



Lifelong
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With the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme of the European Union

**„Identifying Barriers in Promoting the European Standards and Guidelines
for Quality Assurance at Institutional Level“**

IBAR

Agreement number – 2010 – 4663/001 - 001

WP12

Quality and Secondary Education
National study – United Kingdom
2013

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



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Quality and Secondary Education Survey of institutions UK

WP 12

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Introduction

This report presents data from four UK higher education institutions, three from England and one from Scotland, about the management of their internal quality assurance systems as they relate to the collection, analysis and use of information in higher education. The report was produced between April and June 2013 by the IBAR project team at Durham University

The report focuses on the policy and activities associated with the links between tertiary education providers and secondary schools in the UK. It draws on data from four UK institutions and also examines the broader higher education policy and/or legislation and the national quality management environment that influences practice in this area.

This report will form part of the data informing a synthesis report for this work-package of the IBAR project that will make recommendations about future guidelines on the relationship between universities and the secondary education sector and opportunities for enhancement in the context of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area Part 1 (ESG1).

Currently, ESG1 does not include any standard or guideline that mentions the real or desired relationship between the secondary and higher education sectors in Europe.

1. National policy context

Introduction

2. Methodology

Institutions surveyed

The four institutions selected represent a sample of the variant types of higher education institution in the UK. After the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act, polytechnics in the UK achieved degree-awarding status and became universities. Our sample was selected to demonstrate the diversity of higher education in the UK and to ensure that the data collected offered a rich picture of practice across the sector.

Our sample includes:

University A is a research-intensive, collegiate institution, which dates from the early 19th century. The University has around 11000 undergraduate and 5000 postgraduate students and its main functions are divided between academic departments, which undertake research and provide teaching to students, and a number of colleges, which are responsible for the domestic and pastoral needs of students, researchers and some academic staff. University A features prominently in UK and QS university rankings and is a member of British and international groupings of research-intensive universities. It is consistently rated as one of the top universities in the UK.

University B was a former polytechnic that opted to become a university under the powers of the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act. Subsequent mergers with colleges in the region

added Nursing and Midwifery to the academic profile and three smaller campuses. The University has around 16000 students spread across five campuses. It also offers foundation awards in conjunction with partner further education colleges. Some 5000 students study in Europe and Asia for University B awards. There is a strong commitment to employment-related provision.

University C dates from the late nineteenth century. It became an independent institution in the 1960s. Further academic diversification occurred through growth and, in the 1990s, via merger with higher education colleges. Currently it has some 17000 students and a strong professional orientation. Distance learning students account for almost 20 per cent of the student enrolment. University C has some world-renowned areas of research excellence and has a growing reputation for the quality of its student education.

University D is one of the newer universities in the UK, progressing from the status of a higher education college, to that of a University College and then full university status in recent decades. Mergers during that phase also diversified the academic profile. It has around 8000 undergraduate students, of which 1300 are studying for further education qualifications. Almost half of the student population comprises mature students.

Conducting the research

Data collection for WP12 was conducted in the following ways: firstly, as a desk study, using documents publicly available on the websites of the four institutions to uncover policies and information about their activities relating to the secondary education sector. During this first phase of data collection, a number of key individuals at each institution with particular responsibility for/or interest in the articulation between schools and universities were identified. These included senior managers at institutional level (for example, Vice-Principals or Pro-Vice Chancellors of Learning and Teaching, Directors of Quality); academics with oversight responsibility for admissions or first year studies at School/Faculty level (for example, Deans of Faculty, School Directors of Quality); and administrative or service staff with responsibility for schools liaison. In all, 64 university representatives were approached to participate in this study, 16 from each institution.

Subsequent data collection activities comprised focus groups and semi-structured telephone interviews with those individuals identified in phase one of the data collection processes that were available to speak to the team.

A final phase of data collection comprised desk-based data collection to inform a consideration of the sectoral and/or national policy context of tertiary and secondary sector engagement in higher education in the UK.

3. Responses to the research questions

3.1. In what ways does institutional policy on quality take into account issues of progression from secondary education to HE? Are there any special institutional arrangements in place -- academic, personal, social, geographic or administrative -- to assist students in the first year of HE?

3.2. To what extent are secondary school pupils prepared to take maximum advantage of the higher education opportunity offered to them?

3. Are quality assurance requirements for secondary education at odds with those for higher education?

3.4. Are there formal processes in which the secondary and higher education sectors communicate with each other, either at institutional level or national level?

3.5. In what ways might more efficient alignment between secondary and higher education be achieved?

4. Barriers

5. Major findings and policy recommendations

5.1. Identification of barriers to effective links between higher and secondary education with relevance to supranational level

Recommendations:

- ENQA might wish to consider what opportunities exist to encourage national approaches to data collection that support institutional enhancement
- ENQA might wish to consider opportunities to encourage and/or incentivise benchmarking and/or comparisons of practice across the EHEA

7.2 Identification of barriers to effective links between higher and secondary education with **relevance to national level**

Recommendations:

- The higher education sector/government in the UK may wish to consider whether further work to develop national reporting requirements that support local enhancement may be beneficial.
- The higher education sector/government in the UK may wish to consider arrangements for data analysis, presentation and interpretation skills training.
- The higher education sector/government in the UK may wish to consider opportunities for encouraging and/or incentivising benchmarking activities.

5.3 Identification of barriers to effective links between higher and secondary education with **relevance to institutional level**

Recommendations:

- UK universities may wish to consider the extent to which the balance between standardisation of data and local ownership best offers opportunities for enhancement.
- UK universities may wish to consider innovation in the methods used for data collection, particularly in opportunities for staff and students to work together to collect and use meaningful and purposeful data.
- UK universities may wish to consider opportunities for encouraging and/or incentivising benchmarking activities to support enhancement.

Institutional Case Studies

See additional attachment.