Quality Framework for the Tertiary Education Sector in Wales

Introduction

1.   Medr is committed, through its strategic plan, to ensuring learners receive the highest quality provision in a tertiary education sector that strives for continuous improvement[1]. The Quality Framework (the Framework) is a key element in helping Medr achieve this aim, and was developed in alignment with its regulatory approach. It is a vehicle to help deliver across the breadth of Medr's duties including promoting coherence and collaboration and continuous improvement, as part of Medr's regulatory system.

2.   The Framework sets out policy and practice in relation to the quality of tertiary education and training delivered by or on behalf of providers registered with and/or funded by Medr, as set out in the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act 2022 (TERA). It should be read in conjunction with Medr's Strategic Plan, Statement of Intervention, any specific or general advice and guidance issued by Medr, and the annex of additional quality requirements applying to different parts of the tertiary education sector (**Annex 1**) as appropriate.

3.   This framework applies to all provision of registered and/or funded tertiary education providers, including that provided on their behalf via sub-contractual arrangements (e.g. franchise arrangements). It includes provision delivered outside Wales, such as sub-contractual transnational education, overseas campuses, and provision delivered in other countries of the UK. It also extends to the effectiveness of validation arrangements, in enabling the validating provider to satisfy itself about the quality of the education delivered under such arrangements. It applies equally to Welsh medium, bilingual and English medium provision.

4.   Medr's approach to quality assessment and improvement is aligned with its overall regulatory and funding framework (Figure 1) and is designed to help deliver the aims set out in its strategic plan, which takes account of the Welsh Government's associated Statement of Strategic Priorities for tertiary education and research and innovation, and the strategic duties placed on Medr. Where possible, monitoring and intervention in relation to quality will be integrated into Medr's wider processes.

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[1] This term is used to capture both improvement and enhancement

Figure 1. Regulatory Framework (* Conditions of Registration / Funding, for which views are sought in this consultation)

Conditions of Registration		Conditions of Funding
Initial	Ongoing	Funding
Financial Sustainability*	Financial Sustainability*	Financial Sustainability*
Governance and Management*	Governance and Management*	Governance and Management*
Quality*	Quality*	Quality*
Welfare of Staff and Students	Welfare of Staff and Students	Welfare of Staff and Students
	Regard to Advice and Guidance*	Regard to Advice and Guidance*
	Learner Protection Plan	Learner Protection Plan
	Learner Engagement Code	Learner Engagement Code
	Equality of Opportunity	Equality of Opportunity
	Complaints Process	Complaints Process
	Welsh Language	Welsh Language
Validation Arrangements	Validation Arrangements	
Fee Limits*	Fee Limits*	
Charitable Status (HE Core Category Only)*	Charitable Status (HE Core Category Only)*	
Information Provided to Prospective Students*	Information Provided to Prospective Students*	
	Notification of Changes which affect the Accuracy of Information*	
	Information, Assistance and Access	

- Yellow - Conditions of Registration that are also Conditions of Funding for non-registered providers (excluding school sixth forms)
- Green - Conditions of Registration only (i.e. not Conditions of Funding)

5. This Framework recognises the range of other documents and frameworks that apply to providers. It also recognises that providers are expected to comply with a range of legislation and requirements, including:

- The Equality Act 2010
- The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015

- [The Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW)](#)
- [Welsh language standards](#) (under the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 and other legislative requirements)
- Conditions of Registration and Funding
- [Additional Learning Needs Code for Wales](#)[2], as applicable
- [Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018](#), as applicable.

6. Through the Framework, Medr aims to minimise the burden placed on providers while ensuring a consistent and good quality learner experience across all parts of the tertiary education sector, including alignment with quality approaches elsewhere in the UK and internationally where appropriate.

7. Medr aims to promote consistency and coherence across the tertiary education sector, and minimise duplication, while recognising that there are differences in how quality approaches will be implemented across the tertiary sector. This means that providers will need to consider how they can align with the Framework in the context of their own mission and provision. The landscape of tertiary education is complex and dynamic, requiring the Framework to be both robust and adaptable to ensure that quality of provision is maintained even in challenging times.

8. Medr's Quality Committee, established as a requirement of the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act, will advise the Board on the quality of all tertiary education funded or secured by Medr. The Board has responsibility for the implementation and operation of Medr's regulatory system.

Background

9. TERA requires Medr to monitor, and promote improvement in, the quality of tertiary education provided by or on behalf of a registered provider or funded or otherwise secured by Medr in further education, higher education, adult community learning, apprenticeships and maintained school sixth forms[3].

10. Section 50 of TERA notes that Medr may publish quality assurance frameworks, setting out policy and practice in relation to:
- criteria for assessing the quality of tertiary education;
- processes for assessing the quality of tertiary education;
- the roles and responsibilities of—
  - persons assessing the quality of tertiary education,
  - providers of tertiary education as regards the quality of tertiary education, and
  - any other persons as regards the quality of tertiary education as Medr considers appropriate;

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[2] The code relates to schools, further education and local authorities, but Medr encourages all providers to consider how they can take account of the Code in their own context
[3] For the most part Medr expects to engage with sixth forms via Local Authorities. This means that any references to governing bodies/ boards relate to the equivalent structures of the Local Authorities, rather than those of schools.

- consideration of the views of learners about the quality of the tertiary education they receive;
- the professional development of members of the tertiary education workforce
- any other matter that Medr considers relevant.

11.   Welsh Government has set out a [Statement of strategic priorities](#) for tertiary education and research and innovation. This includes a priority to:

'Maintain and enhance the quality of the tertiary system, continue and intensify work on widening participation and take steps to ensure a more equitable and excellent system for all

- *Have ambitious targets that aim for high standards, and in doing so remain within international quality standards to maintain the international reputation of the tertiary system whilst recognising the role other bodies play in enhancing the quality of the tertiary system.*
- *Have a quality enhancement approach that recognises a diversity of provision and take robust action where quality baselines are not met, while always considering how the learner experience can be enhanced through partnership and collaboration.*
- *Use data to identify inequities in the tertiary system and introduce a response that will include the setting of ambitious targets and actions for providers to reduce the inequity of access to tertiary education, improve the diversity of intake where it is low and reduce attainment gaps.'*

12.   The statement also includes a commitment to:

'Develop a plan to … improve the provision … of Welsh-medium education and assessment in the whole of the tertiary system'

13.   Quality is defined in TERA as being inadequate if it is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving the education or undertaking the course. The reasonable needs are likely to change over time given changes to context, eg the labour market and increasing use of technology.

Scope of quality

14.   For the purposes of Medr's remit and the scope of its activities, 'quality' is defined as encompassing all aspects of the learner's experience as a learner. Elements of this scope are at different stages of understanding (e.g. there is much less data available on wellbeing than on learner outcomes). Medr's work in this area will therefore continue to evolve.

15.   The means by which Medr assesses the quality of education are set out below. Medr considers that the delivery of good quality is evidenced by the outcomes achieved by learners, including course completion, achievement of qualifications, and progression to employment or further study, as well as learner satisfaction with their experience and evidence of progress made. Welsh medium and bilingual provision are embedded in these approaches.

16.   The activities supporting good learner outcomes include:

- the quality of teaching, including the design and delivery of the curriculum
- the design and delivery of assessments to support learner achievement
- the quality of support for learning to enable learners to:
  - succeed irrespective of background or protected characteristic
  - progress on completing the programme of study, including employability and career preparation
  - learn well, promoting their wellbeing and welfare[4]
- arrangements to promote active learner engagement in learning, and to understand their satisfaction with their learning experience
- supporting learners that wish to learn Welsh and/or through the medium of Welsh

17. This definition encompasses the following areas of interest:
- activities to secure compliance with threshold standards
- activities promoting enhancement, ambition and innovation
- quality at system level, as well as individual provider level
- initial and continuing professional learning and development for members of the tertiary education workforce[5].

Principles

18. The explanatory memorandum for TERA sets out that 'it is intended that the development of a quality framework will identify common principles for understanding, assessing, and improving quality in provision across the tertiary education sector in Wales'. The principles below were developed in this context. They align with Medr's regulatory approach and set out Medr's expectations of itself and of providers.

19. The Principles are as follows:
   i. **Provider responsibility for quality and standards:** including through having processes in place for rigorous self-evaluation, performance management, and improvement planning, and respecting the principles of institutional autonomy, and academic freedom.
   ii. **Consistency of learner outcomes:** the Framework aims to achieve consistently good learner outcomes across all parts of the tertiary education sector including all mediums of delivery (English, Welsh and bilingual), recognising that quality processes, and the support appropriate for different learners, will vary given the diversity of the sector;
   iii. **Evidence-based:** the Framework is evidence-based (eg through use of data, information, surveys and external quality assessment), with a presumption of

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[4] Medr's conditions of registration and funding are required under TERA to include a condition relating to the effectiveness of the provider's arrangements for supporting and promoting the welfare of its students and staff.
[5] Section 5 (3) identifies members of the tertiary education workforce to be teachers of persons receiving tertiary education, persons who provide support to such teachers, and persons who provide support to learners to participate in tertiary education

transparency in publishing performance data and evidence;

    iv. **Robust, risk-based and proportionate:** the Framework balances enabling Medr to make transparent decisions with minimising bureaucracy;

    v. **Stability and consistency:** learners and providers understand the standards and expectations to be met across the sector, while the Framework also allows for evolution and innovation over time through evaluation, review and consultation;

    vi. **Coordinated approach with other regulators:** the Framework adopts a coordinated approach with other regulators so that Medr's activities complement and add value to the wider regulatory context in which providers operate.

Criteria for assessing the quality of education

20. The framework has a set of pillars, which are the criteria set out by Medr for assessing the quality of tertiary education, and which we expect to drive good learner outcomes. These pillars form the basis for the expectations set out for Medr and providers and each contribute to improving learner outcomes and destinations. Welsh language and bilingual considerations are embedded in each of the pillars.

21. The pillars are as follows:

    (i) **Learner engagement** – engagement is at the heart of the framework, with learners fully involved in the design and implementation of quality assurance and continuous improvement processes.

    (ii) **Learner voice** – consideration of the views of learners about the quality of the tertiary education they receive[6].

    (iii) **Engagement of the governing body / board** – the governing body / board is a key driver of good quality education. It is actively engaged in consideration of the quality and continuous improvement of the provider's tertiary education.

    (iv) **Self-evaluation** - Providers undertake regular, rigorous, self-evaluation, planning for improvement, and reflection, which will be the basis of the external assessment of quality, and planning for continuous improvement

    (v) **Externality** – there will be externality in the assessment of quality and evaluation of planning for continuous improvement, which will take place at regular intervals and cover all its provision, including that delivered on its behalf. Providers will also seek externality through other mechanisms, including their broader use of benchmarking and external reference points.

    (vi) **Continuous improvement** – good practice is shared both internally and externally to drive innovation and excellence in the quality of the learning experience across all parts of the tertiary education sector.

    (vii) **Professional learning and development**[7] – providers and Medr support the professional learning and development of members of the tertiary education workforce.

22. Medr will undertake a range of potential activities in response to performance against these pillars. These activities may range from intervention to secure

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[6] As set out in the legislation
[7] As set out in the legislation

provider compliance with threshold performance requirements, to facilitation of collaboration to promote enhancement and innovation.

23.	Figure 2 sets out a diagram of the principles, pillars, and Medr's activities in response.

Figure 2: The principles and pillars of the Quality Framework, and how they will be evidenced

The quality framework aims to promote consistency and coherence across the tertiary education sector, and minimise duplication, while also recognising that there are differences in how quality approaches will be implemented across the tertiary sector.

◄ Each pillar supports improved learner outcomes ►

Pillar	Learner Engagement	Learner Voice	Engagement of Governing Body / Board	Self- Evaluation	Externality	Continuous Improvement[8]	Professional Learning and Development
Description	**Learner engagement** is at the heart of the framework, with learners fully involved in the design and implementation of quality assurance and enhancement processes	Consideration of the **views of learners** about the quality of the tertiary education they receive	The **governing body / board** is actively engaged in consideration of the quality and continuous improvement of the provider's tertiary education	Providers undertake regular rigorous **self-evaluation**, planning for improvement and reflection, which will be the basis of the external assessment of quality, and planning for continuous improvement	**Externality** in the assessment of quality and evaluation of planning for continuous improvement, which will take place at regular intervals and cover all its provision, including that delivered on its behalf	Good practice is shared both internally and externally to **drive innovation and excellence** in the quality of the learning experience across all parts of the tertiary education sector	Providers and Medr support the **professional learning and development** of members of the tertiary education workforce
Evidenced by	• Data and evidence • Compliance with learner engagement code • Effective learner protection plans • Engagement with learners in external quality assurance • Sharing good practice • Investment of resources and support for learner engagement • Involvement of learners in self-evaluation and continuous improvement planning	• Data and outcomes from national surveys • Evaluation of the impact of learner voice on processes • Feedback from Medr learner voice forum • Effective learner representation systems	• Evidence-based oversight of learner outcomes by the governing body/board • Effective oversight of quality and continuous improvement by the governing body/board. • Capacity and expertise of the governing body / board to engage effectively in quality and continuous improvement	• Analysis of learner outcomes, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats • Regular self-evaluation in partnership with learners and staff, based on agreed guidance • Use of self-evaluation to improve the learner experience	• Engagement with external quality assessment, including analysis of data • Increasing alignment of external quality assessment across tertiary education • Evaluation of how external quality assessment informs continuous improvement	• Improvement plans including measurable targets, performance indicators and evaluation of impact on learner outcomes; • Engagement of learners and staff in continuous improvement plans • Developmental reviews • Engagement in relevant networks to share effective practice Evaluation of evidence • Collaborative working to tackle shared challenges • Effective internal quality processes • Evaluation of qualitative and quantitative evidence, including learner outcomes	• Evaluation of investments in professional learning including impact on learner outcomes • Meaningful collaboration with trade unions and staff • Provision of opportunities for professional learning and development • Professional learning strategies • Supporting staff to meet professional standards.

External Quality Assessment outcomes (cyclical)

Information (ongoing)

Data (annually)

Monitoring (annual) including Provider Risk Review and Annual Assurance Returns

Intervention (as necessary) as set out in the Statement of Intervention[9]

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[8] We use this term to capture both improvement and enhancement

[9] Further detail and consultation on monitoring and intervention will be carried out in due course

Roles and responsibilities of Medr and providers regarding the quality of tertiary education

24.   This section sets out roles, responsibilities and expectations of Medr and providers of tertiary education regarding the quality of courses delivered by them, or on their behalf.

(i) <u>Learner engagement</u>

25.   This will primarily be achieved via the Learner Engagement Code, which will be a separate regulatory condition. This will drive good learner outcomes by ensuring that decisions which impact on provision reflect the views and needs of learners.

26.   Medr will:
- Use data and evidence to provide systematic insights into the learner experience.
- Develop a Learner Engagement Code (autumn consultation).
- Develop Learner Protection Plan Guidance.
- Require all external quality assurance processes to engage with learners.
- Facilitate the sharing of good practice.
- Invest in resources and support for learner engagement, including training and guidance as appropriate.

27.   Providers will:
- Implement the Learner Engagement Code in their context. This will include ensuring learners are involved in the making of relevant decisions within their institution.
- Ensure they have effective learner protection plans in place where required.
- Ensure that their self-evaluation and continuous improvement planning is developed and undertaken in partnership with learners.

(ii) <u>Learner voice</u>

28.   Learner voice is key in assessing quality and achieving continuous improvement. By taking account of the views of learners, providers are able to better drive improvements in learner outcomes and destinations. This pillar focuses on consideration of the views of learners about the quality of the tertiary education they receive, whether delivered in English, Welsh or bilingually.

29.   Medr will:
- Establish a learner voice forum, to ensure Medr is able to take account of learner views and priorities, along with broader feedback on the extent to which learner needs are being met by providers across the sector. This will include how the views of learners about the quality of their tertiary education are considered and contribute to improvement planning.

- Develop national surveys to systematically gather the views of learners on their experiences of all parts of tertiary education – this will complement the National Student Survey, which performs this function for HE.
- Evaluate the impact of learner voice on its own processes and functions.

30. Providers will:
- Take account of the views of learners about the quality of their education in their quality assurance processes and planning for continuous improvement.
- Ensure that learner representation on governing bodies or boards and relevant committees is effective. This will include providing appropriate resources, support and training for learner representatives to engage effectively.
- Enable their learners to participate in learner voice surveys and implement mechanisms to respond to learner feedback.
- Evaluate the impact of learner voice on the learner experience and learner outcomes.

(iii) Engagement of the governing body / board

31. This recognises the specific regulatory condition regarding governance and aims to clarify how providers must take account of quality in this regard (ie that 'providers must have adequate governance and management arrangements, including financial management). This will ensure that the governing body/ board engages effectively with quality, to ensure that good learner outcomes are prioritised appropriately by the provider.

32. Medr will:
- Require the governing body / board of each provider to have effective oversight of the development and effective delivery of strategies and plans for assuring and improving the quality of all the provider's programmes.
- Require annual assurance from providers regarding the oversight of the quality of tertiary education by the governing body / board and performance against its approved strategy and plans.

33. Providers will:
- Ensure that they address quality within their considerations of how to meet the governing body condition.
- Actively engage the governing body or board in the development and oversight of their strategies and plans for internal quality assessment and continuous improvement.

(iv) Self-evaluation

34. Self-evaluation is a key part of external quality assessment, and the adoption of a tertiary approach provides an opportunity to achieve greater commonality of

approaches across the sector. Its importance as a pillar is in its ability to drive improvement in learner outcomes through evidence-based reflection.

35.   Medr will:
- Publish updated guidance for self-evaluation, in partnership with Estyn and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

36.   Providers will:
- Undertake regular self-evaluation in partnership with learners and staff/social partnerships, as part of their responsibility for internal quality assurance, and to drive reflection and continuous improvement across the provider. This will form the basis of external assessment of quality, ensuring that this takes account of all their provision, including that delivered in partnership with others, to include all mediums of delivery (English/ Welsh/bilingual).
- Analyse their data, and demonstrate their understanding of their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats via this process, including through the use of external reference points, and in the provider's context.
- Use the outcomes of self-evaluation as part of a strategic programme of activity to improve the learner experience.

(v) Externality

37.   This pillar recognises current inspection and review methods. It aims to ensure that providers are independently assessed, to include their effectiveness in driving good learner outcomes. Medr's aim is to reduce burden, and consolidate quality assessment where possible, particularly for those subject to multiple external quality assessments. The pillar also recognises the importance of collaboration and social partnership working with other providers and organisations.

38.   Medr will:
- Work with providers and with bodies carrying out external quality assessment to ensure that such assessment is robust, evidence-based, proportionate and timely; adds value for providers and has impact in driving improvement; where appropriate, it aligns with international quality standards; and, where providers deliver learning across multiple parts of the tertiary education sector, a holistic approach is taken to external quality assurance activities.
- Work with bodies carrying out external quality assessment to drive increasing alignment of this process across all parts of tertiary education, and bring coherence to arrangements for providers who are subject to multiple external quality assessments.

39.   Providers will:
- Actively engage with external quality assessment, which will include provision delivered on their behalf.
- Seek opportunities to collaborate with other providers and parts of the sector where this will add value and to inform continuous improvement, and evaluate the impact of this engagement.

- Use benchmarking and external reference points as appropriate to inform continuous improvement.

(vi) Continuous improvement

40. This aims to build on current approaches to continuous improvement. Medr encourages providers and stakeholders to recommend priorities for continuous improvement as part of an ongoing programme of action. This will include a focus on learner outcomes.

41. Medr will:
    - Embed continuous improvement in external quality assessment.
    - Promote continuous improvement for all languages of delivery, through activities such as engagement mechanisms and networks, advice and guidance, and via developmental (eg thematic/ geographical) reviews.
    - Use the findings of external review assessments to identify common themes and areas of interest in the tertiary sector.
    - Facilitate the sharing of effective practice throughout the tertiary education sector to support systematic continuous improvement.
    - Actively seek and evaluate qualitative and quantitative evidence, including on learner outcomes, to identify opportunities for and delivery of continuous improvement.
    - Develop and promote advice and guidance to drive and support improvement across the tertiary education sector, as well as within individual providers, as needed.

42. Providers will:
    - Engage their learners and staff, using social partnership principles, in the development and delivery of plans for continuous improvement with measurable outcomes.
    - Engage in networks relevant to their sector/ mission to share and learn from continuous improvement.
    - Work collaboratively to tackle shared challenges.
    - Actively participate in developmental (eg thematic/ geographical) reviews, responding to findings and reflecting on their practice as appropriate.
    - Share good practice both internally and externally to drive innovation and excellence in the quality of the learning experience across all parts of the tertiary education sector.
    - Seek to enhance their provision through their internal quality processes and reflection on external quality processes and actions, in relation to the context of their part of the sector.

(vii) Professional learning and development

43. This pillar focuses on the professional learning and development of members of the tertiary education workforce, to ensure that they are able to support good learner

outcomes. The voice of the workforce is extremely important in this and is included in other pieces of Medr's work, such as social partnership working arrangements. Medr will work in social partnership with other bodies which deliver professional learning and development to ensure a joined-up approach.

44.   Medr will:

- Work in social partnership to set out expectations in relation to professional learning and development for tertiary education staff.
- Encourage collaboration in the delivery of professional learning and development where appropriate.
- Work collaboratively to improve the provision and quality of delivery and use of the Welsh language in tertiary education.

45.   Providers will:

- Offer, and support all staff in undertaking, appropriate opportunities to engage in professional learning and development, including full-time, part-time, permanent and temporary staff, as well as those in sub-contracted providers.
- Support staff and provide opportunities to engage with and enhance the delivery and use of the Welsh language.
- Work collaboratively with staff, using social partnership principles, to develop professional learning strategies and to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of investments in professional learning.
- Share good practice in professional learning and development, including via advice and guidance, and exploring collaborative approaches where possible.
- Support staff to meet appropriate professional standards, where applicable.

Roles and responsibilities of other parties

46.   Estyn inspects further education colleges, initial teacher education provision, Welsh for Adults, adult community learning partnerships and commissioned contract holders for apprenticeship provision. It inspects school sixth forms as part of a whole school inspection. It also carries out inspection of Local Government Education Services (LGES). Where Estyn identifies performance issues, it requires the provider to submit an action plan and monitors performance against this plan.

47.   The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) carries out quality enhancement reviews of Welsh higher education providers. It is the custodian of HE sector reference points including UK Quality Code, Subject Benchmark Statements and Characteristics Statements. QAA is also on The European Quality Assurance Register for Higher Education (EQAR). It undertakes work on behalf of Medr to support quality assurance and enhancement activity.

48.   Local authorities play a role in sixth form provision and in adult community learning. Their role includes strategic planning, developing Welsh in Education strategic plans, providing support to improve the quality of learning and teaching, and providing accountability for the use of public funding. They also provide a range of

additional specific support services to schools, including regarding basic skills and additional learning needs.

49. Other bodies also have roles in the quality of tertiary education, for example Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs), Qualifications Wales, examining and awarding organisations, the Church in Wales, the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, providers of professional learning and development, etc. Medr will consider the outcomes of engagements by these bodies where it is considered that adverse findings may impact on the quality of tertiary education provision more generally, or where a failure to improve has been identified following such engagements.

Processes for assessing compliance with the Quality Framework

50. Medr intends to take an integrated approach to the monitoring and assessment of overall provider performance and risk.

51. Medr will assess compliance with the quality framework through the following means:
   - Outcomes of external quality assessment
   - Data, including trends
   - Information

52. The processes applied will vary to reflect the nature of different parts of the sector, and the differing information and measures used. Medr will use this information to determine compliance with conditions of registration and funding. Medr will also use these processes to identify excellence and good practice, which would benefit from wider dissemination.

   Outcomes of external quality assessment

53. As noted above, Medr will work with providers and with bodies carrying out external quality assessment to ensure that assessment procedures are robust, proportionate and timely; and they add value for providers and have impact in driving improvement. Any provider receiving an outcome requiring follow-up engagement under the current processes will be considered not to be compliant with quality standards. Medr will keep this under review as external quality assessment methodologies are reviewed, to set out how it will be determined whether external quality assessment outcomes meet quality standards, and how intervention might be applied, where appropriate.

54. Medr has noted with Estyn and QAA its interest in considering greater alignment between current external quality assessment methods, and in particular whether there could be simplification for providers who are subject to multiple engagements.

55. Medr will consider data in relation to a range of outcomes to determine any risk to the quality of tertiary education, using existing data where available. Some learner outcomes are recorded through processes such as RARPA (Recognising and recording progress and achievement), and it will not always be appropriate to evaluate learner outcomes quantitatively.

56. Data will inform Medr's assessment and will be considered in the context of information and the outcomes of external quality assessment to evaluate whether there are systemic issues which Medr needs to consider at provider or sector level.

57. Data to be considered includes, but is not limited to, the following:
    a. Recruitment
    b. Progression
    c. Retention
    d. Completion
    e. Learner views on their experience
    f. Learner outcomes (including differential attainment)
    g. Destinations (employment/ education/ training).

58. Data may also include that from internal and external audits commissioned by providers, together with audits commissioned by Medr.

59. Data benchmarks will be used where available, and Medr may intervene where outcomes are significantly below the benchmark, or where a declining trend indicates that there is a risk that the quality of education may become inadequate (see below). Medr will consult on its approach to defining 'good' learner outcomes. This will be part of a coherent, over-arching approach, aligning with its aim to minimise burden.

60. Different parts of the sector will prioritise different types of learner outcomes. Medr will consider the extent to which it is possible and appropriate to contextualise data, including recognising learner demographics and implications of small cohorts. We therefore consider data to be a trigger for a conversation with providers in the first instance, to facilitate an understanding of context. Medr's Quality Committee advises on risks to the quality of education, including through regular consideration of trends in data and performance against benchmarks, in order to inform Medr's provider risk review process.

Information

61. Medr may use information from other processes and engagements to inform its view regarding whether there is a risk to the quality of education. This may include:
    • Annual assurance returns
    • Complaints about quality and standards made to Medr;
    • Serious incident reports

- Complaints or concerns raised with, and upheld by, other organisations, such as the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), the Charity Commission, Home Office, Welsh language commissioner, etc

- Liaison with other organisations, e.g. Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol, Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), Education Workforce Council (EWC), National Centre for Learning Welsh, National Union of Students Cymru (NUSW), Qualifications Wales, etc., including through operating Memoranda of Understanding as appropriate

- Outcomes of engagements with Awarding Bodies

- Provider risk assessment

62. It can also include information from other bodies with roles in assessing the quality of tertiary education, for example Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs), the Church in Wales, etc. Medr will consider information from outcomes of engagements of these bodies with providers, where it is considered likely that adverse findings may impact on tertiary education provision more generally, or where a failure to improve has been identified following such engagements.

63. Information received by Medr may lead to an assessment that there is a risk to the quality of education. This could lead to a requirement that Medr should undertake, or commission, further investigation. Medr may await the outcome of any ongoing investigations and processes before considering actions prior to exercising its powers of intervention as set out in the Statement of Intervention.

Intervention

64. Medr is required to publish a Statement of Intervention setting out how it will exercise its statutory powers of intervention, including in relation to quality. This sets out the range of levers Medr may use to address issues relating to quality, standards, and continuous improvement in advance of implementing its statutory powers of intervention. Interventions relating to quality will be integrated within Medr's wider regulatory framework.

65. Medr will take a proportionate and risk-based approach to evaluating compliance with each of the pillars, which will be primarily focused on the risk to the learner experience. Intervention will be proportionate to the risk presented.

66. Welsh Government has powers of intervention in relation to further education institutions, and may give a direction to the provider's governing body. Before doing so, Ministers must consult Medr. If Medr considers that grounds for intervention exist in relation to a further education institution it will notify the Ministers of that view, as set out in TERA. Welsh Government will publish a statement on how it proposes to exercise these powers.

67. Medr has the legal powers to provide advice and assistance to any person for the purpose of improving the quality of the tertiary education or course, or preventing the quality of the tertiary education or course from becoming inadequate. The

quality is considered to be inadequate if it is not adequate to meet the reasonable needs of those receiving the education or undertaking the course.

68.   Intervention could include developmental reviews or formal evaluation of part or all of the provider's tertiary education. Such reviews could be carried out by Medr, or commissioned from external quality assessment bodies, or external experts.

69.   Under TERA Medr also has powers to provide, or make arrangements for the provision of, advice or assistance regarding tertiary education provided in Wales which is not registered or funded by Medr, in order to improve the quality of provision, and/or prevent the quality of provision from becoming inadequate. Medr can also carry out, or arrange for another person to carry out, a review of matters relevant to the quality of tertiary education by such providers.

70.   Medr will liaise with public, professional, regulatory and statutory bodies where issues are identified regarding provision which is accredited or otherwise approved by such bodies.

Next steps

71.   This Framework will come into effect on 1 August 2026.

72.   Medr will keep the Framework under review, and revise it as necessary, subject to consultation. It is the responsibility of users to ensure that they are using the most recent version. Any updates will be clearly indicated on Medr's website.

Quality Framework: additional legislation and guidance relating to quality, specific to each part of the tertiary education sector

Introduction

1.   The quality framework aims to promote consistency and coherence across the tertiary education sector, and minimise duplication, while also recognising that there are differences in how quality approaches will be implemented across the tertiary sector.

2.   This annex provides details of the additional legislation, documents and guidance that apply only to specific parts of the tertiary sector.

Sixth form provision

3.   Sixth form provision is part of schools, and therefore also subject to the following:
   - Education Act 2005
   - The School Standards and Organisation (Wales) Act 2013
   - Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018
   - Requirements set out in the terms and conditions of funding
   - Post-16 Collection: technical completion notes

4.   Schools with sixth forms will also need to take account of advice and guidance relating to quality published by relevant organisations, including Estyn.

Apprenticeships

5.   The following additional requirements apply to Apprenticeship providers:
   - Learning and Skills Act 2000
   - Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009
   - Apprenticeship Commissioning Programme Wales Framework
   - Requirements set out in the annual Apprenticeship Programme Commission letter
   - The Specification of Apprenticeship Standards for Wales (SASW)
   - LLWR manual and data management principles

6.   Apprenticeship providers will also need to take account of advice and guidance relating to quality published by relevant organisations, including the National Training Federation for Wales, Colleges Wales, and Estyn.

Further Education

7.   The following additional requirements apply to further education:
   - Learning and Skills Act 2000

- The Further Education Corporations (Replacement of Instrument and Articles of Government) (Wales) Order 2006 (2006 No. 13) (excluding St. David's Catholic Sixth Form College and Adult Learning Wales)
- Further and Higher Education (Governance and Information) (Wales) Act 2014
- Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal (Wales) Act 2018
- Requirements set out in the terms and conditions of funding
- Post-16 Funding Framework: Guide and programmes directory
- LLWR manual and data management principles

8. Further education providers will also need to take account of advice and guidance relating to quality published by relevant organisations, including Colleges Wales and Estyn.

Higher education

9. The following additional guidance documents apply to higher education providers:
    - Alignment with the Frameworks for higher education qualifications
    - Compliance with the principles of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, together with characteristics statements and subject benchmark statements, where appropriate
    - Participation in the QAA Quality Evaluation and Enhancement of UK TNE (QE-TNE) scheme
    - Alignment of internal quality assurance arrangements with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education Area (ESG)
    - Requirements set out in the conditions of registration.

10. Higher education providers will also need to take account of advice and guidance relating to quality published by relevant organisations, including Universities UK and QAA, and engage with activities to protect the international reputation of the higher education brand where applicable.

11. External quality assessment arrangements, as set out by Medr, will continue to align with the European Standards and Guidelines.

12. The Quality Council for UK Higher Education (QCUK) is a sector-owned forum for the four nations on matters relating to quality and standards in higher education. It has oversight of the UK's shared commitment to quality principles and takes a UK-wide approach in celebrating commonalities across the nations and regulatory systems.

Adult Community Learning

13. The following additional requirements apply to Adult Community Learning providers:
    - Learning and Skills Act 2000

- Requirements set out in the [terms and conditions of funding](#)
- [Post-16 Funding Framework: Guide and programmes directory](#)
- [LLWR manual](#) and data management principles
- [Adult Community Learning Partnerships: Tool for Effective Practice and Delivery](#)

14. Adult Community Learning providers will also need to take account of advice and guidance relating to quality published by relevant organisations, including the [Learning and Work Institute](#), and [Estyn](#).

Medr

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