

Response ID ANON-CUT2-WQMA-M

Submitted to **Fulfilling our Potential: Teaching Excellence, Social Mobility and Student Choice**
Submitted on **2016-01-06 16:20:16**

Introduction

What is your name?

Name:
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What is your email address?

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What is your organisation?

Organisation:
Ascentis

Please tick the box that best describes you as a respondent to this consultation.

Please tick the category that applies:
Awarding organisation

Public Sector Equality Duty

1a What are your views on the potential equality impacts of the proposals and other plans in this consultation?

Please type your answer in the answer box:

1b Are there any equality impacts that we have not considered? Please provide any further relevant evidence.

Please type answer in text box:

Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) (Part A: Chapters 1-3)

2 How can information from the TEF be used to better inform student and employer decision making? Please quantify these benefits as far as you can.

Please type your answer in the text box:

3 Do you agree that the ambition for TEF should be that it is open to all HE providers, all disciplines, all modes of delivery and all levels? Please give reasons for your answer.

Please type your answer in the text box:

4 Where relevant, should an approved Access Agreement be a pre-requisite for a TEF award? What other mechanism might be used for different types of providers?

Please type answer in text box:

5a Do you agree with the proposals on what would constitute a 'successful' quality assessment (QA) review?

5b Do you agree with proposals on the incentives that should be open to alternative providers for the first year of the TEF?

5c Do you agree with the proposal to move to differentiated levels of TEF from year two?

Please give reasons for your answers to question 5

Please type your response in the text box:

6a Do you agree with the proposed approach to timing of TEF assessments?

6b Do you agree with the proposed approach to TEF assessments panels?

6c Do you agree with the proposed approach to TEF assessment process?

Please give reasons for your answers to question 6

Please type your response in the text box:

7 How can we minimise any administrative burdens on institutions? Please provide any evidence relating to the potential administrative costs and benefits to institutions of the proposals set out in this document.

Please type your response in the text box:

8 Do you agree with the proposed approach to differentiation and award as TEF develops over time? Please give reasons for your answer.

Please type your response in the text box:

9 Do you agree with the proposed approach to incentives for the different types of provider? Please give reasons for your answer.

Please type your response in the text box:

10 Do you agree with the focus on teaching quality, learning environment, student outcomes and learning gain? Please give reasons for your answer.

Please type your response in the text box:

11 Do you agree with the proposed approach to the evidence used to make TEF assessments - common metrics derived from the national databases supported by evidence from the provider? Please give reasons for your answer.

Please type your response in the text box:

Social mobility and widening participation (Part A: Chapter 4)

12a Do you agree with the proposals to further improve access and success for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds? Please give reasons for your answer.

Yes

Please type your response in the box provided:

Ascentis is committed to widening participation, particularly in relation to the progression of adults into higher education. We therefore welcome the government's continuing commitment to social mobility and widening participation.

12b Do you agree that the Office for Students should have the power to set targets where providers are failing to make progress? Please give reasons for your answer.

Not sure

Please type your response in the text box:

Targets can be useful but can also create perverse incentives. We are unsure about how different HE providers might respond.

12c What other groups or measures should the Government consider?

please type your response in the text box:

We would very much welcome an increased emphasis on adults and mature students' progression to HE. We welcome some progress made by OFFA, but we consider more could be done to make mature students an explicit target group.

13a What potential benefits for decision and policy making in relation to improving access might arise from additional data being available?

Please type your response in the text box:

13b What additional administrative burdens might this place on organisations? If additional costs are expected to be associated with this, please quantify them.

Please type your response in the text box:

Opening up the sector to new providers (Part B: Chapter 1)

14 Do you agree with the proposed single route into the higher education sector? Please give reasons for your answer, including information quantifying how the potential cost of entry would change as a result of these proposals.

Please type your response in the text box:

15a Do you agree with the proposed risk-based approach to eligibility for degree awarding powers (DAPs) and university title? Please give reasons for your answer.

Please type your response in the text box:

15b What are your views on the options identified for validation of courses delivered by providers who do not hold DAPs?

Please type your response in the text box:

16 Do you agree with the proposed immediate actions intended to speed up entry? Please give reasons for your answer.

Please type your response in the text box:

Provider exit and student protection (Part B: Chapter 2)

17 Do you agree with the proposal to introduce a requirement for all providers to have contingency arrangements to support students in the event that their course cannot be completed? Please give reasons for your answer, including evidence on the costs and benefits associated with having a contingency plan in place? Please quantify these costs where possible.

Please type your response in the text box:

Simplifying the higher education architecture (Part C)

18a Do you agree with the proposed changes to the higher education architecture? Please give reasons for your answer.

Not sure

Please type your response in the text box:

In the absence of any clear proposals in the Green Paper on the future of QAA, and specifically for the Access Recognition Scheme which it manages, it is difficult to provide a definitive response to this question.

We note description of the current higher education architecture includes a reference to QAA as a sector-owned body (Part C, paragraph 5). We further note in paragraph 13 that 'quality assurance is currently undertaken by the QAA on behalf of HEFCE'. One element of that quality assurance which QAA undertakes is the Access Recognition Scheme, which provides quality assurance of Access to Higher Education Diploma provision through the regulation of the network of Access Validating Agencies. This regulatory system is well established, works effectively and is highly-regarded and it has resulted in the successful growth of the provision over many years. This provision has made a significant contribution to widening participation by facilitating the progression of large numbers of adults through to HEIs, many of whom come from a disadvantaged background. (for data on numbers and backgrounds of Access students see statistics published by QAA at <https://www.accesstohe.ac.uk/HowCourses/Statistics/Pages/Default.aspx>)

A critical aspect of the success of the Scheme over the years is that the body that manages it (QAA) is a higher education sector-owned body. This we believe has provided significant and continuing credibility for the Access to HE Diploma, and for the students who take it.

We note that in paragraph 14 of the Green Paper the government proposes that two sector-owned bodies (UCAS and OIA) should continue, but is unclear about the future of QAA. We consider it essential that in any new higher education architecture, the remit for the regulation of Access to HE remains with the QAA and that funding streams for this regulatory responsibility are maintained and developed as necessary to fund this critically important activity.

18b To what extent should the Office for Students (OfS) have the power to contract out its functions to separate bodies?

Partially

18c If you fully or partially agree to question 18b, which functions should the OfS be able to contract out?

Please type your response in the text box:

We understand that HEFCE currently contracts out the management of the Access Recognition Scheme as part of its annual contract with QAA. We believe that this arrangement has worked well. We note that OfS will subsume the current role of HEFCE and of OFFA and will therefore have an explicit commitment to widening participation. We therefore consider that the OfS should at least have the power to contract out the management of the Access Recognition Scheme to QAA.

18d What are your views on the proposed options for allocating Teaching Grant? Option 1: BIS Ministers set strategic priorities and BIS officials determine formula. Option 2: BIS Ministers set strategic priorities and allocation responsibilities divested to OfS

Matrix 1 - Option 1:

Matrix 1 - Option 2:

Please give reasons for your answer to question 18d

Please type your response in the text box:

19 Do you agree with the proposal for a single, transparent and light touch regulatory framework for every higher education provider? Please give reasons for your answer, including how the proposed framework would change the burden on providers. Please quantify the benefits and/or costs where possible.

Please type your response in the text box:

20 What steps could be taken to increase the transparency of student unions and strengthen unions' accountability to their student members?

Please type your response in the text box:

21a Do you agree with the proposed duties and powers of the Office for Students? Please give reasons for your answer.

Please type your response in the text box:

21b Do you agree with the proposed subscription funding model? Please give reasons for your answer.

Please type your response in the text box:

22a Do you agree with the proposed powers for OfS and the Secretary of State to manage risk? Please give reasons for your answer.

Please type your response in the text box:

22b What safeguards for providers should be considered to limit the use of such powers?

Please type your response in the text box:

23 Do you agree with the proposed deregulatory measures? Please give reasons for your answer, including how the proposals would change the burden on providers. Please quantify the benefits and/or costs where possible

Please type your response in the text box:

Reducing complexity and bureaucracy in research funding (Part D)

24 In light of the proposed changes to the institutional framework for higher education, and the forthcoming Nurse Review, what are your views on the future design of the institutional research landscape?

Please type your response in the text box:

25a What safeguards would you want to see in place in the event that dual funding was operated within a single organisation?

Please type your response in the text box:

25b Would you favour a degree of hypothecation to ensure that dual funding streams, along with their distinctive characteristics, could not be changed by that organisation? Please give reasons for your answer

Please type your response in the text box:

26 What are the benefits of the REF to a) your institution and b) to the wider sector? How can we ensure they are preserved?

Please type your response in the text box:

27 How would you suggest the burden of REF exercises is reduced?

Please type your response in the text box:

28 How could the data infrastructure underpinning research information management be improved?

Please type your response in the text box:

Comments on the consultation

Do you have any comments that might aid the consultation process as a whole? Please use this space for any general comments that you may have, comments on the layout of this consultation would also be welcomed.

Please type your response in the text box:

Ascentis is an Awarding Organisation regulated by Ofqual and in that capacity we registered 82,000 people on qualifications during the 2014/15 academic year. More specifically in relation to this consultation Ascentis is also an Access Validating Agency (AVA) regulated by QAA, and in that capacity we registered 5,765 people on the Access to HE Diplomas during the 2014/15 academic year. As a result of our recent acquisition of another AVA, AptEd, we are now nationally the largest AVA. Many thousands of students who have taken our awards have progressed to higher education, all of them adults.

We have confined our response to two specific issues, namely:

- Social mobility and widening participation (Question 12)
- Changes to the higher education architecture (Question 18), and in particular the implications for the future regulation of the Access to HE Diploma through the Access Recognition Scheme, which is currently managed by QAA under its contract with HEFCE.