TQF Bulletin, Autumn 2026

Welcome to the TQF Bulletin - your quick overview of the activity of The Quality Forum. Please feel free to share this with colleagues who might find it valuable.

Welcome to another academic year! Hopefully you had a good summer. Our first meeting of the session took place on 5 November. Katrina kicked the meeting off with a look at the Bulletin from the meeting held on 11 June 2026 – we noted that the committee formerly known as QASHE (Quality Arrangements in Scottish Higher Education) is now SHEQEA (Scottish Higher Education Quality Enhancement and Assurance). This year, TQF meetings will follow SHEQEA, which themselves follow meetings of the Quality Council for UK Higher Education, for which QAA now provides secretariat. We anticipate that this new cadence of meetings will enhance the flow of information to TQF members.

Alen was re-elected Vice-Convener over the summer and we noted that as both Katrina and Alen are now in their second terms, members may wish to consider whether they would like to step into one of these roles in 2028. Katrina also reminded members that we are looking for leadership of the Special Interest Group on Professional Services Review if this is to be revived.

Helena Vine, QAA's Head of Public Affairs, updated us on UK-wide quality developments, including a recent away day of the Quality Council for UK Higher Education, which took place at Queen's University Belfast and featured a workshop on the value of higher education as well as discussion about franchising. The Office for Students (OfS) have opened the second stage of consultation on the proposed reforms of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). Proposals include cyclical assessment for all OfS providers against minimum requirements, with TEF ratings becoming optional for providers with sufficient data (though these will still be required for Strategic Priorities Grants, Degree Awarding Powers and charging maximum fees). Those without sufficient data will have a baseline assessment, with an 'unsatisfactory' finding linked to recruitment cuts (and double Bronze linked to recruitment freezes). Helena updated members on QAA's emerging position on the proposals, which would appear to put more distance between the English and Scottish approaches to quality.

In Wales, Medr has opened a consultation on provider quality performance measures. This delivers its Quality Framework commitment to consult on performance measures and benchmarking by 2027. There are five proposed principles (transparency; benchmarking; minimal burden; contextualisation; and continuous improvement). The measures cover recruitment (for context), progression, retention, completion, regulatory concerns raised with Medr, learner surveys and destinations. Helena updated members on QAA's emerging position on the proposals.

Finally, Helena reported on the Education Sector Advisory Group Higher Education Sector Action Plan which forms part of the action plan to deliver the UK's International Education Strategy 2026, including the target of £40bn a year in education exports by 2030. QAA is working closely with Universities UK International on this work, alongside universities, the British Council, UK-ENIC and BUILA. Members noted that membership of QAA's QE-TNE scheme is a key performance indicator for the work – most Scottish institutions are members of this scheme.

Chase Greenfield (sparqs) reported that some of their practical guidance was being refreshed, including a new resource on Institutional Liaison Meetings (ILMs) and one forthcoming on Institution-Led Quality Review (ILQR). A draft Postgraduate Researcher experience model is also forthcoming.

Kyrsten Black (QAA Scotland) gave a short update on the National Review of Awarding Arrangements. Most final reports are now with institutions, and a thematic report is scheduled for publication. Members noted that the National Review was critically important, and Kyrsten extended thanks to colleagues for coming forward to act as reviewers.

In the second part of our meeting, Catriona Bell and Chase Greenfield from sparqs led a workshop on Co-Creating an Enhancement Plan for Student Partnership at Institutional Level. This builds on the Academic Development Toolkit, the aim of which is to support institutions to embed Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership and the Student Learning Experience Model, which in turn will support the sector to align with the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework principle around student engagement and partnership. Recent analysis of key evidence sources such as Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) and Self-Evaluation and Action Plans (SEAPs) have highlighted that there is room to grow on this front.

Members were first invited to contribute individually to a Padlet, answering the question 'Which feature is your top priority for an enhancement plan for student partnership at your institution? Why?'

Following this exercise, we split into four groups and undertook a 'Diamond 9' exercise, organising the eight features of the Ambition by priority. Groups were also given a 'blank card' on which they could add a ninth feature.

In plenary, groups reported that the exercise had been challenging given the interconnectedness of the features and noted that the 'jigsaw' model of the Ambition reflected this interconnectedness well. Two groups chose Genuine Dialogue as their top priority, arguing that there needs to be a shared understanding of the importance of receiving and acting on student feedback. Another group prioritised Strategically Planned, and noted the importance of being able to respond to fast-moving developments. Another group invoked the blank card, adding 'Culture' as a feature. The conversation in some groups had focused on the challenge of how to ensure that diverse student voices are heard – who is coming forward, and how do we empower underrepresented groups?

Members are encouraged to explore the Academic Development Toolkit, with activities five, six, and seven being especially recommended. Resources ten and eleven, which are podcast case studies in using the sector reference points, will also be of use.

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.

Our next meeting will take place on 3 March, and will be an in-person joint event with the Colleges Quality Network. More information will follow shortly.