

## Top Ten Tips for enhancing HE quality 2008/9

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- 1 (8) After four years of continuous improvement in terms of internal verification, provision of credible scenarios, sufficient and timely feedback to students and contextualisation of generic Merit and Distinction criteria, the system appears to have stalled somewhat this year, with some centres having made little improvement. This seems to be linked to retirements, staff changes and the increasing use of part-time staff and external lecturers. It is essential that all new personnel undergo training and development **at an early stage** to allow them to deliver and assess BTEC Higher Nationals in a manner consistent with the guidance and unit specifications provided by Edexcel. In particular, centres must ensure that all new staff are made aware of the importance of the *QAA Code of Practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*.
- 2 (4) Challenge plagiarism and the use of secondary sources such as photocopies, internet downloads and tutor-generated handouts submitted as the student's own work. Introduce centre policies and procedures to address plagiarism and academic misconduct. This issue is assuming greater importance with every passing year.
- 3 (5) Instruct students in the need to acknowledge their sources, systematically to reference their work and to provide comprehensive bibliographies. Higher Nationals are HE programmes and students should be making consistent use of accepted referencing systems. The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) will expect to see evidence of this during HE in FE review.
- 4 (1) Provide training and development aimed at enhancing staff understanding of the QAA Academic Infrastructure and the QAA IQER method (in England). (Centres in Northern Ireland should be aware of the introduction of QAA HE in FE review during the coming year).
- 5 (3) Recognise the importance of research and scholarly activity in supporting effective teaching in HE and give serious consideration to relaxation of contact hours for FE tutors teaching HE programmes.
- 6 (6) Introduce an online database, industry standard software and a virtual learning environment, if none currently exist. Use these to enhance the 'journey to the independent learner' and to reduce reliance upon long hours in the classroom.
- 7 (-) Emphasise the importance of the 'journey to the independent learner' at induction and at regular intervals throughout the programme. This is an important part of the learning process at HN level, but students often appear to be failing to use, in a meaningful way, the time and resources made available for independent study.
- 8 (7) Develop a tutorial provision if there is currently none in place. Support this with a structured Personal Development Planning (PDP) regime that includes individual learning plans, target setting, tutorials and progress reviews.
- 9 (9) Return assessed work to students within a reasonable and agreed time after submission. Visit the Edexcel website in order to access the excellent advice provided in Specialist Paper 7 *Late Work*. Use this to develop a centre policy on late work and referral.
- 10(-) Introduce programme and module evaluation events at the end of every semester and academic year. These meetings should cover every aspect of the provision and, in particular, should be used to ensure standardisation of assessment methods through comparison of the grade profiles for each unit.

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*The figures in brackets refer to the position of those tips that appeared in the immediately previous version of this now annual document. Tips 2 and 10 have fallen out of the 'Top Ten Tips' to be replaced by tips 7 and 10. The tips are generated by scrutiny of the External Examiner reports for 2007/08 and any important surveys and reports into FE in HE published during the last academic year.*