

TQF Bulletin, Spring 2026



Photo credit: Alison Eales

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 2025-26 took place in person at [Fife College's new campus in Dunfermline](#). This was part of a day-long event on the theme of **Managing Quality in Challenging Times**, which was hosted by [QAA](#) and [College Development Network](#) in order to bring together members of TQF and its equivalent group in the college sector. During the course of an

engaging day, colleagues had the opportunity to hear from the [Scottish Funding Council \(SFC\)](#) about the [Self-Evaluation and Action Plans \(SEAPs\)](#) submitted in 2025, to hear about specific practice from institutions (Heriot Watt University's approach to using the Quality Code and South College Lanarkshire's approach to student voice), and to discuss approaches to [Institution-Led Quality Review \(ILQR\)](#). The theme of student engagement was a major talking point. This is proving to be a challenge across all mechanisms of the [Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework \(TQEF\)](#) and it was suggested throughout the day that this was worthy of sector-wide discussion.

During the morning, colleagues split into their two groups (TQF and the [Colleges' Quality Network](#)) for our usual business meetings. Our TQF meeting began with a discussion on UK-wide quality developments, supported by a paper supplied by QAA. The [Office for Students \(OFS\)](#) has highlighted concern with two degree algorithm practices: discounting modules with the lowest marks, and using more than one algorithm and choosing the best mark out of them. It was agreed that this should be flagged up to the Quality Arrangements in Scottish Higher Education group (QASHE) as something to keep under review.

We moved on to a discussion about [Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review \(TQER\)](#). Members commented that while on paper the method looked similar to [Enhancement-Led Institutional Review \(ELIR\)](#), it felt different in practice, particularly in the balance of information required at different stages: the Strategic Impact Assessment (SIA) was shorter than the ELIR Reflective Analysis, but the Advance Information Set (AIS) was longer. Review teams were also asking for more information between visits, something that needed to be factored into workloads. Colleagues were reassured that institutional context was being considered, and that the Scoping Meeting was an opportunity to be honest and set the direction of the review.

Discussion turned to student engagement in TQER. As with discussions about student engagement in TQEF throughout the day, a theme was the challenge of getting the balance right between representative, strategic, and operational engagement. The increasing diversity of the student body – including postgraduate research students, part-time students, distance learners and apprentices – posed specific

challenges in terms of representation. Small specialist institutions, and those with multiple campuses, faced additional challenges on this front. Elected sabbatical officers have their own strategic priorities, and there is a question about the extent to which the Lead Student Representative role is strategic, rather than operational. Some institutions are taking the approach of using student consultants rather than relying on elected officers. Other challenges included ensuring that engagement was meaningful and that guidance was not overwhelming. It was suggested that interviews with outgoing student representatives could form part of the TQER evidence base and would perhaps help provide continuity.

A colleague who had experienced TQER as a reviewer reported that they had enjoyed the process and found it valuable and interesting. They estimated that they had spent around 150 hours on one review, including reading, meetings, and writing, and that this reflected the work that the institution had put into preparing for the review. Members suggested that it would be helpful to have further discussions about TQER, bringing together institutions undergoing review, those who have been reviewed, and reviewers.

We then discussed the [National Review of Awarding Arrangements](#) launched as a result of a [Targeted Peer Review \(TPR\) of the University of Glasgow](#). Members asked questions of Karen Gray (SFC) and Kyrsten Black (QAA). At the time of meeting, the full methodology of the National Review had not been finalised, but SFC and QAA were working together at speed and an FAQ was imminent. It was confirmed that timelines were being finalised for review activity over the summer, taking into account student availability, and that desk-based research was already underway. It was anticipated that the review would not be on the same scale as TQER as it would be thematically targeted, but that there would be some overlap in the reviewer pool. A call for reviewers was planned, along with reviewer training. It was also confirmed that institutions with imminent TQERs could still be selected as part of the sample. Several institutions were already planning to undertake internal reviews or self-evaluation along similar lines of enquiry as Glasgow's TPR. Some institutions indicated that they would be keen to volunteer but this would depend on timelines, and it was confirmed that volunteering did not guarantee selection.

We then heard updates from key sector agencies. Eve Lewis provided an update on areas of student engagement support being developed by [spargs](#), including timelines about what needs to be done at different points in the quality cycle, and quality 'lenses' (Sustainable Development, Mental Health and Wellbeing, and EDI).

Megan Brown flagged up that QAA will be launching a project on compassionate communication.

Karen Gray from SFC reported that an impact evaluation of the [Outcomes Framework and Assurance Model \(OFAM\)](#) was underway. A survey had been circulated with a deadline of 26 March and an expectation of a consultative approach to completion. Work was also underway on a review of a possible tertiary approach to quality concerns, on the Bologna process, on microcredentials, and on the implementation of the [Tertiary Education and Training \(Funding and Governance\) \(Scotland\) Act](#).

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.