

## Mini guide:

a brief student guide to Higher Education Review



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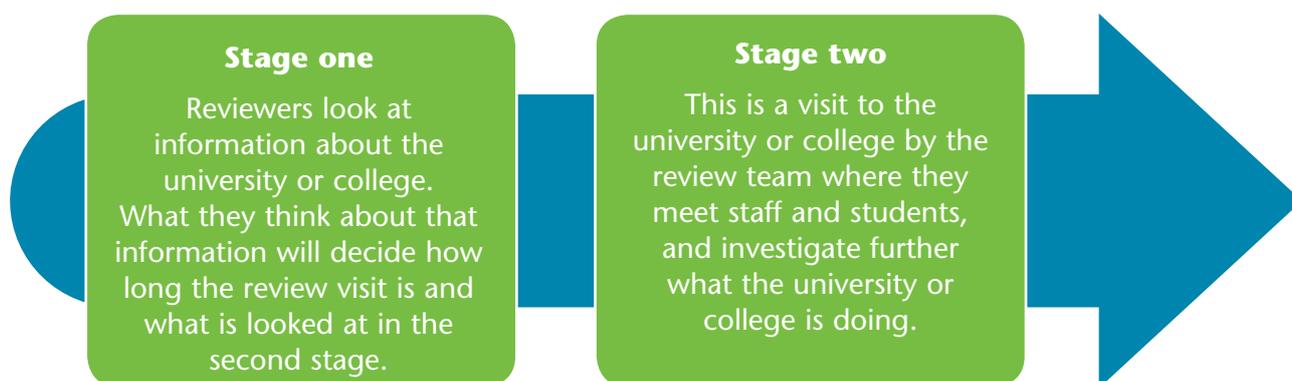
## What is the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)?

Universities and colleges are **independent** and are responsible for making sure that the education they provide is of a high quality and reaches the right academic standards.

QAA's role is to **check how well they do this**, identifying where they have **done things well** and making **recommendations for improvement**. QAA also provides information and guidance to help institutions continue to improve.

## What is Higher Education Review?

Higher Education Review is the way that QAA checks how well universities and colleges in England and Northern Ireland make sure their students' education is of a high enough quality and reaches the right academic standards. Higher Education Review has two stages:



## What does the review actually mean for me as a student?

This review process checks that your university or college meets the same standards as the rest of the UK. Having high quality and standards means you can have confidence in your education at university or college and in your degree. All of this ultimately makes the educational experience for you and your fellow students better.

## Who does the review?

Review teams are made up of staff and students from other universities and colleges in the UK, and have between two and six members. One of the reviewers is always a student.

## How long is the review visit?

Review visits can last from one to five days. If the team thinks that the information provided shows that the university or college is doing well and will continue to do well, then the visit will be fairly short. If they can't be completely sure from the information, then the visit will be longer so that they can investigate more.

## What is the outcome of a review?

The outcome of the review is a report in which the team makes four judgements. The team makes these judgements by looking to see whether national requirements for quality and standards have been met. They also check the processes that are in use, and how much staff and students are involved in these processes.

The four judgements are:

- **Threshold academic standards** - the minimum level of achievement that a student has to reach to gain an award. This is reviewed to ensure that threshold standards are at a comparable level across the UK.
- **Academic quality** - how well the university or college helps students to achieve their award. Review teams look at whether appropriate and effective teaching, support, assessment and opportunities to learn are provided.
- **Enhancement** - what the university or college does to develop and improve things for students. Review teams also look at how student feedback is used, and whether students are involved in decision-making.
- **Information** - the information provided by the university or college to inform the public about its higher education provision.

## What information does the team look at during the review?

### Information provided by the university or college

The university or college provides a self-evaluation document that tells the review team about themselves, describes their approach to making sure that the education they provide is of a high quality and reaches the right standards, and explains how they know that their approach is working and how it could be improved.

This document will also include data from surveys about how satisfied students were with their education and what they do when they leave, and data on how many students make it through their first year of study.

### Information provided by students

Students at the university or college are invited to make a student submission to the review to help the review team understand what it is like to be a student at that university or college and how students' views are considered.

If the student submission indicates significant problems, this may lead to the review team spending longer visiting the university or college. The submission can be written, but can also make use of videos, interviews, focus groups and other forms of presentation. Most importantly, the submission needs to be based on evidence and needs to represent the views of as many students as possible.

If students in the university or college are unable to make a submission then QAA will provide a way for students to make their views known directly through an online system.

### Information collected by QAA

QAA collects for the review team any recent QAA reports on the university or college and any other recent published reports from other organisations that work with the university or college. This covers organisations like Ofsted, the Skills Funding Agency and other international and professional quality assurance agencies.

## What happens after the review?

Within three months of the review visit, a report will be published that explains what the review team found and gives the team's judgements. The university or college then has to produce a plan of action which shows what they will do with any recommendations for improvement or how they will make the most of any good practice that the review team has found.

If a university or college is given a judgement of 'requires improvement' or 'does not meet UK expectations' then a more detailed plan is requested and QAA then checks closely that progress is made.

If not enough progress is made, QAA can ask the Higher Education Funding Council for England, which provides public funds to universities and colleges for higher education, to take action. This action depends on what the exact problem is and how serious it is, but in extreme cases can result in a decision to stop funding that university or college.

## Where can I find out more?

**Website:** [www.qaa.ac.uk/partners/students](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/partners/students)

**YouTube:** [www.youtube.com/qaatube](http://www.youtube.com/qaatube)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/qaastudents](http://www.facebook.com/qaastudents)

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### **The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education**

Southgate House  
Southgate Street  
Gloucester  
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000

Fax 01452 557070

Email [enquiries@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@qaa.ac.uk)

Web [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786