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**Abstract**

There has been a tendency in the literature to see changes in quality assurance as part of a process of increased state control. This article suggests a more nuanced approach that also takes account of the different trajectories of the pre- and post-1992 sectors. It finds that whilst there have been increases in both state oversight and market coordination since 1992, mutuality (self-regulation) remains the dominant mode of control of quality assurance in the United Kingdom. However the present government's higher education reforms, coming on top of a series of market-based policies for structure, funding and governance going back at least to 1980, as well as a growing emphasis on students' rights as consumers through the courts, may change the picture. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)