

TLG Executive Information Paper: Implications of Covid-19 on Quality and Standards

Below is a summary of the Quality Assurance Agency guidance published on 23 March 2020: '[initial guidance on quality and standards](#)' to support HEIs in the response to the challenges posed by Covid-19:

Key Points Raised by the Paper:

1. Assurance of academic standards still need to be met irrespective of the circumstances that are necessitating some radical adjustments.
2. Where possible, student representatives should still be consulted when planning changes to policies, delivery of classes, assessment and progression, and to discuss implications of changes made.
3. Ensure transparency in communications and offer students choices where possible e.g. for T&L changes offer extra drop-in sessions, tutorials, refresher lectures when normality resumes.
4. Be cautious about expectation-setting when decisions are based upon a lot of unknowns still e.g. promising students that assessments can be moved to a later date when we do not have certain timescales for return yet.

QAA Recommended Actions:

1. Support student access to equipment/IT infrastructure. It is incumbent upon us to ensure there are sufficient facilities/learning resources.
2. Support staff in adapting teaching styles to suit different formats of delivery (OU free course: [Take your teaching online](#))
3. Implement suitable alternative arrangements for those with disabilities to ensure that inadvertent new barriers have not been created.
4. Enable student access to tutors and their feedback via communication platforms
5. Adjust regulatory feedback deadlines/timescales to account for closures, sickness absence and different assessment methods.
6. Consider refresher sessions rather than repeating students as a general approach to progression, or to trail assessment into the next year but consider workload implications first
7. Offer alternative assessments where possible even for those where it is dependent on being at a specific place e.g. workplace-based.
8. Contact relevant PSRB's education teams as soon as possible to establish any flexibility. QAA are encouraging PSRBs to apply a flexible approach.
9. Moderate rubrics to ensure there is no unfair disadvantage for those taking changed/remote assessment.
10. EE input should be sought where assessments are changed, which could mitigate some of the potential increased appeals.
11. Consider implications where modifying degree algorithms for ALL years affected, not just finalists
12. Multiple intake programmes may be better catered for, depending on entry point, by offering a 'next entry' re-start.
13. Where a decision is taken to award credit or qualifications to students who have not completed all planned assessment but evidence exists to determine that outcomes at the appropriate level have been achieved, the basis for that decision must be recorded.
14. It is within our gift to decide the information we include on transcripts, so long as they are accurate and care taken not to give a perception that the award is of a lesser standard than other years.
15. Be mindful of greater vulnerability to misconduct, and draw attention of both staff and students to it: [QAA guidance on contract cheating](#).
16. Prepare systems, processes and templates for a potential increase in appeals and complaints and communicate new procedures to students – train staff managing receipt of complaints to ensure consistency of application.
17. Consider impacts of changing assessment practices on the role of External Examiners.