
Ymateb i Ymgynghoriad / Consultation Response

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Dyddiad / Date:	14.09.20
Pwnc / Subject:	QAA Handbook for the review of Degree Apprenticeships

Background information about Estyn

Estyn is the Office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales. As a Crown body, Estyn is independent of the Welsh Government.

Estyn's principal aim is to raise the standards and quality education and training in Wales. This is primarily set out in the Learning and Skills Act 2000 and the Education Act 2005. In exercising its functions, Estyn must give regard to the:

- Quality of education and training in Wales;
- Extent to which education and training meets the needs of learners;
- Educational standards achieved by education and training providers in Wales;
- Quality of leadership and management of those education and training providers;
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of learners; and,
- Contribution made to the well-being of learners.

Estyn's remit includes (but is not exclusive to) nurseries and non-maintained settings, primary schools, secondary schools, independent schools, pupil referrals units, further education, adult community learning, local government education services, work-based learning, and teacher education and training.

Estyn may give advice to the Assembly on any matter connected to education and training in Wales. To achieve excellence for learners, Estyn has set three strategic objectives:

- Provide accountability to service users on the quality and standards of education and training in Wales;
- Inform the development of national policy by the Welsh Government;
- Build capacity for improvement of the education and training system in Wales.

This response is not confidential.

Response

Introduction

Overall, Estyn is supportive of the approach for the developmental review. We have engaged with QAA to share our experiences of inspecting work-based learning (WBL) providers offering higher apprenticeships, and the handbook reflects some of the practices that we have found effective in quality assuring higher level provision. We are happy to provide ongoing advice and support as QAA move to the fieldwork phase of the review.

We agree with the approach of programme trails as these can identify aspects that need to be reviewed with greater scrutiny. Our experience shows that flexibility is important for work-based learning reviews so trails may need to be changed during the review depending on the information and evidence gathered through fieldwork activities.

The review approach considers appropriately arrangements for the delivery and support of apprentices through the medium of Welsh, and the ability of the lead provider and partners to meet the Welsh language needs of employers and apprentices. From our experience of quality assuring higher apprenticeships on our inspections and thematic reviews, it would be important for QAA to have team reviewers who can speak Welsh to learners and employers, where appropriate, and in reviewing the provider's delivery and support through the medium of Welsh.

Question 1: Information about you

- Mark Evans
- Your role HMI
- Your institution/ organisation : Estyn
- Are you responding:
 - on behalf of your provider
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Question 2: Do you believe the proposed approach can achieve its purpose as a developmental review and support providers' learning and development in their delivery of Degree Apprenticeships?

Yes

We agree that as a developmental review, this approach has the opportunity to secure a range of information and evidence about key aspects of the Degree Apprenticeship programme. The providers delivering the pilot programme have now had sufficient time to develop, deliver and review the effectiveness of their programmes. Now is an appropriate time in the programme's development to undertake such a review. The proposed approach will give the opportunity to secure an overview of the learner, provider and employer experiences of degree apprenticeships in Wales. The approach has been developed to align with the established QAA model of review, but to also consider the specific needs of work-based learning programmes. It should also complement the Welsh Government's evaluation of the pilot degree apprenticeship scheme.

Question 3: Does the draft handbook provide sufficient information to prepare and conduct the reviews?

Yes

The documentation provides sufficient detail for key participants who will be involved in the activities.

Are there any areas that require further information/ clarification?

No

Question 4: Considering the timescales for the overall delivery of the review programme, is the review programme for an individual review (Annex B: Provider review timeline) reasonable?

Yes

The timescales for the activity have been developed using similar established periods as other higher education reviews, and include a fair lead in time for providers to distribute questionnaires to employers and students. These timescales seem reasonable for providers.

Are there any recommendations for adjustments in terms of timing and order of activities?

No

The timings are developed using the experience of QAA and their capacity to deliver the review, as well as giving sufficient scope for evaluating the evidence provided.

Question 5: Is the proposed approach to use programme trails appropriate?

Yes

Yes, programme trails give the opportunity to identify programmes or aspects of programmes that need to be reviewed with greater scrutiny. When deciding upon what trails are to be followed the process relies heavily on information supplied by the provider. If the provider supplied documentation from self-evaluation that is detailed and robust this will form a useful starting point. Robust and accurate data will also be beneficial.

Are there any adjustments that would ensure these are used effectively?

Yes

Our experience shows that flexibility is key when undertaking work-based learning inspections. As a result, programme trails may need to be changed during the review dependent upon what information and evidence has been secured as part of fieldwork activities.

Question 6: Are there any further considerations to take into account if part or all of the review needs to be conducted virtually?

Yes

A number of review activities naturally lend themselves to being undertaken remotely rather than through face-to-face activities. Examples could include any review planning meeting with the provider, one-to-one or small group meetings with learners and small group meetings with staff, such as lecturers and tutors. This may be particularly effective when the provider or its learners are spread over a number of sites or their employers are dispersed over a large geographical area.

However, a key aspect of any work-based learning programme at any level is the ability of learners to demonstrate the range of practical or professional skills they have developed in the workplace or occasionally in a simulated work environment. In these cases, remote observation may not be the most effective means of reviewing standards. This is because it may not give the opportunity to observe and review all aspects of the task the learner is undertaking and the observation could be contrived and unnatural. In the best examples, as noted in many of our inspection reports, learners are required to demonstrate their practical skills and knowledge in their workplaces. As a result, the person undertaking the observation has the opportunity to see not only the standard of the tasks undertaken, but the way the learner interacts with their managers, colleagues and peers. When considering remote observation, consideration also needs to be given to the security and confidentiality of data from employers, their staff, clients and customers. A number of employers operate in environments that have a security aspect and others work with customers and clients who may be resistant to being observed remotely.

Question 7: Are the review outcomes (recommendations and good practice) appropriately defined?

Yes

As this is a developmental review, the recommendations and features which represent innovating and interesting practice worthy of sharing are defined clearly. We suggest that it may help to use the term 'emerging practice/insights' to describe practice worthy of sharing at this stage of the pilot programme.

Will the reporting process enable effective sharing of practice?

The structure of the document and the review process will enable potential interesting practice to be identified. The overview report, based on the findings across each of the provider reviews, should promote sharing of interesting and innovative practice in the sector.

Question 8: Are there any unintended consequences that could arise from the proposed review process, for instance, in terms of equality and diversity or the Welsh language?

Yes

How could QAA mitigate these implications?

Equality and diversity:

As for other work-based learners, degree apprentices are recruited by their employers. As a result, employers follow their own recruitment and employment strategy. Early participant data shows that it would be important to aim to increase diversity across the programmes. Education and training providers need to work closely with employers, potential learners and parents to promote degree apprenticeship options widely. The review is an opportunity to consider how well this has been recognised and how successful education and training providers have been in ensuring a diverse cohort of learners.

Welsh language

When undertaking off-the-job activities learners should be encouraged and supported to have their language needs met. In the best examples, our inspection evidence shows training providers attempt to use their staff resource and capacity to match learners to staff as far as they can to meet learners' Welsh language needs. However, this remains a challenge. The review handbook has acknowledged this in discussing Welsh medium provision, and it would be important for QAA to have reviewers who speak Welsh when speaking to learners and employers and in reviewing the provider's delivery and support through the medium of Welsh.

Question 9: Do you have any additional comments on the proposed approach?

Estyn would be willing to continue to offer our support to QAA's review process from our experience of quality assuring higher apprenticeships in Wales through our inspections and thematic reviews.