

TQF Bulletin, Spring 2023

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.



At our second meeting of 2022-23, on 16 March, we welcomed Katrina Swanton (Edinburgh Napier University) to her first TQF meeting as Vice-Convener, and Kevin McStravock as the new Lead Policy Officer for QAA Scotland's Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland directorate. We also welcomed several members who were new to their institutional roles.

Kevin McStravock provided an update on UK-wide developments. QAA will complete its role as the Designated Quality Body (DQB) in England on 31st March 2023. The Department for Education have run a consultation on the de-designation, and Universities UK and the Russell Group have published responses to this consultation.

QAA has begun a review of the UK Quality Code in agreement with the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment. The initial focus of the review is on the central part of the Quality Code, known as the Expectations and Core/Common Practices, thinking about how it should be structured and what its scope should be. Consultation has been carried out with sector groups and stakeholders across the UK, as well as through QAA member networks and bespoke online roundtable events. The outcomes of the online discussions will be shared at our in-person Member Network Conference on 20 April in Birmingham.

The National Student Survey is operating with some changes in 2023 following review and consultation by the Office for Students. The main changes are: a move to a four-point scale for answers, replacing the Likert Scale; additional questions on mental wellbeing and freedom of expression (England only); and the removal of the summative question (England only).

In Wales, QAA is finalising the draft handbook for the new Quality Enhancement Review method, and will shortly consult the Welsh sector on the draft handbook and plans to begin the cycle from the 2023/24 academic year. Following the submission of a proposal to develop a new review method in Northern Ireland to the Department for the Economy (DfE NI), QAA has been informed that it has been approved pending final sign-off by the Permanent Secretary for the Department.

QAA recently underwent review by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, ENQA. The review assesses QAA's activity against the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance (ESG), which are internationally recognised standards for quality. We will receive a draft copy of the review report in May for factual accuracy check with the report being published in June. We will then have to await the decision of the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR) around QAA's inclusion in the register in October/November, and the decision of ENQA around QAA membership of ENQA in December.

Debra Macfarlane and Karen Gray, representing the Scottish Funding Council, provided an update on the development of future quality arrangements in Scotland. The Steering Group for this work met on 21 February and there was strong support for a timely move to a single review method for the tertiary sector. Five workstreams were underway, and members were offered a detailed update on the third of these, *Strengthening Institutional Monitoring, Self-Evaluation and Reporting on Quality*. The aim of this workstream is to explore a single reporting point on quality for colleges and higher education institutions that draws on the most effective elements of existing reporting and that minimises duplication. The working title of this reporting point is the Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP), and it is suggested that this will draw on annual monitoring, key performance indicators, and feedback from students, staff and employers. It is expected that this will be linked with SFC priority outcomes and include a degree of horizon-scanning. Debra and Karen outlined the timeline and potential benefits of the workstream.

The feedback from the Steering Group had been broadly positive, emphasising that self-evaluation should be intended to support the development of a quality culture and action planning should be strategic rather than operational. Strengthening of the student voice, institutional capacity for self-evaluation, and mechanisms for annual reporting will all be key to the success of this workstream, as will a sense of shared ownership.

Members had the opportunity to discuss this item more fully in the second hour of the meeting and were broadly positive about the work. It was noted that the proposed timing of the SEAP meant that there might need to be other, complementary ways of capturing information.

Megan Brown (sparqs) reported on the development of the Student Learning Experience model and accompanying principles. sparqs had been commissioned by SFC to develop these to support institutions in their self-evaluation and with external review. Scotland appears to be unique in having this kind of student-led quality tool. As with the previous item, members discussed this item more fully in the second hour of the meeting and generated some further ideas, including the possible drawing out of equality, diversity and inclusivity as a cross-cutting set of principles, and the exploration of links to the revised UK Professional Standards Framework in order to maximise staff engagement.

Clare Parks (QAA Scotland) invited feedback on the Analysis of institutional annual statements on Institution-led Review, which has been produced in a different format from previous years. It is shorter and includes recommendations from QAA for both SFC and the sector. The analysis did not surface any major areas of concern. The new format was welcomed by members and there was some discussion about how the analysis was shared and used in institutions and agencies.

Our next meeting will be on 22 June on Zoom.

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](#).