

# What is the QAA and why does it matter?

The Quality Assurance Agency and its role in UK Higher Education

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**WONKHE**  
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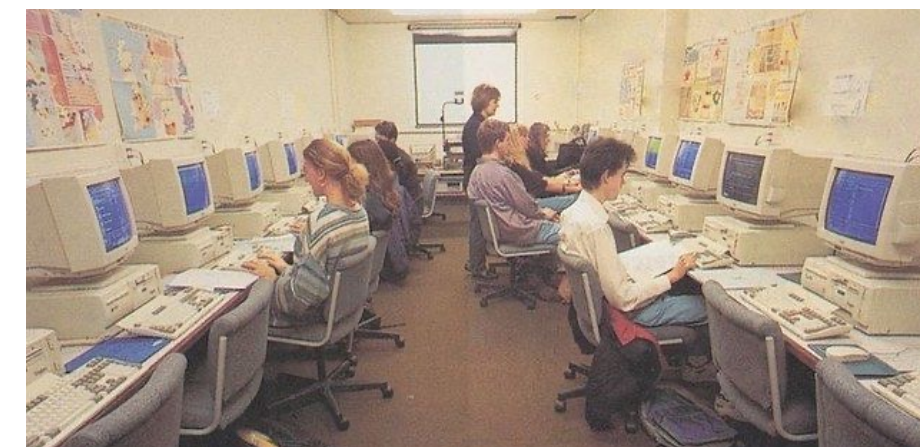
# The nineties





# The nineties

- HEQC, HEFCE and HEFCW
- A process called “subject review”
- A process called “academic audit”
- Dearing report:
  - “A Quality Assurance Agency with the remit of providing assurance about standards and quality”
- A higher education qualifications framework, a code of practice and subject benchmark statements, and established a pool of external examiners



**“Quality”**

**“Quality assurance”**

**“Quality enhancement”**

**WONKHE**

# Today's QAA



- Independent body entrusted with monitoring and advising on standards and quality in UK higher education.
- Checking that students working towards a UK qualification get the higher education experiences they are entitled to expect.
- Ensures that students are involved all aspects of its work (and that students are involved in higher education providers' work)
- Different role in each nation of the UK.
- International partnerships to enhance and promote the reputation of UK higher education worldwide.





# The UK Quality Code

- Key reference point for UK higher education, protects the public and student interest, and champions UK higher education's world-leading reputation for quality.
- Enables providers to understand what is expected of them and what to expect from each other.
- Developed by QAA on behalf of the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment, in consultation with the higher education sector.







The UK Quality Code

Expectations for standards		Expectations for quality	
<p>The academic standards of courses meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications framework.</p> <p>The value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time is in line with sector-recognised standards.</p>		<p>Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.</p> <p>From admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.</p>	
<p><b>Core practices</b></p> <p>The provider ensures that the threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications frameworks.</p> <p>The provider ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.</p> <p>Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them.</p> <p>The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent.</p>	<p><b>Common practices</b></p> <p>The provider reviews its core practices for standards regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.</p>	<p><b>Core practices</b></p> <p>The provider has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system.</p> <p>The provider designs and/or delivers high-quality courses.</p> <p>The provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.</p> <p>The provider has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience.</p> <p>The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.</p> <p>The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students.</p> <p>Where the provider offers research degrees, it delivers these in appropriate and supportive research environments.</p> <p>Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high-quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them.</p> <p>The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.</p>	<p><b>Common practices</b></p> <p>The provider reviews its core practices for quality regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.</p> <p>The provider's approach to managing quality takes account of external expertise.</p> <p>The provider engages students individually and collectively in the development, assurance and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience.</p>

1 Student engagement through partnership working is integral to the culture of higher education, however and wherever provision is delivered – student engagement is led strategically, but widely owned.

Partnership working is a key concept for student engagement in higher education – students and staff fulfil mutually important roles in shaping the student experience that enables staff and students to recognise and value the impact of student engagement in enhancement and quality assurance.

By fostering a culture of mutual respect, openness and sharing of information, providers can benefit from the insights, views and effective engagement of students. Where they exist, providers work with their students' representative body (such as students' union/association/guild) to set mutual goals and desired outcomes from student engagement activity at a strategic level, to orientate students and staff towards a shared understanding of success.

Providers in partnership with their student body should determine how the partnership will work in the context of their own institution. For example, in some providers the students' representative body is the primary vehicle for achieving partnership in institution-wide activities. In others, formal representative structures for partnership working may be embedded throughout.



UK Quality Code  
for Higher Education

Advice and Guidance  
Student Engagement







# UK Quality Code for Higher Education

Advice and Guidance  
**Student Engagement**



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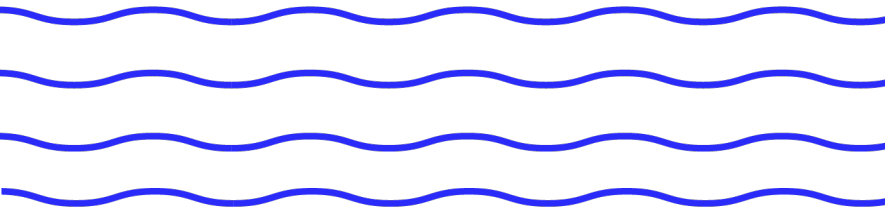
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# Around the UK: England

- OfS is regulator for English higher education providers. In April 2018, QAA was designated by the Secretary of State as the Designated Quality Body for England undertaking assessments of providers on, or wishing to join the OfS' register of higher education providers.
- As the DQB QAA also provides advice to OfS in relation to degree awarding powers.
- England / OfS now has own definitions of quality (B Conditions)





# Around the UK: Scotland

- External quality review of institutions through Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR). This is the process in Scotland to maintain academic standards and enhance the quality of the student learning experience.
- Manage the Enhancement Themes, a multi-year programme of work that enables the sector to explore a specific area.
- Also coordinates Focus On projects to support the enhancement of policy and practice in the sector.



# Around the UK: Wales

- Quality Enhancement Review is the method for reviewing higher education providers in Wales.
- It combines quality assurance and quality enhancement, involves students and can be adapted to suit the scale and nature of particular universities and colleges.
- Gateway Quality Review: Wales allows a higher education provider to demonstrate its compliance with the baseline quality requirements for higher education in Wales.



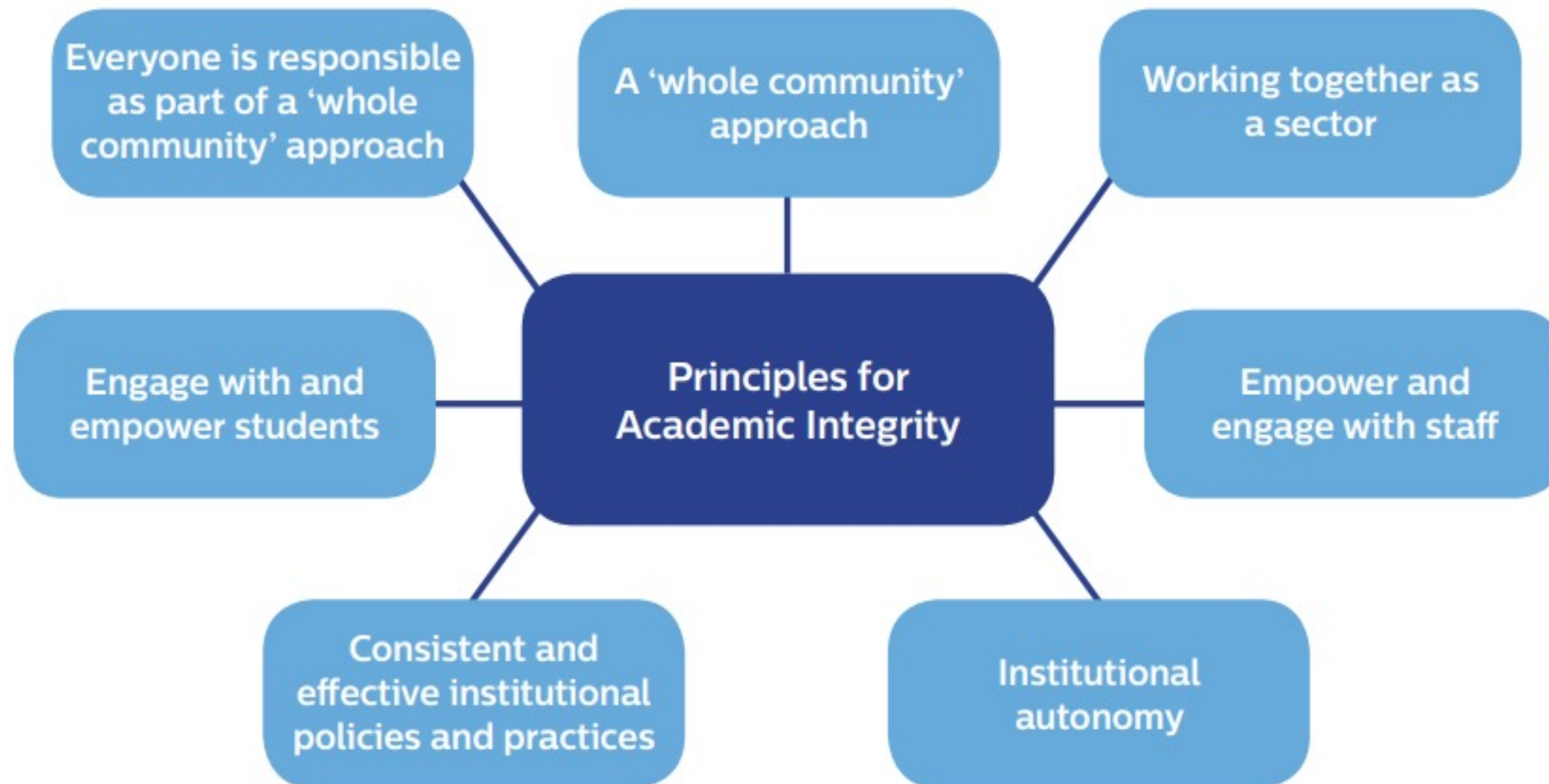


# And there's more

- Higher Education Credit Framework for England
- Subject Benchmark Statements
- Embedding sustainability across the curriculum
- Supporting collaboration for quality enhancement
- Embedding student engagement
- Academic Integrity Charter
- International work

# Academic Integrity

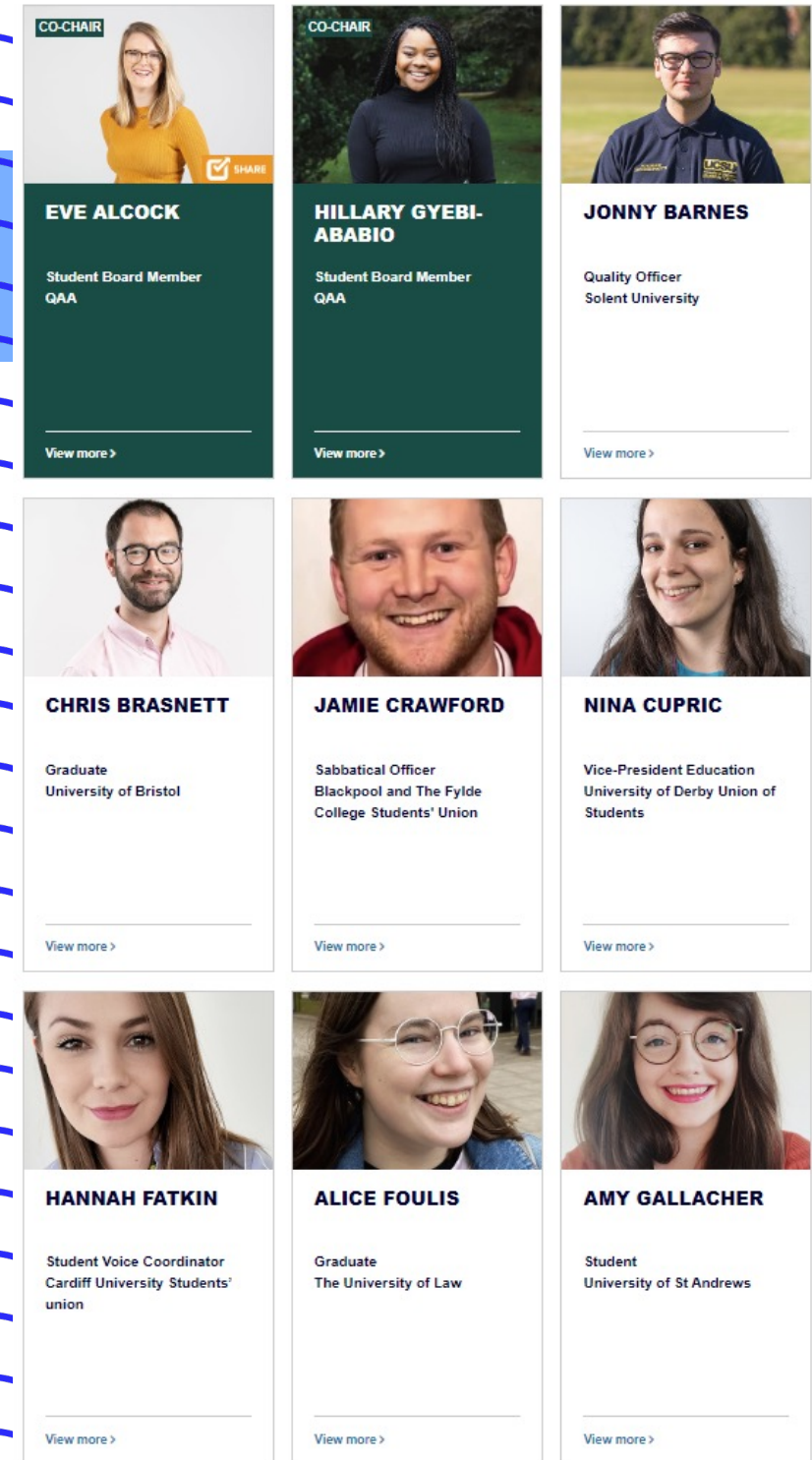
## Principles for Academic Integrity





# Getting involved

- Review teams
- QAA Board
- Student Advisory Committee
- Student engagement projects and resources
- Enhancement themes



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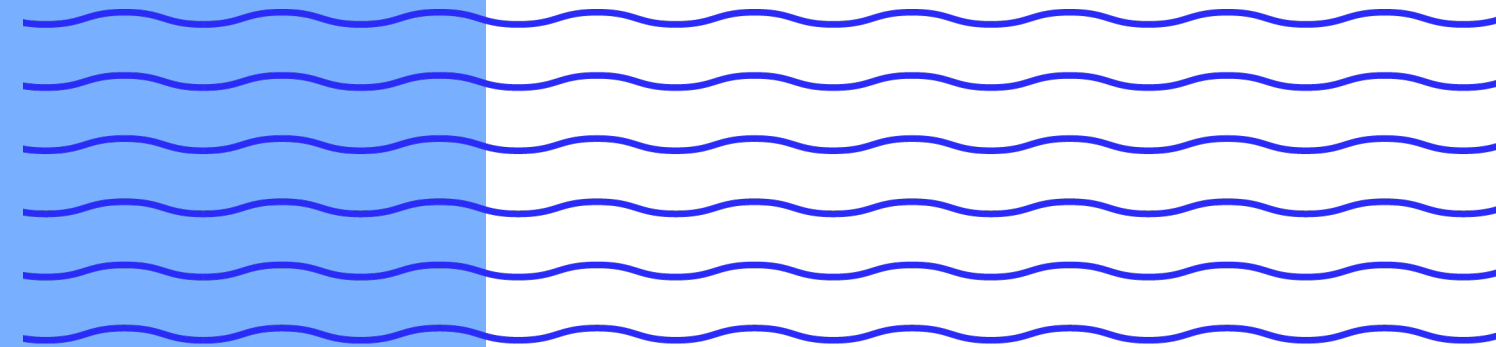
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