

TQF Bulletin, Summer 2022

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

Our final meeting of 2021-22 took place on 16 June. Kathryn O'Loan from the Scottish Funding Council provided an update on progress and next steps relating to future quality arrangements in Scotland. We were also joined by Demelza Curnow from QAA, who had prepared a paper about the proposed institutional reviews in Phase One, and who invited members' views on the evidence base institutions would be asked to produce and how the primary student voice might be better represented. There was some discussion about the benefits and drawbacks of requiring a separate student submission, and members agreed to use the Yammer network to share practice in relation to this.

James Harrison from QAA provided some Scotland-specific updates, including the new leadership of the [Scottish Parliament's Education, Children and Young People Committee](#) (Sue Webber MSP) and [Universities Scotland](#) (Professor Sally Mapstone as Convener, and Sir Paul Grice as Vice-Convener). A recent meeting of the [Scottish Parliament Cross Party Group on Colleges and Universities](#) had included positive discussion of the Enhancement Themes, and the Scottish Government is considering introducing legislation relating to essay mills. Almost all Scottish HEIs are now signed up to the [Academic Integrity Charter](#). James also provided updates relating to Wales and the rest of the UK, including the progress of the [Higher Education \(Freedom of Speech\) Bill in England](#), grade inflation, the external examiner principles being developed by QAA, and the UK-wide statement being developed by the [UK Standing Committee on Quality Assessment](#). There was some discussion about the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#).

We rounded off the first hour of the meeting with short presentations from Edinburgh Napier University and Abertay University about their ELIR 4 commendations. Both institutions spoke about their commendations relating to employability. At Napier, employability is linked explicitly to institutional strategy and is a key theme of the institution's new Curriculum Enhancement Framework. Placements and work-based learning are foregrounded, and many programmes are vocational in nature and have PSBR accreditation as appropriate. Specific practice includes: industry engagement with programme design, delivery and review; live projects commissioned by industry partners, and a more general aim for authentic assessment; proactive support for freelance career pathways; the [Bright Red Triangle](#) incubator; and general professional support from the Student Futures service.

Abertay similarly have well-established links with employers that are recognised and valued by students. All programmes include industry involvement in their delivery, and most programmes include an element of work-based learning. Industry-based assessments are offered wherever possible. [Bell Street Ventures](#) provides an entrepreneurship hub for current students and recent graduates, and the new Cyber Quarter includes 18 business partners and is helping to bring industry into a dedicated research and development space on campus. The institution offers microcredentials supporting employability, including artificial intelligence, sustainability and anti-racist communications. Abertay's employability strategy 2020-25 includes goals relating to work-based learning, and the topic of embedding employability will be a key strand in the institution's Teaching and Learning Conference.

Please let us know if you would like a five-minute slot to share practice at a future meeting.

We concluded the first half of the meeting by noting that it marked the end of Nichola's first term as Convener, and that the election process would run over the summer. We also agreed to invite the Chairs of the Wales Quality Network and the [College Development Network's Quality Network](#) to join TQF as observer members.

In the second hour of our meeting, we went into three breakout rooms. In one room, colleagues discussed the use of the Quality Code. Institutional approaches to the code were broadly similar, but consideration of advice and guidance resulted in institutional documents of varying length and complexity. Questions were raised about its general navigability, how it was being used in relation to policy development, and how student engagement might be developed.

A second breakout discussion considered the Academic Integrity Charter. Colleagues from Robert Gordon University presented on how the institution had introduced the Charter and provided support to students, with a focus on presentative and supportive measures and encouraging students to take pride in their academic work. The institution also made use of pop-ups signposting to academic support if a student attempted to access an essay mill.

The third breakout discussion considered Professional Service Review, which formed part of QAA Scotland's [Focus On project](#) in session 2021-22. Colleagues acknowledged that there was a diversity of approaches to this activity, with an ecosystem of reviews including annual, thematic and institution-led, and that it could be difficult to know how best to conduct this activity in a way that met SFC requirements while avoiding duplication of effort. There is no right or wrong way of conducting this activity, but it does need to be strategic and to meet the aim of enhancing the student experience, and outputs need to be considered at a sufficiently senior level to result in positive change.

Over the coming months we will confirm dates for the 2022-23 session and refresh the membership list. Please have a restful summer, keep in touch on Yammer, and we'll see you all in the new academic year!

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](#).