

# BOLOGNA PROCESS - UK England, Wales & Northern Ireland

## UK NATIONAL REPORT 2005-2007

### A. Background information on your Higher Education system

#### Details

Country	United Kingdom (England, Wales and Northern Ireland)
Date	15 December 2006
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#### Main achievements since Bergen

<p>1. Describe the important developments relating to the Bologna Process, including legislative reforms, since Bergen.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The UK took over responsibility for the Bologna Secretariat following the last Ministerial conference in May 2005 and has been working towards the next summit in London in May 2007.</li> <li>• The UK hosted an official BFUG seminar on Enhancing European Employability at Swansea University in July 2006.</li> <li>• The UK HE Europe Unit published a revised Guide to the Bologna Process in November 2006 to raise awareness and support engagement with the Process in the lead-up to the 2007 London conference. It also published a Guide to the Diploma Supplement in July 2006 to support higher education institutions in their implementation of the Diploma Supplement. Both documents are available on the Europe Unit's website: <a href="http://www.europeunit.ac.uk/news/publications_archive.cfm">www.europeunit.ac.uk/news/publications_archive.cfm</a>.</li> <li>• The Measuring and Recording Student Achievement Steering Group (Burgess Group) was set up in 2005 following a recommendation from a scoping review that the sector should work towards a common higher education credit system in the UK. The Steering Group - a sector-wide initiative - has been working towards producing a credit framework for HE in England (Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales already have their own credit systems). The final report was published in December 2006 and recommended that credit arrangements for HE in England which would be compatible with ECTS should be developed with a view to English institutions voluntarily credit-rating their provision by 2009/10 and thereafter starting to include the credit value in a published description of each of the programmes they offer. It also recommended that the operational detail should be developed by a Credit Issues Development Group.</li> <li>• Wales has been making efforts to self-certify the Credit and Qualification Framework for Wales as compatible with the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA.</li> <li>• Improvements were introduced to the student support system. From 2006/07 full-time undergraduates in England and Northern Ireland will not have to pay tuition fees in advance. Instead these students are able to take out a loan for fees (up to £3,000 per year), repayable only when they are earning more than £15,000, and then in line with income and at no real rate of interest (and written off after 25 years). The measure is backed by a student support package of grants and bursaries focusing on the less well off. Grants of up</li> </ul>
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to £2,700 are available as well as a minimum bursary of £300. Variable tuition fees will bring new income into the HE sector – an extra £1.35bn per year – and are independent of government decisions about public spending priorities. This means English HEIs can maintain and improve competitiveness in the global HE market. There is no evidence to indicate that tuition fee contributions have deterred students from entering HE and there has been no change in the socio-economic background of applicants. These factors are being closely monitored because of concerns about the effect of the variable tuition fees on the uptake of higher education provision, especially by those less well off.

- Foundation Degrees have been further developed since the last national report. There are now around 2,102 courses running with a further 742 planned. Nearly 47,000 students studied for a Foundation Degree in 2005-2006.

### **National organisation**

2. Describe any changes since Bergen in the structure of public authorities responsible for higher education, the main agencies/bodies in higher education and their roles.

Please include:

- whether higher education institutions (HEIs) report to /are overseen by different ministries
- how funds are allocated to HEIs
- areas for which HEIs are autonomous and self governing.

Details of the structure and funding were set out in the previous national report.

The Office for Science and Technology within the Department for Trade and Industry has since become the Office for Science and Innovation (OSI); the Teacher Training Agency has become the Teacher and Development Agency for schools.

UK institutions are responsible for deciding for themselves who is admitted to study, what is taught, who teaches, how the institutions are governed, and what strategies they pursue.

3. Describe any changes since Bergen to the institutional structure.

Please include:

- the number of public/private HEIs
- are there different types of institutions delivering higher education (i.e. academic/professional, university/non-university etc.)
- the number/percentage of students admitted in academic session 2006-2007 to each type of institution
- the extent to which different types institutions are covered by the same regulations.

Details of the number of institutions were provided in the previous national report.

In 2004/05 there were 2.2 million students enrolled on higher education courses at publicly funded UK higher education institutions, plus a further 200,000 undertaking higher education at further education colleges. Of these: 1,445,000 were mature (25 or over for postgraduates, 21 or over for undergraduates); 896,000 were studying part time.

The number of UK domiciled students admitted to UK Higher Education in 2004–05 (the last year for which audited figures are available) was 848,940 (source: Table 10b of the HESA Red Book on students). Currently the University of Buckingham has 814 students (source: University of Buckingham website accessed 23 November 2006).

### **Partnership**

4. Describe the structure which oversees the implementation of the Bologna Process in your country.

Please include:

- the membership and role of any national Bologna group (for example policy committee, promoters' group)
- the membership and role of students, staff trade unions, business and social partners in any national Bologna Group.

The specific arrangements were set out in the previous national report, but institutional autonomy means that implementation of the Bologna principles is primarily a matter for the sector itself. The UK HE Europe Unit's two recent publications, Guide to the Diploma Supplement and Update Guide to the Bologna Process, make an important contribution to the implementation of Bologna reforms.

In addition to the High Level Policy Forum and European Coordinating Group described in the previous report, the National Union of Students, the national team of Bologna Promoters and professional bodies also participate and inform the policy position of the UK HE Europe Unit. Bologna Promoters have been active in the UK over the last two years and have assisted UK institutions on all aspects of the process.

The UK has been providing the Bologna Secretariat since May 2005.

5. Describe the arrangements for involving students and staff trade union/representative bodies in the governance of HEIs.

Please include:

- precise references (preferably with web links) to any legislation (or equivalent) in place to ensure students and staff are represented on HEI governing bodies
- the role of students in the governance of HEIs
- the role of staff trade union/representative bodies in the governance of HEIs.

In England, there are no legislative requirements for HEIs to have student and staff representatives on their governing bodies. However, the Committee of University Chairmen produces guidance on good governance arrangements and recommends that governing bodies should include student and staff members. All HEIs do have academic staff representatives on their governing bodies; some also have non-academic staff members. The vast majority of institutions have student members on their governing bodies. Membership of the governing body will be laid down in the institution's governing documents. Student and staff members are full members of the governing body with full voting rights. The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) Guide for Members of Higher Education Governing Bodies in the UK

([www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2004/04\\_40a](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2004/04_40a)) encourages the adoption of open practices by governing bodies. HEFCE advises that staff and student representatives are fully involved in governing bodies and their expertise fully drawn on. The inclusion of staff (and student) representatives in decision making adds considerably to the authority and transparency of the decisions reached.

6. Describe the measures in place to ensure the co-operation of business and social partners within the Bologna Process.

The Department for Education and Skills' strategy is one of HE sector growth through employer-led provision. The HEFCE strategy on employer engagement (<http://www.hefce.ac.uk/learning/employer/strat/>) reflects this, defining 'employer engagement' in terms of the broad range of collaborations existing between HE and public and private sector organisations (as explored by the Lambert Report on Business-University Collaboration, 2003). The focus of this employer engagement strategy is on teaching and learning although it has links

with knowledge transfer and with widening participation. The 2005 HE Business and Community Interaction Survey ([www.hefce.ac.uk/reachout/hebc/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/reachout/hebc/)) showed that the HE market for business in the community, continuing professional development, and continuing education totalled some £298 million in 03/04.

HEFCE's approach is to respond to the Government's skills strategy by seeking to make educational provision more responsive to employers' needs, with a particular focus on employability.

HEFCE issued a call to institutions in May 2006 for proposals to pilot innovative, employer-led provision (Employer Engagement Pilot Proposals). These will provide evidence on what institutions require to respond flexibly to employers, and on exemplary models of learning that fulfil employers' and learners' needs.

The Government is also taking steps to encourage the embedding of work-related skills widely in HE provision by introducing measures that promote partnership working between HE institutions and employers. For instance, initiatives like Higher Education Skills Train to Gain Pathfinders, part of a national training programme offering employers impartial advice and easy access to quality training, and Sector Skills Councils address skills gaps at HE level and allow employers to contribute to the cost of training.

Sector Skills Councils are strategic employer-led bodies leading the drive to improve competitiveness and productivity in industry and business sectors across the UK. They work with employers, trade unions, professional bodies, trade associations and government to identify skills and productivity trends within their sector, and to establish priorities for investing in the skills of the sector workforce, including the development of apprenticeships, higher education and national occupational standards. They are developing Sector Qualification Strategies to shape and influence qualifications education/training at all levels, including higher level and Foundation Degrees.

## **B. Main stocktaking questions, including scorecard elements**

### **Degree system**

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Stage of implementation of the first and second cycle

7. Describe the progress made towards introducing the first and second cycle.

Please include:

- the percentage of the total number of students below doctoral level enrolled in the two cycle degree system in 2006/07.

The UK degree system is based on 3 main cycles (Bachelors/Masters/Doctorate). Integrated Masters degrees of four to five years' duration exist in engineering and some scientific disciplines. These have been designed to allow fast-track progression to the highest professional status and incorporate second cycle learning outcomes which have been agreed by the academic community and the professions. Extensive work has been done to develop clear expected learning outcomes for all engineering degrees, relating to the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) qualification descriptors and hence to the Dublin descriptors. These have been adopted both as the QAA subject benchmark statement and as the profession's requirements for professional accreditation. In 2004/05, 4% of students were studying doctorates, 13% were studying for masters qualifications, 7% were studying for other postgraduate qualifications (including PGCEs), 54% were studying for 1<sup>st</sup> degrees and 23% were studying for sub degree qualifications. In Northern

Ireland, 65% of enrolments below doctoral level in 2004/05 were at Bachelors level and 10% were at Masters level.

( Eurydice )

Stage of implementation of the third cycle

8. Describe the progress made towards implementing doctoral studies as the third Bologna cycle.

Please include:

- the percentage of 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle students following structured doctoral programmes
- the normal length of full-time doctoral studies
- the elements that are included in doctoral study programmes, e.g. do they include taught courses or independent research only
- the supervisory and assessment procedures for doctoral studies
- are doctoral studies included in your country's qualifications framework and are they linked to learning outcomes
- are interdisciplinary training and the development of transferable skills integrated in doctoral studies
- are credit points used in measuring workload in doctoral studies?

There are no significant changes since the previous report.

A diversity of doctorate programmes exists, including part-time doctoral level study, and durations vary. The QAA Code of Practice for Postgraduate research programmes is widely seen as a source of good practice in Europe

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/codeOfPractice/section1/default.asp>

The percentage of students following structured doctoral programmes is 4% (91,605 out of a total student population of 2,288,000 – source: HESA Red Book on Students 2004 – 05). In Northern Ireland in 2004/05, there were 2,622 enrolments on doctorate degrees at the NI HEIs.

The Roberts Review (2002) recommended that PhD students and postdoctoral researchers be given transferable skills training to equip them better for careers in industry or academia. The Government allocated £29.8m to the Research Councils over the period covered by the Science Budget (April 2003 to March 2006) for implementation of the Roberts Review recommendations for skills training of Research Council-funded PhD students and postdoctoral researchers.

The UK GRAD Programme ([www.grad.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home\\_page/pl/eecddL](http://www.grad.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/pl/eecddL)) has established a number of regional hubs to promote, encourage and share good practice in postgraduate skills training and advised on the development of Personal Development Plans. The next Research Assessment Exercise in 2008 aims to recognise interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary research better than previous exercises.

The UK does not believe that it is appropriate to use credit for doctoral level qualifications. The UK has therefore welcomed the approach in the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA which includes typical credit ranges for Bachelor and Master level qualifications, but with no range included for the third cycle. The UK believes that it is essential that the principles of flexibility and institutional autonomy are maintained at doctoral level. The framework of higher education qualifications (FHEQ) for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, published in January 2001, includes a descriptor for doctoral degrees in terms of learning outcomes

([www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/EWNI/default.asp](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/FHEQ/EWNI/default.asp)).

(Scorecard and Eurydice )  
Access<sup>1</sup> to the next cycle

9. Describe the arrangements for access between the first and second cycles and second and third cycles.

Please include:

- the percentage of first cycle qualifications that give access to the second cycle
- if appropriate, the percentage of first cycle qualifications that give access to the third cycle
- the percentage of first cycle qualifications that give access to both the second and third cycles
- the percentage of second cycle qualifications that give access to the third cycle
- specify any first cycle qualifications that do not give access to the second cycle
- specify any second cycle qualifications that do not give access to the third cycle.
- specify any examples where bridging courses are necessary to transfer between cycles in the same subject area
- any measures planned to remove obstacles between cycles.

The successful completion of a first cycle qualification gives access to the second cycle, so the percentage of first cycle qualifications that give access to the second cycle is 100%. Successful completion of second cycle qualifications gives access to the third cycle. The large majority of students complete a second cycle before starting a doctorate, but in some subjects, UK HEIs allow access to doctoral programmes without prior completion of a Masters degree. There are no first or second cycle qualifications which do not give access to the next cycle.

(Scorecard and Eurydice )

Implementation of national qualifications framework

10. Describe the stage of implementation of the national qualifications framework to align with the overarching Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA<sup>2</sup>.

Please include:

- the stage of development of your national qualifications framework (for example: has your national QF been included in legislation or agreed between all relevant stakeholders; has a working group been established; have national outcomes-based descriptors of the main types of qualifications been prepared; has a timetable for implementation been agreed?)
- the extent to which your national qualifications framework is in line with the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA
- the role of stakeholders in the development of your national qualifications framework.

Universities in the UK are autonomous and award their own degrees and qualifications. The

<sup>1</sup> Access as defined in the Lisbon Recognition Convention. Access: the right of qualified candidates to apply and be considered for admission to higher education.

<sup>2</sup> A Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA: <http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/>

FHEQ provides descriptors for five levels of HE qualifications (three at undergraduate level and two at postgraduate), including short cycle awards within the first cycle as well as descriptors for Bachelor, Master and Doctoral degrees. All qualifications are described in terms of learning outcomes. Guidance is also provided on the nomenclature of awards. In these respects the FHEQ is broadly in line with the overarching framework for qualifications in the EHEA.

11. What measures are being taken to increase the employability of graduates with bachelor qualifications?

Please include where possible:

- the percentage of first cycle graduates who found employment after graduating in 2005/06
- the percentage of first cycle graduates who continued into the second or third cycles in 2005/06
- the extent to which this is expected to change in 2006/2007.

Enhancing the employability of graduates is a key part of the Government's White Paper 'The future of higher education' (Cm 5735) which states that 'as well as improving vocational skills, we need to ensure that all graduates, including those who study traditional academic disciplines, have the right skills to equip them for a lifetime in a fast changing work environment'. To improve both graduate employability and the relevance of graduate skills to the economy, all universities are embracing the skills agenda, recognising the key part they have to play both in preparing the technical and professional workforce of the future, but also in terms of continuing professional development. The HE Academy has stimulated considerable engagement to create vocational progression frameworks, influence the shape of new specialist diplomas at level 3 and of Foundation Degrees, accredit industry skills, find willing employers to engage in HE curriculum design, produce shared resources for vocational learning, research industry competences and employer expectations. This has been particularly successful in the subject areas of Art, Design and Media, and in Construction. It is also actively supporting entrepreneurial and enterprise education through close work with the National Council for Graduate Entrepreneurship. The undergraduate curriculum frequently includes placements, projects, skills and enterprise modules, simulations and other work-related components to generate higher level skills. Extra-curricular activities are also widely supported, such as volunteering and work experience, for which credit or additional certification is frequently available. Personal Development Planning (PDP), which is a process undertaken by an individual to reflect upon their own learning, performance and/or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development, is now a requirement for all HEIs. This not only helps students to develop knowledge about themselves and through this build a stronger sense of identity, but also improves their ability to relate their learning and achievements to employers' interests and needs. The Government has asked HEFCE to produce an employer engagement policy designed to impress upon HEIs the need to recognise that all programmes and training courses should offer employability enhancing skills, through the application of learning and the transfer and development of underpinning skills and knowledge. Information is collected by the Higher Education Statistics agency through an annual survey. This shows the destinations of UK and EU domiciled students six months after graduating. The latest figures for first degree graduates in 2004/05 are: 64% are in employment, a further 9% are in employment and further study and 24% are in further study only. Of those students in 'further study only' or 'further study and employment', 61% were aiming for a higher degree, 17% were studying for professional qualifications, 18% were studying for other qualifications (including 1<sup>st</sup> degrees, diplomas and certificates) and 5% were not aiming for a qualification. We do not model the future destinations

flows of graduates.

### Quality assurance

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

National implementation of the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA<sup>3</sup>

12. To what extent is your national system of QA already in line with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA?

Please include:

- the stage of implementation of the national quality assurance system in line with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA
- any action that has been taken to ensure that the national quality assurance system is in line with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA
- any deadlines set for taking action to ensure that the national quality assurance system is in line with the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA
- any action planned to ensure that the national quality assurance system is in line with the standards and guidelines for QA in the EHEA.

A description of the quality assurance system in the UK and the activities of the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) was set out in the previous report. QAA has carried out an extensive mapping exercise on the relationship of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) to the Academic Infrastructure for quality and standards, comprising the FHEQ, subject benchmark statements, the Code of Practice, QAA principles, policies and audit and review processes. All demonstrate broad alignment with the ESG for internal and external QA. As elements of the Academic Infrastructure are reviewed and revised (normally on a five year basis), explicit reference is made as appropriate to the ESG and other Bologna instruments such as the framework for qualifications. For example, Section 7 of the Code of Practice – Programme design, approval, monitoring and review was reviewed in 2006 and the revised version (September 2006) includes references to European developments. The Handbook for the revised institutional audit process in England and Northern Ireland (2006) also makes explicit reference to the ESG as one of the external reference points for quality of provision and academic standards of awards. The UK HE Europe Unit will produce a note on ESG once the QAA mapping process is complete.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Stage of development of external quality assurance system

13. Describe the quality assurance system operating in your country.

Please include:

- the stage of implementation of your external quality assurance system
- the scope of your external quality assurance system: does it operate at a national level; does it cover all higher education<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.enqa.net/files/BergenReport210205.pdf>

- which of the following elements are included in your external quality assurance system:
  - internal assessment
  - external review
  - publication of results
- whether procedures have been established for the peer review of the national agency(ies) according to the Standards and Guidelines for QA in the EHEA.

In addition to the activities mentioned in the previous report, QAA reviews also cover UK higher education provision delivered outside the UK. QAA institutional audit and review processes involve the use of materials prepared by institutions, including the outcomes of internal reviews, visits by external reviewers and the publication of (full) reports. QAA's institutional audit process was reviewed as part of the review of the Quality Assurance Framework for higher education in England in 2005. QAA will ensure that a peer review according to the ESG will take place before 2010, most probably during the 2008/2009 academic year.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Level of student participation

14. Describe the level of student participation in your national quality assurance system.

Please include:

- whether students are included in the following aspects of quality assurance:
  - the governance of national agencies for QA
  - as full members or observers in external review teams
  - as part of the decision making process for external reviews
  - in the consultation process during external reviews (eg arrangements for external reviewers to consult with students)
  - in internal evaluations.

Currently the QAA Board of Directors has a student observer member nominated by the National Union of Students (NUS) or the National Postgraduate Committee (NPC) on an alternating basis. Students play an important part in the institutional audit process (England and Northern Ireland) by submitting a written submission (the SWS – student written submission) to brief the external audit team. Guidance to student representatives in respect of audit and in addition to the audit Handbook (2006) is provided by a separate publication “Institutional audit – a guide for student representatives” and through events run in conjunction with the NUS in the Quality Takes Time project ([www.officeronline.co.uk/stadia/externalpartners/270162.aspx](http://www.officeronline.co.uk/stadia/externalpartners/270162.aspx)). Student representatives are invited to meetings at all stages of the audit process. The Quality Takes Time project also trains student representatives to be effective in internal review processes as this is where most programme evaluation and review takes place in the UK.

QAA also has dedicated student liaison officers who meet regularly with NUS and NPC. This year an overview report on the findings from institutional audits on the experience of international students was published in the QAA's Outcomes publications series.

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<sup>4</sup> higher education: all types of courses of study or sets of courses of study, training or training for research at the post secondary level which are recognised by the relevant authorities as belonging to a country's higher education system.

QAA will explore with NUS and NPC the possibility of students participating in external review teams. Representatives of the student bodies (in addition to the Board observer) will participate in the QAA Board meeting in March 2007, to consider this proposition further.

In 2005 the first full scale National Student Survey was completed. The Survey gathers feedback on the quality of students' courses to help inform the choices of future applicants to higher education, and to contribute to public accountability. Its results are an essential element of the revised quality assurance framework for higher education. The second survey (2006) is now complete and shows that 80% of students are satisfied with their higher education courses. Plans are under way for the 2007 survey.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Level of international participation

15. Describe the level of international participation in your national quality assurance system.

Please include:

- whether there is international participation in the following aspects of quality assurance
  - the governance of national agencies for quality assurance
  - the external evaluation of national quality assurance agencies
  - teams for external review, either as members or observers
  - membership of ENQA
  - membership of any other international network.

QAA is a member of ENQA – the Chief Executive Officer is currently President of the association. The Agency is also a member of INQAAHE and is an observer of the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN). QAA has bilateral links and agreements with partner agencies in Denmark, Ireland, Malaysia and South Africa, reflecting various levels of interest in sharing information about the transnational activities of UK HEIs and cooperating in international quality assurance and evaluation projects. The Agency manages a programme of visits and seminars for international colleagues and policy makers with an annual average of 55 delegations. Changes to the Board of Directors of QAA have been made since 2005. The current membership of the QAA Board of Directors includes two non-UK nationals from outside Europe, two observers who are not UK nationals, a member of the European Space Agency, an Adjunct Professor at a Hong Kong university and committee and board members at Italian and Portuguese universities. QAA does not use or appoint reviewers on an ad hoc basis. QAA recruits auditors and reviewers through public advertisement on its website and by circulating the advertisement through correspondence with heads of institutions. QAA is committed to the principle of equal opportunities and has a policy to ensure that all people are recruited according to their ability to fulfil the requirements for their role. There is no discrimination on the grounds of race, colour, creed, ethnic or national origins, nationality, age, gender etc. All nominees recruited to join the pool from which audit and review teams are selected have to attend a residential training course and seminars for reviewers and be available, if requested, to participate in three audits over a two year period. QAA has non-UK nationals in the pool of reviewers, but this was not the criterion for selecting them. The next QAA auditor training course to be held in February 2007 will include international participants from Europe and QAA cooperation partners. The external peer review of QAA has not yet taken place but it is expected that it will include international participation.

## Recognition of degrees and study periods

(Scorecard and Eurydice )

Stage of implementation of Diploma Supplement

16. Describe the stage of implementation of the Diploma Supplement in your country.

Please include:

- the percentage of students graduating in 2007 who will receive a Diploma Supplement
- which of the following apply to Diploma Supplements issued in your country:
  - issued in a widely spoken European language
  - free of charge
  - automatically
  - correspond to the EU/CoE/UNESCO Diploma Supplement format.

The UK is fully committed to meeting the Bologna Process objective that every student should receive the Diploma Supplement (DS) automatically and free of charge. The UK National Europass Centre (NEC) promotes the DS within the UK, working with key sector bodies and National Agencies in the Socrates Programme to provide essential information and guidance in support of the sector's progress to full implementation. It will continue to do so under the new Lifelong Learning Programme. The UK HE Europe Unit is also advising HEIs on issuing the Diploma Supplement (DS) in the UK. The results of a survey of UK HEIs in 2005 indicated that around one third of survey respondents currently issue the DS and that 50% had plans to do so over the next two years. Seminars involving representatives from higher education institutions suggest that there is increasing involvement with the DS in the UK. Many institutions have however experienced practical difficulties and are delaying the issue of the DS until they next upgrade their electronic information systems and have the technical capacity to undertake the task. The DS is issued in a widely spoken language and free of charge. Many HEIs are following the EU/CoE/UNESCO format for the DS. In many cases this will be in combination with another document issued to students in the UK, the Transcript element of the HE Progress File which contains overlapping information. A UK wide Steering Group is currently considering how to support the sector's implementation of the DS/Transcript. The UK HE Europe Unit has issued a 'Guide to the Diploma Supplement' and is planning another survey of HEIs in 2007 which will include questions on the DS.

(Scorecard)

National implementation of the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention

17. Describe the stage of implementation of the main principles and later supplementary documents<sup>5</sup> of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

Please include:

- whether your country has ratified the convention (including depositing ratification instrument at either CoE or UNESCO)
- whether all appropriate legislation complies with the legal framework of the

<sup>5</sup> Recommendation on the Criteria and Procedures for Recognition (2001); Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees (2004); Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education (2001)

Convention and the later Supplementary Documents

- which of the following principles are applied in practice
  - applicants' right to fair assessment
  - recognition if no substantial differences can be proven
  - demonstration of substantial differences, where recognition is not granted
  - provision of information about your country's HE programmes and institutions
- whether you have a fully operational ENIC
- any action being taken to ratify or fully implement the Convention and the later Supplementary Documents.

The UK ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention on 23 May 2003 and it came into force on 1 July 2003. The Code of Practice of the UK National Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) includes recognition measures which are in accordance with the Supplementary Documents. All of the following principles of the Convention are applied in practice: applicants' right to fair assessment; recognition if no substantial differences can be proven; demonstration of substantial differences where recognition is not granted; provision of information about the country's HE programmes and institutions. The UK NARIC is a fully operational representative agency in the wider European Network of Information Centres.

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Stage of implementation of ECTS

18. Describe the credit and accumulation system operating in your country.

Please include:

- the stage of implementation of ECTS in academic year 2006/2007
- the percentage of first and second cycle programmes using ECTS in academic year 2006/2007
- how any other credit or accumulation system in use relates to ECTS: is it compatible with ECTS; what is the ratio between national and ECTS credits.

The UK believes that the Bologna process does not specifically require ECTS but a credit system that is ECTS compatible. While many English universities and colleges have for many years been using credit accumulation within their institution, often in modular degree structures, as well as accepting transfer students, there has not been a national credit framework for higher education in England along the lines of those in other parts of the UK. With the publication of the Burgess report in December 2006, this position will change and England will begin to work towards a credit framework that aligns with that of Scotland and Wales. The proposed credit framework for England will operate on the same metrics as those in other parts of the UK, so that 1 ECTS credit would equal 2 English/Welsh/Scottish credit points. Institutions can and do use ECTS, generally for transfer and student mobility purposes within European programmes rather than accumulation. It is not possible to say what percentage of first and second cycle programmes are using ECTS in the 2006/07 academic year as institutions do not have to report on how they structure their programmes and using ECTS is not compulsory. The Erasmus data suggests that 63.2% of UK outward Erasmus students make use of ECTS.

19. Has your country produced a national plan to improve the quality of the process associated

with the recognition of foreign qualifications<sup>6</sup>? If so, give a brief description of the plan and attach a copy.

As a party to the Lisbon Recognition Convention the UK has in place a robust system for the recognition of international qualifications. The attached UK national action plan reports on the current status in detail and describes proposed measures for further qualitative improvements to the process. The number of international students in the UK at all levels is an indication of de facto academic recognition of qualifications from a wide range of systems and countries.

## **Lifelong Learning**

(Scorecard)

Recognition of prior learning

20. Describe the measures in place to recognise prior learning, including non-formal and informal learning.

Please include:

- the stage of development of any procedures or national guidelines to recognise prior learning
- a description of any procedures or national guidelines for assessing prior learning as a basis for access to HE
- a description of any procedures or national guidelines for allocating credits as a basis of exemption from some programme requirements.

There is no significant change since the previous report. The QAA guidelines of accreditation of prior learning can be found at [www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/apl/APL.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/apl/APL.pdf)

21. Describe legislative and other measures taken by your country to create opportunities for flexible learning paths in higher education.

Please include:

- any flexibility in entry requirements
- any flexible delivery methods
- any modular structures of programmes.

The Government announced in its HE White Paper of 2003 that it would set up a series of pilot projects to develop and test accelerated provision in order to respond to the increasingly diverse nature of students and their learning needs, and the need for more flexible and inclusive forms of higher education. In response, HEFCE has allocated £3 million from its Strategic Development Fund to support the general development of flexible learning through a series of pilot projects, focusing on a range of models. There are currently 5 pilot projects ('Flexible Learning Pathfinders'), based in 4 HEIs (Derby, Leeds Metropolitan, Northampton and Staffordshire universities) and a partnership of 3 HEIs: Kent, Greenwich and Canterbury Christ Church University. The pathfinders are concentrating on flexibility in terms of variation in pace and intensity of study, combined with flexibility in method of delivery, and underpinned by credit systems, APL and APEL. Examples of the models HEFCE supports are:

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<sup>6</sup> ENIC/NARIC has produced guidelines for National Action Plans for Recognition.

- accumulation of learning in 'blocks' and the ability to break off and resume studying without having to repeat learning
- accelerated study, such as the compressed two-year honours degree, with a different pattern of terms and shorter holidays
- flexible models of part-time study
- 'mode-free' study or the ability to vary pace/switch between modes
- corporate and work-based learning

Many of the programmes being piloted are modular in structure. Entry requirements vary according to the nature of the programme and practices within specific HEIs. Generally requirements for entry to accelerated 2-year honours degree programmes would be the same as for entry to traditional 3-year degrees. Two-year compressed degrees last for the whole calendar year so that the learning outcomes are comparable to those from traditional degrees. There are no legislative barriers to institutions developing more flexible methods of delivery (as HEIs are autonomous bodies): the (private) University of Buckingham, for example, has been offering 2-year accelerated degrees for many years.

Other models of flexible learning being piloted (eg work-based learning degrees, tailored corporate learning, blended-learning/accelerated/decelerated/foundation degrees) offer opportunities for the entry into HE of non-traditional students.

## Joint degrees

(Scorecard and Eurydice)

Establishment and recognition of joint degrees

22. Describe the legislative position on joint degrees in your country.

Please include:

- the stage of implementation of any legislation to establish joint programmes
- whether joint<sup>7</sup> degrees are allowed and encouraged in legislation
- whether joint degrees are allowed and encouraged in all three cycles
- an indication of the percentage of HEIs that have established joint programmes and are awarding nationally recognised degrees jointly with HEIs of other countries
- any action being taken to encourage or allow joint programmes.

The information provided in the previous report is still current. There is no single model of organisation for joint degree programmes. Roles and responsibilities in respect of admissions and the assessment of student learning are negotiated between partner organisations. There is however increasing awareness of the complexities of working across different legal jurisdictions with different student rights and institutional liabilities. There are double and joint degrees at undergraduate (first cycle) and second cycle (Masters) in a number of institutions and also split-site or joint supervision of PhDs. There is also increasing activity in respect of members of global HE consortia offering joint degrees within a wider framework of cooperation activities.

<sup>7</sup> a joint degree is a single degree certificate awarded by two or more institutions, and where the single degree certificate is valid without being supplemented by any additional national degree certificate.

Programmes are usually organised between individual institutions at their own initiative, although there has been government support for dual and joint degrees through cooperation programmes with Russia (BRIDGE) and India (UKIERI). A number of UK universities have also taken advantage of the French co-tutelle model for doctoral students. The UK is represented in a number of the Erasmus Mundus Consortia.

### C. Current issues in Higher Education

#### Higher education and research

23. Describe the relationship between higher education and research in your country - what percentage of research is carried out in HEIs; are any steps being taken to improve the synergy between HE and other research sectors.

A high percentage of UK universities incorporate a proactive approach to research as an integral part of their university mission. In 2004-05 there were 152 institutions offering doctoral or research programmes in the UK. About 20% of total HE funding is allocated for research (including doctoral programmes).

24. What percentage of doctoral candidates take up research careers; are any measures being taken to increase the number of doctoral candidates taking up research careers?

The 2004 Higher Education Statistics Agency report 'What do PhDs do?' analysed the HESA first destination survey statistics for doctoral graduates in 2003. It calculated that 36% (1375 of 3765) of UK-domiciled respondents working in the UK work in research occupations. The Government has introduced, through the Research Councils, a series of measures aimed at encouraging employers to improve the attractiveness of research careers and to support the training and development offered by universities and research organisations. As a result, a number of recommendations from the Roberts Review into a supply of science and engineering skills in the UK (*SET for Success* 2002) has been implemented, including some specifically aimed at improving conditions for postdoctoral researchers, eg increasing Research Council-supported postdoctoral researchers' salaries by around £4,000 by 2005/06 and PhD stipends to £12,000 by 2005/06 and to £13,000 in areas of recruitment difficulties; providing two-weeks of career development training for Research Council researchers and PhD students; and the development of a new Academic Fellowship scheme to provide 1,000 fellowships over five years. Two rounds of Academic Fellowship awards have now been made, with applications for nearly 2000 fellowships for the 800 available. The 800 awards have been made to 79 universities covering all fields of research activity. The funding for skills training for postdoctoral researchers has enabled universities to expand their training and support for postdoctoral researchers considerably and to provide them with opportunities to develop broader professional skills. In addition to this training, the Research Councils operate schemes and targeted training aimed at providing researchers with broader training, which include public engagement training and the provision of grants for public engagement activities.

Work is currently underway to develop a framework for the employment and management of researchers, through the review of the existing Concordat for the management of research staff (1996), with a view to replacing it with a fuller code of practice reflecting current legislation as well as the European Charter and Code of conduct for the recruitment of researchers. The UK HE sector working group, co-ordinated by Universities UK and Research Councils UK, has produced a mapping of the European Researchers Charter and Code of Conduct for their Recruitment against existing legislation, guidelines and good practice in the UK to provide a comprehensive gap analysis. The analysis has demonstrated that in most cases the UK already meets the requirements of the European Charter and Code and there are no major conflicts with current UK

practice. The document indicates that there is no major barrier to UK HEIs wishing to adopt the Charter and Code in a more formal way.

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships are an example of effective collaboration between HEIs and employers in the field of research. They enable new graduates (many with postgraduate degrees) to work on projects crucial for a company's development with support from both an academic and a business mentor ([www.ktponline.org.uk](http://www.ktponline.org.uk)).

### The social dimension

25. Describe any measures being taken in your country to widen access to quality higher education.

Please include:

- any financial or other measures to widen access in higher education amongst socially disadvantaged
- any measures in place to monitor the impact of policies to widen access to higher education,
- any further measures planned, following evaluation of the widening access measures already

A Government commitment in the White Paper *'The Future of Higher Education'* was 'to increase participation of more people from non-traditional backgrounds have the opportunity to participate in HE. Most universities have lower socio-economic backgrounds. The introduction of variable tuition fees was accompanied by a publication of performance indicators includes Access Indicators showing, by the sector as a whole and by neighbourhoods. The latest available figures for young full-time first degree entrants to UK HE institutions are shown in the table below.

	Percentage of entrants to university from:
	Socio-economic groups 1-3
1997/98	8.1
1998/99	8.1
1999/00	8.1
2000/01	8.1
2001/02	8.1
2002/03	8.1
2003/04	8.1
2004/05	8.1

n. a. = not available: The socio-economic group classification was introduced in 2002/03 to replace the previous classification.

Source: Higher Education Statistics Agency Performance Indicators

26. Describe any measures to help students complete their studies without obstacles related to their financial situation.

Please include:

- any guidance or counselling services and any other measures to improve retention
- any measures in place to monitor the impact of policies to improve retention, including results of
- any further measures planned, following evaluation of the retention measures already in place

Figures published in 2005 by the OECD showed that in 2003 the UK had one of the lowest higher education retention rates. The National Audit Office is looking at the scope to improve retention across the sector and in individual HE institutions. Since 2000, we have been putting funding into universities, via the Widening Participation Allocation mechanism. This funding is allocated to institutions to support their Widening Participation activity, which includes increased funding for research, study skills and learner support and activities to enhance the quality of teaching and learning, all of which are aimed at increasing success and progression for students with diverse needs.

We have made major investments in teaching and learning overall. These include the establishment of 700 new teaching posts. In addition, we are continuing to invest in the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund, through which HEFCE is supporting success and progression for students with diverse needs. We are also working to improve information to students to help them make better informed choices in higher education. A wide range of information about the quality of teaching and learning - including the views of students - is available on the TQI website. The TQI website also includes results from the National Student Survey - a survey of all final year undergraduate students - and their institutional level results to improve the quality and relevance of their provision and facilities - and

## Mobility

27. Describe any measures being taken to remove obstacles to student mobility and promote the full use of mobility programmes.

Please include:

- any measures to increase inward student mobility
- any measures to increase outward student mobility.

The Prime Minister's Initiative (PMI), a 5 year initiative to increase the numbers of overseas students at institutions across the UK, began in 1999. This was very successful and a further phase of the initiative was launched in April 2006. The objective of phase 2 is to secure the UK's position as a leader in international education and to sustain the managed growth of UK international education delivered both in the UK and overseas. It is jointly funded by the government, the British Council and the education sector. Increasing the number of international students studying in the UK continues to be a priority, with a target of an additional 100,000 non-EU students (HE & FE) in the UK by 2011.

The DfES and other UK education departments have been actively supporting the Language Assistants Programme, a series of bilateral agreements with foreign education ministries or their agencies, administered in the UK by the British Council (BC). Through this programme, the UK sends 1900 students and recent graduates every year as English language teaching assistants to Europe and a further 250 to China and North and South America. In return over 2,700 young foreign language assistants (most of them are university students) come to the UK every year to support the teaching of modern foreign languages at schools. Since 2004 the DfES has increased funding to support the marketing and expansion of this programme.

Another programme, also funded by DFES and managed by the BC, that promotes students' mobility is the International Association for the Exchange of Students for Technical Experience (IAESTE). The BC has worked in partnership with organisations in 85 countries to provide international work experience for over 350 UK science and engineering undergraduates between 2004 and 2006 on a reciprocal basis. During this period UK industry and research organisations also benefited from receiving over 400 international IAESTE trainees on short term placements in the UK.

The UK Socrates-Erasmus Council has recognised the critical importance of student ambassadors/champions and holds annual conferences of Erasmus students, seeking to involve them in the evaluation and development of the programme and above all in its promotion within UK higher education institutions, but also to students in schools and colleges preparing for

university entry. The conferences elect a national Erasmus Student Committee that develops materials for Erasmus Student Societies to secure a higher profile for Erasmus in higher education institutions and works with all the relevant bodies to promote Erasmus within the university and outside. Students have been proactive in visiting schools, giving talks, manning stands at higher education fairs, contributing to promotion posters and publicity. The UK also seeks to give profile to the advantages and skills obtained from the Erasmus experience through its annual UK Erasmus Student Prize, which produces valuable case studies for widespread dissemination both within the sector and beyond.

Information about the Erasmus programme has been disseminated to the Connexions advisers (information, advice and support service for 14-19 year olds, <http://www.connexionsdirect.com/>) and published on the Need to Know website aimed at young people <http://www.need2know.co.uk/>. The Department for Education and Skills has also inserted messages into its fortnightly e-mail communication to all schools and published articles in Teachers magazine <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/teachers/>.

Students who spend a full academic year on the Erasmus exchange are exempt in England from paying a tuition fee to their home institution under the Erasmus fee waiver scheme. In addition, the new grant regime for students from low income backgrounds guarantees them a grant during their Erasmus study period.

The Minister for Higher Education in England has been active in discussing with heads of institutions ways in which outward student mobility can be further promoted.

28. Are portable loans and grants available in your country? If not, describe any measures being taken to increase the portability of grants and loans.

The UK provides portable support to students who study abroad as part of their UK course, but does not currently provide support to students who attend a whole course abroad.

29. Describe any measures being taken to remove obstacles to staff mobility and promote the full use of mobility programmes.

Please include:

- any measures to increase inward staff mobility
- any measures to increase outward staff mobility.

Staff from UK Higher Education institutions are highly mobile in attending international conferences and colloquia, and in their involvement with research projects and personal research in countries outside the UK. The UK Socrates Erasmus Council has been discussing with the Higher Education Academy ([www.heacademy.ac.uk/](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/)) the possibility of introducing a module in the professional development programme for new academic staff that will encourage them to participate in the Erasmus scheme. If this initiative is successful, priority will be given to young academic staff involved in professional training and development to participate in Erasmus mobility.

The University and College Union ([www.ucu.org.uk/](http://www.ucu.org.uk/)) is working with the global union federation Education International to organise a seminar in the Bologna programme in February 2007 to address these issues.

### **The attractiveness of the EHEA and cooperation with other parts of the world**

30. Describe any measures being taken in your country to promote the attractiveness of the EHEA.

Much of the UK's focus is on promoting the attractiveness of its own higher education system as a part of the EHEA. This has included the launch in September 2005 of the Teaching Quality

Information website, <http://www2.tqi.ac.uk/sites/tqi/home/index.cfm>, an on-line resource that gives easy access to official information about the quality of higher education in the UK. The site aims to assist prospective higher education students and their advisers to make informed decisions about what and where to study.

On 18 April 2006 the Government launched the second phase of the Prime Minister's Initiative for International Education. This is a new 5 year strategy aimed at increasing the number of international students engaged in UK education. It includes a package of measures to help encourage students from overseas to study in the UK, including i) a streamlined visa process and permission to stay granted for the whole course of study from the beginning, ii) the introduction of a Points Based System for managed migration to provide a much simpler route into the UK for international students, with much greater objectivity and transparency, iii) a marketing strategy, using British Council offices overseas, to provide clear and practical advice for potential students, iv) enabling all international students who complete a post-graduate degree and all students who complete under-graduate degrees in shortage sectors to work in the UK for up to 12 months after they graduate, v) practical support to help international students find employment when they return to their home country.

The UK has been promoting awareness and understanding of what is being achieved under the Bologna Process so that other countries can judge for themselves what the implications may be for them. This has involved UK officials undertaking visits to Armenia and the Ukraine, liaising with officials from Australia, Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Sudan and New Zealand, and working with the Council of Europe and UNESCO through conferences and seminars.

As host of the Bologna secretariat, the UK has developed the Bologna website so that it is a comprehensive source of Bologna-related information.

UK institutions are continuing their involvement in the Tuning Educational Structures in Europe Project.

The British Council (BC) has also been providing expertise and advice to promote the EHEA. Since 2005, it has briefed over 100 visiting policy makers and Ministers from around the world on the UK's approaches to institutional autonomy, funding mechanisms, mission diversity, governance, leadership, quality and access. The BC has managed a number of seminars for higher education professionals, including 'Managing a Competitive University' and 'Higher Education for Development'. The Council has continued its membership of key international groups, such as the Association for Development in Education in Africa and the Academic Cooperation Association, and maintained close relationships with higher education institutions worldwide through regular meetings, seminars and other events. In 2005, the British Council celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Higher Education Links scheme, which aims to reduce poverty and promote sustainable development in line with the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals. Funded by the Department for International Development and managed by the British Council, Higher Education Links has supported over 3,200 partnerships between institutions in the UK and throughout the developing world. It has trained hundreds of young people, creating a valuable resource for the future of their countries. Recommendations arising from the partnerships have in many cases been adopted at the highest levels and implemented widely at community and institutional level. To mark the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the scheme, the British Council held regional celebration workshops for stakeholders to share knowledge sharing and build on networks. The workshops were launched with a high profile reception in London, attended by Secretary of State for International Development, representatives of all the UK institutions involved and ambassadors from the 49 participating countries. HE Links was succeeded in 2006 by Development Partnerships in Higher Education, <http://www.britishcouncil.org/learning-delphe.htm>, which will continue to support partnerships between institutions, with a greater emphasis on working to reduce poverty in Africa and Asia.

### **Future challenges**

31. Give an indication of the main challenges ahead for your country.

The main challenges ahead for the UK are likely to be the following:

Encouraging greater participation in the process; stimulating outward mobility; the development of the national credit system within England; a discussion on degree classification; greater engagement of employers with higher education (eg in the context of mobility, finding suitable and high quality work placements for outgoing and incoming students participating in the new Lifelong Learning programme); encouraging greater interest in science and increasing the number of students undertaking Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics; and encouraging comprehensive use of the Diploma Supplement.