



Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): Partial Review Process

Introduction

1 There are three instances where an alternative provider might be required to undergo a partial Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers):

- where an annual return confirms significant changes have taken place, or there are concerns about academic standards, quality or information that cannot be addressed through an extended monitoring visit
- where QAA has published a report into a full investigation of the provider under the Concerns Scheme
- where an alternative provider has received a judgement of 'requires improvement to meet UK expectations' in a full review.

2 In all of the instances above, QAA may determine that a full review is required instead of a partial review. Please note that where a provider receives a judgement of 'does not meet UK expectations', a full review will be required.

3 The purpose of this document is to give providers, QAA review teams and QAA Review Managers additional information to that which appears in the [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\) Handbook](#)¹ about the process for carrying out a partial review. As this process needs to be responsive to the circumstances of any given review (for example the reasons for requiring a partial review instead of a monitoring visit, or how many unsatisfactory judgements there were in the previous full review), it is appropriate for it to be flexible. This document aims to provide a framework within which the follow-up process should take place, which enables all parties to plan and contribute effectively. It is published on the QAA website in line with our commitments to openness and transparency.

4 The partial review process follows the standard Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) Handbook (or equivalent for embedded colleges or foreign providers) with the following exceptions:

- between one to three judgement areas will be reviewed (at QAA's discretion)
- the timeline for the review process will be shortened
- a new report will be published, focused on the judgement areas reviewed
- there is no first team meeting
- the length of the review visit is determined in advance by QAA
- the partial review process will not normally be preceded by a Financial Sustainability, Management and Governance (FSMG) check.

5 Providers will be required to produce a new self-evaluation document (SED), and students may also voluntarily offer a student submission. The SED will include a brief introduction and context to the provider, and a report on the Expectations under review. Please see the guidance in the Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) Handbook

¹ Alternatively, the [Higher Education Review \(Embedded Colleges\)](#), [Higher Education Review \(Foreign Providers\)](#) or the [Educational Oversight - Exceptional Arrangements](#) handbooks, as applicable.

for more information about producing a SED or student submission. Where the partial review is being carried out to redress failing judgements from a previous review or following a concerns investigation, the provider should also account for progress made with each action in the related action plan.

6 The scheduling of the partial review will be determined by QAA in discussion with the provider, having regard to the appropriate timeframe for review according to educational oversight or specific course designation requirements. In some cases, by mutual agreement, it may be possible to conduct the partial review according to shorter timescales than those set out in the relevant annual monitoring guidance note or review handbook. However, where the partial review is being carried out in response to a concerns investigation or failing judgements in an earlier review, QAA encourages providers to take sufficient time to address the issues identified in the original review, concern or annual return, before engaging in a partial review. It will be necessary for the review team to have evidence that new or revised processes have been implemented before different judgements can be considered.

7 The fee for the partial review will vary to reflect the duration of the partial review and how many reviewers are involved. The following table provides an indication of the likely fee. The full fee must be paid 12 weeks prior to the visit, in order for the partial review to take place. Where providers are required to undergo a partial review in place of a monitoring visit, the fee will be adjusted if the maintenance fee for that year has already been paid.

	One-day visit	Two-day visit	Three-day visit
Two reviewers	£8,630	£10,500	£12,360
Three reviewers	£10,100	£12,690	£15,280
Four reviewers	£11,830	£15,050	£18,270

8 The outcome of the partial review will be fresh judgements and a published partial review report. Unsatisfactory judgements at this stage have different implications depending on whether the alternative provider wishes to maintain educational oversight or specific course designation. QAA will advise the Home Office and/or the Department for Education and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) accordingly of the review outcomes, and advise the provider of the next steps. Please see the Home Office guidance² for the implications for Tier 4 Sponsorship, and the Department for Education guidance³ for the implications for specific course designation.

9 A partial review will not re-set the four-year cycle of full reviews, and the next full review will be scheduled to take place four years after the previous full review.

² Sponsor a Tier 4 Student: Guidance for Educators, available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/sponsor-a-tier-4-student-guidance-for-educators.

³ Alternative Higher Education Providers: Designation Guidance, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/specific-course-designation-alternative-higher-education-providers>

Indicative timeline for a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) partial review

10 The partial review visit will be up to three days, with a maximum of four reviewers. The length of the visit and team size will be determined by QAA in advance of the visit being scheduled.

Following submission of annual return, or on receipt of action plan from concerns investigation or full review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QAA notifies provider of requirement for a partial review, confirms judgement areas to be reviewed and agrees dates for the visit. • QAA notifies provider of Review Manager and team. • Provider reads HER (AP) handbook and starts to prepare self-evaluation and evidence base. Review Manager may offer guidance on the structure of the self-evaluation by telephone or email.
-8 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provider uploads Self-evaluation and supporting evidence, and team begins documentary analysis. Where possible, providers are asked to facilitate the production of a student submission, which may be submitted at -2 weeks.
-5 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team requests additional evidence (if required), and proposes a schedule for the visit, including who to meet.
-2 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provider submits additional evidence (and student submission if available).
Afternoon/evening before partial review visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team hold pre-visit meeting.
0 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partial review visit to the provider.
+2 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review team provide text for the partial review report.
+2 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QAA Review Manager sends key findings letter to provider, copied to Home Office and/or the Department for Education and HEFCE.
+4 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QAA officer sends draft report to the team
+6 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • QAA officer sends draft report to the provider
+9 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provider responds to the draft report
+11 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report proofed and prepared for publication
+12 weeks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Report published on the web, or if a negative judgement, provider may submit an appeal

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