

## Sector impact assessment

<b>Name of policy/initiative/project:</b>	<b>Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review – 2012-13 onwards</b>
1. What are the aims of this policy/initiative/project?	HEFCE has a statutory duty to make provision for assessing the quality of the higher education (HE) that it funds. Currently, HE delivered in further education colleges (FECs) is assessed using a method known as Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER). The reviews are conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). The current cycle of IQER will be completed during AY 2011-12 and HEFCE and the QAA need to ensure that there is a quality assessment method in place after that date.
2. At what stage of the development process is this assessment being undertaken?	Beginning of the process. The QAA and HEFCE have just commenced discussions about the future of IQER.
3. Do existing data sources enable us to provide evidence of impact? If not, how should we best gather evidence?	The QAA has gathered a great deal of evidence from the current cycle of IQER. As well as being able to provide figures on the number of staff and hours required for a review, each institution is invited to complete an evaluation of its review and offer comments. We know from this that while IQER is considered extremely valuable it can be quite intensive, especially for very small providers. Higher education institutions, as validators and franchisers of HE delivered in FECs, are also involved in the reviews, though not as extensively as their FEC partners. We also know that FECs have taken actions after IQER to enhance the education they offer. The first cycle of IQER can thus be said to have had some positive impacts on the quality of education.
<b>Regulatory impact assessment</b>	
4. Will this policy/initiative/project require higher education institutions to perform or commission more work than we already expect from them?	For both HEIs and FECs, we expect that the workload should be either the same or less than is the case with the current IQER method. Early discussions suggest that while the revised review method will be different it will be based on the last one and so will not require completely new ways of doing things. It will require less time as we will omit the developmental engagement stage. This is partly because each FEC that delivers HE will have undergone a two-stage IQER in the first cycle, so all will have experienced some developmental activity; also our evidence base is more complete. However the decision is also a realistic response to reduced funding and a wish to be more proportionate in assessing small amounts of provision.
5. If so, are the benefits of delivery sufficient to outweigh this regulatory impact? Describe these benefits.	The new IQER should not require more work, see above, (The quality assessment of higher education provision funded by HEFCE is a statutory obligation. The aim is to keep unnecessary regulation to a minimum. Quality assessment has an enhancement benefit as institutions respond to recommendations for improved practice, this should benefit all students.)
6. Please explain with supporting evidence how you have arrived at this judgement.	Please see 4 and 5 above. In addition, the QAA's evaluation report of the 2006-07 IQER pilot phase stated: 'almost all participating FECs think that the

	<p>IQER process has produced benefits, in some cases very significantly so... FECs have generally concluded that the costs of their involvement (mainly staff time) provided value for money and were not an excessive burden.'</p>
<b>Equality and diversity</b>	
<p>7. Which of the various groups protected by equality legislation are likely to be affected by this policy/initiative/project, and how?</p>	<p>Potentially all students and staff are affected (and should hopefully benefit) from quality assurance of provision. We do not anticipate impact on one group more than another.</p>
<p>8. What evidence have you used to ascertain whether there will be an impact (or not) on these groups?</p>	<p>The QAA has run quality assessment for many years which is subject to strict evaluation, and we are not aware of any impacts in this regard.</p> <p>The QAA-HEFCE Contract contains the clause 'In the management of its affairs and the evolution of its policies on equality and diversity, QAA shall co-operate with HEFCE in the light of HEFCE's statutory duties and QAA shall take such steps as QAA considers appropriate to promote race equality, equality of opportunity for disabled people and gender equality.'</p> <p>The new method will be subject to consultation and we will ensure that the list of people who advise us on disability issues (as held by our LGM team) are informed about it. The method will have to meet the principles and objectives for a quality assurance system which we consulted on in late 2009/early 2010 in HEFCE 2009/47. We drew the attention of the LGM team's 'disability experts' to this consultation. We did not receive any comments in consultation responses suggesting that inequality for any group would be a concern.</p> <p>At the moment we are in an early stage of development. As HEFCE officers will be members of an implementation group, we can ensure that these issues are raised.</p>
<p>9. Which negative impacts have been identified during the development of this policy/project/initiative, and what actions have been taken to mitigate the effect?</p>	<p>The QAA can check past IQER evaluations to see if any negative impacts have been identified by either institutions or reviewers.</p>
<p>10. What actions will be taken to ensure that this policy/project/initiative promotes both equality and diversity?</p>	<p>Careful development and ongoing monitoring by the QAA, overseen by both the implementation group and by the Quality in Higher Education Group.</p> <p>All QAA documents are available on its web-site and so can be magnified/made accessible with reading software.</p> <p>The HEFCE-QAA contract includes statements in which the QAA undertakes to promote equality and ensure that neither the QAA nor its contractors commit unlawful discrimination.</p>

<b>Sustainable development</b>	
11. What are the likely impacts of this policy/ initiative/project on sustainable development? How have you arrived at this judgement?	Regular review contributes to the sustainability of the sector as a whole by confirming that provision is fit for purpose and any problems are swiftly addressed. This also helps to ensure that students do not risk investing time and money in a poor quality product.
12. Which negative impacts have been identified during the development of this policy/project/initiative, and what actions have been taken to mitigate the effect?	Review visits have a negative impact on the environment in terms of the travelling done by reviewers and QAA staff –although we are aware that the QAA is monitoring this and trying to encourage sustainable travel. However the removal of the developmental engagement element should reduce travel. Also we may consider desk-based reviews for small providers, although this is still to be discussed.
13. What actions will be taken to ensure that this policy/project/initiative promotes sustainable development?	It is difficult to see what more could be done as it is not a focus of quality assessment, but HEFCE officers will raise this during discussions.
<b>Privacy impact assessments</b>	
14. Will you be using information or data about individuals? ( <i>you should answer this question even if the information or data will eventually be anonymised</i> )	No
15. Will you be combining or matching data about individuals with data from other sources?	No
16. Will you be sharing data about individuals with third parties (such as consultants, other funding bodies)?	No

**Certification by Director**

This is a fair assessment of the impact of this policy/initiative/project on the higher education sector, taking into account the regulatory burden imposed. The policy/initiative/project has been appropriately designed to meet our equality, regulatory and privacy obligations as well as promote equality and diversity and sustainable development. This assessment is ready for publication.

**Signed** Heather Fry

**Date** 8 June 2010