

# A New Model for Higher Education Validation

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# Validation Project

- The Open University (OU), Independent Higher Education (IHE) and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) are collaborating on a pilot project to test a new validation model that can be promoted as an exemplar of best practice for UK HE providers.
- The project will also involve regular collaboration and dialogue with HEFCE and the Association of Colleges (AoC), both of whom have representation on the project steering group, as well as other relevant groups such as the Council of Validating Universities (CVU).



# Project Aims

- Developing a high quality, flexible and risk based model for validation.
- Developing better protections for providers entering into a validation relationship and for their students
- Reducing the burden on institutions whilst maintaining high standards to enable more resources to be dedicated to teaching and learning
- Enabling greater autonomy for high quality validated institutions over time, following a judgement of their low risk
- Providing an active response to the proposals within the Higher Education & Research Bill for encouraging diversity and competition within the sector



# Project Aims

- Widening access to higher education for under-represented groups through the expansion of provision within the FEC and alternative provider sectors
- Encouraging new and innovative delivery models to enhance the choices available for students



# Today

- Understand what validation challenges you face
- Explore principles for validation partnerships
- Identify an enhanced role for regulators, and potentially the Office for Students, in supporting validation



# Exam Question 1

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What are your problems with validation partnerships ?



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# The trouble with validation...

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- Why is it so difficult to find a validator?
- Why should we have to produce the same stuff for QAA and validating partners in different formats
- If QAA trust us, why don't our validating partners?
- Why is there such a lack of clarity about the offer and what it costs?
- Why is there so much variation in what validators offer as part of the package?
- Why is there so little protection for partners against anti-competitive behaviour?
- Why does it have to take such a long time?
- Why are partnerships so often dependent on individuals rather than institutions?
- Why aren't costings transparent? Why should validators be allowed to increase fees during an agreement period?
- Why can't there be greater certainty and longevity in partnerships?
- Why can't partners have more of a voice in a University's internal dialogues?
- Why can't partners get greater autonomy with maturity?
- Why is it so difficult to get alternative delivery models validated (eg 2 year degrees)?



## Exam Question 2

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What might a set of principles for an exemplar validation model look like?



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## Transparency

Clear and Transparent processes  
Transparency and Support for  
aligning institutional policy and  
process  
Transparent Financial Models  
Clear and consistent contractual  
arrangements

## Quality assurance

Putting the student first  
Embedding a quality culture

Institutional level management  
of validation with clear  
professional standards



## Quality Enhancement

Promoting growth and innovation in  
higher education  
Validating partnerships should be  
collaborative, not competitive

## Efficiency

Reduce burden by reducing  
duplication with regulators  
Robust, efficient and proportionate  
review processes

## Exam Question 3

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What role(s) could regulators take to improve validation?



# Roles for the regulator

- Creating a register of validators
- Recognising good validators
- Facilitating new relationships
- Arbitration
- Investigating problems
- Reviewing the whole system
- A validator of last resort?

