Annex I: Guidance for providers on the assessment of initial condition B8 (standards)

1. This annex explains the evidence that a higher education provider seeking registration with the OfS must submit to inform our assessment of compliance with initial condition of registration B8 (standards).

Initial condition B8 (standards)

2. Condition B8 sets out requirements in relation to standards that a provider must satisfy to be registered with the OfS. The full requirements of condition B8 can be found in the regulatory framework. The scope of assessment is as defined by initial condition B8. The assessment relates to the standards to be applied to higher education to be provided in any manner or form by, or on behalf of, a provider. This includes, but is not limited to, circumstances where a provider would be responsible only for granting awards for students registered with another provider.

3. The purpose of a condition B8 assessment is to consider evidence to inform the OfS's decision about whether initial condition B8 has been satisfied and whether there is increased regulatory risk. The evidence from a condition B8 assessment will therefore inform the OfS's decisions about whether a provider should be registered and, if it is registered, whether regulatory intervention, such as one or more specific ongoing conditions or other additional monitoring requirements, are appropriate.

Evidence to be submitted

4. We will need you to submit evidence to allow us to conduct a condition B8 assessment. The evidence for the assessment will consist of:

    a. For the courses you intend to provide if your provider is registered, final or draft course documentation, for example, programme specifications, module outlines.

    b. If you have delivered, or are delivering, courses that you intend to provide if your provider is registered, and there is evidence of student achievement in relation to those courses, evidence of student achievement in assessed work and associated records of this achievement.

5. We will identify the specific evidence we need by first asking you to tell us about your higher education courses and the evidence you hold about them.

6. To do this you should complete and submit our provider information template which is available on our website.[1] The template asks for information about your courses, including:

    - a list of higher education courses you provide or intend to provide

    - the mode and level of study for each course

[1] See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/regulatory-advice-3-registration-of-english-higher-education-providers-with-the-ofs/.

- the credit value of each course
- the current and planned student numbers for each course
- whether students are already studying on your courses and, if so, whether their assessed work is available.

7. The provider information template will guide you on the information you should provide.

8. We will review the information in your completed template. We will then write to you requesting the evidence we require you to upload for the assessment. This may be all of the evidence for each course, or a sample of evidence – see the section headed ‘Sampling evidence’ below.

9. During the assessment process, we may request evidence that we have not asked about or that is not referred to in your template.

10. We would normally expect the evidence you submit to be drawn from the documentation that you would, or do, routinely produce for your own purposes. We would not generally expect you to create any new materials specifically for the assessment process. We expect that you will already have materials available, or be creating materials, related to your courses and their standards.

11. The scope of initial condition B8 is such that evidence relating to your systems and processes is unlikely to be relevant. The assessment will relate to the standards of your courses in practice and will not focus on the systems or processes that may have resulted in those standards. You should bear this in mind when listing your evidence (in the provider information template) and submitting the evidence we then ask for.

12. When you receive a request for evidence, you must upload it to a secure environment in our registration portal. We will provide you with step-by-step guidance.

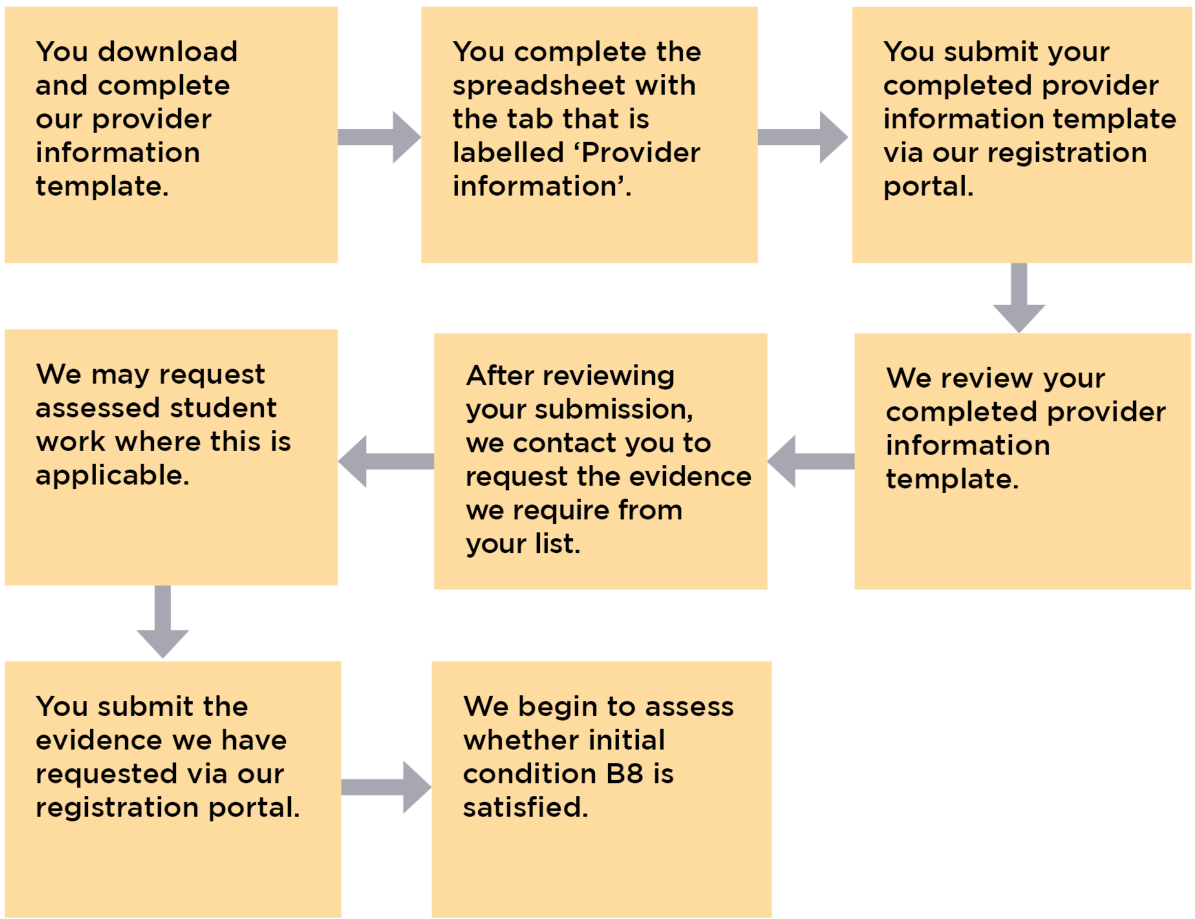
Sampling evidence

13. If we decide to request a sample of your evidence, rather than all of it, we will identify an appropriate sample by considering, for example, the range of courses you offer or plan to offer, and the level, mode of delivery, and subject area of those courses.

14. We will adopt an appropriate approach to sampling to ensure that we can make an assessment of the standards to be applied across all of your courses.

15. If we decide to sample assessed student work, we will request a sample that we determine is representative in demonstrating:

- the consistency of standards in practice for all students
- the consistency of standards in practice across all modules and all courses.



Assessment

16. An assessment will normally be conducted by a team of three assessors. Assessors are contracted or employed directly by the OfS and an assessment team is likely to consist of a combination of academic experts and OfS staff.

17. We have recruited academic experts with expertise in designing and delivering learning, teaching and assessment in higher education to join assessment teams. Collectively, each team will have appropriate expertise to gather information and reach judgements to inform our decisions.

18. Each assessor will complete appropriate training before being assigned to a team. This means that assessors will have current regulatory knowledge alongside their professional or other relevant knowledge and experience.

19. We expect you to be able to provide the evidence needed to enable us to complete a condition B8 assessment without a visit from our assessment team. A condition B8 assessment will therefore normally be conducted as a desk-based exercise. Should a visit be appropriate, we will give you notice and set out our approach.

20. Indicative timeframes for our registration process can be found at page 43 of Regulatory advice 3.

21. The assessment team will set out its findings in a draft report. The report will include information about the standards against which your courses were assessed, the assessment team's judgements about your courses and the reasoning for those judgements.

Draft assessment report

22. When the assessment team has completed its draft assessment report, we will share this with you and invite you to comment on the report including whether there is anything in the draft report that you consider to be factually inaccurate.

23. If you do not have any comments to make, you do not need to do anything further. If you do want to submit comments, you must do so within 14 calendar days beginning from the day after you receive the draft assessment report. For example, if you receive the draft report on the first day of the month, your comments must be submitted on or before 1700 on the fifteenth day of the month. If you do not submit any comments by this deadline, we will record that no comments have been received. If we do not receive any comments, we will send you a copy of the final report after the 14-day response period has ended.

24. We will not normally extend the 14-day response period unless there are exceptional circumstances that mean you are not able to meet the deadline for submission. If you think that there are exceptional circumstances, contact us as soon as you become aware that meeting the deadline may not be possible.

25. You can tell us about:

- typographical or numerical errors
- information that you consider is factually inaccurate
- any information that is relevant to the assessment process that you think has not been considered by the assessment team.

Information that you consider is factually inaccurate

26. When making a comment of this type, you must explain why what is written in the draft report is factually inaccurate, and refer to any supporting evidence. Please label any evidence you submit in attachments as numbered appendices and explain which appendix relates to which comment.

27. When you refer to a specific part of the report we need to know, with no ambiguity, the wording in the draft report that you are referring to. If we cannot determine which wording in the report a comment relates to, we may not be able to consider it.

Any information that is relevant to the assessment process that you think has not been considered by the assessment team

28. If when you read the draft report, you think there is material information or evidence that you provided to us for the assessment, that you think we have not considered, you can tell us about this.

Considering your comments

29. Any evidence submitted in support of any comments you make, must have been available during the period the assessment was conducted. When evidence is submitted (in support of your comments) that was not available during this period because it was created after the period of assessment, we will not normally consider it as it was not available at the time of the assessment. You will be given an opportunity to make representations in relation to the publication of the report and can make any further points you wish as part of that process.

30. We will consider each comment you make and determine whether the relevant part of the draft report should be amended.

31. We will provide a response to your comments and tell you when we have made any amendments to the report. We will do this at the same time as we send you a copy of the final report.

Publication

32. For guidance about our policy on the publication of assessment reports please see Regulatory advice 21.[2]

[2] See www.officeforstudents.org.uk/publications/regulatory-advice-21-publication-of-information/.