



Gateway Quality Reviews : end of cycle thematic report for sessions 2017-18 to 2023- 24

Introduction

On behalf of the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (Medr), the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) undertakes Gateway Quality Reviews (GQRs) of higher education providers to test their higher education (HE) provision against the baseline quality regulatory requirements in Wales. QAA also re-tests the quality aspects of the baseline regulatory requirements at the end of a four-year period, when engaged by the provider to do so. The Gateway Quality Review method is compliant with European Standards and Guidelines (ESG).

The overall aim of Gateway Quality Review is to provide Medr with an expert judgement about the quality assurance of a provider's HE provision.

All reports are [published](#) on QAA's web pages.

The GQR is designed to:

- ensure that the student interest is protected
- provide expert advice to ensure that the reputation of the UK higher education system is protected, including the protection of academic standards
- identify areas for development and/or specified improvements that will help a provider to meet the baseline regulatory requirements.

Timing of Gateway Quality Reviews

In the 2017-18 to 2023-24 cycle QAA completed 12 Gateway Quality Reviews, as follows:

Provider	Year
Bridgend College	March 2021
Cardiff and Vale College	March 2023
Cardiff and Vale College	March 2019
Centre for Alternative Technology	March 2022
Coleg Cambria	May 2023

Coleg Cambria	May 2019
Coleg Gwent	November 2023
Coleg Gwent	November 2019
Gower College Swansea	May 2021
St Padarn's Institute	March 2024
St Padarn's Institute	March 2020
Union School of Theology	May 2022

As five years of review are being reported, four providers are included twice: St Padarn's Institute (2020 and 2024); Coleg Gwent (2019 and 2023); Coleg Cambria (2019 and 2023); Cardiff and Vale College (2019 and 2023).

Analysis of review outcomes

Judgements

For all reviews, the review teams formed the following positive judgements about the higher education provision at providers:

- there can be confidence that academic standards are reliable, meet UK requirements, and are reasonably comparable with standards set and achieved in other providers in the UK
- there can be confidence that the quality of the student academic experience meets relevant baseline regulatory requirements.

Areas for development and specific improvements

The [Gateway Quality Review: Wales Handbook](#) defines areas for development and specified improvements as:

Areas for development relate to areas that the review team believes have the potential to enhance quality and/or further secure the reliability and/or comparability of academic standards.

Specified improvements relate to matters that the review team believes are already putting, or have the potential to put, quality and/or standards at risk and hence require improvement.

There were three reviews with no areas for development: Coleg Gwent (2023); Cardiff and Vale College (2023); and Centre for Alternative Technology. Across the remaining nine reviews, providers were advised on 18 areas for development. An analysis of these is in the following text. There were no specified improvements for any providers.

The 18 areas for development were reviewed and the following common themes noted, as follows (the appendix lists all review outcomes in their entirety).

- **Communication and management of information** (seven reviews – 13 outcomes) – was the most commonly occurring theme for areas for development. The areas covered a range of topics. One was focused on consumer protection:

- establishing a formal procedure that ensures all marketing materials are updated in a timely fashion to reflect external changes as they arise outside the annual updating process
- more clearly signposting the admission appeals procedure to prospective students
- ensuring additional costs for relevant courses are more clearly signposted for prospective students
- reviewing and improving the accessibility of terms and conditions for all students at key stages of the admission process, including the Pearson provision
- further clarifying to students the specific responsibilities of the College and those of the awarding bodies with regards to academic appeals
- clarifying the guidance documentation relating to academic appeals for Pearson Higher National students (UKQC)

A second grouping related to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education:

- promoting more clearly opportunities for accreditation of prior certificated and experiential learning in materials for applicants and to staff involved in the admissions process
- articulating more clearly its expectations for higher education level teaching, learning and assessment in relevant strategies and associated guidance to staff
- consider developing documentary guidance to support the work of all employers

Two outcomes related to the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales, Northern Ireland:

- ensuring that programme specifications for Pearson Higher National programmes meet awarding organisation requirements
- ensuring that the College-defined Programme Specifications for Pearson Higher National programmes meet the requirements as defined by the awarding body

Finally, one outcome related to ensuring the terms of reference of Institute committees are updated to incorporate consideration of academic risk including student complaints; and one outcome advised completing and implementing the new alumni survey to improve information in order to better understand the academic and professional outcomes of students.

- **Development of processes** (two reviews) – areas included continuing development of internal quality assurance processes; and formalising in the annual monitoring process at school and College level reporting on progress against actions identified in previous reports.
- **Assessment** (one review) – areas included developing a greater variety of assessment methods; and ensuring assessment feedback to students is provided in a timely manner.
- **Student representative training** (one review) - further strengthen induction and communication with student representatives.

Summary

In summary, review teams reported confidence in all providers. Three reviews had no areas for development. A key theme in the areas for development related to management and clarity of information, which appeared in seven of the 12 reviews.

Appendix: Areas for development by provider

	Padarn 2024	Gwent 2023	Cambria 2023	Vale 2023	Theol. 2022	Technol. 2022	Gower 2021	Bridge. 2021	Padarn 2020	Gwent 2019	Cambria 2019	Vale 2019
Assessment method variety												
1. Work with its awarding bodies to develop a greater variety of assessment methods that will support students to achieve a wider range of academic and professional outcomes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>											
Assessment feedback timeliness												
2. Ensure assessment feedback to students is provided in a timely manner and supports all students in their academic and professional development	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>											
Development of processes												
3. Continue development of its internal quality assurance processes so that regular reviews of its practices for standards and quality can drive further improvements and enhancements (Standards).			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>									
4. Formalise in the annual monitoring process at school and College level reporting on progress against actions identified in previous reports (Quality Code)										<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Student representative training												
5. Further strengthen induction and communication with student representatives to ensure they can fulfil the role effectively.					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>							

Appendix: Areas for development by provider

	Padarn 2024	Gwent 2023	Cambria 2023	Vale 2023	Theol. 2022	Technol. 2022	Gower 2021	Bridge. 2021	Padarn 2020	Gwent 2019	Cambria 2019	Vale 2019
Management and clarity of information												
6. Establish a formal procedure that ensures all marketing materials are updated in a timely fashion to reflect external changes as they arise outside the annual updating process (Consumer Protection)										<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
7. Promote more clearly opportunities for accreditation of prior certificated and experiential learning in materials for applicants and to staff involved in the admissions process (Quality Code)										<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
8. Articulate more clearly its expectations for higher education level teaching, learning and assessment in relevant strategies and associated guidance to staff (Quality Code)										<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
9. Ensure the terms of reference of Institute committees are updated to incorporate consideration of academic risk including student complaints (Code of Governance).									<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
10. Consider developing documentary guidance to support the work of all employers (UKQC).							<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					
11. Ensure that programme specifications for Pearson Higher National programmes meet awarding organisation requirements (FHEQ)								<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>				

Appendix: Areas for development by provider

	Padarn 2024	Gwent 2023	Cambria 2023	Vale 2023	Theol. 2022	Technol. 2022	Gower 2021	Bridge. 2021	Padarn 2020	Gwent 2019	Cambria 2019	Vale 2019
12. Ensure that the College-defined Programme Specifications for Pearson Higher National programmes meet the requirements as defined by the awarding body (FHEQ)							<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					
13. Complete and implement the new alumni survey to improve information in order to better understand the academic and professional outcomes of students					<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>							
14. Clarify the guidance documentation relating to academic appeals for Pearson Higher National students (UKQC)							<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>					
15. More clearly signpost the admission appeals procedure to prospective students (Consumer Protection)												<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
16. Ensure additional costs for relevant courses are more clearly signposted for prospective students (Consumer Protection)												<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
17. Review and improve the accessibility of terms and conditions for all students at key stages of the admission process, including the Pearson provision (Consumer Protection)											<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
18. Further clarify to students the specific responsibilities of the College and those of the awarding bodies with regards to academic appeals (Student Protection).												<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
None		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>						

Published – 14 July 2025

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2025
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786
www.qaa.ac.uk