

CIRCULAR

Number	CL 20/14
Subject	Consultation on four Qualification Characteristics Statements: <i>Foundation Degree Characteristics, Master's Degree Characteristics, Doctoral Degree Characteristics and Qualifications Awarded by two or more Degree-Awarding Bodies</i>
Publication date	19 December 2014
Recipients	UK higher education institutions and further education colleges; UK higher education funding councils and representative bodies; higher education student representative bodies; other higher education sector bodies; professional, statutory or regulatory bodies; employer bodies.
Of interest to	Individuals with responsibilities for academic standards, programme design and approval, programme monitoring and review, assessment of students and recognition of prior learning; students, student representatives and staff from student representative bodies; professional, statutory and regulatory bodies; policy makers; and employers.
Further information	Janet Bohrer (Assistant Director) j.bohrer@qaa.ac.uk Dr Cathy Kerfoot (Assistant Director - Acting) c.kerfoot@qaa.ac.uk Dan Murch (Development Officer - Acting) d.murch@qaa.ac.uk
Related documents	<u><i>Foundation Degree Characteristics - draft for consultation</i></u> <u><i>Master's Degree Characteristics - draft for consultation</i></u> <u><i>Doctoral Degree Characteristics - draft for consultation</i></u> <u><i>Qualifications Awarded by two or more Degree-Awarding Bodies - draft for consultation</i></u>

Dear colleague,

I am writing to notify you that we are now consulting on updated and revised versions of three Qualification Characteristics Statements: *Foundation Degree Characteristics* (formerly known as the *Foundation degree qualification benchmark*), *Master's Degree Characteristics*, and *Doctoral Degree Characteristics*, and on the development of a new Statement: *Qualifications Awarded by two or more Degree-Awarding Bodies*. This consultation is part of our ongoing work to bring all QAA reference points in line with the main body of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code), which was finalised at the end of 2013.

The Qualification Characteristics Statements for foundation, master's and doctoral degrees are now formal components of Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards of the Quality Code, which includes the Expectation that higher education providers 'consider and take account of QAA's guidance on qualification characteristics' in order to secure threshold academic standards. It is therefore important to ensure that these statements are up-to-date and consistent with the rest of Part A. All three documents have been reorganised to follow a consistent structure and cover a similar range of information (as relevant to the particular qualification). Content has been updated to reflect sector developments and changes in context, but we are aware that in some cases further contextual changes may be required before a final version is produced.

We are proposing that the new Statement, *Qualifications Awarded by two or more Degree-Awarding Bodies*, should be incorporated into Part A, alongside the other three Qualification Characteristics Statements. Guidance on this topic has been developed in response to demand from the sector and we are proposing that, in the context of the Quality Code as a whole, the characteristics statement is the most appropriate format for such guidance. The consultation survey on this statement asks both whether you agree that the format of the guidance is appropriate, and about the detail contained within the draft statement.

The revision and/or development of each of these statements has involved an expert advisory group comprising representatives from different types of higher education provider and from relevant sector bodies from across the four nations of the UK.

We welcome contributions to this consultation from anyone with an interest in any or all of the areas covered, including staff with responsibilities for any or all of the qualifications described; representatives from all four countries; students, student representatives and staff from student representative bodies; sector and representative bodies; professional, statutory or regulatory bodies; and employer groups.

The consultation will be open until the end of 23 March 2014. Please submit responses through the online surveys.

Foundation Degree Characteristics, Master's Degree Characteristics, and Doctoral Degree Characteristics:

www.surveymonkey.com/s/FouMasDocChar

Qualifications awarded by two or more degree-awarding bodies:

www.surveymonkey.com/s/QCSMTODAB

The final versions of the Qualification Characteristics Statements will be published in 2015.

If you would like further information relating to these consultation documents or the consultation process, please contact Janet Bohrer j.bohrer@gaa.ac.uk, Dr Cathy Kerfoot c.kerfoot@gaa.ac.uk, or Dan Murch d.murch@gaa.ac.uk.

I look forward to your response to this consultation and to your continued engagement in the development of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Anthony McClaran', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Anthony McClaran
Chief Executive



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