

28 July 2008

To Heads of HEFCE-funded higher education institutions
Heads of HEFCE-funded further education colleges
Heads of universities in Northern Ireland

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Dear Vice-Chancellor or Principal

HEFCE's response to the report of the Quality Assurance Framework Review Group: Phase 3

1. HEFCE welcomes this report, which is a valuable contribution to the continuing development of the quality assurance framework. HEFCE would like to thank SQW Consulting and the Quality Assurance Framework Review Group (QAFRG) for their work.
2. HEFCE has a statutory duty to ensure that provision is made for the assessment of the quality of the provision it funds, which it discharges by contracting with the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) to carry out reviews on its behalf. While the existing methods for review of audits of collaborative provision are clearly effective in enabling HEFCE to fulfil its statutory duty, this report shows that there is still work to be done to ensure that this does not place an undue burden on the sector.
3. HEFCE, in meeting its statutory duty, will consult with Universities UK, GuildHE and QAA on how to take forward QAFRG's recommendations in revising the method for reviewing collaborative provision.
4. We note the recommendation that higher education institutions should be supported in identifying and addressing the risks posed by collaborative arrangements and will take this forward through our existing assurance processes.
5. As a signatory to the Higher Education Regulation Reform Group Concordat, we will work with QAA and other appropriate agencies to ensure that review processes continue to keep burden on institutions to a minimum.

Yours sincerely,

John Selby
Director (Education and Participation)