

1.6 Provider-owned quality assurance (internal QA)

Quality and its assurance is the primary responsibility of the provider. In very broad terms, provider-owned quality assurance refers to the mechanisms and procedures developed and adopted by providers to achieve and maintain a desired level of quality in educational provision, research and related services. The desired level of quality and complexity of related procedures will be influenced by a provider's context, including its scope; the NFQ level of provision and overall provider goals, as well as its external obligations to all stakeholders (e.g. to regulators and to statutory and professional bodies and other national requirements). Internal quality assurance procedures normally have an external dimension also, for example, external review panels or examiners.

A provider's quality (assurance) system refers to all of the provider's internal QA policies and procedures working in concert to form an integrated whole. For example, policies, procedures, guidelines, roles, responsibilities attached to the human resources and other resources required to govern, oversee, manage, analyse, make decisions, review and improve the quality of provision and related services. A quality system can exist in small as well as large providers. A successful quality assurance system will be efficient, well communicated and integrated into the normal activities of the provider.