

**SALCTG (Scottish Academic Libraries Cooperative Training Group)**  
**Workshop on Frameworks for Quality**  
**Tuesday 28 November 2000**  
**University of Dundee**

**The first presentation was by David Bottomley, Assistant Head of the QAA Scottish Office, who outlined the new QAA Quality Framework.**

The QAA is an Agency which has a service level agreement with the funding councils to provide clear information on the nature and standards of higher education for informed customers. The framework is a 6-year cycle of outcomes and the opportunities for achieving them.

There are four components to the new framework, which is built on the Dearing and Garrick recommendations and these components should be seen as reference points in the whole process:

1. Qualifications Framework
2. Subject Benchmarking
3. Programme Specification
4. Codes of Practice

**1. Qualifications Framework**

There are two frameworks – one for England and one for Scotland - which reflect the different national educational frameworks, and these frameworks are based on clarity of outcomes. In Scotland, credits are the measure of outcome and the process is managed by the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, which provides a map for lifelong learners, allowing them to move up the 12 educational levels (6 of these levels are in higher education).

**2. Subject Benchmarking**

42 subject benchmarks are to be published and each will specify what a student will know and will be able to do after obtaining the qualification.

**3. Programme Specification**

This is for each institution to undertake and each institution will specify the learning outcomes, the assessment procedures and support (including LIS) provided for students – it is likely that students will see this as a ‘contract document’.

**4. Codes of Practice**

These set out in 16 sections good practice in the management of an institution’s programmes.

**Academic Reviews**

The aim is to secure value for money from public funds, encourage improvement and provide public information. The reviews will be at the Subject and at the Institutional level. The 42 subject reviews will take place over 6 years in two cycles, and the process itself will be reviewed after 3 years. The subject reviews, which will express confidence for lack of it in Academic Standards and provide a Narrative Commentary on the Quality of the Learning Opportunities, will focus on three aspects of the quality of learning:

- Teaching and Learning
- Student Progression
- Effective Utilisation of Learning Resources

Learning Resources will not be judgement on their quantity, but whether they being used effectively to enable learners to achieve the intended outcomes.

The outcome, which will be a single judgement on standards and whether they have been achieved, will be Failing/Approved/Commended and if there is one failure then it all fails

## **Process**

The process starts with a Self-Evaluation to be completed by the academic department. The subject review will be over a whole year and will not be based on a single visit. The review will be conducted by 4 or more subject specialists with a co-ordinator. It will be undertaken in the context of the reference points, and the length and depth will vary depending on previous evidence and the issues identified during the review. An institutional facilitator will assist and can sit in at all the meetings except the final meeting and any meetings with students – there will be a lot of student input into the process. The reviewers will use the aide-memoires (Appendix E) to assist them.

### ***Extract from QAA Handbook for Academic Review***

#### ***Annex E – Aide-memoire for subject review***

##### ***Section vii Learning resources***

*Evaluation of the quality of the learning opportunities offered by the subject provider: learning resources and their deployment.*

*21. Reviewers should ask:*

- *Is there an overall strategy for the deployment of learning resources?*
- *How effective is learning facilitated in terms of the provision of resources?*
- *Is suitable teaching and learning accommodation available?*
- *Are the subject book and periodical stocks appropriate and accessible?*
- *Are suitable equipment and appropriate IT facilities available to learners?*

*They should then evaluate the appropriateness of the learning resources available, and the effectiveness of their deployment.*

*Sources of information will include equipment lists, library stocks, and internal review documents.*

*Review activities will include direct observations of accommodation and equipment, discussions with staff, and discussions with students.*

*As a result of these activities, reviewers should be able to judge how effectively the learning resources are deployed in support of the intended outcomes.*

**The message for the Library is that the Reviewers are not interested in the asset, but how it is used and on balance the Library is pretty marginal to the whole process.**

## **Institutional Review**

This will be undertaken every 6 years, with an interim review after 3 years, and any review of collaborative arrangements in addition. The agenda for this 2/3-day review will be formed from the results of the subject reviews and the outcome will be a public narrative similar to the present Audit Reports and a statement as to whether the QAA has confidence in the institution.

**The second presentation was from Fiona Smith, Department of Geography, University of Dundee. Her department is one of the first to be reviewed in Scotland and her paper provided an academic department's perspective on the new regime.**

The department is required to prepare a Self-Evaluation Document, which was found to be very useful in linking the department to national subject debates – especially benchmarking – and providing a process for improving internal documentation, focussing discussion on the curriculum, on-going teaching and learning development.

Her presentation then focussed on library matters in the QAA and the sort of questions that they have been addressing with the Library.

### **Aims and Outcomes**

“Effective in the way in which the subject providers plans, designs and approves the curricula” (p.39)

- e.g. academic standards – does approval of new courses include library resources?
- Is there a process for linkage with the Library e.g. Academic Liaison Librarians?

### **Curricula**

“Do design and content of the curricula encourage achievement of knowledge and understanding, cognitive skills, subject specific skills, transferable skills, progression to employment/further study, personal development?” (p.40)

- Are there library teaching sessions for students (introductory and advanced)?

“Influence of recent development in techniques of teaching and research” (p.40)

- Is the use of online and other resources encouraged (link to Library web site from departmental pages?)

### **Assessment**

“Appropriateness and effectiveness of assessment procedures” (p.41)

- Do criteria/assessments link to reading/use of resources?

“Standards achieved meet minimum expectations of subject benchmarking and qualifications framework” (p.41)

- Geography Benchmarking – undertake research, information handling and retrieval (including the use of online computer searching), working with a wide range of sources, experience of directed reading and library use.

### **Teaching and Learning**

“How good are the materials provided to support learning?” (p.42)

- Is there Library guidance via Departmental Handbook and links via Departmental web pages?
- Is there effective liaison between academic staff and the library on library resources?

### **Key Issues for Learning Resources (pp. 43 – 44):**

- Is there ongoing integration between academic programme and library services/staff (especially identifiable subject librarians)?
- How are student views considered – is there evidence of effective liaison in addressing student problems/complaints?
- Is there an explicit strategy for utilisation of library resources for the subject area (discuss and formalise well before the arrival of the review team)?

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