

Mastering deception: tackling bogus colleges and degrees

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Diploma mills, bogus colleges: why, how, where and so what?

- Credentialism and money – universal drivers?
- Different manifestations and consequences?
- A national and international problem
- From fraud and misrepresentation to endangering public health and safety, money laundering, people smuggling and visa abuse.

Recognised degrees and institutions: the UK approach

- Legislation
- Education
- Media interest
- New actions
- International cooperation

Bogus degrees: UK legislation

- **Education Reform Act 1988 s 214** '*Unrecognised degrees*'

makes it an offence to grant any award which may reasonably be taken to be an award granted by a UK institution and which either is described as a degree or purports to confer on its holder the right to the title of bachelor, master or doctor and may reasonably be taken to be a degree.

- **s 215 Enforcement**, offenders are liable on summary conviction to a fine.

Bogus degrees: UK legislation

- **The Trades Description Act 1968** makes it an offence for a trader to apply by any means, false or misleading statements or to knowingly or recklessly make such statements about services.
- The Act carries criminal penalties and is enforced by local authorities Trading Standards Officers.

UK Legislation: recognised degrees

The UK government publishes lists of UK providers recognised by Royal Charter, Act of Parliament and in Statutory Instruments at

<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/recogniseddegrees>

This includes:

- Recognised bodies – UK institutions with the legal authority to award degrees
- Listed bodies – institutions offering programmes leading to the award of degrees from recognised bodies
- Recognised awards

Education and advice

- Centralised undergraduate admissions through UCAS
- Extensive, validated public information about recognised UK higher education providers including through the British Council offices
- The government's Register of Education and Training Providers - a list of 'genuine providers' of education and training at all levels BUT.....
- Extensive sharing of information between QAA, professional and statutory body accreditors and private sector accreditors.

Media interest...is growing

Bogus degree sites shut down (2004)

Bogus colleges behind migrant scam revealed (2004)

Three arrested after swoop on suspected bogus colleges (2007)

Bogus university scam uncovered (2008)

“Bogus” colleges behind student visas probed (2008)

The Times, The Herald (Glasgow), BBC London, BBC are just some of the sources.

New actions

- Use of Trades Description Act – criminal law - with penalties including imprisonment
- Closure of more than 160 private colleges
- Unannounced visits to institutions on the Register of Providers
- Managed Migration strategy: introduction of a points-based visa system managed by Borders and Immigration Agency (BIA)
 - Tiered system – Tier 4 - international students
 - Register of (Education) Sponsors
 - All sponsors, including nonUK universities operating in the UK must be accredited by February 2009.

International cooperation is necessary as bogus providers

- Frequently operate
 - across national jurisdictions making prosecution difficult and expensive
 - into or from developing countries where easy access to official information about status and recognition is not available
 - in partnership with 'legitimate' providers
- Damage or have the potential to damage
 - the reputation of national systems of HE internationally as well as the recognition of cross border education.

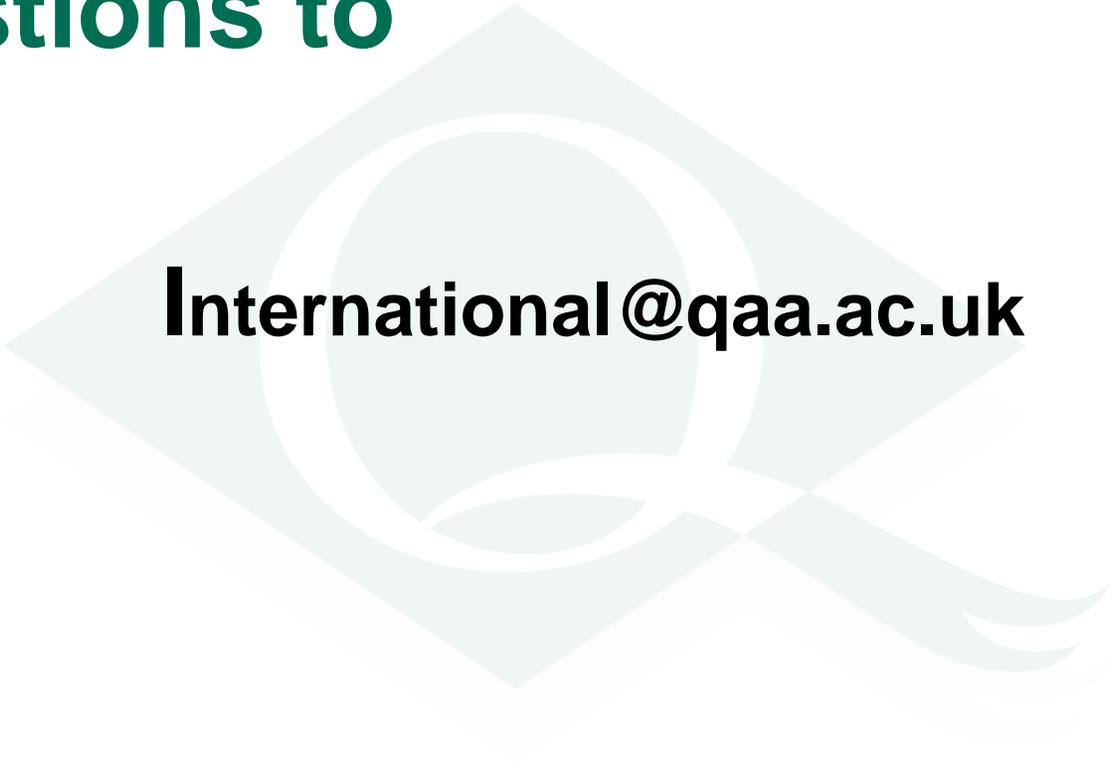
Current international initiatives include

- Disclaimers on websites of inter-governmental organisations and others
- UNESCO's work on developing a portal to national lists of recognised institutions
- Development of and implementation of international instruments on recognition and quality provision in cross border education
- Sharing of information formally and informally between quality assurance and accreditation agencies and national recognition bodies such as ENICs.

BUT

**More information from and
questions to**

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