

Agent Quality Framework (AQF)

Information for BSA member schools



What is the AQF

The [Agent Quality Framework](#) (AQF) is an education sector-wide initiative that provides standards, training and resources to enhance the experience of international students applying to the UK and to uphold the integrity of the UK's student visa system.

The AQF is designed to ensure agents have the right knowledge of the UK as a study destination and understand the integrity of the UK visa and immigration system, in order to uphold the UK's reputation as a world-class study destination. The AQF promotes four key principles:

- empowering student choice and enabling informed decision making
- ensuring good agent governance and professionalism
- promoting ethical agent practices, professional knowledge and competency
- increasing transparency and accountability.

Does the AQF apply to schools?

Yes. The AQF applies to all UK education providers on the [register of licensed student sponsors](#) who use international student recruitment agents. The AQF sets out the standards by which UK education providers are expected to manage their agents. The AQF also supports agents and counsellors in developing and maintaining knowledge of the UK as a world-class study destination.

[Boarding Schools' Association](#) (BSA) is a key sector partner of the AQF.

Does the Home Office Student Sponsor Guidance refer to the AQF?

The Home Office [Student sponsor guidance: Sponsorship Duties](#) was updated on April 7, 2026 to include the following:

3.30 All student sponsors using recruitment agents must have committed to adhering to the key principles of the Agent Quality Framework (AQF) as stated at: www.aqf.info/. As part of these commitments, student sponsors may want to consider the recommended actions and best practices set out on the AQF webpage.

3.31 All student sponsors using recruitment agents must retain evidence of how they are managing agents in line with the AQF and [The National Code of Ethical Practice for UK Education Agents](#), as applicable to the school, further education, pathway and higher education sectors.

What are the key principles of the AQF?

- 01** Empowering student choice and enabling informed decision making
- 02** Ensuring good agent governance and professionalism
- 03** Promoting ethical agent practices, professional knowledge and competency
- 04** Increasing transparency and accountability

How do we show we have committed to adhering to the key principles of the AQF?

AQF Commitment	Best practices	Recommended actions
<p>Empowering student choice and enabling informed decision making</p>	<p>Proactively promote the Student and Parent Guide to Choosing an Education Agent to prospective international families, both directly and through networks, to aid them in selecting a reliable agent.</p> <p>Clearly signpost to international families the process for registering complaints around their chosen agent.</p> <p>Clearly display a list of contracted agents on school website to aid international families in their choice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminate the Student and Parent Guide to Choosing an Education Agent through relevant communication channels to prospective students. • Actively encourage contracted agents to host the Student and Parent Guide to Choosing an Education Agent on their website/s and to agree, where feasible, to send a copy to all students who engage their services. • Regularly monitor and update the details of your contracted agents as listed on your website. • Provide families with a clear channel for lodging a complaint if they are dissatisfied with their experience of using a specific education agent.
<p>Ensuring good agent governance and professionalism</p>	<p>Build The National Code of Ethical Practice for UK Education Agents into Agent Contracts to highlight their commitment to a quality experience for the student.</p> <p>Embed governance processes throughout agent contractual cycle to deliver the highest quality service, including during selection, due diligence, contracting, training, planning and ongoing reviews and contract renewals.</p> <p>Embed high quality agent management collaborative practices to ensure the best possible partnership with agents is created, as specified in the Good Practice Guide for Providers using Education Agents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make all AQF collateral available to your agent network in your onboarding and training materials, and by hosting these on your agent portal or webpage/s. • Include specific clauses in your education agent contracts that require appointed agents to endorse the National Code of Ethical Practice. • Work collaboratively with your education agents. Plan together and jointly agree objectives to ensure information and best practices flow in both directions.

AQF Commitment	Best practices	Recommended actions
<p>Promoting ethical agent practices, professional knowledge and competency</p>	<p>Promote the adoption of the principles and standards set out in the National Code of Ethical Practice and Good Practice Guide for UK Education Agents Partnering for Quality right across agent network.</p> <p>Build requirement for contracted agents to undergo an appropriate UK Credited training programme such as BSA Certified Agent training, so that they are well equipped to give families up-to-date information about studying in the UK.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate your agents' compliance with the National Code of Ethical Practice by including an audit of National Code standards in your review processes (e.g. annually). • Agree a minimum level of engagement for all agent personnel, who provide advice and assistance to prospective families, to study and complete an appropriate UK Credited training programme. • Promote the principles of the framework in all your agent and student recruitment and engagement work.
<p>Increasing transparency and accountability</p>	<p>Work with contracted agents to ensure transparency around the use of sub-agents, clarifying their commitment and processes for ensuring quality throughout their sub-agents network.</p> <p>Ensure clarity for families regarding commercial relationships schools have with education agents.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request transparency around the use of sub-agents. Be clear that an agent's endorsement of the National Code of Ethical Practice and engagement with an appropriate UK Credited training programme also applies to any sub-agent partners working with the contracted agent. • Request clarity on the processes for training, managing and quality assuring sub-agents. • Be clear that the completion of an appropriate UK Certified training programme is applicable for all family-facing staff within sub-agents. • Through the promotion of the Student and Parent Guide to Choosing an Education Agent, increase transparency of the commercial relationships education providers have with education agents

Is a BSA Certified Agent considered as having an appropriate level of training?

Yes. BSA runs a certified agent scheme supporting schools in their due diligence in identifying reputable and ethical agents supporting families in identifying and applying for school places. [View the list of BSA certified agents.](#)

If we put a list of agents on our website we are worried families will think they have to use an agent to apply to us. Do you have suggested wording we can use?

Schools can make clear on their website that they do not require families to apply via an agent and doing so will not make a difference to the selection process or outcome. Suggested wording to consider:

Agents

Choosing an international study destination for your child is one of the most important decisions you can make. Wider family and friends may be able to help but making a final choice and applying to an education provider for your child can be daunting. This is why some families get help from an education agent, consultant or counsellor.

Please see this guide for you, your family and child to understand the role of agents working with UK-bound students and the service they should provide.

View the [Student and Parent Guide to Choosing and Education Agent.](#)

We list below those agents that we have contracted with to support us with recruiting internationally. Please note that these agents cannot provide you with favourable entry requirements, alternative application options, or access to information that differs from applying directly. We are very happy to accept applications directly from you, or via your chosen agent where not listed below.

If you have any complaints regarding agent conduct, please contact us if they are listed above, and/or the Boarding Schools' Association, bsa@boarding.org.uk.

How will schools be audited against the AQF?

During compliance activity UKVI will continue to examine how a sponsor recruits students and manages its third-party relationships. Sponsor schools must retain evidence of, and be ready to demonstrate, how they are managing agents in line with the [AQF](#) and [The National Code of Ethical Practice for UK Education Agents](#), as applicable to the school sector.

What key actions should we take now?

1. Ensure you are tracking the source of recruitment for your incoming international students, specifically those who have been recruited via an agent or third party, and which one.
2. Ensure that you have an up-to-date list of all agents and third parties used to recruit international students ready to provide to UKVI when prompted.
3. Familiarise yourself with the AQF, in particular:
 - [The National Code of Ethical Practice for UK Education Agents](#)
 - [Good Practice Guide for Providers using Education Agents](#)
 - [Agent Quality Framework pledge](#)
4. Review your agent recruitment processes and relationships in line with AQF best practice.
5. Add a section to your website as above (if not already in place).
6. Include reference in your future agent contracts to [The National Code of Ethical Practice for UK Education Agents](#).

Get in touch

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