

Quality in England - giving students power

JIM DICKINSON, WONKHE SUs



WONKHE
SUs

Quality in England - giving students power

JIM DICKINSON, WONKHE SUs



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SUs

Ah...

- Social connections/social sec
- Helping others succeed
- Teaching assistant
- Low level complaints sponge
- Careers coordinator
- Moaning rod
- Evaluator?



Awareness Test

'Mickey Mouse' university courses could have student loans removed

Programmes with high drop-out rates and low levels of graduate employment will be under scrutiny

By Camilla Turner, EDUCATION EDITOR

15 January 2022 • 8:08pm

Universities are facing a crackdown on “Mickey Mouse” degrees as the watchdog threatens to withdraw student loan funding from [low-quality courses](#).

Vice-chancellors will be warned by the Office for Students (OfS) that they risk being hit with sanctions - including financial penalties - if their degrees fail to deliver for students.

The higher education regulator had pledged to take a more “robust” approach to quality assurance, which will include launching investigations where bad practice is reported.

Degrees with high drop-out rates and low rates of [graduate employment](#) will be targeted by the OfS for scrutiny.

The regulator will publish proposals this week which set out the series of “minimum requirements” they expect degree courses to meet in terms of student outcomes.

If courses are deemed to consistently fall below these they could be barred from receiving student loan funding which would most likely render them financially unviable.

WONKHE

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The Royals

and The Crown

What the series gets wrong

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Chloe Smith

My shock at getting cancer at 38

Celia Walden

No10 battle of the sexes demeans them and us

The Daily Telegraph

BRITAIN'S BEST QUALITY NEWSPAPER

Lockdown looms over Christmas

England could remain shut beyond Dec 2 as effect on virus cases is not yet clear

By Gordon Rayner POLITICAL EDITOR

absolutely hope to be able to replace the national lockdown with a tiered system.” The Prime Minister’s spokesman earlier took a more positive stance, saying: “Those measures will be coming to an end on Dec 2. They will expire in law. We are committed to setting out next week what the replacement regime will be.” Mr Hancock refused to say whether lockdown would simply be “rebranded”. But Dr Susan Hopkins, chief medical adviser to NHS testing, said even if lockdown ended in England, a tougher tier system would be likely to replace it. She said that while Tier 3 and “Tier 3 plus” in the North West had reduced cases, Tier 2 had done “not so well” and “we saw very little effect from Tier 1.” Another 21,363 people tested positive for the virus yesterday. There were 14,935 Covid patients in hospital, up nearly 2,000 in a week, and 215 deaths were reported, taking the daily average to 413, up from 322 a week ago. Up to 70 Tory MPs have joined the newly formed Covid Research Group to pressure the Government into finding alternatives to lockdowns to safeguard the economy. Mark Harper, chairman of the group, said: “It’s time for a new way to live with the virus.” Although the rebels are likely to vote against extending lockdown, Labour would almost certainly support it.

21,363
DAILY CORONAVIRUS CASES

-11%
CHANGE IN 7-DAY AVERAGE

52,147
DEATHS +215

lockdown in England would end by law on Dec 2 and that there would be a return to a “localised” regime. But at Downing Street press conference yesterday the Health Secretary left the door open for an extension, which would have to be approved by Parliament. Mr Hancock said: “It is too early for us to know what the number of cases will be as we come to the end of the current lockdown.” At the moment most of the tests that we’re getting back and most of the positive cases are from around the time when the lockdown came in. It’s too early to expect to see in the data the impact of the second lockdown, but we

Matt Hancock said at the Downing Street media briefing that lockdown might not end on Dec 2 as its effects were not clear in the data

Hancock won't rule out mandatory vaccine

By Harry Yorke and Laura Donnelly

MATT HANCOCK has refused to rule out making coronavirus vaccine mandatory, suggesting ministers could consider it if initial take-up was lower than expected. The Health Secretary yesterday insisted the Government was not “proposing” compulsory vaccination, pointing out that a number of people would be unable to take it for medical reasons. But when asked whether he could rule it out in future, Mr Hancock said he had learnt “not to rule things out” during the pandemic, adding: “We have to watch what happens and you have to make judgments accordingly.” Asked later at a Downing Street press conference whether other candidates to be vaccinated could alternatively be barred from entering workplaces such as hospitals, Mr Hancock said only that

ministers had not discussed it. Echoing his comments, a government source said that while ministers were focused on encouraging voluntary take-up, “nothing could be ruled out”. A second source added: “If there was an effective vaccine and because of low uptake we were still seeing deaths in large numbers, then we would have to consider it.” The US biotech firm Moderna yesterday became the second producer after Pfizer-BioNTech to release promising results from phase three trials, showing its vaccine to be 94.5 per cent effective. Mr Hancock said the announcement was a “candle of hope and we must do all that we can to nurture its flame”. However, if left ministers scrambling to secure doses of the jab, having prioritised other candidates – including Pfizer’s – expected to be available more quickly – it is “entirely inappropriate”

enough for 2.5 million people to receive the required two doses. Vaccines are not mandatory in the UK, with official guidance stating that individuals must be allowed to make an informed choice. However, there is concern that anti-vaxxers – who are spreading unfounded claims about the safety of Covid-19 vaccine – candidates on social media – could undermine efforts to encourage widespread inoculation. Meanwhile, research by YouGov yesterday suggested that while 67 per cent of Britons were likely to take the Pfizer vaccine, one in five respondents was unlikely to and 12 per cent were unsure. Mr Hancock also hit out at hundreds of health and care staff who had formed a group opposed to vaccinations on social media, describing it as “entirely inappropriate”

Report Page 6

NEWS BRIEFING

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£500,000 fines for ‘Mickey Mouse’ courses Universities that run “Mickey Mouse” degree courses not being fixed up to £500,000, under plans by the watchdog to “stamp out” bad practice. The Office for Students is to crack down on degrees with high student dropout and low graduate employment rates, as well as those with significant grade inflation. Under proposed reforms, the OfS could investigate university departments and faculties if there is evidence that individual courses are not up to scratch. Page 4

After isolating with his dog Dylan, the PM has now tested positive for kennel cough

Queen ‘didn’t mind’ Obama protocol breach

By Ben Riley-Smith US EDITOR

BARACK OBAMA has waved away an old row about whether the first lady broke royal protocol by placing a hand on the Queen’s shoulder on a state visit, writing in his new memoirs that Her Majesty “didn’t seem to mind”. The incident took place when the Obamas visited Britain alongside other world leaders for a G20 summit in April 2009. The former US president discusses the incident in his book *A Promised Land*, which is published today. Mr Obama, who then had only been in the White House for three months, recalls how Michelle Obama caused “her own bit of controversy” at the reception in Buckingham Palace. “She was photographed with her hand resting on Her Majesty’s shoulder – an apparent breach of royal etiquette protocol,” Mr Obama writes,

‘I hope you enjoy sleeping on the couch when you get home. The White House has plenty to choose from.’ adding: “Although the Queen didn’t seem to mind, slipping her arm around Michelle in return.” Mr Obama also describes how concerned his wife had been with what to wear for their audience with the Queen. The former president remembers telling Mrs Obama: “You should have taken my suggestion and worn one of those little hats. And a little matching handbag!” Mr Obama quotes her response too: “And I hope you enjoy sleeping on a couch when you get home. The White House has so many to choose from!” In the end, Mrs Obama wore a cardigan over her dress, “wondering, Fleet

Street into a horrified tizzy”. The exchanges offer an insight into the conversations that happen when a world leader and their other half meet the Queen for the first time. They also show the raised eyebrows that were adopted by the Obamas as the media policed royal protocols. The story is one of a number linked to Britain that Mr Obama describes in his 768-page memoir, which covers his life up to mid-2011. A second volume, which will include his 2012 election and second term, is in the works. “Throughout the book, Mr Obama offers up colourful descriptions of world leaders, including the two UK prime ministers he worked with while in office: Gordon Brown and David Cameron.” Mr Brown is described as someone who “lacked the quippery political gifts of

Continued on Page 4

BUSINESS

Timing of US job data release questioned

Moderna, the US drugmaker, released crucial data on the Covid vaccine under embargo before the results were made public, prompting calls for new rules over how trial information is announced to the market. It briefed journalists on data showing its jab is almost 95 per cent effective against coronavirus, almost an hour before publishing the details – with a midday embargo meaning this lifted before US trading opened. There is no suggestion Moderna broke any rules. Business page 1

SPORT

Stewart leads drive to knight Hamilton

Sir Jackie Stewart last night led calls for Lewis Hamilton to be knighted after he won a record-equalling seventh Formula One world title. Sir Jackie told *The Daily Telegraph* there was “no question” Hamilton deserved to join him in becoming only the second world champion to receive the honour. It may require Boris Johnson to intervene, as the deadline for nominations has passed. Otherwise, Hamilton faces having to wait until next year or even until he retires. Sport page 1

'Mickey Mouse' university courses could have student loans removed

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NEWS

£500,000 fines for ‘Mickey Mouse’ courses

Universities that run “Mickey Mouse” degree courses face being fined up to £500,000, under plans by the watchdog to “stamp out” bad practice. The Office for Students is to crack down on degrees with high student dropout and low graduate employment rates, as well as those with significant grade inflation. Under proposed reforms, the OfS could investigate university departments and faculties if there is evidence that individual courses are not up to scratch.

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WONKHE

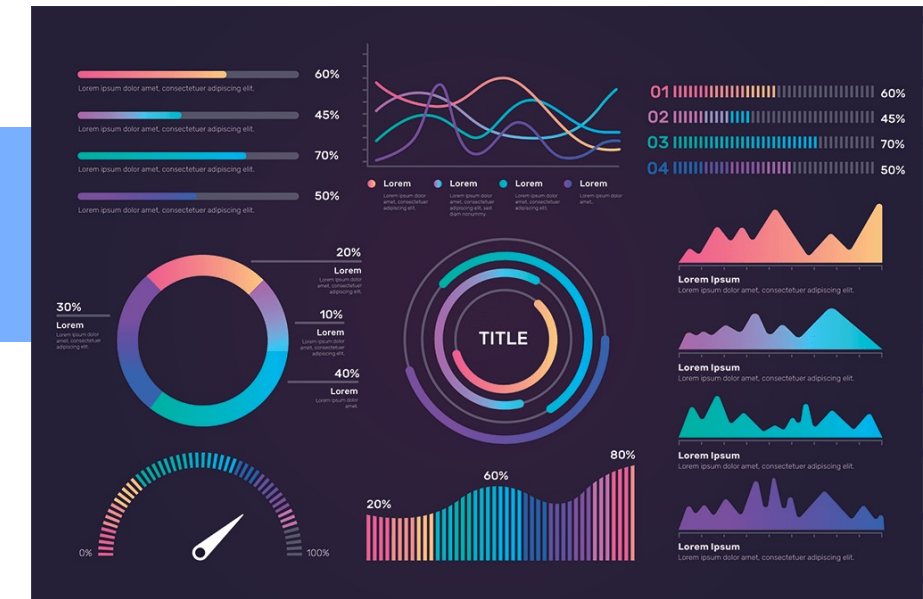
B3: Outcomes

- The percentage of students that get to their second year (if they have one)
- The percentage of students that complete the award they signed up for
- The percentage of students that get a graduate job



We will get baselines

- **Continuation** rates help it understand whether a provider is recruiting students able to succeed through the early stages of its courses, with the appropriateness of recruitment and student support under the spotlight;
- It says **completion** is similar and provides a look over the whole student lifecycle. This difference in focus means that there will not be a direct, linear, relationship between a provider's continuation rate and its completion rate.
- Meanwhile **progression** tells OfS whether a provider's students have successful student outcomes beyond graduation.



Blame it on the baseline

- Baseline for each indicator (in each mode and level of study that the provider delivers) and published stats.



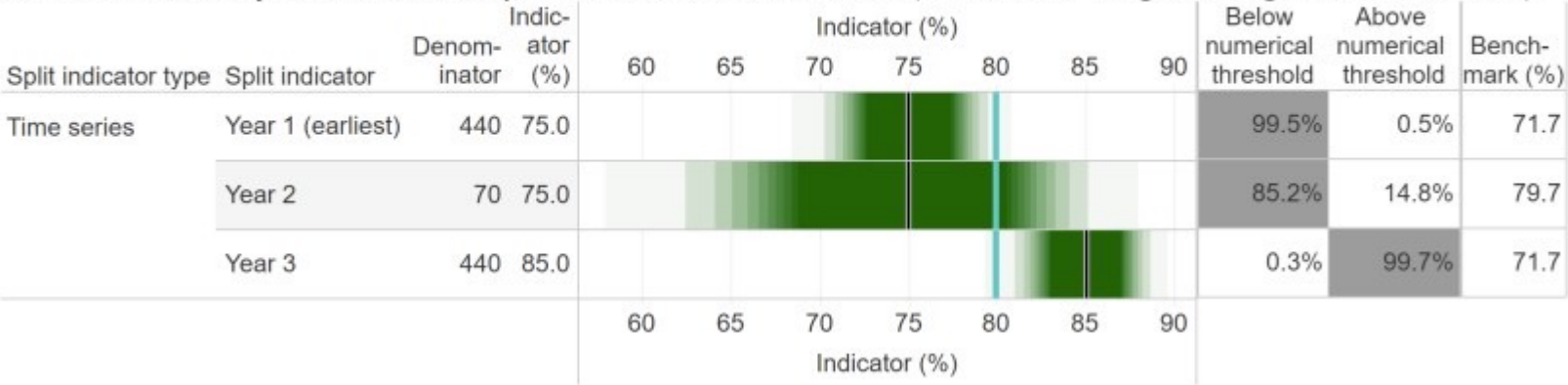
Table 1: Summary of proposed numerical threshold levels

Level and mode of study	Continuation	Completion (cohort tracking)	Completion (composite indicator)	Progression
FT Other UG	75%	65%	65%	45%
FT First Degree	80%	75%	75%	60%
FT UG / PG border	85%	85%	80%	80%
FT PGCE	85%	85%	85%	85%
FT PG Taught Masters	80%	80%	80%	70%
FT PG Other	80%	80%	80%	85%
FT PG Research (PhD)	90%	75%	75%	85%
PT Other UG	55%	55%	55%	65%
PT First Degree	60%	55%	55%	75%
PT UG / PG border	60%	60%	60%	80%
PT PGCE	75%	75%	75%	85%
PT PG Taught Masters	65%	65%	65%	85%
PT PG Other	65%	60%	65%	85%
PT PG Research (PhD)	70%	60%	60%	85%
Apprenticeship – UG	70%	55%	55%	75%
Apprenticeship – PG	80%	80%	80%	80%

Note: 'FT' = 'full-time'; 'PT' = 'part-time'; 'UG' = 'undergraduate'; 'PG' = 'postgraduate'.

Figure F1: Examples of assessing indicators and split indicators

Student and study characteristic split indicators: *Continuation (Other UG, Taught or registered, Full-time)*



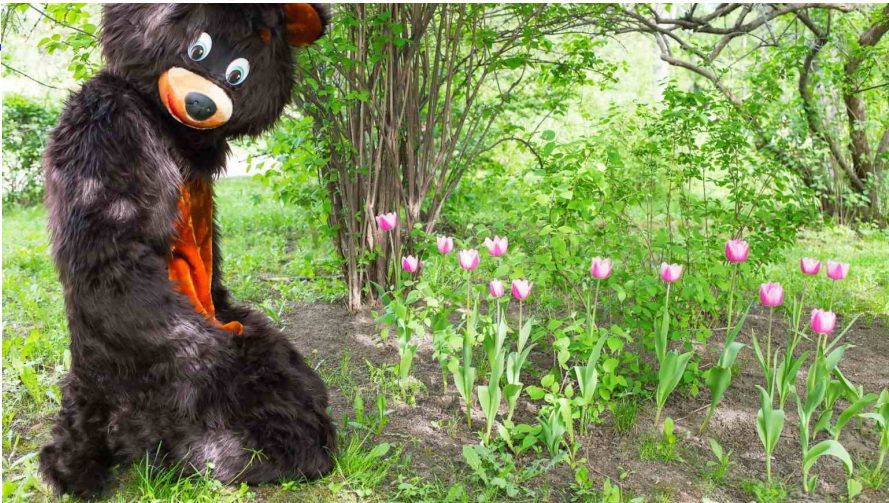
Blame

- Baseline level of published

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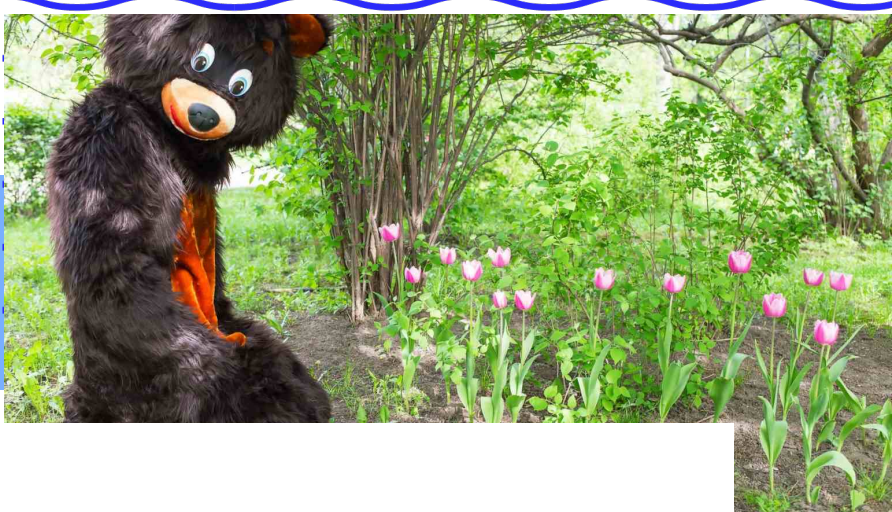


icators

3, Taught or registered, Full-time)

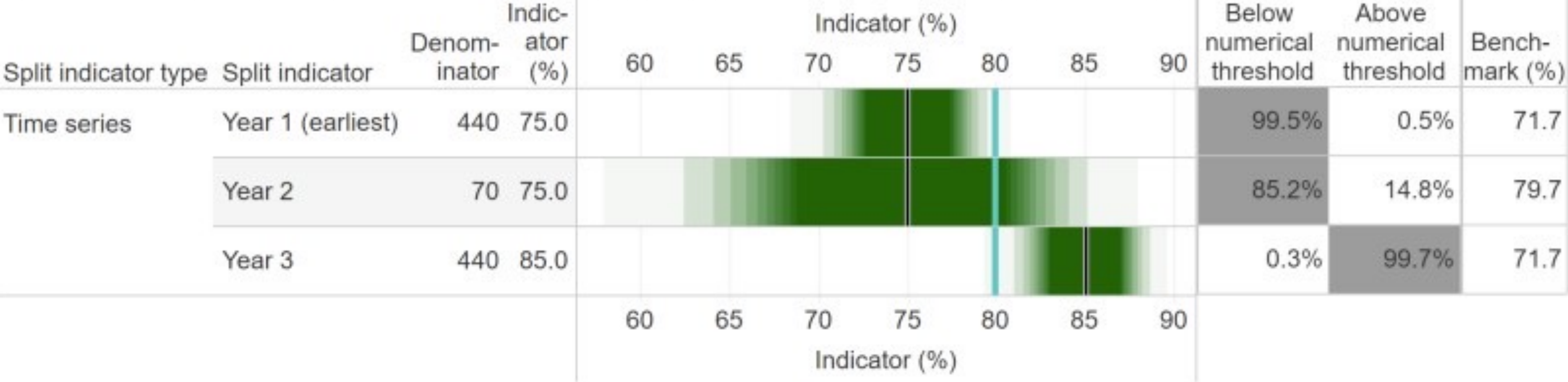
85	90	Below numerical threshold	Above numerical threshold	Benchmark (%)
		99.5%	0.5%	71.7
		85.2%	14.8%	79.7
		0.3%	99.7%	71.7
85	90			

Blame it on the baseline



- Figure F1: Examples of assessing indicators and split indicators

Student and study characteristic split indicators: *Continuation (Other UG, Taught or registered, Full-time)*



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Note: 'FT' = 'full-time'; 'PT' = 'part-time'; 'UG' = 'undergraduate'; 'PG' = 'postgraduate'.



Quality

Feed back about your course...

- “Teaching is great, feedback is great, but the content doesn’t seem to relate to the field I want to go into and the material doesn’t seem to be up to date
 - Do students blame themselves or realise they have rights to challenge that?
- “Teaching is good but the support outside of the classroom is poor”
 - Do students realise they may be entitled to better support?



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>Core practices</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>Common practices</p> <p>The provider reviews its core practices for standards regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.</p>	<p>Core practices</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>Common practices</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>

**+No
institutional
review!**

Regulatory Framework

Condition B1: The provider must deliver well-designed courses that provide a high quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.

Condition B2: The provider must provide all students, from admission through to completion, with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.

Condition B3: The provider must deliver successful outcomes for all of its students, which are recognised and valued by employers and/or enable further study.

Condition B4: The provider must ensure that qualifications awarded to students hold their value at the point of qualification and over time, in line with sector recognised standards.

Condition B5: The provider must deliver courses that meet the academic standards as they are described in the Framework for Higher Education Qualification (FHEQ) at Level 4 or higher.

Breakaway from QC

- Two consultations:
- One on B3/Outcomes (the "B3 Bear")
- One on B1, 2, 4, 5 – the rest of quality!
 - Condition B1 requires that all students receive a high quality academic experience. This means that courses must be up-to-date, challenging and well delivered, and equip students with the skills they will need after graduation.
 - Condition B2 requires that all students receive the resources and support they need to succeed on their courses and after graduation.
 - Condition B4 requires universities and colleges to assess students effectively and award qualifications that are credible and stand the test of time.
 - Condition B5 ensures that the standard of qualifications is consistent with sector-recognised standards.



OfS and regulation

- Ministerial letters to OfS
- First to "speed up" B3 and outcomes (plus SNCs related to outcomes)
- Now on B1, 2, 4 – onsite inspections...
 - that online learning should be used to complement and enhance a student's learning experience, not to detract from it;
 - the provision of sufficient contact hours, particularly where this has been flagged by intelligence from students; and
 - the importance of maintaining rigour in assessment, including appropriate technical proficiency in English necessary to secure a good outcome for all or some students.



Summary

- B1: The course itself – curriculum, teaching
- B2: Resources, support and student engagement
- B3: Outcomes (continuation, completion, progression)
- B4: Assessment and Awards

- Do SU officers know them?
- Do course reps use them when feeding back?
- Are surveys built around them?
- Could the student submission be built around them?



The B Conditions...

Condition B1: Academic experience

- The provider must ensure that the students registered on each higher education course receive a high quality academic experience.
- A high quality academic experience includes but is not limited to ensuring that each course:
- **is up-to-date; provides educational challenge; is coherent; is effectively delivered; and as appropriate to the subject matter of the course, requires students to develop relevant skills.**



Up to date and appropriately informed...

- The subject matter of a course is not representative of current thinking and practices.
- The pedagogy of a course is not representative of current thinking and practices.
- The length of the period during which aspects of the course have not been updated.
- The scale and nature of the changes needed to ensure the course is up-to-date.
- The impact on students and others of an out-of-date course.
- Whether a provider has plans to make changes to a course to ensure it is up-to-date.



Educational challenge

- An integrated masters' course with a final year of study that does not provide sufficient rigour and difficulty, for example because students at different stages of the course are taught together in a way that does not recognise the different challenge needed, would likely be of concern.
- An undergraduate degree course with an integrated foundation year, where the foundation year does not provide sufficient rigour and difficulty such that students are not prepared for successful study in the undergraduate course, would likely be of concern.
- A research degree course that is focused on a research question that provides limited scope for original ideas would likely be of concern.



Coherent

- The content of a course is too narrow.
- The content of a course is too broad.
- Students are not secure in foundational topics.
- Practical or practice-based components are not taught in an appropriate order
- Module choices do not ensure students are able to construct a coherent pathway.



Effective delivery

- The range of learning activities is too narrow.
- Learning activities are not delivered effectively. For example, insufficient opportunities for students to engage directly with teaching staff, including where parts of a course are delivered remotely, would likely be of concern.
- The research environment does not support students' learning.
- Professional or practice-based elements are not integrated with academic elements.
- Assessment is not designed into the course.



Relevant skills

- A course that does not require students to develop and demonstrate intellectual skills, such as evaluating evidence, mobilising an argument, and solving problems, consistent with the subject and level of the course, would likely be of concern.
- A course designed to lead to a particular profession that does not require students to develop and demonstrate the skills necessary for success in that profession, for example, where specific skills are required for a relevant PSRB accreditation, would likely be of concern.



B2: Resources, support and student engagement

The provider must take all reasonable steps to ensure that students receive resources and support, and that there is effective engagement with each cohort of students to ensure, that there is a high quality academic experience for those students, and that students succeed in and beyond higher education.



B2 fails

- A staff team comprised solely of inexperienced teachers is not likely to be appropriately qualified.
- A staff team with narrow collective expertise in a subject area is not likely to be appropriately qualified if the range of options available to students extend beyond that collective expertise.
- A staff team in which none of the individuals hold a teaching qualification or have been trained to undertake teaching is not likely to be appropriately qualified.
- A staff team that is over-reliant on visiting teachers to deliver large or significant elements of a course is not likely to be appropriately qualified.
- A staff team that does not conduct research at the forefront of relevant discipline(s) is not likely to be appropriately qualified to provide supervision to research students.



B2 Physical and digital

- Appropriate laboratory and technical resources for STEM subjects.
- Appropriate studio, performance, and technical resources for creative subjects
- Appropriate hardware
- Appropriate software. Students have, or have reliable and consistent access to, the software they need to effectively access all aspects of course content.
- Robust technical infrastructure.
- Reliable access to the internet.
- A trained teacher or instructor.
- An appropriate study place.



32. Where the condition contains requirements that relate to learning resources, a provider is expected to fund the provision of these resources, without additional charge beyond the course fee, where this is a reasonable step to take to ensure that the cohort of students registered on a course receive sufficient resources for the purpose of ensuring a high quality academic experience and success in and beyond higher education. A provider may determine the approach it takes to making such resources available to students, for example, by loaning resources to students for the duration of the course.

B2 Support

- Academic support includes support to help students with course content or on placements, to identify and address knowledge or skills gaps, and make decisions about future study choices.
- Support needed to underpin successful physical and digital learning and teaching includes support to help students make best use of digital learning.
- Support relating to avoiding academic misconduct includes support for essay planning and accurate referencing, and advice about the consequences of academic misconduct
- Careers support includes the information, advice and guidance students need to identify their capabilities and the way in which these may be suited to particular careers, and to articulate these in a way likely to result in successful job applications



B2 Engagement

- Membership of, and effective contribution to, the provider's committees.
- Student feedback. Students not given a range of opportunities, either individually or collectively, to provide feedback on their course and the way it is delivered would likely be of concern



The B Conditions...

Condition B4: Assessment and awards

The provider must ensure that:

- students are assessed effectively;
- each assessment is valid and reliable;
- academic regulations are designed to ensure that relevant awards are credible;
- academic regulations are designed to ensure the effective assessment of technical proficiency in the English language in a way which appropriately reflects the level and content of the course; and
- relevant awards granted to students are credible at the point of being granted and when compared to those granted previously.



B4 Effective assessment

- An undergraduate degree course in which students at different stages of the course are taught together on a module and assessed in the same way, but without differentiation in the marking criteria, would likely be of concern.
- A course that assesses a limited range of subject matter, or knowledge and skills would likely be of concern.
- An integrated higher or degree apprenticeship end-point assessment that does not meet the requirements of external quality assurance monitoring, for example because it is not delivered in line with the published EPA plan, would likely be of concern.
- A course that is accredited by a PSRB and does not meet the requirements for assessment set by that body would likely be of concern.
- An absence of feedback on students' performance before a final essay or exam, or feedback not returned in time for students to learn from it before the next assessment, would likely be of concern.



The B Conditions...

Condition B3: Student Outcomes

- The provider must deliver successful outcomes for all of its students, which are recognised and valued by employers and/or enable further study.



B3: Outcomes

- The percentage of students that get to their second year (if they have one)
- The percentage of students that complete the award they signed up for
- The percentage of students that get a graduate job



B5: Sector standards

- Subject benchmark standards
- Degree outcome statements
- Degree classification descriptions



Subject Benchmark Statement

Archaeology

March 2022

Observations

- Course/programme review?
- Universal minimum v discussions about ideals
- Structured conversations
- Themed conversations
- Representation as reaching judgements
- Complaints?
- Snowballing...
- Reps?
- Student submission?
- OfS getting there before us?

Summary

B1: The course itself – curriculum, teaching

B2: Resources, support and student engagement

B3: Outcomes (continuation, completion, progression)

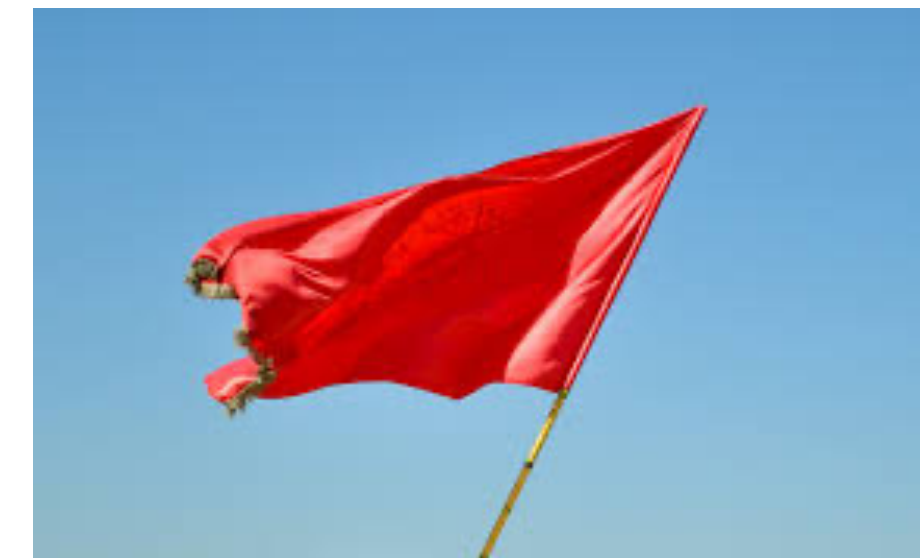
B4: Assessment and Awards

- Do SU officers know them?
- Do course reps use them when feeding back?
- Are surveys built around them?
- Could the student submission be built around them?
- Day to day work, (minor before major) complaints



Summary

- Rights based around the NSS questions
- Rights based around B1-5
- Rights in wider law with duties on Pas (equality, safety etc)
- Rights based on expectations set (consumer protection law)
- Rights based on policies set internally



Questions?

Get in touch at
sus@wonkhe.com



WONKHE
SUs