

Appendix 1

CONCORDAT ON QUALITY ASSURANCE ARRANGEMENTS AND DATA COLLECTION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS BETWEEN HEFCE, TTA, QAA, Ofsted, ALI, LSC, SKILLS FOR HEALTH (or other relevant NHS/DoH), HESA, RESEARCH COUNCILS, NAMED PROFESSIONAL, STATUTORY AND REGULATORY BODIES

Coverage

The Concordat applies across the Higher Education sector. It is meant to cover the external quality assurance of higher and further education provision in Higher Education Institutions, and the collection of data.

Signatories are committed to a coordinated approach to data collection and quality assurance. They have agreed to the following principles in their engagements with HEIs. In implementing the principles these bodies will also have due regard to the five principles of better regulation, as adapted by the HERRG for higher education.

General principles

A high quality higher education system, offering good value for money, is a core objective for HEIs themselves, individually and as a sector, and for all who fund or support higher education.

An institution demonstrates its **commitment** to quality and standards by the skills and attitudes of its staff, and the systems and structures that it puts in place for itself.

An institution's **achievements**, and the value for money that it provides, are demonstrated by its performance against output indicators, based on reliable, timely, transparent data.

A robust external quality assurance regime is a vital part of any high quality HE system. However, within such a system the main responsibility for creating and delivering a high quality HE product rests with individual higher education institutions. HEIs are the first line for transparent accountability through their governance and management structures.

Intervention from external agencies is most effective when it is demonstrably risk-based – targeted on the weakest institutions. External intervention should be proportionate, allowing maximum freedom for those HEIs that operate successfully.

In accepting these general principles, signatories are all seeking to move in the same direction – a lighter touch, more risk-based approach, relying more on institutions' own processes, and reducing duplication. However, signatories, and the institutional areas they cover are at different stages of progress, and their detailed commitments are set out in annexes.

Data

The core data about HEIs - their students, staff and finance - is regularly supplied by them to HESA, who process, coordinate and publish it. All signatory bodies¹ will rely upon this data collection and not duplicate it. HEIs are responsible for its accuracy and timeliness, and HESA is responsible for maintaining the integrity of the complete datasets, the accuracy of its published summaries and the timely provision of data to its stakeholders.

Signatory bodies may require extra data, or data not yet published by HESA, in order to analyse or assess HEI performance in particular areas. If HESA can supply this data, signatory bodies will use HESA as their source. If HESA indicates it cannot supply the desired data in the timescales required, the signatory body may seek it directly from the relevant HEIs (wherever possible using the format and definitions of the HESA returns, or data produced internally by the HEI for its own purposes).

Signatory bodies will have regard to the costs and practicality of producing additional data, and will seek in general to reduce their demands, rather than increase them.

Quality Assurance and standards

The assessment of how well an English HEI matches up against national benchmarks for quality and standards is made by the Quality Assurance Agency, on the basis of information supplied by the institution and periodic institutional audit visits. All signatory bodies will rely upon this assessment as giving an accurate picture of overall quality in an institution.

Where they think it necessary to assess standards in particular subjects, or make comparisons between institutions' performance, signatory bodies will seek to develop suitable metrics and performance indicators. These will use an institution's own data, including that collected for HESA purposes, as far as possible.

Signatory bodies will seek to reduce the frequency, depth and duration of inspection visits to effective institutions. They will have regard to the costs and practicality of inspections for an HEI. They will work with each other, and with [insert concordat monitoring body] as necessary, to coordinate inspections; to rely upon each other's reports rather than duplicating them; and to seek to harmonise their inspection methodologies.

If there is demonstrable cause for concern about provision in any institution, signatory bodies can arrange for inspection of that provision at any time.

¹ Throughout 'signatory body' refers to all those who have signed the concordat agreement: [add in bodies]

Review

All signatories agree that this concordat should be reviewed in one year's time, and annually thereafter. It is agreed that [insert body] will take the lead in monitoring its implementation, and its effectiveness in reducing burdens on HEIs while providing funders with the data and quality assurance they need.

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