

TQF Bulletin, Spring 2025

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.

Our second meeting of the year took place on 4 March 2025, and marked the first in-person TQF meeting since before the pandemic (at least for some of us). We ran a hybrid meeting, with some of us gathering at [Queen Margaret University](#) and the rest on Teams. Thank you to QMU for hosting!



Photo credit: Alison Eales

For our first hour, we were joined by Catriona Bell, who ran a workshop on embedding student partnership within staff development in Scottish colleges and universities. This project will run during session 2024-25 and has the aim of supporting the [Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework \(TQEF\)](#). A [theory of change model](#) has been adopted to help plan approaches and outputs, which will be piloted in the next phase of the project and then launched at the end of the academic year.

The project is aligned with the [Student Learning Experience \(SLE\) Model](#) and [Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership](#), as well as the two sets of professional standards ([GCTS](#) and [PSF](#)) that apply across the tertiary sector. Project outputs will include resources that can be used in staff induction. A needs analysis found that, as staff development pathways are different in colleges and universities and differ from one institution to the next, these resources will need to be asynchronous, bite sized and contextualizable. They will be pitched at three levels: introductory resources; resources aimed at supporting individuals to enhance their own practice; and resources aimed at supporting individuals to enhance the practice of others. An [acronym buster](#) is already available. Colleagues agreed that this project is timely and will support institutions in their current work, including the development of whole-institution approaches to student engagement and partnership.

Catriona invited us to work in three small groups to answer a set of questions: what staff development opportunities currently exist for quality professionals; where, when and how are existing sparqs resources used; and how might the outputs of this project be used in the future? Plenary feedback surfaced: the need to ensure a mix of formal and informal opportunities for development; the need to re-introduce some of the in-person development work (such as [Focus On](#)) that was more common pre-pandemic; the need to map external reference points including TQEF, [Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review \(TQER\) guidance](#), the [Scottish Funding Council \(SFC\)'s quality guidance](#) and sparqs' resources; the need to engage senior managers with sparqs' resources; and the need to ensure that we consider culture as well as process. We also heard some examples of good practice and creative ideas, such as institutions inviting quality staff to develop CPD internally and work towards [AFHEA](#). Attendees also recognised the value of TQF in offering informal development and networking opportunities for quality professionals in Scotland.

After Catriona's workshop, we moved on to an open discussion about the first year of the TQEF. Colleagues flagged some challenges with sabbatical officers being Lead Student Representatives for TQER. Colleagues also reflected that the volume of information required for the TQER scoping meetings was quite large, but that QAA officers were approachable and open to alternative ways of providing this.

We then discussed Self-Evaluation and Action Plans (SEAPs). Derek Horsburgh from the SFC had provided a helpful update paper and confirmed that at this stage there are no plans to revise the guidance for session 2025-26. Some colleagues reported that it had been challenging to meet the SFC word limit and still satisfy their institutional reporting requirements. Approaches to student engagement with the development of the SEAP had been varied. Maggie King reported that Heriot-Watt University had produced a guide for, and in collaboration with, student bodies on engagement with the SEAP, and that they would be happy to share this document. This built on [guidance produced by sparqs](#).

Colleagues thanked SFC for their feedback on the SEAPs, including feedback provided at the annual quality engagement meetings between SFC and institutions. Colleagues from SFC and QAA clarified that it was not anticipated that there would be a lot of overlap between the two sets of institutional liaison meetings: SFC were focused more on the production of SEAPs and whether they met requirements, while QAA would be focused on the content of the SEAPs. It was agreed that it would be helpful to have a practice-sharing session at the June meeting of TQF.

We then heard updates from key sector agencies and committees, further to those included in the papers. sparqs have been meeting with institutions, and key themes emerging from these meetings include reports of increases in students requiring additional support with learning; challenges with student engagement in learning and teaching; and challenges around student engagement in quality processes. Colleagues are encouraged to use the SLE Model to address some of these issues. Practical suggestions include theming meetings around the SLE building blocks; using SLE to design questions for internal review; and using the model to refresh learning and teaching. sparqs are producing guidance on student participation in TQER and STEP and considering how to update guidance on the SEAP.

QAA reported that reviewer training was being delivered in batches to ensure that it remained current and that the next batch was likely to be delivered in May.

SFC reported that an initial high-level scoping document had been produced regarding the evaluation of the TQEF and that this was being discussed with delivery partners to ensure that the evaluation of the overall framework would be consistent with that of its component parts. The [Micro-Credentials Network](#) is continuing its work – it has two workstreams and is currently surveying the sector. In terms of the proposed [post-school education reform](#), the decision has been made to proceed with funding changes and legislation is now before parliament. Francesca Osowska OBE FRSE has been appointed as the new Chief Executive of SFC.

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.