

# QAA AND UK HIGHER EDUCATION TODAY

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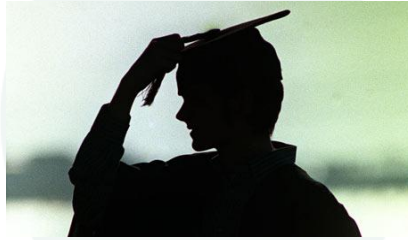
# About QAA

Established 1997

Remit: to assure standards and improve the quality of UK higher Education

Advisor to Government on applications for degree-awarding powers and university titles

From 2011, designated by the UK Border Agency to provide educational oversight of private higher education providers



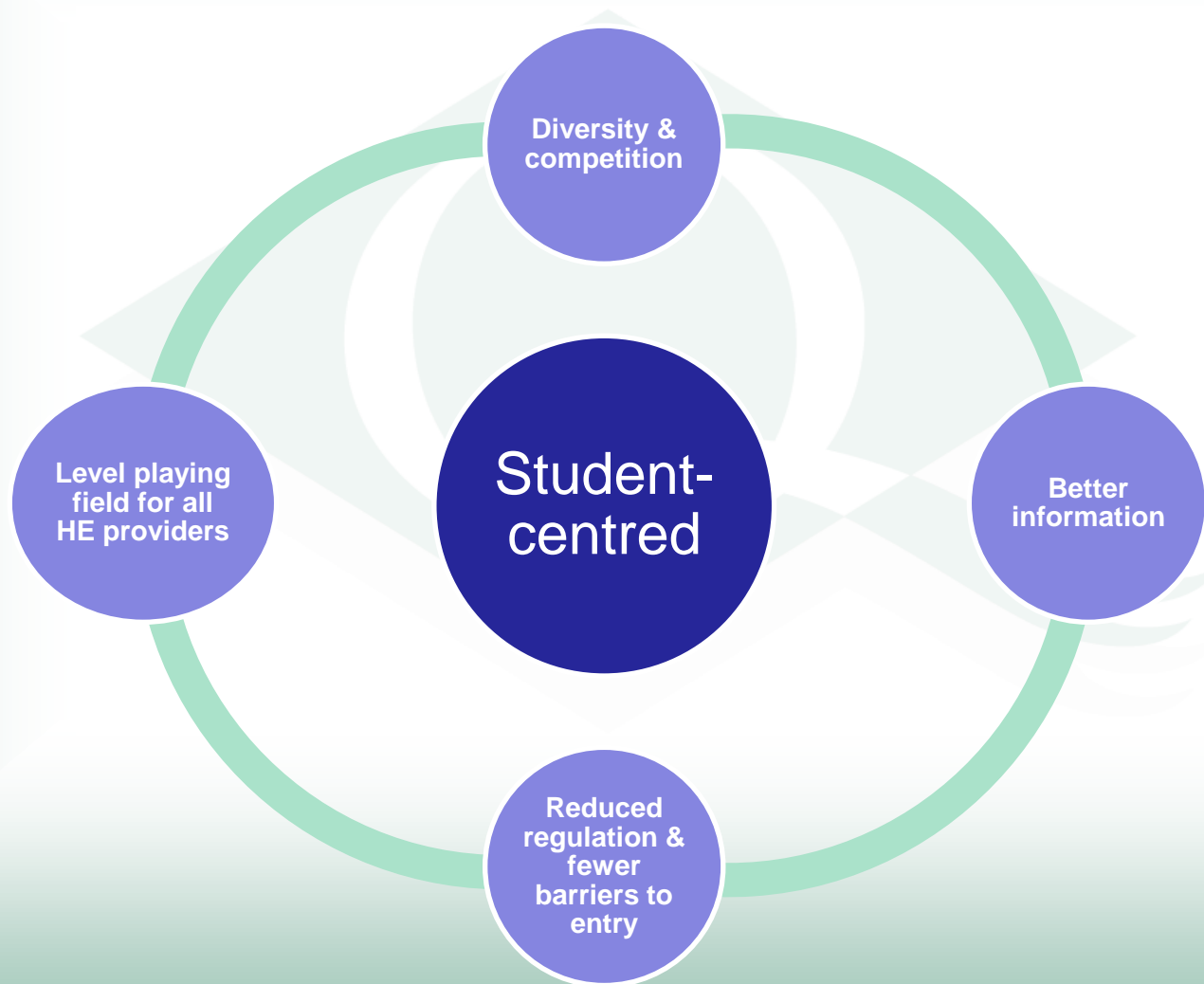
The QAA delivers review and audit programmes for universities, further education colleges and private providers

The QAA is also responsible for the maintenance and development of the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education* (formerly *Academic Infrastructure*)

# Key characteristics of the UK quality assurance system



# The Government's vision for higher education in England



# The changing landscape in England

*“The UK approach to quality assurance is highly regarded and influential around the world. Maintaining and enhancing our reputation for high-quality higher education provision is crucial for the UK’s image as a destination of choice for international students. But **the quality assurance regime must also adapt to a changing environment.**”*

From *Students at the Heart of the System*, chapter 3: paragraph 15,  
(BIS white paper, June 2011)

**BIS** | Department for Business  
Innovation & Skills

HIGHER EDUCATION

Students at the Heart of the  
System

JUNE 2011

# Moving to a risk-based approach in England

- Reducing regulation: a new risk-based approach to quality assurance

*“We will tackle the micro-management that has been imposed on the higher education sector in recent years and which has held institutions back from responding to student demand.”*

[Foreword to BIS White Paper, June 2011]

- Key directive of the BIS White Paper: a **single, robust quality assurance framework for all UK institutions**, public and private
- QAA position: important to balance deregulation with assuring public and student interests

# What will a risk-based approach look like?



# Our challenges

The crucial task of maintaining the world-class quality of UK higher education, in a rapidly changing environment

## Challenges:

- The need to develop criteria to measure risk
- The importance institutions will place on being categorised as 'low risk'
- The need for ongoing monitoring of risk, as institutions change and develop
- The need for rapid, effective response when risk triggers occur
- Retaining *enhancement* alongside a risk-based approach



# New providers in the HE sector

- BIS White Paper – increasing competition and reducing barriers to entry to HE
- QAA position: we welcome **a diverse but quality assured** market
- A single, robust quality assurance process for all providers
- QAA technical consultation recommendation:
  - Degree awarding powers for new market entrants – renewed on a sliding scale of years

# QAA & private providers

QAA already working in this area:



- Advisor to Privy Council on degree awarding powers for private providers
- Educational Oversight for UK Border Agency (applications from around 230 non degree granting providers)
- Private providers now represented on QAA committees
- All private providers with degree awarding powers subject to same system of external review as degree-awarding institutions in receipt of public funds

# Empowering students

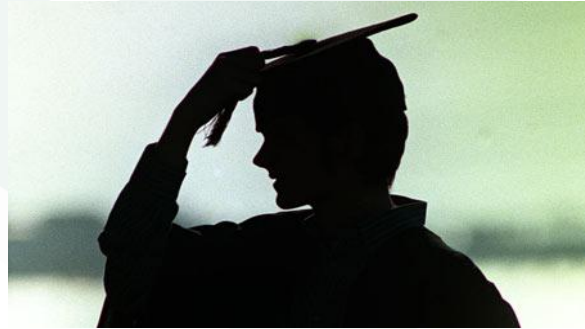
Proactive QAA engagement with students:

- Student Sounding Board

- Student reviewers

- Joint projects with NUS  
(investment of £250,000)

- Revised Concerns & Complaints  
procedures



- Student representative on QAA  
Board

- Student consultations

- New '*Student Engagement*'  
chapter in the upcoming *UK  
Quality Code*

# Key Information Sets

*“Improving information for prospective students is a priority for the Government and is a key part of our plans for higher education. We want empowered students to make their study choices based on better, more transparent information. **The Key Information Set provides an important first step.**”*

[David Willetts, Minister for Universities and Science, in HEFCE announcement on KIS, 16 June 2011]

- HE sector to provide relevant, accessible and useable information
- From 2012/13 - formal judgement on the quality of information, as part of QAA's new review methodology

# QAA and public information



Improving how we communicate with the public:

- Simplifying our language
- Monitoring public information needs through our stakeholders
- Shorter, clearer reports and publications

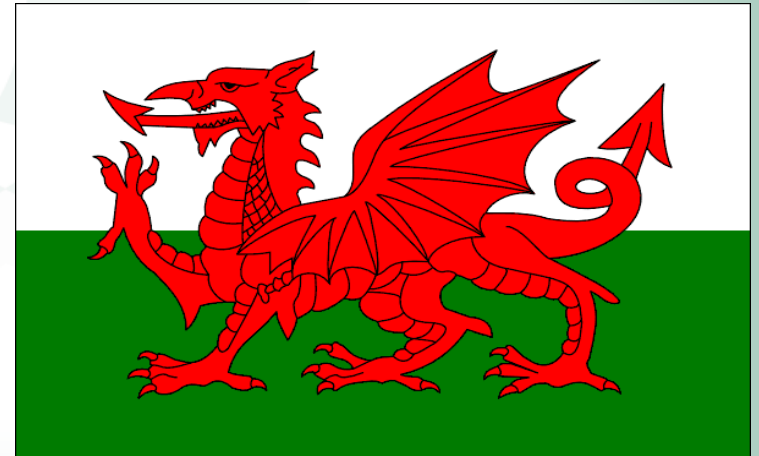
# QAA Wales

- *Independent Review of Higher Education Governance in Wales* (March 2011)



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

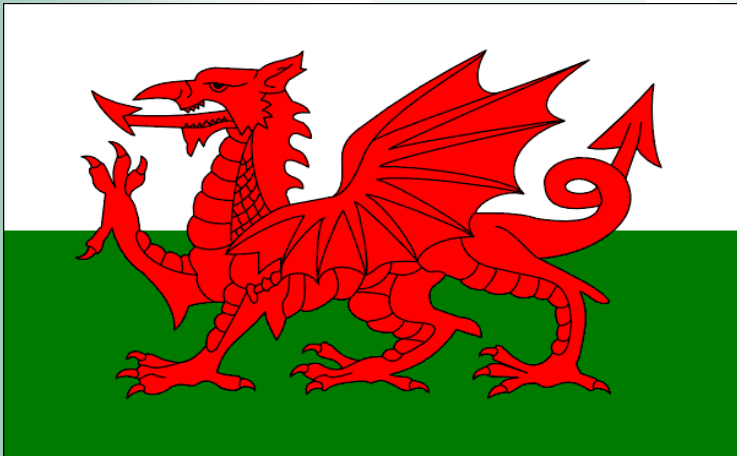
- Recommendations including:
  - Guidance and monitoring
  - One planning and funding body
  - Greater student representation



# QAA Wales



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government



- The University of Wales
- Welsh Government's consultation - *The Future Shape of Higher Education in Wales* (Jul-Oct 2011):
  - Mergers & reconfiguration

# QAA Scotland

- 2011 review of Scottish quality enhancement framework
- Scottish Government consultation on post-16 education
- Scottish national enhancement theme for 2011-14: *Developing and Supporting the Curriculum*
- Review programme for Scotland 2011-12:
  - Five reviews completed
  - First results will be published around Easter 2012



The Scottish Parliament  
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba





# QAA Northern Ireland

- No major updates at this time
- “Our Higher Education Policy Branch continues to work with our colleagues in England to agree on future developments within the Higher Education quality assurance system”

[from DELNI website]



Northern Ireland  
Assembly



Department for  
**Employment  
and Learning**

[www.delni.gov.uk](http://www.delni.gov.uk)

# The new *UK Quality Code for Higher Education*

- Published by QAA in three parts:
  - 1) Academic Standards
  - 2) Academic Quality
  - 3) Information about Higher Education
- For the first time, includes new chapters on:
  - *Teaching & Learning*
  - *Student Engagement*
- ‘Soft’ launch of first sections in December 2011 (on QAA website)
- Further sections will be published over 2012 – complete version by summer 2013





**QAA**