

Number	CL 10/13
Subject	Consultation on Part A: Setting and maintaining academic standards, <i>Chapter B1: Programme design and approval</i> , <i>Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review</i> and <i>Chapter B6: Assessment of students and recognition of prior learning</i> .
Publication date	31 May 2013
Recipients	UK HE institutions and further education colleges; UK HE funding councils and representative bodies; HE student representative bodies; other HE sector bodies; professional, statutory or regulatory bodies; employer bodies.
Of interest to	Individuals with responsibilities for academic standards, programme design and approval, programme monitoring and review, assessment of students and recognition of prior learning, students, student representatives and staff from student representative bodies, professional, statutory or regulatory bodies and policy makers.
Further information	Part A: Sarah Butler s.butler@qaa.ac.uk , Dr Melinda Drowley m.drowley@qaa.ac.uk or Dominic Passfield d.passfield@qaa.ac.uk Chapters B1 and B8: Janet Bohrer j.bohrer@qaa.ac.uk or Harriet Barnes h.barnes@qaa.ac.uk Chapter B6: Dr Tim Burton t.burton@qaa.ac.uk or Dominic Passfield d.passfield@qaa.ac.uk
Related documents	Part A: Setting and maintaining academic standards - Draft for consultation Chapter B1: Programme design and approval - Draft for consultation Chapter B6: Assessment of students and recognition of prior learning - Draft for consultation Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review - Draft for consultation

Dear colleague,

I am writing to notify you that we are now consulting on the draft content of Part A: Setting and maintaining academic standards and three further Chapters of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education: *Chapter B1: Programme design and approval*, *Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review*, and *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and recognition of prior learning*.

The revision of each of these components of the Quality Code has been undertaken by expert advisory groups comprising representatives who work in the areas of academic standards; programme design and approval; programme monitoring and review; assessment of students and recognition of prior learning respectively. Members of the various advisory

groups were drawn from different types of higher education providers and relevant sector bodies from across the four nations of the UK.

Earlier this year, the schedule for the development of Part A and these three Chapters was revised to allow work to take place in parallel, given the close relationships between the topics they cover. The consultation documents have been shaped by a series of discussion events held around the UK in the spring, which were designed to explore the complementary way in which these components of the Quality Code safeguard academic standards.

As with other Parts and Chapters of the Quality Code, the Expectations in these documents will replace the current Expectations which are used as reference points in reviews. This is of particular importance for Part A, as the development of this new section of the Quality Code means that more detailed Expectations will be available to inform judgements on academic standards. These Chapters will become reference points for the purpose of reviews carried out by QAA from August 2014.

Part A provides a narrative which explains how academic standards are set and maintained for higher education qualifications awarded by degree-awarding bodies. This is the first time that QAA has produced a statement which describes this process. It is important not only in pointing practitioners to the relevant reference points and guidance (including *The framework for higher education qualifications In England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, *The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland*, and subject benchmark statements) but also in providing an explanation for all stakeholders about how the various reference points are used collectively to set and maintain threshold standards on individual academic programmes. It is of particular importance in describing to the international community (more familiar with national accreditation processes) how academic standards are set by individual degree-awarding bodies for UK higher education qualifications.

Chapter B1: Programme design and approval and *Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review* focus on the different processes which higher education providers use to ensure programmes offered to students make available learning opportunities which enable the intended learning outcomes to be achieved, and ensure that appropriate academic standards are set and maintained. Together these processes offer opportunities for higher education providers to encourage innovation and creativity in the development of the learning experience for students, as well as promoting a culture of continuous improvement of their provision.

Finally, *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and recognition of prior learning* addresses those matters related to the processes of assessment and the regulatory frameworks within which those processes take place. It deals with the assessment and grading of student learning, both learning which is achieved as part of a formal programme offered by a higher education provider, and comparable learning achieved outside of the formal programme of study. The Chapter covers all forms of assessment used in the context of taught provision, and for the recognition of prior learning.

We hope that this consultation process will stimulate discussions around the key principles embedded in Part A and each of these Chapters and highlight the complementary role they play in safeguarding academic standards.

We welcome contributions to this consultation from anyone with an interest in any or all of the areas covered, including staff with responsibilities for academic standards, programme design and approval, programme monitoring and review, assessment of students and recognition of prior learning; representatives from all four countries; students, student

representatives and staff from student representative bodies; sector and representative bodies; professional, statutory or regulatory bodies and employer groups.

The consultation will be open until the end of Thursday 1 August 2013. Please submit responses through the [online survey](#). The final version of Part A and the three Chapters will be published at the end of October 2013.

We will be running consultation events during the consultation period. Please see our [website](#) for further details.

If you would like further information relating to this consultation document or consultation process, please contact Dr Melinda Drowley m.drowley@gaa.ac.uk.

I look forward to your response to these consultations and to your continued engagement as the UK Quality Code for Higher Education is developed.

Yours sincerely



Anthony McClaran
Chief Executive



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