All change? The new QA regime, the HE Bill and the TEF

Rachel Dearlove
Education Policy Support

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Overview

• The quality assurance regime to date and how did we get here
• HEFCE’s review of quality assessment and the new system
• Teaching excellence framework – from manifesto promise to reality
• Impact on Oxford of the changes
QA to date

• HEFCE responsible for the ‘assessment of quality’ of education supported by public funds

• Carried out this duty through 20 years of ‘cyclical peer review’ by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)

• QAA was also responsible for setting the framework for quality assurance (and enhancement) which universities were meant to meet
Too much or too little?

• Continuous tensions between assuring quality and standards and institutional autonomy

• Different review methods tried, but all involved a significant burden for institutions

• Quality Code (formally the Academic Infrastructure) covering: standards, quality and information
  • Evolved to become increasingly detailed
  • Perceived as too prescriptive

• The regime operated by QAA was both not adequate to assure standards and quality AND overly burdensome!
Policy context for change

• Browne Report (2010) and White Paper *Students at the heart of the system* (2011)
• Introduction of 9k fees in 2012
• Lifting of the student number cap
• Encouragement and market entry of ‘alternative providers’?
• HEFCE’s contract with QAA up for renewal
HEFCE review and new regime
Review and consultation

• Review of the ‘quality assessment regime’ announced in October 2014

• Engaged in a ‘conversation’ with the sector - consultation document published in June 2015

• Consultation proposed:
  • Significantly reduced requirement for cyclical review against the ‘baseline’ – the end of QAA review
  • Demonstration of institutional use of ‘outcomes data’
  • Improved ‘professionalised’ external examining system
  • Subject communicates to set standards and a national review of degree classification algorithms
New quality assessment regime

• Final document published March 2016 (but still with gaps)

• One off external verification of a providers own review methods – pilot in 2016-17

• New annual provider review process conducted by HEFCE
  • Drawing on data (including recruitment, continuation, contextual data, NSS, TEF (?), outcomes)
  • Annual statement from governing body

• Re-focused five yearly assurance visit from HEFCE

• QAA is not dead – won the tenders for new providers, investigating concerns and international QA
The new statement

The governing body has received and discussed a report and accompanying action plan relating to the continuous improvement of the student academic experience and student outcomes. This included evidence from the provider’s own periodic review processes, which fully involve students and include embedded external peer or professional review.

The methodologies used as a basis to improve the student academic experience and student outcomes are, to the best of our knowledge, robust and appropriate.

The standards of awards for which we are responsible have been appropriately set and maintained.

The governing body has received a report that confirms that the provider continues to meet the standards of Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines (2015)
Teaching excellence framework (TEF)
A throw-away line...

We will ensure that universities deliver the best possible value for money to students: we will introduce a framework to recognise universities offering the highest teaching quality; encourage universities to offer more two-year courses; and require more data to be openly available to potential students so that they can make decisions informed by the career paths of past graduates.

Conservative Party manifesto, 2015
TEF timeline

- July 2015 Minister announces intention to introduce the TEF
- November 2015 Publication of the Green paper ‘Fulfilling our potential: teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice’
  - Introduction of the TEF
  - Merger of HEFCE and OFFA into ‘Office for Students’ (OfS)
  - Single ‘gateway’ to the sector for new providers
- May 2016 publication of:
  - HE White paper ‘Success as a knowledge economy: teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice’
  - TEF year 2 - technical consultation
- Swiftly followed by the HE Bill which had its first reading 3 days later
What is the TEF?

• Only have details for TEF years 1 (2015-16) and years 2 (2016-17)

• Everyone with a ‘positive’ QAA review is automatically qualified for Year 1; Year 2 requires an opt-in

• TEF Year 2 (deadline Dec 2016)
  • Standard data (NSS, retention, DHLE)
  • Written submission
  • Panel
TEF Map

**Inputs**
- Employment & Earnings (DLHE / HMRC data match)
- Retention/Continuation (from performance indicators)
- Student Satisfaction (derived from NSS)
- Additional metrics... (to be added in due course)

**Independent Panel Review**

**Outputs**
- TEF Award at Level 4
- TEF Award at Level 3
- TEF Award at Level 2
- TEF Award at Level 1

- Level descriptor: 'significantly above expectations' and/or 'compelling evidence of excellence'
- Level descriptor unspecified, but should 'differentiate'
- Level descriptor unspecified, but should 'differentiate'
- Level descriptor: 'baseline quality assured'

From 2017-18

From 2016-17
Quality and fees

TEF allows universities to be ‘rewarded’ for quality by charging higher fees

Real value of fee projections:

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Cash value of fee projections (what students will pay):

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The impact on Oxford

- HEFCE regime
  - Council currently do not receive a report which meets the needs of the annual statement
  - Ensuring that our review processes (annual and periodic) meet the requirements
  - Adapting to the ESG from the Quality code
- TEF
  - New process, new burden
  - Questions of whether we should participate at all
Questions?