

NNECL Quality Mark Webinar Q&A

Are each of the 7 areas graded? Will a provider be graded on their position in each area?

Yes, institutions are graded on each overall section as either satisfactory, enhanced or exceptional.

However, these individual ratings are not made public by NNECL who will simply award the Quality Mark to successful institutions. The grading is primarily to help institutions benchmark themselves and assist their future development.

How will you know if progress is being made?

Our experience has been that significant progress is made during the process of compiling the Quality Mark submission as institutions take stock, implement changes that can be made immediately and plan for changes in the future. NNECL will also contact institutions for a light touch review of their Action Plan 18 months after the Quality Mark is awarded.

At what stage will we see the application form please? Is it after submitting interest?

We have now uploaded the submission form to our [Quality Mark Web Page](#)

Will the QM expect the provider to provide care leaver/experienced data on: continuation rates (% that progress from 1st to 2nd year); success (% of 1st and 2:1) and completion rates?

NNECL will expect an institution to know who its care leaver/experienced students are and ideally to be able to map continuation (through their programme), success (attainment) and progression (into employment or further education). However, if an institution is not able to provide this information, NNECL would expect them to be able to explain why this is and investigate how this can be done in the future. For example, data collection issues may be linked to definitions used for care experienced students and how successful an institution is in encouraging students to declare.

Do you have recommendations as to who to include (as a minimum) in the cross-working group?

Working group participants will vary according to each institution's organisational structure. We would suggest including colleagues from key departments that interact with and support care experienced students such as widening participation/outreach teams, admissions, pastoral and financial support and careers services, plus some input from senior management, where appropriate. In some cases, there may be an existing group or committee which has oversight of other developments such as the Care Leaver Covenant or

StandAlone pledge. Involvement of care experienced students should also be built in, wherever possible, and this will be viewed favourably in the Quality Mark review process.

It is important that the working group is able to operate efficiently and there will be a balance to be struck between getting appropriate representation while not being unduly burdensome.

To gain the QM, will the provider have to confirm that they have contacted each student who has self-declared that they are a care leaver/ care experienced on their UCAS application, and have gained evidence from a local authority to confirm their status in this area?

There is not a requirement to provide proof of each individual communication to your care experienced students; however, you may like to include some illustrative examples of your communications along with a communications plan if there is one.

Providing evidence of your collaborative relationship with local authorities can support your submission. This could be evidenced in the form of a partnership agreement or support letter/email from the local authorities with whom you work.

**How do you recommend or how are others getting the student voice involved in what we're doing in this area; or getting them more involved in curricula/decision making?
How are views from care experienced students captured in the assessment?**

There are a range of methods institutions use to engage care experienced students in their work. This could include: having student members on your working group; putting out a student call for evidence and input specifically related to the Quality Mark submission; inviting your Students' Union to lead on engagement; inviting peer mentors to engage with care experienced students or share their knowledge of this group. In a submission developed with other institutions, there could be a collaborative approach to garnering the student voice.

Care experienced students can also be incorporated into Equality Impact Assessments (both of curricula and of institutional policies) by considering this group as an additional protected characteristic group within an EIA framework. In this regard they should be consulted along with those groups covered by the Equality Act.

What sort of staff time allocation would you say is needed to go through the process e.g. per week?

The average weekly time required to complete the Quality Mark submission will vary depending on the level of provision already in place at your institution and how much planning and development occurs throughout the submission process. We recommend taking a whole institution approach

and working collaboratively with internal colleagues and therefore sharing the workload and resource.

As a Local Authority considering a bid for post 16 PP+ DfE pilot programme can the quality mark be incorporated into our bid? As part of this pilot as a LA we would like to support a small number of general FE institutions work through the quality mark.

NNECL has already successfully completed a collaborative project with eight universities and colleges supported by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. We are open to using this format for other groups. Please contact info@nnecl.org if you would like to discuss a group submission.

How is the partnership with LAs evidenced in the QM application/assessment?

Providing evidence of your collaborative relationship with local authorities can support your submission. This could be evidenced in the form of a partnership agreement or support letter/email from the local authorities with whom you work.

Section seven is the main area to include evidence of your collaboration with local authorities. However, there may also be evidence of collaboration that is appropriate for inclusion in other sections. For example, some institutions deliver CPD collaboratively with local authorities (Section 1) and there may be elements of pre-arrival or ongoing support provision that benefit from such collaboration.

Re: timescale for assessment. I know this will differ for each institution, but it would be useful to have a 'guide time'?

We suggest a timescale of 2-4 months for each institution however this may vary for many reasons. Your assessor will work with you to create a realistic timescale for the submission process.

Qu about Student Wellbeing - "named person responsible for managing support?" Can we have some clarification about this please. We have large numbers at our institution so this is less sustainable. Our named contact focuses on enhanced signposting, rather than case work or support coordination, and trying to get students to the right place for specialist support (Careers, wellbeing, study skills etc)

Each institution has a different infrastructure and the submission process is designed so that institutions can provide evidence based on their structure and processes. In institutions with larger numbers of care experienced students, there is likely to be a team of staff working to manage support and signpost specialist services. In all cases, we will be interested to see evidence of how the staff involved work together effectively.

If there are gaps, is it worth expressing interest? Is it better to wait until some of these have been overcome? At what point should you be submitting your submission of interest form? Does this need to be completed once you believe you are meeting all the criteria?

Reply from Sophie Flieshman: I'd say definitely, yes. Our provision was much more developed in some areas than others. There are definitely sections in our submission which were more outlines of plans, than things that we've already done. The action plan you get at the end will ensure that plans are acted on.

NNECL recommends reading the full guidance as a starting point. We are happy to receive expressions of interest and work with institutions to help them prepare for the submission process. Within the submission process itself, institutions create an action plan. This allows you to document future plans and acknowledge areas for future improvement.

Was the process more difficult for those who were not part of a collaborative group

There may be some advantages to working collaboratively, providing there is a group of willing institutions who are able to work on the same timescale. However, institutions in the first pilot phase all worked individually on the Quality Mark and the feedback from them on the benefits of the process was similar to those involved in the collaborative pilot.

How much does the Quality Mark cost?

The fee for the Quality Mark is £900 (discounted to £750 for NNECL members). This provides support for three online discussions with your assessor as well as the assessment process itself. You will need to pay the fee before you start the Quality Mark assessment.

How does NNECL recommend this work is resourced? Is there a position in the university you would recommend leads and coordinates? Designated contacts are very likely to be busy supporting students

The positioning of this work will vary across institutions according to their different infrastructures. We anticipate working with colleagues across various teams such as Professional Services, WP and Outreach, Student Services and Marketing and Communications. We recommend taking a whole institution approach and working collaboratively with internal colleagues. If your designated contact is very busy on direct student support, that person's line manager may be better placed to manage the process.

Will NNECL let institutions know if there are other local institutions that are also going through the process and potentially join a group with, or will institutions be expected to contact others direct?

We are currently exploring methods for supporting communication between institutions undergoing the submission process. One possible option is a forum on the NNECL website. We will provide an update in the near future.

Scottish Universities and Colleges are all named as 'Corporate Parents', with defined legal responsibilities in this area ('Assess the needs...' 'Promote the interests...' 'Collaborate' etc.), and the requirement to publish Corporate Parenting Plans laying out how these responsibilities are met. Has the structure of the QM been aligned with these overarching Corporate Parenting responsibilities, or would it be adaptive to this language and the structures already in place in Scotland?

We did consult and take account of the Scottish context when developing the Quality Mark. Although we cannot use the terminology of corporate parenting within the framework because it would not resonate with other parts of the UK, the framework is aligned with the overarching responsibilities in Scotland.

As a small provider, who is new in the area of care-experienced students, would the processes be the same as a larger HE provider?

The submission process has been designed to reflect the diversity of institutions across the UK. While the process itself would remain the same, the supporting evidence will relate to the particular context of the individual university or college.

Do you have a grooming or a support process for newcomers?

The NNECL team is happy to work with colleagues prior to the assessment process to support preparation and help identify gaps etc. We can also tailor the package to provide a higher level of support for an enhanced fee. Once the submission process has begun, both the assessor and the NNECL team will provide ongoing support.

I wanted to understand the relationship between the NNECL Quality Mark and the Care Leaver Covenant. What are the distinctions and is there value in having both?

The NNECL Quality Mark has a specific, holistic and in-depth focus on support for care experienced students as they progress into and through further and higher education. The Care Leaver Covenant is a broader promise made by any private, public or voluntary organisation to provide support for care leavers aged 16-25 to help them to live independently. In relation to higher and further education institutions, the Covenant looks at three pillars of activity: student; employment; and community. Each organisation is supportive of the other's initiative and sees it as complementary.

As highlighted in the Quality Mark Guidance, participation in the Care Leaver Covenant is regarded as evidence of strategic commitment under section one.

What CPD are you running for staff in your HEI?

We envisage that we will learn about the various CPD and training taking place across the sector and NNECL are working on identifying any gaps, exploring training that NNECL can offer and we are also developing mechanisms to share our learning with our network.

The types of CPD we have seen in previous submissions are:

1. *Training with virtual schools (on PEP completion and support);*
2. *NEON Outreach training;*
3. *GM Higher Training (e.g. on attachment theory);*
4. *Attendance at GM Care Experienced Education Forum;*
5. *Care Leaver Covenant training;*
6. *DfE training;*
7. *Mental Health First Aider training;*
8. *Safeguarding training;*
9. *'Building confidence in young people' training;*
10. *Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) training.*

Are NNECL able to provide examples of what they would expect to see under each statement?

The Guidance document provides further details including illustrative examples of the types of evidence to be included. The NNECL team and assessor would also be able to help with further suggestions from the developing evidence base of effective practice.