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**Abstract**

This paper analyses the unfolding of the quality agenda in England from 1992 to the present. By using two disciplinary approaches, 'political science' and 'social philosophy', the article traces the recent transition from quality assurance to quality enhancement. How is this development to be explained and how significant is it? Are the concepts of quality assurance and quality enhancement contested territories? The article argues that the undermining of quality assurance was the consequence of the emergence of a different kind of higher education politics in Britain: the shift from a corporatist model to one driven by pressure-group politics. Furthermore, although theoretically quality enhancement has the potential of a transformative discourse, it is unlikely to unsettle the relative stable structures in which quality assurance functions. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)