

# A new “risk based” approach to Quality Assurance for the UK

Helen Marshall

Deputy Vice Chancellor

University of Glamorgan, UK

# Features of “risk based” Quality Assurance

- Signals a move away from a system in which all institutions are reviewed in the same way
- Sometimes referred to as “light touch” process – but this can be a misleading term
- “Risk based” QA aims to deliver a more tailored process based on an institutions track record of outcomes from QAA visits, the level of higher risk activity and any issues apparent from a range of nationally published data sets

# Why is this type of process being introduced?

- In over 20 years of institutional audit and program assessment only a tiny proportion (about 1 %) resulted in “not approved” outcomes
- Currently burden and cost to institutions and government is not proportionate to risk
- Need for recognition and “reward” for institutions with a strong track record of outcomes and lower risk activity

# Basis of new “risk based” QAA process

- Differential visit cycles - 6 or 4 years depending on track record
- Different levels of intensity – visits last between 3 -5 days
- Tailored reviews – e.g. higher risk activity will get more attention
- Nationally published data sets will be used to focus on areas in institutions that fall below nationally set benchmarks

# Basis of new “risk based” QAA process

- Greater use will be made of professional body/ accreditation reports to help decide the level of intensity and focus of the review visit
- Additional mechanisms will be available to investigate concerns out of the normal visit cycle

# Potential advantages and disadvantages of a “risk based” approach to QA

- Lighter touch for some institutions –BUT potentially heavier touch than now for others
- Recognition for those with stronger track records in managing academic standards and quality
- Risk based approach may stifle innovation as it may be seen as too risky?
- If the process concentrates on the risky elements of an institutions work, how will good practice be indentified?