

Quality Assurance and Compliance News

Issue 6 - November 2021

Welcome to the Quality Assurance and Compliance Office Newsletter



QUALITY ASSURANCE &
COMPLIANCE OFFICE /
ANNEX 10 QA CLINICS

Book a 30-minute QA Clinic to for 1-2-1 training on any aspect of Academic Misconduct policy and procedure. Sessions would be beneficial for Academic Misconduct Committee Chairs, Secretaries or Panel Members. Staff members who are new to the process or would like to refresh their knowledge of Annex 10 are encouraged to book a session.

Annex 10 QA Clinics will be running until the end of the Autumn Term. Book via the QA Clinic form on our website: <https://form.jotform.com/210694401587357>

For more information visit: <https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/> or email the QA Training team at gacotraining@kent.ac.uk.



Kent Union have an open call for Student Representatives to join Academic Misconduct Committees as panel members. Training and resources for all Representatives will be provided by the Quality Assurance & Compliance Office.

For more information and to register, students should email Academic Policy & Representation Manager **Lauren Harrison** at L.C.Harrison@kent.ac.uk.

New definitions of quality & standards for English Higher Education by **Jana Moehren (Quality Assurance & Compliance Adviser, QACO)**

The regulator for Higher Education in England, the Office for Students (OfS) has recently consulted on changing some of its conditions of registration relating to quality and standards. It is expected that these changes will soon come into force, but at the time of writing we are still waiting for the final publication. Previously, only minor changes have been made to any OfS proposals following consultation. We can expect the current consultation proposals to be implemented soon.

What are the conditions of registration and why do they matter for us?

The OfS came into place in 2018, replacing HEFCE and the Office for Fair Access, but with a different remit as a regulator. In its regulatory function, the OfS maintains a Register of English Higher Education institutions that meet its Conditions of Registration. Being on the register is a prerequisite to register students and receive fees, receive public grant funding, be granted degree awarding powers and to maintain a student sponsor license for visas for international students.

The conditions of registration cover seven areas of a provider's activities:

- A. Access and participation
- B. Quality, standards and outcomes
- C. Protecting students' interests including consumer law
- D. Financial sustainability
- E. Governance
- F. Provision of information
- G. Accountability

The conditions have to be met at all times and the OfS continuously monitors whether a provider is at risk of breaching any of them. The conditions that are now revised are the so called 'B conditions', related to quality and standards.

Isn't quality for higher education defined by the Quality Code and the QAA?

No, with the implementation of the OfS, for English providers the role of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) has changed. The QAA no longer carries out a review every six years, but may only be called to carry out a review when asked by the OfS. One of the main proposals of the changes to the B Conditions is that the UK Quality Code for Higher Education will no longer be mandatory in England. Providers can still follow the Quality Code, and the Code and its Advice and Guidance are still an example of good practice in quality assurance – but to meet the minimum requirements set out in the conditions, it will not matter to the OfS whether or not a provider follows the Quality Code

So, what are the changes?

So far, the B conditions have set out in broad terms the expectations towards the delivery of courses, student experience and student support as well as the value of qualifications. The wording of these conditions has been at a very high level and comparable to what the expectations for quality and standards

of the current Quality Code state. These conditions have now been made more detailed and include a few areas of emphasis that the university will need to consider in its quality assurance. They cover the following areas:

Academic experience

There is an expectation that all delivery provided is up to date, challenging, coherent and effectively delivered. There are implications, for example, for how and how often courses are updated to remain representative of current thinking. There are also expectations on the skills students acquire and the optional subjects available.

Resources, support and student engagement

There is an expectation on providers to ensure that students receive the resources and support to allow them to receive a high quality academic experience, and succeed both during and after their course of study. This expectation includes a renewed focus on courses designed to avoid opportunities for academic misconduct, but also assurance that there are sufficient numbers of appropriately qualified staff to deliver the qualifications and training. There is also an expectation that students are provided with the necessary physical and digital resources, such as hardware and software, and support, including careers support.

Assessment and awards

There is an expectation that students are assessed effectively and reliably and that academic regulation ensure that awards are credible. This again includes an expectation that assessments are designed to avoid opportunities for academic misconduct, but also that the use of English language is assessed. A recent [publication from the OfS](#) about the need for providers to be rigorous in the assessment of grammar, spelling and punctuation in the use of English language in assessments that underpins this expectation. It is also expected that students will receive timely feedback prior to their final assessments.

Sector-recognised standards

This refers to the expectation that awards are only given when students meet the standards and have acquired the knowledge and skills set out in the qualification descriptors for each level. It also includes an analysis of the degree classification and awards the university gives and whether there is any indication of so-called degree inflation. This ties in with the need to adhere to the classification descriptors which are now formally adopted by the OfS. As there are no quantitative indicators for these conditions, the university must ensure these conditions as an institutions.

What will this apply to and from when?

Another important change will be the remit of the OfS. The university will therefore need to ensure that the courses required to meet these conditions will expand beyond what we understand as prescribed courses. This will mean that apprenticeships that do not lead to a degree, courses delivered outside of the UK or any form of short course will also need to meet the conditions at all times.

The OfS has also announced that the Teaching Excellence Framework will be put in place again later during this academic year. As a requirement to participate in TEF, providers will be expected to meet the conditions outlined above.

As mentioned the changed conditions have not yet been published, but it is expected that they will be published later this year and become effective immediately. QACO is therefore mapping all of our current practices against the new conditions to ensure that all of the university's courses and awards will continue to meet the expected quality and standards. We will provide more information once the OfS have published the new conditions about if and where changes will need to be made.

If you would like to contribute to the QA Blog or get involved in this ongoing policy work, please get in touch with a member of the QA team via QACO@kent.ac.uk.



Updates to Codes of Practice / Credit Framework

The following changes have recently been applied to the Code of Practice - Taught Courses of Study; Research Courses of Study - to be updated

- NEW Annex T (Quality Assurance Framework for Higher and Degree Apprenticeships) has been published.

Code of Practice - Taught Courses of Study: [Codes Of Practice - Taught and Research Programmes \(kent.ac.uk\)](https://kent.ac.uk)

Code of Practice - Research Courses of Study: [Codes Of Practice - Taught and Research Programmes \(kent.ac.uk\)](https://kent.ac.uk)

The following changes have recently been applied to the Credit Framework

- Annex 10 (Academic Misconduct: Principles and Procedures): clarification added to section 1.5 regarding the combined application of penalties; referral to cases of ethical approval to the Research and Ethics Committee has been removed from section 5.1; section 6.2.1ii has been updated to state that students should be informed at the point of referral and a template letter has been provided.

- Annex 10, Appendix A (Academic Misconduct: Principles and Procedures):
- Annex 10, Appendix B (Academic Misconduct: Principles and Procedures): Multiple sections have been revised to reflect the penalty changes; penalty exemplars have been amended to change 'possession' of unauthorised materials to 'use' of unauthorised materials.

Credit Framework: [Credit Framework for Taught Programmes \(kent.ac.uk\)](https://kent.ac.uk/credit-framework)

For CMA related queries and issues. Please contact kentcma@kent.ac.uk.

QAC FAQs:

These are QA questions that are asked regularly, that might be of general interest. If you have a question that you would like to see answered here, please contact qacotraining@kent.ac.uk.

Q: Should Divisions contact students to let them know when their work is being investigated for alleged academic misconduct?

A: Whereas in previous years, practice has been that students are not informed of academic misconduct investigations until the Academic Misconduct Committee Chair has determined that there is a case to answer, recent policy updates now state that students should be informed at the point of referral. Students should be informed of the reason for referral/investigation and the nature of the academic misconduct allegation. Divisions should refer to section 6.2.2ii of Annex 10. A template letter is available.

Q: When will the new Academic Misconduct Referral Form be ready?

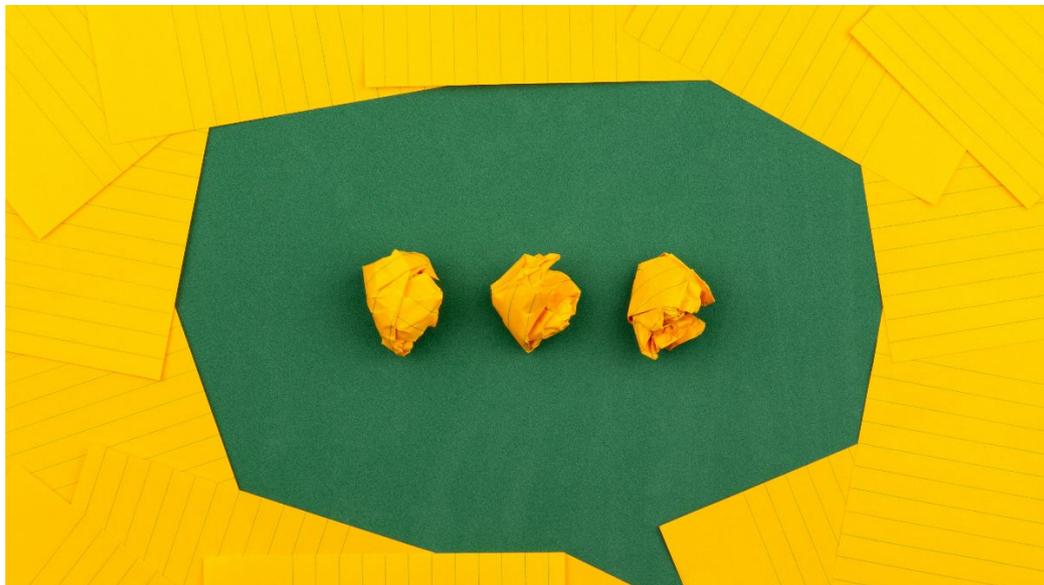
A: QACO has been working with colleagues in the Project Management Office to develop a new referral form for academic misconduct cases. The new form has been developed on the basis of Divisional feedback. The form is currently being piloted across three academic Divisions. All Divisions should expect to be using this method of referral by the beginning of the Spring Term.

Q: Are Student Representatives required at Academic Misconduct Committees?

A: Yes, student representatives are considered to be full panel members of Academic Misconduct Committees and should be included in all committee procedures in accordance with Annex 10. Divisions have now been supplied with lists of Student Representatives who have signed-up for committees this term. Recruitment for these positions remains open and students are encouraged to apply.

Q: Do Annex 10 procedures apply to PGR students?

A: Whilst it is recognised that the scope of investigation may differ in cases where academic misconduct is suspected in work submitted by research students, Annex 10 procedures should still be followed as closely as possible. Divisions can consult with QACO to discuss the appropriate application of penalties for PGR students, as certain penalties may not be applicable. Further work on reviewing the process for investigating academic misconduct in PGR cases will be commencing in the Spring Term.



How We Work

The Project Management Office are asking for feedback and suggestions on processes and how we work.

Take part in the survey via the link below:

<https://livekentac.sharepoint.com/sites/howwework/SitePages/OpportunitiesForImprovement.aspx>.

Useful weblinks

Academic Regulations – Research Courses:

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/regulations/index.html?tab=research-courses-of-study>

Academic Regulations – Taught Courses:

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/regulations/index.html>

Collaborative Partnerships:

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/collaborative/index.html>

Credit Framework:

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/credit-framework/index.html>

Research Code of Practice:

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/index.html?tab=research-courses-of-study>

Taught Code of Practice:

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/codes/index.html>

If you would like to be added to the mailing list for this newsletter, please email gacotraining@kent.ac.uk.