

TQF Bulletin, Summer 2021

Welcome to the TQF Bulletin - your quick guide to the activity of [The Quality Forum](#). Please feel free to share this with colleagues who might find it valuable.



Photo credit: Alison Eales

At our final meeting of the 2020-21 session we welcomed Maggie King (Heriot-Watt University) to the role of Vice-Convener, which she will be covering for the next year. Our main item of discussion in the first half of the meeting was the [Academic Integrity Charter](#), to which twelve Scottish institutions have signed up at the time of writing. Colleagues were invited to share whether and how they were using the Charter, and how they were approaching the issue of academic integrity more broadly. Those institutions who were using the Charter reported that it was supporting existing work

without creating additional burden. A common theme was that institutions are actively considering how academic integrity relates to the broader student learning experience. This is reflected in how and where the issue is being discussed within institutions: for example, it is being considered as part of discussions around assessment design, curriculum frameworks, academic regulations, and student experience strategies. We heard some helpful examples of how students' associations are being engaged with this work and how they are supporting students to understand the issue. Terminology appears to be shifting, with more institutions using the term 'academic integrity' in place of 'academic misconduct'. It was clear from the discussion that this is an area of work that is still developing, and we agreed that it would be worth revisiting for further discussion in the 2021-22 academic year.

In the second half of the meeting, Kathryn O'Loan from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) presented an update on SFC's [Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability](#), which was launched in the summer of 2020 and which at the time of writing is in its third phase. The final report, which will contain options and recommendations for the short, medium, and long term, is due to be sent to the Scottish Government in June 2021. Kathryn emphasised that the publication of the report would not mark the end of a process – rather, the intention is to engage with the sector on an ongoing basis. There is recognition of the value of the enhancement-led approach, and also the potential of the sector to catalyse Scotland's recovery from the pandemic.

Following the presentation, colleagues were invited to participate in two short breakout discussions. We explored the enablers and barriers to alignment across the tertiary sector, and the future use of data in quality processes. In plenary, colleagues identified features and processes that currently exist within the university enhancement space that might offer potential for closer working between university and college providers (Enhancement Themes for example were highlighted). In terms of quality processes, colleagues

also discussed where impact might be achieved by adapting existing processes (including annual discussions between institutions and QAA Scotland, and institutions' annual reports to SFC) rather than developing new ones. We also discussed the need for stronger public messaging around quality of HE in Scotland. Colleagues noted the need for data to be presented in ways that are easy to understand.

In terms of updates from sector agencies, [Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland \(sparqs\)](#) thanked everyone who had submitted nominations for the [2021 Student Engagement Awards](#). These are now being considered, and the award ceremony will take place on 22 June.

QAA Scotland alerted colleagues to forthcoming events, including a webinar being delivered in partnership with Abertay University and Kirkcaldy High School and webinars relating to the Enhancement Themes collaborative clusters. Following discussion on the Yammer network about the [Quality Evaluation and Enhancement of UK Transnational Higher Education \(QE-TNE\) scheme](#), colleagues were also invited to contact [QAA's International and Professional Services directorate \(IPS\)](#) if they have any questions or would like further information. IPS have indicated that they would be happy to discuss the scheme with individual institutions, or with TQF colleagues as a group, if this would be helpful.

SFC provided an update on the progress of the [review of the National Student Survey \(NSS\)](#). At the time of writing this review is entering its second phase, and the intention is to examine the question set, response thresholds, the dissemination of results, and the procedures for dealing with allegations of inappropriate influence. This phase of the review will run until Spring 2022, with the allegations procedures likely to be the only changes in place in time for the 2022 survey. The 2021 NSS results will be published on 15 July, with responses to the COVID-specific questions published by nation but not institution.

Colleagues will be aware that AdvanceHE's funding model in Scotland is changing, and [Catriona Bell](#) would be happy to discuss this with anyone who would like more information.

At this meeting, we also reviewed changes we have made to the management of TQF over the past year. These include the introduction of two-part meetings, bulletins, the Yammer network, and the webpage. Colleagues agreed that these changes appeared to all be positive and should be retained. The proposed buddy scheme had not yet had a chance to become common practice.

Meeting dates for session 2021-22 have yet to be set, but colleagues have agreed to retain the pattern of recent years (October, March and June). We will hold the October meeting on Zoom, and consider at that meeting whether the March 2022 meeting might be an in-person or hybrid event.

TQF is a forum for sharing practice on matters of teaching quality, and colleagues are encouraged to suggest items for discussion. Please [get in touch with QAA Scotland](#) if you would like to share practice from your institution or learn more about practice across the sector. You can also join the [TQF Yammer Network](#).