



Writing Reflectively in the SIA

Institutional reflection and self-evaluation are central to the TQER's enhancement-led approach to quality. The emphasis on 'no surprises,' where institutions disclose and reflect on both their strengths and challenges, allows for an open discussion with the review team.

This resource provides support for writing reflectively in the SIA, including reflective writing tips and example sections. The examples include both strong and weak versions, with critical commentary.

Tips for Writing Reflectively

Reflective writing in the SIA involves moving beyond description to explore what the data means. The SIA should provide a critical self-analysis of an institution's enhancement context, goals, and progress.

When writing reflectively, you should:

1. **Focus on why, not what.** Discuss what's changed at your institution and why the changes occurred.
2. **Demonstrate impact.** Rather than simply describing what you did, demonstrate what your actions achieved (and how you know).
3. **Be honest and balanced.** Outline your institution's areas for development as well as its strengths.
4. **Interpret the evidence.** Rather than simply presenting KPIs or other data, explain what the data tells you about your institution.
5. **Use specific examples.** At key points, include examples of practice, but avoid lengthy case studies or multiple examples illustrating the same point.
6. **Acknowledge challenges.** Instead of smoothing over differences, recognise where institutional practice varies and discuss targeted interventions.
7. **Link to action plans in the SEAPs.** Review previous documentation and highlight what changes you've made or if your approach has changed.
8. **Demonstrate student partnership.** Clarify how you've responded to the student voice and how your action plan is student-centred.

Example SIAs

The following examples provide two versions of the Student Partnership section of an SIA. The first example is weak, lacking specificity and focussing too heavily on uninterpreted data. The second example is stronger, exploring how the institution's approach has changed over time and highlighting where further work is needed. It also meets QAA's

recommendations about referencing.

Weak SIA Example

Sample SIA Text	Critical commentary
Student Partnership Overview The institution has a long history of working with students and has a range of committees and groups that involve students. The Students' Association is represented on all major committees, including the Learning and Teaching Committee, the Quality Committee, and the Academic Board. There are also student representatives on programme committees. In 2025–26, 87% of programme committees had at least one student representative present. The institution has a Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) which is reviewed annually. The SPA outlines the areas where the institution and the Students' Association work together. The Students' Association runs class rep training every year and has a system for gathering feedback from students. In 2025, 412 class reps attended training sessions. The institution also has a student engagement policy and a student voice framework. There are several mechanisms for gathering student feedback, including module evaluations (completed by 62% of students in 2025–26), NSS (overall satisfaction 78%), internal surveys (2,341 responses last year), and focus groups (34 held across Schools). The institution has a student experience team that works closely with the Students' Association. In 2025, the institution introduced a new digital feedback tool to gather more real-time feedback from students. Since launch, 5,800 pieces of feedback have been submitted through the tool. Staff have been trained in how to use the tool, with 146 staff attending training sessions. The institution also has a range of student support services, including wellbeing, careers, and academic skills. In 2025–26, wellbeing services recorded 1,920 student contacts, careers delivered 118 workshops, and academic skills supported 2,403 students. Students are encouraged to participate in enhancement projects, and some Schools have student interns who support enhancement work. Last year, 12 student interns were appointed. Strengths - Students are represented on committees - There is a Student Partnership Agreement	Vague headings provide little indication of the subsequent discussion. No specific institutional context provided. Should include what committee representation looks like—is the system effective? 87% is a helpful statistic, but doesn't tell the whole story. No discussion of what the SPA contains; unnecessary explanation of what an SPA is. More detail needed about content and efficacy of training sessions. Helpful list of student voice mechanisms with impressive numerical data, but no discussion of what has been learnt from the feedback. Provide strategic context: why was the tool needed? How is the feedback being used? Good attention to uptake of student support services, but unclear how this relates to student partnership. Should discuss opportunities and challenges of involving student interns in enhancement projects. Helpful to provide overview of strengths and challenges, but could be more specific.

• There are lots of ways to gather feedback Challenges • Some students don't engage • Not all staff use the digital tool Future Plans • Improve engagement • Increase awareness of partnership	Challenges haven't been discussed in the text so feel unexpected at this point. Vague future plans without clear next steps or ownership of actions.
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Strong SIA Example

Sample SIA Text	Critical Commentary
<i>Student Partnership</i> Overview and Institutional Context Over the past three years, strengthening student partnership has been a central institutional priority, driven by our Strategy 2023–26 commitment to 'embed students as co-creators in enhancement activity.' While partnership is well-established in formal governance structures, our focus has shifted towards building more consistent, meaningful engagement at programme level and ensuring that student voice informs decision-making across all campuses. Evaluative Commentary Our partnership work has matured significantly since 2023. The introduction of School-level Student Partnership Forums has improved the quality of dialogue between staff and students, particularly in areas where engagement was previously low. Forum meeting minutes (0203) and Student Pulse Survey (0205) results demonstrate the impact of this shift, including more timely resolution of assessment concerns and clearer communication around curriculum changes. However, engagement remains uneven. Students at our satellite campus report fewer opportunities to influence decision-making, and our evaluation of the 2024–25 Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) (0207) shows that only 54% of class reps felt confident contributing to programme review discussions. This reflects variability in staff confidence and capacity to facilitate partnership, which we are addressing through targeted professional	Clear headings guide the reader. Link to strategy available on institutional website. Outlines specific institutional context and strategy, providing a balanced overview with strengths and areas for development. Good attention to development over time, including the reasons for the changes. Links to the wider evidence base supports the narrative without overwhelming with data. Honest discussion of weaknesses and challenges. Highlights specific areas of challenge, identifying both causes and potential solutions.

development. The introduction of our digital ‘Pulse Feedback’ (0208) tool has increased the volume of student feedback, but its impact has been mixed. While some programme teams use the data effectively to identify emerging issues, others report difficulty integrating real-time feedback into existing processes. Our SEAP 2024–25 (0102) included a specific action to streamline feedback routes and reduce duplication. Student involvement in enhancement projects has been a notable success. In 2025–26, 18 students were employed as Student Enhancement Partners, contributing to work on inclusive assessment and digital learning. Their evaluation reports (0215) highlight improved communication between staff and students and a stronger sense of shared ownership of enhancement activity. Strengths • Clear institutional commitment to partnership, supported by strategic priorities and visible in governance structures • Positive impact of School-level Partnership Forums, particularly in improving responsiveness to student concerns • Strong examples of co-creation through Student Enhancement Partners, with demonstrable influence on assessment and digital learning • Improved transparency and communication around enhancement activity Challenges • Inconsistent partnership practice across campuses and Schools • Variable staff confidence in facilitating partnership discussions • Mixed effectiveness of the Pulse Feedback tool due to process duplication • Lower engagement and confidence among class reps at the satellite campus Forward Priorities (2026–29) • Introduce a revised Student Partnership Framework	Balanced discussion of the implementation and impact of the new tool. References SEAP action plans (though could be improved by reporting on progress so far). Overview of paid student roles, including their specific areas of work. Reference to evaluation, with headline findings. Overview of strengths clearly arising from the discussion. Strengths focus on impact rather than simply listing initiatives. Highlights specific areas of strength and causes of improvement. Clear articulation of challenges, without targeting areas of weakness. Balanced—notes ‘inconsistent partnership’ and ‘mixed effectiveness’ rather than assuming practice is the same everywhere.
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to ensure consistency across all Schools • Expand Student Enhancement Partner roles to all campuses, with a focus on widening participation groups • Streamline feedback mechanisms and integrate Pulse Feedback into programme review processes • Strengthen class rep training and introduce peer-to-peer mentoring to build confidence and capability • Co-develop a new SPA format with the Students' Association to improve clarity and accountability	Priorities listed with specific outcomes and intended impact. Plans are presented in overview form at this stage; a full action plan could be included in the broader evidence base.
Section Summary Our evaluation shows that partnership is strongest where staff and students work collaboratively on shared priorities, and weakest where engagement relies on formal structures alone. Over the next review cycle, our focus will be on building consistency, strengthening staff capability, and ensuring that partnership is embedded in everyday practice rather than concentrated in specific teams or projects.	Final summary provides an overview for reviewers, while also allowing the institution to double-check all key points have been included.

Published – 3 September 2026

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Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786
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