

TQF Bulletin, Autumn 2025



Photo credit: Alison Eales

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 9 October on Teams. We were pleased to be joined by Donnie Wood from the [SCQF Partnership](#), who provided an update on the work they are leading on Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). This has been the focus of much work in the sector for a number of years and has now been identified as a priority by the [Scottish Government](#), who invited SCQF to instigate the current project. Employer engagement is a key area of focus, as the changing needs of employers (as well as changing demographics) are likely to drive policy. Subject areas identified for particular attention are engineering, built environment

and social care. The project is progressing positively. A project steering group has been established with representation from employers, educators (with [Universities Scotland](#) and [Colleges Scotland](#) representing institutions), and student representatives (identified from the Student Engagement Group managed by [sparqs](#)). The student voice will be critical to this work, as will building links to work being conducted elsewhere on microcredentials.

Members welcomed this update, acknowledging the need to raise awareness and share practice around RPL. There is existing good practice in the Scottish sector, and there remain areas where understanding could be developed, for example in relation to the reasons for increases in requests for RPL, as well as how it will relate to the lifelong learning entitlement and how it can work for international students. Katrina agreed to liaise with Kirsty Conlon at Universities Scotland to strengthen the link between TQF and the project steering group. Donnie was also invited to speak to the colleges [Quality Network](#) managed by [College Development Network \(CDN\)](#).

In terms of sector updates, Megan Brown drew attention to several items in the paper from sparqs, including the recruitment for a deputy director, updated guidance on [Self-Evaluation and Action Plans \(SEAPs\)](#), and new guidance on [Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review \(TQER\)](#). These were aimed at students' association staff but would be helpful for anyone with a student engagement role. A programme of training on TQER was being delivered to students in partnership with QAA and there was a new cohort of Associate Trainers with both university and college experience. Members commented on how helpful they had found sparqs guidance and training. QAA Scotland are additionally running TQER preparation events for those institutions with reviews upcoming. Excitingly, Megan will be joining QAA as a Quality Enhancement Manager at QAA in November.

Derek Horsburgh from the [Scottish Funding Council \(SFC\)](#) reported that, since the last meeting of TQF, the Education (Scotland) Bill had progressed through the Scottish Parliament, bringing the sector closer to the formal establishment of the new agency Qualifications Scotland and the new inspectorate. Derek also reported that Ben Macpherson has been appointed Minister for Higher and Further Education, succeeding Graeme Dey, and that SFC were working with the new Minister to ensure that he was informed of all developments.

Our two breakout discussions were on student voice and the production of SEAPs.

The group discussing student voice fed back to the main group several points about surveys, with some institutions currently reviewing their approach to this mechanism and establishing survey working groups to explore challenges and solutions. The quantity and timing of surveys in general had been a point of discussion, and efforts were being made to understand the relationship between mid-module and other surveys. Integrating third-party surveys into VLEs had seen response rates improve in some places, as had more in-person and supportive approaches, such as setting aside time in class to promote and even complete surveys. Other matters relating to student voice included closing the feedback loop, using sparqs' [Student Learning Experience \(SLE\) model](#) to shape curriculum working days, and the ethos of student partnership. Thanks to colleagues from Heriot-Watt University for chairing this session and providing slides, which have been circulated.

The group discussing SEAPs looked at four broad areas: approaches to self-reflection; planning; use of data; and working with students. There appeared to be a trend towards more collaborative approaches than there had been in session 2024-25, with some institutions using short-life working groups to ensure that the right people were engaged with the process. Challenges included striking a balance between reporting on business-as-usual and new developments, and including information from all stakeholders while remaining within the word limit. Members felt that the thematic report published by SFC had been helpful and asked whether it might be possible for this to be published earlier in the cycle.

Our next meeting will take place on 10 Mach 2026. This will be in-person (please note that we do not plan to run this as a hybrid meeting). Plans are underway to make this a joint meeting with the colleges Quality Network managed by CDN, with the two groups meeting separately in the morning and coming together in the afternoon to discuss matters that would benefit from cross-sector sharing, with the broad topic of Managing Quality in Challenging Times. Several topics related to TQEF have been suggested and the conveners and chairs of these groups will meet to plan the event. We are looking for volunteers to host. In the meantime, please save the date.

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.