

Government consultation on the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education: de-designation

Response of the Association of School and College Leaders

A. Introduction

1. The Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL) represents over 24,000 education system leaders, heads, principals, deputies, vice-principals, assistant heads, business managers and other senior staff of state-funded and independent schools and colleges throughout the UK. ASCL members are responsible for the education of more than four million children and young people across primary, secondary, post-16 and specialist education. This places the association in a strong position to consider this issue from the viewpoint of the leaders of schools and colleges of all types.
2. ASCL welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this consultation.

B. Key points

3. ASCL has consulted our members who deliver Higher Education (HE) on the issue of de-designation of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). While we recognise that the QAA has asked to be removed from the designation as the quality body for HE, we set out some concerns about this below.
4. Our concerns centre on the future role of QAA with HE providers, the increased cost of the work of the Office for Students (OfS) to HE providers, and the difficulties with recruiting assessors to the new quality roles.

C. Answers to specific questions

Question: Do you agree that the designation of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education as the designated quality body for higher education in England should be removed, on the basis set out above?

5. Under paragraph 5(4) of Schedule 4 to HERA (2017), the Secretary of State is required to consult before removing the designation of a DQB, even where the DQB has requested the removal of the designation.
6. Since the QAA has asked to be removed from this role, our response is **Yes, we agree**. However, we have some concerns, which we set out below.
7. We assume the OfS intends to increase its fees, to take account of this work, without stating what the increase will be. We also have no clear idea if providers will still be required to work with the QAA.

8. The proposed change will bring a very different focus to HE regulation.
9. We also know that assessors are hard to recruit for the HE sector, so it is likely that some of those who worked for QAA will be re-appointed. This brings concerns that the outputs of HE assessors will be very similar under the OfS as they were under the QAA. Therefore, it is hard to see how quality will be improved in the short-term.

D. Conclusion

10. We hope that this response is of value to your consultation. ASCL is willing to be further consulted and to assist in any way that it can.

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March 2023*