Meeting the benchmark for postgraduate taught provision

NSA: Taught Postgraduates
Competition, Marketing and Quality
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QAA

Role of the QAA

- Checks how UK universities maintain academic standards and quality
- Reviews and reports on how universities meet their responsibilities and, in so doing, identifies good practice and makes recommendations for improvement
- Publishes **guidance** to help UK universities and colleges ensure that students have a good learning experience
- Investigate concerns

Guidance – the UK Quality Code

- UK **Quality Code**, including:
- Higher education **qualification frameworks**: Eng, Wales & NI and Scotland
- **Subject benchmark statements**
- Associated guidance eg ***Master's degree characteristics (2010)***

UK Quality Code

1. Programme design and approval
2. Admissions
3. Learning and teaching
4. Student support, learning resources and careers education
5. Student engagement
6. Assessment and APL
7. External examining
8. Programme monitoring and review
9. Complaints and appeals
10. Collaborative arrangements
11. Research degrees

Overarching values

All students are treated fairly, equitably and as individuals.

Students have the opportunity to contribute to the shaping of their learning experience.

Students are properly and actively informed at appropriate times of matters relevant to their programmes of study.

All policies and processes relating to study and programmes are clear and transparent.

Strategic oversight of academic standards and academic quality is at the highest level of academic governance of the provider.

All policies and processes are regularly and effectively monitored, reviewed and improved.

Sufficient and appropriate external involvement exists for the maintenance of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities.

Staff are supported, enabling them in turn to support students' learning experiences.

Example of an Expectation…

"Higher education providers, working with their staff, students and other stakeholders, articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subject(s) in depth and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking" (**Learning & Teaching chapter**)

And another…

"Higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience" (**Student engagement chapter**)

Master’s degree characteristics (2010)

I. Research master’s eg MPhil
II. Specialised/advanced study master’s eg MSc, MA, MRes and some integrated master's
III. Professional/practice master’s eg MBA, MEd, MTL, LLM and some integrated master's

- Not everyone will agree!
- Many master’s will span categories
- No national definitions of degree titles or types

Master's degree characteristics (2010)

- Purpose
- Content
- Structure and delivery
- Volume of learning and credit
- Teaching, learning and assessment
- Relationship to further study or employment
- Naming of awards
- Impact of the Bologna Process
- UK Quality Code on research degrees
- [Postgraduate certificates and diplomas]

Ongoing considerations within the policy landscape

- Large numbers of international students study for taught PG awards
- [Concerns in the sector over recognition issues re Bologna?]
- Clarity of information for students and student choice
- Quality assurance in context of flexible, work-based or collaborative provision
- Student satisfaction – not *currently* included in the NSS

Further information

- **UK Quality Code and related guidance:** http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/Pages/default.aspx
- **QAA review reports:** http://www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/Pages/default.aspx
- **QAA Strategy:** http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AboutUs/strategy11-14/Pages/default.aspx
- **Twitter:** @QAAtweets and @QAA_HEER