2 SCOPE OF QUALITY ASSURANCE PROCEDURES

National policy is that the provider-owned, quality assurance procedures of designated awarding bodies will be comprehensive. This means that such procedures will cover **all** education and training, research and related activities of the designated awarding body. This should be understood to encompass all education programmes regardless of whether or not these lead to awards recognised in the NFQ or to awards (single and/or joint) of other awarding bodies or none. Procedures will also cover the approval, monitoring and review of effectiveness of the quality assurance procedures of linked providers.

In addition to (or by encompassing) regular periodic review of study programmes, designated awarding bodies should undertake quality reviews of academic, administrative and service departments and as appropriate in units such as schools, faculties and colleges. It may also be useful to undertake thematic reviews of institution-wide issues as part of the regular cycle of unit evaluation.

The explicit quality measures envisaged by the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, May 2015* (ESG) refer to design, approval, monitoring and periodic review of study programmes; supports and training for teaching staff and regular student feedback and complaints procedures. In addition, well-established mechanisms such as the external examiner system and institutional research and strategic planning functions can contribute significantly to quality.

Periodic quality review should be understood in the context of a range of other mechanisms in higher education institutions, with which they must interact and which they must support if they are to be fully effective. Integrated institutional approaches to quality improvement should be geared to eliminate unnecessary duplication, reduce burden and, most importantly, promote synergies. Such approaches should yield benefits and opportunities for the institutions to test the effectiveness of their systems and procedures with a view to ongoing enhancement; identify and disseminate good practice; identify challenges and areas for improvement and how to address them; enhance the student experience; enhance strategic and other planning as appropriate.