Data Collection and Use

Annual Monitoring Return (AMR)

Introduction

Providers (PRVs) and Awarding Organisations (AOs) completing the *Annual Monitoring Return Forms* (AMR-FRM) for approved qualifications or qualifications with permission to commence recruiting students as an 'approved training establishment' should read and refer to this document in conjunction with the relevant *AMR Completion Guidance* (AMR-FRM-CG) and *External Indicator Guidance for AMR Qualification Analysis* (EXT-AMR-CG).

Sections in this document:

- Section one – How we will use the AMR data
- Section two – AMR updates and changes
- Section three – Why the GOC collects certain information
- Section four – Publication
- Section five – Disclosure
- Section six – Attachments
- Section seven – Transparency

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the information within this document, please contact the **Education Department** via **education@optical.org**.

Section one – How we will use the AMR data

Once the AMR reporting period closes, we will use the information submitted to identify, review, assess and analyse:

- updates regarding key changes and events at individual qualifications and providers;
- current risks and issues relating to specific qualifications and providers;
- themes, trends and risks within and across the sector;
- examples of good practice and lessons learnt within the sector; and
- ways in which the GOC's approval and quality assurance activities could be further developed and enhanced.

Once the data has been analysed, we will produce the *UK Optical Education GOC Approved Qualifications Report* (the sector report), providing qualitative, quantitative and thematic analysis. The analysis may be illustrated by charts and data tables where appropriate. This will assist the GOC in carrying out its statutory function of providing

oversight of the optical education sector and in developing the GOC's targeted, risk-based and proportionate approach to regulation.

As we aim to enhance proportionality and efficiency in our reporting process, we will no longer produce a report for each qualification. Any information submitted as part of the AMR process will be used to support ongoing quality assurance and enhancement method (QAEM) activities as part of a qualification's periodic review.

We will still undertake qualitative and quantitative analysis regarding that qualification's submission. This will include analysis of the information the qualification has submitted both individually and in the context of the optical education sector, for example by examining the performance of the qualification in relation to its peers. Should we identify any serious or immediate concerns, or require additional information, we will contact the individual responsible for completing the AMR form and/or the qualification using the contact details you have provided. In the future, the findings from this analysis will be included in a quality assurance and enhancement method (QAEM) report for individual qualifications. QAEM reports will be shared at the end of a qualification's periodic review.

The table below identifies whether the information submitted will be used in support of the *UK Optical Education GOC Approved Qualifications Report*, for qualification QAEM purposes, or both.

We encourage you to review the *External Indicator Guidance* document to support understanding how the Education Operations team will triage submissions as part of its QAEM.

Section	**QAEM**	**UK Optical Education GOC Approved Qualifications Report**
Section one – Submission details		
Form completed by	✓	X
Individual responsible for the qualification	✓	X
Section two – Risk and strategy		
Risk details	✓	✓

SWOT analysis	X	✓
Section three – Qualification delivery		
Staffing	✓	✓
Admissions	✓	✓
Cohort	✓	✓
Progression	✓	✓
Section four - Attainment		
Student attainment	✓	✓
Section five – Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)	✓	✓
Section six – Qualification feedback		
Student feedback	✓	✓
Section seven – Equality, Inclusion and Diversity (EDI)		
Personal characteristics* – Gender	✓	✓
Personal characteristics* – Age Group	✓	✓
Personal characteristics* – Disability	✓	✓
Personal characteristics* – Ethnicity	✓	✓
Personal characteristics* – Refugee status	✓	✓
Widening participation	✓	✓
Use of EDI data and widening participation	✓	✓
Section eight – Lessons learned and good practice		
Lessons learned	X	✓
Good practice	X	✓
Section nine – Feedback on AMR process		
Feedback	X	X
Response to ETR recommendations**		
Recommendations	✓	X
File name or annex number	✓	X

*For the purpose of QAEM, the Education Operations team reviews whether EDI data is collected and how it is used but does not analyse each individual data set. Please see

the AMR External Indicator Guidance for further information on how responses to section seven (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) are analysed.

Section two – AMR updates and changes

Risk and strategy

In line with the Education Operations team's quality assurance of provider's AMR submission, *Section two – risk and strategy* now seeks provider confirmation of:

- the individual(s) responsible for managing risk for the qualification (if different from individual responsible for the qualification – as outlined in section 1.5-1.8 of the submission form),
- when the risk register (or equivalent) was last updated, and
- how often the risk register (or equivalent) is updated.

We acknowledge that many risk registers are set at department or school level rather than qualification level and therefore, if you are unable to respond to these questions, we ask you to provide commentary in section *2.11 additional risk comments*.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Following feedback from our Provider workshop earlier this year, *Section seven – Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)* has been enhanced in line with the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) classifications to provide the GOC with an overview of key indicators relating to several personal characteristics including gender, age group, disability, and ethnicity.

Collection of this data reflects the Professional Standards Authority (PSA)'s strengthened expectations concerning Standard 3 introduced in 2019 of the Authority's Standards of Good Regulation which considers whether regulators such as the GOC understand the diversity of their stakeholders and ensure that their processes do not discriminate unfairly.

The PSA has developed an evidence matrix published in May of 2023, in which Outcome 4: *"The regulator engages with and influences others to advance EDI issues and reduce unfair differential outcomes"* is particularly relevant and especially the final two indicators:

- Engages with providers of approved qualifications and other organisations in the sector to improve the diversity of student admissions and progression, and
- Has made progress in developing and implementing its plans to reduce any identified unfair differential attainment in training.

Section three – Why the GOC collects certain information

The GOC is required to collect and report on certain information as part of the AMR review period. Below, we have provided some information on the types of information we collect and why.

Risk analysis

The risk register you submit will provide the GOC with an overview of the key risks affecting your qualification. It should also provide the GOC with assurance regarding how your qualification manages risk.

In addition, the information provided by all qualifications in relation to risk will provide the GOC with oversight of the risk profile of the sector and enable the GOC to proactively adapt our regulatory approach to meet the evolving needs of the sector.

Finally, where a significant risk(s) is reported by a qualification, or on a sector-wide basis, the GOC will take steps to assist that qualification, or the sector, in managing and mitigating that risk(s).

SWOT analysis

The SWOT analysis will provide the GOC with greater insight into the internal and external factors that may be positive and negatively impacting both the qualification and the optical education sector. This will assist us in putting the information we receive regarding the qualification, both through the AMR and other QAEM activities, into context, and will enhance our oversight of the sector.

It will also enable us to identify key trends in the sector and proactively manage any risks, and to proactively adapt our regulatory approach to meet the evolving needs of the sector.

Admissions

Student admissions data is requested by the GOC for the following reasons:

- Number of applications – provides the GOC with an insight into the popularity and sustainability of the qualification.

- Number of students admitted (included from clearing) – allows the GOC to calculate the applications: admissions ratio.
- Number of UK (home) students admitted – allows the GOC to calculate the applications: admissions ratio.
- Average entrance offer – provides oversight over the qualifications of students entering the qualification, and assurance over how the qualification verifies this information.
- Average entrance attainment – provides oversight over the qualifications of students entering the qualification, and assurance over how the qualification verifies this information.

In addition to this, admissions data is used as part of our quantitative analysis of AMR submissions. This analysis is used to identify trends and outliers in the optical education sector.

Cohort
Student cohort data allows the GOC to ensure that qualifications do not exceed their student number cap (where relevant) and monitor cohort sizes for significant changes. In addition to this, cohort data is used as part of our quantitative analysis of AMR submissions. This analysis is used to identify trends and outliers in the optical education sector.

Attainment
Student attainment demonstrates the quality of outcome for students on the qualification and is therefore indicative of the quality of education and assessment on the qualification. In addition to this, attainment data is used as part of our quantitative analysis of AMR submissions. This analysis is used to identify trends and outliers in the optical education sector.

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
This information allows the GOC to monitor the volume and type of RPL that is being applied at individual qualifications and across the optical education sector and adjust our QAEM activities and guidance if required.

Qualification feedback
This information allows the GOC to monitor student satisfaction with individual qualifications and across the optical education sector.

Collecting EDI data through the AMR process enhances the GOC's targeted approach to regulation by providing the GOC with data on the makeup of the optical student base and provides us with a stronger evidence base to rely on when designing and refining our regulatory policies and processes.

In addition, EDI data may be used as part of our quantitative analysis of AMR submissions. This analysis is used to identify trends and outliers in the optical education sector.

Collecting EDI data also supports the GOC's commitment to promoting equality, valuing diversity, being inclusive, and meeting our equality duties.

Information relating to widening participation provides the GOC with an overview of the steps that individual providers and the optical sector are taking to attract students from backgrounds that may be underrepresented in the higher education sector and to address the discrepancies in the take-up of higher education opportunities between different social groups. This supports the GOC's EDI strategy.

The information provided in relation to widening participation may be used to inform the formal collection of widening participation data in future AMR cycles.

Lessons learned and good practice

The GOC seeks to recognise good practice within the sector. The GOC seeks to encourage sharing of good practice within the optical education sector to raise standards.

Section four – Publication

As a public body, the GOC is required to operate and execute its statutory and regulatory duties in accordance with a range of principles. In particular, we are required and committed to operating transparently and to making decisions that are clear, well-reasoned and evidence based.

We reserve the right to publish:

- the *UK Optical Education GOC Approved Qualifications Report* (the sector report); and
- QAEM reports.

In publishing these reports, we will use the approach outlined below. In line with this approach information may not be anonymised or redacted unless there is an appropriate rationale.

We will not publish:

- Your AMR submission, including any attachments.

Please note: all information submitted to the GOC in your AMR submission, and any attachments may be used in producing both the *UK Optical Education GOC Approved Qualifications Report* and QAEM reports, and therefore information you submit may be contained in either or both reports.

When reviewing the *UK Optical Education GOC Approved Qualifications Report* and QAEM report, you may identify information and / or data that you believe should not be published and should therefore be redacted from a report. In this situation, you must contact the GOC as soon as possible, highlighting the information and / or data that you believe should not be published and the basis for this. The GOC will take a collaborative approach to address and manage any such concerns. However, the GOC reserves the right to make the final decision on what information and data should be published through the AMR process and will consider the public interest in making this decision. Please refer to **section four** for further information regarding the GOC's obligations in relation to transparency.

We will provide you with a copy of the *UK Optical Education GOC Approved Qualifications Report* prior to finalisation and publication.

Section five – Disclosure

The GOC discloses information contained in AMR submission forms for use in the annual *UK Optical Education GOC Approved Qualifications Report* on a provider-by-provider basis. *Currently this information is restricted to year 1 cohort data.* Other data in the report include quantitative data totals for qualification providers and awarding organisations as well as a sectoral summary of risk, strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats, and good practice.

Section six – Attachments

Attachments submitted will not be disclosed in the sector or QAEM reports. For example, we will not publish SWOT analyses submitted for section two. Information and data submitted in attachments may be disclosed in the *UK Optical Education GOC Approved Qualifications Report* and / or QAEM reports.

Section seven – Transparency

As a public authority, the GOC is subject to the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. Information that you submit may be released under the Act, subject to the relevant exemption(s), or as part of the GOC's publication scheme, you can find out more about this via our **data and information** webpage.

Should we receive a request under the Freedom of Information Act, we will ask you to highlight any sections that may be exempt from release and provide a justification for the exemption. Please note that personal information that is not in the public domain will not be released.

Any personal information that is provided will be processed for the purpose of our public task of conducting our education function. We may use your contact details to contact you in relation to the information submitted on this basis.

The GOC is committed to continually developing its approach to AMR. In response to feedback on the process, lessons learned, and the changing needs of the GOC and the sector, future iterations of the AMR-FRM may be subject to change. Any changes will be communicated to providers as appropriate.