



Appointment of an independent Student
Member to **the Board of Directors**
of the Quality Assurance Agency for
Higher Education

July 2022

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Welcome from the Chair of the Board, Simon Gaskell

Dear applicant

Thank you for expressing an interest in joining the Board of QAA.

QAA is the independent expert body entrusted with safeguarding academic standards and enhancing the quality of UK higher education wherever it is delivered around the world. We work with 600 universities, colleges and specialist providers in the UK to promote high academic standards, quality experiences and excellent outcomes for all students of UK higher education. We have international reach, enhancing the reputation of our world-class higher education sector.

This is an exciting time for our organisation as we embrace the significant regulatory reform of higher education across the UK and as the legislative context of our operation transforms. This is a pivotal and challenging role, bringing new perspectives to our Board in a time of major change.

We invite applications from students who will engage with our vision, will be strong ambassadors for QAA, and will lead the organisation in times of change and opportunity. We are particularly interested in attracting individuals who are committed to the mission and values of QAA and who bring the skills and experience required to play a full and active part at Board level. QAA welcomes applications from people in all sections of the community and values diversity.

You will find more information about QAA in this pack and on our [website](#). I do hope you will express an interest in joining our Board at this critical and exciting time in the development of QAA.

Yours faithfully

Simon Gaskell
Chair, QAA Board

About QAA

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is the independent body entrusted with monitoring and advising on academic standards and quality in UK higher education. As the scale, shape, structure and purpose of learning provision are changing in the UK and around the world, QAA safeguards standards and supports the improvement of quality for students - whether they study at a university or college in the UK or in any other location worldwide where courses lead to UK higher education qualifications.

QAA also has a consultative and advisory role, working at government level through to individual organisations. We play a leading role in international development in quality assurance, through membership of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education.

QAA is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. It has offices in Gloucester (main office), Cardiff, Glasgow and London. For further corporate information at a glance, please see the [Annual Report and Financial Statements](#).

Our role

We are independent of government and of higher education providers, and act in the public interest for the benefit of students.

We develop guidance that is accepted by all involved in this important sector of the UK economy, and review higher education providers to check whether they meet agreed UK expectations.

While our review work is done under contract with the funding councils (the public bodies that help fund UK higher education), our guidance is developed through close working with the providers themselves. We act independently of both the funding councils and the higher education sector.

Our work

Our vision is for world-leading and independently assured higher education.

As the independent body entrusted with monitoring and advising on standards and quality in UK higher education, we are dedicated to checking that the three million students working towards a UK qualification get the higher education experiences they are entitled to expect. We ensure that students are involved in all aspects of our work.

We work across all four nations of the UK. We also build international partnerships to enhance and promote the reputation of UK higher education worldwide.

The main areas of our work include:

- regulating the Access to HE Diploma, and license the agencies who develop, approve and monitor Access to HE courses. QAA also promotes the Access to HE Diploma, raising awareness of the qualification and its potential to transform lives through access to higher education
- working in partnership with stakeholders across the globe to review and report on UK transnational education (TNE), safeguard standards and improve quality. QAA believes that UK TNE helps maintain and develop the world-class brand of UK higher education
- supporting the international development of higher education quality through bespoke capacity building, training and review services to governments, quality agencies and

higher education institutions. This includes accreditation through our International Quality Review

- using our experience and expertise to address sector challenges such as academic integrity. We facilitate the Academic Integrity Charter, the UK Academic Integrity Advisory Group, and the Europe-wide ENQA Working Group on Academic Integrity
- advising the Office for Students and UK governments on applications for degree awarding powers
- investigating complaints (concerns) about academic standards and quality in higher education in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland
- providing oversight of alternative providers not on the OfS Register in the UK

Governance

Our structure and funding

We are an independent body, a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee.

QAA is funded through a number of channels:

- membership fees from higher education providers
- fees paid by providers registered with the Office for Students for our quality assessment activity as the Designated Quality Body in England
- contracts and agreements with the UK funding councils and organisations
- providers of higher education, seeking educational oversight for immigration purposes as required by the Home Office, pay a fee to be reviewed by a QAA team, as well as an annual maintenance charge
- additional private contracts, consultancy and business development work in the UK and internationally.

Our Board, through the Honorary Treasurer, is responsible for the conduct of our finances, and for monitoring our performance against agreed targets at a corporate level.

QAA is governed by our Board. The Board is responsible for policy development, for the conduct of our finances, and for monitoring our performance against agreed targets at a corporate level. Please see our [Articles of Association](#) for further information.

Simon Gaskell is Chair of the QAA Board. He holds degrees from the University of Bristol and has had an academic career (with multiple industrial connections), both in the UK and US. After spending several years at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, he returned to the UK to take up a chair in mass spectrometry at what was then the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology. His research career has been devoted to the application of physical chemical techniques to the solution of problems in the biomedical sciences. He was closely involved with the merger of UMIST and the Victoria University of Manchester (2002-04), and subsequently became Vice-President for Research.

In 2009, Professor Gaskell was appointed President and Principal of Queen Mary University of London. In 2012, he began two terms as an elected member of the executive board and Treasurer of Universities UK. He served as Chair of the Higher Education Statistics Agency from 2013 to 2017. He retired from full-time roles in 2017.

More information on our Board Members and the QAA Board can be found on our [website](#).

About the role of Student Member

This is a position for a non-executive independent Director appointed by the Board of Directors.

The eligibility criteria for appointment is that the successful applicant, at the time of their initial appointment is:

- a) either a registered undergraduate or postgraduate student for a course leading to an award of a higher education institution
- b) an elected student officer of a students' union (a students' union being for the purpose of this Article a students' union within the meaning of part II of the Education Act 1994 and any other establishment which the Board of Directors deems is a student union)

or
- c) an elected student officer of a student representative organisation.

The Board as a whole is responsible for the leadership, direction and control of the organisation, and in particular for:

- approving QAA's mission, strategy and key performance indicators
- ensuring the establishment and monitoring of systems of control and accountability - including financial and operational - and procedures for handling internal grievances, conflicts of interest and whistleblowing
- ensuring processes are in place to monitor and evaluate the performance and effectiveness of QAA against approved plans and key performance indicators, benchmarking against other comparable organisations
- safeguarding the reputation and core values of QAA
- overseeing annual reporting, with overall responsibility for the company's assets, property and estate
- being the company's legal authority.

In carrying out these responsibilities, non-executive directors have specific obligation to:

- constructively challenge and contribute to strategy development
- scrutinise performance and monitor reporting
- be satisfied that financial information is accurate, and that appropriate financial controls are in place
- be satisfied that QAA's risk management system is robust and appropriate.

The full responsibilities of company directors and charity trustees are set out in detail in the [QAA Code of Best Practice](#).

Person specification

Independent non-executive director

Essential

- Evidence of objectivity, independence of mind, and good judgement; collegiate attitude to decision-making; willingness to share knowledge, skills and expertise to the benefit of the organisation and the beneficiaries of its work.
- A willingness to co-chair QAA's Student Advisory Committee and represent the views of students at Board level.
- At the time of initial appointment is:
 - a) either a registered undergraduate or postgraduate student for a course leading to an award of a higher education institution
 - b) an elected student officer of a students' union (a students' union being for the purpose of this Article a students' union within the meaning of part II of the *Education Act 1994* and any other establishment which the Board of Directors deems is a student union)

or
 - c) an elected student officer of a student representative organisation.

Desirable

- Experience, empathy or understanding of the higher education sector and a clear commitment to the role and mission of QAA and its values.
- Demonstrable willingness to accept the legal duties and responsibilities of being a trustee and ability to commit to the demands and requirements of the role.
- A demonstrable appreciation of the range of stakeholder interests in UK higher education.
- Experience of chairing committee meetings.
- A willingness to sit on the Audit and Risk Committee.

Time commitment

The QAA Board normally meets four times a year. This includes a strategic Board Away Day in October, and a virtual Annual General Meeting in December. Board members normally attend QAA's Annual Conference (one day, different venues across the UK).

Board members are further expected to contribute to Board committees, which meet virtually up to four times a year respectively, in particular to this role - a willingness to co-chair the Student Advisory Committee which meets three times a year (further information attached separately).

Remuneration

QAA Board members are charity trustees and receive no remuneration. Reasonable and properly documented expenses incurred in the performance of Board members' duties will be reimbursed in line with QAA's policies.

Term of appointment

The independent student member will be appointed for a term of one year, renewable for one additional one-year term on approval of the Board.

How to apply

To apply, please submit your CV, together with a brief statement of what you can bring to the role.

The recruitment process

We will treat all enquiries, formal and informal, in confidence.

The closing date for applications is Thursday 18 August at midnight.

Final interviews will be held by telephone or video conference on Friday 2 September.

Further information

For further information regarding this role, please contact Assistant Company Secretary, Rachel Hill-Kelly at r.hill-kelly@qaa.ac.uk