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UK Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter B4: Supporting student achievement

UK Quality Code: Chapter B4 Supporting student achievement
Consultation Survey

UK Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter B4: *Supporting student achievement Consultation Survey*

Welcome to the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) consultation on Chapter B4: *Supporting student achievement of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education*.

This Chapter focuses on the range of mechanisms and services higher education providers put in place to enable every student, whatever their mode of learning, prior educational background or other needs, to achieve their learning objectives and make the most of their student experience.

The Chapter is concerned with the range of different types of support which higher education providers make available for students throughout their period of study. It incorporates the guidance previously contained in the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (the Code of practice) Section 8: Career education, information, advice and guidance* (2010) and aspects of the *Code of practice, Section 3: Disabled students* (2010) as they relate to supporting student achievement.

We hope that this consultation process will generate lively debate and discussions about the key principles of supporting student achievement across the diverse contexts in which UK higher education takes place. We are keen to receive diverse and varied feedback, which can be used to produce a final publication that is of value and relevance to all potential

users.

We welcome contributions to this consultation from anyone with an interest in supporting student achievement in higher education in the UK, including representatives from all four countries; prospective, current and past students and their representatives; staff from the full range of higher education providers, including staff who support student achievement in any way as well as staff with responsibilities for the quality assurance of that support; and from employers, who depend upon the abilities, skills and knowledge of graduates.

To answer the consultation questions, please refer back to the consultation document, which is available from <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/B4-consultation.aspx>.

The consultation questions are ordered as follows:

1. Your overall impressions of the Chapter
2. The Chapter Expectation
3. The Indicators of sound practice
4. Further comments.

If you intend to give full answers to our questions, and/or if you would like to work through them in a different order, we recommend that you write and save your answers separately then copy them into the survey, as responses need to be completed in one sitting. The consultation survey can be found at:

http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/UKQCHE_B4_Supporting_student_achievement

Once the survey is submitted you will not be able to change your answers.

The consultation will be open until the end of **Thursday 3 January 2013**.

Thank you for your interest.

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UK Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter B4: Supporting student achievementChapter B4:
Supporting student achievement - Overall impressions

5. Does the title of this Chapter adequately reflect its content? No

Please add further comments below.

The title is somewhat vague and implies the inevitability of achievement where appropriate support is provided rather than recognising the role that needs to be played by the student.

6. Is the remit of the Chapter appropriate and clearly stated? No

Please add further comments below.

It is not clear what the limits of 'support' are in the context of this chapter or what is intended by 'student objectives' or indeed 'achievement'. The definition of the terms employed and the totality of this chapter's scope need significant clarification.

7. The Chapter will replace guidance previously contained in the Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (the Code of practice) Section 8: Career education, information, advice and guidance (2010) and aspects of the Code of practice, Section 3: Disabled students (2010) as they relate to supporting student achievement. Does the new Chapter adequately capture the relevant content of these two documents? No

Please add further comments below.

Although it is clear that these aspects of the previous Academic Infrastructure are incorporated into B4, there is a lack of clarity around how HEI's should interpret their obligations within the context of the new Quality Code and the proposed expectation.

8. Is this Chapter sensitive to the diversity of higher education providers, higher education students, and modes of learning? Yes

Please add further comments below.

UK Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter B4: Supporting student achievementChapter B4:
Supporting student achievement - Expectation (Page 5)

The Quality Code sets out the following Expectation about supporting student achievement, which higher education providers are required to meet.

Higher education providers have effective arrangements in place to support all students appropriately in achieving their learning objectives.

9. Do you agree with the wording of the Expectation for this Chapter? No

Please add further comments below.

The expectation implies a responsibility on the part of the HEI for the achievement of objectives, rather than for appropriately supporting the opportunity to achieve subject to the student meeting the obligations and expectations placed upon him/ her. In addition, HEI's should be responsible for supporting students in pursuit of the objectives that the HEI has articulated and not for such objectives as any individual student chooses to identify. The expectation as currently phrased suggests that HEI's are responsible for supporting any objective that a student wishes to select.

UK Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter B4: Supporting student achievementChapter B4:
Supporting student achievement – Indicators of sound practice (Pages 5 - 16)

Indicator 1

Support for student achievement is included in higher education providers' strategic planning.

10. Do you agree with the wording of this Indicator?

Do you agree with the wording of this Indicator? No

Please add further details below.

It should refer to support in relation to affording students the opportunity to achieve those outcomes that the provider has indicated to students form part of the set of conditional outcomes associated with the given programme of study.

11. Do you have any suggestions for additional explanatory text or signposts to further information it may be helpful to include? Yes

Please add further details below.

Please see answer to 10 above

Indicator 2

Higher education providers have in place policies and procedures in which responsibilities for student support are clearly defined.

12. Do you agree with the wording of this Indicator?

Do you agree with the wording of this Indicator? No

Please add further comments below.

This is extremely vague and needs significant clarification

13. Do you have any suggestions for additional explanatory text or signposts to further information it may be helpful to include? Yes

Please add further comments below.

The indicator needs to clearly list the specific areas of student support to which this indicator applies.

Indicator 3

The provision of student support is guided by a commitment to equitable access and outcome.

14. Do you agree with the wording of this Indicator? No

Please add further comments below.

Outcomes are not within the gift of providers to determine since they rely on the interaction between a range of processes, individuals and organisations of which the provider is only one. The primary responsibility for the outcome of a student's period of study must lie with the student.

15. Do you have any suggestions for additional explanatory text or signposts to further information it may be helpful to include? Yes

Please add further comments below.

'and outcome' should simply be removed from this indicator

Indicator 4

Higher education providers promote internal collaboration, collaboration with external partners and understanding of individual responsibilities in order to provide student support.

16. Do you agree with the wording of this Indicator? No

Please add further comments below.

There is a lack of clarity in this indicator as to whether the focus is on individuals or structures. In addition the problem of a lack of clarity and definition around the term 'student support' renders this indicator almost entirely opaque.

17. Do you have any suggestions for additional explanatory text or signposts to further information it may be helpful to include? Yes

Please add further comments below.

'Providers ensure that appropriate dialogue is maintained between all parties who have responsibility for supporting [insert finally determined list of relevant areas of support]'

Indicator 5

Higher education providers make information available to students about the extent and range of support services provided before, during and after their registration.

18. Do you agree with the wording of this Indicator? No

Please add further comments below.

Again, it is not at all clear what is implied by 'support services', for example does this include support services about which the provider is aware (eg provided by the Student Union/ Guild) but for which it is not directly responsible.

19. Do you have any suggestions for additional explanatory text or signposts to further information it may be helpful to include? Yes

Please add further comments below.

Providers make information available to students about the services provided by the institution in relation to [insert list of relevant services]

Indicator 6

Higher education providers have policies, practices and systems to actively support students in making a successful transition into higher education.

20. Do you agree with the wording of this Indicator? No

Please add further comments below.

This indicator is not at all clear and, as noted at the consultation event, it is so vague with regard to the indicator's primary function as to make it difficult to comment on any possible improvement

21. Do you have any suggestions for additional explanatory text or signposts to further information it may be helpful to include? Yes

Please add further comments below.

This indicator should be removed. Its absence would not lead to any significant element of student support, insofar as it was provisionally defined at the consultation event in London, being excluded from appropriate oversight within the Code.

Indicator 7

Higher education providers ensure that academic progression and completion are actively supported.

22. Do you agree with the wording of this Indicator?

Do you agree with the wording of this Indicator? No

Please add further comments below.

Providers cannot be expected to and do not give any undertaking to potential students that they will be responsible for a student's progression or completion.

This indicator could open the floodgates to a number of complaints and/ or appeals from failing students who see it as a suggestion that any failure to progress or complete must lie with the providers lack of 'active support'

23. Do you have any suggestions for additional explanatory text or signposts to further information it may be helpful to include?

Do you have any suggestions for additional explanatory text or signposts to further information it may be helpful to include? Yes

Please add further comments below.

This indicator should be removed since to the extent that there is a legitimate obligation upon providers in relation to the supporting of student achievement in the stated outcomes of a given programme of study it is already covered by other indicators.

Indicator 8

Higher education providers' support facilitates student progression to employment and further study.

24. Do you agree with the wording of this Indicator? No

Please add further comments below.

This sentence is not at all clear to the extent that is semantically problematic and could be read at least three different ways.

25. Do you have any suggestions for additional explanatory text or signposts to further information it may be helpful to include? Yes

Please add further comments below.

This indicator was intended to refer to support for students in relation to careers advice/ employability and further study:

'Providers offer appropriate services that afford students the opportunity to develop their employability, investigate career options and consider further study'

Indicator 9

Higher education providers ensure that all members of staff who provide students with support and guidance as appropriate to their role are trained, supported and resourced.

26. Do you agree with the wording of this Indicator? Yes

Please add further comments below.

27. Do you have any suggestions for additional explanatory text or signposts to further information it may be helpful to include? No

Please add further comments below.

Indicator 10

Higher education providers ensure there are appropriately maintained physical and virtual learning resources and learning environments.

28. Do you agree with the wording of this Indicator? Yes

Please add further comments below.

29. Do you have any suggestions for additional explanatory text or signposts to further information it may be helpful to include? No

Please add further comments below.

Indicator 11

Higher education providers ensure that students are supported to acquire appropriate skills to support their learning and transferable skills which will enable their progression into the workplace or into further study.

30. Do you agree with the wording of this Indicator? No

Please add further comments below.

This is very clumsily worded, the repetition of skills is problematic and potentially confusing. It implies that the development of transferable skills requires a meta-skill set that allows the acquisition of transferable skills.

Moreover, this appears to stray from the theme (as far it is possible to determine with any clarity) of this chapter and move into issues more related to B3. There is a question mark as to whether it is appropriate for QAA to specify the content of any and all degree programmes in the manner that is suggested by the wording of this indicator. Crucially, and as noted above, providers cannot 'ensure' but can only afford opportunities for students to access if they so choose.

31. Do you have any suggestions for additional explanatory text or signposts to further information it may be helpful to include? Yes

Please add further comments below.

The indicator should be removed

Indicator 12

Higher education providers ensure that the provision of student support forms part of its quality assurance processes and management of enhancement activities.

32. Do you agree with the wording of this Indicator? No

Please add further comments below.

It is not clear what this indicator means.

33. Do you have any suggestions for additional explanatory text or signposts to further information it may be helpful to include? Yes

Please add further comments below.

'providers ensure that quality assurance and enhancement strategies have regard to student support issues as defined in the Introduction to B4' [Not yet so defined]

UK Quality Code for Higher Education Chapter B4: Supporting student achievement
Chapter B4: Supporting student achievement - Further comments

34. Do the Indicators of sound practice in this Chapter adequately set out what higher education providers might do to meet the Chapter Expectation? No

Please add further comments below.

The entire chapter is extremely unclear and ill-defined. Consequently, the indicators cannot possibly be adequate since they are attempting to clarify an expectation and Chapter remit which require substantial revision.

35. Are any additional Indicators needed? If so, please give details. Yes

Please add further comments below.

The indicators need to be re-written once the purpose of this chapter has been clarified with appropriate revisions to the title and expectation.

36. Do you agree with the order in which the Indicators have been arranged?

Do you agree with the order in which the Indicators have been arranged? No

Please add further comments below.