CIMSPA Policy: Quality Assurance Review of Higher Education Partners

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Contents

Introduction

CIMSPA recognises that Higher Education (HE) Partners are already regulated by numerous external bodies e.g. Office for Students (OfS) and The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).

CIMSPA is keen to work collaboratively whilst recognising our own role and responsibility to provide assurance to our stakeholders that entities in partnership with CIMSPA accede to the vision of both offering and operating at the highest standards, whilst - wherever possible - taking a practical and pragmatic approach to the burden of such activity.

This policy should be read in conjunction with CIMSPA's Quality Assurance Strategy.

The CIMSPA Quality Assurance (QA) Process is a multi-staged approach:

- Initial onboarding quality checks for all endorsements,
- Quality assurance review, at least biennial for each higher education partner,
- Renewal of partnership.

Scope

The aim of this policy is to explain the effective, consistent, and fair procedures that will be followed by CIMSPA when conducting quality assurance activities for CIMSPA HE Partners in relation to their endorsed curriculum and to implement the terms of the partnership agreement between CIMSPA and the CIMSPA HE Partner.

Policy

The role of the Higher Education Partner

The HE partner is responsible for monitoring and evaluating its internal systems, policies and procedures for the delivery of their endorsed degree programmes on offer. This is to ensure that they are operating in line with external bodies requirements, and that each HE partner implements an internal quality assurance process on their curriculum that is mapped to professional standards.

Once a HE partner approves staff to deliver their endorsed curriculum, there are specific requirements that must be adhered to, in order to remain compliant. CIMSPA, HE partners have additional responsibility to all learners undertaking their qualifications, to ensure their staff are delivering content accurately and in accordance with the professional standard intention.

The role of CIMSPA

Quality Assurance (QA) is fundamental to all CIMSPA processes, products, and services and the purpose of the QA review is to support with the ongoing professionalisation of the sport and physical activity sector. To ensure there is rigour and consistency behind each HE partner's processes, and to protect and avoid reputational risk to both CIMSPA and the HE partner, CIMSPA will continue to support and monitor its HE partners by completing biennial monitoring activities through conducting a QA review.

Risk

CIMSPA will adopt a risk and need based model for quality assurance activity.

By quality assuring a HE partner it reduces the negative consequences for both the organisation itself and for the community it serves. CIMSPA's approach to working with our HE partners is to successfully identify and manage risks that may be associated with the delivery of CIMSPA Professional Standards embedded within the endorsed degree programmes. Therefore, CIMSPA will work with the HE partner to successfully identify and manage the exposure to risk.

To mitigate some risks, HE partners should implement robust quality assurance measures including transparent governance structures, regular audits and evaluations, adherence to best practices, fair and consistent rule enforcement, workforce protocols, and ethical conduct standard. Quality assurance not only helps maintain the integrity of the organisation but also ensure its long-term viability and success.

Process

The aim of the quality assurance activities is to collaboratively manage the exposure by taking preventive actions to keep the exposure at an acceptable level. CIMSPA will primarily identify risks through our quality assurance review; however, some risks may be identified by other sources (whistle-blower, complaints etc.).

A Higher Education Partner's overall risk rating will be informed using a holistic approach that considers the probability, the impact and mitigations of any individual risks identified through the quality assurance review.

It is a requirement that on becoming a Higher Education Partner, all relevant policies and procedures that are in place for the organisation are submitted. Subsequently, upon seeking endorsement for a degree programme the partner must submit all relevant documentation.

Quality assurance review

The quality assurance review will be split into three categories:

1. Quality of Education
2. Learner Journey
3. Marketing and Promotion

Quality of Education

CIMSPA will make judgements on the quality of the provision being offered by evaluating the extent to which the HE partner has aligned their curriculum to the sector agreed professional standards chosen.

1.1 The education partner provides opportunities for future learning and career development.

1.2 The education partner adopts an inclusive approach to:

- organisation culture
- the accessibility of its education provision
- education delivery.

1.3 The education partner delivers the endorsed curriculum in line with endorsement conditions and outlined scheme of work.

1.4 The education partner's methods of delivery for the endorsed curriculum provide the learners with knowledge, skills and understanding relating to the intended aims and objectives.

1.5 The education partner's assessment methods check the learner's knowledge, skills and understanding.

1.6 The education partner:

- provides learners with the opportunity to feedback on their learner experience
- acts on the learner feedback to enhance the quality of provision.

1.7   The education partner deals with any complaints received in a professional and efficient manner.

Learner Journey

2.1   The education partner ensures effective communication between tutors/assessors and the learners.

2.2   The education partner ensures that support is available for the learners to complete the chosen provision

2.3   The education partner ensures that all learners who complete the provision are certificated for their achievements.

Marketing and Promotion

3.1   The education partner markets their provision in line with CIMSPA requirements.

3.2   The education partner markets their endorsed curriculum with truth and accuracy.

The evidence framework, set out in **Appendix A** provides examples of evidence that CIMSPA may review as part of the quality assurance process. The examples listed show indicative evidence only and are not meant to be exhaustive. As HE partners operate within varying contexts, the relevance of different types of evidence is likely vary for each institution. For that reason, we do not prescribe a standard set of evidence that we will use within the review.

During the QA review, the Quality Assurance Advisor will assess the HE partner's current level of compliance for these areas and record a judgement in the QA report based on the HE performance at the time of the review.

The HE partner's overall risk rating is a simple measure to improve the visibility of risks and allow CIMSPA to assist the HE partners in proactively addressing any emerging risks.

Outcome of annual review

The rating scale that will be used to judge the provision offered will be either Enhancing, Enabling or Emerging.

- **Enhancing** – HE partners that are identified as Enhancing have evidenced best practice within most of their operations, processes, and procedures, and are seen to be offering the highest quality provision to its learners by CIMSPA.

- **Enabling** – HE partners identified as Enabling have evidenced some good practice within their operations, processes, and procedures, with minimal areas for development. CIMSPA has provided clear actions to support the development of the partner to ensure high quality education provision to its learners.

- **Emerging** – HE partners identified as Emerging have key actions needing to be completed within a specified time, to ensure adherence to CIMSPA standards and expectations of its endorsed provision. CIMSPA will provide bespoke support to HE partners identified as emerging to ensure sufficient quality developments to achieve an enabling or enhancing outcome, following the next quality assurance review.

How your outcome is achieved

Appendix A – Evidence Framework

1. Quality of Education

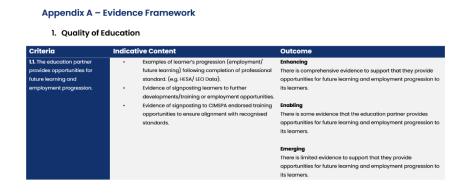| Criteria	Indicative Content	Outcome
1.1. The education partner provides opportunities for future learning and employment progression.	• Examples of learner's progression (employment/ future learning) following completion of professional standard. (e.g. HESA/ LEO Data). • Evidence of signposting learners to further developments/training or employment opportunities. • Evidence of signposting to CIMSPA endorsed training opportunities to ensure alignment with recognised standards.	**Enhancing** There is comprehensive evidence to support that they provide opportunities for future learning and employment progression to its learners. **Enabling** There is some evidence that the education partner provides opportunities for future learning and employment progression to its learners. **Emerging** There is limited evidence to support that they provide opportunities for future learning and employment progression to its learners.

Figure 1 Evidence Framework

Your Quality Assurance Advisor will determine which category best fits the evidence provided for each criterion in the review. The overall rating is determined by taking a holistic review of all criteria outcomes. CIMSPA's Quality Assurance Manager will provide the HE partner with the overall rating upon receipt of the report from the Quality Assurance Advisor.

Please note if there were any **Emerging** characteristics for the HE partner within Quality of Education during the review, this would result in an Enabling category being the highest achievable outcome.

Biennial Review Approach

A QA review of a HE partner will take place biennial It will take the form of a desk-based review pre-visit and a subsequent site visit (**Appendix B**). The desk-based review will be conducted on information sent prior to the visit, such as the most recent External Examiner reports, graduate outcomes data, and the HE partner's policies and procedures. The QA review will be conducted by a Quality Assurance Advisor who is a member of a team of independent quality assurance specialists contracted by CIMSPA to conduct such activity on our behalf.

CIMSPA will subsequently issue a quality assurance report, and a meeting will take place to discuss the findings of the review and develop a tailored action plan (if required) to support ongoing quality improvement aligned to CIMSPA's requirements of partners. CIMSPA and its team of quality assurance advisors will work to ensure the quality assurance review does not place unnecessary burden on the HE partner.

Review

The CIMSPA Policy; Quality Assurance Review of Higher Education Partners will be reviewed in January 2026 unless a change in policy, governance or other circumstance requires a review prior to this date.

Appendix A – Evidence Framework

1. Quality of Education

Criteria	Indicative Content	Outcome
1.1. The education partner provides opportunities for future learning and employment progression.	• Examples of learner's progression (employment/ future learning) following completion of professional standard. (e.g. HESA/ LEO Data). • Evidence of signposting learners to further developments/training or employment opportunities. • Evidence of signposting to CIMSPA endorsed training opportunities to ensure alignment with recognised standards.	**Enhancing** There is comprehensive evidence to support that they provide opportunities for future learning and employment progression to its learners. **Enabling** There is some evidence that the education partner provides opportunities for future learning and employment progression to its learners. **Emerging** There is limited evidence to support that they provide opportunities for future learning and employment progression to its learners.

Criteria	Indicative Content	Outcome
1.2. The education partner adopts an inclusive approach to: • organisation culture • the accessibility of its education provision • education delivery.	• Evidence of an up-to-date equality diversity and inclusion (EDI) policy adhering to appropriate legislation. • Evidence of appropriate terminology used within organisation communications that promote inclusion and sense of belonging. • Evidence of EDI training undertaken. • Evidence of up to date and comprehensive reasonable adjustments and special considerations policy, and application to teaching and learning. • Evidence of accessible entry to facilities.	**Enhancing** There are comprehensive practices seen to show that the partner has an inclusive approach to organisational culture, accessibility, and education delivery. **Enabling** There are some practices seen to show that the partner has an inclusive approach to organisational culture, accessibility, and education delivery. **Emerging** There is limited evidence to show the partner has an inclusive approach to organisational culture, accessibility, and education delivery.
1.3 The education partner delivers the endorsed curriculum in line with endorsement conditions and outlined scheme of work.	• Evidence of adherence to CIMSPA's endorsement guidelines. • Evidence that the endorsed curriculum's scheme of work is being adhered to.	**Enhancing** There is comprehensive evidence that shows the course delivery is in line with endorsement conditions and outlined scheme of work. **Enabling** There is some evidence that shows the course delivery is in line with endorsement conditions and outlined scheme of work. **Emerging** There is limited evidence that shows the course delivery is in line with endorsement conditions and outlined

Criteria	Indicative Content	Outcome
1.4. The education partners methods of delivery for the endorsed curriculum provide the learners with knowledge, skills and understanding relating to the intended aims and objectives.	• Examples of resources used for content delivery. • Observation of delivery (if appropriate). • Learner feedback.	**Enhancing** There is comprehensive evidence that the endorsed curriculum delivery method provides knowledge, skills and understanding relating to the intended aims and objectives. **Enabling** There is some evidence that the endorsed curriculum delivery method provides knowledge, skills and understanding relating to the intended aims and objectives. **Emerging** There is limited evidence that the endorsed curriculum delivery method provides knowledge, skills and understanding relating to the intended.

Criteria	Indicative Content	Outcome
1.5. The education partners assessment method(s) check the learner's knowledge, skills and understanding.	• The assessment methods chosen are valid, reliable, and fit for purpose. • Evidence that the assessment methods is in line with real life scenarios.	**Enhancing** There is comprehensive evidence that the assessment method(s) are well considered to ensure knowledge, skills and understanding are checked. **Enabling** There is some evidence that the assessment method(s) are well considered to ensure knowledge, skills and understanding are checked. **Emerging** There is limited evidence that the assessment method(s) are well considered to ensure knowledge, skills and understanding are checked.

Criteria	Indicative Content	Outcome
1.6. The education partner: • provides learners with the opportunity to feedback on their learner experience. • acts on the learner feedback to enhance the quality of education.	• Evidence of feedback opportunities available to learners • Evidence of completed learner feedback forms. • Evidence that learner feedback has been considered and actioned where appropriate.	**Enhancing** There is comprehensive evidence of feedback opportunities within the experience for the learners to provide their feedback. There is excellent evidence that the feedback received is acted upon. **Enabling** There is some evidence of feedback opportunities for learners to communicate about provision. There is some evidence that the feedback received is acted upon. **Emerging** There is limited evidence of feedback opportunities within the experience for the learners to provide their feedback. There is limited evidence that the feedback received is acted upon.
1.7. The education partner deals with complaints in a professional and efficient manner (if applicable).	• Evidence of an up-to-date complaints policy with date, review date, and signature. • Examples of previous complaints handled with outcomes and closure in last 12 months (if applicable).	**Enhancing** There is comprehensive evidence that complaints are dealt with in a professional and efficient manner. **Enabling** There is some evidence that complaints are dealt with in a professional and efficient manner. **Emerging** There is limited evidence that complaints are dealt with in a professional and efficient manner.

2. Learner Journey

Criteria	Indicative Content	Outcome
2.1 The education partner ensures effective communication between tutors/assessors and the learners.	• Examples of partners communication methods to learners. • Evidence of student engagement at meetings/forums /communities of practice.	**Enhancing** There is comprehensive evidence that the partner is consistently using effective communication between all relevant parties. **Enabling** There is some evidence that the partner is using effective communication between all relevant parties. **Emerging** There is limited evidence that the partner provides communication effectively between all relevant parties.
2.2 The education partner ensures that support is available for the learners to complete the endorsed curriculum.	• Examples of the support in place for learners to complete.	**Enhancing** There is comprehensive evidence that the partner supports learners to complete the endorsed curriculum. **Enabling** There is some evidence that the partner supports learners to complete the endorsed curriculum. **Emerging** There is limited evidence that the partner supports learners to complete the endorsed curriculum.

Criteria	Indicative Content	Outcome
2.3 The education partner ensures that all learners who complete the endorsed curriculum are certificated for their achievements.	• Professional standards request form is provided to CIMSPA following completion of standard. • The learners receive their certificates in a timely manner.	**Enhancing** There is comprehensive evidence that all learners who complete the course are certified for their achievements. **Enabling** There is some evidence that the partner certifies all learners who complete the endorsed curriculum. **Emerging** There is limited evidence that the partners certifies all learners who complete the endorsed curriculum.

3. Marketing and Promotion

Criteria	Indicative Content	Enhancing
3.1 The education partner markets their endorsed curriculum in line with CIMSPA expectations.	• Evidence of compliance to **CIMSPA brand guidelines**	**Enhancing** All marketing provided by the education partners demonstrates adherence to CIMSPA requirements. **Enabling** There is some evidence that the partner markets their endorsed provision in line with CIMSPA requirement. **Emerging** There is limited evidence that the partner markets their endorsed provision in line with CIMSPA requirement.
3.2 The education partner markets their endorsed curriculum with truth and accuracy.	• Accurate representation of their endorsed curriculum. ○ For example, HEI is transparent in the detail of course prerequisites, course duration, achievement obtained. • Consistent marketing of the endorsed curriculum.	**Enhancing** All marketing provided by the education partner demonstrates truth and accuracy of the provision. **Enabling** There is some evidence that the education partner markets their provision with truth and accuracy. **Emerging** There is limited evidence that the education partner markets their provision with truth and accuracy.

Appendix B: Example timetable for a site visit for HE QA Review

Time	Activity	Quality Assurance Framework Criteria
10:00	Arrival: meet and greet	N/A
10:30 to 11:30	Review selection of learner work and feedback	1.2, 1.5, 2.1, 2.2
11:30 to 12:00	Learner focus group	1.6, 2.1, 2.2
13:00 to 13:30	Staff focus group	1.6
13:30 to 14:30	Learner assessment (if possible)	1.5, 2.1, 2.2
14:30 to 15:00	Collate initial findings	All
15:00 to 15:30	Feedback of initial findings	All