

Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) 4 Operational Guidance: Annual Discussions

Annual discussions facilitate the ELIR process and provide an important opportunity for information sharing between QAA Scotland (QAAS) and the institution. Since the introduction of the enhancement-led approach in 2003, the Scottish higher education sector has adopted an informal protocol for sharing information, often referred to as 'no surprises'. Under the 'no surprises' arrangements, institutions can seek advice from, and provide information to, QAAS officers.

Annual discussion meetings are intended to be useful to the institution, and therefore there is flexibility around the precise agenda and who attends. In general, these annual meetings are held between a QAAS officer and a small group of staff and student representatives from the institution who, collectively, are able to explore the agenda items identified.

QAAS will contact the institution to identify a mutually convenient date for meeting, taking into account the date of the previous annual discussion meeting and the institution's position in the ELIR cycle. The institution is asked to invite the colleagues it wishes to attend, including at least one student representative. The institution should consult the student(s) attending to ensure that the agenda is relevant to student interests.

The institution and QAAS officer will agree the agenda, based on the indicative topics below. There is flexibility around the precise agenda items to ensure that the meeting has value for the institution. For ELIR 4, institutions are invited to extend the annual discussion agenda to include consideration of the institution's engagement with the current Enhancement Theme. The institutional contact is asked to agree the agenda with the QAAS officer and provide information to support the meeting, as indicated below.

Following the meeting, the QAAS officer writes to the institution to confirm any action points and outline the key topics explored.

Indicative topics for discussion

- 1 Update on Institution-led Review - this might include themes from the institution's annual report to SFC, outcomes from the reviews, the method of review being used, and any changes to the review schedule.
- 2 Current developments in student engagement at the institution - this might include progress with activity highlighted in the student partnership agreement or equivalent document.
- 3 Progress with ELIR, relevant to the institution's position in the cycle - this could include preparations for ELIR, the Follow-up report, and/or progress with actions arising from ELIR.

4 Progress and engagement with the current Enhancement Theme - this would provide an early opportunity to discuss challenges or changes to the institution's deliverables associated with the Theme and, therefore, could include discussion of institutional activities linked to the Theme as outlined in the institutional plan, and sharing good practice and other developments linked to changes in strategy, policy or learning and teaching practice.

5 Discussion on the extent to which the institution is able to make use of materials developed through the Enhancement Themes, Focus On projects and other related activity. This would provide an opportunity to share information on the impact of the Themes and Focus On outcomes and resources.

6 Information sharing on matters relevant to ELIR and the Enhancement Themes - this might include updating QAAS on strategic developments at the institution and/or sharing current sector activity.

7 Other matters that the institution and/or students' association wish to discuss.

Documentation to support the annual discussion meeting

The institution is not expected to prepare material especially for the annual discussions. It is anticipated that the meetings will be supported by a set of existing information, such as:

- the definitive internal document(s) describing the approach taken to Institution-led Review, including information about the forward schedule of reviews
- the Institution-led Review reports completed since the previous annual discussion meeting and, where relevant, the follow-up from any previous ILR reports discussed at earlier annual discussions
- any internal documents analysing the outcomes from Institution-led Reviews or evaluating the review method used
- information relating to changes in the institution's approach to quality enhancement
- information relating to developments in student partnership working at the institution
- the institution's plan of activities in support of the current Enhancement Theme and any end-of-year reports
- the most recent annual institutional report to SFC regarding Institution-led Reviews and related matters.