

Annex C - 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. 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. We define continuous improvement as the ongoing process through which providers use self-evaluation, data, analysis and information to strive for sustained excellence. It is iterative, and can include both addressing deficits and making incremental changes to learner outcomes over time. Higher education providers usually refer to this activity as enhancement. Medr's view is that it is aligned with the enhancement process in the higher education environment.
3. 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, and any specific or general advice and guidance issued by Medr as appropriate. It recognises the range of existing quality requirements applying to different parts of the tertiary education sector, and aims to minimise any duplication by ensuring that providers can use those existing activities as evidence of compliance with the framework (**Annex 1**).
4. 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 (TERA, Section 51). This encompasses further education, higher education, adult community learning, apprenticeships and maintained school sixth form provision. This duty therefore 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. Medr will normally engage with the body which is funded and/or registered. This means that in the case of sixth forms, Medr expects to engage via Local Authorities. This means that any references to governing bodies relate to the equivalent structures of the Local Authorities, rather than those of schools.
5. 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.

Figure 1. Regulatory Framework

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
Staff and Learner Welfare	Staff and Learner Welfare	Staff and Learner Welfare
	Welsh Language	Welsh Language
	Learner Protection Plan	Learner Protection Plan
	Learner Engagement Code	Learner Engagement Code
	Equality of Opportunity	Equality of Opportunity
	Complaints Procedures	Complaints Procedures
	Regard to Advice and Guidance	Regard to Advice and Guidance
	Information, Assistance and Access	Information, Assistance and Access
Validation Arrangements	Validation Arrangements	
Charitable Status (HE Core Category Only)	Charitable Status (HE Core Category Only)	
Information Provided to Prospective Students	Information Provided to Prospective Students	
	Fee Limits (HE Core Category Only)	
	Notification of Changes which affect the Accuracy of Information	

- yellow - Conditions of Registration that are also Conditions of Funding for non-registered providers
- green - Conditions of Registration only (i.e. not Conditions of Funding)

6. 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](#)¹, as applicable
 - [Additional Learning Needs and Education Tribunal \(Wales\) Act 2018](#), as applicable.
7. **Annex 1** sets out additional legislation and guidance relating to quality, specific to each part of the tertiary education sector, although this is not intended to be exhaustive.
8. Through our approach to quality, 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. The Framework therefore is intended to align with existing mechanisms and established standards, including those set out by Estyn, QAA, Qualifications Wales to support an integrated view of quality and what this means in the context of tertiary education.
9. 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.
10. Medr's Quality Committee, established as a requirement of the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Act, will advise its 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

11. 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
 - 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

¹ 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

12. 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’*

13. 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’.

Scope of Quality

14. 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 (Section 52). The reasonable needs are likely to change over time.
15. For the purposes of Medr’s remit and the scope of its activities, we consider the learner’s reasonable needs to encompass all aspects of the individual’s learning experience which are within the control of the provider. The elements that constitute this definition may change over time, or be at different levels of maturity across different parts of the sector. Therefore we expect our shared understanding of this scope to evolve.
16. We consider good quality education to be that which meets the reasonable needs of learners. Good quality education is demonstrated through positive learner outcomes, in the context of the diversity of the sector and the learner body. This includes:
- course completion, achievement of qualifications, and progression to employment or further study
 - a good learner experience, including in relation to teaching and learning, as evidenced by learner engagement and satisfaction with their education
 - pursuit of continuous improvement through effective self-assessment and responding to feedback
17. Education demonstrating these features is considered to represent good value for

money. Welsh medium and bilingual provision are embedded in these approaches.

18. This definition of quality encompasses the following priority areas:

- activities to secure compliance with threshold standards (i.e. minimum expectations)
- activities promoting improvement/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 workforce²

19. The activities supporting good learner outcomes include providers':

- oversight of the quality of teaching, including the design and delivery of the curriculum
- design and/or delivery of assessments to support learner achievement
- 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, including supporting their wellbeing and welfare³
- arrangements to promote learner engagement with their learning, and understand their satisfaction with their learning experience
- support for learners to learn through the medium of Welsh, to use the Welsh language and/or to learn Welsh

20. We plan to consult on performance indicators by 2027, and will explore the role of benchmarks and threshold standards as part of this consultation.

Principles

21. 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.

22. The principles are as follows:

- Provider autonomy and responsibility for quality and standards:** Medr is required under TERA (Section 17-18) to have regard to the importance of institutional autonomy and academic freedom. We recognise that providers have autonomy and responsibility for quality and standards, and demonstrate this through having processes in place for rigorous self-evaluation, performance

² 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.

³ 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.

- management, and improvement planning.
- ii. **Consistency of learner outcomes:** the Framework aims to achieve consistently good learner quality (see para 16) 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, learner demographics, and needs of groups of learners.
 - iii. **Evidence-based:** the Framework is evidence-based (e.g. through use of data, information, surveys and external quality assessment), with a presumption of 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

23. The framework has a set of pillars, which are the criteria Medr believes demonstrate provision is of quality and which we expect to drive good learner outcomes. Medr considers these pillars to contribute to improving learner outcomes and destinations. Welsh language and bilingual considerations are embedded in each of the pillars.
24. The pillars are as follows:
- (i) **Learner engagement** – learners have opportunities to engage in providers' decision making and on matters of concern or interest to them
 - (ii) **Learner voice** – consideration of the views of learners about the quality of the tertiary education they receive, as set out in section 50(2)(d) of TERA
 - (iii) **Engagement of the governing body** – the governing body 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**⁴ – providers and Medr support the professional learning and development of members of the tertiary education workforce

⁴ As set out in the legislation.

25. Medr will undertake a range of activities in response to performance against these pillars. These activities may range from intervention to secure provider compliance with threshold performance requirements, to facilitation of collaboration to promote enhancement and innovation.
26. **Figure 2** sets out a diagram of the principles, pillars, and Medr's activities in response.

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

Each pillar supports improved learner outcomes							
Pillar	Learner Engagement	Learner Voice	Engagement of Governing Body	Self- Evaluation	Externality	Continuous Improvement	Professional Learning and Development
Description	Learners have opportunities to engage in providers' decision making and to have their voices heard on matters of concern or interest to them	Consideration of the views of learners about the quality of the tertiary education they receive	The governing body 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	- Compliance with learner engagement code - Effective learner representation systems - Effective learner protection plans - Engagement with learners in external quality assurance - 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 - Processes for learners to have their views represented at Board, Committee and course level - Processes for the provider to give feedback to learners about action taken in response to concerns raised	- Evidence-based oversight of learner outcomes by the governing body/board - Effective oversight of quality and continuous improvement by the governing body - Capacity and expertise of the governing body 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	- Providers' self-evaluation and continuous improvement strategies, 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							

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

27. This section sets out each pillar, together with actions Medr will take and the means by which providers of tertiary education can evidence good quality in each area.

(i) Learner engagement

28. This pillar focuses on the engagement of learners in their provider's processes and actions to assure and improve the quality of their learning experience.

29. Medr will:

- develop a Learner Engagement Code, monitor providers' compliance with the Code, and evaluate its impact
- work with learners, providers and stakeholders to identify and share good practice in learner engagement
- invest in resources and support for learner engagement, including training and guidance tailored to the needs of different parts of the tertiary sector and their learners
- expect organisations responsible for inspection and review to engage with learners and take their views into account, and
- develop Learner Protection Plan Guidance which will require providers to engage with their learners on relevant matters and when developing learner protection plans

30. Providers can demonstrate this through:

- implementing the Learner Engagement Code to ensure that learners are involved in decision-making, and monitor the impact of learner engagement;
- ensuring that learners are involved in their processes for self-evaluation and continuous improvement
- evaluating the effectiveness of their systems for learner representation, learn from best practice, and adopt approaches that reflect the diverse needs and preferences of their learners, and
- ensuring they have effective learner protection plans in place where required, and appropriate support for learner transfers

(ii) Learner voice

31. This pillar focuses on consideration of the individual and collective views of learners about the quality of the tertiary education they receive. Learner voice is key in assessing quality and achieving continuous improvement. Understanding learners' views and experiences enables providers to drive continuous improvement and ultimately to secure better outcomes for learners.

32. Medr will:

- establish learner voice forum arrangements, to ensure Medr takes account of learners' views and priorities in the development of its own policies and plans
- work with learners, the tertiary sector and stakeholders to develop national surveys to gather systematically the views of learners across FE, apprenticeships, adult community learning, sixth forms, and postgraduate higher education, complementing the existing National Student Survey for undergraduate higher education
- analyse learner survey data to identify themes, good practice and weaknesses and use this, alongside other indicators including qualitative evidence from learner feedback and complaints, to monitor quality and follow up on areas of concern, and
- evaluate the impact of learner voice on its own processes and functions

33. Providers can demonstrate this through:

- using the views of learners, from national surveys, their own local surveys and qualitative evidence, in their quality assurance processes and planning for continuous improvement
- working with learners in the ongoing development and implementation of action plans to improve learner satisfaction where required, and
- encouraging and supporting their learners to participate in surveys and keep them informed about what has happened in response to their views

(iii) Engagement of the governing body

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

35. Medr will:

- require the governing body 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, and
- require annual assurance from providers regarding the oversight of the quality of tertiary education by the governing body and performance against its approved strategy and plans

36. Providers can demonstrate this through:

- ensuring that they address quality within their considerations of how to meet the governing body condition, and

- actively engaging the governing body in the development and oversight of their strategies and plans for internal quality assessment and continuous improvement.

(iv) Self-evaluation

37. Self-evaluation is a key part of the responsibility of each provider to manage its own quality assurance and continuous improvement. Each provider should evaluate regularly the quality and standards of the programmes it is delivering, and how they may be improved, with rigorous analysis of data and evidence on learner outcomes and learner satisfaction. This self-evaluation will also provide an important input for 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.

38. Medr will:

- publish updated guidance for self-evaluation, in partnership with Estyn and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education, and
- work with the sector and partners to ensure that monitoring activities complement, rather than duplicate, existing external reviews

39. Providers can demonstrate this through:

- undertaking regular self-evaluation in partnership with learners, trade unions and staff, 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)
- analysing 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, and
- using the outcomes of self-evaluation as part of a strategic programme of activity to improve the learner experience and outcomes

(v) Externality

40. This pillar recognises current inspection and review methods, and aims to enhance the value of existing processes, while reducing duplication. 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.

41. 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, and
- 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

42. Providers can demonstrate this through:

- actively engaging with external quality assessment, including provision delivered on their behalf
- seeking opportunities to collaborate with other providers and parts of the sector where this adds value and to inform continuous improvement, and evaluate the impact of this engagement, and
- using benchmarking and external reference points as appropriate to inform continuous improvement

(vi) Continuous improvement

43. This pillar builds on current approaches to continuous improvement. Medr encourages providers and stakeholders to recommend priorities for continuous improvement as part of an ongoing programme of collective, sector-wide action. This will include a focus on learner outcomes.

44. Medr will:

- embed continuous improvement in external quality assessment (i.e. ensure it is part of the methodology)
- promote continuous improvement for all languages of delivery, through activities such as engagement mechanisms and networks, advice and guidance, and via developmental (e.g. thematic/geographical) reviews
- use the findings of external reviews and 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, and
- develop and promote advice and guidance to drive and support improvement across the tertiary education sector, as well as within individual providers, as needed

45. Providers can demonstrate this through:

- developing, delivering and keeping under review a strategy for continuous improvement, based on their self-evaluation
- engaging their learners and staff in the development and delivery of strategies for continuous improvement with measurable outcomes
- using their strategy for continuous improvement to seek to enhance their provision, in relation to the context of their part of the sector
- engaging in networks relevant to their sector/mission to share and learn from continuous improvement to share good practice and drive innovation and excellence in the quality of the learning experience across all parts of the tertiary education sector
- working collaboratively to tackle shared challenges where this will add value, and
- actively participating in developmental (e.g. thematic/geographical) reviews, responding to findings and reflecting on their practice as appropriate

(vii) Professional learning and development

46. 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, including promoting collaboration between providers and trade unions. Medr will work with other bodies which deliver professional learning and development to ensure a joined-up approach.

47. Medr will:

- work with stakeholders to set out expectations in relation to professional learning and development for tertiary sector staff
- explore the investment and support required across the tertiary sector for professional learning and leadership development
- encourage collaboration in the delivery of professional learning and development where appropriate, and
- work collaboratively to improve the extent and quality of delivery through the medium of Welsh

48. Providers can demonstrate this through:

- offering, and supporting 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 provision
- working collaboratively with recognised trade unions and staff to develop professional learning strategies, and to evaluate the effectiveness and impact of investments in professional learning
- providing opportunities and support for staff to enhance the delivery and use of the Welsh language
- sharing good practice in professional learning and development, exploring collaborative approaches where possible, and

- supporting all staff to meet appropriate professional standards, where applicable

Roles and responsibilities of other parties

49. Estyn inspects further education institutions, initial teacher education provision, 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).
50. 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.
51. Both Estyn and QAA carry out thematic reviews as commissioned by Medr.
52. Local authorities are funded by Medr for sixth form provision and in adult community learning, and have responsibility for oversight of provision in both parts of the sector. 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.
53. 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, the Education Workforce Council, professional bodies, and providers of professional learning and development. 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 and Continuous Improvement condition

54. Through the Quality and Continuous Improvement Condition, providers are asked to demonstrate a minimum level of compliance with the following requirements, via annual assurance returns to Medr:
 - learner engagement – compliance with the Learner Engagement condition or, in the case of sixth forms, relevant statutory duty⁵
 - learner voice – confirmation that they use the outcomes of learner surveys as

⁵ in the case of sixth forms, this duty is on the governing bodies of schools, rather than on the local authority

- part of their quality assurance and continuous improvement processes⁶
 - engagement of the governing body – confirmation that the governing body is actively engaged in the development and oversight of strategies and plans for internal quality assessment and continuous improvement, with at least an annual review of the impact of those strategies and plans
 - self-evaluation – confirmation that they undertake regular self-evaluation, with at least annual review by the governing body
 - externality – confirmation that the provider actively engages in external quality assessment (Estyn inspection, QAA review, or both, as applicable);
 - continuous improvement – confirmation that they undertake regular planning to drive continuous improvement, with at least annual review by the governing body of the impact and effectiveness of the continuous improvement programmes, and
 - professional learning and development – confirmation that they have a strategy to support professional learning and development
55. These are minimum requirements which may be reviewed. Medr's judgement of compliance with the Quality and Continuous Improvement Condition will encompass the full breadth of requirements and expectations set out in the condition.
56. Medr intends to take an integrated approach to the monitoring and assessment of overall provider performance and risk. We will do this through the following:
- outcomes of external quality assessment
 - data monitoring, including trends, and
 - information
57. These will be used to create an integrated assessment of performance, and identify whether there are systemic issues which Medr needs to consider at provider or sector level. This includes assessment of outcomes for learners studying partly or wholly through the medium of Welsh, and different groups of learners, including those with protected characteristics, where sufficient data is available.
58. This assessment will form part of Medr's assurance framework, which will include our annual assurance process, provider risk review, and broader regulatory compliance.
59. 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

60. 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; add value for providers; and have impact in driving improvement.

⁶ In the case of sixth forms, we expect local authorities to work with their schools to ensure that this is done.

61. Any provider receiving an outcome requiring follow-up engagement under the current external quality assessment processes will be considered not to be compliant with quality standards.
62. Medr will keep this under review as external quality assessment methodologies are updated. Where there are changes to review and inspection in the future, Medr will set out how it will be determined whether external quality assessment outcomes meet quality standards, and how intervention might be applied, where appropriate. Any substantive updates to external quality assessment methodologies will be subject to consultation.
63. Medr has asked Estyn and QAA to consider opportunities for greater alignment between current external quality assessment methods, and in particular whether there could be simplification for providers who are subject to multiple assessments.

Data monitoring

64. 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. The data Medr will use are principally collected from the Post-16 Data Collection, the Lifelong Learning Wales Record (LLWR) and the HESA records. By 2027 Medr expects to have reviewed data collection arrangements and consulted on performance indicators and use of benchmarking and thresholds.
65. Data to be considered includes, but is not limited to, the following:
 - (a) recruitment
 - (b) progression
 - (c) retention
 - (d) completion (including achievement of qualifications)
 - (e) complaints to Medr (including numbers and patterns)
 - (f) learner surveys
 - (g) destinations (employment/education/training)
66. Data may also include that from internal and external audits commissioned by providers, together with audits commissioned by Medr.
67. Medr will, where possible, consider data holistically to ensure that any intervention is based on an integrated assessment and not individual indicators taken in isolation.
68. 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). In line with our Strategic Plan commitments, 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.

69. 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, mode of study, implications of small cohorts, and the diversity of the sector. 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.
70. While the Quality Framework sets out an expectation that providers engage with continuous improvement, Medr recognises that an ongoing year-on-year improvement across all data measures is not achievable, particularly where providers have good or excellent outcomes. Therefore, if providers are undertaking appropriate continuous improvement activities and provider performance is satisfactory, Medr would not expect to undertake interventions in relation to continuous improvement unless issues had been identified in looking at external quality assessment outcomes, data, or information.

Information

71. 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 by learners, parents/carers, staff, or employers about quality and standards or trends arising from data on complaints, relate to the quality of education delivered by a provider, whether directly or through a sub-contractual arrangement⁷
 - reportable events
 - 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, and
 - provider risk assessment
72. Information can also include that from other bodies with roles in assessing the quality of tertiary education as set out in para 53. 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.

⁷ Medr has a very limited remit to investigate complaints but may use them as part of the qualitative information it considers in its monitoring.

73. 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

74. 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.
75. Medr will take a proportionate and risk-based approach to evaluating compliance which will be primarily focused on the risk to the learner experience. Intervention will be proportionate to the risk presented.
76. Welsh Ministers have 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 (Section 71). Welsh Ministers will publish a statement on how they propose to exercise these powers.
77. 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.
78. 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.
79. 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 (Section 52). 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.
80. 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

81. This Framework will come into effect on 1 August 2026 (1 August 2027 for apprenticeship providers).
82. Medr will keep the Framework under review, and revise it as necessary, subject to consultation. Providers will be informed of any amendments with adequate notice to allow for planning, compliance and learner/stakeholder engagement. Medr will publish updates and notify stakeholders when updates are made to the framework and/or external quality assessment methodologies.

DRAFT

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. [Paragraph 6](#) of the Framework sets out a range of other legislation and requirements that apply to providers. This annex provides details of the additional legislation, key documents and guidance that apply only to specific parts of the tertiary sector (it is not intended to be exhaustive). There may be other pieces of legislation or instruments of government that apply to certain sectors, and it is the responsibility of each provider to ensure that they maintain oversight of the requirements to which they are subject.

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](#)
 - [Curriculum and Assessment \(Wales\) Act 2021](#)
 - Requirements set out in the [terms and conditions of funding](#)
 - [Post-16 Collection: technical completion notes](#)
 - [Learning and Skills \(Wales\) Measure 2009](#)
 - [Welsh Language and Education \(Wales\) Act 2025](#)
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](#)
- [Learning and Skills \(Wales\) Measure 2009](#)
- 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
- compliance with the [Education Act 1994](#) and the expectations for student representation and union support

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.

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

11. 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

12. 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](#)

13. 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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