

University Quality: Market and Social Relevance

The public interest in quality assurance: experience from the UK

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Outline

- The changing landscape of higher education
- Subject reviews 1993-2001
- The revised quality assurance framework
- Teaching quality information (TQI)
- Review of public information in audit
- Meeting the needs of employers
- Student involvement in audit and review



The changing landscape of HE

Dearing Report, 1997, issues:

- Sustained increase in student numbers in higher education
- Plans for continued expansion and participation
- Need for new sources of finance
- Importance of higher education to maintain position in international competition and responding to social and economic change
- Needs of employers for higher level skills
- Partnership between higher education, industry, commerce and public service
- Higher education needs to be ‘...explicit and clear in how it goes about its business, be accountable to students and to society, and seek continuously to improve its own performance’



Public information

‘We have emphasised the need for students and employers to be well-informed about what higher education offers. They need clear statements about the intended outcomes of higher education programmes and the levels at which it is possible to leave with a recognised award’

Subject Review 1993-2001

- Initiated by the higher education funding councils for the purpose of public accountability
- 2,904 subject review reports across 62 subject areas in all universities and colleges receiving public funding.
- Involved as assessment (score) of performance in six areas of activity: Curriculum design; teaching, learning and assessment; student progression; student support and guidance; learning resources; and quality assurance.
- Review reports were published and made widely available.



Revised quality assurance framework

- Reasons for the termination of subject review
- The new deal:
 - Recognising the responsibilities of HEIs for quality and standards
 - Lightness of touch to reduce the burden of accountability
 - Meeting public information needs, so that stakeholders – and above all students – can obtain information which is up-to-date, consistent and reliable about the quality and standards of teaching and learning at different HEIs
- External review based on the institutional audit model
- HEI's to publish information



Teaching Quality Information (TQI)

- Quantitative information for publication
 - HESA statistics
- Qualitative information for publication
 - Summaries of external examiner reports
 - Learning and teaching strategies
 - Outcomes of internal reviews
 - Details of links with employers
- Information available internally in HEIs
- Results of the National Student Survey
- New website 'Unistats'

Review of published information in audit

‘Institutional audit balances the need for publicly credible, independent and rigorous scrutiny of institutions with the recognition that the institutions themselves are best placed to provide stakeholders with valid, reliable and up-to-date information about the academic standards of their awards and the quality of their educational provision’

- The institution’s approach to ensuring the accuracy and completeness of published information
- Accuracy and completeness of published information, including TQI
- Students’ experience of published information



Meeting the needs of employers

- Subject benchmark statements
- Programme specifications
- Employer engagement in the design and development of programmes
- Employer representation
- Co-funding arrangements
- Higher-level skills
- Work based learning

Student involvement

- Focus on the student learning experience
- Students' written submission
 - How accurate is the information that the institution publishes?
 - Do students know what is expected of them?
 - What is the student experience as a learner like?
 - Do students have a voice in the institution, and is it listened to?
- Student membership of audit and review teams



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