Quality Assurance Framework; Higher Education Partners

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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,
- On the ground experience,
- 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 its endorsed degree programmes. This is to ensure that provision operates in line with relevant external body requirements

and that each HE partner implements an internal quality assurance process for curriculum delivery mapped to professional standards.

Once a HE partner has approved staff to deliver its endorsed curriculum, specific requirements must be met in order to maintain alignment with CIMSPA expectations. CIMSPA HE partners have responsibility to students undertaking endorsed provision to ensure that teaching, academic and assessment staff deliver content accurately and in accordance with the intent of the relevant professional standard.

The role of CIMSPA

Quality Assurance (QA) is fundamental to CIMSPA processes, products and services. The purpose of QA activity is to support the ongoing professionalisation of the sport and physical activity sector, provide assurance of academic quality within endorsed provision, and support rigour and consistency in each HE partner's quality assurance arrangements. CIMSPA will continue to support and monitor HE partners through biennial QA reviews and ongoing quality assurance activity.

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 activity; 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 activity.

It is a requirement that upon seeking endorsement for a degree programme the partner must submit all relevant documentation on the endorsement submission form and endorsement guidance documents.

Quality assurance review

The quality assurance review will be split into three categories:

1. Quality of education
2. Student journey
3. Marketing and promotion

Quality of education

CIMSPA will make judgements on the quality of provision by evaluating the extent to which the HE partner has aligned, delivered and assessed the endorsed curriculum against the relevant sector-agreed professional standard(s).

1.1. The HE partner provides opportunities that support students' future learning, progression and career development.

1.2. The HE partner adopts an inclusive approach across its institutional culture, the accessibility of its education provision and the delivery of the endorsed curriculum.

1.3. The HE partner delivers the endorsed curriculum in line with endorsement conditions and the approved programme specification, module information and delivery documentation.

1.4. The HE partner's method(s) of delivery for the endorsed curriculum enable students to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding required to meet the intended learning outcomes, aims and objectives.

1.5. The HE partner's assessment methods validly assess students' knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to the intended learning outcomes of the endorsed curriculum.

Student journey

2.1. The HE partner ensures effective communication between teaching, academic and assessment staff and students.

2.2. The HE partner uses student feedback to inform enhancement of provision and the wider student experience.

2.3. The HE partner ensures that appropriate academic, pastoral and learning support is available to enable students to complete their programme of study.

2.4. The HE partner ensures that students who successfully complete the provision receive appropriate recognition or certification for their achievement.

Marketing and promotion

3.1. The HE partner markets its endorsed curriculum in line with CIMSPA expectations.

3.2. The HE partner promotes its endorsed curriculum accurately, transparently and in line with published programme information.

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 will 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 review

The outcomes that will be used to evaluate the quality of the provision offered will be either Enhancing, Enabling or Emerging.

- **Enhancing** – HE partners that are identified as Enhancing demonstrate established and embedded best practice across their academic provision. They provide a high-quality student experience and demonstrate a strong commitment to continuous enhancement of learning, teaching and student outcomes.

- **Enabling** – HE partners identified as Enabling demonstrate good practice across their academic provision, with a limited number of identified areas which could be developed. CIMSPA will provide recommendations and/or actions to support continuous improvement and further enhancement of the student experience and endorsed provision.

- **Emerging** – HE partners identified as Emerging demonstrate that minimum CIMSPA requirements and expectations are being met across their endorsed provision. While the provision is operating within the required standards, opportunities for further enhancement have been identified. CIMSPA will provide recommendations and/or actions to

encourage continuous improvement and progression towards an Enabling or Enhancing outcome at future quality assurance reviews.

Quality assurance outcomes will be published on the CIMSPA course directory. This supports transparency and enables prospective students, employers and other stakeholders make informed decisions regarding endorsed programmes and HE partners.

How your outcome is achieved

The Quality Assurance Advisor will determine the outcome for each criterion based on the evidence submitted as part of the review. The overall outcome will be determined through a holistic evaluation of all review criteria and associated evidence, informed by a weighted scoring methodology. The three areas of the framework, **Quality of Education**, **Student Journey** and **Marketing and Promotion**, carry weightings of 45%, 45% and 10% respectively.

The Lead Quality Manager will confirm the overall outcome to the HE partner following consideration of the Quality Assurance Advisor's report.

Please note that where one or more criteria within the **Quality of Education** category are assessed as **Emerging**, the highest overall outcome that can be achieved is **Enabling**.

Following completion of the biennial quality assurance review, HE partners have one opportunity to submit additional evidence in support of a revised outcome. Any additional evidence must be submitted within 12 months of the report date. The outcome determined following review of the additional evidence will be final and will remain in place until the next scheduled quality assurance review.

Biennial review approach

A quality assurance review of each HE partner will take place on a biennial basis. The review will comprise a desk-based evaluation followed by a review visit (**Appendix B**). The desk-based evaluation will consider information available in

advance of the visit, including the most recent External Examiner reports, graduate outcomes data, and relevant institutional policies, procedures and quality assurance arrangements. The review will be undertaken by a Quality Assurance Advisor who forms part of a team of independent quality assurance specialists contracted by CIMSPA to conduct review activity on its behalf.

Following completion of the review, CIMSPA will issue a quality assurance report outlining the review findings and the overall outcome. A follow up meeting will be offered with the HE partner to discuss the findings and where appropriate agree recommendations and enhancement actions to support continuous improvement and ongoing alignment with CIMSPA requirements and expectations for endorsed provision.

CIMSPA and its Quality Assurance Advisors will work collaboratively with HE partners to ensure that the quality assurance review is proportionate and does not place unnecessary burden on institutional quality assurance arrangements.

HE partners will be provided with a three-month review window. The HE partner will be required to agree a visit date within this period with the Quality Assurance Advisor.

The following circumstances may be treated as non-compliance (see following section), unless CIMSPA determines that there are exceptional circumstances:

- A date for the review visit cannot be agreed within the specified review window.
- A review visit is cancelled by the HE partner and is not rearranged within four weeks of the original visit date.
- A review visit takes place, but key evidence required to inform the review is unavailable to the Quality Assurance Advisor.

Non-Compliance

Failure to comply with this policy is a material breach of the CIMSPA Partnership Contract for Higher Education Partners and as such the HE partner will be given

written notice by CIMSPA to remedy the breach within 14 days. If the breach is not remedied within that period, then the contract will be terminated.

Review

The CIMSPA Policy; Quality Assurance Review of Higher Education Partners will be reviewed in September 2028 unless a change in policy, governance or other circumstance requires a review prior to this date.

Appendix A- Evidence Framework

Quality of education

Criteria	Indicative Content	Outcome
1.1. The HE partner provides opportunities that support students' future learning, progression and career development.	• Examples of student progression, including employment or further study, following completion of the relevant professional standard. For example, HESA data. • Evidence of signposting students to further learning, professional development or employment opportunities. • Evidence of signposting to CIMSPA endorsed training opportunities to ensure alignment with recognised standards.	**Enhancing** There is comprehensive evidence that the HE partner provides opportunities that support students' future learning, progression and career development. **Enabling** There is sufficient evidence that the HE partner provides opportunities that support students' future learning, progression and career development. **Emerging** There is evidence that minimum CIMSPA requirements are met, with opportunities identified to strengthen support for students' future learning, progression and career development.

Criteria	Indicative Content	Outcome
1.2. The HE partner adopts an inclusive approach across its institutional culture, the accessibility of its education provision and the delivery of the endorsed curriculum.	• Examples of how equality diversity and inclusion (EDI) policy is actively implemented in practice, ensuring alignment with current legislation and promoting inclusive behaviours across the organisation. • Evidence of appropriate terminology used within organisation communications promotes inclusion and sense of belonging. • 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 is comprehensive evidence that the HE partner embeds an inclusive approach across institutional culture, accessibility of education provision and delivery of the endorsed curriculum. **Enabling** There is sufficient evidence that the HE partner has an inclusive approach across institutional culture, accessibility of education provision and delivery of the endorsed curriculum. **Emerging** There is evidence that minimum CIMSPA requirements are met, with opportunities identified to further embed inclusive practice across institutional culture, accessibility and curriculum delivery.

Criteria	Indicative Content	Outcome
1.3. The HE partner delivers the endorsed curriculum in line with endorsement conditions and the approved programme specification, module information and delivery documentation.	• Evidence of adherence to CIMSPA's endorsement guidelines. • Evidence that the endorsed curriculum is delivered in line with the approved programme specification, module information and delivery documentation.	**Enhancing** There is comprehensive evidence that the endorsed curriculum is delivered in line with endorsement conditions and the approved programme specification, module information and delivery documentation. **Enabling** There is sufficient evidence that the endorsed curriculum is delivered in line with endorsement conditions and the approved programme specification, module information and delivery documentation. **Emerging** There is evidence that minimum CIMSPA requirements are met, with opportunities identified to strengthen alignment between curriculum delivery, endorsement conditions and approved delivery documentation.

Criteria	Indicative Content	Outcome
1.4. The HE partner's method(s) of delivery for the endorsed curriculum enable students to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding required to meet the intended learning outcomes, aims and objectives.	• Examples of resources used for content delivery. • Observation of delivery (if appropriate). • Student feedback.	**Enhancing** There is comprehensive evidence that delivery of the endorsed curriculum enables students to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding required to meet the intended learning outcomes, aims and objectives. **Enabling** There is sufficient evidence that delivery of the endorsed curriculum enables students to develop the knowledge, skills and understanding required to meet the intended learning outcomes, aims and objectives. **Emerging** There is evidence that minimum CIMSPA requirements are met, with opportunities identified to further strengthen delivery in support of intended learning outcomes, aims and objectives.

Criteria	Indicative Content	Outcome
1.5. The HE partner's assessment methods validly assess students' knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to the intended learning outcomes of the endorsed curriculum.	• The assessment methods chosen are valid, reliable, and fit for purpose. • Evidence that assessment methods are aligned to professional standards and relevant sector practice. • Evidence that students can make links between academic content and the relevant professional standard.	**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.

Student journey

Criteria	Indicative Content	Outcome
2.1 The HE partner ensures effective communication between teaching, academic and assessment staff and students.	• Examples of effective communication between teaching, academic and assessment staff and students. • Examples of the HE partner's communication methods with students. • Evidence of student engagement at meetings/forums /communities of practice.	**Enhancing** There is comprehensive evidence that the HE partner uses effective communication to support engagement between teaching, academic and assessment staff and students. **Enabling** There is sufficient evidence that the HE partner uses effective communication to support engagement between teaching, academic and assessment staff and students. **Emerging** There is sufficient evidence that minimum CIMSPA requirements are met, with opportunities identified to strengthen communication and student engagement.

Criteria	Indicative Content	Outcome
2.2. The HE partner uses student feedback to inform enhancement of provision and the wider student experience	• Evidence of student voice opportunities available. • Evidence of completed programme or module evaluations, including content relating to the student experience. • Evidence that student voice has been considered and acted upon where appropriate.	**Enhancing** There is comprehensive evidence that students have meaningful opportunities to provide feedback on their student experience, and that feedback is systematically considered and acted upon to support enhancement. **Enabling** There is sufficient evidence that students have opportunities to provide feedback on their student experience, and that feedback is considered and acted upon where appropriate. **Emerging** There is sufficient evidence that minimum CIMSPA requirements are met, with opportunities identified to further strengthen student feedback mechanisms and the use of feedback to enhance the student experience.

Criteria	Indicative Content	Outcome
2.3 The HE partner ensures that appropriate academic, pastoral and learning support is available to enable students to complete their programme of study.	• Examples of academic, pastoral and learning support available to enable students to progress and complete their programme of study.	**Enhancing** There is comprehensive evidence that the HE partner provides appropriate academic, pastoral and learning support to enable students to complete their programme of study. **Enabling** There is sufficient evidence that the HE partner provides appropriate academic, pastoral and learning support to enable students to complete their programme of study. **Emerging** There is sufficient evidence that minimum CIMSPA requirements are met, with opportunities identified to strengthen academic, pastoral and learning support for students.

Criteria	Indicative Content	Outcome
2.4 The HE partner ensures that students who successfully complete the provision receive appropriate recognition or certification for their achievement.	• Professional standards request form is provided to CIMSPA following completion of standard. • Evidence of student onboarding processes for CIMSPA student membership. • Students receive appropriate recognition or certification in a timely manner following successful completion of the endorsed provision.	**Enhancing** There is comprehensive evidence that students who successfully complete the endorsed provision receive appropriate recognition or certification for their achievement. **Enabling** There is sufficient evidence that students who successfully complete the endorsed provision receive appropriate recognition or certification for their achievement. **Emerging** There is sufficient evidence that minimum CIMSPA requirements are met, with opportunities identified to strengthen processes for recognising or certifying student achievement.

Marketing and promotion

Criteria	Indicative Content	Enhancing
3.1. The HE partner markets its endorsed curriculum in line with CIMSPA expectations.	• Evidence of compliance to **CIMSPA brand guidelines** •	**Enhancing** There is comprehensive evidence that the HE partner markets its endorsed programme provision in line with CIMSPA requirements and expectations. **Enabling** There is good evidence that the HE partner markets its endorsed programme provision in line with CIMSPA requirements and expectations. **Emerging** There is sufficient evidence that minimum CIMSPA requirements are met, with opportunities identified to strengthen marketing of endorsed programme provision.

Criteria	Indicative Content	Enhancing
3.2. The HE partner promotes its endorsed curriculum accurately, transparently and in line with published programme information.	• Accurate representation of their endorsed curriculum. ○ For example, the HE partner is transparent in its published programme information, including entry requirements, programme duration and achievement obtained. • Consistent marketing of the endorsed curriculum.	**Enhancing** There is comprehensive evidence that the HE partner promotes its endorsed curriculum accurately, transparently and in line with published programme information. **Enabling** There is sufficient evidence that the HE partner promotes its endorsed curriculum accurately, transparently and in line with published programme information. **Emerging** There is sufficient evidence that minimum CIMSPA requirements are met, with opportunities identified to strengthen the accuracy, transparency and consistency of published programme information.

Appendix B- Example timetable for review visit

Time	Activity	Quality Assurance Framework Criteria
10:00	Arrival: meet and greet	N/A
10:30 to 11:30	Review sample of student work and feedback	1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 2.2, 2.3
11:30 to 12:00	Student focus group	1.2, 2.1, 2.3, 2.2, 2.4
13:00 to 13:30	Staff focus group	1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4,
13:30 to 14:30	Review of student assessment activity, where available, or relevant teaching and learning observation	1.2, 1.3, 1.4,1.5, 2.1
14:30 to 15:00	Collate initial findings	All
15:00 to 15:30	Feedback on initial findings	All



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