

Higher
Education
Regulation
Review
Group

Higher Education Concordat

On quality assurance arrangements and data collection

May 2006

Foreword: Higher Education Concordat

If you want to change the way things are done in any walk of life, you must win hearts and minds. This is the challenge for 'Better Regulation' initiatives in any sector. How do you sustain high standards whilst streamlining regulation and reducing bureaucracy across a multiplicity of public and private bodies?

It is a particular challenge in higher education, because of its complexity and diversity. Some hundred and thirty universities and colleges are funded by three government departments, as well as directly by students, charities and businesses. Institutions have developed rapidly over the last twenty years, expanding to provide opportunities for nearly half of Britain's young people and providing regional, national and international leadership in an era of global competition.

Universities and colleges manage revenues of about £18 billion, over half of it public money. Data, inspection and regulatory demands have helped to shape success and improve accountability; and universities have improved significantly their own management, audit and governance arrangements. It is this that enables us now to make the move to risk based systems of accountability and to reduce and simplify the requirements of government and their agencies.

Over the past few years significant changes in the way data is required and inspections managed *has* reduced the cost and burden of regulation. The Higher Education Regulation Review Group and its predecessors have been part of this effort and the Group commends, in particular, the way the Higher Education Funding Council for England and the Quality Assurance Agency have embraced this agenda and built targets to simplify and reduce costs into their new strategic plans.

But the number and complexity of our institutions of learning is mirrored by the number of agencies involved in funding, supporting and regulating their range of activities. This is clear from the number of signatories to this Concordat. Higher education is a success story and there are more risks than gains to be had from a fundamental redesign of its funding and inspection framework. Instead, this Concordat builds on what has been achieved. It commits its signatories to collaboration and the principles of risk-based regulation as well as, individually, to business plans which aim to share knowledge and eliminate overlap. This Concordat is about hearts and minds. It will be owned and implemented by its signatories over time. It creates a ratchet for eliminating unnecessary burdens on the sector, since each signatory will be required to account for progress and commit to further simplification in succeeding years. It aims to sustain or improve standards, whilst releasing one third or more of the current costs of accountability, freeing resources in the sector for what our universities and colleges are really about.

Dame Patricia Hodgson, Chair, Higher Education Regulation Review Group

May 2006

CONCORDAT

on quality assurance arrangements and data collection for higher education institutions in England between:

Department for Education & Skills;
Department of Health;
Higher Education Funding Council for England;
Training and Development Agency for Schools;
Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education;
Office for Standards in Education;
Adult Learning Inspectorate;
Learning and Skills Council;
Skills for Business Network;
Skills for Health;
Higher Education Statistics Agency;
Research Councils UK;
Institution of Engineering & Technology;
Architects Registration Board; and
The Information Centre for Health and Social Care;
and supported by Managing Information Across Partners

General Principle

Good regulation is proportionate, consistent, transparent, targeted and accountable. Best practice in management and governance within autonomous higher education institutions is to be encouraged and supported. Unnecessary burdens from external bureaucracy and regulation should be reduced.

1 Context

- 1.1 This Concordat covers the collection of data and the external quality assurance of higher and further education provision in higher education institutions (HEIs) in England.
- 1.2 A high quality higher education system, offering good value for money and effectively contributing to the individual and collective knowledge base, is one of the main objectives of HEIs, the higher education community as a whole and all who fund or support higher education.
- 1.3 The public interest and the interests of higher education institutions, their supporters and funders, require the availability of good quality, useful, reliable and timely information about HEIs and reassurance about the academic standards and quality of the awards and the learning opportunities being provided by them, both individually and in partnership with other organisations.
- 1.4 It is important that the means used to collect information and to assure the standards and quality of learning provided by HEIs should make no greater demands on institutions than is absolutely necessary.

2 Objectives

- 2.1 Signatories to this Concordat are committed to a co-ordinated approach to data collection and the external quality assurance of higher and further education delivered in HEIs in England. They have agreed that they will subscribe to the principles and practices described below when dealing with HEIs in these areas.
- 2.2 In accepting these terms, signatories wish to move in the same direction: towards a less burdensome, more proportionate approach to quality assurance and data collection. They will rely so far as is practicable on institutions' own processes and do all they can to reduce duplication of effort on the part of both the collectors and producers of information.
- 2.3 In implementing these principles these bodies will also have due regard to the five principles of better regulation, as adapted by the Higher Education Regulation Review Group.

3 Data collection

Principle

An institution's achievements and the value for money that it provides are demonstrated by its performance against output indicators, based on reliable, timely, transparent data. Signatory bodies are committed to collect the data which they reasonably require about higher education institutions in the least onerous way possible. They accept the general principle that data should be collected once and used many times.

- 3.1 The core data on HEIs – information on their students, staff and finances – is supplied by institutions on a regular basis to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). HESA co-ordinates this process, analyses and publishes the data. HEIs are responsible for the accuracy and timeliness of the data and HESA is responsible for maintaining the integrity of the complete datasets, the accuracy of its published summaries and the timely provision of data to its stakeholders.
- 3.2 Signatory bodies will rely upon the data supplied by HEIs to HESA and not duplicate it. If signatory bodies require additional data or data not yet published by HESA, in order to analyse or assess HEI performance in particular areas, they will first approach HESA to see if these data can be made available to them.
- 3.3 This Concordat recognises, however, there will be situations when data not readily available through HESA is required by signatory bodies¹. If HESA cannot supply the desired data to the timescales or quality standards that a signatory body requires, the signatory body may seek the information directly from the relevant HEIs. Wherever possible these data should be requested in the format and definitions of the HESA returns or in the manner in which data are produced internally by the HEI for its own purposes.
- 3.4 Signatory bodies will have regard to the costs and practicality of producing additional data and will do their best to keep such demands to a minimum necessary for their purposes.

4 Quality Assurance

Principle

An institution demonstrates its commitment to quality and standards through a culture of continuous improvement based on institutional values and the skills and attitudes of its staff. These are underpinned by the effective use of the systems and structures that it puts in place to assure and enhance the programmes of study and the learning which it provides. Signatory bodies are committed to assessing quality and standards in a co-ordinated and appropriate manner. Intervention from external agencies should be demonstrably risk-based – targeted on the weakest institutions.

¹ Throughout 'signatory bodies' refers to all those who have signed the Concordat.













- 4.1 An effective independent external quality assurance regime is a vital part of a modern, high quality higher education system. The main responsibility for creating and delivering high quality higher education rests with individual HEIs – not outside bodies – and their starting point for transparent accountability is their own governance and management structures. The Concordat is, however, concerned with situations when external monitoring by signatory bodies is required.
- 4.2 The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is the body responsible for safeguarding academic standards in England and for maintaining the Academic Infrastructure (AI) on behalf of the sector. The AI provides a framework for higher education qualifications, standards and quality management systems in the UK. Through various audits and reviews, QAA assesses how well academic standards and quality are maintained and monitored in institutions, as measured against the AI. Signatory bodies will not duplicate this work; they will rely upon the QAA assessment to give an accurate picture of overall effectiveness of the quality systems for assuring the academic standards and the learning opportunities being provided by an institution.
- 4.3 In executing their functions, signatory bodies may have the need to assess, inspect or accredit particular aspects of provision not already covered by the activities of QAA. This may be particularly likely for subjects where the maintenance and enhancement of quality depends on partnership arrangements that reach outside higher education.
- 4.4 When carrying out these assessments, inspections or accreditations signatory bodies will use their best efforts to minimise unnecessary burdens on HEIs by working with each other and with the person appointed by the Minister to oversee progress and implementation of the Concordat as necessary by:
- using definitions and building on processes that are consistent with HEIs' internal processes and with the AI;
 - observing the data collection principles outlined in section 3 above, and using appropriate high level performance indicators to assess risks objectively;
 - having due regard to the financial and practical cost of inspection visits for the HEIs involved;
 - reducing the frequency, depth, and duration of inspection visits to institutions to no more than is necessary to discharge their statutory responsibilities and address any perceived risks;
 - co-ordinating such visits with other bodies; and
 - relying upon each other's findings, rather than duplicating them.
- 4.5 If, however, there is demonstrable cause for concern about particular provision in an HEI, relevant signatory bodies may inspect or review that provision in that HEI at any time.

5 Review

- 5.1 This Concordat will be reviewed in one year's time, and annually thereafter. It is agreed that the Minister for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education will appoint a person to take the lead in monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of the Concordat in reducing burdens on HEIs whilst providing funders with the data and quality assurance that they need.
- 5.2 The Higher Education Regulation Review Group (HERRG) will explore the scope for a concordat which would seek to apply these principles to the provision of data concerning research activity and the exploitation of research. This will be discussed with appropriate organisations involved in research.

Signatory organisations' Annexes to the Concordat

Each organisation which has signed the Concordat has produced an Annex committing themselves to the principles of the Concordat and setting out where their organisation sits in trying to meet the principles, the current obstacles to progress and what steps they will be taking to address these obstacles. It provides the basis for signatories to account for progress and, following their annual review, enable each to commit to further simplification in succeeding years. These Annexes are set out on the following pages.

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Department for Education & Skills Annex to the Higher Education Concordat

1. The DfES set out its strategy for higher education in the 2003 White Paper, *The Future of Higher Education*; and we have subsequently confirmed and developed this in the Department's five-year strategy (published July 2004) and in public statements such as grant letters to the HEFCE.
2. Key points of our strategy for HE are: increased public funding for teaching and research, reflecting the contribution of HE to the economy and society; asking graduates (where they can afford it) to bear more of the costs of HE provision; an emphasis on the diversity of contemporary HE, with encouragement for institutions to play to their strengths; developing the contribution of HE to the nation's higher skills needs; widening participation in HE for students from underrepresented backgrounds; and boosting the international status of our HE.
3. In all of this, it might be said that Government has both increased and stabilised the funding provided to HE by the taxpayer; and therefore in return Government is making increased demands on HE on behalf of society.
4. But there is no reason at all why this should mean that Government should impose a higher bureaucratic or accounting overhead on the system. Government's demands should be in terms of outcomes, and simplification of processes and systems helps focus attention on outcomes. We should not expect to take over or distort the management of universities. Free institutions perform better than controlled ones; this is every bit as true in HE as it is in other areas of life. The Department believes there is a causal relationship between the autonomy of our HE institutions and their consistently high quality judged against other countries.
5. This is why the Department established the HERRG in the first place. It is why we warmly support the principles of the Concordat; why we shall be sustaining the gatekeeping role of the HERRG; and why we will be making arrangements for the Concordat's signatories to be held to account and for signatories' annexes to be updated in future.
6. The Department has very few direct interactions with HE institutions, so the primary focus for us as a signatory is in our role of strategic leadership of the system – ensuring that the Concordat and deregulation principles are understood and embraced across HE.

Actions we shall take over the next year are:

- Appoint a "Concordat Czar" who will be responsible (i) for holding signatories to account for performance against commitments made in the annexes containing implementation plans and (ii) approving updated annexes for future year. We expect to make this appointment **by June 2006**.
- Ensure that, after the launch of this Concordat and with the completion of its current responsibilities, HERRG continues as a gatekeeper group with the ability to review and influence developments that might impact on the HE sector, before they are set in stone. The last meeting of HERRG in its current form is scheduled for July; our intention is that the successor group should meet from **September 2006**.

- Provide ongoing secretariat support and senior-level advice for the “Czar” and the HERRG, while stressing that both of these are independent of the Department
- Working with HEFCE, review the approach that is taken to consulting with the HE sector, and develop proposals for how this can be done in ways that absorb less management time, while still allowing proper shaping of policy and technical questions. We intend to have proposals on this **by October 2006**.
- Work with QAA and OFSTED to develop the ideas in paragraph 5.12 of the Further Education White Paper about the inspection of HE programmes in colleges. The White Paper makes clear the importance of QAA and OFSTED minimising burdens by sharing data and self-evaluations.
- Give a continuing commitment to ensuring that data collected by HESA on behalf of the Department is limited to what is needed for policy development purposes.
- Give a continuing commitment in providing advice to Ministers that we shall screen policy proposals for impact.
- Invite the non-departmental public bodies sponsored by the Department to provide advice on what more the Department could do to shape the HE “landscape” to achieve further simplification and deregulation. We intend to do this **towards the end of 2006**.
- Where appropriate, provide leadership and guidance to support the Concordat process, informally or formally through grant letters.

The Department of Health Annex to the Higher Education Concordat

1. The Department of Health welcomes and supports the HERRG Concordat.
2. Although we do not commission data directly from higher education institutions, we do use national higher education data from both UCAS and HESA organisations when developing education and training policy for health and social care. Increasingly, our new special health authority, *Information Centre for Health and Social Care*, meets this need and represents the Department's student data interests with the higher education sector. The UK Sector Skills Council for health, *Skills for Health*, leads on developing and maintaining partnerships for quality assurance of health care education in England through a service level agreement with us. A similar arrangement operates with its sister organisation *Skills for Care*.
3. Health and social care education and training courses make up a significant proportion of higher education provision. Streamlining data collection processes, using a single data collected route, will have major benefits for health and social care employers. They can use the improved and more readily assessable student data for monitoring education and training courses and for workforce planning.
4. The aspiration of a one stop shop or conversation that covers current and comprehensive student data from application through education to professional registration (and possibly beyond) would have major benefits for health and social care employers. Given the complexity of higher education, it is unlikely that this aspiration can be achieved unilaterally. Initiatives like HERRG and the Concordat, which bring together interested organisations will help achieve the one stop shop where the joined-up approach will have benefits well beyond health and social care.
5. Strategic direction for health and adult social care is determined by the Department of Health, while responsibility for the programmes and policies that deliver these strategies is delegated to appropriate authorities within the health and care services. Apart from exceptional circumstances, we do not normally intervene in day-to-day management, but ensure our requirements are set out in service level agreements with the delivery partners which contain relevant targets and milestones and reflect the principles of better regulation.

Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) Annex to the Higher Education Concordat

Current Position

1. Our vision is that institutions should have such excellent governance and management processes that they can easily demonstrate to their stakeholders, including HEFCE, proper accountability for the use of funds. This vision has been embodied in the HEFCE Strategic Plan 2006-11 which explains that our role is to maintain institutional autonomy and identify policies and funding methods which are not burdensome, but will help secure the long term sustainability, vitality and excellence of higher education.
2. The Strategic Plan aims to be consistent in its recognition of this approach throughout. One of the Strategic Aims, 'Sustaining a high quality HE sector', is particularly pertinent and includes a key performance target 'to provide annual assurance to Parliament that internal control, corporate governance and risk management in the sector are effective, and that value for money is being achieved. To do this while reducing the cost of accountability by 20 per cent between 2004 and 2007, and by a further 10 per cent by 2011'.
3. Our view is that we should, wherever possible, trap data error and embed the data validation rules within the HESA data collection process before data is finally submitted.
4. The position in respect of data collection is that HEFCE currently rely on HESA as far as possible. HEFCE are consulting with institutions on making more use of HESA data for funding purposes. Two key areas where we seek data directly are the HESES return and financial information (eg final accounts).
5. Common definitions for post compulsory education data are being developed by the Management Information Across Partners Group to enable data sharing. There is a proposal from the DfES to set up a standards authority to oversee data definitions in a gatekeeper role. For data sharing arrangements to be effective it may be helpful to use a unique student identifier. It is hoped that services for students might also be improved as a result.
6. Whenever possible we seek to use administrative data collected by other bodies rather than collect data from institutions even if this does not exactly meet our needs. This relies upon other agencies willingly sharing their data with us and issues around data protection, confidentiality, commercial interests and the use to which the data is put can inhibit this. The data concordat deals primarily with the use of HESA data, but DfES and other agencies such as UCAS and SLC hold individual level data which is not captured on the HESA return but can be used to enhance its value and utility for research and policy analysis. The MIAP initiative may ultimately provide a framework for effective data sharing covering the whole of post-compulsory education, but it will be some time before these benefits are realised.
7. In respect of quality assurance, we place reliance on the work of the QAA which we commission.

Further Changes

8. In respect of the use of data, HEFCE keeps the funding methodology under review. Over time, and subject to consultation with the sector, it is our intention to move the basis of the funding calculation from HESES data to HESA data. It will still be necessary to collect in year aggregate data on student numbers for DfES planning purposes. These will be few and simple and would be needed internally by any well managed institution.
9. In respect of inspection, we hope that other funding agencies may be enabled to place reliance on the work which the QAA undertakes, in line with this concordat. HEFCE also wish to develop a revised approach to quality assurance of HE in FE.

Issues and Obstacles

10. The different funding bodies in the UK have differing requirements which may add to the complexity of HESA.
11. We are currently consulting on the use of the HESA return as the basis of funding. However, there are issues in the relationship between data and grant in respect of timing and lags introduced into the system.
12. HESES is currently the only source of in-year data. A record of in-year activity will always be required.
13. The Concordat suggests that Estates data should be collected by HESA, but the issues relating to this potential change have not yet been established.
14. It is likely that some information will continue to be collected directly by HEFCE, for example Annual Monitoring Statement information. However, as part of the consultation exercise for accountability for higher education, we are looking at ways of reducing and simplifying our requirements.
15. In the early stages of development of the Higher Education Business and Community Interaction survey, HEFCE have been collecting the data. It is the intention to hand this function over to HESA in time. The funding related elements may cause some difficulties.
16. For Access to Learning monitoring returns we use HESA data as much as possible but it is unlikely that HESA would collect all this data on our behalf.
17. The most difficult issue in respect of quality assurance is to obtain the acceptance of the various professional bodies to the concordat approach.

Timescales expected

18. The HESA record review affects 2007-08. The data for 2007-08 is likely to be available in December 2008. Our plan to base funding on HESA data is still subject to consultation but is unlikely to take effect before 2008.
19. As part of the review of Quality Assurance Framework, a revised institutional audit method is currently being developed by the QAA in consultation with HEFCE and others, and will be published in 2006 for use between academic year 2006-07 and academic year 2012-13.

20. It is planned that the new method for assuring quality of HE in FE colleges will be published during 2006 and will be in use from academic year 2007-08.

Timescale for Review

21. We intend to review the Concordat annually.

Comments and Complaints

22. We welcome comments from any who may have constructive suggestions to offer. If you have any comments please contact: p.moynihan@hefce.ac.uk
23. We recognise that sometimes criticism or complaint may be appropriate. HEFCE does operate a formal complaints procedure. Full details can be found at www.hefce.ac.uk/aboutus/complain/council.htm).

Action Plan

	Action	Responsible	Timescale
1.	Publish results of consultation on T-funding	Chris Taylor and Toby West-Taylor	April 2006
2.	Consult further on T funding, especially in relation to the application of TRAC principles to costing and the move from premiums to allocations	Chris Taylor and Toby West-Taylor	January 2007
3.	Review Group established with Universities UK and the Standing Conference of Principals to report on costs and potential improvements to the quality assurance framework, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – QAA audit (Phase 1) – Teaching quality information and the National Student Survey (Phase 2) 	Graeme Rosenberg/ Emma Creasey	Summer 2006
4.	To look at ways of reducing and simplifying our requirements as part of the development of the new accountability framework	David James	2006-07 and continuing

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) Annex to the Higher Education Concordat

Introduction

1. QAA welcomes the opportunity to become a signatory to the Concordat and endorses the value of a Concordat for the higher education sector as an aid to rationalising data collection and quality assurance processes.
2. QAA was established in 1997 with the intention of creating a body that would be responsible for providing a comprehensive system of quality assurance across the whole of the UK higher education sector.
3. At the time of its creation QAA inherited a variety of methods of review from its predecessor organisations and an historical system where the standards and quality of higher education were reviewed at both individual subject level and across institutions as a whole.
4. Through a process of innovation and evolution QAA has sought to refine its existing review methods – leading to the discontinuation of routine subject level review in 2001 in higher education institutions – and to develop new, more cost-effective, methods to meet the needs of its stakeholders.
5. QAA now operates a programme of peer reviews by agreement with the representative bodies of higher education institutions and through contracts with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), the Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council (SFC) and the Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland (DEL):
 - institutional level audits and reviews for higher education institutions
 - institutional level audits of collaborative provision in some higher education institutions
 - subject level reviews of higher education delivered in further education colleges
 - occasional sample audits of HEIs' links with overseas partners
6. QAA also has responsibility at present for quality assurance in a number of other areas of higher education through the provision of contracted review services:
 - subject-level reviews of NHS-funded healthcare provision contracted by Skills for Health
 - the accreditation of osteopathic programmes of study on behalf of the General Osteopathic Council
7. QAA advises governments in the UK on the merits of applications for degree-awarding powers and university title, using a scrutiny procedure.
8. Organisational and structural underpinning of higher education qualifications in the UK is provided by the Academic Infrastructure, which is maintained by QAA on behalf of the HE

sector. The Academic Infrastructure provides a means of describing the academic standards of national tertiary qualifications in the UK and consists of:

- national frameworks for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and in Scotland
- subject benchmark statements
- programme specifications
- the Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education.

Current position

9. QAA's mission is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. Underpinning this mission is a belief that higher education institutions (HEIs) hold the primary responsibility for determining and maintaining the standards of the awards they deliver and the quality of education they provide. QAA itself works to the purposes, standards and values described in its Strategic Plan (2006).
10. All of QAA's review methods are developed and subsequently reviewed and revised periodically through a process of consultation. Feedback on review methods and the elements of the Academic Infrastructure is sought through conferences, workshops and other meetings which enable representatives from all stakeholder groups to contribute ideas and raise concerns. QAA evaluates all its activities and learns from the outcomes.
11. In July 2005 the report of phase one of the Quality Assurance Framework Review, concerning the impacts, benefits and costs of institutional audit, was published. This was undertaken jointly by HEFCE, Universities UK and SCOP on the recommendation of the Better Regulation Task Force. The report concluded that the institutional audit method introduced in 2001 had substantially decreased the burden on HEIs and proved an efficient and effective method to demonstrate the quality and standards of UK higher education. A number of recommendations were made to improve the method further and these have been taken account in the design of the revised institutional audit method (see section 3 below).
12. QAA has a continuing and productive relationship with the HERRG and has committed itself to taking on board the rationalising regulation agenda including the work of the Better Regulation Task Force.
13. In addition to our efforts to rationalise our own processes we already work closely with other organisations to enable the co-ordination of activities and sharing of information with the intention of reducing the burden on the sector. To this end we have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Institution of Electrical Engineers (now the Institution of Engineering and Technology) and have signed the Healthcare Commission's Concordat as an associate signatory. We are also engaged in continuing discussions with Ofsted, ALI, and TDA, to try to find areas where we can share information and the outcomes of our various review and inspection processes, thereby reducing the requirements that we place on institutions and providers.
14. Although not a frequent or major collector of data, we nonetheless co-operate with HESA and other organisations in the work of the Managing Information Across Partners Group.

15. QAA itself is also, rightly, subject to regulation and we welcome the insights these processes bring. We have a range of mechanisms to assure the quality and effectiveness of our work. For example: institutions evaluate the conduct of reviews; we provide training for the reviewers and auditors who work on our behalf; we have published complaints and representations procedures; our partner bodies monitor achievement of our annual operating plans and their contracts with us; subscription levels and contract prices are subject to annual negotiation; we are required to report to contracting bodies, Companies House and the Charity Commission; and internal and external audits report on the security and reliability of our financial and management systems.

Future developments

16. QAA has included 'rationalising regulation' as one of five key strategic themes in its new Strategic Plan for 2006-11 and has included as a strategic objective 'rationalisation of the regulation burden on universities and higher education colleges'.
17. The Strategic Plan states: 'We believe there is some scope for rationalisation, and that we have the expertise and a track record of working with others to help deliver good regulation and reduce the burden. Through our expertise in developing review methods and programmes we can help institutions, funding bodies, government departments and Professional and Statutory Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) to meet their responsibilities in ways that do not impose disproportionate burdens on the institutions. Our experience with major review provides one possible model; our work with individual PSRBs provides another. More generally, there is considerable scope for greater co-ordination and information-sharing between PSRBs and QAA; steps in this direction have already been taken. We are closely involved in discussions designed to rationalise the review and inspection methods applied to FE colleges that provide higher education.'
18. We expect the implementation of the Concordat to be an important element in the achievement of the theme's objectives. To this end we intend to initiate discussions with all signatories to the Concordat to examine ways in which its aims can be achieved. We shall discuss with those organisations that commission us to undertake reviews how their needs can best be met in the context of the Concordat. We envisage that initial discussions will have taken place with our commissioners by September 2006 and with other signatories by December 2006.

Areas for attention

19. While we believe that we have made good progress in furthering the better regulation agenda, we realise that work remains to be done. In particular, we are in no doubt that there are considerable areas of potential synergy to be exploited through the co-operation of QAA, Ofsted, ALI and the TDA. Discussions have been continuing with these bodies for some time, and we hope that progress will now accelerate in the light of the commitment of all of these organisations to the terms of this Concordat. The quality assurance of both HE in FE, FE in HE, and Initial Teacher Training offer good opportunities for early agreements. In the light of the changes that are likely to take place following the creation of a single Inspectorate for Children and Learners, QAA will seek to engage with the design process for those aspects of the

² Dates based on the provisional timetable given in *A Single Inspectorate for Children and Learners: The Government's Response to Consultation* (DfES, 2005).

transitional provision that relate to HE. These are due to be in place for Autumn 2006. We will then take these forward into our relationship with the new body from its inception in April 2007.²

- 20. We are also conscious of the need for our HEIs both to play a leading role in the development of the European Higher Education Area and to be defended, should the need arise, from inappropriate prescription in the name of European convergence or other international regulation. QAA will do all it can to ensure that no unnecessary regulatory burden is imposed on HEIs, and will equally play its part in promoting the reputation for good standards and high quality of UK higher education generally, so long as its reviews indicate that this continues to be justified. QAA will contribute to these aims through networking activities and providing opportunities for UK HEIs to learn about and discuss European and international developments. QAA will hold at least two European/international themed conferences for this purpose by the end of 2006.
- 21. Since we are not regulators or inspectors and our mission includes elements relating to the enhancement of the management of academic standards and quality, as well as the provision of information to the public, our task is not simply to do less reviewing, although that has been the consequence of our policies over the past five years. We shall use our best efforts to ensure that our reviews and other activities add value to the work of our subscribing institutions and those whose activities we look at, so that they may become more effective providers of higher education. We will make available our review findings, analyse and publish them in ways which will be helpful to our different constituencies. The 'Outcomes from institutional audit...' series of papers has been designed with this purpose in mind. The first series of papers will have been published by the end of June 2006. The second series will be in print by the end of March 2007, together with a new series, 'Outcomes from collaborative provision audit,' later in 2007.

Review

- 22. QAA commits itself to review the terms of this annex on an annual basis.

Summary of Action

Initiate discussions with all Concordat signatories to examine ways in which its aims can be achieved and discuss with organisations that commission us to undertake reviews how their needs can best be met in context of Concordat.

Initial discussions with commissioners by September 2006 and with other signatories by December 2006.

Engage with design process for aspects of transitional provisions that relate to HE in creation of single Inspectorate for Children and Learners.

By Autumn 2006

Take these forward into QAA relationship with the new body from its inception.

April 2007

Summary of Action

Hold at least two European/international themed conferences to help ensure European Higher Education Area develops in appropriate way.

Before end of 2006

Make available review findings, analyse and publish them in ways which will be helpful to enhancement of management of academic standards and quality

Publish first series of 'Outcomes from institutional audit...' papers by the end of June 2006.

Second series to be in print by the end of March 2007.

Publish new series, 'Outcomes from collaborative provision audit' before end of 2007.

Review QAA Annex to Concordat

By May 2007

Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) Annex to the Higher Education Concordat

Data Collection

1. We have been working increasingly closely with HESA on the collection and validation of HEI data to minimise the burdens on the sector. We have also participated fully in the Management Information Across Partners Group to enable data sharing.
2. We have integrated our data checking and validation processes with the HESA data collection process. All preliminary data returns made to HESA by institutions are now shared with us and we work jointly with HESA to ensure data quality and completeness. We use the final signed-off HEI data to populate our Initial Teacher Training (ITT) data systems and restrict and control any further changes to the data. Changes are currently limited to the update of late Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) awards and these are made through the HESA data collection systems and relayed to us. The objective is to ensure that we all work from the same dataset and that post publication changes to national statistics are avoided.
3. The next step for us in this area is the procurement of a new contract to bring together our two major data collection and handling exercises. These are: the creation and publication of statistical profiles of all initial teacher training providers; and the collection of student recruitment information required for funding HEIs.
4. The current contracts come to an end in June 2007. The new contract will incorporate the census and profiles collections, to reduce further the burdens on HEIs. The procurement process will commence in April/May with a view to a contract award in September 2006. We are building in a nine month overlap to allow a new contractor to develop, build and test the necessary systems before the current contracts expire. We will be requiring the new contractor to work as closely as possible with HESA to minimise burdens on providers.
5. We plan to have early discussions, by the end of April, with HESA and DfES, through the Concordat process to ensure that our procurement process will fully reflect the requirement to utilise as fully as possible existing data and information and to improve or develop that data to meet our needs where that is practicable.

Quality Assurance

6. Over the last few years we have worked closely with Ofsted to minimise the inspection burden on HEIs. The latest three year round of inspections will involve 40 per cent less inspection time than the previous round. We have introduced a risk based approach which has led to substantial reduction in the inspection load on HEIs which have demonstrated the strength of their internal management and quality assurance arrangements, and our inspection regime will concentrate increasingly on this aspect of provision.
7. We have worked closely with QAA and Ofsted to remove overlap between inspections and to standardise requirements. We expect this to lead to further streamlining of procedures, particularly for those HEIs where teacher training is a major part of the provision.

8. We will continue to review with Ofsted the 'fitness for purpose' of our inspection arrangements. We have already agreed to a lighter load for providers rated 'Good' from September 2006 and are working with Ofsted on new arrangements for the next round of inspections, due to start in 2008. We do, however, see a continuing role for Ofsted in ensuring that the professional standards for Qualified Teacher Status are maintained, and in allowing the Agency to fulfil its statutory responsibility to link its funding of teacher training to the quality of provision. The importance of maintaining the role of Ofsted is also a reflection of the location of teacher training. A substantial amount of the training – around two thirds of the one year postgraduate course takes place in schools and a third in an HEI – and quality assurance arrangements must be appropriate for both locations.

Timescales

9. **By September 2006:** award of a new contract to bring together TDA's two major data collection and handling exercises. The new contractor will be required to work as closely as possible with HESA to minimise burdens on providers.
10. **By September 2006:** working with OFSTED, implement a lighter inspection burden for HEIs rated "Good".
11. **By January 2008:** agree new arrangements with OFSTED for next round of inspections, standardising requirements and streamlining procedures where possible.

Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED)

Annex to the Higher Education Concordat

Current position

1. Ofsted welcomes the principles outlined in the concordat on quality assurance arrangements and data collection in higher education.
2. Across the full range of its activities, Ofsted has already begun to demonstrate its commitment to reducing unnecessary burden on the institutions it inspects, relying more on institutions' own quality assurance processes and developing inspection methodologies that are proportionate to risk.
3. A lighter touch approach, for example, has been adopted for the inspection of schools and colleges since autumn 2005 and plans are well-advanced to reduce inspection activity still further for good and outstanding schools and further education colleges and to target resources on the satisfactory and weak ones. Ofsted has been active in promoting a culture of self-assessment in schools and colleges.
4. We have worked closely with the Training and Development Agency (TDA) to reduce the burden of initial teacher training inspections. The current programme reduced the overall inspection tariff by 40%, based on a proportionate inspection process where good or very good provision receives a short inspection focusing on management and quality assurance. At the same time, we award grades for secondary provision as a whole rather than for separate subjects. We have further reviewed the inspection methodology during the first year of the current programme (2005/06) As a result, we have agreed with the TDA to introduce even more proportionate inspections for very good providers and small providers, to take effect from the 2006/07 academic year. Ofsted continues to work closely with the QAA and TDA to reduce any overlap in the inspections/reviews carried out by Ofsted and the QAA, share timetabling information to avoid clashes and share information to reduce the bureaucratic demands on providers.
5. We are currently two years into a four-year inspection programme of initial teacher training for teachers in further education (FETTI). It has become clearer this year that we should consider possible overlaps with QAA inspections of the HE providers of FE teacher training and we will liaise with QAA on the structure of the FETTI programme for the next two years.
6. The new college inspection arrangements, introduced in autumn 2005, for providers of post-16 education and training are now proportionate to risk and more tailored to institutions' circumstances. Decisions about differing resource levels and the timing of inspection take into account a college's track record, analysis of achievement data and the institution's self-assessment. A new system of annual one-day visits by inspectors is beginning to feed into this system and will lead to more careful and appropriate targeting of resources. Currently, in good colleges, inspection involves only a small core team of inspectors and individual areas of learning are not usually inspected.

7. In the last cycle of inspections, between 2003 and 2005, Ofsted and the ALI inspected LSC-funded provision in higher education institutions, at the request of the DfES. The approach was to have a 'level playing field' with other institutions offering the same qualifications, education and training opportunities. Therefore, the inspectorates applied the same principles to planning, notifying and conducting the inspections as they did for general FE colleges and sixth form colleges. With the revised common inspection framework and the new proportionate inspection arrangements now in place, most of the FE provision in HE inspected in the last round would be due a much lighter touch inspection from 2007.

Future position

8. From April 2007 post-16 institutions will no longer need to engage with two separate inspectorates. The changes to inspection services announced by the Secretary for State for Education and Skills in December 2005 will lead, subject to legislation, to a single inspectorate – the Office of Standards for Education, Children's Services and Skills.
9. We are also working with the TDA to review the inspection process for 2008/11. We have considered ways of making inspection proportionate to risk. From October 2006 we intend to further reduce inspection visits to very good providers and small providers. However, we believe it is essential that Ofsted continues to play a leading role in inspecting the quality of initial teacher training (ITT) because of the increasing number of school-based providers of employment based routes and the fact that the most of the HEI based training takes place in partnership schools. We need to agree procedures for assessing the quality of ITT wherever it is located.
10. Ofsted will liaise with the QAA to share timetabling information about FETT to try to avoid overlapping visits and to share any qualitative information relating to the HE providers of FETT that will help to reduce the information required from providers.
11. Ofsted is also committed to working with the QAA to share information and training, with the aim of eliminating unnecessary overlaps between inspections and audits and to use each other's judgements about quality to inform their inspection/audit processes.
12. Ofsted and the QAA are moving in the same direction. However, there is still much to be done in order to clarify and simplify inspection arrangements for those institutions offering both HE and LSC-funded FE provision. This applies not only to HE institutions offering FE but also to general further education colleges with substantial HE provision. Ofsted is committed to continuing to work collaboratively with colleagues from the DfES, QAA, LSC, UUK, AoC and other stakeholders to look at issues around data collection, use and benchmarks, to develop a greater consistency of approach and to begin to co-ordinate inspection and audit activities. In doing so, Ofsted is mindful of its role of providing an independent public account of the quality of education and training and standards achieved, as well as being in a position to highlight good practice and judge what steps need to be taken to improve provision further.
13. Ofsted supports the development of common definitions for post compulsory educational data which is being developed by the Management Information across Partners (MIAP) group. It is hoped that this will result in a unified set of data demands on HE establishments.

Issues and obstacles

14. Ofsted's role is to provide an independent public account of the quality of education and training and standards achieved and to bring about improvement in provision, as well as being in a position to highlight good practice and judge what steps need to be taken to improve provision further. In fulfilling this role, Ofsted is mindful of the need to apply the same principles of risk assessment and inspection to all institutions offering similar provision.
15. In relation to ITT, there is always the possibility that as Ofsted makes inspections more proportionate the sharing of information with QAA, or piloting joint activities, may make the procedures more complicated rather than less complicated. HEI must recognise that as ITT inspections are designed to judge and report on the quality of ITT wherever it takes place, and that they are tied to TDA requirements, the inspection of ITT in HEI cannot be replaced by QAA audits.
16. Paragraph 4.4 of the Concordat states that signatories should rely upon the findings of others, rather than duplicate them. Ofsted will use this process to consider jointly with TDA, DfES, HEFCE and QAA the implications of sharing judgements about weak quality in one area in a way that could impact on judgements in other areas. In particular, consideration needs to be given to incorporating judgements about non-compliance/poor quality in ITT in HEI into the wider reviews of the quality of the HEI made by QAA.

Timescales expected

17. Development and implementation of a more proportionate model of inspection for ITT for the academic year 2006/2007. Ongoing liaison with QAA to implement sharing of information and training for 2006/07 academic year.
18. The formation of a single inspectorate for education, children's services and skills in April 2007.
19. Review of an even more proportionate model of inspection for FE provision in light of the recent FE White Paper by December 2006.

Timescale for review

20. We intend to review the concordat annually

Ofsted Action plan

Action	responsible	timescale
Hold discussions with QAA to review the alignment of methodology with respect to co-ordinating inspection activity to draw on similar data and self assessment.	Wilf Hudson Harriet Harper	April 2007 for implementation September 2007
Development and introduction of a more proportionate model of inspections of very good and small providers of ITT.	Norman Blackett	Introduction in 2006/2007 academic year
Share reports and grades of ITT inspections with QAA and receive links to QAA information that would inform ITT inspections.	Norman Blackett	From July 2006
Ofsted will provide QAA with programmes of ITT and FETI as soon as they are decided to try to avoid overlapping inspections and audits.	Norman Blackett Christine Dick	From September 2006
QAA and Ofsted to attend training of inspectors (Ofsted) and reviewers (QAA) and provide briefings to ensure that they are familiar with different processes.	Norman Blackett	September 2006
QAA and Ofsted design a pilot for joint inspection/audit.	Norman Blackett	Pilots from Autumn 2007
Establishment of a single inspectorate for education, children's services and skills.	David Hinchliffe, David Eden	April 2007
Further review the inspection methodology of FE to bring about the requirements of the FE white paper for a move to inspection even more proportionate to risk and that are even lighter touch for good and outstanding colleges.	David Hinchliffe Paul Curry	December 2006
Review how this more proportionate and lighter touch inspection methodology will be applied to FE in HE.	Wilf Hudson Harriet Harper	April 2007

Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) Annex to the Higher Education Concordat

1. The ALI has a relatively limited involvement in the inspection of higher education institutions. It is responsible for inspecting the quality of further education provision in such institutions for learners aged 19 and above whilst Ofsted has responsibility for inspecting provision for those aged 16-18. Under the terms of the Learning and Skills Act 2000, the two inspectorates inspect all the further education in higher education institutions jointly in a single visit. Such joint inspections are carried out under the overall direction of Ofsted. A few higher education institutions offer work-learning provision which the ALI also has a responsibility to inspect. Where possible, the ALI tries to include the inspection of this provision within a planned joint inspection of the institution.
2. Under the provisions of the current Education and Inspections Bill, the ALI is merging on 1 April 2007 with Ofsted, Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and that part of Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Court Administration (HMICA) responsible for inspecting Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Services (CAFCASS) to form the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills, the 'new Ofsted'. The ALI will therefore cease to exist on 31 March 2007. After this date the new inspectorate will be responsible for taking forward any developments in the ALI's responsibilities in respect of higher education institutions. Any issues around data will be addressed through the Management Information Across Partners process.

Learning Skills Council (LSC) Annex to the Higher Education Concordat

Vision

1. The LSC's *agenda for change* prospectus published in August 2005, set out our vision for radically streamlining the way in which information is used in the sector, by only collecting the data which providers need to manage their own businesses, creating a consistent set of data definitions and management information reports, and introducing a Unique Learner Identifier and a record of learning for each individual.
2. The LSC believes that streamlining information flows is only possible if all of the relevant agencies involved in the collection and use of data work together to harmonise requests and reduce bureaucracy. This approach is already well embedded through the Managing Information across Partners (MIAP) programme led by the DfES, which is being delivered on behalf of partners by the LSC.
3. The LSC fully supports the principles set out in the Concordat, and welcomes the development of the concordat as it is very much in the spirit of the data and quality themes of the LSC *agenda for change*, as well as the MIAP programme.

Current position

4. The LSC has a longstanding reciprocal arrangement with HESA covering data collection for individualised learner data from HEIs and FE Colleges. HESA collects individualised learner data from HEIs about all their provision and then shares it with the LSC. The LSC does the same for FE Colleges with HE provision.
5. The LSC has reached agreement with a small number of HEIs who deliver a large amount of FE provision, to return Individual Learner Record (ILR) type data to the LSC so that quality measures can be calculated and the provision at the institution can be benchmarked with other similar provision in the area. This allows the LSC to fulfil its planning role.
6. In addition, the LSC asks HEIs to complete an annual forward budgeting and planning document, which is similar to other institutions receiving FE funding, as part of the annual planning and funding cycle.
7. The LSC will assure the quality of Further Education provision in HEIs through its normal annual review process and risk assessment, as part of the annual planning cycle. When carrying out such reviews it will minimise unnecessary burdens on HEIs. Information for such quality assurance reviews will be gathered in the way outlined in other parts of this annex. Information regarding the effectiveness of quality systems will be gained through the QAA assessment. However, in particular circumstances, inspection visits may be necessary by OfSTED/ALI in order to discharge statutory responsibilities and address perceived risks. Any intervention will be clearly risk-based and in proportion to the volume of Further Education provision.

Timescales

8. The LSC is committed to implementing the common data definitions and Unique Learner Number which are being developed as part of the MIAP programme. This will enable more effective data sharing between the organisations which are part of the MIAP group. The timescales for this are for **progressive implementation from 2007/08**.
9. The recently published (March 2006) white paper "Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances" sets out the government's support for the plans described in agenda for change to adopt common standards for data and reporting across the sector.
10. The White Paper sets out the government's intention to build on this by bringing together the information needs of all the organisations who request information from the sector and agree what will be required from all providers, based on common standards. The intention is ensure that:
 - data is collected once and used for a variety of purposes
 - only priority information is collected and that reports are fed back in a standard format.
11. The White Paper describes the intention to:
 - establish a single mechanism or gatekeeper for setting information standards and data and reporting requirements
 - set up an operational body or data agency to implement these requirements.
As suggested by Sir Andrew Foster, this could include giving the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) new responsibilities for post 16 data or simplifying the current LSC arrangements through a strong annual information agreement between colleges or providers and key data users.
12. The timescales for implementation are for **progressive implementation from 2006/07**.

Research Councils UK Annex to the Higher Education Concordat

1. Research Councils UK (RCUK) is the partnership between the UK's eight Research Councils. Through RCUK, the Research Councils work together to champion the research, training and innovation they support. The Research Councils are independent non-departmental public bodies, funded by the Science Budget through the Department of Trade and Industry.
2. RCUK was created to increase the collective visibility, leadership and policy influence of the Research Councils; to stimulate multi-disciplinary research that encourages collaboration; to provide a single focus for collective dialogue with stakeholders and to encourage greater harmonisation of internal operations.
3. The partnership is led by the RCUK Executive Group, which meets monthly and comprises the chief executives of the eight Research Councils. The Group is currently chaired by Professor Ian Diamond, Chief Executive of the Economic and Social Research Council.
4. The eight UK Research Councils are:
 - Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC);
 - Biotechnology & Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC);
 - Council for the Central Laboratory of the Research Councils (CCLRC);
 - Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC);
 - Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC);
 - Medical Research Council (MRC);
 - Natural Environment Research Council (NERC);
 - Particle Physics & Astronomy Research Council (PPARC).

The Concordat

5. The Research Councils fully subscribe to the principles of better regulation and endeavour to minimise any bureaucratic obligations placed on Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).
6. The Research Councils note that this Concordat has been specifically developed to address quality assurance and data collection relevant to the educational role of HEIs and does not therefore mention other aspects, such as research or knowledge transfer. The Research Councils' interactions with HEIs reach well beyond their educational role. Therefore, the Research Councils are signing the Concordat specifically within the context and parameters of the current scope and will endeavour to follow its principles in relation to quality assurance and data collection concerning the educational role of HEIs.

Current position

7. One of the aims of the Research Councils UK (RCUK) partnership is to ensure joined up operations between the Research Councils to improve services to the communities they sponsor. A key component of this activity is working with the academic community and Funding Councils to provide effective and efficient services, reducing the level of bureaucracy on researchers and administrators. The Research Councils are working together to address this challenge, across all areas of engagement with HEIs.
8. The Research Councils seek to use HESA data, where available, to fulfil their data requirements. The Research Councils are a statutory HESA customer and have contracted HESA to provide destination of leavers from higher education data on an annual basis. At the same time the Research Councils have discontinued their own separate collection of this data ensuring that HEIs only receive a single request for this information.
9. The Research Councils have collectively implemented the Joint Electronic Submission (JeS) system. In defining the requirements for this system, in consultation with HEIs, the opportunity was taken to harmonise many of the processes and data requirements across the Research Councils. This has been important for the recent introduction of full economic costs for research grants, which has further increased the level of harmonisation between the Research Councils, again in consultation with HEIs.
10. To enable Research Council Chief Executives to comply with their responsibilities for ensuring that public funds are being administered and used with propriety by award holding institutions, including HEIs, the Research Councils run a dipstick testing programme. Positive feedback has been received from institutions that have seen the mutual benefit of these visits and this approach is currently being adapted to embrace new requirements for quality assurance and validation of Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) full economic costing. The Research Councils remain committed to ensuring that this process remains as light touch as possible.

Future arrangements in line with the Concordat

11. The Research Councils intend to build on the partnership with HESA in a number of areas such as longitudinal analysis of student destinations or studies of post-doctoral populations. It will be important in this to work with HESA to improve the quality of its data.
12. The Research Councils receive public money to support and sustain the research base. It is therefore important that they are able to demonstrate what they have achieved and the benefits of their research to the UK. The Research Councils also have a formal obligation to provide performance data to the Office of Science and Innovation (OSI) and Treasury. This is not information that is amenable to a sector wide, HESA-like approach and therefore it is not practicable for the Research Councils to commit to asking HESA every time they require information from HEIs. The Research Councils are committed to ensuring that the performance management system does not impose excessive burdens on HEIs.
13. QAA is concerned about academic standards in teaching, but not in research and the Research Councils do not presently look to QAA to provide comments on research quality or other aspects of their business.

14. The Research Councils are committed to exploring areas where they cannot yet obtain data from QAA or HESA. The Research Councils are happy to participate in the Concordat process and, through that process, discuss with the other signatory bodies whether HESA, QAA, or any other body can develop their activities to meet any of the Councils' needs. Data must fully satisfy the standards required by the Councils i.e. sufficient to fulfil formal reporting requirements including those to Council stakeholders such as Government and be available at a reasonable cost.

Extending the scope of the Concordat

15. The Research Councils see an opportunity for the Concordat's objective of minimising the bureaucratic demands on HEIs to be extended beyond the current scope. The Research Councils will invite HEIs to engage with the Councils and other research sponsors in order to provide information about outputs and outcomes in a way that minimises the burden on them, while ensuring the necessary quality and maintenance of data that sponsors might reasonably expect them to provide. The Research Councils will be working with HERRG to explore the scope for developing a complementary Concordat which would seek to apply these principles to the provision of data concerning research activity and the exploitation of research. This will be discussed and developed in conjunction with the appropriate organisations involved in research.

Plans for 2006/07

16. The Research Councils will:
- build on the existing HESA partnership by commencing discussions with HESA **by July 2006** about improving the quality of data in areas such as longitudinal analysis of student destinations or studies of post-doctoral populations;
 - hold an initial meeting with HERRG **by March 2007** to discuss a complementary Concordat for research activity and the exploitation of research and decide how to progress this objective; and
 - **on the same timescale** and in discussion with appropriate Concordat signatory bodies identify whether their activities might be utilised or developed to reduce the need for Research Councils themselves to make direct demands on HEIs.

Skills for Health Annex to the Higher Education Concordat

Quality Assuring Healthcare Education – Context and Development

Introduction

1. *Skills for Health* was established in April 2002 and licensed by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) as the UK Sector Skills Council for health in May 2004. It is part of the NHS but with its own Board and management. *Skills for Health* covers the whole health sector – NHS, independent and voluntary employers. It is funded through the four UK health departments, the Sector Skills Development Agency, the Education Act regulatory bodies and the sector itself. Its role is UK-wide.
2. *Skills for Health* welcomes the HERRG Concordat and the opportunity to become a signatory to the Concordat. Discussion to date with HERRG, and with the Better Regulation Review Group before it, has served to identify the high degree of compatibility between the principles applied in *Skills for Health's* work and HERRG's approach: both derive from the Cabinet Office principles for better regulation.
3. There is wide acceptance in the healthcare and healthcare education community that the arrangements for the quality assurance (QA) of healthcare programmes in HEIs require a rather different (but complementary) approach to that applied in other HE subject areas. This is because:
 - The specifically contractual basis of NHS-commissioned programmes differs from the HEFCE block-grant environment and presents additional requirements for accountability
 - Health programmes have a high – typically 50%, and sometimes more – mandatory practice placement component which needs to be fully reflected
 - Public safety issues arise in an immediate (and potentially life-threatening) form given students' direct access from an early stage in their pre-registration programmes to patients
 - Health is a subject area where HEIs' offer needs to be particularly responsive to fast changing service needs
4. *Skills for Health*, with partners, has been developing new arrangements for quality assuring health care education, assuming this leadership role under the terms of a Service Level Agreement from the Department of Health. The arrangements will apply to England, but will be based upon the exchange of information about good QA practice with the other UK nations and internationally.
5. *Skills for Health* acknowledges the need for the emerging QA framework for healthcare education to complement the framework of QA at HEI institutional level which the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) applies, adapting to this as it develops over time, and to draw

wherever possible upon the information resources of the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). In respect of quality assurance, *Skills for Health* will work with its healthcare education partners towards systems which eliminate overlap and duplication, which as far as possible utilise information already available or developed by other bodies and in which additional information is sought only where this is essential to meet statutory, regulatory, contractual or policy responsibilities.

Focus and purpose

6. Historically, the focus of *Skills for Health's* QA activity has been on credit-bearing programmes in nursing, midwifery and the allied health professions, principally those commissioned by Strategic Health Authorities (Workforce Development Directorates). This encompasses provision valued at more than £1.5 billion, delivered in more than 80 HEIs (and partner healthcare providers) to more than 75,000 students.
7. The rationale for a Partnership Quality Assurance Framework (PQAF)'s was set out in *Quality Assuring Health Care Education – Purpose and Action* (Department of Health, 2001). This rationale may be summarised as being to:
 - Drive quality enhancement
 - Ensure accountability
 - Support choice by providing information to employers, public, students and potential employees;

and in doing so, where possible, reduce burden by fulfilling multiple needs through common streamlined processes, in line with better regulation principles.
8. *Skills for Health's* partners have been the Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs), the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), the Health Professions Council (HPC), and the DH. (The responsibilities of the SHAs are currently under review.) There has in addition been extensive consultation, both national and local, with a wider set of stakeholders, including representatives of the HE sector and individual HEIs.
9. Partnership arrangements for QA of healthcare education are currently under review. It is agreed that new structures, potentially with a wider membership, will be introduced, and that an independent chair will be established as part of the new arrangements. New partnership arrangements will fully recognise the statutory obligations of individual partners including regulators, not all of which obligations will necessarily be channelled through the partnership.
10. Meeting of Chief Executives and their nominees from existing and potential new partner organisations (including Universities UK) were held in February and May 2006, and gave initial consideration to how this should be done, beginning with a mapping of healthcare education partners' existing processes and standards.
11. A national reference group (the Quality Assurance Stakeholders Development Group, QASDeG) exists, and normally meets quarterly. QASDeG has a number of Higher Education members. Local reference groups are also maintained as a two-way source of information and advice on both the principles and the practical application of QA for healthcare education.

National Contract Framework for Healthcare Education

12. It has been agreed that the arrangements for quality assuring health care education, when finalised, will be incorporated as a national QA Framework into the formal requirements of the national contract framework for healthcare education in England which is being implemented under an agreement between the Department of Health and representative bodies for Higher Education.

Healthcare Commission Concordat

13. Given that effective QA of healthcare education necessarily involves scrutiny of practice placements as learning environments, *Skills for Health* has recently signed up to the Concordat of the Healthcare Commission, which seeks to streamline the impacts upon healthcare providers of audit, inspection and quality assurance agencies.

Recent developments and current activity

14. The three Framework elements – Major Review, Programme Approval and Ongoing Quality Monitoring and Enhancement (OQME) – are at different stages of development, review and implementation. Thus:
- Development and introduction of Major Review has been undertaken on *Skills for Health's* behalf by the QAA. The current cycle of Major Review is more than half complete, and runs through to December 2006. Completed Major Review reports are available on the QAA web-site. Consideration will be given in 2006 to whether a further iteration of Major Review is required, with no automatic presumption of continuation. The judgements about quality of provision reached through Major Reviews have to date generally (though with a small number of exceptions) been very positive (a high prevalence of 'commendable' judgements, coupled with full confidence in academic and practitioner standards).
 - Development, consultation, prototype testing and evaluation of possible arrangements for Approval (of learning programmes), Ongoing Quality Monitoring and Enhancement (OQME), and a set of shared standards and supporting evidence for this, took place in 2004 and 2005. The prototyped set of standards, derived from a mapping exercise and a public consultation, represented a significant reduction from a number of existing separate and overlapping groups of standards.
15. Whilst the details of the overall architecture of QA Framework and arrangements have yet to be finalised, there is agreement on the general principles which will underlie these, in effect adapting the Cabinet Office better regulation principles to the healthcare education context, namely:
- *Minimisation of burden* on practice placement and education providers, consistent with assuring quality
 - Emphasis on quality *enhancement* as much as quality assurance
 - Parity of *practice-based* with academic education
 - *Self evaluation* by education and practice placement providers as a starting point
 - Use of *existing* evidence sources and QA processes wherever possible

- *Publication* of findings from QA processes, including examples of good practice
- Clear *action plans* for remedying short-comings where they are identified

16. Recent developments include:

- Assessment of partner and stakeholder responses to the prototypes and the evaluations of them; and wider views regarding future arrangements for quality assuring healthcare education, derived from a series of consultative events which *Skills for Health* organised in autumn 2005
- A commissioned review of international best practice in health care education quality assurance – published on the *Skills for Health* web-site in December 2005
- A report to Department of Health upon the outcomes of the evaluation of prototype testing – November 2005
- Interim Standards for QA – published May 2006 and, with fewer standards, representing a significant further streamlining from the earlier prototyped version.
- Foundation-laying for new partnership arrangements – early 2006

Concordat review

17. *Skills for Health*, with its partners, will review the terms of this Annex after twelve months in the light of progress and will, if partnership needs indicate, add further steps with milestones, taking full account of the scope to reduce further the demands made of HEIs.

Future plans and timescales

18. The following is a summary of the specific activities we plan that will further reduce the administrative burdens on HEIs, while ensuring continued assurance that quality of healthcare education is maintained and, wherever possible, improved. The timescales remain tentative and subject to revision as *Skills for Health* and its healthcare education partners continue to develop the approach set out in this Annex.

Activity	Stages	Timescale
Decide what should follow current cycle of Major Review	End of current cycle of Major Review	December 2006
	Consider whether a further iteration of MR is required; no automatic presumption of continuation (and integrally linked to new QA framework)	May 2007
Develop and decide overall architecture of QA Framework and arrangements on general principles which adapt Cabinet Office better regulation principles to the healthcare education context	Publish Interim Standards for QA with fewer standards and significant further streamlining from earlier prototyped version	May 2006
	Publish information for learners and service users	June 2006
	Interim Standards for QA start to be used for 2006/07 academic year	September 2006
	Publish Consultation document on future QA arrangements, maximising opportunities to meet partners' needs through common, streamlined approaches	January 2007
	Agreement on future QA arrangements	May 2007
	<i>Skills for Health</i> contracts for training package to support new arrangements	Summer 2007
	Early adopter implementation of new arrangements in academic year 2007/08	September 2007
	Full adoption in England of new arrangements from academic year 2008/09	September 2008
	Incorporate arrangements for quality assuring health care education as a national QA Framework into the formal requirements of the national contract framework for healthcare education in England	Summer 2007
Establish new partnership forum for QA of healthcare education, with wider (including HE) membership	Partnership Summit meetings to support development of protocols and terms of partnership	July and October 2006
	Extended membership agreed by all partners	Summer 2006
	Appoint independent Chair of forum	Autumn 2006
	Formally establish new forum	Autumn 2006
HERRG Concordat	Review in the light of progress and needs of partnership, adding further steps with milestones, taking full account of the scope to reduce further the demands made of HEIs	May 2007

The Information Centre for Health and Social Care Annex to the Higher Education Concordat

About Us

1. The Information Centre for Health and Social Care works to co-ordinate and streamline the collection and sharing of data about health and adult social care. We are providing an important service to front line healthcare staff, by reducing the time they spend on data collection – allowing them more time to concentrate on providing care to patients. To improve accessibility we will be a focus for everyone who needs information, including patients, clinicians and regulators such as Monitor and the Health Commission.
2. The Information Centre is a special health authority that became a statutory body on 1 April 2005.
3. The authority took on some of the information related functions of the former NHS Information Authority and some statistics and information management functions of the Department of Health including social care.
4. The authority is tasked with three main strands of work:
 - Making information more accessible
 - Reducing the burden
 - Strengthening the capacity for informed decision making

Our current involvement with HEI data

5. Currently, the main use of HEI data within the Information Centre sits with the Workforce Analysis Team. They receive an annual extract of HESA data which focuses on people studying for Healthcare Courses. Over the past twelve months, a lot of effort has gone into coding the data into reliable subject groups, so we can answer questions on numbers studying for courses which lead into particular Healthcare Professions.
6. This data is now coded for academic years 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05. The next stage we are keen to investigate is to work with other users of HEI data (and HESA) in order to develop robust measures of *attrition* from Healthcare Courses during Summer 2006.

Our relationship with the Concordat

7. As part of our commitment to the principles of the Concordat, the Information Centre are currently liaising with workforce planning colleagues across the NHS to develop a list of standardised tables, using the HESA extract we receive to inform them about numbers studying for courses etc. It is hoped that this provides them with a lot of information in the '*Collect once, use many times*' spirit of the Concordat.

8. We currently do not collect information from HEIs themselves – we go through HESA in order to obtain the data we use. Hence, our commitment to the Concordat means we will focus on data sharing in order to maximise the information obtained from the data we process and working with other signatories to try to ensure we continue to do so if we need new information not currently available.

The Skills for Business network Annex to the Higher Education Concordat

Current position

1. In 2006 the Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA) successfully achieved its first major milestone in completing the Skills for Business network of 25 Sector Skills Councils (SSCs). The network has four strategic objectives in increasing productivity, addressing skills gaps and shortages, providing greater opportunities for the workforce, and improving learning supply.
2. Much recent policy development aimed at raising quality and standards has been in post-16 learning and skills and has focused on improving the quality of the supply side; that is, organisational issues and the 'architecture' of training, further and some higher education, predominately around foundation degrees. The demand side has received less attention, except in strengthening the learner voice in higher education student surveys. The Sector Skills Development Agency and the Skills for Business network are encouraging the development of the employer's voice in the curriculum, both to improve employability and to improve the relevance of the curriculum to learners and employers. They are also keen for the collective voice of employers to be taken into account in vocational education. Employers also have a role to play as external examiners and reviewers of higher education provision and intervention in policy and practice could address this issue.
3. In order to explore improved employer influence in vocational education quality and curricula the Skills for Business network have agreed to the general principles outlined in the Concordat and to become a signatory. The direction of travel to move towards a less burdensome, more proportionate approach to quality assurance and data collection is welcomed. We support the need for all stakeholders, including SSCs and employers, to have the data they need and to have confidence in quality assurance, particularly when they are at the centre of the vocational education development process.
4. As part of the SSC standard and review process the Sector Skills Development Agency monitor various aspects of SSC performance to improve the quality and relevance of the supply side, including tools of influence, particularly through Sector Skills Agreements. The SSDA do not have the capacity or resources to monitor individual endorsement schemes across the wide spectrum of education and training organisations. Also SSDA conflict of interest policy is intended to assist SSCs avoid getting into situations of conflict of interest when developing income generating products.

Future position

5. The Skills for Business network are committed to working with all the stakeholders and are to hold early discussions with the Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) about the specific data set needs to inform the Sector Skills Agreements (SSAs). Sector Skills Councils do not subscribe to HESA and do not receive the privileges or special data arrangements of other institutions such as the Learning and Skills Council. The Data Service provided by HESA is proving expensive for Sector Skills Councils and the current data does not meet the needs of the Sector Skills Agreements. The Skills for Business network would like to work with HESA to improve the quality of data sets and input into the design of structures to ensure that HESA data meets the needs and requirements of the Sector Skills Agreements and is free of charge.
6. A number of Sector Skill Councils administer 'endorsement schemes'. These are additional tools of influence for employers in enhancing and driving up the quality of training and education and enhance formal quality assurance. The Skills for Business network would like to work with QAA to secure direct benefits to programmes by acknowledging these as enhancements to formal quality assurance procedures in higher education.
7. The Skills for Business network would like to develop reciprocal partnerships between higher education and industry to inform the work of the Quality Assurance Agency in reviewing benchmark statements for identified vocational provision to ensure they reflect national occupational/competence standards where these exist and have engaged in early discussions. We would welcome a more flexible approach to policy interventions by QAA to ensure that guidance for institutions is fit for purpose and written in plain English. The Sector Skills Development Agency is part of relevant review groups but outcomes are not consistent with change.
8. We would like industry to work with stakeholders to develop a national training scheme for employers to work as External Examiners and for teams and reviewers of education to include significant employer representation. The Skills for Business network consider it important that formal quality assurance recognises and values high employer investment in programmes and include the employer voice in formal 'quality assurance procedures'.
9. The Skills for Business Network are happy to commit to review the terms of this annex on an annual basis to report progress.

Action plan

Action	Timescale
Commence discussions with HESA about enabling their data set provision to meet the needs and requirements of Sector Skills Agreements – in particular, improving quality of data, input into design and charging policy.	By October 2007
Commence discussions with QAA about SSC endorsement schemes to consider effectively developing the iterative relationship between our respective activities and how both bodies might utilise the work of the other to improve judgements on quality of provision while reducing the burden on HEIs.	By October 2007
Discuss with QAA development of reciprocal partnerships between HE and industry to inform QAA's work.	By December 2007
Discuss with QAA a more flexible approach to their policy interventions to ensure guidance for institutions is fit for purpose and written in plain English.	By October 2007
Consider with other stakeholders how to effectively recognise the "employer voice" in formal QA procedures, including development of a national training scheme for employers to as External Examiners and for employer representation within teams and reviewers of education.	By December 2007
Consider progress and review the terms of this annex.	By May 2007

Managing Information Across Partners (MIAP)

Annex to the Higher Education Concordat

1. MIAP is about streamlining how post-14 information on learners, learning and learning providers is shared across the education sector and used by individual learners so that excellent services are made available to individuals, employers and communities. This programme of improvement to data collection and sharing is being introduced over several years and is being led by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) and delivered by the Learning and Skills Council (LSC). Following extensive consultation, Ministers and the MIAP Stakeholder Group have endorsed a programme of work that will simplify the way information about learners and providers is collected, handled and shared.
2. MIAP will introduce common data definitions to be used across the education and skills sector, a Unique Learner Number for every person undertaking education and training, and mechanisms that will allow information on learners and providers to be collected once, used many times and used by all. It will enable appropriate local and national agencies to share information; reducing bureaucracy for learners, schools, colleges, work based learning providers, universities, awarding bodies and employers.
3. The MIAP Stakeholder Group encompasses the organisations covered by the HERRG Concordat. Representatives from the HERRG Concordat group including DfES, HESA and LSC sit on the MIAP Programme Board.
4. The MIAP Programme Board is fully committed to the HERRG Concordat and to delivering a solution which builds on the agreed principles and will within 3 months of the Concordat's launch start to work with those in the lead on delivering its principles to identify barriers to the Concordat's objectives which MIAP activity might be able to remove.
5. The data sharing framework was agreed by all MIAP partners in Autumn 2004 and MIAP will deliver other outcomes relevant to the Concordat on the following timescales:
 - Common data definitions will be introduced **during 2006/07**
 - A Learner Registration Service, including Unique Learner Numbers will be prototyped **during 2006/07**
 - The Learner Data Sharing Interface will be **designed during 2006/07, trialled in 2007/08 and become operational by 2010**
6. MIAP is taking a phased approach to change. With many diverse systems and processes in place across the education and skills sector, any attempt to introduce a 'big bang, one size fits all' approach would be high risk, disruptive to learners and providers and extremely expensive to implement.

Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)

Annex to the Higher Education Concordat

1. **Our vision is that HESA develops as the source of choice as well as the primary national source for the cost-effective collection of data about Higher Education, driving the specification of data that is useful to HE Institutions for their own purposes and which enables government, funding agencies and all other users to understand trends and inform their own strategic and administrative purposes.**
2. HESA is the primary, although not the single, focus for national, sector-wide HE data collection. The major funding bodies (HEFCE; TDA; DH/NHS; Research Councils) are now using data from HESA where previously they collected it independently. However, there is further scope for HESA to collect and process data and to provide a service which eliminates the need for separate collection or processing. HESA also has the potential to develop analytical work to add value for customers to the data collected.
3. **The Agency is committed to working with its Statutory Customers across the UK to ensure that it provides the nature and quality of service to them that makes HESA their preferred data collection mechanism.**
 - The Agency recognises that not all needs are met by its present pattern and style of data collection, and plans to develop a broader portfolio of approaches to data collection, to position it to streamline current requirements and respond to new requests in a cost effective manner. Current initiatives include:
 - The introduction of the longitudinal (3½ years after completion) component of the destinations survey on a centrally-operated sample basis, is an example of the kind of thinking that can help users. A pilot survey was conducted on the 2002/03 graduating cohort in 2005/06 to identify the preferred methodology and establish likely response rates, and the first substantive survey will be carried out on a disjoint sample from the same cohort in 2006/07.
 - In addition, a web-based data collection service for the collection of data from new qualifiers in the initial destinations return is under development. The HESA Board will assess the success of pilot work at its May 2006 meeting, and subject to approval a full service will be in place for 2006/07.

A further programme of review of existing data collection will include the following:

- Discussion with DfES, HEFCE and TDA on the design of a more formal process for identifying alternative methods for data collection and assessing the relative burdens involved will be initiated at a meeting in June 2006.
- The HESA record review process already meets the need to conduct a regular review with stakeholders of each data collection, including the consideration of radical options such as discontinuation (as in the case of the December student return), radical reduction, and conversion to voluntary status (as in the case of the return of non-credit-bearing provision). Each record will in future be subject

to this full review process at intervals of not more than five years and a post-implementation review will take place where appropriate on the basis of one year's experience with a newly reviewed record.

- The design process for the revised student record has introduced a rigorous data model that will allow repetitious collection (for example, of entry qualifications) to be avoided. Following the earlier BRTF-mandated review of requirements, low-priority items are being removed from the record and alternative procedures are being developed for areas of data that can be collected effectively on an aggregate or sample basis rather than through the individualised record. These changes will come into effect for 2007/08.
 - Collaboration with the Department of Health project to map data demands from individual Strategic Health Authorities and Trusts in order to examine the potential for a single, shared specification. HESA's contact with DH/NHS is now through the Information Centre for Health & Social Care (recently designated as a Strategic Health Authority) and this work will be initiated at a meeting in May 2006.
 - Effective automated data transfer from UCAS (via institutions, to maintain the institutional sign-off principle, see below) is already in place, using common data standards, and the scope for this is being further developed in the context of the redesigned HESA student record being introduced for 2007/08. The possibility of direct UCAS-to-HESA data transfer to reinforce data quality assurance (on a similar basis to the recently introduced exchange of data with the Socrates/Erasmus Office) is being explored.
 - Exploration as above with the Learning and Skills Council and the development of proposals for co-ordinating HE and FE data through one Agency. Following the Foster report and the White Paper *Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances* work is currently being carried out to establish how this might operate and a report by DfES officials to Ministers will allow a decision to be taken in June 2006. If Ministers decide on this approach, implementation will commence early in 2006/07 with a first impact on data collection for 2007/08.
4. The principles that the Agency sees as common to all its data collection processes, present and future, are: first, the need to achieve data quality that makes the data fit-for-purpose, but at minimal cost to institutions; and secondly, the need for institutions explicitly to take primary responsibility for achieving that quality (and to 'sign off' the results), but in doing so to expect and rely on a range of support, guidance, and training from the Agency.
5. **HESA welcomes the encouragement offered in discussion with HERRG to take a more pro-active position in providing data-based services that will be necessary to deliver the above programme.**
- A major step in this direction is currently in hand through the Higher Education Information Database for Institutions (HEIDI) project to develop a management information system for institutions based on the successful LUMIS project at the University of Leeds. This project is being funded by HEFCE and the funding bodies in the devolved administrations at a level of around £300k over eighteen months. The initial objective is to provide a system that incorporates the current capabilities of LUMIS, the HESA On-Line Information System (HOLIS), and the institutional-level Higher

Education Management Statistics (HEMS) and HEIDI will have an open-ended design allowing for the incorporation of further sets of data and additional analysis capabilities in the future. HEIDI will become operational in April 2007.

- The present HESA Information Provision Service deals with about 1,500 requests each year, roughly one-third of which arise from the HE sector. The service forms part of HESA's commercial activity and in 2004/05 showed a net profit of £139K (on a turnover of £275K). HESA's total commercial profit as budgeted for 2005/06, of which IP profit is the major part, allowed the capitation element of the subscription payable by institutions for 2005/06 to be reduced from 93.8p to 87.1p. Commercial income constitutes about one-seventh of the total income of the Agency. The IP service is at present reactive in character and has grown organically in response to demand. The IP Service is well-placed to form the basis for a much more pro-active analysis and consultancy service, which would complement the facilities available to institutions through HEIDI. Users outside the Sector would also be able to commission analyses based on HESA data. Elements of such a development are likely to include the introduction of a portfolio of analyses designed to meet the needs of individual institutions and the production of topic-oriented sector analyses and position papers. In the latter case, care will of course be taken to maintain HESA's independence and integrity as a data source. During 2006/07 the HESA Board will establish stretching targets to develop the IP service in this way and increase its contribution to costs, so that implementation can follow on from the initial release of HEIDI.
- HESA is currently negotiating with DfES over the provision of a service to provide on a regular basis the quantitative input to responses to parliamentary questions relating to HE and, subject to agreement, it is expected that this will become operational in mid-2006.

Timescales

- Longitudinal Destination of Leavers in Higher Education (DLHE) introduced on 2002/03 cohort **in 2006/07**
- DLHE web-based collection service **2006/07** (subject to approval)
- Formalisation of burden assessment – **work begins June 2006**
- Revised student record and associated changes **2007/08**
- Work with DH/NHS on alignment issues **May 2006**
- Integrated HE/FE data collection decision **June 2006**
- ... and, if agreed, first impact of integrated collection **2007/08**
- HEIDI becomes operational **April 2007**
- Enhanced IP service building up following the release of HEIDI
- PQ service to DfES **mid-2006** (subject to agreement)

Architects Registration Board Annex to the Higher Education Concordat

Preface

1. The Architects Registration Board (ARB or the Board) warmly welcomes the Higher Education Regulation Review Group's invitation to become a signatory of the Concordat on Data Collection and Quality Assurance. Through its innovative and light-touch approach to its statutory duty to prescribe qualifications in architecture, ARB is committed to finding ways of assisting Higher Education Institutions seeking to gain professional recognition for their awards. ARB believes that adherence to this Concordat will pave the way towards making the process easier.

Current Position

2. The Architects Act, 1997 gives the Architects Registration Board the duty of determining who has the legal right to practise as an architect in the UK. Most are registered by the Board because they have a qualification and practical experience that the Board has prescribed (see section 4(1)(a) of the Act). The Board therefore has a statutory duty to set the standards required of someone who wishes to be registered. The Act thus makes the prescription of qualifications central to the Board's work and it cannot be left, still less delegated, to any other body.
3. In 2002 the ARB published criteria (www.arb.org.uk/education/arb-criteria/contents.shtml) which set out the minimum levels of awareness, knowledge, understanding and ability that students of architecture must acquire at key stages in the process of qualifying as an architect. These criteria are transparent and form the basis upon which ARB makes decisions as to whether or not qualifications can be prescribed. They also ensure consistency of process and decision making. Before ARB prescribes a qualification it has to be satisfied that any person to whom it is awarded has and will have met all its criteria.
4. ARB's Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications (www.arb.org.uk/education/prescription-procedures.shtml) describe how from September 2003 universities, schools of architecture, and other institutions that award an architectural degree, diploma, or the like, may apply for and obtain the decision of the ARB as to whether it will be recognised as a prescribed qualification. ARB's decision, for which it is accountable to the public and the profession, is made on the basis of the documentary material selected and submitted by an institution and does not involve ARB, or its representatives, visiting or inspecting an institution. Neither does ARB pro-actively collect data or material. Rather, it is the recipient of data and material selected by institutions themselves to secure the Board's confidence. That data and material is typically used by the institutions for their own purposes.
5. The Procedures are intended to be both proportionate and simple to operate both from the point of view of the applicant institution and of the ARB. They are targeted to give the institution freedom to decide what will best support its application and envisage that institutions will already be in possession of the material needed to secure the Board's confidence.

6. The Procedures are flexible in order to accommodate the position of individual applicants and, if needed, to allow for adjustments.

Future

7. ARB is committed to reviewing the operation of its Procedures annually.
8. The principles of the Concordat will inform the review process. In particular, the following themes will be addressed within each annual review:
 - The administrative impact on institutions and ARB and how, if at all, these can be reduced;
 - The costs to institutions of submitting applications to ARB and how, if at all, these can be reduced;
 - The best use by ARB and institutions of material/data collected by other signatories, in particular QAA and HESA, in securing ARB's confidence to prescribe a qualification;
 - Advice and guidance to institutions on sourcing relevant existing and available material;
 - Best use of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Visiting Board reports, with a view to encouraging the RIBA to adopt an approach complementary to ARB in its validation of courses and to adopt the principles of the Concordat;
 - Enhancement of the risk-based approach to prescribing qualifications.

The Institution of Engineering and Technology

Annex to the Higher Education Concordat

Preface

1. The Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET) was created on 31st March 2006, from two established bodies: the Institution of Electrical Engineers (IEE) and The Institution of Incorporated Engineers (IIE). Building on the aims, objectives and successes of its component parts, the IET will facilitate the generation and dissemination of knowledge and the advancement of science, engineering and technology through publishing, education and its networks. (www.theiet.org)
2. The IET welcomes the opportunity to become a signatory to the Concordat on Data Collection and Quality Assurance, which it believes will assist Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) seeking to gain recognition for their awards.

Current Position

3. The IET is a registered charity, with some 160,000 members, making it the largest organization of its kind in Europe. It has main offices in the UK, Hong Kong, America and China, and plans to open an office in India in 2006. There are 50 branches outside the UK.
4. The IET remit means that it has strong connections with universities, colleges and learned societies throughout the world. In particular, it performs the important function of registering professional engineers, as Chartered Engineer, Incorporated Engineer or Engineering Technician. Over half of the members are registered through the IET as professional engineers. (www.theiet.org/careers/qualifications/)
5. Accreditation of degree programmes and other qualifications is central to the registration of engineers and the IET continues to carry out a programme of accreditation visits to fulfil its obligations to its regulator, the Engineering Council UK. In addition, accreditation visits are made to universities and colleges throughout the world. Accreditation is primarily focused on establishing the acceptability of specific degree programmes as providing an appropriate education for graduates who seek to register as professional engineers. The IET accredits approximately 700 programmes each year. (www.iee.org/professionalregistration/accreditation/index.cfm)
6. The IET is aware that, in recent years, a number of changes have taken place to the regulatory environment in which departments operate. For example, QAA Subject Review has given way to Institutional Audit supplemented by Discipline Audit Trails and it is now expected that universities will be using internal review mechanisms such as periodic review as an integral part of their institutional quality management framework. Each of these activities in isolation can be justified as achieving a specific purpose in terms of maintaining quality and ensuring that standards are upheld. However, if the cumulative burden of regulatory intervention becomes too great then there is a danger that damage will start to be inflicted on the very thing that it was originally designed to protect.

7. It is in the above context that the IET continues to explore ways in which the burden on institutions and departments might be reduced without compromising the high quality and standards of degree programmes for which the UK has built up an enviable reputation. The IET is redesigning its accreditation procedures to place more emphasis on the achievement of output standards and departments have been consulted on proposals relating to this. At the same time, it has been recognised that the possibility of aligning accreditation visits with institutional periodic review events, with a view to minimizing the amount of additional documentation that departments have to produce, would benefit both the IET and institutions and departments.
8. In 2005, the IET (as the IEE) and the QAA agreed that the two organizations should aim to work together more closely for their mutual benefit and for the benefit of higher education institutions. An agreement was signed which commits both bodies to investigate how the sharing of information (e.g. accreditation visit reports and QAA visit reports) might assist in reducing duplication of effort. This could mean that, in future, with HEI agreement, the IET could rely on the QAA for information about Quality Assurance at the institutional level and that the QAA could rely on the IET for information on activities within specific departments. (www.qaa.ac.uk/news/media/pressreleases/23_Aug_2005.asp)
9. The IET also recognises professional development schemes by accrediting company training schemes both within the UK and overseas. Here, in a similar fashion to the HEI case, the IET has been negotiating agreements which, where appropriate and possible, will enable the use of company processes and documentation to avoid duplication of effort. (www.iee.org/professionalregistration/accreditation/index.cfm)

Future

10. The IET registration and accreditation procedures are subject to annual review: externally by the regulator, the Engineering Council UK; internally, by a team appointed for the task from the membership.
11. The principles of the Concordat will inform the review process, with the following themes being addressed:
 - the administrative impact on HEIs and the IET and where these might be reduced;
 - the costs to HEIs of making submissions to IET and where these might be reduced;
 - the best use by the IET and HEIs of materials and data collected by other signatories, in particular, QAA, as part of the IET's accreditation process;
 - the possibility of the agreement with the QAA leading to HEIs receiving a reduced number of visits overall.

Timescales

12. **Within six months:** the IET will enter into further discussions with relevant HEIs and the QAA to consider what steps might be taken to provide data which meet each other's needs.
13. **After 12 months:** the IET will review this Annex against progress made and, where reasonable, add new objectives and revised timescales.

Glossary

AI	Academic Infrastructure
ALI	Adult Learning Inspectorate
AMS	Annual Monitoring Statement
AoC	Association of Colleges
ARB	Architects Registration Board
BRTF	Better Regulation Task Force
CAFCASS	Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service
CSCI	Commission for Social Care Inspection
DEL	Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DH	Department of Health
DLHE	Destination of Leavers from Higher Education
FE	Further Education
FETT	Further Education Teacher Training
FETTI	Inspection of teacher training for teachers in further education
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England
HEFCW	Higher Education Funding Council for Wales
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEIDI	Higher Education Information Database for Institutions
HERRG	Higher Education Regulation Review Group
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
HESES	Higher Education Students Early Statistics Survey
HMICA	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Court Administration
IET	Institution of Engineering and Technology
ILR	Individualised Learner Record
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
LUMIS	Leeds University Management Information System

LSC	Learning and Skills Council
MIAP	Managing Information Across Partners
NHS	National Health Service
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education
PSRB	Professional and Statutory Regulatory Bodies
QA	Quality assurance
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
QASDeG	Quality Assurance Stakeholders Development Group
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
RC	Research Council
RCUK	Research Councils UK
RIBA	Royal Institute of British Architects
SFC	Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council
SLC	Student Loans Company
SSA	Sector Skills Agreement
SSC	Sector Skills Council
SSDA	Sector Skills Development Agency
TDA	Training and Development Agency for Schools
TRAC	Transparent Approach to Costing
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
UUK	Universities UK

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