

# Are we (nearly) there yet?

---

David Cairns and Colin Raban

Academic Audit Associates Ltd.





Since September we have seen...

# (A degree of) convergence around

- ‘One size cannot fit all’
  - No repeat baseline testing for mature providers.
  - New HE providers subject to gateway tests and probation.
  - Differential treatment of providers on the basis of their ‘track record’ (or is it competence)?
- Greater reliance on metrics and student outcomes
  - To be analysed and interpreted by expert peer panels
  - TEF data and metrics to inform QAF and vice versa

# And around...

- Student involvement throughout the QAF and TEF
- Enhancement to be a core purpose of the TEF and QAF
- Retaining the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
- Bundling transnational HE reviews with future quality assessments
- Means to intervene when things go wrong



But we have also seen ...

# Less agreement around...

- A greater role for governing bodies in accountability for academic activities
- Interventions in previously sector-owned academic standards and quality support measures
  - strengthening the role of external examiners
  - calibrating of academic output standards
  - the future of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education
  - guidance on algorithms for degree classification

# To be clarified...

- The differentiation of institutions in terms of the 'maturity' of their corporate & academic governance arrangements.
- Is there an alternative to the identification of risk on the basis of 'track record'?
- Can the QAF and the TEF cohere to form 'a single, transparent and light touch regulatory system'.
- Do providers need a 'buffer body' to stand between them and the Government to safeguard their autonomy?
  - Will the proposed OfS be sufficiently independent of Government to fill that role?
  - Would QAA be sufficiently independent of the sector to be such a 'buffer body'

Publicly funded institutions with university title by virtue of the 1992 Act or Royal Charter

Institutions outside the publicly funded sector which hold DAPs on an indefinite basis. (UoB)

Providers that are eligible for public funding and which have renewable DAPs (including FDAP)

Providers that are ineligible for public funding but which hold their own renewable DAPs.

Providers that do not award their own degrees but have been designated as eligible for HE funding.

'Non-established' private providers that do not possess their own DAPs.



Publicly funded institutions with university title by virtue of the 1992 Act or Royal Charter

Institutions outside the publicly funded sector which hold DAPs on an indefinite basis. (UoB)

Providers that are eligible for public funding and which have renewable DAPs (including FDAP)

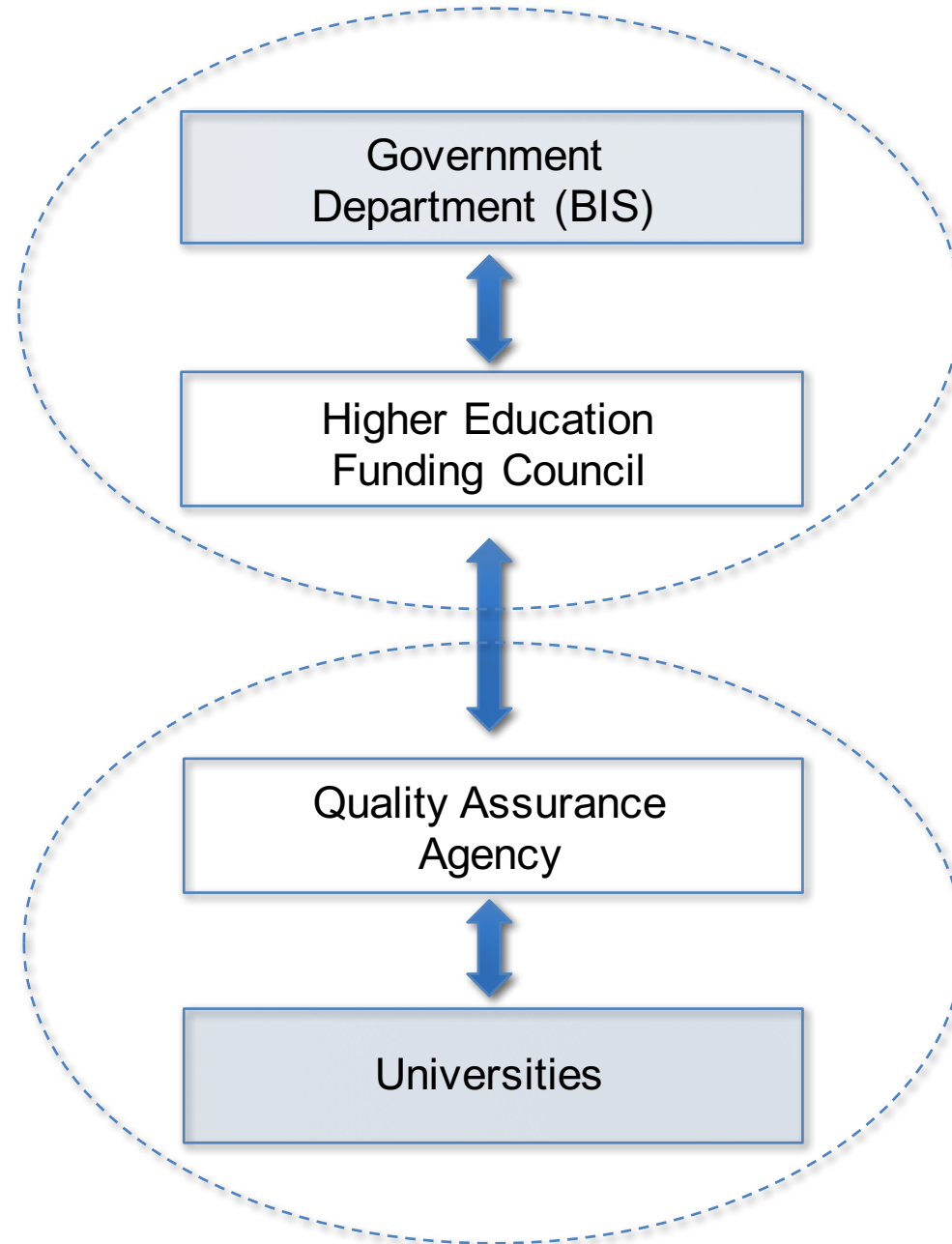
Providers that are ineligible for public funding but which hold their own renewable DAPs.

Providers that do not award their own degrees but have been designated as eligible for HE funding.

'Non-established' private providers that do not possess their own DAPs.

# To be clarified...

- The differentiation of institutions in terms of the 'maturity' of their corporate & academic governance arrangements.
- Is there an alternative to the identification of risk on the basis of 'track record'?
- Can the QAF and the TEF cohere to form 'a single, transparent and light touch regulatory system'.
- Do providers need a 'buffer body' to stand between them and the Government to safeguard their autonomy?
  - Will the proposed OfS be sufficiently independent of Government to fill that role?
  - Would QAA be sufficiently independent of the sector to be such a 'buffer body'



# The future for QAA

- A limited company owned by the representative bodies on behalf of HE providers
  - Cannot be closed down without the agreement of the representative bodies
  - However, the contract with HEFCE (OfS) could be put out to tender.
- Future roles
  - Gatekeeper for entry to the higher education sector?
  - Probation officer and reviewer of new entrants?
  - Operating an updated Concerns scheme

# Can we manage without the Code?

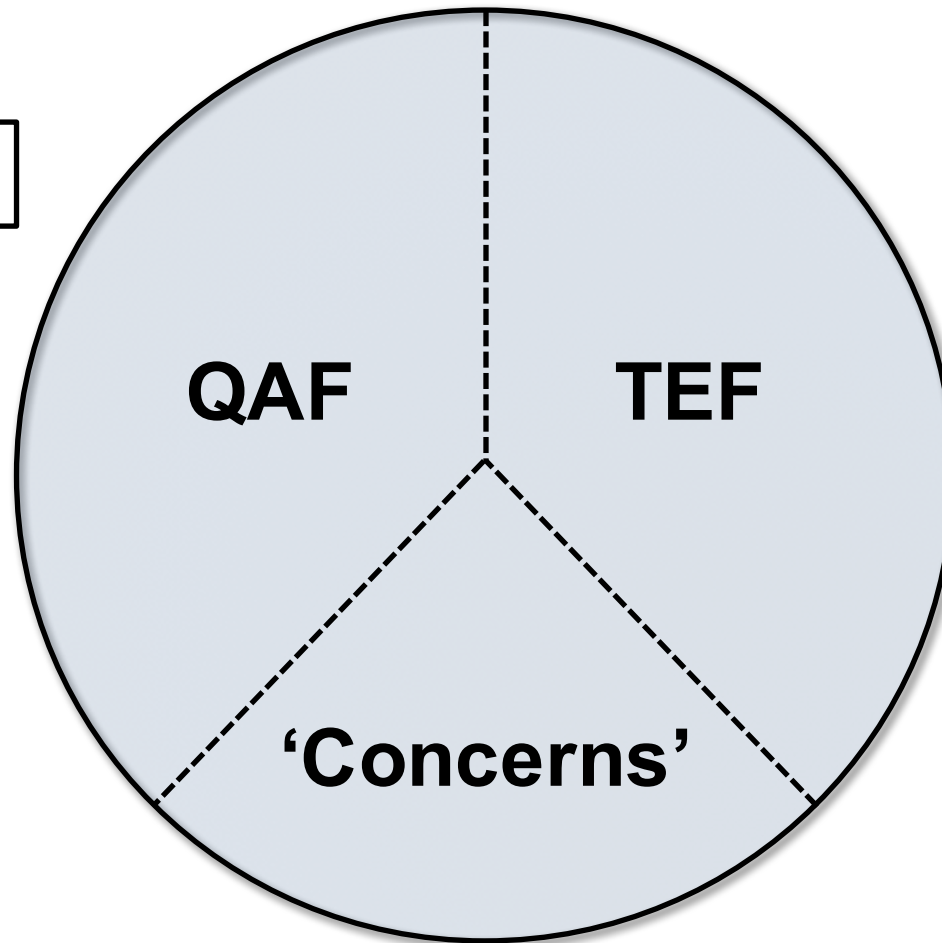
- A dispersal of academic and administrative talent and expertise
  - No-one with power is making a case for retaining even a modified Quality Code
  - Even less enthusiasm for the Subject Benchmark Statements
    - “Our staff are so far advanced beyond the benchmark statements that they see no point in consulting them”.
- (Director of Quality of a Russell Group University)



# Figures

**Competence**

**Performance**



**'At risk'**