student assessment.

Self-evaluation

36 After the briefing, the college is required to submit a self-evaluation. The purpose of the self-evaluation is to describe the responsibilities which the college has within the area under review, making reference to its agreements with awarding bodies, and the processes and procedures it has adopted for discharging these responsibilities. The self-evaluation also provides the opportunity for critical self-reflection on the effectiveness of these processes and procedures.

37 Section six of this handbook provides further guidance on the self-evaluation. The self-evaluation should provide sufficient information and evidence against each of the headings set out in this guidance. If it does not, QAA may return it to the college for revision. QAA will invite students to provide a written submission and to send this to QAA at the same time as the college submits the self-evaluation. More information about the role of students is given below.

Preparatory meeting

38 The next stage is a **preparatory meeting** at the college between the college and the coordinator. This will take place about nine weeks before the visit. The purposes of the preparatory meeting are to discuss the arrangements for the Developmental engagement, to develop the agenda for the visit in light of the college's self-evaluation (and the student submission if one is made) and to identify further evidence for the college to make available during the visit. It is also an opportunity for the coordinator to clarify the process and for college staff to ask questions. Annex B provides an indicative programme for the preparatory meeting. QAA will provide the coordinator with a compendium of publicly available information, the **information digest**, to help him/her to prepare for this meeting.

Developmental engagement teams

39 The Developmental engagement team usually comprises four people: the coordinator, one **reviewer** and two **nominees** from the college under review. Where a college has more than 1000 students funded by HEFCE and/or more than four awarding bodies associated with its higher education provision, QAA may consider the inclusion of an additional reviewer.

40 The college nominees are full members of the team. All team members are responsible for analysing and commenting on the self-evaluation, conducting the visit, drafting sections of the report and contributing to the team's findings. More information about the composition of the team is provided in the glossary. QAA will provide each team member with a copy of the information digest to assist with preparation for the visit.

The Developmental engagement visit

41 The visit normally takes place over two consecutive days. Colleges with fewer than 100 full-time equivalent students

funded by HEFCE may have a shorter visit or no Developmental engagement. Section five provides more details of an **abridged method**.

42 The purpose of the visit is to allow the team to pursue the lines of enquiry by scrutinising evidence on site and by meeting college staff, students and other stakeholders, including awarding bodies' representatives and employers, if appropriate. Annex C provides an indicative programme for the visit.

43 The team is led by the coordinator, who is responsible for ensuring that the team's activities are consistent with the method and that the visit is completed on time. The team is responsible for gathering, verifying and sharing evidence as a basis for testing the college's self-evaluation and the views of students. It is also responsible for considering the extent of the college's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure. The team will discuss the evidence, check its understanding and interpretation, refine its views and triangulate different sources of evidence to arrive at conclusions. It will keep notes of all meetings with staff and students, and of any emerging examples of good practice and areas for improvement; these will be circulated among the team and collated by the coordinator. Where concerns emerge in the course of the visit, the college will have the opportunity to provide additional evidence to address them.

44 Evidence comes in a wide range of forms and will vary from college to college. It is likely to include formal agreements with awarding bodies, policies and procedures for the management of the student learning experience of higher education programmes, external examiners' reports, validation documents, and review and inspection reports by other organisations such as Ofsted, and any information arising from meetings with staff and students. The coordinator will agree with the college what evidence is required before the visit.

45 The team may also carry out direct observation of some elements of provision, for example learning resources. When a team requires evidence of teaching quality, this will usually be obtained from a documentary study of procedures such as the college's observation of higher education teaching, the analysis of student evaluation questionnaires and other arrangements for gathering feedback. Exceptionally, the team may carry out class observations.

46 At the end of the visit the team identifies areas of **good practice** and **recommendations**. The coordinator, accompanied by the other team members will make a short oral report about the team's findings to the college.

Role of students

47 The students' written submission is strongly encouraged but voluntary. If students are not able to make a submission, for whatever reason, this will not prejudice the outcome of the Developmental engagement.

48 At the visit itself the team will meet with at least one group of students. The college will normally be responsible for identifying students for this meeting within parameters agreed with the coordinator. The coordinator will confirm these parameters to the college at the preparatory meeting or at least eight weeks before the visit. Meetings with students are confidential and their views will not be attributed to individuals.

Reports

49 The Developmental engagement culminates in a report of the team's findings. The report has two main elements: good practice and recommendations for action by the college. In addition, the team will make evaluative comments about each of the three core themes. The Developmental engagement report will not be published, however, the Summative review report will

include a short summary of the findings of the Developmental engagement team and this report will comment on the extent to which the action identified in the Developmental engagement action plan has been effective.

Good practice

50 An important element of Developmental engagement reports is **good practice**. In IQER, good practice is defined as practice that the team regards as making a particularly positive contribution to the college's management of the student learning experience of higher education in the context of that college, and which is worthy of wider dissemination within and/or beyond the college.

51 QAA will disseminate good practice identified in Developmental engagement reports through periodic reports and through collaboration with the Higher Education Academy and, where appropriate, with Foundation Degree Forward.

Recommendations

52 Recommendations for improving the college's management of its higher education provision are categorised as **desirable**, **advisable** or **essential** according to priority.

- **Essential recommendations** refer to important matters which the team believes are currently putting quality and/or standards at risk and which require urgent corrective action.
- **Advisable recommendations** refer to matters which the team believes have the potential to put quality and/or standards at risk and require preventative corrective action.
- **Desirable recommendations** refer to matters which the team believes have the potential to enhance quality, build capacity and/or further secure standards.

53 Exceptionally, recommendations may lead to the college having another Developmental engagement because they indicate that quality and/or standards are at risk. More information about risk criteria is provided in section five.

Action plan

54 QAA will send a draft of the Developmental engagement report to the college for its comments about four weeks after the visit. This gives the college and its awarding body(ies) the opportunity to draw the team's attention to any areas which they regard as inaccurate or incomplete. The team is then responsible for considering these comments and any supporting evidence which the college may offer at this stage, and for agreeing whether or not any aspect of the report should be amended in response. Teams will only be able to consider supporting evidence that was available at the time of the review visit.

55 The college is also asked at this stage to produce an action plan in response to the conclusions of the report. The action plan is intended to support the college in the continuing development of its higher education provision by describing how it intends to take the findings of the Developmental engagement forward. The action plan will be incorporated into the Developmental engagement report and will also form part of the evidence base for future review activity, particularly the Summative review. Once the team has considered and responded to the college's comments, a final version of the report is sent to the college, its awarding body(ies) and to HEFCE.



Figure 5: Key stages of the Developmental engagement

Developmental engagement: timeline

(Please note - during 2007-08 the timing of the events in stage 1 will differ from this published timeline. QAA will notify the colleges and awarding bodies and supply alternative times)

IQER stage	Time +/- visit	IQER process	What the college does	What QAA or the coordinator does	What the team does	How the awarding body is involved
1	-26 weeks	Preparation		QAA notifies the college of the review and proposed dates for the visit. QAA asks the college to identify nominee(s). QAA invites the college to attend a briefing event.		Notified by QAA of the review of its partner college. Invited by QAA to attend a briefing event.
	- 24 weeks		Arranges a discussion with the awarding body(ies) to agree the extent of awarding body involvement in the IQER process. Sends copy of agreement to QAA (or after briefing event).			Receives an invitation from the college to pre-briefing event discussion.
	-23 weeks		Confirms visit dates to QAA and identifies its nominee(s).	QAA notifies the college of the coordinator responsible for the review. The coordinator contacts the college to discuss the agenda and participants for the preparatory meeting.		
	- 22 weeks		College and its awarding body(ies) hold discussions.			Takes part in discussion with the college about its involvement in IQER process.
	-18 weeks	Briefing event	Attends a briefing event. Organises the preparatory meeting and identifies college attendees including staff and students.	QAA provides a briefing event. QAA notifies the college and the awarding body of the proposed Developmental engagement team and the QAA officer responsible for the review.		Attends briefing event, if this has been agreed in discussions with the college. Supports the college in the preparation of the self-evaluation and attends the preparatory meeting if these have been agreed in discussions with the college.

IQER stage	Time +/- visit	IQER process	What the college does	What QAA or the coordinator does	What the team does	How the awarding body is involved
			Receives details of the team.	QAA asks the college to check the proposed team for conflicts of interests.		Receives details of the proposed team from QAA and sends any comments to the college.
	-14 weeks		Collates comments on the proposed team and reports potential conflicts of interest to QAA.			
2	-12 weeks	Self-evaluation	Sends the self-evaluation to QAA. Students send QAA their written submission, where appropriate. The college copies both documents to awarding body(ies).	The QAA officer and the coordinator scrutinise the self-evaluation, the proposed lines of enquiry, the partnership agreement(s) with higher education institution(s) and the student written submission. If the self-evaluation is suitable, QAA informs the college. If it is not suitable, a QAA officer will ask the college to revise it.		Receives the self-evaluation and any student written submission from the college.
3	-11 weeks	Analysis of the self-evaluation	Sends the self-evaluation to each member of the team.	The coordinator analyses the self-evaluation.	Analyses the self-evaluation and the supporting evidence and posts a report to ARCS , (QAA's secure electronic folder for this review) and includes suggestions for further evidence and the programme for the visit.	

IQER stage	Time +/- visit	IQER process	What the college does	What QAA or the coordinator does	What the team does	How the awarding body is involved
	-10 weeks			The coordinator produces a summary of team's analysis and sends it to the college.		
4	-9 weeks	Preparatory meeting	Takes part in the preparatory meeting. Receives a letter confirming the arrangements for the visit.	The coordinator chairs the preparatory meeting. The coordinator sends the college, its awarding body(ies), the team and QAA a letter confirming the arrangements for the visit. The coordinator allocates areas of responsibility to each team member.		Takes part in the preparatory meeting, if this has been agreed in discussions with the college. Receives a letter from the coordinator confirming the arrangements for the visit.
5	- 1 week		Assembles further evidence in accordance with the team's requirements.			
	0 week +2 days	Visit	Takes part in the Developmental engagement.	The coordinator chairs the Developmental engagement. At the end of the visit the coordinator gives an oral report of the findings of the Developmental engagement to the college.	Conducts the visit.	Attends meetings in accordance with agreements made in advance with the college.

IQER stage	Time +/- visit	IQER process	What the college does	What QAA or the coordinator does	What the team does	How the awarding body is involved
	+1 week		Receives confirmation of the findings of the Developmental engagement.	The coordinator confirms the findings of the Developmental engagement to the college and its awarding body(ies).		Receives confirmation of the team's findings of the Developmental engagement from the coordinator.
6	+1 week	Reporting		The coordinator collates and edits the text and sends draft one to the team for comment.	Drafts text and posts it to ARCS.	
	+2 weeks			The coordinator prepares draft two and submits it to QAA Reports team for proofing.	Comments on draft one of the report.	
7	+4 weeks	Draft report to the college	Receives the draft report and action plan template.	The coordinator sends the third draft of the report to the head of the college and the awarding body(ies) for comments and provision of further evidence along with the action plan template.		Receives a copy of the draft report and action plan template from the coordinator.
8	+5 weeks		Checks the draft report for factual accuracy. Liaises with relevant staff to discuss and complete the action plan.			Sends any comments on the factual accuracy of the report to the college. Helps the college to develop the action plan, if this has been agreed in advance.
	+6 weeks		Collates and returns the report to QAA with comments on the factual accuracy of the report and submits further evidence (if appropriate).	Receives the college's response to the draft report.		Receives from the college a copy of the response to the draft report. Sends to QAA.

IQER stage	Time +/- visit	IQER process	What the college does	What QAA or the coordinator does	What the team does	How the awarding body is involved
	+7 weeks				Considers the comments and further evidence (if appropriate) and posts responses to ARCS.	
	+8 weeks		Returns the completed action plan to QAA, signed by the head of the institution.	The coordinator incorporates the team's response to the college's comments into the final draft report.		
	+9 weeks			QAA combines the draft report and the action plan		
9	+10 weeks	Report completed	Receives the final report for internal use only.	QAA sends the final report to the college and awarding bodies for internal use only and to HEFCE.		Receives the final report from QAA for internal use only.

Section four: Summative review

56 The purpose of this section is to state the aims and objectives of the Summative review and describe how it operates. This is summarised in a timeline at the end of this section.

Aims

The Summative review reflects all aims, which are:

- to support colleges in reviewing and improving the management of their higher education provision, for the benefit of students, and within the context of their agreements with their awarding body(ies)
- to foster good working relationships between colleges and their awarding bodies, for the benefit of students
- to enable HEFCE to discharge its statutory responsibility for ensuring that provision is made for assessing the quality of education provided by institutions it funds
- to provide public information.

Objectives

To realise these aims, the Summative review adopts all objectives:

- to engage colleges in a process of self-evaluation and peer review focused on reviewing, evaluating and improving the management of their higher education provision
- to produce reports of these review activities
- to contribute to public information about the academic standards and quality of higher education in colleges.

Overview

57 The emphasis of the Summative review is on reviewing the college's management of the student learning experience of its higher education provision and making judgements about the

effectiveness of its procedures. In common with the Developmental engagement, the Summative review takes full account of the varying roles of awarding bodies and is sensitive towards differences in those roles between different colleges. The Summative review differs from the Developmental engagement in five key respects:

- it covers all aspects of a college's management of its higher education provision
- it does not employ lines of enquiry proposed by the college
- there are no college nominees on the review team (although the college is invited to nominate a **facilitator** to act as a single point of contact between the college and the team)
- it leads to judgements about core themes one and two, and a conclusion about core theme three
- the Summative review report is published.

58 All colleges with HEFCE-funded higher education provision falling within the scope of IQER, as described in section one, will have one Summative review between 2007-08 and 2011-12, regardless of student numbers.

Preparation

59 In order to promote consistency and continuity, the coordinator for the Summative review will normally be the same as that for the Developmental engagement. About 22 weeks before the Summative review visit, the coordinator will contact the college and offer to hold a meeting at the college to renew contact and to discuss preparations for the Summative review. This contact is not a formal part of the review; its purpose is to refresh the college's understanding of the method and to provide further guidance on preparing a self-evaluation and helping students make a written submission.

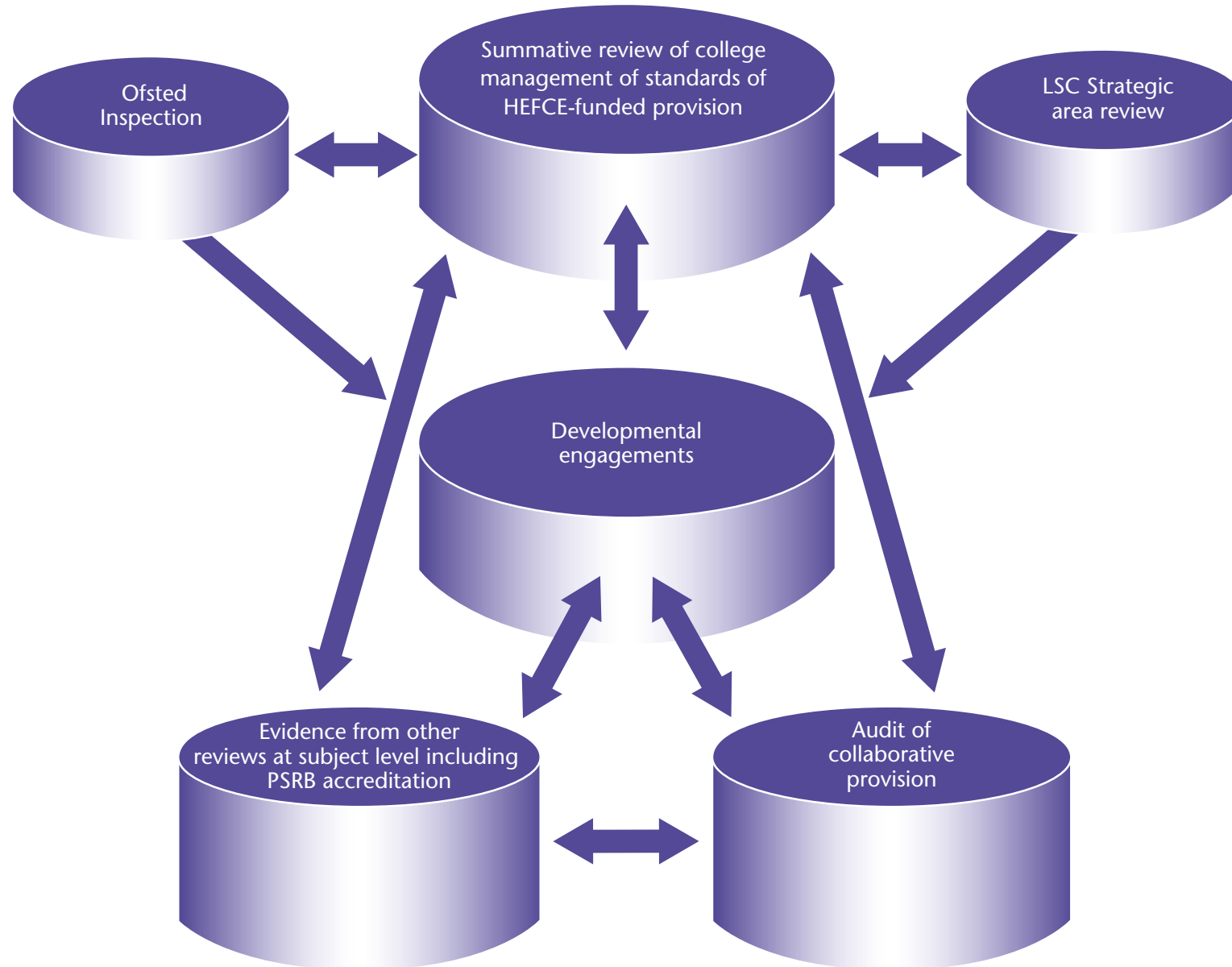


Figure 6: The information flow between the range of external scrutiny processes and Summative review

Self-evaluation

60 The purpose of the self-evaluation for the Summative review is similar to that of the self-evaluation for the Developmental engagement: to describe the responsibilities which the college has for its higher education provision, making reference to its agreements with awarding bodies, and the processes and procedures it has adopted for discharging these responsibilities; and to provide a critical self-reflection on its approach. The self-evaluation for the Summative review differs in that it covers all aspects of the college's higher education provision. Section six provides further guidance on the self-evaluation for Summative review.

Preparatory meeting

61 The next stage is a preparatory meeting at the college between college staff and students, representatives of awarding bodies, if agreed between the partners, and the coordinator. The purpose of the preparatory meeting is broadly the same as the preparatory meeting for the Developmental engagement described in the previous section. An indicative programme for a Summative review preparatory meeting is provided in Annex B.

Summative review teams

62 The number of members of the Summative review team is normally four, the same as that for the Developmental engagement but the composition is different. It usually comprises the coordinator and up to three reviewers. Summative review teams do not include the college's own nominees, although the college is invited to nominate a facilitator to act as a single point of contact between the college and the team during the visit and beforehand. QAA advises that one of the nominees becomes the facilitator to provide continuity between the IQER stages. More information about the role of the facilitator is provided in the glossary in section seven.

63 Where a college has more than 1000 students funded by HEFCE and/or more than four awarding bodies associated with its higher education provision, QAA may consider the inclusion of an additional reviewer in the Summative review team.

The Summative review visit

64 The visit normally takes place over two consecutive days. Colleges with fewer than 100 full-time equivalent students funded by HEFCE may have a shorter visit or no visit at all depending on the numbers of students. Details of abridged methods are set out in section five.

65 The purpose of the visit is broadly the same as that for the Developmental engagement: to allow reviewers to scrutinise evidence on site, meet college staff, students and other stakeholders and consider the extent of the college's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure. The responsibilities of the reviewers at the Summative review visit are very similar to those of the Developmental engagement team. The role of the coordinator, however, becomes one of leadership and facilitation and the coordinator does not make judgements. Annex C provides an indicative programme for the visit.

Role of students

66 The Summative review again seeks to identify students' views of their education both before and during the visit. The mechanisms for identifying these views are consistent with those at the Developmental engagement and the coordinator is again responsible for discussing with the college methods of securing a students' written submission, which remains voluntary. Teams will also expect the college's self-evaluation to explain how the college ensures that students' views inform the management of its higher education programmes.

67 During the visit the team will meet with at least one group of students. The arrangements for this meeting reflect those at the Developmental engagement, as described in section three.

Provisional judgement meeting

68 The Summative review team meets again normally one week after the visit to agree summaries of evidence and to make **provisional judgements** about the college's management of its responsibilities for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the college's procedures for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the information it is responsible for publishing. The provisional judgements are **confidence, limited confidence** or **no confidence**.

- Where a college is found to be managing effectively its responsibilities for the delivery of the academic standards and the quality of its higher education provision; the prospects for the future continuation of this appear good, and it has rigorous mechanisms for the management of its HEFCE-funded programmes in accordance with awarding bodies' requirements, the provisional judgement will be confidence.
- Where significant concerns exist about aspects of a college's current or likely future management of quality and/or delivery of the standards of its HEFCE-funded higher education programmes, the provisional judgement will be limited confidence.
- Where major concerns exist about significant aspects of a college's current or likely future capacity to secure and maintain quality and/or deliver standards of its HEFCE-funded programmes, the provisional judgement will be no confidence.

69 Judgements and conclusions will always be made with due reference to the requirements of the college's awarding body(ies).

70 Further details of the criteria for making judgements are set out in full under 'Confidence', 'Limited confidence' and 'No confidence' in the glossary in section seven. Differentiated judgements can be made where a team regards a college's management of the standards and/or quality of the programmes of study of one awarding body to be substantially different from those of another.

71 For core theme three the team will reach a provisional **conclusion**. The provisional conclusion will be whether or not reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information which the college publishes about itself.

- Where a college recognises all of the information it is responsible for publishing within the area under review; has rigorous mechanisms for the management of these responsibilities, which ensure that the information it publishes is both accurate and complete; and has evidence that this is the case, then the conclusion will be that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of all of the public information which the college is responsible for publishing.
- Where a college does not recognise all of the information it is responsible for publishing and/or where there is evidence that this information is inaccurate and/or incomplete, then the conclusion will be that reliance cannot be placed on the accuracy and completeness of all the public information which the college is responsible for publishing.

72 A differentiated conclusion may be reached where a team regards the information as accurate but not complete or vice-versa. Further information about how teams arrive at this conclusion is provided in the glossary in section seven and in annex D.

73 At the provisional judgement meeting the team will also identify good practice and provisional recommendations. These

share common definitions with those for the Developmental engagement. When essential recommendations are made they are likely to be reflected in a provisional judgement of limited confidence or no confidence against core themes one and/or two, and/or a conclusion that reliance cannot be placed on the accuracy and completeness of all the public information which the college is responsible for publishing about itself.

74 The coordinator will inform the college and its awarding bodies in writing about the outcome of the provisional judgement meeting within one week of the meeting. All judgements, good practice and recommendations remain provisional until the report is finalised.

Reports

75 Following the provisional judgement meeting, the team is responsible for writing a report of its findings. The report sets out the provisional judgements, good practice and recommendations and actions by the college as described above, together with contextual information and supporting evidence.

76 The coordinator will send a draft version of the report to the college and its awarding body(ies) for comment around four weeks after the end of the visit. This gives the college the

opportunity to draw the team's attention to any areas which it regards as inaccurate or incomplete and, if necessary, submit additional evidence. Teams will only be able to consider supporting evidence that was available at the time of the review visit. The team is then responsible for considering the college's comments and any supporting evidence which the college may offer at this stage, and agreeing whether or not any aspect of the report, including the provisional judgements, should be amended in response.

77 The college is also asked at this stage to produce an action plan to accompany the report. The action plan describes how the college intends to take forward the reviewers' findings and the effectiveness of the action taken will form part of the evidence base for any future review activity and constitute a published record of the college's commitment to developing its provision. QAA will provide a standard format for the action plan.

78 Normally, once the team has considered, and responded to, the college's comments, it will confirm the judgements, QAA will set out these judgements in writing to the college and the awarding body(ies) and QAA will send a final version of the report to the college, its awarding bodies and to HEFCE. The final report is subsequently published on the QAA website 15 weeks after the end of the visit.

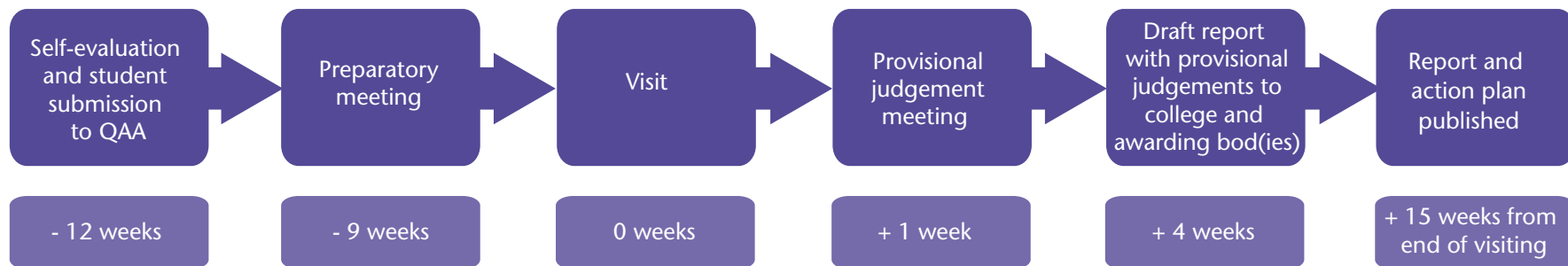


Figure 7: Key stages of a Summative review with one visit

Second visits and follow-up action

79 After the college has commented on the draft report and had the opportunity to submit further evidence, if the team continues to have limited or no confidence in either or both of the first two core themes, or considers that reliance cannot be placed on the accuracy and/or completeness of the information the college published about itself, then the team will conduct a second visit to the college to review further evidence. This will take place as soon as possible after the first visit, at the discretion of QAA. The team for the second visit will normally be the same as for the first. A second visit will also take place should a team be unable to reach provisional or confirmed judgements after the first visit. QAA considers it highly likely that the awarding body(ies) will wish to take part in a second visit and will ensure that QAA staff copy to the awarding body(ies) all correspondence from QAA to the college about the second visit.

80 If the second visit results in judgements of confidence for core themes one and two plus the conclusion that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information

the college is responsible for publishing about itself, the review is completed following the process set out in paragraphs 77 and 78. However, should the second visit result in a judgement of limited confidence in either or both core themes one and two and/or the conclusion that reliance cannot be placed in the accuracy and/or completeness of published information, the report is published and there will be a formal programme of **follow-up action**, which must be completed by the college within 18 months of the publication of the review report.

81 If the second visit results in a judgement of no confidence in either or both of core themes one and two, and if the college and its awarding body(ies) have cause to disagree with these outcomes, they may consider using the QAA procedure on representations. If one or both of the judgements are confirmed as no confidence, the report will be published and there will be a formal programme of follow-up action. If after this time QAA is still concerned about the effectiveness of the remedial action, QAA may conduct a further visit; and if satisfactory progress has still not been made, the matter will be referred to HEFCE, which reserves the right to withdraw some or all of its funding.



Figure 8: Key stages of a Summative review which results in a provisional and/or confirmed judgement of limited or no confidence in one or both of core themes one and two

Summative review timeline (where provisional judgements are 'confidence' for core themes one and two and the conclusion for core theme three is that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of all of the public information which the college is responsible for publishing).

IQER stage	Time +/- visit	IQER process	What the college does	What QAA or the coordinator does	What the team does	How the awarding body is involved
10		Preparation				
	-26 weeks			QAA notifies the college of the proposed date for the visit. QAA asks the college to identify the facilitator.		Receives notification from QAA of the review of its partner college.
	-24 weeks		Confirms the facilitator. Responds to the coordinator's offer of an informal meeting.	The coordinator contacts the college to offer an informal meeting to discuss the preparation for the review. The coordinator copies this invitation to the awarding body.		Responds to the college about its possible involvement in an informal meeting with the coordinator.
	-23 to -14 weeks (optional activity)		Takes part in an informal meeting with the coordinator if the college requires this meeting.	The coordinator takes part in an informal meeting with the college if the college requires this meeting.		Takes part in an informal meeting with the college and the coordinator, if this has been agreed with the college.
	-22 weeks			The coordinator contacts the college to discuss the agenda and the participants of the preparatory meeting.		
	-14 weeks		Organises the preparatory meeting and identifies college participants, including staff and students.	QAA notifies the college of the review team and the QAA officer responsible for the review. QAA asks the college to check the proposed team for conflicts of interests.		Receives details of the preparatory meeting from the college and the coordinator and arranges to attend if this has been agreed with the college. Receives details of the proposed review team and offers comments to the college on the proposed team membership.

IQER stage	Time +/- visit	IQER process	What the college does	What QAA or the coordinator does	What the team does	How the awarding body is involved
	-13 weeks		Reports potential conflicts of interest to QAA.			
11	-12 weeks	Self-evaluation	Submits the self-evaluation to QAA. Students submit written submission, if appropriate.	A QAA officer and the coordinator scrutinise the self-evaluation, the partnership agreement for HEI awards and the student written submission, if provided. If the self-evaluation is suitable, QAA informs the college of this. If it is not suitable, a QAA officer will ask the college to revise it.		
12	-11 weeks	Analysis of the self- evaluation	Sends the self-evaluation and the optional student written submission to each member of the IQER team and to the awarding body(ies).	The coordinator analyses the self evaluation.	Analyses the self-evaluation and the supporting evidence and reports through ARCS, including suggestions for further evidence and the programme for the visit.	Receives a copy of the approved self evaluation and any optional student written submission from the college.
	-10 weeks		Receives a summary of the team's analysis of the self-evaluation.	The coordinator produces a summary of the team's analysis and sends it to the college.		Receives a copy of the summary of the team's comments on the self-evaluation from the coordinator.

IQER stage	Time +/- visit	IQER process	What the college does	What QAA or the coordinator does	What the team does	How the awarding body is involved
13	-9 weeks	Preparatory meeting	Takes part in the preparatory meeting.	The coordinator chairs the preparatory meeting. The coordinator sends the college, its awarding body(ies), the team and QAA a letter confirming the arrangements for the visit.		Attends the preparatory meeting, if this has been agreed in advance with the college.
	-2 weeks			The coordinator allocates areas of responsibility to each team member.	Receives a briefing and the allocation of areas of responsibility for the review.	
	-1 week		Assembles evidence in accordance with the team's requirements.			
14	0 week	Visit	Takes part in the Summative review visit.	The coordinator chairs the Summative review visit. At the end of the visit the coordinator offers a verbal update on the progress of the review to the college facilitator.	Conducts the visit. Accompanies the coordinator to provide a verbal update on the progress of the review.	Takes part in the review visit in accordance with agreements with the college made in advance.
15	+1 week	Provisional judgement meeting	Receives a letter from the coordinator setting out the provisional judgements.	The coordinator chairs the provisional judgement meeting. The coordinator sends a letter to the college, copied to the awarding body (ies), setting out the provisional judgements.	Meets with the coordinator to agree summaries of evidence, provisional judgments, good practice and recommendations.	Receives from the coordinator a copy of the letter setting out the provisional judgements.

IQER stage	Time +/- visit	IQER process	What the college does	What QAA or the coordinator does	What the team does	How the awarding body is involved
16	+1 week	Report writing		The coordinator collates and edits the text and sends the first draft report to the team for comment.	Drafts report text and posts it on ARCS.	
	+2 weeks			The coordinator prepares draft two of the report and submits it to QAA Reports team.	Comments on draft one of the report.	
17	+4 weeks	Draft report to the college	Receives the draft report.	The coordinator sends the third draft of the report to the head of the college and to the awarding bodies for comments and for the provision of further evidence. This report draft includes the action plan template.		Receives a copy of the draft report from the coordinator.
	+5 weeks		Checks the draft report for factual accuracy and identifies any additional evidence it needs to submit. Liaises with relevant staff to discuss and develop the action plan.			Provides any comment on the draft report to the college to collate into one response to the coordinator on the draft report.

IQER stage	Time +/- visit	IQER process	What the college does	What QAA or the coordinator does	What the team does	How the awarding body is involved
	+8 weeks		Collates all comments on the draft report and sends one set of comments on factual accuracy to QAA and provides additional evidence, if appropriate.	<p>Considers the college's (and its awarding body comments) and any further evidence submitted and posts responses to ARCS.</p> <p>Confirms judgements of confidence or agrees that a second review visit to the college is needed.</p>		
	+9 weeks		<p>Receives a copy of the letter setting out either the final judgements of confidence or notification that a second visit is required.</p> <p>Returns the completed action plan to QAA.</p>	QAA confirms either the final judgements of confidence to the college and its awarding bodies or confirms that a second visit is required.		Receives from QAA either a copy of the letter of final judgements of confidence or notification that a second visit to the college is required.
	+10 weeks					Contributes to the development of the action plan, if this has been agreed in advance with the college.
	+15 weeks		Report publication	QAA publishes the report.		

Timeline for a Summative review second visit.

IQER stage	Time +/- visit	IQER process	What the college does	What QAA or the coordinator does	What the team does	How the awarding body is involved
14	-1 week min	Second visit	Receives copies of all correspondence from QAA and the coordinator and prepares for the second visit.	The coordinator confirms the arrangements for the second visit and agrees the agenda with the college and its awarding body(ies).	Receives copies of all correspondence from QAA and the coordinator and prepares for the second visit.	Receives copies of all correspondence from QAA and the coordinator and prepares for the second visit.
	0 weeks		Takes part in the second visit to the college.	The coordinator chairs the second visit to the college.	Visits the college to conduct the second visit.	Takes part in the second visit to the college, if the awarding body considers this necessary.
15	+2 days		Receives the oral report and the judgements.	The coordinator provides an oral report and the judgements to the head of college and his/her nominated staff before the team leaves at the end of the visit.	Accompanies the coordinator to provide the oral report and the judgements to the college staff.	Receives the oral report and the judgements, if in attendance at visit.
16	+1 week	Report writing	Receives a letter from QAA confirming the review judgements.	QAA sends a letter confirming the outcomes to the college and copies this to the awarding body(ies). The coordinator collates and edits the team's text, and sends draft one of the report to the review team for finalisation.	Drafts report text and post it on ARCS. Comments on draft one of the report.	Receives a copy of the letter from QAA confirming the review judgements.
	+2 weeks			The coordinator prepares draft two of the report and submits it to the QAA Reports team for proofing.		

IQER stage	Time +/- visit	IQER process	What the college does	What QAA or the coordinator does	What the team does	How the awarding body is involved
17	+4 weeks	Draft report to the college	Receives the draft report from the coordinator.	The coordinator sends the third draft of the report to the head of the college and copies it to the awarding body(ies) for comment.		Receives the draft report from the coordinator.
	+5 weeks		Checks the draft review report for factual accuracy. Liaises with the relevant staff to discuss and complete the action plan.			Provides any comments on the draft report to the college. Contributes to the college's development of the plan of action to address any limited or no confidence judgement(s) that relate to its awards.
	+8 weeks		Returns collated comments on the factual accuracy of the report.		Considers the college's and the awarding body(ies)' comments and posts responses to ARCS. Confirms the review evaluation and judgements.	
	+10 weeks		Returns the completed action plan to QAA, signed by the head of college.	The coordinator completes draft four of the review report.		Receives a copy of the completed action plan from the college.
18	+15 weeks	Report published		QAA combines the draft report and the completed action plan and publishes it only if the judgements are confidence and/or limited confidence. If one or more judgements are of no confidence, the report remains draft until the end of any representation the college and its awarding body(ies) raise. At the end of this period the judgements are considered and QAA finalises and publishes the report.		

IQER stage	Time +/- visit	IQER process	What the college does	What QAA or the coordinator does	What the team does	How the awarding body is involved
19		Action plan	Implements the action plan with its awarding body(ies).			An awarding body may wish to help the college to implement its action plan, particularly if the limited or no confidence judgement(s) relate to its award(s).
20	Within 18 months of publication of the report	Follow up only if limited or no confidence judgements	If the judgements are limited or no confidence, the college takes part in formal follow-up action to demonstrate its progress in implementing the action plan and the impact of this action on the students' education.	If the judgements are limited or no confidence, QAA carries out a formal programme of follow-up action to check the college's progress in implementing the action plan and the impact of this action on the students' education.		An awarding body takes part in formal follow-up to any limited or no confidence judgement(s) related to its award(s).

Section five: Adaptations to IQER

82 QAA recognises that the provision of higher education in colleges is characterised by an array of different types of delivery, sizes of provision, and funding and awarding relationships. QAA also recognises that IQER is being introduced at a time when this provision is changing rapidly in response to a number of factors, including government policy and the needs of students. QAA has, therefore, designed IQER so that it engages with the higher education provision in each college on its own merits. IQER has no preferred model for higher education provision, other than that it expects that any model must permit the awarding body to assure itself about the standards and quality of its collaborative provision with colleges. QAA has made three adaptations to the application of IQER method to reflect: the size of the provision; collaborative modes of management and delivery; and situations where provision is undergoing significant changes. These adaptations are described in the following paragraphs. In all cases, QAA will involve awarding bodies in discussions alongside colleges.

Abridged method

83 The external evaluation of the IQER pilot confirmed QAA's view that the costs to colleges of engaging in IQER are proportionately higher for those with a small higher education provision. In response QAA has developed an abridged method for colleges with fewer than 100 full-time equivalent students funded by HEFCE to ensure that the cost and workload associated with their review remains in proportion to the costs and workload borne by colleges with larger numbers of students. As with larger colleges, IQER reviews will result in a published Summative review report: some colleges may also elect to take part in a Developmental engagement.

Abridged Developmental engagement

84 Colleges with fewer than 100 full-time equivalent students funded by HEFCE may opt for a Developmental engagement but will not be required to have one unless they meet one of the risk criteria set out in paragraph 97. Where such a request is agreed by QAA, the abridged Developmental engagement will apply. This will normally involve:

- a three person review team: the coordinator, a reviewer and the college's nominee. QAA will provide two reviewers if a college is unable to provide a nominee
- a shortened visit. QAA will determine the duration of the visit according to student numbers as follows:
 - where the number of full-time equivalent students funded by HEFCE is fewer than 100 but more than 49, the Developmental engagement visit will normally take place over one and a half days or two days depending on the complexity of the provision
 - where the number of full-time equivalent students funded by HEFCE is fewer than 50, the Developmental engagement visit will normally take place over one day or one and a half days depending on the complexity of the provision.

Abridged Summative review

85 All colleges with HEFCE-funded higher education provision falling within the scope of IQER described in section one will be required to take part in one Summative review between 2007-08 and 2011-12, regardless of student numbers. QAA has, however, made adaptations to the process of Summative review for colleges with fewer than 100 full-time equivalent students funded by HEFCE to ensure that the review process remains proportionate. However, colleges which receive essential

recommendations in a Developmental engagement are not eligible for an abridged Summative review. This is because essential recommendations indicate that quality and/or standards of the higher education provision at the college are at risk.

86 Where the number of full-time equivalent students funded by HEFCE is fewer than 100 but more than 49, the Summative review visit will normally take place over one and a half days and it will be conducted by a team of three: a coordinator and two reviewers.

87 For colleges with fewer than 50 full-time equivalent students funded by HEFCE, QAA will not automatically arrange a review visit. Instead the Summative review team will carry out a desk-based analysis of the college's self-evaluation and will draft the Summative review report based on this analysis. The report will be sent to the college and its awarding body(ies) for comments on factual accuracy and for the submission of further evidence following the standard process described in section four. Should the team be unable to complete the report from the evidence available, or if the team reaches provisional judgements of limited or no confidence, QAA will arrange for the team to visit the college for one day or one and a half days to complete the review. In such cases, the IQER team will normally comprise three members: the coordinator and two reviewers.

88 Exceptionally, under either of these adaptations to the Summative review, if QAA and the team consider that there is insufficient evidence to support the formulation of provisional judgements or the production of a report, or if the team reaches provisional judgements of limited or no confidence, QAA will arrange for the team to return to the college for a second visit. The second visit will normally take place over one day.

Adaptations for colleges in HEFCE-funded consortia, in lifelong learning networks and for higher education centres

89 The primary unit of IQER reviews is normally the individual college. QAA recognises, however, that some colleges manage and deliver their higher education provision through HEFCE-funded consortia: collaborative relationships with other colleges and awarding bodies. QAA has designed IQER to reflect such relationships by allowing adaptations to both the Developmental engagement and Summative review where it is feasible and appropriate to do so.

90 Possible adaptations may include:

Example one

One Developmental engagement carried out across all of the colleges in the consortium. This would involve one self-evaluation and one enlarged Developmental engagement team, and would result in one Developmental engagement report and action plan.

Example two

A separate Developmental engagement for each college in the consortium, carried out in parallel and preceded by a meeting between the consortium management team and/or awarding bodies with representatives of the Developmental engagement teams. This would involve one self-evaluation and one Developmental engagement team for each college, and would result in a separate report for each college.

Example three

HEFCE requires each college to have its own individual Summative review according to the process described in section four. However, the process may be adapted to reduce burden on the consortium management team by the submission of material about the respective responsibilities of each college and the consortium management team and by a meeting between the consortium management team and/or awarding bodies, with representatives of the Summative review teams before review visits to any of the colleges.

91 QAA will also be willing to consider allocating two or three coordinators to lead the reviews of all the colleges in a consortium and also to have some overlap in the teams of reviewers involved. Such adaptations may help a consortium to review and enhance its management arrangements in a manner which reduces the potential duplication of involvement for the management team and the awarding body(ies) in HEFCE-funded consortia. These examples are not intended to be exhaustive and QAA would be willing to discuss other adaptations suggested by colleges and their awarding bodies in HEFCE-funded consortia, provided they retain the core elements of the Developmental engagement and Summative review described in sections three and four respectively.

92 QAA officers will contact the management team of each HEFCE-funded consortium in 2007-08 to discuss the possibility of adapting IQER for its members. In order to provide sufficient time to do this, members of HEFCE-funded consortia will not be reviewed in 2007-08. The adaptations described above only apply to HEFCE-funded consortia and QAA would welcome approaches from colleges involved in other types of consortia, such as lifelong learning networks, to discuss possible adaptations for them.

93 HEFCE is also supporting the development of a number of higher education centres, most of which draw on the provision of local colleges. As the status and constitution of these higher education centres varies from centre to centre, QAA will contact each centre individually in 2007-08 to discuss how IQER will apply to them. Higher education centres will not be scheduled for a review visit in 2007-08 to provide sufficient time to tailor the application of IQER to each centre.

Arrangements for colleges undergoing significant changes to their higher education provision

94 IQER teams consider colleges' present and likely future management of higher education based on evidence about processes and procedures in place at the time of the review. However, there will inevitably be cases where existing processes and procedures provide limited evidence about the future management of the college's higher education provision, particularly where a college is undergoing significant growth and/or changes to its awarding bodies. In such cases, QAA believes that limiting IQER to a review of existing processes and procedures would also limit the value of the process to the college, its awarding bodies and its students.

95 Normally, any adaptations to the method made to reflect significant change will be confined to a review of existing evidence about the college's future plans. Exceptionally, and again only with the agreement of the college, its awarding bodies and HEFCE, QAA may adjust the timing of the visit so that more evidence about the college's plans is available. Requests for such adaptations must be made in writing by the college to QAA.

How QAA determines the number of Developmental engagements for each college

96 All colleges with 100 or more full-time equivalent students on HEFCE-funded programmes will take part in at least one Developmental engagement. A small number of colleges will be asked to take part in two Developmental engagements and exceptionally in a third, because they have recently received unsatisfactory reports from either QAA or Ofsted and/or their partner awarding body has a judgement of limited or no confidence in the audit of its collaborative provision and which relates to the partner awarding body's management of its collaborative provision in colleges. This reflects QAA's commitment as a signatory to the Higher Education Concordat on quality assurance arrangements and data collection to target our activities according to risk.

97 Where a college meets one or more of the following criteria it will be scheduled for two Developmental engagements between 2007-08 and 2011-12:

- no confidence and/or a failing judgement in a QAA Academic review since January 2002, not redressed through a satisfactory re-review of the relevant provision
- no confidence and or failing judgements in two or more QAA academic reviews since January 2002 irrespective of the outcomes of re-review
- no confidence judgement in a review of a Foundation Degree in the academic year 2004-05 including a Foundation Degree consortium in which the college delivers the Foundation Degree under review
- a judgement of no confidence or limited confidence from an audit of a college's partner higher education institution's collaborative provision, where it is clear that the evidence for the judgement relates in whole or in part to the management of higher education provision in colleges in receipt of HEFCE funding

- a grade of 4 in leadership and management in an Ofsted college inspection not redressed through a satisfactory re-inspection of the relevant provision
- a reported 'cause for concern' with regard to higher education provision in a college, that has been investigated by QAA and resulted in a requirement for action to address the issues raised.

98 In exceptional circumstances a college may be asked to participate in a third Developmental engagement. This will be rare and only if:

- a college has essential recommendations in two separate Developmental engagements or in one Developmental engagement and the Summative review, or
- a 'cause for concern' has been raised about a particular college in accordance with QAA's published policy on 'causes for concern' and has resulted in a required plan of action.

99 Where a college has two or more Developmental engagements, QAA will normally spread them across the cycle to give the college and its awarding body(ies) time to reflect and act upon the findings of the first before taking part in a second Developmental engagement or the Summative review. Colleges may, however, ask to have two Developmental engagements concurrently or close together.

100 Where a new college is formed by merger or acquisition, QAA will determine the number of Developmental engagements for that college in discussion with HEFCE, the college and its awarding bodies and by reference to the experiences of its predecessors in external scrutiny by QAA and Ofsted.

How QAA determines when each Developmental engagement and Summative review will take place

101 QAA is responsible for conducting Developmental engagements and Summative reviews in about 270 colleges from 2007-08 to 2011-12. To help determine when they will occur for each college, QAA has adopted the criteria set out below. It is not possible on the basis of these criteria for a college and its awarding body(ies) to identify exactly when a particular review will take place, however, they are included here to give some indication of the likely timing of the reviews. QAA will always try to give colleges at least 26 weeks notice in writing of a Developmental engagement or Summative review visit; and there will be a minimum of one year between a Developmental engagement and the Summative review visits. Colleges also have the opportunity to negotiate the timing of reviews to fit in with external reviews by other bodies.

102 In determining when particular visits should take place, QAA will consider:

- the total number of reviews required for each college. Colleges with two Developmental engagements should have the first one early in the review cycle to give time to reflect and act upon the findings of the first before taking part in the second Developmental engagement and the Summative review (unless they have chosen concurrent Developmental engagements)
- previous QAA reviews. Colleges with substantial experience of QAA reviews, such as Academic review, will tend to fall later in the cycle (notwithstanding the number of Developmental engagements required); colleges with less experience will tend to fall earlier. However, QAA will not schedule colleges without any experience of QAA in the first year, 2007-08
- burden on awarding bodies. Where an awarding body makes awards at a large number of colleges, QAA will try to distribute those colleges across the cycle so that the awarding body is not involved in too many reviews in any one year
- possible adaptations to the method for colleges in consortia. QAA will avoid review visits to any members of HEFCE-funded consortia, or colleges involved in higher education centres, in 2007-08 to provide sufficient time to discuss with these colleges and their awarding bodies about possible adaptations to the method
- resources. QAA will distribute the reviews evenly across and within the review cycle to reflect the resources QAA has available to carry out reviews.

Section six: Guidance to colleges on preparing self-evaluations

103 Both the Developmental engagement and the Summative review stages of IQER are based on a college's self-evaluation. The purpose of the self-evaluation is to describe the responsibilities that the college has for the management of the student learning experience of its higher education provision, making reference to its agreements with awarding bodies, and the processes and procedures it has adopted for discharging these responsibilities. The self-evaluation also provides the opportunity for the college to reflect critically on the effectiveness of these processes and procedures.

104 Guidance is provided below for colleges on the structure and content of self-evaluations. This should be regarded as guidance, rather than a template or prescription, since each college has different responsibilities reflecting individual agreements with awarding bodies.

105 An effective self-evaluation is key to a college gaining substantial benefit from IQER and to the smooth running of IQER. QAA, therefore, encourages colleges to give its preparation due time and attention. QAA will return the self-evaluation to the college for further work if it does not enable the IQER team to identify the college's responsibilities and understand how these responsibilities are discharged. The preparation of a self-evaluation is a major focus of the briefing that QAA will arrange for colleges and their awarding bodies.

Self-evaluation: Developmental engagement

106 The self-evaluation for the Developmental engagement should focus on the area under review for all three core themes. The following guidance is based on the area of student assessment because this is the focus of the first Developmental

engagement for every college. For colleges with more than one Developmental engagement, the structure of the self-evaluation for subsequent Developmental engagements will be similar, although the content may be quite different. The coordinator will be able to provide further guidance on self-evaluations for colleges with more than one Developmental engagement.

Structure

107 The self-evaluation for the Developmental engagement should be structured according to the lines of enquiry, which the college agrees with the coordinator following the briefing and before the preparatory meeting. The self-evaluation should also include an introduction to the college, including details of agreements with awarding bodies. Within each line of enquiry the college should explain how the college manages its responsibilities with respect to the three core themes of academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information. For example, if the line of enquiry is the contribution of work placements to final assessments, the college might explain, under the quality of learning opportunities, how it supports students in work placements to enable them to generate information or evidence for final assessments; or, under public information, what it says about the contribution of work placements to final assessments in its programme handbooks. Some lines of enquiry may not apply to all core themes.

Content

108 In order to limit the burden of the IQER exercise, colleges should as far as possible discuss their responsibilities, processes and procedures in a portfolio of documents which form the self-evaluation. Any new material should be limited to that which is required to signpost and/or contextualise the material in the portfolio and other existing material for the team. New material should not normally exceed four pages of A4. Returning to the example of the contribution of work placements to final assessment, the college may regard its existing policies on work placements as providing a comprehensive description of the college's approach. If so, then it may simply need to include these policies in the self-evaluation portfolio and make reference to them in a short covering document together with evidence of their effectiveness. The following guidelines provide details of the evidence that the college might consider including or referencing in the self-evaluation.

109 The self-evaluation also provides colleges with an opportunity to reflect critically on the effectiveness of its processes and procedures for managing higher education. Any material provided should be limited as far as possible to that which already exists, for example, a report on a recent internal review of higher education provision or a recent periodic review carried out by an awarding body. The length of a college's Developmental engagement self-evaluation depends on the college's level of responsibility, the lines of enquiry and the quality and comprehensiveness of existing written evidence. Reviewers will value a self-evaluation in which they can find the material they need readily; it will therefore be important for the college to consider the reviewers' needs when compiling the self-evaluation.

Indicative structure of a self-evaluation for Developmental engagement in student assessment

Introduction to the college and its awarding body(ies)

Suggested content:

- mission statement
- brief description of the college, its location, size and higher education programmes listed with their awarding bodies
- prospectus
- data showing three year student enrolment and progression across each programme
- higher education annual monitoring reports.

Details of the college's responsibilities for higher education

Suggested content:

- formal partnership agreement(s) with higher education institution(s)
- Edexcel standard note.

Outline of recent changes affecting higher education provision in the college

Suggested content:

- brief description of recent changes to higher education programmes
- brief description of changes to higher education programmes planned
- higher education strategy (when this policy has been implemented by HEFCE).

Possible sources of evidence or references:

- college strategic plan
- higher education annual reports.

Outline of assessment policy and practice

Suggested content:

- Use of the Academic Infrastructure
- Effectiveness of procedures for:
 - programme and assessment planning
 - programme internal validation
 - the regulation and operation of assessment
 - marking
 - assessment moderation and verification
 - staff development and training in assessment
 - assessment record keeping
 - feedback to students
 - the review of assessment regulations.

Possible sources of evidence or references could include some of the following, depending on the extent of the college's responsibilities for standards in the college's agreement with each awarding body:

- assessment policy
- assessment planning process
- assessment design
- assessment tasks
- assessment criteria
- assessment records

- assessment review and evaluation reports
- action taken on receipt of external review or inspection reports
- programme specifications
- information for students
- minutes of formal meetings to consider students' achievement and academic progression.

Lines of enquiry

The lines of enquiry in this case could be, for example:

- the match between intended learning outcomes, the assessment set and marking practice
- the quality of the feedback to students on formative and summative assessment
- the match between the information on student assessment in the programme specification, in publicity and promotional material and in assessments set.

Possible sources of evidence or references could include some of the following, depending on the extent of the college's responsibilities for standards in the college's agreement with each awarding body:

- quality assurance policy
- monitoring and review processes
- resource policy
- admissions policy
- accreditation of prior learning policy
- student support policy
- student assessment policy
- external examiner or verifier reports

- action taken on receipt of external review or inspection reports
- teaching and learning strategy
- management structure
- meeting structure
- staff development policy
- college and awarding bodies regulations for progression
- statistical records
- programme specifications
- national student survey results (if appropriate)
- information for staff managing and delivering higher education
- promotional material
- information for students
- action plans resulting from:
 - awarding body reports
 - periodic review reports
 - internal reports
 - external examiner or verifier reports
 - evidence from reviews at subject level, including professional statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) accreditation
 - LSC strategic area reviews
 - Ofsted inspections
- the use of the Academic Infrastructure.

Self-evaluation: Summative review

110 The self-evaluation for the Summative review should address all aspects of the college's management of its higher education provision.

Structure

111 The self-evaluation for the Summative review should be structured according to the three core themes: academic standards, quality of learning opportunities and public information. The self-evaluation should also include an introduction to the college, with details of any agreements with awarding bodies. This section may be repeated from the Developmental engagement, but it is important to cover these arrangements again to reflect any changes since the Developmental engagement and because the Summative review team usually has two reviewers who will not have been involved in the Developmental engagement. Also it will be important for colleges to bear in mind that the Summative review team will receive only the final Developmental engagement report from QAA and not the full set of evidence on which the Developmental engagement conclusions were based. Within each core theme the college should describe the responsibilities which its awarding bodies have conferred on it and explain the processes and procedures it has adopted for discharging these responsibilities. The self-evaluation also provides colleges with an opportunity to reflect critically on the effectiveness of these processes and procedures.

Content

112 As with the Developmental engagement self-evaluation, colleges should as far as possible describe their responsibilities, processes and procedures by compiling a portfolio of existing documents, with any new material strictly limited to what is

required to signpost and/or contextualise existing material for the team. Further guidance on the composition of this portfolio is provided below. It is not possible to provide definitive guidance on the length of the self-evaluation for the Summative review. The length depends on the college's level of responsibility and the quality and comprehensiveness of existing written evidence. However, where a college feels confident in relying on a portfolio of existing evidence about the management of its higher education provision, it may be able to restrict any new material to four sides of A4.

Indicative structure of a self-evaluation for Summative review

Introduction to the college and its awarding bodies

Suggested content:

- mission statement
- brief description of college, its location, size and higher education programmes listed against their awarding bodies
- prospectus
- data showing three years of student enrolment and progression across each programme
- higher education annual monitoring reports
- higher education strategy (when HEFCE has implemented this policy).

Details of the college's responsibilities for higher education

Suggested content:

- formal partnership agreement(s) with higher education institution(s)
- Edexcel standard note.

Outline of recent changes affecting higher education provision in the college

Suggested content:

- brief description of recent changes to higher education programmes
- brief description of changes to higher education programmes planned.

Possible sources of evidence or references:

- college strategic plan
- higher education annual report
- higher education strategy (when HEFCE has implemented this policy).

Academic standards

Suggested content (this will vary in accordance with the extent of each college's commitments as set out in agreements with awarding bodies):

- responsibilities for managing standards
- reporting structure
- terms of reference for committees
- effectiveness of the arrangements for curriculum development
- effectiveness of the arrangements for internal validation
- effectiveness of the arrangements for student assessment
- analysis of student progression and achievement
- effectiveness of programme monitoring and evaluation
- use of the Academic Infrastructure.

Possible sources of evidence or references:

- quality assurance policy
- monitoring and review processes
- admissions policy
- accreditation of prior learning policy
- student assessment policy
- management structure
- meeting structure
- internal validation processes
- college and awarding bodies regulations for progression
- action taken on receipt of external review or inspection reports
- statistical records
- programme specifications
- PSRB accreditation reports
- student complaints and appeals processes
- college student survey analyses
- national student survey results (if appropriate)
- information for higher education staff
- Ofsted inspection reports
- Developmental engagement report(s).

Quality of learning opportunities

Suggested content (this will vary in accordance with the extent of each college's commitments as set out in agreements with awarding bodies):

- use of the Academic Infrastructure
- effectiveness of arrangements for:
 - developing teaching and learning
 - staff development
 - student support and academic guidance
 - resourcing the higher education provision
 - collecting and acting on student opinion.

Possible sources of evidence or references:

- quality assurance policy
- monitoring and review processes
- resource policy
- admissions policy
- accreditation of prior learning policy
- student support and guidance policy
- teaching and learning strategy
- management structure
- meeting structure
- staff development policy
- statistical records
- programme specifications
- college student survey analyses

- analyses of college student surveys
- student complaints and appeals procedures
- national student survey results (if appropriate)
- information for higher education staff
- Ofsted inspection reports
- Developmental engagement report(s).

Public information

Suggested content (this will vary in accordance with the extent of each college's commitments as set out in agreements with awarding bodies):

- details of information for which college is responsible for publishing
- effectiveness of the procedure for assuring the accuracy and completeness of public information.

Possible sources of evidence or references:

- publishing policy and procedures for both electronic and paper based information
- notes of meetings discussing scrutiny and approval of public information
- promotional material
- mission statement
- corporate plan
- programme specifications
- information for students.

Format

113 The college may submit the self-evaluation in hard copy or electronic format or in a mixture of the two formats. Supporting evidence should be clearly titled, numbered and referenced from the covering or introductory note. The college may provide any electronic documents on CD-ROM or a similar electronic storage device. Alternatively, the college may provide hyperlinks to electronic documents available on the college's website. If so, the links from the covering or introductory note should be direct to the documents concerned and not to the college's homepage or similar. It would also help the review team if references to the relevant paragraph or sub-section are given.

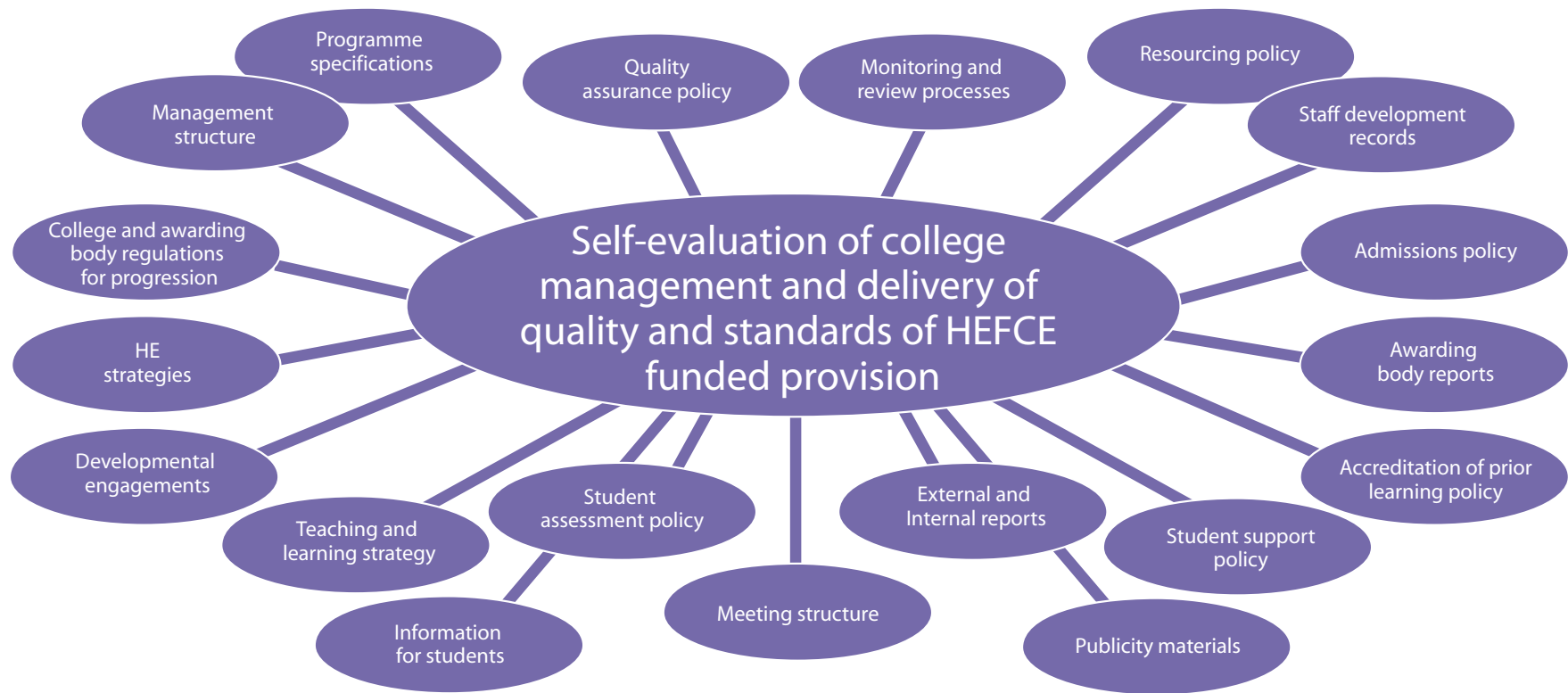


Figure 9: Sources of evidence which inform the self-evaluation

Section seven: A glossary of terms

Abridged method

An application of IQER for colleges with fewer than 100 full-time equivalent students funded by HEFCE to ensure that the costs and workload associated with their reviews remain in proportion to the costs and workload borne by colleges with larger numbers of students. The abridged method can be used whatever the funding route. For more information see section five.

Academic Infrastructure

www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/default.asp

The Academic Infrastructure is a set of nationally agreed reference points relating to effective practice in the setting and management of academic standards and quality in higher education. It comprises: the *Code of practice* www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/default.asp the FHEQ www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/default.asp and its companion for Scotland; subject benchmark statements www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/default.asp and the *Foundation Degree qualifications benchmark* www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/foundationDegree/benchmark/FDQB.pdf all published by QAA. Programme specifications www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/programSpec/default.asp and progress files www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/progressFiles/default.asp also contribute to the Academic Infrastructure and QAA provides guidance on these.

The Academic Infrastructure is at the heart of the IQER process. IQER teams will draw upon the Academic Infrastructure as a source of reference when considering colleges' approach to the management of their higher education provision. IQER teams will ask colleges about their use of the *Code of practice*, and self-evaluations should include an account of this, drawing attention to any resulting changes in practice which have taken place, any benefits accruing and any areas of difficulty encountered and how they have been addressed.

Reviewers will also explore colleges' use of relevant qualification and award descriptors and subject benchmark statements. As the large majority of subject benchmark statements apply to single subject honours degrees, their general application by colleges will not always be appropriate. However, such benchmarks provide an authoritative reference point, and reviewers are likely to be especially interested in whether, and if so how, they have been used to inform the development of programmes such as HNC, HND and Foundation Degrees.

Programme specifications contain definitive information on the aims, intended learning outcomes and expected achievements of students, and reviewers will explore their accuracy and usefulness to students and staff. In particular, reviewers will wish to see how programme specifications make use of other reference points in the Academic Infrastructure to define expectations for teaching, learning, assessment and achievement. QAA publishes guidance for colleges on the development of programme specifications.

Academic standards

Academic standards are defined as the level of achievement a student has to reach in order to achieve a particular award or qualification. There are nationally agreed reference points for the academic standards of the various levels of higher education qualifications set out in the FHEQ, published by QAA. See 'Academic Infrastructure' for more information.

The first core theme of IQER focuses on academic standards. An awarding body is responsible for the academic standards of all awards granted in its name. IQER is concerned with how colleges exercise any responsibilities they have for the academic standards of the awards that they deliver on behalf of their awarding bodies.

The Developmental engagement considers academic standards within the area under review. For the first, and often the only Developmental engagement, this will be student assessment. By contrast, the Summative review considers academic standards against all aspects of the college's HEFCE-funded provision, leading to a judgement which is subsequently published. For more information, see 'judgements'.

Action plan

After a Developmental engagement or Summative review, the college will be asked to develop an action plan, set out in a format provided by QAA, describing how the college plans to take action on the findings of the review. The action plan forms part of the final version of the report.

QAA will monitor the implementation of the action plan through the next review, unless it follows a judgement of limited or no confidence at the Summative review. Details of the follow-up to limited or no confidence judgements are provided in 'Follow-up action' below. The action plan, its implementation and impact will, therefore, form part of the evidence base for any future review activity. In the case of the Summative review action plan, it will also constitute a published record of the college's commitment to take forward the findings of IQER.

Advisable recommendation

Both Developmental engagement and Summative review reports may include recommendations about how a college might improve the management of its higher education provision. Recommendations are categorised according to priority. Advisable recommendations refer to matters that reviewers believe have the potential to put quality and/or standards at risk and require preventative corrective action.

ARCS

ARCS is the name of the QAA's secure web-based communication system through which review teams can communicate among themselves before and after review visits. QAA will provide training on the use of ARCS for all IQER team members.

Awarding body

At the time of writing this handbook, colleges do not have powers to award higher education qualifications. They work with awarding bodies, in particular Edexcel www.edexcel.org.uk/home/ and/or one or more higher education institutions, which retain responsibility for the academic standards of all awards granted in their names and for ensuring that the quality of learning opportunities offered through collaborative arrangements are adequate to enable students to achieve the academic standard required for their awards. Although IQER is not concerned with how awarding bodies discharge their responsibilities within these arrangements, awarding bodies are important stakeholders in the process. Further guidance on the involvement of awarding bodies in IQER appears in section two.

The Further Education and Training Act 2007

www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2007/ukpga_20070025_en_1 makes provision for colleges to apply for powers to award Foundation Degrees. QAA will provide separate guidance on this process and its relationship to IQER in due course.

Briefing

The briefing is the first stage of the IQER process. Its purposes are to describe IQER in more detail, allow colleges and awarding bodies to ask any questions about the method, to give further advice and guidance on developing a self-evaluation and on helping students to prepare a written submission. Normally the briefing is also an opportunity for colleges and awarding bodies to meet the coordinator and to talk to other colleges who are preparing for a Developmental engagement.

Conclusion

Summative review teams are asked to reach a conclusion about the college's management of its responsibilities for public information. The conclusion is whether or not reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information which the college publishes about itself and the programmes it delivers. For more information see 'Public information'.

Confidence

Summative review teams are required to make judgements about colleges' management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities according to core themes one and two respectively. The judgements are confidence, limited confidence or no confidence.

Where a college is found to be managing effectively its responsibilities for the delivery of the academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities; the prospects for the future continuation of this appear good, and it has rigorous mechanisms for the management of its HEFCE-funded higher education provision in accordance with awarding bodies' requirements, it will receive a judgement of confidence for each of core themes one and two. Such a judgement will be reached on the basis of evidence that the college has sound structures and procedures for assuring and enhancing quality and the delivery of standards, that it is successful in managing them and that they are applied effectively to each HEFCE-funded higher education programme. This judgement may be accompanied by recommendations considered advisable and/or desirable (but never essential), however, the overall judgement should not be seen as being qualified by such recommendations.

A judgement of confidence is, therefore, an expression of belief in a college's commitment and ability to identify and address any situation which potentially threatens the quality of student learning opportunities, the delivery of the standards of awards or its ability to meet its contractual obligations. This includes considering and addressing in a mature and engaged manner, through its own procedures and those of its awarding bodies, any recommendations contained in the report.

Coordinator

Coordinators are contracted by QAA to manage a number of IQER reviews. Coordinators are selected for their experience of the management of higher education.

The coordinator manages the review on behalf of QAA. A coordinator is responsible for guiding the college on preparing its self-evaluation; chairing the preparatory meeting; discussing and agreeing the programme for the visit with the college and the rest of the IQER team; identifying the most effective way of engaging with students; if required, discussing with awarding bodies their involvement in IQER; leading the team at the visit; editing IQER reports; responding to any comments on the reports from the college; and keeping in touch with the college between the Developmental engagement and the Summative review. A full description of the role is given in Annex E.

The coordinator is the college's first and main point of contact throughout the review process. To promote consistency and continuity, the college will normally retain the same coordinator for all stages of IQER, including where there is more than one Developmental engagement.

Core themes

IQER has three core themes:

- 1 academic standards
- 2 quality of learning opportunities
- 3 public information.

Both the Developmental engagement and Summative review are fundamentally concerned with reviewing the college's management of its responsibilities according to these three themes within the context of the college's agreements with its awarding body(ies). In the case of the Developmental engagement within the area under review; and in the Summative review against all aspects of the college's provision.

The Developmental engagement makes evaluative comments about the three core themes within the area under review. The Summative review leads to judgements about core themes one and two and a conclusion about core theme three. For more information, see 'Judgements' and 'Conclusion'.

Desirable recommendation

Both Developmental engagement and Summative review reports may include recommendations about how the college might improve the management of its higher education provision. Recommendations are categorised according to priority. Desirable recommendations refer to matters which reviewers believe have the potential to enhance quality, build capacity and/or further secure standards.

Developmental engagement

IQER takes place in two complementary stages: Developmental engagement and Summative review. The emphasis in the Developmental engagement is on supporting the college in developing its management of higher education in an open and collegial way. For more information see section three.

Edexcel

Edexcel is the largest awarding body in the UK. It offers a wide range of vocational and general qualifications at all levels of the National Qualifications Framework www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/background/ewni/positionPaper.asp
IQER is concerned with HNC and HND awards.

Enhancement

For the purposes of IQER, QAA uses the term enhancement to mean the continuous improvement of a college's management of the student learning experience of higher education provision, for the benefit of students, and within the context of their agreements with awarding bodies.

Essential recommendation

Both Developmental engagement and Summative review reports may include recommendations about how the college might improve the management of its higher education provision. Recommendations are categorised according to priority. Essential recommendations refer to important matters that reviewers believe are currently putting quality and/or standards at risk and which require urgent corrective action.

When essential recommendations are made at the end of the Summative review, they are likely to be reflected in a judgement of limited confidence or no confidence against core themes one and/or two, and/or a conclusion that reliance cannot be placed on the accuracy and/or completeness of all the public information which the college is responsible for publishing about itself.

When essential recommendations are made at the end of a Developmental engagement, exceptionally the college may be required to have another engagement. More information about risk criteria is provided in section five.

Evidence

IQER is an evidence-based process. This means that teams conduct their enquiries primarily by comparing evidence about the college's management of its higher education provision with its own policies and procedures, the agreements it has with its awarding bodies and the expectations of the Academic Infrastructure.

Evidence comes in a wide range of forms and will vary from college to college. It is likely to include formal agreements with awarding bodies, policies and procedures for the management of the student learning experience of higher education programmes, external examiners' reports, validation documents, data about the college on the Unistats www.hero.ac.uk/uk/inside_he/education_quality_and_standards/unistats.cfm website (from 2008 onwards), review and inspection reports of other organisations such as Ofsted www.ofsted.gov.uk/ and any information arising from meetings with staff and students.

Some of this evidence, such as review reports by other organisations, will be publicly available. Other elements should be provided by the college as part of its self-evaluation or supporting evidence. QAA gives further guidance on developing the self-evaluation, including a list of supporting evidence, in section six. Once the team has read the self-evaluation, the coordinator may ask for more evidence to be available at the visit itself.

Facilitator

For the Summative review the college is invited to nominate a facilitator. The facilitator acts as a single point of contact between the college and the IQER team. The facilitator's responsibilities include ensuring that reviewers have the relevant evidence to enable them to conduct the review (including when the team is off-site), bringing additional information to the attention of the reviewers and helping to clarify any matters of fact. In addition, the facilitator attends all review team meetings other than those with students and employers, or where judgements are discussed. The facilitator does not contribute to the Summative review report or its judgements. Facilitators will be trained for the role alongside reviewers.

A full description of the role is given in Annex E. QAA advises that the facilitator is one of the nominees from the Developmental engagement to provide continuity for the college.

Follow-up action

If a second Summative review visit results in judgements of confidence for core themes one and two plus the conclusion that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information the college is responsible for publishing about itself, the review is completed following the process set out in paragraphs 77 and 78. However, should the second visit result in a judgement of limited confidence in either or both core themes one and two and/or the conclusion that reliance cannot be placed in the accuracy and completeness of published information, the report is published and there will be a formal programme of follow-up action, which must be completed by the college within 18 months of the end of the publication of the review report.

If the second visit results in a judgement of no confidence in either or both of core themes one and two, the college and its awarding body(ies) may consider using the QAA procedure on representations. If one or both of the judgements are confirmed as no confidence, there will be a formal programme of follow-up action. If after this time QAA is still concerned about the effectiveness of the remedial action, QAA may conduct a further visit; and if satisfactory progress has still not been made, HEFCE reserves the right to withdraw some or all of its funding.

Good practice

Good practice is practice that the IQER team regards as making a particularly positive contribution to the college's management of the student learning experience of higher education in the context of that college; and which is worthy of wider dissemination within and/or beyond the college.

Both Developmental engagement and Summative review reports are likely to include features of good practice. QAA will disseminate good practice identified through IQER review in periodic reports and through collaboration with the Higher Education Academy

and, where appropriate, Foundation Degree Forward.

HEFCE

HEFCE distributes public money for teaching and research to universities and colleges in England on behalf of the Government. HEFCE funds some colleges directly; others receive money indirectly through an agreement with another college or a higher education institution, or as part of a consortium. All colleges with taught higher education programmes funded by HEFCE are required to take part in IQER, regardless of how this funding is distributed. For more information about the scope of IQER, see section one.

Information digest

The information digest is a compendium of publicly available information about a college which QAA will assemble and provide to IQER teams at the beginning of the review process. The digest mainly comprises contextual information about the college, including the numbers of higher education students and the types of programmes provided.

Judgements

Summative review teams are asked to make judgements about the college's management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities against core themes one and two respectively. The judgements are confidence, limited confidence or no confidence. These are defined elsewhere in this glossary.

Judgements on the core themes may be differentiated, for example, should the team regard a college's management of the quality and/or standards of the programmes leading to the awards of one awarding body to be below the required threshold, a judgement of limited or no confidence would be awarded to that provision alone.

Limited confidence

Summative review teams are asked to make judgements about the college's management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities according to core themes one and two respectively. The judgements are confidence, limited confidence or no confidence.

Where significant doubts exist about aspects of a college's current or likely future management of quality and/or delivery of the standards of its higher education programmes, the college will receive a judgement of limited confidence. Such a judgement will indicate how widespread the doubts are and which aspects of the college's management of academic standards and/or quality of learning opportunities has given particular cause for concern. Reviewers will make reference to awarding body requirements when reaching such judgements and such a judgement, which is likely to have implications for the college's awarding body(ies), will be accompanied by one or

more recommendations considered essential and, almost certainly, others considered advisable and/or desirable.

A judgement of limited confidence will trigger follow-up action. For more information, see 'Follow-up action'.

Lines of enquiry

To facilitate a developmental approach to the Developmental engagement stage of IQER, the college is invited to suggest the lines of enquiry it would like the team to pursue. This gives the college the opportunity to target matters it would like the team to prioritise. Colleges may find the Academic Infrastructure a useful point of reference in identifying lines of enquiry. The *Code of practice, Section six: Assessment of students*, www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/section6/COP_AOS.pdf may be particularly useful in identifying lines of enquiry for the first Developmental engagement on student assessment. Normally three lines of enquiry will suffice for each Developmental engagement. QAA will give further guidance about lines of enquiry at the briefing event it provides for colleges and awarding bodies.

At the Developmental engagement, teams use lines of enquiry as a way of reviewing the evidence and formulating conclusions about the college's management of higher education in the area under review. They can be regarded as lenses through which teams view the area in question. For example, where the Developmental engagement is concerned with student assessment, possible lines of enquiry could include how work placements contribute to final assessments; how the views of employers inform assessment criteria; or the college's processes for providing formative feedback to students on coursework.

No confidence

Summative review teams are asked to make judgements about the college's management of academic standards and quality according to core themes one and two respectively. The judgements are confidence, limited confidence or no confidence.

Where major doubts exist about significant aspects of a college's current or likely future capacity to secure and maintain quality and/or deliver standards, the college will receive a judgement of no confidence. A no confidence judgement will be made with reference to the awarding body requirements of the college. The report will identify the main areas of concern, discuss the means by which such a situation was able to arise and be sustained, and advise students and other stakeholders of the existence of failing or unsatisfactory academic standards, or quality of provision. It will contain one or more recommendations

considered essential and others considered advisable and/or desirable.

A judgement of no confidence will reflect serious procedural inadequacies or implementation failures, and be indicative of fundamental weaknesses in a college's capacity to manage its responsibilities for the delivery of academic standards or for providing higher education of an appropriate quality. It will have serious implications for awarding bodies, which are likely to wish to take urgent action.

A judgement of no confidence will trigger follow-up action. For more information, see 'Follow-up action'.

Nominee

At the Developmental engagement stage of IQER the college is invited to provide up to two nominees. Nominees are full members of the Developmental engagement team. They are responsible for analysing and commenting on the college's self-evaluation, participating in the visit, drafting sections of the report and contributing to the Developmental engagement conclusions.

The participation of the nominee is crucial to the development of an open and collegial framework within which the Developmental engagement team can seek to enhance a particular area of the college's provision. To fulfil the role effectively, the nominee should have a thorough working knowledge of the management and delivery of the college's higher education provision and the maturity to reflect critically on this provision, including in areas where s/he may have responsibilities in their normal college role. A full description of the role is given in Annex E. Nominees will be trained for the role alongside reviewers. QAA advises that the facilitator is one of the nominees from the Developmental engagement to provide continuity for the college.

Partnership agreement

Colleges have formal partnership agreements with their higher education institution awarding bodies and many of these describe precisely the college's responsibilities for any given higher education programme. These agreements will be very useful to IQER teams in identifying the parameters of each particular review. Such agreements will form a key part of the college's self-evaluation. Where an agreement does not identify the college's responsibilities in detail, then it may be appropriate for the college and the awarding body to provide further information or for the awarding body to participate in the visit. Section two provides more information about this.

Peer review

IQER is a peer review process. This means that the reviews are conducted by people with current or very recent experience of managing, developing, delivering and/or assessing

higher education in higher education institutions and/or colleges. As a result, IQER reports reflect a working knowledge of UK higher education and, more specifically, the challenges of managing higher education academic standards and quality effectively in colleges.

Preparatory meeting

About nine weeks before a Developmental engagement or Summative review visit, there is a preparatory meeting for the visit between college staff and the coordinator. The purpose of the preparatory meeting is to develop the agenda for the visit and identify further evidence for the college to supply to the team, based on an analysis of the college's self-evaluation and the student submission. It also gives the coordinator the opportunity to clarify the method and the college to ask any questions. Awarding bodies may also attend this meeting. An indicative agenda for the preparatory meeting is provided in Annex B.

Provisional judgement meeting

Summative review teams meet around one week after the visit to agree summaries of evidence, to make provisional judgements and identify provisional good practice and recommendations. The coordinator will inform the college about the outcome of the provisional judgement meeting in writing usually within one week of the meeting. All judgements, good practice and recommendations remain provisional until the college has had the opportunity to highlight any areas in the draft report which it regards as inaccurate or incomplete and until the team has finalised the report in response to the college's comments. Occasionally, the judgements will remain provisional until the team has completed a second visit. See 'Summative review' below for details of second visits. All provisional judgements and conclusions are made with reference to awarding body requirements of the college.

Public information

Public information is information about the academic standards and quality of learning opportunities which is in the public domain. In some cases the publication of this information is the responsibility of awarding bodies, carried out on the colleges' behalf; some will be provided by the college and published by external organisations like Unistats; and for some the college itself will be responsible for publication.

IQER considers whether or not the information which the college is responsible for publishing about itself is accurate and complete. An indicative list of this information is provided in Annex D. It should be emphasised that this list is only indicative because different colleges will have different responsibilities for publishing information according to their agreements with awarding bodies.

Where a college recognises all of the information it is responsible for publishing (by reference both to its agreements with its awarding bodies and the expectations of HEFCE and the Academic Infrastructure); has rigorous mechanisms for the management of these responsibilities, which ensure that the information it publishes is both accurate and complete; and has evidence that this is the case, the team will conclude that reliance can be placed on the accuracy and completeness of public information.

Where a college does not recognise all of the information it is responsible for publishing and/or where there is evidence that this information is inaccurate and/or incomplete, the team will conclude that reliance cannot be placed on the accuracy and completeness of all the public information which the college is responsible for publishing. A differentiated conclusion may be reached where a team regards the information as accurate but not complete, or vice-versa.

QAA

QAA stands for the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. QAA's mission is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. QAA does this by working with higher education providers, including universities and colleges, to define academic standards and quality, and carries out and publishes reviews against these standards. QAA was established in 1997 and is an independent body funded by subscriptions from UK universities and colleges of higher education, and through contracts with the main UK higher education funding bodies, including HEFCE.

Quality of learning opportunities

Quality of learning opportunities considers the effectiveness of everything that is done or provided (the 'learning opportunities') by the college to ensure that its students have the best possible opportunity to meet the stated outcomes of their programmes and the academic standards of the awards they are seeking.

Quality of learning opportunities is the second core theme of IQER. It is common to the Developmental engagement and the Summative review. The Developmental engagement considers the quality of learning opportunities within the area under review. The Summative review considers the quality of learning opportunities against all aspects of the college's provision, leading to a judgement which is subsequently published. For more information, see 'judgements'.

Recommendations

Both Developmental engagements and Summative review reports may include recommendations for the college about how the college might improve the management of its higher education provision. Recommendations are categorised as essential, advisable or desirable according to priority. These terms are defined elsewhere in this glossary.

Reports

Both stages of IQER culminate in a report of the team's findings. Developmental engagement reports have two main elements: good practice and recommendations for action by the college, both confined to the area under review. In addition, the team will make evaluative comments about each of the three core themes. To facilitate a developmental approach to the Developmental engagement, the reports are confidential to HEFCE, the college, its awarding bodies and QAA.

Summative review reports differ from Developmental engagement reports in three main respects:

- Summative review reports contain judgements about core themes one and two and a conclusion about core theme three
- Summative review reports cover all aspects of the college's management of its higher education provision rather than a specific area like student assessment
- Summative review reports will be published on QAA's public website.

Colleges and their awarding bodies will always be invited to provide comments on a draft report and to indicate any areas which they consider incomplete or inaccurate. The coordinator will provide further guidance on the procedures for making comments on reports.

Reviewer

Reviewers are external peers with current or recent experience of managing, developing, delivering and/or assessing higher education in higher education institutions and/or colleges. They are not employed by QAA, although they are paid for taking part in IQER. Reviewers are trained specifically for the role by QAA.

Self-evaluation

Both stages of IQER are based on a self-evaluation prepared by the college. The self-evaluation describes the responsibilities which the college has for the management of the student learning experience of its higher education and the processes and procedures it has adopted for discharging these responsibilities. In order to limit the burden of the exercise, colleges should as far as possible describe their responsibilities, processes and procedures by reference to a portfolio of existing documents, with any new material limited to that which is required to signpost and/or contextualise existing material for the team.

The self-evaluation also provides colleges with an opportunity for critical self-reflection on the effectiveness of its processes and procedures for managing higher education. Again any material provided on this theme should be limited as far as possible to what already exists, for example, a report on a recent internal review of higher education provision.

An effective self-evaluation is key to the college gaining substantial benefit from IQER and to the smooth running of both the Developmental engagement and the Summative review and so, QAA encourages colleges to give its preparation due time and attention. QAA may return the self-evaluation to the college for further work if it does not enable the team to identify the college's responsibilities and understand how these responsibilities are discharged. Further guidance on preparing the self-evaluation can be found at section six. The self-evaluation will be a key focus of the briefing that QAA provides for colleges and awarding bodies.

Students' written submission

One of IQER's aims is to support colleges in reviewing and improving the management of their higher education provision for the benefit of students. Within this context teams need to try to identify students' views about their experiences as learners and to draw on these views in developing their conclusions about the college's provision. Teams will meet students at the visit as a matter of course. Teams will also invite students to prepare a written submission before the visit, to help them make sure that students' views inform the arrangements for the visit, including who they meet.

Student submissions may take a variety of different forms such as a summary of responses to recent student questionnaires or a written report of student focus groups. QAA will provide further guidance to students in a separate guidance note. The principle of the submission, irrespective of its form, is that it should reflect the students' own views of their experiences as learners. Colleges may, however, have a valuable role to play in helping their students to prepare a submission, for example by sharing information with them. QAA will provide further guidance to colleges during preparations for IQER. After the briefing, coordinators will also have the responsibility of discussing with the college how the college might assist students to develop a submission for IQER.

The student submission is voluntary. If students are not able to make a submission, despite the best efforts of the college and the coordinator, this will not prejudice the outcomes of IQER.

Summative review

IQER takes place in two complementary stages: Developmental engagement and Summative review. Summative review evaluates all aspects of the college's management of its higher education provision and leads to judgements about the management of that provision within the context of the college's agreement with its awarding bodies. Every college with HEFCE-funded higher education provision will be required to have one Summative review between 2008-09 and 2011-12; this will normally take place a minimum of one year after a Developmental engagement. For more information see section four.

Team

The Developmental engagement team usually comprises four people: the coordinator, one reviewer and two nominees from the college. Where a college has more than 1000 students funded by HEFCE and/or more than four awarding bodies associated with its higher education provision, QAA will give consideration to the inclusion of an additional reviewer. Where a college is not able to identify a nominee, QAA will provide an additional reviewer.

The Summative review team comprises the coordinator and up to three reviewers. Where a college has more than 1000 students funded by HEFCE and/or more than four awarding bodies for its higher education provision, QAA will give consideration to the inclusion of an additional reviewer.

IQER team selection will be made with reference to a college's HEFCE-funded higher education provision. QAA will avoid known conflicts of interest, including having worked in or for the college under review or in or for its awarding bodies during the previous five years; having undertaken validation, external examination or consultancy work for it during the previous three years; having recently applied for a post or having a close relative working or studying there. QAA will send brief details of proposed teams to colleges and their awarding bodies not less than nine weeks before each Developmental engagement or Summative review visit, allowing the college two weeks to draw to QAA's attention in writing any conflicts of interest they believe QAA has not identified.

Unistats

From 2008, the Unistats website will bring together authoritative, official information about higher education from universities and colleges in one place, in a way that is not available on any other website. HEFCE owns the Unistats websites and has contracted UCAS to manage the delivery and maintenance of these websites on its behalf.

Visit

Each IQER visit normally takes place over two consecutive days. The main exception to this applies to colleges with fewer than 100 full-time equivalent students funded by HEFCE. Section five provides details of the arrangements for these colleges.

The purpose of visits is to allow the team to scrutinise evidence on site, meet college staff, students and other stakeholders (such as awarding bodies' representatives and employers, where appropriate) and consider the extent of the college's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure. Indicative visit programmes for the Developmental engagement and Summative review are provided in Annex C.

The coordinator will discuss and agree the programme for each visit with the college beforehand. During the visit itself, it is helpful if the college can make a room available as a workroom for the team and a separate and larger room available for meetings.

List of hyperlinks

Academic Infrastructure:

www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/default.asp

Code of Practice:

www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/default.asp

FHEQ:

www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/default.asp

Subject benchmark statements:

www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/benchmark/default.asp

Foundation Degree qualifications benchmark:

www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/foundationDegree/benchmark/FDQB.pdf

Programme Specifications:

www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/programSpec/default.asp

Progress files:

www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/progressFiles/default.asp

HEFCE:

www.hefce.ac.uk/

Edexcel:

www.edexcel.org.uk/home/

The Further Education and Training Act 2007:

www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2007/ukpga_20070025_en_1

National Qualifications Framework:

www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/background/ewni/positionPaper.asp

Unistats:

www.hero.ac.uk/uk/inside_he/education_quality_and_standards/unistats.cfm

Code of practice section six:

www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/section6/COP_AOS.pdf

Ofsted:

www.ofsted.gov.uk/

Section eight: Annexes

Annex A: QAA's purposes, values and standards

Purposes

1 To achieve its mission, QAA works in partnership with the providers and funders of higher education, the staff and students in higher education, employers and other stakeholders, to:

- safeguard the student and wider public interest in the maintenance of standards of academic awards and the quality of higher education
- communicate information on academic standards and quality to inform student choice and employer understanding, and to underpin public policy making
- enhance the assurance and management of standards and quality in higher education and promote a wider understanding of the value of well-assured standards and quality
- promote a wider understanding of the nature of standards and quality in higher education, including maintenance of common reference points, drawing on UK, other European, and international practice.

Values

2 QAA's work is underpinned by the following core values:

The importance of higher education

3 QAA values knowledge, intellectual challenge, imagination, discovery and achievement in higher education; respects the constitutional, intellectual and operational autonomy of higher education providers, and the diversity of institutional mission within

the different legislative and educational contexts across the UK; acknowledges the academic calling and the importance of higher education in the personal, professional and economic lives of citizens individually and collectively; values the high international regard in which UK higher education and its awards are held; and recognises the importance of UK engagement in European and other international developments.

The entitlements of learners

4 Students are entitled to a higher education with academic standards that reflect national expectations and awards that meet published specifications; and to fair and equitable treatment in all aspects of their studies. QAA values the participation of students in the assurance of academic standards and quality.

The significance of the responsibilities of the providers of higher education

5 The providers of higher education have the primary responsibility for protecting academic standards and quality; QAA aims to work with the providers in meeting that responsibility. Effective assurance of academic standards and quality is a key indicator of professionalism in higher education and a key guarantor of the student and wider public interest. It also provides the foundation for continuous improvement and the enhancement of quality. We take as the starting point for our reviews the belief that providers wish and intend to do a good and professional job in meeting their responsibilities as guardians of their academic standards and quality. QAA is neither a regulator nor an inspectorate, and we value the insights and benefits that peer review brings to our audit and review processes. QAA depends on the valuable contribution made by the many hundreds of colleagues from the higher education sector and professional and subject bodies who work with it. We value their skills and diversity and their contribution to peer processes.

The validity of the public interest in higher education

6 Higher education in the UK is an important contributor to the well-being, interests and prosperity of the country. The public invests significant resources in higher education, and has a legitimate expectation that the standards of higher education qualifications will be maintained and that the quality of provision - notwithstanding diversity of institutional missions and modes of delivery - will allow learners to achieve the necessary standards.

Standards

Our standards are integrity, professionalism, accountability and openness.

QAA sets itself high standards in all its undertakings.

Integrity: We aim to show impartiality, fairness, independence and honesty in our work. Decisions and judgements - whether positive or critical, welcome or unwelcome - will be evidence-based and transparent, stated clearly, without fear or favour.

Professionalism: We aim to show high professional standards and provide a cost-effective service. We aim to get it right first time and be prompt, courteous and constructive in all our dealings. Where we get something wrong, we will acknowledge this, learn from it and improve our own work. QAA carries out a range of functions in relation to the work of the providers of higher education. In some cases our role involves the making of public judgements; in some, it involves guiding and encouraging; in some, it involves advising and commenting. In all cases, QAA will conduct itself in a way that is fitting and proportionate both to the function and to the role.

Accountability: QAA is accountable to its subscribers - the higher education institutions - as well as to a wide range of other stakeholders, partners and users of our services and the information we provide. We aim to demonstrate that we use our

resources to good effect and with probity and conduct our work with integrity and impartiality; and to ensure that stakeholders are able to depend on the information and advice we provide.

Openness: We aim to be open and approachable; to be transparent in our work and methods, to build confidence and trust among stakeholders, and to provide information about QAA's work to the wider public. We aim to communicate in a clear, consistent and accessible way.

Annex B: An indicative programme for a Developmental engagement or Summative review preparatory meeting

1 The agenda below is indicative and QAA considers it the minimum necessary to enable the college, its awarding body(ies) and the coordinator to establish the requirements of the review. The coordinator, the college and its awarding body(ies) may feel it appropriate to include additional items. In practice the programme for each college may vary. The coordinator should

have some opportunity to meet a wider group of staff than those who will be involved directly as nominees or facilitators, and have a separate meeting with students. QAA will give further guidance about who might attend the preparatory meeting at the briefing.

2 It is important that colleges prepare to discuss each item on the agenda by, for example, ensuring that they have up to date information available at the meeting. The preparatory meeting provides college staff with a valuable opportunity to clarify their understanding of the review method.

Time	Activity	Suggested participants
1000	Overview of the Developmental engagement or Summative review and its place in IQER: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● a standard presentation about the method ● questions from college staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● the head of the college or a representative and relevant members of the senior management team ● staff responsible for managing higher education and/or heads of faculties, schools or sections providing higher education, other staff who deliver higher education ● the college's nominees and the facilitator ● awarding body representatives, if agreed in advance.
1030	How the Developmental engagement or Summative review will operate: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● clarification of the scope of the review process ● questions from college staff ● next steps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● college staff responsible for managing higher education ● the college's nominees and/or the facilitator ● awarding body representatives, if agreed in advance.

1130	<p>The role of students:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● introductions ● purpose of the preparatory meeting ● the clarification of the IQER method and the place of the Developmental engagement or Summative review within the process ● the clarification of the lines of enquiry for the Developmental engagement or the scope of the Summative review ● questions from students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● students ● students' representatives, eg Students' Union officers ● college staff with responsibility for liaison with students.
1230	Lunch	
1330	<p>Detailed planning, including confirmation of the team's requirements for the visit:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● questions arising from the initial analysis of the self-evaluation ● confirmation that the statistical data are correct and accurate ● the reviewers' requests for information to date ● establishing the programme of review activities ● clarification of the availability of evidence, including student work ● 'housekeeping' arrangements ● remaining questions from college staff or awarding body representatives ● next steps. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● college staff responsible for managing higher education ● college's nominees or facilitator ● awarding body representatives, if agreed in advance.
1530	End of meeting	

Annex C: An indicative programme for a Developmental engagement or Summative review visit

Indicative programmes for a Developmental engagement and a Summative review visit are set out below. They are provided here primarily to illustrate the balance between meetings with staff,

students and other stakeholders, and the time which teams will spend scrutinising evidence in private. In practice, each visit will have a bespoke programme informed by several factors including the availability of staff and students, the involvement of awarding bodies and the questions the team wishes to explore. The programme will be discussed at the preparatory meeting and confirmed by the coordinator before the visit.

Developmental engagement visit: Day one

Time	Activity
0830	The team arrives at the college
0900	A brief presentation by the college about its higher education provision
0915	The team develops a detailed work plan for the visit including questions for staff and students (team only)
1100	The team meets with selected college staff to discuss the lines of enquiry
1200	The scrutiny of evidence (team only)
1300	Lunch
1400	The second meeting with selected staff to discuss the lines of enquiry
1500	The further scrutiny of evidence followed by a team meeting (team only)
1700	The team meets higher education students
1800	The team departs

Developmental engagement visit: Day two

Time	Activity
0830	The team arrives at the college
0900	A meeting with college staff to advise of any changes to the proposed programme
0930	The further scrutiny of evidence (team only)
1300	Lunch
1400	The team confirms that all areas have been addressed, agrees summaries of evidence and identifies good practice and recommendations (team only)
1530	The coordinator prepares the oral report, other team members amend sections of draft report
1600	The coordinator, accompanied by the team, gives an oral report to the college
1630	The team departs End of visit

Summative review visit (for the first and usually the only visit): Day one

Time	Activity
0830	The team arrives at the college
0900	A brief presentation by the college about its higher education provision
0915	The team develops a detailed work plan for the visit including questions for staff and students (team and facilitator)
1100	The team meets with selected college staff to discuss the management of academic standards
1200	The scrutiny of evidence (team only)
1300	Lunch
1400	The second meeting with selected staff to discuss the management of the quality of learning opportunities
1500	The team meets higher education students
1600	The further scrutiny of evidence (team only)
1700	A team meeting (team and facilitator)
1800	The team departs

Summative review visit: Day two

Time	Activity
0830	The team arrives at the college The further scrutiny of evidence (team only)
1000	The third meeting with staff to discuss public information
1100	The further scrutiny of evidence (team only)
1300	Lunch
1400	The team summarises evidence and confirms that all areas have been addressed (team and facilitator)
1600	The coordinator, with the support of the team, gives a verbal update to the facilitator and the college contact on the progress of the review and the need for any additional evidence
1630	End of visit The team departs

Indicative programme for a Summative review second visit: Day one

Time	Activity
0830	The team arrives at the college
0900	The team develops a detailed work plan for the visit including questions for staff and students (team and facilitator)
0915	The team scrutinises evidence (team only)
1100	The team meets with selected college staff and awarding body(ies), if appropriate, to discuss the management of academic standards
1200	The scrutiny of evidence (team only)
1300	Lunch
1400	The second meeting with selected staff and awarding body(ies), if appropriate, to discuss the management of the quality of learning opportunities
1500	The team meets higher education students
1600	The further scrutiny of evidence (team only)
1700	A team meeting to summarise evidence and agree arrangements for the next day (team and facilitator)
1800	The team departs

Summative review second visit: Day two

Time	Activity
0830	The team arrives at the college
	The further scrutiny of evidence (team only)
1000	The third meeting with staff and awarding body(ies), if appropriate, to discuss public information
1100	The further scrutiny of evidence (team only) and report drafting
1200	Lunch
1230	A team meeting to summarise evidence, agree good practice, recommendations and judgements (team only)
1530	The coordinator prepares an oral report of the findings and judgements of the review, other team members draft report sections
1600	The coordinator, with the support of the team, gives an oral report and judgements to the head of the college and staff and to awarding body representatives, if they are in attendance at the visit
1630	End of visit The team departs

Annex D: Public information about academic standards and quality of learning opportunities

1 The purpose of this annex is to give colleges and IQER teams an indication of the types of information to be considered within IQER's third core theme of public information.

2 Public information means information about the academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities which is in the public domain. Some information will be published by awarding bodies on colleges' behalf; some will be provided by the college and published by external organisations like Unistats or UCAS; and some will be published by the college itself.

3 IQER considers whether or not the college has procedures in place which are effective in ensuring that the information which the college is responsible for publishing about itself is accurate and complete. An indicative list of this information is provided below. This list reflects the expectations of HEFCE and QAA with respect to the availability of information about academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. It should be emphasised that this list is only indicative because different colleges will have different responsibilities for publishing information according to their arrangements with awarding bodies. For more information about how teams come to conclusions about the accuracy and completeness of this information, see 'Public information' in the glossary.

4 In respect of core theme three, IQER teams will consider:

- information on the broad college context, for example:
 - mission statement
 - corporate plan
 - statement of quality assurance processes and procedures
 - strategy for higher education learning and teaching

- higher education strategy (once HEFCE's new policy for higher education for colleges is fully in place)
 - information about the college's agreements with awarding bodies
 - details of links with employers.
 - information about the academic standards and quality of programmes, for example:
 - prospectuses, programme guides or similar
 - programme specifications
 - student handbooks
 - module/unit guides
 - information about the college's and/or its partners' procedures for programme approval, monitoring and review
 - details of accreditation from professional, statutory and regulatory bodies
 - results of internal student surveys
 - arrangements for assessment and external examination procedures
 - the college's policies for student complaints, appeals and representations.
- 5 IQER is not concerned with:
- the accuracy and completeness of information which is not available to students or other external stakeholders, such as management information (although teams may be interested in colleges' use of this kind of information in the management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities)
 - auditing the accuracy of quantitative information
 - information about the college which is published by other organisations, such as awarding bodies.

Annex E: IQER role descriptions and person specifications

Role title: Coordinator

Role purpose

- 1 The coordinator manages the Summative review and all Developmental engagements in each of the colleges to which s/he is assigned.
- 2 Key responsibilities include:
 - leading a programme of reviews for QAA
 - providing clear briefings to a wide range of college participants on the IQER method and participants' respective responsibilities
 - discussing and agreeing with the college, the lines of enquiry and review agenda that form the basis of the reviews
 - discussing and agreeing focused review activities with the college and the reviewers to ensure effective use of time
 - organising and coordinating review activities to ensure that conclusions, recommendations and judgements are sound and evidence based
 - liaising effectively with all stakeholders through face-to-face, telephone, email and written communications to ensure the smooth running of each review
 - providing additional training for reviewers, if necessary
 - making effective use of QAA's secure electronic folder system throughout the review to ensure that a full evidence base is available to reviewers and QAA staff in a timely manner and is archived promptly

- respecting protocols on confidentiality
- producing high-quality reports that usefully inform all stakeholders of conclusions, recommendations and judgements, where appropriate.

Person specification

- 3 Knowledge and understanding to include:
 - current or recent knowledge and understanding of current issues affecting higher education in colleges
 - awareness of current higher education teaching methods and curricula
 - knowledge and understanding of the assurance of standards and quality
 - awareness of the role of professional statutory and regulatory bodies in programme accreditation
 - experience of liaison with senior management and a range of staff at other levels.
- 4 Skills include ability to:
 - manage small teams (with experience either in higher or further education or in other employment)
 - work within tight timescales and to strict deadlines
 - chair meetings
 - communicate effectively in face-to-face interaction
 - train others in methods of work
 - produce clear and succinct reports on time
 - word process
 - communicate electronically, including emails, attachments and use of web mail
 - be flexible and devise sound plans when situations change with little notice.

Reviewer

Role purpose

5 The reviewers contribute to evaluating academic standards and the quality of higher education provision through a peer review process. They engage in a variety of activities designed to gather and analyse evidence so that they can arrive at considered conclusions, recommendations and judgements. These outcomes help the college being reviewed to prepare an action plan to further enhance higher education provision.

6 Key responsibilities include:

- reading, analysing and preparing written commentaries of the self-evaluation submitted by the college and any other documents sent in advance of a review
- adhering to the review schedule agreed between the college and the coordinator
- participating in visits to the college in order to gather, share, test and verify evidence
- drawing conclusions, making recommendations and judgements on the academic standards achieved and the quality of the learning opportunities provided
- recording evidence gathered from a variety of review activities and submitting this to the QAA secure folder in a timely fashion
- drafting sections of the report that are referenced to evidence gathered during the review
- respecting protocols on confidentiality
- contributing to and commenting on the compilation of the report of the review to agreed schedules and deadlines
- being available for the whole period of a review for which they have been selected and committing to complete all processes of a review once they have embarked upon it.

Person specification: Reviewer

7 Knowledge and understanding include:

- current or recent experience, knowledge and understanding of higher education provision
- knowledge and familiarity with the Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points such as those of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies
- for reviews requiring subject expertise, experience of providing higher education-level teaching and learning delivered in colleges or higher education institutions: in the case of industrially or professionally-based reviewers, familiarity with teaching and learning in higher education
- understanding of programme entry requirements and the ability to interpret progression statistics, including withdrawal, transfer and failure rates and destinations data
- familiarity with academic support strategies and the functions of academic tutorials
- experience with examining and/or verification (and preferably external examining or external verification)
- knowledge of the quality assurance processes employed by colleges providing higher education
- familiarity with the standards of higher education awards in colleges and universities in the United Kingdom.

8 Skills include the ability to:

- conduct meetings and interviews with staff
- conduct meetings with a range of current and former groups of students
- write succinctly and coherently
- meet tight timescales and deadlines
- work effectively as a member of a team

- work courteously and professionally
- maintain confidentiality
- communicate electronically, including emails, attachments and use of web mail.

Role title: Nominee

Role purpose

9 The role provides an opportunity for members of a college's staff to consider the quality and standards of higher education across the college and to be part of a team testing the effectiveness of the college's self-evaluation processes. Where colleges are considering revising internal review processes, participation in a Developmental engagement team may contribute to ways in which processes might be revised.

10 Key responsibilities include:

- reading, analysing and preparing written commentaries of the self-evaluation submitted by the college and any other documents sent in advance of a Developmental engagement
- adhering to the Developmental engagement schedule agreed between the college and the coordinator
- participating in the Developmental engagement to the college in order to gather, share, test and verify evidence
- drawing conclusions and making recommendations on the academic standards achieved and the quality of the learning opportunities provided
- recording evidence gathered from a variety of review activities and submitting this to the QAA electronic review folder in a timely fashion
- drafting sections of the report that are referenced to sound

evidence gathered during the Developmental engagement

- respecting protocols on confidentiality
- contributing to and commenting on the compilation of the report of the review to agreed schedules and deadlines
- helping the college to draw up its action plan for implementation of the Developmental engagement team's recommendations
- playing a lead role in the implementation of the action plan within the college
- being available for the whole period of a Developmental engagement for which they have been selected and committing to complete all processes of a Developmental engagement once they have embarked upon it.

Person specification: Nominee

11 Knowledge and understanding include:

- experience, knowledge and understanding of higher education provision in general and within his/her own college
- understanding of the college structure, policies and procedures for managing and delivering higher education programmes
- familiarity with the Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points relevant to his/her own area of expertise
- understanding of programme entry requirements and the ability to interpret progression statistics including withdrawal, transfer and failure rates and destinations data
- familiarity with academic support strategies and the functions of academic tutorials
- experience of examining and/or verification (and preferably

external examining or external verification).

- understanding quality assurance processes employed by colleges providing higher education and familiarity with higher education programmes.
- 12 Skills include an ability to:
- conduct meetings with staff
 - conduct meetings with a range of current and former groups of students
 - write succinctly and coherently
 - meet exacting timescales and deadlines
 - work effectively as a member of a Developmental engagement team
 - continue to work effectively as part of the college team after the Developmental engagement(s) has (have) been completed
 - communicate electronically, including emails, attachments and use of web mail
 - maintain confidentiality
 - influence colleagues within their college and take forwards the action plan.

Role title: Facilitator

Role purpose

13 The facilitator ensures the smooth running of the Summative review by acting as the single point of contact between the college staff and the reviewers.

14 Key responsibilities include:

- providing effective liaison between the reviewers and the college staff
- ensuring that the reviewers obtain accurate, timely and comprehensive information about the educational provision and the college context
- helping the reviewers to come to a clear and accurate understanding of the structures, policies, priorities and procedures of the college, and the nature of the provision under scrutiny
- ensuring that reviewers are provided with appropriate evidence to allow them to reach conclusions, recommendations and judgements
- bringing additional information to the attention of the reviewers and correcting factual inaccuracy
- observing objectively, and communicating clearly with the reviewers and the subject provider
- respecting protocols on confidentiality
- establishing effective relationships with the coordinator and the reviewers, as well as with the college staff
- participating in the college's preparations for the Summative review
- attending all meetings other than those with students and employers, or where judgements are discussed
- monitoring the pattern of review activities
- maintaining regular telephone and/or email contact with the coordinator to ensure that reviewers are receiving the information or documents that they need, particularly for off-site analysis.

15 Knowledge and understanding include:

- thorough knowledge of the structure, policies, priorities, procedures and practices of their college
- knowledge and experience of working in higher education at a senior level
- experience of quality assurance
- knowledge and understanding of IQER.

16 Skills include an ability to:

- locate cogent information
- maintain confidentiality
- deal conscientiously with detail
- make accurate records of discussions
- meet exacting timescales and deadlines
- work effectively with reviewers
- continue to work effectively as part of the college team after IQER has been completed
- communicate electronically, including emails, attachments and use of web mail
- influence colleagues within their college and take forward the action plan.

Annex F: QAA training and development policy for review team members and review facilitators

Introduction

- 1 This policy applies to reviews in any part of the UK.
- 2 The QAA recognises that those selected to be review team members and review facilitators are drawn from a pool of highly qualified, experienced and well-respected personnel who already have skills in the core activities of review. In particular, they are selected for their highly developed and practised skills of written and oral communication, conduct of meetings, analysis and synthesis of a wide variety of information, and evaluation leading to sound judgement. Reviewer and facilitator training seek to build on these skills to assist review team members and facilitators to apply them to a specific review process.
- 3 The training and development policy will be published.

Policy

- 4 The training will be designed to enable review team members and facilitators, where appropriate, to:
 - participate in accessible and relevant training and development which is economical in the use of their time
 - experience learning methods which take account of individual learning styles
 - participate in training which takes due account of prevailing legislation
 - participate fully in training activities that will be relevant to all participants irrespective of gender, age, ethnicity or disability

- hone and apply core skills essential for all of the QAA's methods of review through initial training.

What can reviewers and facilitators expect of the QAA?

5 Each review team member and facilitator can expect the QAA to:

- provide induction to the work of the QAA, its mission, standards and values
- train him/her in specialist skills needed to carry out or facilitate review work; for review team members, this includes effective use of the electronic communications system set up to support reviews
- assist him/her to develop sufficient confidence to undertake or facilitate their first review
- provide training reference material to use after completion of their training
- provide the QAA documents they need to conduct the reviews to which they are assigned
- add them to the QAA's mailing list for receipt of relevant new QAA publications and information about the QAA's work
- provide them with opportunities to contribute to the evaluation of the methods in which they have reviewed.

6 Assuming successful completion of initial training, the QAA will:

- provide review team members with feedback on their performance on their first review and, where appropriate, guidance on their further development
- encourage each team member to engage in the further development of his/her role as reviewer

- take into account experience of prior QAA review training and experience when training review team members and facilitators to carry out QAA review methods which are new to them.

Benefits for institutions and other organisations subject to review

7 Adherence to this policy should provide the following benefits:

- confidence that review team members and facilitators are properly trained to undertake review work professionally, and confidently
- consistent application of each review method
- consistency in the messages about the review method which the review team members and facilitators take back to their institutions.