QAA SCOTLAND

Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework

# Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER)

## Guide for Institutions

This review method is ESG compliant

October 2024

| Action | Date | Responsibilities |
|---|---|---|
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# Introduction: Quality assurance and enhancement in Scotland

1 This is the Guide to the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) for Scotland's tertiary sector. The Guide sets out how provision delivered by colleges and universities will be reviewed to support quality assurance and enhancement. TQER is a peer-led, enhancement-focused approach which has been co-created with staff and students from across Scotland's tertiary institutions. TQER puts student interests and the student voice at the heart of Scotland's quality system. It recognises the value, commitment and professionalism of staff across Scotland's system. It seeks to provide both support and challenge for institutions to deliver meaningful experiences for students and to develop and innovate learning and teaching. TQER provides the basis for public and stakeholder confidence in the management of academic standards, the enhancement of the quality of student learning experience, and enabling student success. TQER has been designed and developed and will be delivered independently by QAA in line with the requirements of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

## What is Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework?

2 Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) is the quality assurance and enhancement framework for Scotland's college and university[1] further and higher education provision. The TQEF comprises a shared set of principles, delivery mechanisms and outputs that can be applied in different contexts to give assurance on academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience and ensure accountability for public investment in learning and teaching. TQER is one of the delivery mechanisms within the overall framework.

3 The TQEF is an evolution of Scotland's enhancement-led approach to quality assurance and draws on the strengths of the college and university sectors' previous arrangements. It has been co-created by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) in partnership with Scotland's colleges, universities and quality agencies. The TQEF will seek to answer the question: '*Is the provision delivered by Scotland's colleges and universities of high quality and does it continue to improve?'.* A key part of evidencing the answer to this question is through external peer review.

## What is external peer review and why does it matter?

4 External review by peer teams ensures that those who have current expertise or management experience in learning, teaching and assessment are evaluating and making TQER judgements about a college or university's quality and standards. It allows a college or university to benefit from an outside perspective and get feedback from others working in the same environment. Having a network of peer reviewers from across colleges and universities, and beyond, also allows for continuous professional development of those staff and students undertaking reviews and sharing of practice, through those reviewers, back to colleges and universities, therefore benefiting the whole sector.

5 External peer review ensures and provides external assurance that the quality of the teaching and learning and the experience that students get in Scotland's colleges and

[1] Throughout this Guide and for ease of reading, the term 'colleges' is used to denote all Scottish colleges and the term 'universities' is used for universities and small specialist higher education institutions without degree awarding powers. The collective term 'institution' is used to denote all of the above.

universities is of high quality and that together we continue to make improvements in every college and university individually and across Scotland, both now and for the future.

6 Change is a constant in learning environments and as teaching techniques, curriculum and technology continue to evolve, external peer review evidences that Scotland's provision remains current and that students can achieve the best outcomes they can to meet their own personal learning aims and employment goals.

## Quality assurance, quality enhancement and self-evaluation in the context of external peer review

7 **Quality assurance** is the systematic monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching, and the processes that support them, to make sure that the standards of academic awards meet the expectations set out in the UK Quality Code, and that the quality of the student learning experience is being safeguarded and improved.

8 **Quality enhancement** is using evidence to plan, implement and evaluate deliberate steps intended to improve the learning experience in our colleges and universities.

9 In order to take deliberate steps, it is expected that the institution will have a clear strategic vision of the enhancement it is seeking to bring about. It is also expected that the institution will evaluate its current strengths and areas for development (see the role of self-evaluation in TQER - paragraphs 14-15).

10 Enhancement includes assurance through self-evaluation. The approach the institution takes to self-evaluation forms a significant focus in external peer review.

11 Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) will consider the following aspects of enhancement.

### Assurance

12 TQER looks at the strategic management of learning and teaching, the management of academic standards and the quality of the learning experience. It is important to emphasise at the outset that a key element of an effective enhancement approach involves understanding and assessing how an institution assures itself that standards and quality are being appropriately maintained (assurance).

### Strategic approach

13 Enhancement involves evaluation and strategic intention, and it is expected that the institution will have a clear strategic vision and leadership for enhancement and the changes it seeks to bring about. Enhancement activity should be **focused, targeted and measurable, and involve intention and evaluation**. It is expected that any enhancement activity will be informed by a culture that promotes evaluative practice in quality assurance processes, with the institution's evaluation of the effectiveness of its implementation of earlier plans, current strengths and areas for development across the range of its provision and student support services. TQER is particularly interested in the institution's strategic intentions and its plans for enhancement that takes account of the diversity of provision and will explore the impact of the planned changes on the student learning experience as part of that review. For example, if the institution intends to expand particular areas of its student population, TQER will be interested in

the steps the institution has taken to ensure its quality policy and practices are effective for that expansion. Once the expansion has taken place, TQER will be interested in the outcomes of the institution's evaluation of its policy and practices, and in the institution's response to that evaluation which should include student engagement (see paragraphs 20-22 - 'Student engagement and partnership').

## Self-evaluation and action planning

14 The approach the institution takes to self-evaluation and action planning forms a significant focus in TQER. This is because considerable confidence can be derived from an institution that has systematic arrangements in place for evaluating its strengths and identifying and addressing potential risks to quality and academic standards. In an enhancement-led approach, institutions identify ways in which learning and teaching and the student learning experience could be improved, even when baseline expectations have been met. The enhancement culture in Scotland places emphasis on engaging well beyond the baseline, inspiring excellence.

15 Effective self-evaluation and resulting enhancement activity should build on an institution's use of data and evidence to improve the effectiveness of the student learning experience, building on reference points and the sharing of good practice, and making the most effective use of resources to support learning. Review teams will look at the effectiveness of planning based on an institution's self-evaluation and progress made as a result. Review teams will also be interested in how students have been engaged in self-evaluation approaches.

## Management of change

16 The management of change is fundamental to enhancement. Enhancement involves using evidence to make decisions about planned changes and evidence to evaluate the effectiveness of change initiatives. It means doing new things or doing established things in different ways. A key element for institutions will be the ability to identify and manage the risks associated with change; for example, substantial changes to student numbers, the provision, strategy or challenges in an area of enhancement introduced by the institution. TQER supports institutions in adopting an ambitious approach to their enhancement activity. It encourages innovation and promotes managed risk-taking. It is inevitable that some changes will be more successful than others and often more can be learned in the long run from analysing the reasons for less successful outcomes. Reviewers will be interested in how students have been engaged in enhancement decisions, and in introducing and evaluating change.

## Engagement in Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP)

17 STEP provides support for institutions for responding to challenges and opportunities collaboratively. It is expected that institutions engage with STEP, although the precise way in which they engage is for each institution to determine - in line with the *SFC Guidance on Quality for Colleges and Universities AY2024-25 to AY 2030-31*,and institutional priorities. Sector-enhancement activity produces outcomes that are potentially valuable reference points and that can impact policy and practice across the sector. Engagement in these enhancement activities provides the benefit of sharing learning, innovation and best practice across the sectors. TQER teams may explore with an institution why it has, or has not, chosen to adopt a particular approach to enhancement for challenges and opportunities where they exist. This will be carried out in the context of TQER seeking to support diversity across the sector.

18 Enhancement can take place at multiple levels within an institution and in a range of ways. Enhancement may involve continuous improvement and/or more significant step-changes in policy and practice to improve the effectiveness of the student learning experience. It may involve the whole institution in a change or innovation at programme of study or departmental level. Enhancement is the result of change which may include innovation. Change and innovation will frequently involve necessary risk and testing of approaches. Institutions are required to manage this risk in a way that provides reasonable safeguards for current students. The review process will recognise and support appropriate risk in this context.

19 External peer review will support the rich diversity of institutions in Scotland. While there are commonalities of purpose, each institution in Scotland has its own unique mission and will seek to meet the needs of its own students and its own strategic ambitions. The enhancement approaches of individual institutions will therefore have their own characteristics. The review process will consequently engage with the enhancement of the learning experiences of students in the context of the individual institution and engagement in STEP activity will be a key part of an institution's strategic approach to enhancement. Review teams will be particularly interested in the impact of STEP-related activity.

## Student engagement and partnership

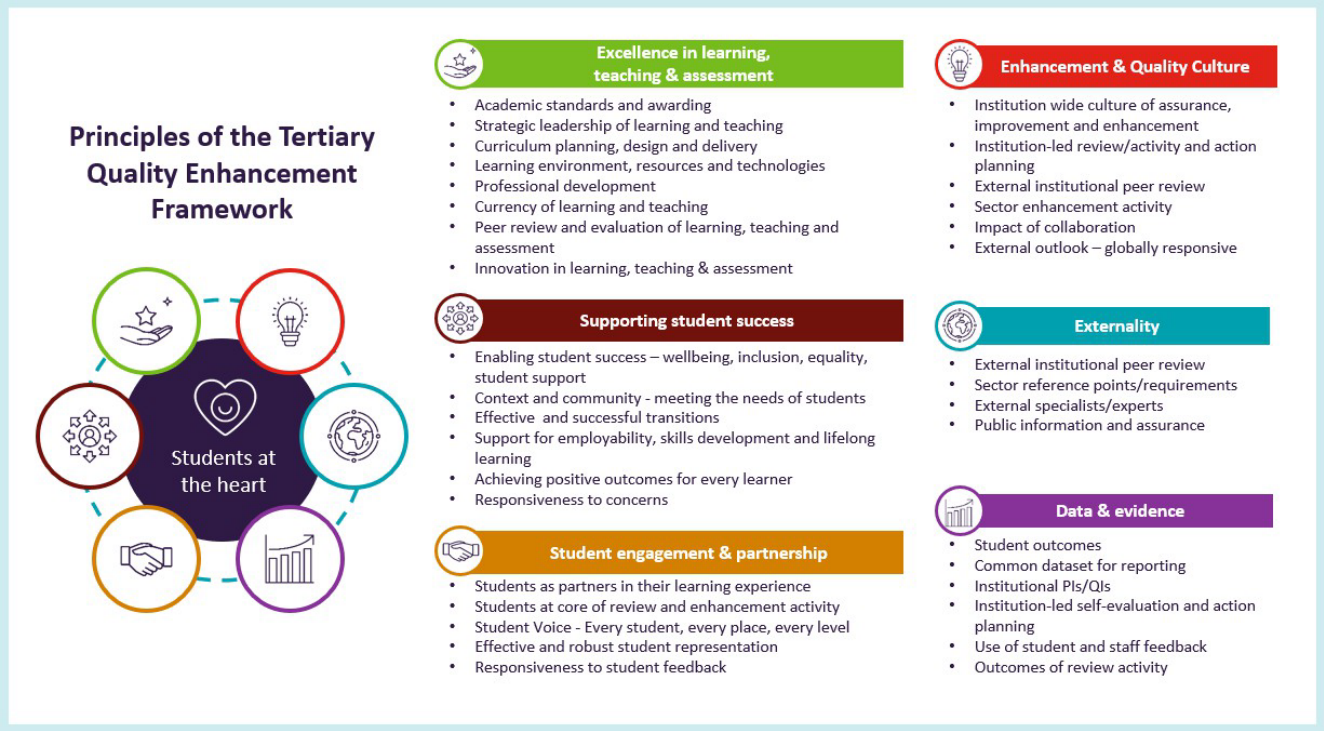
20 Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) puts students at the centre of quality arrangements and recognises the valued role students have as partners in shaping their learning experience. 'Student Engagement and Partnership' is one of the principles of the TQEF. The effectiveness of an institution's approach to student engagement and partnership is a significant focus of TQER.

21 Student partnership is achieved when there is mutual respect for both student and staff expertise, a robust representative system that is accountable to the entire student body, and student and staff capacity to co-create and implement solutions. Central to this is a partnership approach where student views are essential to all levels of decision-making, self-evaluation activity and enhancement planning. It is expected that students should be partners in the formulation, operation and evaluation of the institution's approach to assurance and enhancement. Within the review method, the review team will consider the extent and effectiveness of student partnership across the full range of students and will be interested in the approach taken to engaging students in review preparation (see role of self-evaluation in TQER - paragraphs 14-15). Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership and its associated features and indicators will be a key reference point for the review.

22 There is also an expectation that students will have opportunities to work in partnership with the institution to actively shape and co-create aspects of their learning experience. By working together to a common agreed purpose, steps can be taken that lead to enhancement. The sparqs' Student Learning Experience model, developed as part of the TQEF, will be a key reference point for TQER (see also: 'External reference points for TQER' - paragraph 40; 'Key stages in the TQER method' - paragraph 102; and SFC Guidance on Quality for Colleges and Universities AY2024-25 to AY 2030-31).

## The Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) principles and their role in TQER

23 The external peer review team, made up of staff and students from other colleges and universities, will look at an institution's effectiveness in meeting four of the principles of the TQEF with data and evidence and externality as underpinning principles.




24 In each review, across all locations, subject areas and modes of delivery, the review team will be seeking to answer the following questions based on the six principles:

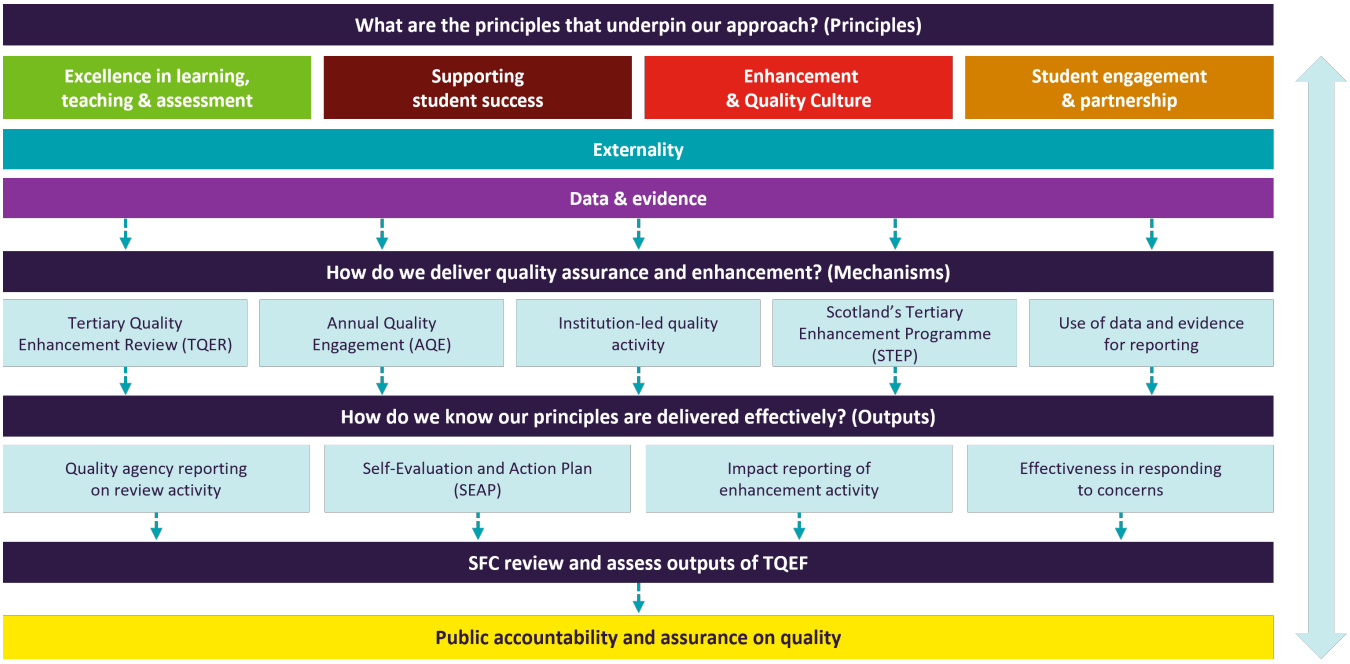
- **Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment** - How effective is the institution's approach for achieving excellence in learning, teaching and assessment, and for assuring and maintaining academic standards?
- **Supporting student success** - How effective are the institution's arrangements for supporting student success?
- **Student engagement and partnership** - How effective is the institution's approach to student engagement and partnership?
- **Enhancement and quality culture** - How effective is the institution in embedding an enhancement and quality culture across the institution?
- **Externality** - How effectively does the institution use external expertise across all principles?
- **Data and evidence** - How effectively does the institution use data and evidence across all principles?

25 Full details of how the review team will make a judgement on the effectiveness of the institution against the principles of the TQEF can be found in the section 'What is the review team evaluating and how do they do it?' (paragraphs 59-64).

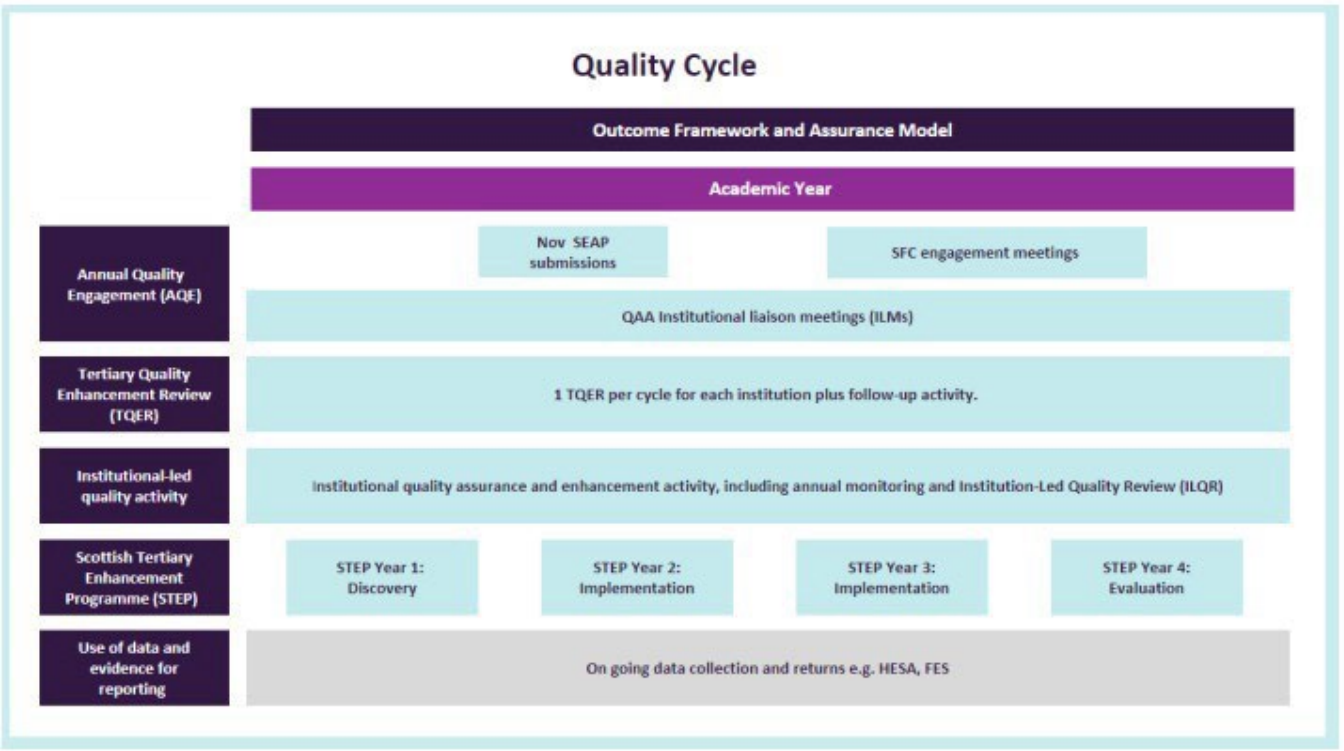
## The Quality Cycle

26 The five delivery mechanisms of quality enhancement and assurance set out in the TQEF are:

- External peer review and follow-up activity (Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER))
- Annual Quality Engagement
- Institution-led quality activity
- Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP)
- Use of data for evidence and reporting.




27 QAA Scotland manages the overall external peer review and follow-up activity and national enhancement activity. Expectations for institutions around all of the mechanisms above (including external peer review and follow-up activity, and Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme) and the Quality Cycle are outlined in the SFC Guidance on Quality for Colleges and Universities AY 2024-25 to AY 2030-31.




28 Each delivery mechanism of quality assurance and enhancement in the TQEF is interrelated and each feed into TQER. Taken together, the activities and outputs from the quality cycle can give confidence for students, staff, employers and all stakeholders that colleges and universities are meeting sector expectations in managing academic standards, enhancing the quality of the learning experience and enabling student success - currently and into the future - and that there can be public confidence in the institution's qualifications and in the quality of the learning experience it provides for its students.

29 **External peer review and follow-up activity:** External peer review (TQER) takes place on a seven-year cycle and every institution will be reviewed once within that cycle. After the review, institutions must take part in follow-up activity (see 'Follow-up activity' - paragraphs 132-141) that includes follow-up reporting and engagement.

30 **Annual Quality Engagement (AQE):** There will be two aspects to Annual Quality Engagement (AQE) to support the delivery of high-quality learning in institutions. Institutional Liaison Meetings (ILMs) will be led by QAA as part of the TQER process, while SFC Outcome Managers will continue to lead discussion around high-quality learning and the outcomes of the Self-Evaluation and Action Plans (SEAPs) in their approach to the Outcomes Framework and Assurance Model.

31 ILMs are undertaken with every institution on an annual basis (apart from the year of review) to consider developments in, and impact of, an institution's quality assurance and enhancement approach and progress following external peer review.

32 **Institution-led quality activity:** Institution-led quality activity - for example, annual monitoring processes, SEAPs and, where applicable, institution-led quality review - is considered by review teams as part of the evidence base for the review.

33 **National thematic enhancement activity:** An institution's engagement with the programme of Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme will be considered as part of TQER.

34 **Use of data and evidence for reporting:** The use of data and evidence to underpin activity undertaken as part of the TQEF, will be ongoing.

## External reference points for TQER

35 As part of identifying its strategic approach to enhancement and evaluating its current policy and practice, the institution is expected to make use of a range of external reference points. Institutions have flexibility in identifying the full suite of reference points that are relevant to their strategic vision, context and student population, and will be supported to do so by QAA during institution preparation events for TQER and in developing the review specification.

36 There are a number of specific references that Scottish institutions are expected to address. Some of these reference points will be common to all Scottish institutions, such as:

- the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) principles on which TQER is based (see paragraphs 23-24 - TQEF principles and their role in TQER)
- the SFC Guidance on Quality (setting out the requirements of the Scottish Funding Council for institutions)
- the UK Quality Code (the Quality Code) (see paragraph 37 below)
- the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and Level Descriptors (see **Annex T: SCQF duty for quality assurance of credit rating activity**).

Institution adherence to these reference points will be explored during TQER.

37 The Quality Code is a UK-wide reference point. The Quality Code helps to frame the review team's analysis and understanding of the operation of the institution's management of its quality and enhancement and allows them to consider the institution's practice to the Code, and Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) (see also **Annex S: ESG Part 1 mapping**). The Quality Code is a key resource as outlined in 'Evidencing the effectiveness of the institution against the TQEF principles' (see pages 17-28). The Advance Information Set (see **Annex E: Advance Information Set**) is also arranged according to the sector-agreed principles of the Quality Code for this purpose and review teams may explore the institution's alignment to the Code during the Initial Review Visit (see **Annex I: Indicative schedules** for indicative review schedules). In addition, institutions may utilise a range of approaches to demonstrate how the Quality Code sector-agreed principles apply in their context; this could include a mapping or use of the Code as a reflective tool.

38 QAA's work and review methods are also informed by the fundamental values of the European Higher Education Area. QAA's approach and methods are designed to meet the standards and reflect the guidelines set out in the ESG. QAA seeks to encourage engagement with other Bologna expectations, including means to enable mobility.

39 Other key reference points for individual institutions may include a range of documents, including:

- Characteristics Statements
- Subject Benchmark Statements
- Quality Code Advice and Guidance
- Documents from awarding bodies (colleges)
- Professional Standards Framework (universities)
- Professional Standards for Lecturers in Scotland's Colleges (colleges)

40 Most institutions will also make use of reference points published by relevant professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). Institutions are also expected to use sparqs' (student

partnerships in quality Scotland) Student Learning Experience and Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership and its associated features and indicators, and the review team will explore the use of these models for enhancement during TQER.

41 One of the elements of the TQEF is Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP). Institutions are expected to engage with this activity as set out in the SFC Guidance on Quality for Colleges and Universities AY2024-25 to AY 2030-31.

42 This review method recognises that institutions operate in a dynamic environment in which the possible suite of key reference points is evolving. Review teams will consider the extent to which the institution has systematic arrangements for:

- identifying the reference points that are most relevant to its strategic direction and student population
- identifying changes in the key reference points, and updating institution policy and practice accordingly
- using these reference points in setting, managing and evaluating institution strategy, policy and practice.

43 The review team will recognise appropriate lead times for the institution to undertake this type of activity.

# Scope of TQER

## What is in scope of TQER?

44 Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) applies to all Scottish Funding Council (SFC) tertiary education fundable bodies in Scotland. The scope of TQER includes all of the institution's credit bearing provision - that is, programmes of study leading ultimately to awards or credit at Level 1-12 of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

45 The scope of the review will take into account the awarding status of the institution under review. For example, some institutions delivering programmes of study in collaboration with awarding bodies or awarding organisations may have responsibility for the maintenance of academic standards, while institutions with degree awarding powers may have responsibility for the setting and maintenance of academic standards. The review team will take this into account when making judgements, reviewing the institution against only the applicable responsibilities. For those without degree awarding powers, this will include managing provision with awarding bodies. Similarly, for institutions without research degree awarding powers but with postgraduate research provision, the review will focus on matters of quality assurance and enhancement for the postgraduate research student experience.

## What is out of scope of TQER?

46 The specific quality arrangements for non-credit bearing provision (for example, non-credit bearing fully commercial provision, outreach or community activity) will not be covered as part of the review but may be considered overall as part of an institution's overall impact and approach (for example, summer schools may be considered in the context of widening participation and commercial provision may be considered in the context of regional impact).

47 The other baseline requirements of the SFC in respect of its duty to ensure the quality of credit bearing provision by tertiary education fundable bodies - such as financial sustainability, management and governance requirements - are checked directly by the SFC and do not form part of the method. However, any public information relating to other regulatory requirements, such as professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) reports, will inform the context for the review and may shape the institution's approach to its management of quality and standards.

## What is considered as part of the TQER?

48 TQER evaluates, analyses and reports on the management of academic standards, the enhancement of the quality of the student learning experience and enabling student success at institution level. As outlined in the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF), individual programmes of study and subjects are reviewed through institution-led quality activity and the operation and outcomes of this activity will form part of the evidence base for TQER.

49 TQER is concerned with the learning experience of credit bearing provision delivered by fundable bodies in Scotland of all students, irrespective of their level, mode, language or location of study. The nature of the provision will depend on the context of the individual institution.

50 TQER evaluates an institution's ability to meet the principles of the TQEF (see also 'TQER outcomes' - paragraphs 113-125).

## What may additionally be considered as part of TQER?

51 Depending on the context of the provision, the following may additionally be in scope:

| | |
|---|---|
| Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework desk-based analysis | See **Annex T: SCQF duty for quality assurance of credit rating activity** for applicability |
| Matters referred by Scottish Funding Council (SFC) | Matters referred as part of the SFC analysis of data (see 'The evidence base for TQER') |
| Collaborative provision | The scope of TQER includes collaborative provision wherever and however it is delivered. For awarding bodies, this may include provision through a college, a branch campus,[2] or employer organisation, be it franchised or validated, and delivered in the UK or internationally. For institutions that are not awarding bodies, this may include how collaborative arrangements are operationally managed with awarding bodies (such as higher education institutions, Schools College Partnership and the Scottish Qualifications Authority). Further examples relevant across the tertiary sector include foundation and graduate apprenticeships and collaborative provision with regional authorities and health boards. Where provision is made in conjunction with an overseas partner, the review will focus on the arrangements the awarding institution in Scotland has in place to manage the quality of the student learning experience and the academic standards of its awards. Assurance and enhancement of collaborative provision will be considered as part of the review. The scope will also include any embedded international pathway college where the institution has overall responsibility for the awards. Awarding bodies retain responsibility for all awards made in their name. |
| Matters referred from the Quality Evaluation and Enhancement of UK Transnational Education process | Eligible institutions in Scotland will continue to participate in the review of their transnational education (TNE) in a UK-wide Quality Evaluation and Enhancement of UK-TNE (QE-TNE) Scheme, and related activity organised from time-to-time where it applies to their provision. Where appropriate, the outcomes from that work will inform TQER reviews. Where matters have been referred, information will be provided by QAA to the review team. If the QE-TNE process identifies practice relating to quality assurance that will require further examination the matter will be referred to the relevant regulator/funder and/or to the next review of the institution in line with what has been agreed with the relevant authority in each of the UK's home nations. |

[2] Where these are deemed collaborative provision.

| | |
|---|---|
| Matters referred from the Scottish Quality Concerns Scheme | As well as undertaking TQER, a concern about academic standards and/or the quality of the student learning experience at a higher education institution can be raised under the Scottish Quality Concerns Scheme where applicable. Where there is a concern that requires investigation in the run-up to a TQER, rather than conducting a separate investigation, this may be incorporated within the TQER. For further details about how a concern and follow-up to a concern would be incorporated within a TQER - see **Annex O: Scottish Quality Concerns Scheme concerns incorporated within TQER**. |
| Matters arising from institution partner reviews | TQER of degree-awarding institutions will take into consideration the outcomes of reviews of accredited partners. Outcomes of 'partially effective' or 'not effective' (or equivalent judgements where other review methods are used) in reviews of accredited partners, will be considered to reflect on the management of the partnership by the accrediting partner. Such an outcome may trigger SFC action or be followed up in the forthcoming review of the accrediting partner if the timescales are reasonable to do so. |

# Tailoring the review to an institution's context

52 Tailoring a review to an institution's context considers how an institution's approach is influenced by its mission, aims and strategy, and includes consideration of how an institution's specific circumstances (such as its size or geographical location(s)) might influence that approach.

53 Tailoring a review to an institution's context, while ensuring consistency of the approach across the review method, is intended to support institutions in gaining optimal value from the process by enabling focus on the areas that will be the highest priority for them.

54 Tailoring the review to an institution's context is initially explored with the institution by a QAA Review Manager (see 'Key roles in TQER' - paragraphs 85-87) at a scoping meeting which will inform:

- the composition of the review team
- flexibility in the length and arrangements for the review visits.

55 The arrangements that support tailoring the review to an institution's context will be reflected in a tailored review specification which will be issued to the institution following the scoping meeting.

## Scoping the review

56 Approximately eight months before the Main Review Visit takes place, a QAA Review Manager will meet with representatives of the institution for a scoping meeting. This would normally include the institution lead(s) for the academic quality of learning and teaching and a Lead Student Representative. It is intended to explore the operating context of the institution, its plans and reflections on the key challenges it faces (see **Annex B: Scoping meeting** for scoping meeting content).

57 The scoping meeting will inform the following:

- **Review team composition:** The review team comprises a core of four reviewers including a student reviewer (see **Annex G: Review team size and composition**) and the institution will be invited to advise on the category of reviewer(s) (see 'Key roles in TQER' - paragraphs 88-91) that they think would be of most value for the remaining member(s) of the review team.
- **Review visit(s):** A review will involve two visits by the review team to the institution: an Initial Review Visit, comprising meetings with the institution's leaders and then focusing on meetings with a broad, representative range of students; and a Main Review Visit, which will comprise meetings with a range of the institution's stakeholders including students, internal staff and external stakeholders (see 'Key stages in the TQER method' - paragraphs 100-110). The precise timing and length of each of these, and the online/hybrid/in-person nature of each of them, will be discussed with the institution, taking account of context including number and nature of campuses and students.
- A **review specification**, developed by the QAA Review Manager and shared with the institution, based on the method set out in this Guide and drawing on the scoping meeting, will set out the terms of the review, including the arrangements to support tailoring the review to an institution's context (see **Annex C: Review specification exemplar** for

review specification template). The review specification will outline the areas identified by the institution as key topics which will support institutions to gain optimal value from the review by focusing on these areas.

58 A review timeline can be found at **Annex H: Review timeline**.

# What is the review team evaluating and how do they do it?

## Overview

59 The review team will look at an institution's effectiveness in meeting the principles of Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF). They will do this across the course of the TQER event (that is, from submission of the Advance Information Set to the end of the review visits and finalisation of the report) using questions that address the institution's effectiveness against the principles of the TQEF.

## Triangulation and testing of evidence

60 To assess how an institution meets the principles of the TQEF, the questions that the review team will consider are outlined in the tables below. The overarching question in each section is based on four of the principles of the TQEF (Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment; Supporting student success; Enhancement and quality culture; and Student engagement and partnership) with consideration of principles of Externality, and Data and evidence being incorporated within the four. The questions the review team will consider under the overarching question are based on the bullets that sit under the corresponding principle. Against each question, there is an indication of where and how the review team might find answers and what sources of primary and secondary evidence might be considered. The evidence the review team uses to answer these questions comes from triangulating the evidence base - that is, the Advance Information Set, Strategic Impact Analysis and evidence and analysis from other sources, and further evidence gathered at the review visits.

61 Other reference points that the review team will consider are indicated at the start of each section; further information can be found in paragraphs 35-43 - 'External reference points for TQER'.

## Review team attendance

62 Activities that are part of the review visits will be carried out by at least two review team members, although it is envisaged that most activities will involve the whole team. Where the review team splits for an activity (for example, for a learning walk or to facilitate simultaneous meetings), there will be catch-up time afterwards so that all team members have a shared understanding of what has been found. The QAA Review Manager will be in attendance throughout the review.

## Evidencing the effectiveness of the institution against the TQEF principles

63 Within each of the four overarching sections, the review team will also be seeking evidence demonstrating the effectiveness and impact of the institution's use of 'data and evidence' and 'externality' in meeting all the other indicators within the overarching principle.

64 The tables below provide a framework of questions that the review team will ask itself as a reference point. It is important to note that they are not prescriptive questions that will be asked as part of the review. They have been structured around the TQEF principles and corresponding bullet points. The relevant sector-agreed principles of the Quality Code are provided to support review teams and institutions in considering institutional alignment with the Code. These tables will additionally support the institution in developing its Strategic Impact Analysis (see **Annex D: Guidance on the structure and content of the Strategic Impact Analysis**).

## Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment



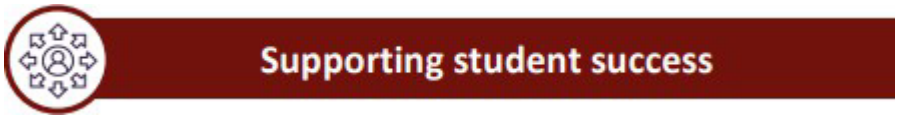

| **TQEF principle: How effective is the institution in achieving excellence in learning, teaching and assessment, across all locations, subject areas and modes of delivery, and for assuring and maintaining academic standards?** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Quality Code sector-agreed principles:**<br><br>Principle 1: Taking a strategic approach to managing quality and standards<br>Principle 3: Resourcing delivery of a high-quality learning experience<br>Principle 4: Using data to inform and evaluate quality<br>Principle 5: Monitoring, evaluating and enhancing provision<br>Principle 6: Engaging in external review and accreditation<br>Principle 7: Designing, developing, approving and modifying programmes<br>Principle 8: Operating partnerships with other organisations<br>Principle 10: Supporting students to achieve their potential<br>Principle 11: Teaching, learning and assessment | | | | |
| **Questions the review team will consider** | | | **Where and how the review team will seek answers** | |
| **Question code** | **Question text** | **Strategic Impact Analysis (SIA)** | **Advance Information Set** (indicative sources - full details are contained in Annex E: Advance Information Set) | **Review visits** (indicative engagements) |
| ELT 1 | How is the institution ensuring that the academic standards and awarding practices for the awards that it delivers and/or supports meet external expectations and are secure, consistent and reliable over time so they can be trusted by students, employers and, where applicable, awarding bodies? | N/A - should be contained within Advance Information Set | SEAP<br><br>Institution's analysis of student outcomes data including trends<br><br>Institution's analysis of feedback from external assessors, verifiers and/or examiners<br><br>Evidence and analysis from other sources (eg SFC, SCQF, QAA) | Engagements with:<br><br>• Principal<br>• senior leadership<br>• staff |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Where relevant, evidence in relation to the oversight of collaborative provision (such as evidence listed in Annex E, (QC P8))<br><br>Information on FTE staffing (full-time/part-time teaching, support, administration)<br><br>Policy and guidance for students on academic integrity and institution's analysis of annual data relating to academic misconduct | |
| ELT 2 | Does the institution make effective use of relevant frameworks to provide clarity around level and type of qualification, including the SCQF? | N/A - should be contained within Advance Information Set | Sample of credit rating information for SCQF level and credit as outlined in Annex E: Advance Information Set<br><br>Illustrative examples showing the design, development and approval of programmes of study, using degree awarding powers<br><br>SCQF desk-based analysis on your submission | Engagements with:<br><br>• staff |
| ELT 3 | How does the leadership enable and support a culture for excellence in learning, teaching and assessment that positively impacts at all levels and across all areas that support the student learning experience? | Advance Information Set may need to be supplemented by further evaluation in SIA | SEAP<br><br>Current Learning & Teaching Strategy, supporting action plan and the institution's evaluation of the impact of previous action plan(s)<br><br>Institution's mission and strategic plans<br><br>Monitoring and evaluation activity including, but not limited to institution-led quality review / institution-led quality activity | Engagements with:<br><br>• Principal<br>• senior leadership<br>• staff<br>• students |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ELT 4 | How do the planning, design, approval, monitoring and delivery of the curriculum ensure that the institution's programmes of study are current, meet student needs and reflect changes in demand for workforce skills needs, wherever and by whomever they are delivered? | Context-dependent so likely to require evaluation in SIA | Institution's analysis of stakeholder feedback (eg students, alumni, employers, schools, external verifiers/examiners, accrediting bodies and/or partner institutions)<br><br>Monitoring and evaluation activity, including but not limited to institution-led quality review / institution-led quality activity<br><br>Portfolio/curriculum planning and approval activity | Engagements with:<br><br>• staff<br>• students<br>• employers<br>• partner institutions |
| ELT 5 | What is the impact of the institution's work with industry, employer and collaborative partners in support of the development of a current and appropriate curriculum portfolio and progression pathways for students? | Context-dependent so likely to require evaluation in SIA | Institution's analysis of stakeholder feedback (eg students, alumni, employers, schools, external verifiers/examiners, accrediting bodies and/or partner institutions)<br><br>Institution's analysis of student outcomes data (including trends) | Engagements with:<br><br>• staff<br>• students<br>• employers<br>• partner institutions |
| ELT 6 | How is the institution ensuring the quality of learning, teaching, assessment and student learning experience in work-based learning? | N/A - should be contained within Advance Information Set | Monitoring and evaluation of partnership arrangements<br><br>Sample of minutes or equivalent of employer engagement meetings<br><br>The number and types of employers involved in work-based learning<br><br>Institution's analysis of stakeholder feedback (eg students, employers, schools, external verifiers/examiners) | Engagements with:<br><br>• staff<br>• students<br>• employers |
| ELT 7 | How does the institution ensure its learning environment, resources and technologies deliver an effective student learning experience? | Context-dependent so likely to require evaluation in SIA | SEAP<br><br>Monitoring and evaluation activity, including but not limited to, institution-led quality review / institution-led quality activity<br><br>Institution's analysis of stakeholder feedback (eg students, alumni, employers, schools, | Engagements with:<br><br>• staff<br>• students |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | external verifiers/examiners and accrediting bodies)<br><br>Improvement plan or equivalent as a result of engagement with the Jisc digital elevation tool or digital maturity model based on institution self-evaluation | |
| ELT 8 | How is the institution's teaching and student-facing staff supported in their professional development? | N/A - should be contained within Advance Information Set | Policies for professional development and review of staff<br><br>Percentage of staff with a recognised teaching qualification<br><br>General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) registration status, where applicable<br><br>Percentage of staff with HEA Fellowship<br><br>Analysis of staff promotions based on teaching<br><br>Policies relating to staff promotion<br><br>Institution's analysis of staff feedback | Engagements with:<br><br>• senior leadership<br>• staff |
| ELT 9 | How has the institution's approach to peer review and evaluation enhanced learning, teaching and assessment across the institution? | N/A - should be contained within Advance Information Set | SEAP<br><br>Monitoring and evaluation activity, including but not limited to institution-led quality review / institution-led quality activity<br><br>Overview of any peer review and/or team-teaching approaches and evidence of its impact | Engagements with:<br><br>• senior leadership<br>• staff |
| ELT 10 | How is the institution enabling innovation in learning, teaching and assessment? | Context-dependent so likely to require evaluation in SIA | SEAP<br><br>Monitoring and evaluation activity, including but not limited to, institution-led quality review/institution-led quality activity<br><br>Enhancement activity-related case studies | Engagements with:<br><br>• staff<br>• students |

## Supporting student success




| TQEF principle: How effective are the institution's arrangements for supporting student success? |
|---|
| **Quality Code sector-agreed principles:**<br><br>Principle 3: Resourcing delivery of a high-quality learning experience<br>Principle 4: Using data to inform and evaluate quality<br>Principle 5: Monitoring, evaluating and enhancing provision<br>Principle 7: Designing, developing, approving and modifying programmes<br>Principle 8: Operating partnerships with other organisations<br>Principle 9: Recruiting, selecting and admitting students<br>Principle 10: Supporting students to achieve their potential<br>Principle 12: Operating concerns, complaints and appeals processes |

| Questions the review team will consider | | | Where and how the review team will seek answers | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Question code** | **Question text** | **Strategic Impact Analysis (SIA)** | **Advance Information Set** (indicative sources - full details are contained in Annex E: Advance Information Set) | **Review visits** (indicative engagements) |
| SSS 1 | How well do the design and availability of support arrangements enable student success by addressing challenges of wellbeing, inclusion, equality and student support? | N/A - should be contained within Advance Information Set | SEAP<br><br>Institution's analysis of student outcomes data including trends<br><br>Evidence and analysis from other sources (eg SFC, SCQF, QAA) | Engagements with:<br><br>• senior leadership<br>• staff<br>• students |

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|---|---|---|---|---|
| SSS 2 | How effective is the institution in ensuring that it addresses the specific support that its students need for its context and community? | Context-dependent so likely to require evaluation in SIA | Institution dependent but could include analysis of student engagement data - for example, virtual learning environment use, data/equitable uptake of resources | Engagements with:<br>• senior leadership<br>• staff<br>• students<br>• employers<br>• partner institutions<br>• other external stakeholders |
| SSS 3 | How well does the institution support students through the full student lifecycle and, particularly, in making effective and successful transitions through each stage? | N/A - should be contained within Advance Information Set | Analysis of student recruitment data including any related trend analysis<br>Recognition of Prior Learning policy.<br>Institution's analysis of student transitions data including trends (eg recruitment, retention, progression and leaver destination data)<br>Personal tutor/academic mentor/course tutor approaches and evidence of impact of these<br>Evaluation of support for students on placement or exchange | Engagements with:<br>• senior leadership<br>• staff<br>• students |
| SSS 4 | How effective is the institution's support for employability, skills development and lifelong learning (including upskilling and reskilling short courses and careers information advice and guidance)? | Advance Information Set may need to be supplemented by further evaluation in SIA | Institution's analysis of the impact on student destinations, including employability, from:<br>• curriculum planning with industry engagement<br>• regional analysis-informed curriculum design<br>• learner skills and attributes development<br>• strategy for micro-credentials and other awards designed to support employability | Engagements with:<br>• staff<br>• students<br>• employers<br>• other external stakeholders |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SSS 5 | How well does the institution provide an individualised learning experience? | Context-dependent so likely to require evaluation in SIA | Policies relating to the provision of student support, including for those with additional support needs (eg Personal Learning Support Plans)<br><br>Impact of approaches to individualised student support<br><br>Policies and procedures relating to safeguarding | Engagements with:<br><br>• staff<br>• students<br>• employers |
| SSS 6 | How effective is the institution's response to concerns? | N/A - should be contained within Advance Information Set | Analysis of complaints, appeals and disciplinaries, including any themes and learning | Engagements with:<br><br>• staff<br>• students<br>• senior leadership<br>• partner institutions |

## Student engagement and partnership




| TQEF principle: How effective is the institution in student engagement and partnership? | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Quality Code sector-agreed principles:**<br>Principle 2: Engaging students as partners<br>Principle 4: Using data to inform and evaluate quality<br>Principle 5: Monitoring, evaluating and enhancing provision | | | | |
| **Questions the review team will consider** | | | **Where and how the review team will seek answers** | |
| **Question code** | **Question text** | **Strategic Impact Analysis (SIA)** | **Advance Information Set** (indicative sources - full details are contained in Annex E: Advance Information Set) | **Review visits** (indicative engagements) |
| SEP 1 | How effective is the institution in embedding a culture of student partnership in which students are central to shaping the quality of learning? | N/A - should be contained within Advance Information Set | Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) / student engagement policy or equivalent and any resulting action plans<br>Evaluation of the effectiveness and/or impact of the SPA and student engagement activity<br>Evidence of the use of the Student Learning Experience (SLE) model and Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership | Engagements with:<br>• Principal<br>• students<br>• senior leadership<br>• staff |
| SEP 2 | How are students effectively involved in review and enhancement activity and what has been the impact of student involvement? | Context-dependent so likely to require evaluation in SIA | Monitoring and evaluation activity, including but not limited to institution-led quality review/institution-led quality activity | Engagements with:<br>• students<br>• senior leadership<br>• staff |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SEP 3 | How is student partnership strategically planned, resourced, evaluated and enhanced at all levels of the institution? | N/A - should be contained within Advance Information Set | Academic committee or governance structure and terms of reference<br><br>Sample of minutes, or equivalent, from academic committees/groups<br><br>Annual report reflecting on effectiveness of student partnership and engagement<br><br>Institution's analysis of student feedback and any associated action plans<br><br>Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) / student / engagement policy or equivalent | Engagements with:<br><br>• Principal<br>• students<br>• senior leadership<br>• staff |
| SEP 4 | What is the model for supporting student representation and how effective is it? | Context-dependent so likely to require evaluation in SIA | Evidence relating to use of the Student Learning Experience (SLE) model and Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership<br><br>Organogram of student representative structure<br><br>Academic committee or governance structure and terms of reference | Engagements with:<br><br>• Principal<br>• students<br>• senior leadership<br>• staff |
| SEP 5 | How does the institution act on feedback and communicate effectively the decisions and any action it has (or has not) taken as a result? | N/A - should be contained within Advance Information Set | Sample of minutes, outcomes, or other record, from student-staff liaison meetings (or equivalent)<br><br>Institution's analysis of student feedback and any associated action plans<br><br>Evidence relating to use of the Student Learning Experience (SLE) model and Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership<br><br>Any other analysis of the effectiveness of the institution's communication with students | Engagements with:<br><br>• students<br>• senior leadership<br>• staff |
| SEP 6 | In what ways does the institution ensure that diverse student voices can influence change and that mechanisms for engagement enable all those who wish to contribute can do so? | Context-dependent so likely to require evaluation in SIA | Evidence relating to use of the Student Learning Experience (SLE) model and Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership<br><br>Annual report reflecting on effectiveness of student partnership and engagement | Engagements with:<br><br>• students<br>• senior leadership<br>• staff |

## Enhancement and quality culture




| **TQEF principle: How effective is the institution in embedding an enhancement and quality culture across the institution?** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Quality Code sector-agreed principles:**<br><br>Principle 1: Taking a strategic approach to managing quality and standards<br>Principle 4: Using data to inform and evaluate quality<br>Principle 5: Monitoring, evaluating and enhancing provision<br>Principle 6: Engaging in external review and accreditation<br>Principle 8: Operating partnerships with other organisations | | | | |
| **Questions the review team will consider** | | **Where and how the review team will seek answers** | | |
| **Question code** | **Question text** | **Strategic Impact Analysis (SIA)** | **Advance Information Set** (indicative sources - full details are contained in Annex E: Advance Information Set) | **Review visits** (indicative engagements) |
| EQC 1 | How effectively is an institution-wide culture of assurance, improvement and enhancement embedded throughout the institution?<br><br>How is this culture making a positive impact on the student learning experience?<br><br>How well is this culture enabled by the leadership and governance arrangements? | N/A - should be contained within Advance Information Set | SEAP<br><br>Organogram, academic committee or governance structure, terms of reference and minutes, or equivalent evidence, from key committees/groups<br><br>Monitoring and evaluation activity including, but not limited to institution-led quality review / institution-led quality activity and institution-level analysis of themes and impact of actions | Engagements with:<br><br>• Principal<br>• senior leadership<br>• staff<br>• students<br>• partners and other external stakeholders such as employers |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| EQC 2 | What is the institution learning from institution-led quality review activity and action planning, and how effectively is this used in the enhancement of the student learning experience (and maintaining academic standards)? | N/A - should be contained within Advance Information Set | SEAP<br><br>Monitoring and evaluation activity including, but not limited to institution-led quality review / institution-led quality activity and institution-level analysis of themes and impact of actions<br><br>Minutes or equivalent evidence from key committees/groups responsible for the oversight of quality, standards and enhancement | Engagements with:<br><br>• senior leadership<br>• staff<br>• students<br>• partners<br>• employers |
| EQC 3 | What impact has the institution's engagement with external institutional peer review had and what opportunities are there to develop further? | Context-dependent so likely to require evaluation in SIA | SEAP<br><br>Follow-up and/or action plans and updates following any external review activity | Engagements with:<br><br>• Principal<br>• senior leadership<br>• staff<br>• students |
| EQC 4 | How has the institution engaged in sector enhancement activity and how effectively has it used that engagement? | Advance Information Set may need to be supplemented by further evaluation in SIA | Institution's evaluation of the impact of its engagement in sector enhancement activity (STEP) | Engagements with:<br><br>• Principal<br>• senior leadership<br>• staff<br>• students |
| EQC 5 | What impact have collaborations had on enhancement and the development of a quality culture? | Advance Information Set may need to be supplemented by further evaluation in SIA | Institution's evaluation of the impact of its collaborations | Engagements with:<br><br>• Principal<br>• partners<br>• senior leadership<br>• staff |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| EQC 6 | How has the institution's external outlook driven innovations and enabled quality improvement? | Context-dependent so likely to require evaluation in SIA | Institution-dependent - this could include:<br>• approaches to sustainability<br>• response to UN Sustainable Development Goals<br>• cross-cutting quality enhancement themes<br>• impact of local, regional, national and/or international initiatives | Engagements with:<br>• Principal<br>• senior leadership<br>• staff<br>• students<br>• other external stakeholders |

## Managing consistency across the TQER method and cycle

65 As part of its role in managing the overall system of reviews, QAA will ensure consistency of method through:

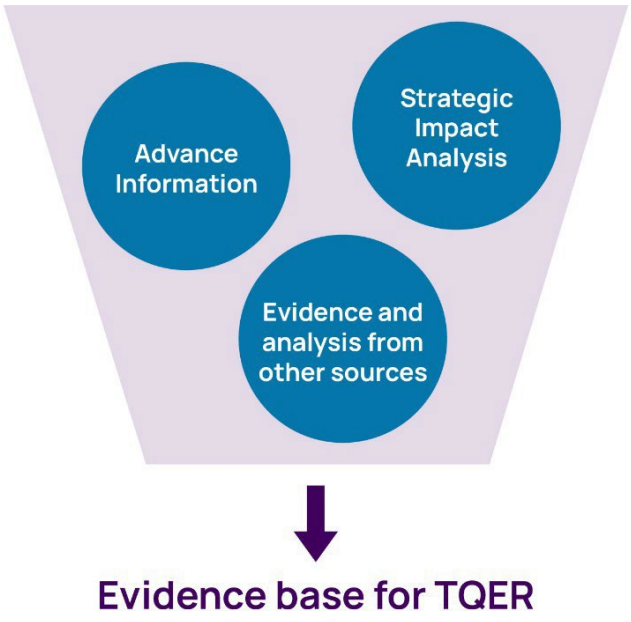
- the recruitment of reviewers with significant experience and expertise, who are supported through training
- ensuring review teams make judgements according to decision-making frameworks including the judgement criteria in **Annex J: Judgement criteria** and external reference points (see 'External reference points for TQER' - paragraphs 35-43)
- QAA Review Manager responsibility for the consistency and integrity of the review process by ensuring review teams follow the review process, by testing the evidence base for review outcomes with the review team, by providing advice on norms and precedents and by editing and finalisation of the report (see 'QAA Review Manager' - paragraphs 85-87)
- QAA Review Manager responsibility for ensuring that the wording of any recommendations or features of good practice identified by the review team are specific and precise and are consistent with the aims and parameters of the method
- institutions having the opportunity to provide comment on factual accuracy of the report
- internal moderation processes to ensure judgements and outcomes are consistent across all reviews
- evidence-based reports whereby report context is supported by evidence and triangulation.

66 The first cycle of TQER will provide a robust, accurate and fair judgement that is also intended to support the enhancement-led approach and accordingly inform subsequent cycles of the method.

## The evidence base for TQER

67 Documentation needed to support Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) is made up of the following components:

- a **Strategic Impact Analysis** prepared by the institution
- an **Advance Information Set** to support the Strategic Impact Analysis and provide assurance that the institution's approach to managing academic standards, enhancing the quality of the learning experience and enabling student success is effective; the Advance Information Set should consist of existing documentation, and it is expected that documentation used for the Advance Information Set will also fulfil SFC's documentary requirements for an institution's Self-Evaluation and Action Plan.
- **evidence and analysis from other sources:**
  - i information that the Scottish Funding Council provides the review team, including analysis of data that is relevant to the institution's context at the time of the review
  - ii desk-based analysis produced by the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership, where applicable (where institutions exercise their authority to be credit rating bodies to credit rate provision as outlined in **Annex T: SCQF duty for quality assurance of credit rating activity**)
  - iii where applicable, information pertaining to a Scottish Quality Concerns Scheme (see **Annex O: Scottish Quality Concerns Scheme concerns incorporated within TQER**)
  - iv QAA reports from institution partner reviews (see table in section 'What may additionally be considered as part of TQER').




68 Documents submitted by the institution are required by the review team 10 weeks before the Initial Review Visit (see **Annex H: Review timeline**). Submission is by way of an upload to

a secure review site. The evidence base will help review teams form lines of enquiry for the review visits and gives the review team direct access to information about the institution's key processes for securing academic standards and assuring quality. Having this information at this stage allows more time during the review visits for discussions relating to quality enhancement.

## Strategic Impact Analysis

69 The Strategic Impact Analysis (SIA) is a key document and reference point produced by the institution for TQER. This is used by an institution as a self-evaluation against the principles of the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) (see 'The TQEF principles and their role in TQER' - paragraphs 23-35). The SIA complements the Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP) and is intended to support institutions in reflecting on their effectiveness, specifically against the principles of the TQEF, on which TQER is based. An institution's SEAP, from the time of the last external review, is part of the Advance Information Set and gives an overview of priorities and progress over time. It is anticipated that this will be referred to in the SIA to reduce duplication.

70 In keeping with the ethos of student partnership, there is an expectation that students, through the Lead Student Representative, will be fully involved as key partners in the preparation of the SIA. Furthermore, it should be clearly signed off by the Accountable Officer and the Lead Student Representative, reflecting co-ownership.

71 The SIA should be viewed as the overarching periodic commentary on an institution's journey since the last external review, outlining its current context, trends over this timeframe, challenges, opportunities and successes to support the upcoming review, while the SEAP is an update provided on an annual basis. Cross-referencing the SIA to SEAPs completed up until the point of external review is expected to provide examples and reduce duplication.

72 Using the principles of the TQEF, institutions are asked to address the six key areas of the Framework with an emphasis on evaluation and evidence of impact (rather than description of process). (See **Annex D: Guidance on the structure and content of the Strategic Impact Analysis** for detailed guidance.)

## Advance Information Set

73 While the SIA is prepared specifically for the review by the institution, the evidence used to support the review should be existing or live documentation (referenced within the SIA by hyperlink to external webpages or internal sharing sites (where access is provided to review teams) or included as part of the Advance Information Set). It is expected that documentation used for the Advance Information Set will also fulfil SFC's documentary requirements for an institution's Self-Evaluation Action Plan. All evidence should be accessible to the review team throughout the review process – from the submission of the SIA and evidence base through to the final stages in the report production. A list of the Advance Information Set required is outlined in **Annex E: Advance Information Set**.

## Evidence and analysis from other sources

74 The evidence and analysis from SFC and desk-based analysis from SCQF provided to QAA will be given to the institution at least eight weeks before the Initial Review Visit.

# Key roles in TQER

75 The key roles in the review are the Lead Student Representative, the Institution Quality Contact, the review team and the QAA Review Manager. The student body and staff of the institution are also important contributors through the preparation for the review, during the review visits themselves and in follow-up activity. Throughout the review, the QAA Review Manager will be the key contact for the institution and is available for advice and guidance as appropriate. Communication from the QAA Review Manager will be made jointly to the Lead Student Representative and the Institution Quality Contact.

76 Where circumstances mean that any participants become unavailable to participate in the review, the QAA Review Manager will liaise with the institution to determine an appropriate solution.

## Students

77 Student engagement in the review should help the review team to understand what it is like to be a student at the institution under review and how student partnership in decision-making, quality assurance and quality enhancement processes enhance the student learning experience at the institution. Student engagement and partnership is a key component of the quality enhancement approach in Scotland and the effectiveness of student engagement is a significant focus of the review method.

78 Student engagement and partnership is central to the TQER approach. The student learning experience is at the centre of the review process and the student contribution takes a number of forms:

- student meetings which form the basis of the Initial Review Visit and will help shape the lines of enquiry for the Main Review Visit
- source of evidence and co-author in the institution's Self-Evaluation and Action Plans (SEAPs)
- source of evidence and co-author in the institution's Strategic Impact Analysis (SIA) for the review
- formal meetings with the review team across a range of areas
- student reviewers are full and equal members of the review team.

## Lead Student Representative

79 Working in partnership with the institution and Institution Quality Contact, the Lead Student Representative (LSR) is the point of contact between the QAA Review Manager/the review team and students studying at the institution under review. The LSR will work in partnership with the Institution Quality Contact throughout the review process as outlined below.

80 The institution should work in partnership with the Students' Association[3] to identify an LSR. The person selected could be the elected sabbatical officer with responsibility for learning

[3] Scottish Government legislation uses the term 'Students' Association', so the same terminology has been adopted in this Guide. It should be taken to encompass alternative terms that are used for institutions' student representative bodies, including but not limited to Students' Union, Guild and Students' Representative Council (SRC).

and teaching or might be another elected officer from a students' association. In instances where an elected student representative is not available, the institution, working in partnership with the Students' Association, should seek a volunteer from the broader student body. It is possible for two student representatives to share the LSR role and, in such an instance, institutions should share with the QAA Review Manager their proposed arrangements for managing this effectively. If it is not possible for the institution working in partnership with the Students' Association to identify an LSR, the review team will still expect to meet students and student representatives at each key stage of the review process.

81 Institutions, together with the Students' Association, will have a key role in supporting student engagement in the review. It is expected that institutions support the LSR by helping them to understand the significance of their role and how the student contribution adds value to the review process. Institutions are expected to provide appropriate, administrative, operational and logistical support to the LSR and, in particular, in the interests of transparency to share relevant information or data to ensure that the student contribution is well-informed and evidence-based. It is recognised that it may not be possible to keep the same LSR for the duration of the whole review process. In such cases, the institution should work with the Students' Association to ensure effective handover between LSRs and ensure that the QAA Review Manager is kept informed of any changes. When Students' Associations involve their staff in the review process to support the LSR, they can also provide continuity between, and handover to, new LSRs. It is also recognised that the level of engagement a LSR will have with TQER will vary from institution to institution depending on the nature and size of the institution and of the student body. QAA will be supportive of this and provide training, advice and guidance to support the LSR.

82 Lead Student Representatives, with the support of the Institution Quality Contact, will typically:

- receive copies of key correspondence from QAA
- contribute to the preparation of the Strategic Impact Analysis (SIA)
- liaise with the Institution Quality Contact to ensure smooth communication between the student body and the institution
- attend review visit meetings/groups where appropriate, including meeting with the QAA Review Manager alongside the Institution Quality Contact
- support the institution to disseminate information about the review to the student body
- work with the QAA Review Manager and institution to select students to meet the review team
- meet with and advise the review team during the visits on request
- attend the final clarifications meeting with key staff
- coordinate any comments on factual accuracy from the student body on the draft review report
- complete an evaluation questionnaire on the review experience
- work with the institution in developing an action plan as a result of the review and its findings, and coordinate the students' input into the action plan.

83 Training, advice and guidance for LSRs will be provided ahead of the review, which will include advice on the TQER process and the national context in which it takes place.

## Institution Quality Contact

84 Institutions are invited to confirm a single member of staff (the Institution Quality Contact) to facilitate the review by liaising closely with the QAA Review Manager to ensure the organisation and smooth running of the review process. This is likely to be the institution's Head of Quality or equivalent.

## QAA Review Manager

85 Review teams will be supported by a QAA Review Manager, who will also be the key liaison point for the institution during the review. In accordance with international standards, judgements are the responsibility of peer reviewers, while the management of a review is the responsibility of QAA Review Managers.

- QAA Review Managers are the custodians of the consistency and integrity of the process, testing the evidence base for review outcomes with the review team, providing advice on norms and precedents, and editing and finalising the report.
- QAA Review Managers have responsibility for ensuring that the review team reaches a consensus and that the review team's judgements are aligned with the judgement criteria for the method and are consistent with the evidence available to it.
- QAA Review Managers are responsible for ensuring that the wording of any recommendations or features of good practice identified by the review team are appropriately specific and precise, and are consistent with the aims and parameters of the method.
- QAA Review Managers conduct the review in a transparent manner, facilitating constructive dialogue and communication.
- QAA Review Managers manage the work of the review team through planning and coordinating the review and taking notes of meetings.

86 In addition, the QAA Review Manager will also challenge and support the review team around points of disagreement - for example, around lines of enquiry, or any other aspect of the review as appropriate.

87 The QAA Review Manager will also advise, intervene and support in any instances where a reviewer is not performing their duties effectively or where circumstances mean that they do not have the capacity to do so.

## Review team

88 TQER is carried out by teams of peer reviewers, who are staff with senior-level expertise in the provision, management and delivery of education in the tertiary sector; and students with experience in representing students' interests. The precise composition of the review team is flexible (see **Annex G: Review team size and composition**), but teams will comprise a minimum of four and maximum of six reviewers, and should address the nature of the institution and the scope of the review, in line with the outcomes from the scoping meeting (see 'Key stages in the TQER method' - paragraphs 96-98 and **Annex B: Scoping meeting**) and

discussion with the institution. Review teams will be tertiary in their make-up, comprising team members with experience drawn from those with both college and university sector experience. For each review, it is expected that the majority of the team will be drawn from reviewers with current experience of the type of institution under review.

89 There are three categories of reviewer:

**Reviewer:** A staff member from another institution who has current or recent senior-level expertise, and experience in the management and/or delivery of further and/or higher education provision.

**Student reviewer:** A reviewer drawn from recent students or sabbatical officers who have experience of contributing, as a representative of student interests, to the management of academic standards and quality.

**Specialist reviewer:** A staff or student reviewer selected from appropriate education institutions, related agencies, employers or industry, from the UK and beyond, or as an additional student reviewer from the UK or another country.

90 The type of specialist reviewers and specialist student reviewers may be identified by the institution at the scoping meeting with QAA eight months prior to the Main Review Visit. However, a review team will not have more than two student reviewers.

91 More information on the three categories of reviewer can be found in **Annex G: Review team size and composition**. Information about reviewer nomination, appointment and training can be found in **Annex F: Reviewer nomination, appointment and training**.

# Key stages in the TQER method

92 Full details and timings for TQER activity can be found in **Annex H: Review timeline**. For ease of reference, after each stage of review outlined below, action tables are provided that illustrate what an institution must do.




## Pre-review preparation and activity

### Sector preparation events

93 Sector preparation events will take place to support key staff and students who will be involved in the planning for review within an institution. These may take place as a webinar or in person and are anticipated to take place twice a year. Institutions will be invited to attend the event that is most appropriate to the timing of their review.

### Institution preparation activity

94 Institutions will be preparing for their review in the period leading up to the review visits. The activity in that period will include:

- liaising with their QAA Review Manager, which will include a meeting to discuss the scope of the review
- development of their Strategic Impact Analysis in partnership with the student body
- consideration of the supporting Advance Information Set.

95 Approximately 10 months prior to the Main Review Visit, a QAA Review Manager will be appointed. The QAA Review Manager will contact the institution to arrange a scoping meeting and indicative weeks for the review will be proposed for discussion at the scoping meeting. The institution will be asked to submit certain information ahead of the scoping meeting to help inform the agenda. This will include, among other information, the types of provision that falls within scope, student numbers and partnerships.

### Scoping and review specification meeting

96 Approximately eight months prior to the Main Review Visit, a QAA Review Manager will hold the scoping meeting with the institution (see **Annex B: Scoping meeting**). This will normally take place between a QAA Review Manager and the institution's key contacts for learning and teaching, and quality management, including the Institution Quality Contact and the Lead Student Representative. The scoping meeting presents the opportunity to explore the scope of the review and, in particular, any arrangements to support tailoring the review to the institution's context.

97 The agenda will include:

- roles in TQER
- key information
- mission, aims and strategy including
  - key challenges
  - identified strengths
  - areas of focus for enhancement
  - key industries, stakeholders and employers
- scope of the review
- degree awarding powers and/or credit rating authority
- student engagement in TQER
- proposed dates of key review milestones, including:
  - dates and format of Initial Review Visit
  - dates and format of Main Review Visit
  - dates for Key Outcomes letter, review of draft report for factual accuracy and publication of final report
  - dates for institution's response to report
- size and profile of the review team to best-meet mission, student profile and strategic priorities
- submission of any evidence in addition to the SIA.

98 Discussion at the scoping meeting will inform the review specification which will be issued to the institution within four weeks of the scoping meeting. Proposed members of the review team will be notified to the institution within a further four weeks, enabling any conflicts of interest to be identified by the institution. Where reviewer availability causes an unavoidable delay to the proposal of the review team, QAA Review Managers will notify the institution.

### Submission of Strategic Impact Analysis and Advance Information Set

99 Institutions will complete the work on their Strategic Impact Analysis and upload it with the Advance Information Set at least 10 weeks prior to the Initial Review Visit. The review team will begin their evaluation of the evidence base.

# Pre-review preparation and activity

| TOER action | When | Institution action |
|---|---|---|
| Review manager (RM) confirmed TOER dates proposed | **c 10 months before review** | Confirm institution quality contact<br>Work with RM to find dates |
| Sector preparation events<br>RM ongoing liaison | **In review year** | Attend sector preparation events<br>Ongoing liaison |
| Scoping Meeting with RM | **c 8months before review** | Consider and identify expertise in review team and areas for review focus of benefit to institution |
| RM sends Review Specification (includes key dates for review visits and evidence submission) | **4 weeks after Scoping Meeting** | Receive and continue preparation of Strategic Impact Analysis and Advance Information |
| Review team proposed by RM | **4 weeks after Review Spec issued** | Notify RM of any conflict of interest |
| Strategic Impact Analysis (SIA) and Advance Information submission date | **10 weeks prior to Initial Review Visit** | Submit SIA and Advance Information |
| SCOF submits desk-based analysis (where required) and OAA shares that and SFC evidence and analysis with the institution for information | **8 weeks prior to Initial Review Visit** | No action required |
| Review team begins evaluation | **8 weeks prior to Initial Review Visit** | No action required |

## Initial Review Visit

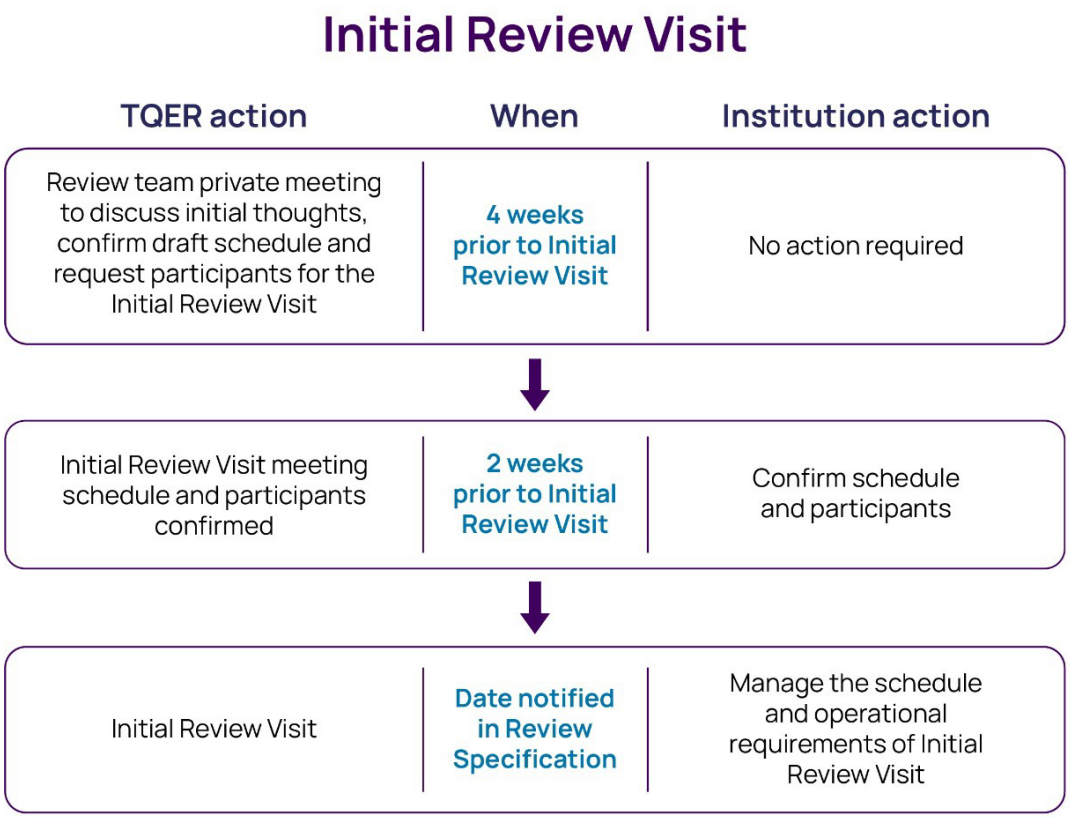
100 TQER puts students at the forefront of the method. The intention of the Initial Review Visit is to ensure the breadth of student voice is equal to the leadership voice in influencing the direction of the review.

101 The purpose of the Initial Review Visit is to:

- enable the breadth of the student voice to influence lines of enquiry
- support student partnership
- to meet with executive and senior quality leadership to discuss the approach to quality management.

102 The review team will want to meet with *up to* four student groups, depending on the context, size and complexity of the provision, to hear about the student learning experience across the institution's range of study. Student views will be used to inform potential lines of enquiry in the Main Review Visit and identify any additional documentation that may help the review team. The Student Learning Experience model and Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership and its associated features and indicators will be key external reference points that guide the review team's approach and conversations.

103 The Initial Review Visit involves the whole review team and the QAA Review Manager and is anticipated to take place over approximately one and a half days. It could be hybrid, online or on-campus, and the format will be agreed with the institution at the scoping meeting. The review team meet to discuss their initial thoughts and draw up a schedule and propose participants informed by their analysis of the documentation they have received. The QAA Review Manager will confirm these with the institution four weeks before the Initial Review Visit to enable the institution to identify attendees that meet the review team's criteria.




## Main Review Visit

104 Within one week of the Initial Review Visit, the QAA Review Manager will provide information on any additional document requests, the indicative schedule and participants for the Main Review Visit. Three weeks after the Initial Review Visit, the institution submits any additional documentation and at four weeks the QAA Review Manager will confirm the schedule and participants and indicate the key lines of enquiry that the review team intends to explore. Full details and timings for TQER activity can be found at **Annex H: Review timeline**.

105 The Main Review Visit will last between two and five days, depending on the size and complexity of the provision. The arrangements for the Main Review Visit will be agreed as part of the scoping meeting and included within the review specification.

106 During the Main Review Visit, the review team will continue to consider documentary evidence. The Main Review Visit provides an important opportunity for the review team to engage with a range of stakeholders, both at and working with the institution including a variety of staff and students, and external verifiers/examiners, partners and employers/representatives from industry, placement institutions and other workplace-based stakeholders. While many of the interactions will take the form of more traditional meetings, depending on the key strengths and areas for development identified by the institution in the SIA, or the review team's lines of enquiry, the review team may elect to make use of other types of engagement, for example:

- visits to other parts of the campus or other sites of delivery/learning
- access to the virtual learning environment

- workshops or focus group discussions, which may be general in scope, either with a particular group of stakeholders (for example, staff) or mixed, or could follow a particular line of enquiry
- environmental scanning/learning walks - this allows the review team, as a whole, or in smaller groups, to learn about the institution's context, delivery and student support in situ
- walkthroughs - the purposes of these are to: support the review team's understanding of the environment and culture of the institution, and the extent to which it supports learning and the student learning experience; understand how student and staff engage with the learning environment; and to continue to access the student voice
- demonstrations of innovative activity.

107 There will be leeway in the Main Review Visit schedule where a review team may elect to use the time to undertake any of these types of engagements. The QAA Review Manager will work with the institution to manage these types of engagements. If used, these will be discussed with the institution on the allocated day(s) of the Main Review Visit (see **Annex I: Indicative schedules**).

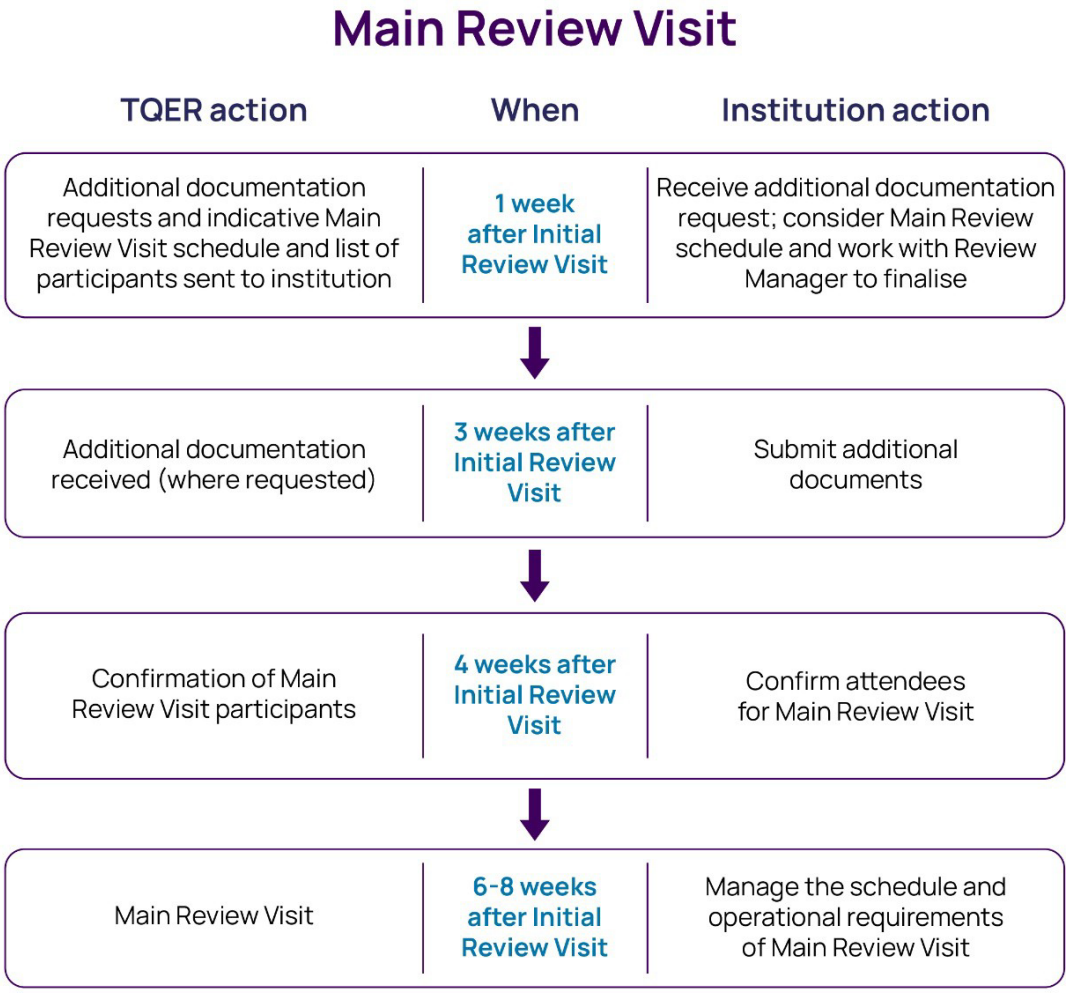
108 The Main Review Visit will be informed by the review specification, and any matters raised through the evidence base, or matters arising from the Initial Review Visit. As such, the Main Review Visit will vary across institutions. Some elements will be common, however, including:

- regular contact with the key contacts to support clarifications
- meetings with staff, students and stakeholders
- a final clarification meeting between the review team, senior staff of the institution and the key contacts (including the Lead Student Representative) at which the review team can seek clarifications if required and set out next steps; this meeting will enable the review team to seek clarity on any areas still outstanding, whether potential good practice, a potential recommendation, or issues not sufficiently understood.

109 After the final clarifications meeting, the review team will hold a private outcomes meeting with the QAA Review Manager to consider:

- preliminary judgements
- outline commentary on each section of the report
- any examples of good practice
- any recommendations requiring action by the institution.

110 These outcomes will be shared with the institution in the Key Outcomes letter following internal moderation and agreement of the outcomes with the QAA Review Manager and TQER team to ensure consistency across reviews.

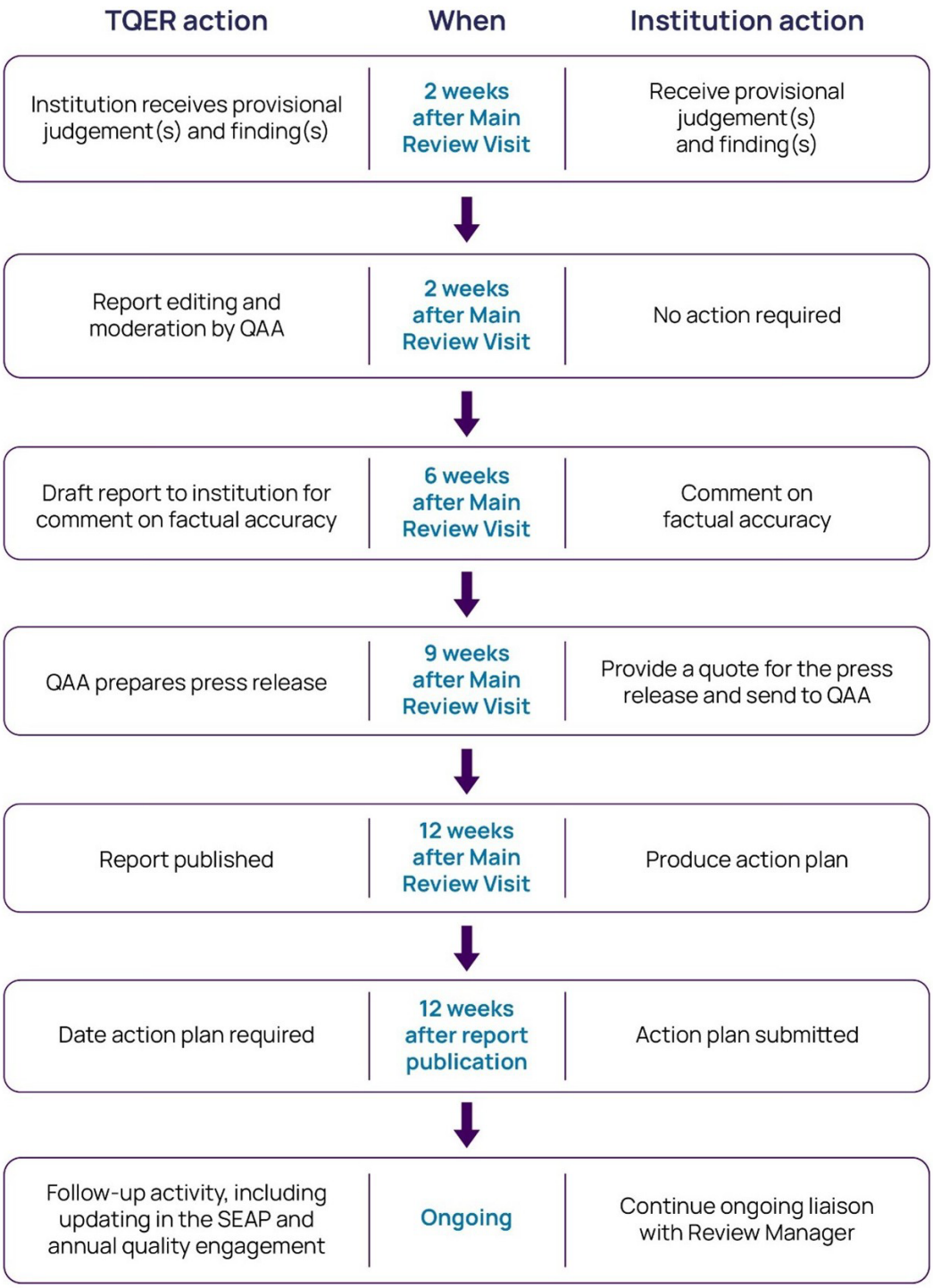



## Key Outcomes letter and report

111 Two weeks after the last day of the Main Review visit, the QAA Review Manager provides a letter outlining the key outcomes of the review. Six weeks after the last day of the Main Review Visit, the QAA Review Manager shares the draft review report with the key contacts at the institution and offers a three-week period in which any factual inaccuracies may be identified. In line with the ethos of student partnership, a single, agreed response from the institution and its student body should be returned to QAA. For further details on reporting see 'TQER report' (paragraphs 126-131).

112 QAA, as coordinator of the review process, will consider the institution's response to the factual accuracy check, liaising with the review team as appropriate. The report will be published three weeks later - 12 weeks after the Main Review Visit - and follow-up activity will take place as outlined in paragraphs 132-141, 'Follow-up activity'. The final report will be shared with SFC and the institution in advance of publication.

# Key Outcomes letter and report



# TQER outcomes

## Overview

113 Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) provides a set of outcomes for individual institutions and Scottish tertiary education sector stakeholders, that includes:

- a **clear judgement** on whether the institution has effective arrangements in managing academic standards, enhancing the quality of the learning experience and enabling student success
- **findings - recommendations and good practice** for each institution on its approach to managing academic standards and enhancing the quality of the learning experience and enabling student success
- **an action plan** subsequently developed by the institution outlining how the institution will make progress on review outcomes.




Judgements, recommendations, good practice and a credible action plan combine to confirm whether there can be public confidence in the institution's qualifications and in the quality of the learning experience it provides for its students.

114 Together with review reports from other institutions, the published review report and action plan contribute to a sector-wide information set on which a programme of development and enhancement activity for all colleges and universities is based.

115 Review judgements are based on evidence and reviewers' expert judgement, supported by the sample of information available to the review team at the time of the review.

Review teams make decisions based on:

- reading and considering the institution's SIA and evidence base, evidence and analysis from other sources (see paragraph 68), student feedback, and any other related approved material/references (as outlined in 'The evidence base for TQER')
- discussion with staff, students and other stakeholders in meetings and focus groups during the review visits
- testing self-evaluation against the evidence
- analysing and reflecting on those documents and activities.

## TQER judgement

116 The review team will make a judgement on whether the institution meets sector expectations in managing academic standards, enhancing the quality of the learning experience it provides and enabling student success, currently, and has the quality assurance and enhancements arrangements in place to enable this into the future.

**Judgements will be expressed as one of the following:**

- The institution is **effective** in managing academic standards, enhancing the quality of the learning experience and enabling student success.
- The institution is **partially effective** in managing academic standards, enhancing the quality of the learning experience and enabling student success. The institution is effective in respect of [list from principles below] but partially effective in respect of [list from the principles below].
- The institution is **not effective** in managing academic standards, enhancing the quality of the learning experience and enabling student success**.**

117 The judgement is formulated based on four of the six principles of the TQEF with the remaining two (data and evidence, and externality) incorporated within the four principles below.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment** | The institution has appropriate and systematically applied practices in line with sector expectations for achieving excellence in learning, teaching and assessment, including assuring and maintaining academic standards. The institution's practices make effective and accurate use of data, evidence and externality to demonstrate impact and are effective in achieving excellence in learning, teaching and assessment. |
| **Supporting student success** | The institution has appropriate and systematically applied practices in line with sector expectations for supporting student success that uses data, evidence and externality, demonstrate impact and are effective in supporting student success. |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Student engagement and partnership** | The institution's approach to student engagement and partnership is systematic and strategic. The institution ensures the quality of the student learning experience is continuously improved based on the voice of students in line with sector expectations. The institution works in partnership with students to use data, evidence and externality to develop, implement and evaluate the student learning experience. |
| **Enhancement and quality culture** | The institution has clearly identified strategic leadership and governance of the approach to quality assurance and enhancement with the capacity and commitment to identify and address situations that have the potential to pose risk to academic standards, the quality of the learning experience and enabling student success. The institution accurately manages data. The institution's strategic approach uses data, evidence and externality in line with sector expectations and promotes an embedded enhancement quality culture for developing, implementing and evaluating strategies. The institution has made timely and effective progress in formulating, implementing and reviewing actions in response to the findings of last external review. |

118 The judgement criteria are outlined in **Annex J: Judgement criteria**. The ESG Part 1 and the agreed baseline regulatory requirements form the key reference points for the review, reflecting expectations of the European Higher Education Area and thus help ensure review outcomes are recognised across and beyond the UK (see 'External reference points for TQER' - paragraphs 35-43).

119 Judgements and key findings are shared with SFC when the Key Outcomes letter is sent to the institution.

120 'Effective' is a positive judgement whereby all, or nearly all, applicable requirements and/or standards have been met. Requirements which have not been met, do not - individually or collectively - present any serious risks to the management of standards, enhancement of quality or enabling student success. The judgement may be accompanied by a number of recommendations and good practice. With a positive judgement, the institution will normally be required to undergo an external review in the next seven years. The judgement will apply until the next external review or for a maximum period of nine years (to allow for flexibility in the schedule for future cycles), whichever is sooner.

121 A judgement of 'partially effective' is aimed at driving enhancement. Most applicable requirements and/or standards have been met. Requirements which have not been met, do not - individually or collectively - present any serious immediate risks to the management of standards, enhancement of quality or enabling student success. This judgement will be accompanied by a number of recommendations and does not preclude identification of areas of good practice. Recommendations may relate to shortcomings in approaches to requirements or to underdevelopment of practices to drive improvement or enhancement.

122 'Not effective' judgements, indicates that several applicable requirements and/or standards have not been met or there are major gaps in one or more of the applicable expectations. Requirements which have not been met present serious risk(s) - individually or collectively - to the management of standards, enhancement of quality or enabling student

success. This judgement will be accompanied by a number of recommendations and does not preclude identification of areas of good practice. Recommendations may relate to ineffective approaches to requirements or to ineffective practices to drive improvement or enhancement.

123 All judgements will require follow-up activity. The level of follow-up activity will depend on the outcome of the review and will occur as outlined in paragraphs 132-141. There may be additional action undertaken by SFC in accordance with its statutory duty.

## TQER findings: Recommendations and good practice

124 Alongside the overarching judgement, the review team will identify features of good practice. Good practice is an example of practice that has impact and benefit in the context of the institution and makes a particularly positive contribution to the learning experience. It may be an innovation that has not yet been evaluated or adopted more widely. Where the good practice identified is an example of practice significantly above sector norms with evidence of impact and benefit to others in the sector, this will be identified in the report.

125 Review teams will make recommendations for action. Recommendations are used when a review team considers the institution should consider changing a practice, policy or process to address a weakness or shortcoming. Recommendations will not be prescriptive about what an institution should do but focus on the matter to be improved. Review teams will make recommendations for action that may indicate the urgency with which the review team thinks the institution should address the matter. For instance, the review team may indicate that an institution addresses a recommendation within three months, or before the start of the next academic year, or before any further students are recruited to a programme of study. Institutions are expected to take note of these deadlines when they construct their action plan after the review. In an enhancement-led approach, recommendations can also cover areas for enhancement as well as improvement.

# TQER report

126 The TQER report will set out the evidence and conclusions of the review in more detail. Reports, which are published on the QAA website, are intended to support the institution in its development following the review. They will also be of interest to quality assurance professionals at other institutions, key agencies within the sector and other external stakeholders so will be written in a way that judgements and findings are clear to a lay audience.

## Structure

127 Review reports will take the following structure:

- contextual information about the institution
- the review judgement and findings, comprising good practice and recommendations (see 'TQER judgement' - paragraphs 116-123; and 'TQER findings' - paragraphs 124-125)
- a statement of the review team's view in relation to each area of the TQEF, reflecting the structure of the SIA, followed by an indication of the main supporting evidence for that view:
  - excellence in learning, teaching and assessment
  - supporting student success
  - student partnership and engagement
  - enhancement and a quality culture

128 Within each of these areas, the review team will also reflect on the effectiveness and impact of the institution's use of data and evidence, and externality.

129 More detail on the structure of the report is set out in **Annex K: TQER report structure**.

130 Thematic analysis of reviews will be undertaken to draw out lessons from a suite of reviews. Common themes identified through this analysis can inform enhancement events and projects for the tertiary sector in Scotland as a whole, together with cross-nation enhancement events and activities. From analysis of the findings of external institution review, a suite of thematic reports will be produced with the aim of promoting the sharing of information, including providing institutions with information that they can use to compare their policy and practice with that across the sector. A reflective overview will be conducted at the end of the cycle and thematic reports on topics identified from TQER. Thematic reports also provide information that supports development and enhancement activity.

## Timescales

131 Six weeks after the last day of the Main Review Visit, a draft report will be sent to the Principal, Institution Quality Contact and Lead Student Representative of the institution who will be invited to comment on factual accuracy. The report will be published on the QAA website 12 weeks after the last day of the Main Review Visit. For further details relating to the overall timeframe of the review activities, including the stages of the report, see **Annex H: Review timeline**.

# Follow-up activity

132 All outcomes from Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) will include follow-up activity. The level of follow-up activity will depend on the outcomes from the review. Routine follow-up is the requirement for all institutions to submit an action plan which will be considered as part of the Institutional Liaison Meetings (ILM) (see 'Institutional Liaison Meetings' - paragraphs 135-137).

133 ILMs will include discussion on the progress against developing and disseminating areas of good practice and actions taken on TQER recommendations. Where there are concerns about the timeliness or effectiveness of actions being undertaken, these will be shared with SFC. SFC may wish to instigate further action where there is unsatisfactory progress on the specific area(s) identified. 'Partial effectiveness' and 'not effective' outcomes will result in a TQER re-review.

**Standard QAA follow-up for all review outcomes**

| | |
|---|---|
| **Action plan and Institutional Liaison Meetings** | • Required for all outcomes (effective, partially effective, not effective) |

**Additional QAA follow-up for partial effectiveness and not effective outcomes**

| | |
|---|---|
| **TQER re-review** | • Required for 'partially effective' judgements (may be desk-based)<br>• Required for 'not effective' judgements<br>• May be supplemented with additional QAA liaison visits |

## Action plan

134 All institutions are required to complete an action plan within a maximum of 12 weeks following the publication of the TQER report. QAA expects the action plan to have been developed with students. The format of the plan should be aligned with the Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP) so that it can be integrated into the SEAP at the point of next submission. Guidance on the format of the action plan can be found in **Annex L: Action plan guidance**.

## Institutional Liaison Meetings (ILMs)

135 ILMs are a component of external quality arrangements and support the 'no surprises' and liaison approach of sharing information. An institution's SEAPs, up until the point of the external peer review, will form an important part of the evidence base for the ILM. ILMs are held with a named QAA liaison officer and a small group of staff and student representatives from the institution. Following the meeting, the notes of the ILM are shared with the institution. The institution is not expected to prepare bespoke material for ILMs. ILMs will be supported by a set of existing material, or information already prepared for other purposes. The approach to ILMs, including the agenda and Advance Information Set needed, is set out in separate guidance.

136 QAA will use ILMs for the oversight of TQER follow-up. This will be done by way of inclusion of the TQER action plan and progress on it forming part of the documentation for discussion at the ILM (see 'The Quality Cycle', paragraphs 26-34). At ILMs, QAA will highlight any matters to be reviewed at the subsequent visit.

137 ILMs will focus on success, progress and good practices. Where concerns arise about the timeliness or effectiveness of actions being undertaken in response to TQER outcomes, QAA will consider whether any escalation is required including potential notification to SFC. SFC will be updated on any delays in completing the action plan and the impact of delays, as well as any rationales or mitigations put in place by the institution and discussed at the ILM. The information provided to SFC will use the notes from the ILM which the institution will have seen and have had an opportunity to comment on factual accuracy. From this information, SFC may wish to instigate further action where there is unsatisfactory progress.

## TQER re-review

138 For 'partially effective' and 'not effective' judgements, a TQER re-review will take place a maximum of two years after the original TQER Main Review Visit. Institutional Liaison Visits may be additionally established during this period. The nature, timing and scope of TQER re-review will be proportionate to the issues identified in the original review and would be discussed with SFC and the institution following the publication of the TQER report. The timings for TQER re-review will be agreed, taking into consideration:

- the actions as outlined in the action plan and the point at which the recommendations will be addressed
- the nature of the review and timings required for preparation
- review logistics.

139 TQER re-review for 'partially effective' judgements may include the following:

- The scope of the re-review may be limited to the recommendations.
- The re-review may be conducted through a desk-based approach, where the nature of the recommendations from the original review support this. The review visits may be replaced by a desk-based evaluation of documentation focused on the recommendations. This will be determined by taking into consideration the nature of the recommendations. The desk-based review will, where possible, include at least two reviewers from the original team. The peer reviewers will evaluate whether the actions taken have addressed the recommendations within the agreed timescales. This will provide an opportunity for the original judgement outcome to be revised.
- It may have tailored documentation linked to the recommendations and the institution should provide a short update report developed with students outlining what has been done supported by evidence that the actions from the TQER have been completed.
- It may result in a focused addendum report that will be published. If the institution has provided evidence that the action plan has been successfully implemented, the judgement will be upgraded to 'effective'. Any areas for further consideration will be highlighted and will be reviewed at the next review visit. Where the outcome of TQER re-review identifies that the action plan has not been successfully implemented, the original judgement will be maintained. In both instances, the report of the follow-up activity will be published.

140 TQER re-review for 'not effective' judgements will follow the process and timescales outlined in this Guide in full and will not be limited to the areas of concern.

141 For an institution which delivers with other awarding bodies, relevant awarding partners should be involved in the follow-up process where this is requested by QAA. Where appropriate, institutions that work with external collaborative partners should involve their partners to ensure the quality of education of their partnerships is not put at risk.

## QAA Quality Mark

142 Institutions with a judgement of 'effective' qualify for use of the QAA Quality Mark; this extends to institutions that have had their judgement(s) upgraded. The Quality Mark is intended to assure the public that the institution has undergone a review and achieved a successful result through an independent quality assurance process. The institution may place the Quality Mark as a public statement of the outcome of their review. QAA will send through an approved copy of the Quality Mark, together with terms and conditions of use.

## Appeals and complaints

143 QAA has formal processes for receiving complaints about its own operation and services and appeals against unsatisfactory judgements. The appeals process for TQER is incorporated within QAA's Consolidated Appeals Procedure which can be found on the QAA website and details all procedures for submitting appeals including timelines. Further details of the QAA appeals and complaints procedure are included in **Annex M: Appeals and complaints**.

## Monitoring and evaluation of the review method

144 QAA is committed to continuous improvement through the monitoring and evaluation of its review methods. At the end of each review, evaluation forms are sent to institutions, the review team and QAA Review Manager in order to learn from effective practice and identify any operational shortcomings. QAA also conducts internal annual monitoring to ensure review methods are working effectively and improvements are made in a timely manner. At the point of major revision, QAA will conduct an end-of-cycle evaluation as part of a wider evaluation of the effectiveness of the method and the overall impact of the review method over time. QAA evaluation approaches will contribute to the wider evaluation of the TQEF conducted by SFC both during and at the end of the cycle. Further details about the operation of the monitoring and evaluation process for Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) can be found in **Annex N: Monitoring and evaluation of the review method**.

# Annex A: Definition of key terms

### Academic standards

Standards that institutions set and/or maintain for the award of academic credit or qualifications. Responsibilities for academic standards may differ depending on the nature of the institution. Where an institution delivers teaching and learning opportunities for qualifications that are awarded by another body or organisation, the institution has responsibility for the management and maintenance of academic standards. Degree-awarding bodies are responsible for defining their own academic standards by setting the pass marks and determining the grading/marking schemes and any criteria for classification of qualifications that differentiate between levels of student achievement above and below the threshold academic standards and the management and maintenance of those. These individual standards align to national qualifications and credit frameworks and/or the Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area.

### Action plan

A plan developed by the institution after the review report has been published that is normally signed off by the head of the institution. It responds to the recommendations in the report and gives any plans to capitalise on the identified good practice.

### Appeal

Challenge by an institution to the outcome of a review or to another decision made by the review team or QAA.

### Complaint

A complaint is an expression of an individual's dissatisfaction with their experience of dealing with QAA. Complaints may be on behalf of the individual's institution.

### Credit(s)

A means of quantifying and recognising learning whenever and wherever it is achieved, awarded in recognition of achievement of learning outcomes at a specified level and used for the purposes of certification.

### Credit bearing

Refers to a programme of study and/or award made by an institution that comprises a stipulated number of credits.

### Degree-awarding body

Institutions who have authority - for example, from a national agency - to issue their own awards.

### Desk-based analysis

An analysis by the review team of evidence, submitted by the institution, that enables the review team to identify and develop its review outcomes.

### Enhancement

Using evidence to plan, implement and evaluate deliberate steps intended to improve the learning experience in our colleges and universities. Enhancement will take place at multiple levels within the institution and in a range of ways. Enhancement may involve continuous improvement and/or more significant step-changes in policy and practice to improve the effectiveness of the student learning experience. It may involve whole institution change or innovation at programme of study or departmental level.

### European Standards and Guidelines

Internationally-recognised standards for education provision. For details, including the full text on each Standard, see www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg

### Evidence base

The information that will be used by the review team to make their judgements. This includes the Strategic Impact Analysis, Advance Information Set submitted, and evidence and analysis from other sources.

### External reference points

Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured.

### Franchising

A process by which a degree-awarding body agrees to authorise another organisation to deliver (and sometimes assess) part or all of one (or more) of its own approved programmes. Often, the degree-awarding body retains direct responsibility for the programme content, teaching and assessment strategy, assessment regime and quality assurance. Students normally have a direct contractual relationship with the degree-awarding body.

### Good practice

Good practice is an example of practice that has impact and benefit in the context of the institution and makes a particularly positive contribution to the student learning experience. It may be an innovation that has not yet been evaluated or adopted more widely. Where the good practice identified is an example of practice significantly above sector norms with evidence of impact and benefit to others in the sector, this will be identified in the report.

### Initial Review Visit

Visit focused on the senior leadership, the approach to quality management and the student learning experience to inform the Main Review Visit.

### Institution

Any organisation involved in the provision of tertiary education to students and apprentices.

### Institutional Liaison Meeting

Annual meeting on quality matters between QAA and the institution that includes standard follow-up to the review to monitor progress on actions from TQER and developments within the institution.

### Institution-led quality activity

A mechanism within the TQEF which includes, for example, annual monitoring processes, self-evaluation and action plans and, where applicable, institution-led quality review.

### Institution Quality Contact

A member of staff from the institution to liaise with the QAA Review Manager to ensure the organisation and smooth running of the review process.

### Judgement

The formal decision(s) made by a review team on whether the institution meets the threshold standards or requirements.

### Lead Student Representative (LSR)

A role which allows a student at the institution under review to engage in the review process on behalf of the student body.

### Lines of enquiry

Areas that the review team intend to explore further during the review process through requests for additional information and/or through obtaining oral testimony during the visit.

### Main Review Visit

A series of meetings (conducted online, hybrid or onsite) held by the review team over consecutive days which includes meetings with institution staff, students and other stakeholders to gather oral testimony and private meetings of the review team to review documentation and discuss outcomes.

### Peer reviewers

Members of the review team who make the decisions in relation to the review of the institution. Peer reviewers have experience of managing quality and academic standards in tertiary education or have recent experience of being a student in tertiary education.

### Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs)

Organisations that set the standards for, and regulate entry into, particular professions and are authorised to accredit, approve or recognise specific programmes of study leading to the relevant professional qualifications - for which they may have a statutory or regulatory responsibility.

### Programme of study

An approved pathway of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads towards a qualification. Depending on the institution, programmes of study are also referred to as courses, units or modules.

### Quality assurance

The systematic monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching, and the processes that support them, to make sure that the standards of academic awards meet the expectations set out in the UK Quality Code, and that the quality of the student learning experience is being safeguarded and improved.

### Quality Code

A key reference point for UK tertiary education, protecting the public and student interest, and championing UK tertiary education's world-leading reputation for quality. It enables institutions to understand what is expected of them and what to expect from each other.

### Quality Mark

An electronic badge that institutions with a successful outcome are permitted to use by QAA, which is intended to assure the public that the institution has undergone a review and achieved a successful result through an independent, external quality assurance process.

### QAA Review Manager

Quality agency individual who is responsible for managing all stages of the review, including liaison with the review team and the facilitator.

### Recommendation

A statement made by the review team on an area where the institution should consider developing or changing a process or a procedure to improve its provision. Recommendations also cover areas for enhancement as well as improvement.

### Review specification

Outline of the parameters for the review including dates, size and composition of the review team, and scope of the review to reflect tailoring the review to the institution's context.

### Scoping meeting

Meeting between the QAA Review Manager and the institution to explore the operating context of the institution, its ambitions and reflections on the key challenges it faces.

### Sector preparation events

Events to support key staff and students who will be involved in the planning for review within an institution.

### Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP)

Annual self-evaluation submission by an institution to the Scottish Funding Council.

### Strategic Impact Analysis

The written submission from an institution that includes information about the institution, supported by evidence, on how it considers it meets the requirements for review. The Strategic Impact Analysis is submitted as part of the TQER evidence.

### Students

An individual studying at a tertiary institution regardless of demographic, mode or level of study, subject area or geographic location. This includes current students on a programme of study, recent former students and graduates (as defined by the institution's regulations), and people applying for a place at an institution, as well as those students who are also 'apprentices'. The term is used to denote both students and learners, regardless of registration status.

### Student learning experience

A term that encompasses students' experiences of their programme of study and of the resources, support, facilities and opportunities that an institution makes available to support their learning.

### Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF)

A shared set of principles, delivery mechanisms and outputs that give assurance on academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience and ensure accountability for public investment in learning and teaching (see Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF)).

### TQER re-review

TQER re-reviews are follow-up activities for 'partially effective' and 'not effective' judgements. For 'not effective' judgements, TQER re-review follows the same format as TQER reviews. For 'partially effective' judgements, TQER re-reviews will follow the same format as TQERs with the exceptions outlined in 'Follow-up activity' - paragraphs 138-141. TQER re-reviews are peer reviews and result in a published report and action plan.

### Thematic reports

Analyses of the findings of external institution review with the aim of promoting the sharing of information, including providing institutions with information that they can use to compare their policy and practice with that across the sector.

### Validation

A process where a module or programme is approved by a degree-awarding body in order to contribute, or lead, to one of its awards. The validated course is delivered by the institution that designed it and students on the course normally have a direct contractual relationship with that institution and not the validating institution. The validating institution remains responsible for the academic standards of the award granted in its name. (See also 'franchising')

## Abbreviations used in this Guide

| | |
|---|---|
| AIS | Advance Information Set |
| CDN | College Development Network |
| EDI | Equality, diversity and inclusion |
| EHEA | European Higher Education Area |
| ESG | Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area |
| GDPR | General Data Protection Regulation |
| ILM | Institutional Liaison Meeting |
| ILQR | Institution-led Quality Review |
| LSR | Lead Student Representative |
| PSRB | Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body |
| QE-TNE | Quality Evaluation and Enhancement of UK Transnational Education |
| SCQF | Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework |
| SCQFP | Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership |
| SQCS | Scottish Quality Concerns Scheme |
| SEAP | Self-Evaluation and Action Plan |
| SFC | Scottish Funding Council |
| SIA | Strategic Impact Analysis |
| SLE | Student Learning Experience model |
| SPA | Student Partnership Agreement |
| SQA | Scottish Qualifications Authority |
| TNE | Transnational Education |
| TQEF | Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework |
| TQER | Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review |

# Annex B: Scoping meeting

Early in the review process, a QAA Review Manager will meet with representatives from the institution for a scoping meeting. This would normally include the institution lead(s) for the academic quality of learning and teaching and a Lead Student Representative. It is intended to explore the operating context of the institution, its plans and reflections on the key challenges it faces.

The following elements will be included in the scoping meeting:

- roles in TQER
- key information including:
  - student numbers within main types of provision/cycles and overall campus(es) and other key places of delivery
  - collaborative partnerships (including embedded colleges and similar international pathway arrangements)
  - professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) or other government-accrediting authorities/accreditations/recognitions
- mission, aims and strategy including:
  - key areas of strength (as identified by the institution)
  - key areas for development/challenges (as identified by the institution)
  - key industries, stakeholders and employer partnerships
- scope of review: types of provision, including SCQF levels of study and subjects/disciplines
- degree awarding powers and/or use of credit rating authority
- student engagement in TQER
- proposed dates of key review milestones, including:
  - dates and format of Initial Review Visit
  - dates, format and duration of Main Review Visit
  - dates for Key Outcomes letter, review of draft report for factual accuracy and publication of final report
  - date for institution's response to the report.

The institution will also have the opportunity to raise anything else they consider pertinent to the review.

The QAA Review Manager will make a note of the meeting, which will be shared with the institution to confirm factual accuracy. This note will then be used to inform the review specification.

# Annex C: Review specification exemplar

# Review specification [name of institution]

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | **Dates, duration and type of review** | |
| | Initial Review Visit:<br><br>Main Review Visit: | Online / on-campus / hybrid [delete as applicable; if on-campus, include venue]<br><br>Online / on-campus / hybrid [delete as applicable; if on-campus, include venue] |
| **2** | **Proposed size and composition of review team** | |
| | [No of members overall, any details on additional members, e.g., additional student reviewers, specialist reviewer] | |
| **3** | **Scope of review** | |
| | [Information on the types of provision that fall within the review, including SCQF levels] | |
| **4** | **Degree awarding powers / credit rating authority** | |
| | [Information on any current use of credit rating authority and/or intention to use credit rating authority and the type(s) of degree-awarding powers held, (if any)] | |
| **5** | **Key topics identified by the institution** | |
| | [Key challenges, self-identified strengths, and areas of focus for development] | |
| **6** | **Evidence and analysis from other sources** | |
| | Desk-based analysis by SCQF Partnership required?<br><br>☐ Yes ☐ No<br><br>Date when analysis will take place:<br><br>SCQF Partnership desk-based analysis and SFC evidence and analysis shared with [institution] for information: [Date (ahead of Main Review Visit)] | |

| | |
|---|---|
| **7** | **Other key milestones** |
| | Upload of Advance Information Set: |
| | Key Outcomes letter: |
| | Receipt of draft report: |
| | Comments on matters of fact: |
| | Publication of report: |
| | Response to report: |
| **8** | **Enclosures** |
| | i Note of scoping meeting, including campuses, other sites of delivery and student numbers<br>ii List of academic partnerships/accrediting bodies<br>iii List of professional, statutory and regulatory body / industry accreditations and partnerships |

# Annex D: Guidance on the structure and content of the Strategic Impact Analysis

## Purpose

The Strategic Impact Analysis (SIA) allows the institution to undertake a self-evaluation that sets out for the review team an overview of their operating context and strengths and opportunities for further development in the context of the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) principles. The SIA should act as an overarching reflective piece which draws on the institution's available Self-Evaluation and Action Plans (SEAPs) from the time of the last external review.

In keeping with the ethos of student partnership, the student body should be a key partner in the preparation of the SIA and engage with relevant staff. The final SIA should be clearly signed off by at least one representative of the student body as representing their intended contribution.

The evidence cited in the SIA should be specific and targeted and included with the TQER Advance Information Set (see **Annex E: Advance Information Set**). The aim is to enable the review team to understand and affirm the information, evaluation and conclusions in the SIA. This approach will make it easier for the review team to understand the institution's systems and gather information quickly and effectively. The SIA should include information that contextualises its provision and be evaluative and as concise as possible.

## Format

The SIA should reflect the principles of the TQEF and guidance for completing each section is provided below. As a guide, the SIA should normally be no more than 20 pages in length (Arial 10pt font as a minimum) and only include evidence that is relevant to support the text.

## Role of data & evidence and externality

The use made of data and evidence, and externality underpins the overall approach to the SIA as these are critical elements that inform the self-evaluation of the other four principles. Information about the use made of externality, and data and evidence should be integral to all other sections to explain distinctive features of your context for the review team. Each section should include consideration of how data and evidence are used to inform the institution's approach and demonstrate impact of action, and also how effectively externality is embedded.

## Advance Information Set and the Strategic Impact Analysis

The Strategic Impact Analysis is also supported by the TQER Advance Information Set (see **Annex E: Advance Information Set**) that includes:

a) any evidence relevant to supporting the Strategic Impact Analysis

b) documentation to support the assurance element of the review which helps the review team to confirm that the institution's approach to managing academic standards and the quality of the learning experience is effective.

In approaching the SIA, institutions should focus on presenting relevant information that is either not available from the Advance Information Set or provides context that will support the review team's understanding and/or engagement with the evidence base.

In addressing the overarching effectiveness question in each section, institutions should answer the following questions:

1 How do you use data and evidence to inform strategic decisions (what do you do and why)?
2 How do you know your approach is successful (how well does it work/help you achieve your aims)? How do you know this (evidence of impact)? And what could you do to be even better?
3 What planning assumptions are you making on the basis of this analysis and self-evaluation?

After addressing these questions under the overarching question of each section, institutions should conclude each section by identifying key strengths and key priority areas for development for that principle. This is to support self-evaluation by the institution and also help the review team in considering key areas of enhancement.

The concluding reflections section offers institutions the opportunity to identify what they could do even better. In answering these questions, institutions should also make explicit the use made of externality, particularly:

- the use made of sector reference points and requirements
- the impact that engagement with external specialists and experts has had.

**Introduction**

The institution should outline for the review team any key facts and features of its operating context that influence its approaches and that help the review team understand it.

1 


**How effective is our approach for achieving excellence in learning, teaching and assessment, across all locations, subject areas and modes of delivery, and for assuring and maintaining academic standards?**

How do you use data and evidence to inform strategic decisions?
[discussion]

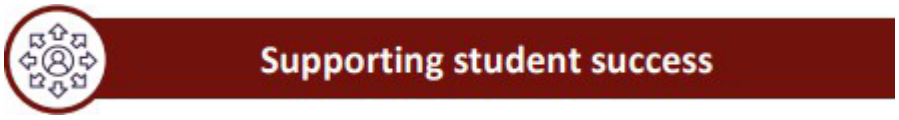
How do you know your approach is successful?
[discussion]

What planning assumptions are you making on the basis of this analysis and self-evaluation?

**Conclusion**

Key strengths and priority areas for development
[brief discussion/bullet points]

2




**How effective are our arrangements for supporting student success?**

How do you use data and evidence to inform strategic decisions?
[discussion]

How do you know your approach is successful?
[discussion]

What planning assumptions are you making on the basis of this analysis and self-evaluation?

**Conclusion**

Key strengths and priority areas for development
[brief discussion/bullet points]

3




**How effective is our approach to student engagement and partnership?**

How do you use data and evidence to inform strategic decisions?
[discussion]

How do you know your approach is successful?
[discussion]

What planning assumptions are you making on the basis of this analysis and self-evaluation?

**Conclusion**

Key strengths and priority areas for development
[brief discussion/bullet points]

4




**How effective are we in embedding an enhancement and quality culture across our institution?**

How do you use data and evidence to inform strategic decisions?
[discussion]

How do you know your approach is successful?
[discussion]

What planning assumptions are you making on the basis of this analysis and self-evaluation?

**Conclusion**

Key strengths and priority areas for development
[brief discussion/bullet points]

**Concluding reflections**

In summing up, please draw on your self-evaluation within this SIA and briefly summarise your current position in terms of the questions below:

- What are our strengths? How can we maintain and build on these?
- What are our opportunities and what do we need to be able to take advantage of those opportunities?
- What are our institutional priorities and what are the challenges, if any, in addressing these?

# Annex E: Advance Information Set

The precise nature and constitution of the Advance Information Set reflects the context of the individual institution. It provides the review team with the necessary background rationale for the approaches and practices related to quality assurance and quality enhancement. It also helps to frame the review team's analysis and understanding of the operation of the institution's management of their quality and enhancement and allows them to consider the institution's practice to the UK Quality Code and Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) (see also **Annex S: ESG Part 1 mapping**). The Advance Information Set is arranged according to the Quality Code sector-agreed principles (QC P) for this purpose.

The institution's Advance Information Set should reflect the full range of its activity. This will include the various modes, locations and levels of study, full and part-time, on and off campus, flexible and distance learning, and provision delivered in partnership (be that in workplace settings, within the UK or as transnational education).

The institution is not expected to prepare bespoke material. It is anticipated that the Advance Information Set should comprise a set of existing material, or information already prepared for other purposes including meeting the expectations set out in the SFC Guidance on Quality. It is expected that documentation used for the Advance Information Set will also fulfil SFC's documentary requirements for an institution's Self-Evaluation Action Plan. The information should be uploaded to the secure portal.

Institutions should also upload the SIA and any evidence that directly supports the SIA to the secure portal. Where evidence is provided in the form of links to websites or to internal sharing sites (where access is provided to review teams), this should form part of the Advance Information Set and should be provided in one document as a list clearly mapped to information requested.

### General

- Institution organogram, committee structure and terms of reference to illustrate how responsibilities for teaching, learning and assessment and the assurance of quality and standards are organised. This should indicate both central and local levels and details of the involvement of students.
- Evidence of outcome data being made publicly available.
- Evaluation of impact of engagement in sector enhancement activity (STEP).

### Taking a strategic approach to managing quality and standards (QC P1)

- Link to the institution's mission and strategic plan(s).
- A copy of the institution's current Learning and Teaching Strategy (or equivalent), supported (where appropriate) by:
    - Any action plan (or equivalent) supporting the delivery of this Strategy for the current academic session
    - Evaluation of previous session's action plan (or equivalent).

- Minutes or equivalent evidence from meetings of key institution committee(s)/groups responsible for the oversight of teaching, learning and assessment, and the quality and standards (including collaborative provision) covering a period of two years at point of submission .
- Institution's procedures and guidance on quality assurance and enhancement (this may be in the form of an academic manual or regulations, or code of practice), including Equality Impact Assessment.
- Improvement plan or equivalent as a result of engagement with the Jisc digital elevation tool or digital maturity model based on institution self-evaluation.

### Engaging students as partners (QC P2)

- Organogram of student representative structure.
- A copy of the current Student Partnership Agreement/student voice/engagement policy (or equivalent) with the Students' Association and any resulting action plans and/or evaluation of impact.
- Any annual report or paper reflecting on the student partnership arrangements and/or student engagement in the quality assurance and enhancement of their experience, produced by either the Students' Association (or equivalent) or the institution.
- Sample of minutes, outcomes or similar from student-staff liaison meetings or equivalent from last two academic years.
- Evidence of use of sparqs' Student Learning Experience model and Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership

### Resourcing delivery of a high-quality learning experience (QC P3)

- Information on FTE staffing (full-time/part-time teaching, support, administration).
- Policy(ies) for the professional development and review of staff.
- Where there are promotion routes, analysis of staff promotions based on teaching.
- Polices relating to staff promotion.
- Analysis of student engagement data - for example, virtual learning environment use, data/equitable uptake of resources.

### Using data to inform and evaluate quality (QC P4)

- Analysis of data relating to student recruitment, student admissions, student retention (including deferrals, early and further withdrawals), achievement and progression including full and part-time, further and higher education, undergraduate, postgraduate and international, and those with protected characteristics where applicable, progression to next level of education, course transfers, and leaver destination data and analysis on this set from the time of the last external review. This should be complete by level and mode of attendance and should cover all nine protected characteristics and priority groups such as SIMD10, SIMD20, Care Experienced and Carers, and Widening Access. Provide any mitigation for attainment gaps and non-progression. Include published data and analysis of your own internal data up to the date of submission of the Advance Information

Set. Self-evaluation of this area should address trends, areas for development and particular challenges or success.

- Institution's analysis of feedback from students and staff from previous three academic sessions, including any related trend analysis.

### Monitoring, evaluating and enhancing provision (QC P5)

- Self-evaluation and actions plans (SEAPs) from the time of the last external review.
- Institution's analysis of feedback from external assessors, verifiers and/or examiners from previous three academic sessions, including any related trend analysis.
- Annual monitoring and ILQR equivalent processes, including for review of professional services, and analysis of outcomes and actions of these since the time of the last external review.
- Sample of annual monitoring reports to illustrate operation through different levels of scrutiny from the most recent cycle.
- Sample of institution-led quality review (ILQR) reports or reports on institution-led quality activity since the time of the last external review plus sample of follow-up activity/reporting (sample size and timeframe to be agreed following scoping meeting).
- Any other institution-led activity relevant to the student learning experience that you would like to share and is not covered by the previous categories.

### Engaging in external review and accreditation (QC P6)

- Reports, plus follow-up and/or action plans and updates following any external review activity (excluding professional, statutory and regulatory bodies or in-country accrediting authorities - see below). Institutions should list in chronological order all recommendations from external review activity since and including the last review by a quality agency - for example, QAA Quality Enhancement and Standards Review or Education Scotland Annual Engagement or Progress Visit. Institutions should include all recommendations and progress on actions.

### Designing, developing, approving, and modifying programmes (QC P7)

- Illustrative examples showing the design, development and approval of programmes of study, using degree-awarding powers.
- Evidence of curriculum planning with industry engagement, regional skills analysis informing curriculum design and approaches, evidence of community involvement in design and delivery of curriculum, including micro-credentials/learner skills and attributes/other awards designed to support employability.
- Where applicable, the documents listed below will be shared with SCQFP (including any submitted as part of the Advance Information Set and indicated by the institution as meeting any of the requirements in the box below).

**Documents shared with SCQF Partnership**

**For universities, documentation is only required for any SCQF credit rated provision that is outside of degree awarding powers and owned by the institution.**

**For colleges, documentation is only required for any SCQF credit rated provision that is owned by the college (see Annex T: SCQF duty for quality assurance of credit rating activity):**

- A copy of the process/procedure being used to allocate SCQF level and credit points and to provide quality assurance and governance of that process (see Annex A of SCQF Handbook for an illustrative example of credit rating stages).
- Evidence as to how the SCQF level and credit points for the most recent credit rated internal programme of study was allocated and ratified. This should include fully completed and signed off records of the credit rating decision-making process and evidence of the formal ratification of that decision.
- Copy of the template of the certificate and/or transcript that is issued to a successful student detailing the necessary SCQF information (SCQF Principle 10)
- Evidence as to how these programmes of study are monitored and reviewed regularly in terms of the currency of their SCQF level and credit and, as they approach the end of the allocated credit rating period, in order to extend the credit rating for a further period.

**For institutions who also carry out third-party credit rating:**

- A copy of the process/procedure being used to allocate SCQF level and credit points and to provide quality assurance and governance of that process if that differs to the process for internal programmes of study.
- The procedure for carrying out third-party credit rating if it differs to that used for internal programmes of study.
- Evidence as to how the SCQF level and credit points for the most recent third-party programme was allocated and ratified. This should include fully completed and signed off records of the credit rating decision-making process and evidence of the formal communication of that decision with the third party.
- Evidence of guidance given to third parties during the credit rating process and post-credit rating.
- Evidence of risk assessment and governance around third-party credit rating activity.
- Evidence of monitoring and review of third parties post-credit rating.
- Evidence that the institution wants to include which illustrates the robustness of its credit rating processes and associated governance (this may be evidence already submitted as Advance Information Set and should be clearly indicated as evidence that can be shared with SCQF).

## Operating partnerships with other organisations (QC P8)

- A current register of collaborative provision.
- Policy and practice for the management of collaborative provision including monitoring and evaluation.
- Where appropriate, list of provision accredited by a professional, statutory and regulatory body, date of last visit and accreditation status.
- Where appropriate, list of provision accredited by in-country accrediting authorities, date of last visit and accreditation status.
- The number and types of placements, corresponding student numbers and evaluation of the effectiveness of support for students in preparing for, undertaking and reflecting on their placements.
- The number and types of employers involved in work-based learning.
- Sample of minutes or equivalent of employer engagement meetings (sample size and timeframe to be agreed following scoping meeting).
- Institution's analysis of feedback from employer and schools from previous three academic sessions, including any related trend analysis. Evidence of the impact of this feedback on learning design and provision. This may include, for example, employer surveys, course team minutes or equivalent, work-based learning student feedback and managing agent feedback where appropriate.
- The number of students on exchange or year abroad where this is expected or essential as part of a student's programme of study, and evaluation of support for these students.

### Recruiting, selecting and admitting students (QC P9)

- Institution's approach to admissions and widening participation strategy(ies) and evidence of impact of these.
- Analysis of student recruitment data from previous three academic sessions, including any related trend analysis.
- Recognition of Prior Learning policy.

### Supporting students to achieve their potential (QC P10)

- Personal tutoring/academic mentor/course tutor approaches and evidence of the impact of these.
- Policy, guidance for students on academic integrity and institution's analysis of annual data relating to academic misconduct.
- Any reports arising from the review of student-facing services and wider professional services impacting on the student learning experience.
- Policies, procedures and evidence of compliance with supporting minors and vulnerable adults (for example, safeguarding, corporate parenting, Prevent).
- Policies relating to the provision of student support, including for those with additional support needs (such as Personal Learning Support Plans).

### Teaching, learning and assessment (QC P11)

- Overview of any peer review and/or team-teaching approaches designed to share practice and evidence of its impact.
- Percentage of staff with a recognised teaching qualification, including for example Teaching Qualification in Further Education (TQFE), PGCert in Academic Practice or Higher Education Learning and Teaching (or equivalent).
- General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) registration status, where applicable.
- Percentage of staff with HEA Fellowship.

### Operating concerns, complaints and appeals processes (QC P12)

- Analysis of student casework - complaints, appeals and disciplinaries and themes of any of these.

### Additional document requests

It is important to note that an institution's context or circumstances may require some additional evidence to be submitted. The review team may request additional documentation if they identify any gaps or require further information to help them reach a conclusion about quality assurance and/or quality enhancement. Where this can be anticipated in advance - for example, if an institution has an action plan in place following a Scottish Quality Concerns Scheme investigation or where matters are identified through Institutional Liaison Meetings - then this will be confirmed at the same time as dates for TQER are confirmed wherever possible. Additional documentation requests will take place in accordance with the published timescales. Evidence will not be able to be submitted after the Main Review Visit. Requests for additional information will be strictly limited to what the review team requires to complete their analysis and understanding. The QAA Review Manager will scrutinise all requests for additional evidence to ensure it is needed by the review team to complete its understanding. The request will specify the purpose of the additional information required. Institutions can ask for clarification so that the most relevant pieces of information are provided.

# Annex F: Reviewer nomination, appointment and training

## Reviewer recruitment

Applications will be considered for all reviewer types and all members of review teams are selected according to the criteria outlined below. Reviewers are appointed using a job description and person specification published as part of the recruitment process. Reviewer recruitment is undertaken periodically.

## Reviewer training

All reviewers, including those trained in other review methods, are required to undertake mandatory training and specific training for TQER. Reviewers will be expected to participate in continuing development and reviewer events as appropriate and targeted training and continuing professional development to specific reviewers as required.

## Reviewers

Reviewers are essential to delivery of a peer-review system of quality assurance. The Peer Review process is also critical in building the capacity and capability of the sector for quality improvement and enhancement. Institutions also benefit through having staff trained as reviewers and through the experience and insights they gain through review team involvement.

Reviewers are staff with senior-level expertise in the provision, management and delivery of education in the tertiary sector; or students with experience in representing students' interests in the tertiary sector.

QAA Scotland appoints reviewers using a job description and person specification published as part of the recruitment process. These are included here to support understanding and confidence in the quality and calibre of QAA Scotland's reviewer pool.

## Nomination

Reviewers are recruited through an open call and may be nominated by institutions or self-nominate. Staff currently working for an institution must be nominated by their employer, as an indication of the employer's willingness to support their time commitment to the review process.[4]

Each college and university in Scotland should nominate at least two reviewers (including one student reviewer) to participate in reviews over the review cycle, with larger institutions scaling their contribution as appropriate. Nominations are also welcomed from institutions across the UK.

Student reviewers may be nominated by Scottish student representative bodies, or Scottish colleges and universities. Student reviewers will be expected to demonstrate general awareness of the diversity of the Scottish further and higher education sector beyond their 'home' institution, and awareness of the arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement in

[4] Given the time commitment and other contractual requirements, staff must have the support of their employer.

Scotland. QAA Scotland actively encourages applications from students from all backgrounds and with experience of a wide variety of study modes and levels.

International reviewers are selected based on nominations from Scottish colleges and universities and from QAA's contacts with relevant institutions and agencies in other countries. They may be recruited to a review team as a specialist reviewer.

The credibility of review findings and outcomes depends upon review teams having current or recent (within three years) knowledge and experience in the tertiary sector. We appoint reviewers who are currently or have been recently employed as staff by institutions. Recognising that knowledge and experience have a life span beyond a period of employment or study, we are happy to consider self-nominations from former staff who have been out of an institution for no longer than three years and who meet the selection criteria set out below. They must be able to demonstrate a continuing and meaningful engagement with the assurance of academic standards and quality beyond any involvement they may have with QAA review work. This could be through a consultancy role or a voluntary post, such as membership of an institution's governing body.

In the case of student reviewers, they should be enrolled on or have recently completed a programme of study, or who are, or have recently been, sabbatical officers. We permit students and sabbatical officers to continue as reviewers for up to three years after they finish their studies or term of office.

We permit students and sabbatical officers to continue as reviewers for up to three years after they finish their studies or term of office.

QAA Scotland makes every attempt to ensure that the total pool of TQER reviewers reflects the characteristics of the Scottish tertiary education sector including taking account of equality and diversity strands.

All reviewers are given training by QAA Scotland to ensure that they are familiar with the TQER method, the ESG, the wider enhancement-led approach and the Scottish further and higher education context.

## Experience and qualifications

### REVIEWER

| Attribute | Criteria |
|---|---|
| **Experience** | **Essential**<br><br>Current or recent experience (within three years) of:<br><br>• overseeing, managing and/or assuring academic standards and quality in a senior academic and/or professional support capacity<br><br>• assessing and/or overseeing the achievements of students on tertiary education programmes internally and/or at other institutions including in a professional services capacity<br><br>• conducting audits, reviews, assessments, accreditations, investigations or similar activities within a tertiary education institution and/or with other |

| | |
|---|---|
| | quality assurance agencies / inspectorates / auditing bodies in the UK or internationally.<br><br>**Desirable**<br><br>Experience of at least one of:<br><br>• engagement with sector bodies (for example, HEA Fellowship, advisory bodies, learned societies, fellowships, national committee/panel memberships, accreditation and awarding bodies)<br>• supporting the interests of students (for example: active engagement with students in quality assurance; managing/overseeing student support services; chairing student experience committee or similar)<br>• working in, or with different types of tertiary education institutions, such as universities, further education colleges, private and/or specialist tertiary education institutions<br>• as a course/programme leader with ultimate responsibility for academic leadership, management and assessment of the course/programme<br>• participating as a chair, panel member, assessor or equivalent in the monitoring and periodic review process of their own and/or other institutions<br>• working at, or with, an institution that is a recent entrant to the tertiary education sector<br>• investigating and/or managing complaints and appeals<br>• academic governance, tertiary education partnerships, awarding body responsibilities and accrediting body responsibilities<br>• transnational education and/or overseas operating environments. |
| **Qualifications** | • Hold an SCQF Level 9 or equivalent further or higher education qualification. |

## STUDENT REVIEWER

| Attribute | Criteria |
|---|---|
| **Experience** | **Essential**<br><br>Current or recent experience (within three years):<br><br>• as a student, or as a sabbatical officer, at a Scottish tertiary education institution, equivalent to a minimum of one year's full-time education<br>• of representing the interests of students in the management of academic standards and/or quality (for example, as a student representative). |

| | |
|---|---|
| | **Desirable**<br><br>Experience of one or more of the following:<br><br>• conducting audits, reviews, assessments, accreditations, investigations or similar activities within a tertiary education institution and/or with other quality assurance agencies/inspectorates/auditing bodies in the UK or internationally<br>• engagement with sector bodies (for example: advisory bodies; learned societies; fellowships; national committee/panel memberships; accrediting bodies), preferably with regard to student engagement activities<br>• working in a tertiary education institution or student representative organisation, preferably in a student engagement role<br>• engagement in initiatives and/or projects related to student engagement<br>• chairing committees or other formal meetings<br>• participating in quality assurance at institutional level<br>• participating in tertiary education outside the UK or knowledge of international education systems, including transnational education. |
| **Qualifications** | • Holder of, or working towards, a further education, higher education or tertiary education qualification. |

## INTERNATIONAL REVIEWER

| **Attribute** | **Criteria** |
|---|---|
| **Experience** | **Essentia**l<br><br>In addition to Reviewer criteria, International Reviewers must also meet the following criteria:<br><br>• current or recent (within three years) wide experience of academic management at the institutional level outside the UK, preferably relating to quality assurance and enhancement of the student learning experience<br>• current or recent (within three years) experience of external review of tertiary education institutions outside the UK, either as a panel member or through senior involvement with a quality assurance or enhancement organisation. |

## Other attributes required of all reviewer types:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Knowledge, skills and abilities** | **Essential**<br>• awareness of the diversity of the tertiary education sector and of the arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement<br>• demonstrable interest in ensuring the student interest is protected<br>• strong analytical skills with the ability to assimilate, critically analyse, synthesise and evaluate large quantities of quantitative and qualitative data in a context-sensitive manner<br>• technical ability to work effectively with electronic and/or web-based communication systems<br>• ability to work effectively as part of a small team in person and where work may be conducted remotely from other team members<br>• excellent listening and verbal communication skills in conducting and participating in meetings<br>• ability to plan work and adhere to agreed protocols, procedures and deadlines<br>• ability to write in clear, concise and accurate text to a required style<br>• ability to recognise personal values and presumptions and have insight into the ways these may affect thinking and judgements<br>• ability to lead discussions about strategic and operational approaches to the management of quality and academic standards<br>• cultural awareness and the ability to understand a range of perspectives, recognise personal values and biases and have insights into how these affect thinking and judgements<br>• personal and professional credibility with staff, including senior managers, heads of institutions, and staff currently engaged in learning and teaching.<br>**Desirable**<br>• knowledge and understanding of key international/national standards and quality frameworks relevant to the method (for example: the UK Quality Code; European Standards and Guidance (ESG); Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework)<br>• knowledge and understanding of the policy context for further and higher education. |

| Behaviours | Essential |
|---|---|
| | • demonstrate the highest standards of personal conduct, honesty and integrity that inspires trust and confidence.<br>• ensure QAA is presented in a positive, helpful and professional manner<br>• maintain confidentiality, including with sensitive matters<br>• a willingness to work, with a flexible 'can-do' approach<br>• commitment to critical reflection and continuous improvement<br>• highly motivated and able to work under pressure. |

# Annex G: Review team size and composition

Discussion at the scoping meeting will inform the size and composition of the review team.

The minimum size of the review team is **four** peer reviewers to include one Student Reviewer, and either:

- two reviewers (at least one of these will have teaching experience) and one specialist reviewer
- three reviewers (at least one of these will have teaching experience).

The maximum team size is **six** reviewers depending on the size and complexity of the institution and the outcomes of the scoping exercise.

Following discussion with the QAA Review Manager, institutions can opt to request any of the following additional members of their review team:

- additional reviewers (with either teaching or professional services experience)
- an additional student reviewer
- a specialist reviewer - for example, a reviewer with experience of industry, international work, or in a specific topic such as transitions or work-based learning
- a specialist student reviewer.

The final review team composition will be determined by QAA.

### Potential team composition

<table>
<tr><th>Option 1 (minimum team of 4)</th><th>Option 2 (minimum team of 4)</th></tr>
<tr><td>Student Reviewer</td><td>Student Reviewer</td></tr>
<tr><td>Reviewer A<br><br>Reviewer B<br><br>(at least one with teaching experience)</td><td rowspan="2">Reviewer A<br><br>Reviewer B<br><br>Reviewer C<br><br>(at least one with teaching experience)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Specialist Reviewer</td></tr>
<tr><td>Additional</td><td>Additional</td></tr>
<tr><td>Additional</td><td>Additional</td></tr>
</table>

Collectively, the review team will have experience and knowledge aligned with the outcomes from the scoping exercise and the composition of each review team will be tailored to the institution to ensure the review team has the relevant knowledge and experience to undertake

the review. This will take into consideration factors such as, the type of institution, type of provision, and size and type of collaborative provision.

Each team will have a mix of reviewers from within and outwith the Scottish tertiary sector. It will be possible and may be desirable for review teams to have a mix of college and university staff. For each review, it is expected that the majority of the team will be drawn from reviewers with current experience of the type of institution under review. TQER teams will be managed by a QAA Review Manager who will attend the review with the review team.

**There are three categories of reviewer:**

### Reviewer

Reviewers have current or recent senior-level expertise, and experience in the management and/or delivery of further and/or higher education provision, which may include the management and/or administration of quality assurance. Reviewers may have teaching, research or professional services roles. Reviewers may be based in Scotland or be recruited from the other UK nations.

### Student Reviewer

Student reviewers are recruited from among students or sabbatical officers who have experience of contributing, as a representative of student interests, to the management of academic standards and quality. The student reviewer brings a student perspective to the review. Their responsibilities during the review are likely to focus on lines of enquiry relating to the institution's management of the student learning experience, including the student journey and student engagement, and they will have experience of the type of provision they are reviewing. Student reviewers will typically be based in Scotland or have been a recent student in Scotland.

### Specialist Reviewer

Specialist reviewers can bring an added external perspective to the review team's consideration of the institution's approach to quality assurance and the enhancement of the student learning experience. Specialist reviewers are expected to have a range of knowledge and experience that will benefit the institution, the review process, and the tertiary education sector, and may include comparative international knowledge and experience. They may be selected from appropriate education institutions, related agencies, employers or industry, from the UK and beyond, or as an additional student reviewer from the UK or another country. Specialist reviewers can bring an added dimension to the review team, bringing peer-acknowledged expertise in the development of good practice in learning and teaching, and the wider student experience at an international level. The recruitment of specialist reviewers to a review team is informed by their expertise and experience, with the aim of achieving a suitable match to the strategic approach and enhancement priorities of the institution as discussed in the scoping meeting. Specialist reviewers are optional and not all review teams will include a specialist reviewer.

Specialist reviewers and specialist student reviewers may be identified by the institution at the scoping meeting with QAA eight months prior to the Main Review Visit. However, a review team will not have more than two student reviewers.

# Annex H: Review timeline

| Timeline | Activity | Notes |
|---|---|---|
| c 10 months before Main Review Visit | QAA Review Manager makes initial contact with institution, requests scoping meeting availability, requests information to inform scoping meeting and review specification | |
| c 9 months before Main Review Visit | Institution returns information requested to QAA Review Manager | |
| c 8 months before Main Review Visit | Scoping meeting to inform review specification, to include:<br>• confirmation of proposed dates and length of Main Review Visit<br>• size and profile of the review team<br>• submission of evidence | Takes place as a conversation between lead contact(s) at institution and QAA Review Manager.<br>The institution will always produce a Strategic Impact Analysis. Most other documentation will already be held owing to SEAP activity. This meeting will consider whether any other additional information that already exists or is in development could usefully be included in the submission. |
| 4 weeks after scoping meeting | Review specification issued by QAA Review Manager to institution | |
| 4 weeks after Review Spec issued | Review team proposed; institution has two weeks to notify any conflicts of interest | |
| 10 weeks prior to the Initial Review Visit | Institution submits:<br>• Strategic Impact Analysis<br>• any other documentation agreed in the scoping activity | SCQF Partnership begins desk-based analysis. |
| 8 weeks prior to the Initial Review Visit | SCQF Partnership completes a desk-based analysis and submits this as an additional source of evidence; SFC provides QAA with evidence and analysis - this evidence is shared with the institution | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 8 weeks prior to the Initial Review Visit | Review team begins work:<br><br>• reading submission<br>• populating analysis tool<br>• preparing for Initial Review Visit | |
| 4 weeks prior to the Initial Review Visit | Review team has private virtual meeting to discuss initial thoughts and confirm a schedule and the participants for the Initial Review Visit.<br><br>QAA Review Manager provides draft schedule and participant requests for Initial Review Visit. | |
| 2 weeks prior to the Initial Review Visit | Institution confirms participants. | |
| n/a | Initial Review Visit (maximum of 1.5 days):<br><br>• to establish key lines of enquiry, inform any additional document requests.<br><br>Typically comprising:<br><br>• half day of meeting with senior leaders; followed by<br>• up to 1 day of meetings with student groups. | May take place in-person/ onsite or online/virtually.<br><br>Always occurs.<br><br>Student groups typically include:<br><br>• formal representatives, including sabbatical officers<br>• groups reflecting the range of levels and types of provision, and subject spread. |
| 1 week after Initial Review Visit | Review team confirms any additional document requests. The review team provides an indicative Main Review Visit schedule and participants. | |
| 3 weeks after Initial Review Visit | Institution submits additional document requests. | |
| 4 weeks after Initial Review Visit | Review team confirms schedule, lines of enquiry and participants for Main Review Visit. | |
| 1 week before Main Review Visit | Institution confirms attendees at each meeting for Main Review Visit. | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 6-8 weeks after Initial Review Visit | Main Review Visit (2-5 days).<br><br>To include meetings with a range of representatives and stakeholders, which could be drawn from:<br><br>• staff<br>• students<br>• employers / workplace-based associates | Takes place in-person/onsite at one (or more) of the institution's campuses.<br><br>Always occurs. |
| 2 weeks after Main Review Visit | QAA Review Manager informs institution of provisional judgement(s) and finding(s) in a Key Outcomes letter. | |
| 2 weeks after Main Review Visit | Review team submits completed text for report.<br><br>QAA Review Manager edits report - 2 weeks, including liaising with review team.<br><br>Moderation and response take place - 2 weeks. | |
| 6 weeks after Main Review Visit | Draft of report to institution for comment on factual accuracy. | |
| 9 weeks after Main Review Visit | Institution response on factual accuracy. | |
| 9 weeks after Main Review Visit | QAA prepares press release and institution provides quote for inclusion. | |
| 10 weeks after Main Review Visit | QAA Review Manager confirms report internally and with the review team and submits final draft for editing and proofreading. | |
| 12 weeks after Main Review Visit | Publication of report. | |
| Within 12 weeks of publication of report | Response of institution: action plan. | |
| Ongoing | Follow-up activity, including updating in the SEAP and annual engagement. | |

# Annex I: Indicative schedules

## Initial Review Visit

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Day 1** | | |
| 13.00 | Review team arrives/joins online | |
| 13.00 – 13.30 | Private meeting of the review team | |
| 13.30 – 14.00 | Meeting with Principal (or equivalent) | |
| 14.00 – 14.15 | Break | |
| 14.15 – 15.00 | Meeting with senior leadership team, including the Student President | |
| 15.00 – 15.15 | Break | |
| 15.15 – 16.45 | Meeting with key quality contacts to discuss the approach to quality management | To explore the use made of the UK Quality Code and/or other matters arising. |
| 16.45 – 17.30 | Private team meeting | |
| **Day 2** | | |
| 08.45 | Review team arrives/joins online | |
| 08.45 – 9.30 | Private meeting of the review team | |
| 09.30 – 10.30 | Student meeting/focus group 1 | This will normally be students in senior formal representative roles - for example, sabbatical officers, school/faculty or campus reps, including the LSR as a member of the group. |
| 10.30 – 10.45 | Break | |
| 10.45 – 11.45 | Student meeting/focus group meeting 2 | For example, a particular level of study, discipline, campus or collaborative partner, study-type or student characteristic, possibly including class/programme of |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | study/characteristic reps, including those students who might on work placements or apprentices. |
| 11.45 – 12.00 noon | Break | |
| 12.00 noon – 13.00 | Student meeting/focus group 3 | For example, a particular level of study, discipline, campus or collaborative partner, study-type or student characteristic, possibly including class/programme of study/characteristic reps, including those students who might on work placements or apprentices. |
| 13.00 – 14.30 | Private meeting of the review team, to include lunch | |
| 14.30 – 15.30 | Student meeting/focus group 4 | For example, a particular level of study, discipline, campus or collaborative partner, study-type or student characteristic, possibly including class/programme of study/characteristic reps, including those students who might on work placements or apprentices. |
| 15.30 – 16.00 | Private meeting of the review team | |
| 16.00 – 16.15 | Break | |
| 16.15 – 16.45 | Opportunity for clarifications with key quality contacts | Optional |
| 16.45 – 17.30 | Private meeting of the review team to agree next steps | |

**Alternative schedule for when an evening meeting is required - for example, owing to students in employment, on work placements or in different time zones.**

| **Day 1** | | |
|---|---|---|
| 08.45 | Review team arrives/joins online | |
| 08.45 – 09.15 | Private meeting of the review team | |
| 09.15 – 09.45 | Meeting with Principal (or equivalent) | |
| 09.45 – 10.00 | Break | |
| 10.00 – 10.45 | Meeting with senior leadership team, including the Student President | |
| 10.45 – 11.00 | Break | |
| 11.00 – 12.30 | Meeting with key quality contacts to discuss the approach to quality management | To explore the use made of the UK Quality Code and/or other matters arising. |
| 12.30 – 14.00 | Private team meeting, to include lunch | |
| 14.00 – 15.00 | Student meeting/focus group 1 | This will normally be students in senior formal representative roles - for example, sabbatical officers. |
| 15.00 – 15.15 | Break | |
| 15.15 – 16.15 | Student meeting/focus group 2 | For example, a particular level of study, discipline, campus or collaborative partner, study-type or student characteristic, possibly including class/programme of study/characteristic reps |
| 16.15 – 16.30 | Break | |
| 16.30 – 17.30 | Private meeting of the review team | |
| Evening - time tbc | Student meeting/focus group 3 | For example, apprentices, students on work placements or internships, or students in employment |

| Day 2 | | |
|---|---|---|
| 08.45 | Review team arrives/joins online | |
| 08.45 – 09.30 | Private meeting of the review team | |
| 09.30 – 10.30 | Student meeting/focus group 4 | For example, a particular level of study, discipline, campus or collaborative partner, study-type or student characteristic, possibly including class/programme of study/characteristic reps |
| 10.30 – 10.45 | Break | |
| 10.45 – 11.15 | Private meeting of the review team | |
| 11.15 – 12.00 noon | Opportunity for clarifications with key quality contacts | Optional |
| 12.00 noon – 12.45 | Private meeting of the review team to agree next steps | |

**Main Review Visit**

The Main Review Visit will be between two and five days, as determined by the scoping activity early in the review process. Engagement with the institution will normally take place between 08.00 and 18.00 but, where the needs of participants demand otherwise, the review team may require access outside of those hours. Examples would be stakeholders whose work commitments mean they are not available to meet with the review team during the day or stakeholders in a different time zone to the UK.

The schedule for the Main Review Visit will be tailored to each review by the review team. It will be influenced by the lines of enquiry the review team has developed through their scrutiny of the evidence base (comprising the Strategic Impact Analysis and the Advance Information Set), any information provided by SFC and other sources, the SCQF Partnership desk-based analysis (where relevant) and the findings of the Initial Review Visit.

During the Main Review Visit, the review team will typically want to engage with a range of stakeholders, including:

- staff in academic roles, across a range of experience and at different levels of seniority
- staff in support/professional services roles who support different aspects of the student lifecycle
- employers and key industry contacts
- delivery partners
- students across a range of levels, subject disciplines and learning modes

While many of the interactions will take the form of more traditional meetings, the review team may elect to make use of other types of engagement, for example:

- visits to other parts of the campus or other sites of delivery/learning
- access to the virtual learning environment
- workshops or focus group discussions, which may be general in scope, either with a particular group of stakeholders (for example, staff) or mixed, or could follow a particular line of enquiry
- environmental scanning/learning walks - this allows the review team, as a whole, or in smaller groups, to learn about the institution's context, delivery and student support in situ
- walkthroughs - the purposes of these are to support the review team's understanding of the environment and culture of the institution and the extent to which it supports learning and the student experience; understand how student and staff engage with the learning environment; and to continue to access the student voice
- demonstrations of innovative activity.

Institutions will be advised at the start of the day within the Main Review Visit if reviewers wish to undertake this type of engagement.

# Annex J: Judgement criteria

The criteria that review teams use to come to their judgements are set out below. The matrix below outlines the judgement in the context of the outcome of each criterion and is supplemented by indicators.

| **Effective** | **Partially effective** | **Not effective** |
|---|---|---|
| All, or nearly all, applicable requirements and/or standards have been met.<br><br>Requirements which have not been met do not, individually or collectively, present any serious risks to the management of standards, enhancement of quality or enabling student success. | Most applicable requirements and/or standards have been met.<br><br>Requirements which have not been met do not, individually or collectively present any serious immediate risks to the management of standards, enhancement of quality or enabling student success.<br><br>Some moderate risks exist that, without action, could lead to serious problems over time with the management of standards, enhancement of quality or enabling student success. | Several applicable requirements and/or standards have not been met or there are major gaps in one or more of the applicable expectations.<br><br>Requirements and/or standards which have not been met present serious risk(s), individually or collectively, to the management of standards, enhancement of quality or enabling student success. The controls in place to mitigate the risk are inadequate.<br><br>Consequences of inaction/insufficiently timely action in some areas may be severe. |
| Recommendations may relate, for example, to:<br>• identified opportunities for further enhancement or reflection<br>• occasional lapses in the rigour with which the institution follows its own quality management/academic standards or enabling student success processes<br>• completion of activity that is already underway in a small number of | Recommendations may relate, for example, to:<br>• shortcomings in the institution's approach to requirements and/or standards and/or quality and/or enabling student success<br>• underdevelopment of practices to drive improvement and enhancement or evaluating impact<br>• insufficient emphasis or priority given to assuring standards, quality or enabling student success | Recommendations may relate, for example, to:<br>• ineffective approach to requirements and/or standards and/or quality and/or enabling student success<br>• ineffective practices to drive improvement and enhancement<br>• significant gaps in policy, structures or procedures relating to the institution's assurance of quality, standards or enabling student success |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| areas that will allow the institution to meet requirements more fully<br>• the institution's approach to drive improvement and enhancement. | • quality assurance procedures that, while broadly adequate, have some shortcomings in terms of the rigour with which they are applied<br>• problems that are confined to a small part of the provision. | • breaches by the institution of its own quality assurance procedures. |
| Other indicators include:<br>• effective leadership and governance<br>• identified examples of good practice shared by the institution<br>• an approach to self-evaluation that enables the identification of areas for development<br>• evidence-based monitoring of impact and evaluation that informs effective action<br>• student engagement is supported<br>• managing the needs of its students is a clear focus of the institution's strategies and policies<br>• evidence of appropriate action routinely being taken within a reasonable timescale, including in response to previous reviews<br>• there is evidence that the institution is fully aware of its responsibilities for assuring quality and standards and is alert to indicators that could signal when problems might develop. | Other indicators include:<br>• plans that the institution presents for addressing identified problems before or at the review may be underdeveloped or not fully embedded<br>• actions may not be appropriately prioritised with the risk that issues become more systematic or serious<br>• the institution's approach to supporting student engagement is not systematic, compromising the effectiveness of the overall approach<br>• the institutions' priorities or recent actions suggest that it may not be fully aware of the significance of certain issues<br>• urgency of time-bound recommendations<br>• lack of timely response or effective response to actions arising from the outcomes and findings of the last external review activities across multiple or time-bound recommendations or without appropriate mitigations. | Other indicators include:<br>• plans for addressing identified problems that the institution may present before or at the review are not adequate to rectify the problems, or there is very little or no evidence of effective progress<br>• the institution may have not recognised that it has major problems or has not planned appropriate action to address problems it has identified<br>• student engagement is not supported<br>• the institution has limited understanding of the responsibilities associated with one or more key areas of the requirements or may not be fully in control of all parts of the organisation<br>• the institution may repeatedly or persistently fail to take appropriate action in response to external review activities. |

# Annex K: Indicative TQER report structure

Review reports will be concise, evidence-based and structured around the following headings:

i Contextual information about the institution, student population and review
ii Review judgement and findings
iii A statement and commentary on each of:
- Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment
- Supporting student success
- Student partnership and engagement
- Enhancement and quality culture

The review team will also reflect on the effectiveness and impact of the institution's use of 'Data and evidence', and 'Externality'.

## i Contextual information

- Summary information about the institution, including mission, strategic aims and place in community.
- Composition and key trends in the student population, including information on retention, progression and outcomes.
- Brief outline of authority and/or responsibilities with regard to the award of qualifications and/or credit rating activity.

## ii Review judgement and findings

Overarching judgement about the institution:

**[Name of institution]** is **effective** in managing academic standards, enhancing the quality of the learning experience and enabling student success.

**[Name of institution]** is **partially effective** in managing academic standards, enhancing the quality of the learning experience and enabling student success. The institution is **effective** in respect of (list from the four principles but **partially effective** in respect of (list from the four principles).

**[Name of institution]** is **not effective** in managing academic standards, enhancing the quality of the learning experience and enabling student success**.**

## iii Main commentary

The main commentary of the report will follow the same structure as the Strategic Impact Analysis, with a section on each of: Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment; Supporting student success; Student partnership and engagement; and Enhancement and quality culture. There will be consideration of the effectiveness and impact of the institution's use of Data and evidence, and Externality in meeting the other indicators within the overarching principle.

Each section will open with a statement that confirms whether or not the review team considers the institution to be effective in that area.

# Annex L: Action plan guidance

All institutions are required to complete an action plan within a maximum of 12 weeks following the publication of the TQER report. The action plan should be signed off by the head of the institution or governing body and should be developed with students. The action plan should address the recommendations and must contain clear actions linked to the recommendations with deadlines and, where appropriate, process stages. Institutions are also asked to outline developments and ongoing actions to disseminate and enhance the areas identified as good practice. This should form part of the action plan, but the main focus should be on the recommendations.

Institutions are advised to share the initial draft action plan following review with their QAA Liaison for feedback. The action plan submitted at 12 weeks will be published by QAA. The format of the plan should be aligned with the SEAP action plan so that it can be integrated into the SEAP at the point of next submission. This means that the action plan should be in the following format:

| **Principle and area for development** | **Action(s) and planned impact/ outcomes** | **Milestone(s)/target date(s), continuing/carried forward (c/f)** | **Responsible/lead** |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |

Under **principle and area for development**, institutions should list the recommendation/area of good practice in full as worded in the TQER report and specify the TQEF principle(s) to which this aligns.

Under **action(s) and planned impact/outcomes**, the institution is asked to detail the process steps to meet the requirements of the recommendation. For example, this may include focus groups or research to contextualise the issue raised, development of policy/practice and its approval, implementation stages and evaluation. In addition, there should be a statement on planned impact which can be evaluated. The actions should be specific and measurable. The detail in the plan should demonstrate how the recommendation is being addressed and enable progress to be monitored.

The **milestones** should be timely and align with any timescales specified by the review team.

The **responsible lead** should outline the position in the institution that is responsible for each individual action.

QAA and SFC expect institutions to update the action plan jointly with students on an annual basis as part of the SEAP until all actions are signed off as completed. The action plan will form part of the documentation for discussion at the Institutional Liaison Meeting. At Institutional Liaison Meetings, QAA will highlight any matters to be reviewed at the subsequent visit. QAA will advise SFC of any instances where an institution is not making appropriate progress on TQER outcomes. SFC may take additional action in line with its statutory duty.

# Annex M: Appeals and complaints

Appeals and formal complaints procedures are designed to ensure that there is no conflict of interest throughout, and both are handled by QAA's Governance team to avoid any conflict of interest. No one involved will have had previous involvement with the matter.

## Appeals

An appeal is a challenge by an institution to the outcome of a review or to another decision made by QAA.

QAA has a consolidated appeals procedure. This is available on QAA's public website.

A number of methods have tailored appeals procedures where a regulator requires specific elements that differ from the consolidated procedure. These are available on the same page of QAA's public website. Where there is no specific procedure, the consolidated procedure applies.

The appeal procedures state when an appeal can be made, the deadline by which an appeal must be made to be valid, what is an appealable judgement and the grounds for appeal. The procedures set out the process, timescales and potential outcomes.

## Complaints

A complaint is an expression of an individual's dissatisfaction with their experience of dealing with QAA. This can include a complaint about QAA's delivery of its Welsh language standards. Complaints may be on behalf of the individual's institution.

Please note that if a formal complaint is received at the same time as an appeal, the complaint is stayed until the appeal has been concluded.

In common with most complaints' procedures, QAA would encourage anyone dissatisfied with its service to first speak to the person that they have been dealing with at QAA, so that they can try to assist and to find a resolution. If you then wish to pursue a complaint you should refer to QAA's Complaints Handling Procedure which is available on its public website. This details who you should contact and how your complaint will be handled, indicative timescales and outcomes.

# Annex N: Monitoring and evaluation of the review method

## Purpose and principles of monitoring and evaluation

QAA monitors and evaluates the operation of Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) on an ongoing basis and undertakes regular evaluation of the effectiveness of the method. This is intended to encompass all stages of the review process, support QAA in delivering the method effectively, and inform the ongoing development of the method in the wider context in Scotland and ESG.

QAA designs its monitoring and evaluation activity to:

- be regular and timely
- ensure institutions (including students) and reviewers can provide structured feedback
- support the training and continuing development of reviewers
- encourage active reflection and dialogue on the design and development of the method to ensure it continues to be fit-for-purpose
- support continuous improvement
- enable collective learning across QAA.

## Monitoring and evaluation

QAA invites all those engaging in TQER to be involved in the monitoring process: the institution, Lead Student Representative, reviewers and the QAA Review Manager responsible for managing the review. QAA seeks feedback through monitoring questionnaires, which it asks all participants in TQER to complete once the review report has been finalised. QAA encourages all parties to take part in the process. The questionnaires seek comment on operational aspects of the review as well as broader questions relating to the effectiveness of the method. Reviewers are invited to reflect on and evaluate their own performance which is used to inform individual development plans and to identify training and other support needs for reviewers.

Building on information gathered in monitoring, QAA evaluates the effectiveness of TQER in achieving its objectives as an enhancement-led review method within the wider perspective of the Scottish context and ESG on an annual basis. It will update and modify the Guide and other guidance to ensure that TQER remains a responsive method that meets sector needs. An additional benefit of annual monitoring is the identification of weaknesses and strengths that can be used to inform the membership services and thematic activity of QAA.

At the end of the cycle, QAA will conduct a wider evaluation on the effectiveness and impact of the review method over time. QAA will invite institutions, student bodies and reviewers to take part. This enables QAA to reflect on how the method has delivered its objectives and helps to inform the next iteration of the external review and consultation on the development of the subsequent method.

# Annex O: Scottish Quality Concerns Scheme concerns incorporated within TQER

A Concern about academic standards and/or the quality of the student learning experience at a higher education institution can be raised to QAA by students, staff and other parties through the Scottish Quality Concerns Scheme (SQCS). Where there is a Concern submitted to the SQCS in the run up to a Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER), it may be incorporated within the TQER.

Depending on the nature of the Concern, QAA may add extra reviewers to the review team and may extend the number of days of the Initial Review Visit and/or Main Review Visit so that sufficient time can be given to the concern. If the duration of the Main Review Visit has already been decided, the review team may need to revise its decision.

Where a Concern is considered as part of TQER, QAA will develop a review plan in accordance with the Targeted Peer Review Process that forms part of the SQCS. The review plan would be shared with the review team. An outline of the review plan detailing the nature of the Concern and areas under investigation will be sent to the institution. The review team may make a separate request for additional information if it is not feasible to do so as part of the TQER timeline, but no later than two weeks before the Main Review Visit. Where a Concern is investigated as part of a TQER, the review will be conducted as part of onsite engagement with the institution. The review team may need to revise their meeting schedule and the list of key staff to meet on the visit.

The reporting of the Concern will be incorporated within the TQER review report and contribute evidence to the review team's judgements and findings. It is possible that the consideration of the Concern may lead to recommendations and may have an impact on the judgement.

In the instance where a Concern is referred to a Targeted Peer Review after the Main Review Visit has ended, which may affect the review outcome, QAA may decide to delay publication of the report while it conducts a separate Targeted Peer Review. QAA will determine whether the concerns have already been captured by the review team in their report, or whether they represent new issues of which the review team was unaware.

QAA may also follow up on an institution's response to the outcomes of an earlier Concern(s) through the TQER review process as outlined in the Scottish Quality Concerns process. Concern information may be shared with the review team, and this may result in requests for additional evidence, and/or additional meetings at the Initial Review Visit and/or the Main Review Visit.

# Annex P: Data protection

QAA complies with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679 - the *Data Protection Act 2018* - and any other applicable data protection legislation in relation to personal data. QAA only processes personal data for the purposes of conducting its review activities and, in this case, ensuring data shall only be accessible to those who require access to carry the requirements of TQER. This may include consideration of concerns under the Scottish Quality Concern Scheme.

QAA is committed to ensuring and maintaining the security and confidentiality of personal and/or special category data, and all members of staff are responsible for handling data in accordance with QAA's Data Protection Policy so that personal and special category information is processed compliantly. All QAA staff and reviewers undergo GDPR training on an annual basis. How QAA gathers and processes personal information, the individual's rights and QAA's obligations are set out in QAA's Privacy Notice. There is a Data Protection Incident Reporting Policy and procedure for reporting, assessing and managing incidents.

QAA stores personal data and non-personal data securely and ensures the data is only accessible to those who require access to it to carry out the TQER. No data or information extracted from TQER will be passed to any party unless agreed in writing, with the exception of the documentation indicated in **Annex E: Advance Information Set** which is to be shared with SCQF.

# Annex Q: Equality, diversity and inclusion

## Equality, diversity and inclusion at QAA in general

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) are important to QAA. QAA recognises the positive benefits of equality, diversity and inclusion and is committed to providing opportunities which embrace diversity and promote equality and inclusivity. QAA's commitment is captured in an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and related policies, such as that on Dignity at Work, and reinforced by QAA's values. EDI training is mandatory for all members of staff.

EDI informs QAA's work with its members - for instance, thematic activity on inclusive learning communities and work in developing the UK's Standards and Frameworks. EDI is, for example, considered by the review teams revising the UK's Subject Benchmark Statements.

## Equality, diversity and inclusion in reviews

In a number of European Higher Education Area (EHEA) nations, the external quality assurance agency has a significant role to play in exploring matters of discrimination and intolerance or ensuring ethical behaviour. Thus, the ESG contains a number of references to guarding against discrimination or intolerance (1.1 and 3.6), attending to diversity, developing respect (1.3) and ethical behaviour (3.6).

Equality and diversity have a lower profile in external quality reviews in the UK because of legislation such as Public Sector Equality Duties, the *Equality Act* (2010), employment practices, equality monitoring, equality and diversity training and awareness. Various forms of external monitoring and reporting by other public bodies cover expectations in this respect for tertiary education institutions. Furthermore, institutions are supported in developing good practices by the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Directorate within Advance HE and by sector-wide and sector-led work on matters such as fair admissions. Tertiary education regulators and funders monitor and analyse performance against equality and diversity indicators.

EDI training is part of the approach to reviewer training, both as part of generic training and in looking at matters such as guarding against bias in the conduct of reviews.

Across its methods, QAA places particular emphasis on *how* institutions respond to and support the diversity of their student body and enable all their students to fulfil their potential. This informs the way in which reviews are conducted and review teams will comment on examples of good practice or make recommendations for action.

## National Equality Outcomes (NEO)

The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) have identified persistent inequalities in the tertiary education system that institutions should address as part of their Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The National Equality Outcomes (NEOs), identified in the SFC-EHRC report Tackling persistent inequalities together, include consideration of:

- Success and retention rates of students and seeks improvements, at a national scale, for older students in the university sector and younger students in the college sector.

- Satisfaction levels of disabled students in relation to the reasonable adjustments put in place to support their learning and student experience.
- The imbalance on courses by sex.
- The mental health of staff and students and seeks improvements in student learning outcomes and assurances of access to mental health support.
- The safety of students and staff and steps taken to address harassment particularly in relation to disability, race, sexual orientation, trans identity and religion and belief.
- Responding to the Scottish Government's Equally Safe strategy particularly in relation to prevention, support, and response mechanisms.
- Proportionate representation of staff, Boards and Courts particularly in relation to race and disability.

The NEOs have been developed by EHRC, SFC, and equality leads and planners from the sector and charities, with input from those with lived experience of inequalities. SFC, in partnership with the EHRC, will review progress made towards the NEOs through reviewing PSED reports.

With respect to the NEOs, SFC ask institutions to:

- Consider their contribution to the NEOs, where appropriate, as part of their legal requirement under the 2021-25 Public Sector Equality Duty reporting cycle.
- Work with their students and Student Association to address the inequalities and contribute to the NEOs.

# Annex R: Conflicts of interest

QAA works to maintain the highest possible standard of integrity in the conduct of its work and is actively vigilant against any perception of conflict or bias. Alongside the ways in which QAA ensures that there is no conflict in the handling of appeals and complaints, QAA seeks to ensure that there are no conflicts of interest in the conduct of reviews and has a Conflicts of Interest Policy. The policy recognises the range of potential conflicts (including direct and indirect, actual and perceived). QAA staff and reviewers are responsible for declaring conflicts of interest as soon as they are aware of them and for following the relevant guidance on considering those conflicts as set out in the QAA Conflicts of Interest Policy. Given the size, complexity and dynamic nature of the tertiary education sector, new conflicts may emerge - for instance, a job opportunity may emerge for a reviewer. QAA and review staff must be actively vigilant against any perception of conflict or bias.

Before review teams are finalised, proposed names will be checked with an institution to ensure that they do not know of any potential conflict with the individuals selected. Individual reviewers will not always be aware of institutional-level conflicts - for example, discussions with a collaborative partner - and so it is the responsibility of the institution to raise known connections.

# Annex S: ESG Part 1 mapping

## Mapping the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) (2015) to the 2024 UK Quality Code.

A fundamental aim of the ESG is to contribute to the common understanding of quality assurance for learning and teaching across borders and among all stakeholders. In response to feedback from the sector, QAA offers this mapping of the ESG to the latest (2024) iteration of the Quality Code. The ESG is integral to the regulatory frameworks in Scotland and Wales and often referenced in partnership arrangements for UK providers seeking to work with European partners.

| ESG Standard and guidelines (ESG 2015) | Sector-agreed principles and key practices to which ESG Standard aligns |
|---|---|
| **1.1 POLICY FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE**<br><br>Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.<br><br>**Guidelines:**<br><br>Policies and processes are the main pillars of a coherent institutional quality assurance system that forms a cycle for continuous improvement and contributes to the accountability of the institution. It supports the development of quality culture in which all internal stakeholders assume responsibility for quality and engage in quality assurance at all levels of the institution.<br><br>In order to facilitate this, the policy has a formal status and is publicly available. Quality assurance policies are most effective when they reflect the relationship between research and learning & teaching and take account of both the national context in which the institution operates, the institutional context and its strategic approach. | **Principle 1 - Taking a strategic approach to managing quality and standards**<br><br>Providers demonstrate they have a strategic approach to securing academic standards and assuring and enhancing quality that is embedded across the organisation.<br><br>**Key practices**<br><br>1a Academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience are the responsibility of the provider. Degree-awarding bodies are aware that they have ultimate responsibility for the qualifications offered in their name.<br><br>1b The strategic approach is employed wherever and however provision is delivered and is embedded in the culture and practices of providers. |

| ESG Standard and guidelines (ESG 2015) | Sector-agreed principles and key practices to which ESG Standard aligns |
|---|---|
| Such a policy supports:<br>• the organisation of the quality assurance system<br>• departments, schools, faculties and other organisational units, as well as those of institutional leadership, individual staff members and students, to take on their responsibilities in quality assurance<br>• academic integrity and freedom, and is vigilant against academic fraud<br>• guarding against intolerance of any kind or discrimination against the students or staff<br>• the involvement of external stakeholders in quality assurance.<br><br>The policy translates into practice through a variety of internal quality assurance processes that allow participation across the institution. How the policy is implemented, monitored and revised is the institution's decision.<br><br>The quality assurance policy also covers any elements of an institution's activities that are subcontracted to or carried out by other parties. | 1c The strategic approach aligns with providers' policies and practices on equity, equality, diversity and inclusion, and environmental sustainability for students and staff.<br><br>1d The strategic approach is published and supported by a comprehensive and transparent governance framework that is communicated clearly and is accessible to staff, students and external stakeholders.<br><br>1e The strategic approach is monitored and evaluated on a regular basis. |
| **1.2 DESIGN AND APPROVAL OF PROGRAMMES**<br><br>Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to *The Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area.* | **Principle 5 - Monitoring, evaluating and enhancing provision**<br><br>Providers regularly monitor and review their provision to secure academic standards and enhance quality. Deliberate steps are taken to engage and involve students, staff and external expertise in monitoring and evaluation activity. The outcomes and impact of these activities are considered at provider level to drive reflection and enhancement across the provider. |

| ESG Standard and guidelines (ESG 2015) | Sector-agreed principles and key practices to which ESG Standard aligns |
|---|---|
| **Guidelines:**<br><br>Study programmes are at the core of the higher education institutions' teaching mission. They provide students with both academic knowledge and skills, including those that are transferable, which may influence their personal development and may be applied in their future careers.<br><br>Programmes:<br>• are designed with overall programme objectives that are in line with the institutional strategy and have explicit intended learning outcomes<br>• are designed by involving students and other stakeholders in the work<br>• benefit from external expertise and reference points<br>• reflect the four purposes of higher education of the Council of Europe (cf. Scope and Concepts)<br>• are designed so that they enable smooth student progression<br>• define the expected student workload, eg in ECTS<br>• include well-structured placement opportunities where appropriate<br>• are subject to a formal institutional approval process. | **Key practice**<br><br>5g Programmes and modules are monitored and reviewed regularly by internal and external peers, employers and students, in line with the provider's strategic approach to quality and standards. Outcomes from processes required from funding, accrediting, professional and approval bodies feed into monitoring and review.<br><br>**Principle 7 - Designing, developing, approving and modifying programmes**<br><br>Providers design, develop, approve and modify programmes and modules to ensure the quality of provision and the academic standards of awards are consistent with the relevant Qualifications Framework. Providers ensure their provision and level of qualifications are comparable to those offered across the UK and, where applicable, The Framework of Qualifications for The European Higher Education Area.<br><br>**Key practices**<br><br>7a All programmes and modules meet academic standards that are consistent with relevant national qualifications and credit frameworks. Where applicable, provision also meets professional body and accreditation requirements, and apprenticeship standards.<br><br>7c The award to be received and how outcomes of study are recorded and certificated are made clear to all students and staff involved in the teaching, learning and evaluation of the programme and module. |

| ESG Standard and guidelines (ESG 2015) | Sector-agreed principles and key practices to which ESG Standard aligns |
|---|---|
| | 7e External engagement and evaluation form a component part of the design, development, approval and modification process.<br><br>7g Students are involved meaningfully in the design, development, approval and modification of programmes and modules.<br><br>**Principle 11 - Teaching, learning and assessment**<br><br>Providers facilitate a collaborative and inclusive approach that enables students to have a high-quality learning experience and to progress through their studies. All students are supported to develop and demonstrate academic and professional skills and competencies. Assessment employs a variety of methods, embodying the values of academic integrity, producing outcomes that are comparable across the UK and recognised globally.<br><br>**Key practice**<br><br>11b Students are given clear information about the intended modular and/or programme learning outcomes and the purpose of assessment, and are enabled to use feedback/feedforward to support further learning. |
| **1.3 STUDENT-CENTRED LEARNING, TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT**<br><br>Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.<br><br>**Guidelines:**<br><br>Student-centred learning and teaching plays an important role in stimulating students' motivation, self-reflection and engagement in the learning process. This means careful consideration of the design | **Principle 2 - Engaging students as partners**<br><br>Providers take deliberate steps to engage students as active partners in assuring and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience. Engagement happens individually and collectively to influence all levels of study and decision making. Enhancements identified through student engagement activities are implemented, where appropriate, and communicated to staff and students.<br><br>2a Student engagement through partnership working is strategically led, student-centred and embedded in the culture |

| ESG Standard and guidelines (ESG 2015) | Sector-agreed principles and key practices to which ESG Standard aligns |
|---|---|
| and delivery of study programmes and the assessment of outcomes.<br><br>The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching:<br>• respects and attends to the diversity of students and their needs, enabling flexible learning paths<br>• considers and uses different modes of delivery, where appropriate<br>• flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods<br>• regularly evaluates and adjusts the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods<br>• encourages a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher<br>• promotes mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship<br>• has appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints.<br><br>Considering the importance of assessment for the students' progression and their future careers, quality assurance processes for assessment take into account the following:<br>• Assessors are familiar with existing testing and examination methods and receive support in developing their own skills in this field.<br>• The criteria for and method of assessment as well as criteria for marking are published in advance.<br>• The assessment allows students to demonstrate the extent to which the intended learning outcomes have been achieved. Students are given feedback, which, if necessary, is linked to advice on the learning process.<br>• Where possible, assessment is carried out by more than one examiner. | of providers.<br><br>2b Student engagement and representation activities are clearly defined, communicated, resourced and supported. Transparent arrangements are in place for the collective student voice to be heard and responded to.<br><br>2d Student engagement opportunities and processes are inclusive of students' characteristics and responsive to the diversity of each provider's student population. They involve student representative bodies, where applicable.<br><br>**Principle 5 - Monitoring, evaluating and enhancing provision**<br><br>Providers regularly monitor and review their provision to secure academic standards and enhance quality. Deliberate steps are taken to engage and involve students, staff and external expertise in monitoring and evaluation activity. The outcomes and impact of these activities are considered at provider level to drive reflection and enhancement across the provider.<br><br>5c Staff and students are engaged in monitoring and evaluation activities and receive appropriate training and support to undertake them.<br><br>**Principle 11 - Teaching, learning and assessment**<br><br>Providers facilitate a collaborative and inclusive approach that enables students to have a high-quality learning experience and to progress through their studies. All students are supported to develop and demonstrate academic and professional skills and competencies. Assessment employs a variety of methods, embodying the values of academic integrity, producing outcomes that are comparable across the UK and recognised globally. |

| ESG Standard and guidelines (ESG 2015) | Sector-agreed principles and key practices to which ESG Standard aligns |
|---|---|
| • The regulations for assessment take into account mitigating circumstance.<br>• Assessment is consistent, fairly applied to all students and carried out in accordance with the stated procedures.<br>• A formal procedure for student appeals is in place. | 11a Learning and assessment at all levels is informed by research and/or scholarship. Teaching, learning and assessment align to ensure students can demonstrate their achievements, reflect on and reinforce their prior learning, skills and knowledge, and fulfil their potential.<br><br>11b Students are given clear information about the intended modular and/or programme learning outcomes and the purpose of assessment and are enabled to use feedback/feedforward to support further learning.<br><br>11c Staff involved in facilitating learning and supervising research are appropriately qualified and supported to enhance their teaching and supervisory practice. Research degrees are delivered in supportive environments that are conducive to learning and research.<br><br>11d Students are enabled and encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and to take an active role in shaping and enhancing the learning process. Providers offer ongoing advice and guidance about academic integrity to ensure that students and staff understand what is expected of them.<br><br>11f Providers design assessments that test appropriate learning outcomes and are fair, reliable, accessible, authentic and inclusive. Where applicable, and sustainable, students are offered different options for undertaking assessments to promote accessibility and inclusion.<br><br>**Principle 12 - Operating, concerns, complaints and appeals processes**<br><br>Providers operate processes for complaints and appeals that are robust, fair, transparent and accessible, and clearly articulated to staff and students. Policies and processes for concerns, complaints |

| ESG Standard and guidelines (ESG 2015) | Sector-agreed principles and key practices to which ESG Standard aligns |
|---|---|
| | and appeals are regularly reviewed and the outcomes are used to support the enhancement of provision and the student experience.<br><br>12a Policies and processes for concerns, complaints and appeals are accessible, robust and inclusive, and enable early resolution wherever possible and include information relating to recruitment, selection and admission.<br><br>12b Concerns, complaints and appeals policies and procedures, including information about them, are clear and transparent to students, those advising them and those implementing the processes. Formal and informal stages of the processes are clearly articulated. |
| **1.4 STUDENT ADMISSION, PROGRESSION, RECOGNITION AND CERTIFICATION**<br><br>Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student 'life-cycle', eg student admission, progression, recognition and certification.<br><br>**Guidelines:**<br><br>Providing conditions and support that are necessary for students to make progress in their academic career is in the best interest of the individual students, programmes, institutions and systems. It is vital to have fit-for-purpose admission, recognition and completion procedures, particularly when students are mobile within and across higher education systems.<br><br>It is important that access policies, admission processes and criteria are implemented consistently and in a transparent manner. Induction to the institution and the programme is provided. | **Principle 4 - Using data to inform and evaluate quality**<br><br>Providers collect, analyse and utilise qualitative and quantitative data at provider, departmental, programme and module levels. These analyses inform decision-making with the aim of enhancing practices and processes relating to teaching, learning and the wider student experience.<br><br>4a A consistent, coherent and evidence-informed strategic approach to the collection, storage and management of data is employed across the provider. The provider makes explicit the type and level of data utilised (such as departmental, programme, module level) and the policies and processes that underpin its use in the maintenance of academic standards and the assurance and enhancement of quality.<br><br>4c When designing and operating monitoring and evaluation arrangements, staff and students adhere to ethical and data protection requirements relating to gathering and submitting |

| ESG Standard and guidelines (ESG 2015) | Sector-agreed principles and key practices to which ESG Standard aligns |
|---|---|
| Institutions need to put in place both processes and tools to collect, monitor and act on information on student progression.<br><br>Fair recognition of higher education qualifications, periods of study and prior learning, including the recognition of non-formal and informal learning, are essential components for ensuring the students' progress in their studies, while promoting mobility.<br><br>Appropriate recognition procedures rely on:<br>• institutional practice for recognition being in line with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention<br>• cooperation with other institutions, quality assurance agencies and the national ENIC/NARIC centre with a view to ensuring coherent recognition across the country.<br><br>Graduation represents the culmination of the students' period of study. Students need to receive documentation explaining the qualification gained, including achieved learning outcomes and the context, level, content and status of the studies that were pursued and successfully completed. | data for national data sets, regulatory purposes, and internal monitoring and evaluation.<br><br>**Principle 5 - Monitoring, evaluating and enhancing provision**<br><br>Providers regularly monitor and review their provision to secure academic standards and enhance quality. Deliberate steps are taken to engage and involve students, staff and external expertise in monitoring and evaluation activity. The outcomes and impact of these activities are considered at provider level to drive reflection and enhancement across the provider.<br><br>5b The methods for monitoring and evaluation activity are documented to clarify their aims, objectives, intended actions and targets. They are explicit about how they will be conducted, the nature of evidence (data) to be considered and the form of reporting, along with key indicators of success.<br><br>**Principle 7 - Designing, developing, approving and modifying programmes**<br><br>Providers design, develop, approve and modify programmes and modules to ensure the quality of provision and the academic standards of awards are consistent with the relevant Qualifications Framework. Providers ensure their provision and level of qualifications are comparable to those offered across the UK and, where applicable, The Framework of Qualifications for The European Higher Education Area.<br><br>7a All programmes and modules meet academic standards that are consistent with relevant national qualifications and credit frameworks. Where applicable, provision also meets |

| ESG Standard and guidelines (ESG 2015) | Sector-agreed principles and key practices to which ESG Standard aligns |
|---|---|
| | professional body and accreditation requirements, and apprenticeship standards<br><br>7c The award to be received and how outcomes of study are recorded and certificated are made clear to all students and staff involved in the teaching, learning and evaluation of the programme and module.<br><br>**Principle 9 - Recruiting, selecting and admitting students**<br><br>Providers operate recruitment, selection and admissions processes that are transparent, fair and inclusive. Providers maintain and publish accurate, relevant and accessible information about their provision, enabling students to make informed choices about their studies and future aspirations.<br><br>9a Policies and procedures for application, recruitment, selection and admission to programmes are reliable, fair, transparent and accessible, including processes for the recognition of prior learning. Similar and proportionate arrangements are in place for modules and other units of study.<br><br>9b Providers offer information that supports prospective students, and their advisors for recruitment and widening access purposes, in making informed decisions. Providers meet their legal and regulatory obligations in relation to the information presented about themselves and their provision or any changes they make to programmes and modules.<br><br>9d All teams involved in the application, selection and admissions processes ensure information about the applicant journey is consistent and clear. Specific elements of the selection process are clearly defined and any programme or module changes that |

| ESG Standard and guidelines (ESG 2015) | Sector-agreed principles and key practices to which ESG Standard aligns |
|---|---|
| | can impact decision making are communicated swiftly and consistently to enable all parties to exercise informed choice. |
| **1.5 TEACHING STAFF**<br><br>Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.<br><br>**Guidelines:**<br><br>The teacher's role is essential in creating a high-quality student experience and enabling the acquisition of knowledge, competences and skills. The diversifying student population and stronger focus on learning outcomes require student-centred learning and teaching and the role of the teacher is, therefore, also changing (cf Standard 1.3).<br><br>Higher education institutions have primary responsibility for the quality of their staff and for providing them with a supportive environment that allows them to carry out their work effectively. Such an environment:<br><br>• sets up and follows clear, transparent and fair processes for staff recruitment and conditions of employment that recognise the importance of teaching<br>• offers opportunities for and promotes the professional development of teaching staff<br>• encourages scholarly activity to strengthen the link between education and research<br>• encourages innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies. | **Principle 4 - Using data to inform and evaluate quality**<br><br>Providers collect, analyse and utilise qualitative and quantitative data at provider, departmental, programme and module levels. These analyses inform decision-making with the aim of enhancing practices and processes relating to teaching, learning and the wider student experience.<br><br>4d Staff who are required to collect, manipulate and analyse data for reporting, quality assurance and enhancement purposes receive training that enables them to undertake these activities effectively, ethically and securely. Policies cover any third-party use of data, including applications utilising Generative Artificial Intelligence.<br><br>**Principle 9 - Recruiting, selecting and admitting students**<br><br>Providers operate recruitment, selection and admissions processes that are transparent, fair and inclusive. Providers maintain and publish accurate, relevant and accessible information about their provision, enabling students to make informed choices about their studies and future aspirations.<br><br>9c Staff, student representatives and external partners engaged in the delivery of recruitment, selection, admissions and widening access processes are appropriately trained and resourced.<br><br>**Principle 10 - Supporting students to achieve their potential**<br><br>Providers facilitate a framework of support for students that enables them to have a high-quality learning experience and achieve their potential as they progress in their studies. The support structure |

| ESG Standard and guidelines (ESG 2015) | Sector-agreed principles and key practices to which ESG Standard aligns |
|---|---|
| | scaffolds the academic, personal and professional learning journey, enabling students to recognise and articulate their progress and achievements.<br><br>10d Staff are appropriately qualified, trained and supported to deliver high-quality learning and support for all students, particularly those with specific needs and requirements.<br><br>**Principle 11 - Teaching, learning and assessment**<br><br>Providers facilitate a collaborative and inclusive approach that enables students to have a high-quality learning experience and to progress through their studies. All students are supported to develop and demonstrate academic and professional skills and competencies. Assessment employs a variety of methods, embodying the values of academic integrity, producing outcomes that are comparable across the UK and recognised globally.<br><br>11c Staff involved in facilitating learning and supervising research are appropriately qualified and supported to enhance their teaching and supervisory practice. Research degrees are delivered in supportive environments that are conducive to learning and research. |
| **1.6 LEARNING RESOURCES AND STUDENT SUPPORT**<br><br>Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.<br><br>**Guidelines:**<br><br>For a good higher education experience, institutions provide a range of resources to assist student learning. These vary from physical | **Principle 3 - Resourcing delivery of a high-quality learning experience**<br><br>Providers plan, secure and maintain resources relating to learning, technology, facilities and staffing to enable the delivery and enhancement of an accessible, innovative and high-quality learning experience for students that aligns with the provider's strategy and the composition of the student body. |

| ESG Standard and guidelines (ESG 2015) | Sector-agreed principles and key practices to which ESG Standard aligns |
|---|---|
| resources - such as libraries, study facilities and IT infrastructure - to human support in the form of tutors, counsellors and other advisers. The role of support services is of particular importance in facilitating the mobility of students within and across higher education systems.<br><br>The needs of a diverse student population (such as mature, part-time, employed and international students as well as students with disabilities), and the shift towards student-centred learning and flexible modes of learning and teaching, are taken into account when allocating, planning and providing the learning resources and student support.<br><br>Support activities and facilities may be organised in a variety of ways depending on the institutional context. However, the internal quality assurance ensures that all resources are fit-for-purpose, accessible and that students are informed about the services available to them.<br><br>In delivering support services, the role of support and administrative staff is crucial and therefore they need to be qualified and have opportunities to develop their competences. | 3b Providers ensure they have dedicated, accessible and inclusive resources to support and enhance the delivery of their programmes (and smaller units of study) along with the wellbeing of students and staff. These include staffing, digital and physical resources.<br><br>3d Resources are allocated to ensure that staff receive ongoing professional development to support and enhance the delivery of a high-quality and innovative student learning and research experience.<br><br>3e Processes and activities to support the management of academic standards and quality enhancement are appropriately resourced to meet strategic, operational and regulatory objectives and requirements.<br><br>3f The creation, development and maintenance of accessible and inclusive learning environments (physical and virtual) offer all students the opportunity to be engaged in their learning experience and facilitate a sense of belonging. Providers ensure they consider environmental sustainability in designing and maintaining these learning resources and facilities.<br><br>3g Providers, in collaboration with staff and students, monitor and evaluate on a systematic basis the effectiveness and impact of learning environments and the resources required for the delivery and enhancement of the learning experience.<br><br>**Principle 10 - Supporting students to achieve their potential**<br><br>Providers facilitate a framework of support for students that enables them to have a high-quality learning experience and achieve their potential as they progress in their studies. The support structure scaffolds the academic, personal and professional learning journey, enabling students to recognise and articulate their progress and achievements. |

| ESG Standard and guidelines (ESG 2015) | Sector-agreed principles and key practices to which ESG Standard aligns |
|---|---|
| | 10a Accessible, relevant, accurate and timely information is offered to students and the staff supporting them throughout the learning journey about the provider, programme of study, wider opportunities for development and availability of support services.<br><br>10b All students are supported at key transition points throughout their journey, with their specific needs and requirements met and their pathways into learning recognised.<br><br>10c Students and staff are aware of the ongoing academic, professional and pastoral services and activities available, and students are encouraged to access these opportunities and support throughout their learning journey.<br><br>10d Staff are appropriately qualified, trained and supported to deliver high-quality learning and support for all students, particularly those with specific needs and requirements.<br><br>10e As students move through their learning journey, they are given the opportunity and support to transition effectively between academic levels, further study and employment. Providers enable students to recognise the progression they have made and steps they need to take to achieve their potential.<br><br>10f Providers design assessments that test appropriate learning outcomes and are fair, reliable, accessible, authentic and inclusive. Where applicable, and sustainable, students are offered different options for undertaking assessments to promote accessibility and inclusion.<br><br>**Principle 11 - Teaching, learning and assessment**<br><br>Providers facilitate a collaborative and inclusive approach that enables students to have a high-quality learning experience and to progress through their studies. All students are supported to develop |

| ESG Standard and guidelines (ESG 2015) | Sector-agreed principles and key practices to which ESG Standard aligns |
|---|---|
| | and demonstrate academic and professional skills and competencies. Assessment employs a variety of methods, embodying the values of academic integrity, producing outcomes that are comparable across the UK and recognised globally.<br><br>11a Learning and assessment at all levels is informed by research and/or scholarship. Teaching, learning and assessment align to ensure students can demonstrate their achievements, reflect on and reinforce their prior learning, skills and knowledge, and fulfil their potential.<br><br>11b Students are given clear information about the intended modular and/or programme learning outcomes and the purpose of assessment and are enabled to use feedback/feedforward to support further learning.<br><br>11c Staff involved in facilitating learning and supervising research are appropriately qualified and supported to enhance their teaching and supervisory practice. Research degrees are delivered in supportive environments that are conducive to learning and research.<br><br>11e As students move through their learning journey, they are given the opportunity and support to transition effectively between academic levels, further study and employment. Providers enable students to recognise the progression they have made and steps they need to take to achieve their potential.<br><br>11f Providers design assessments that test appropriate learning outcomes and are fair, reliable, accessible, authentic and inclusive. Where applicable, and sustainable, students are offered different options for undertaking assessments to promote accessibility and inclusion. |

| ESG Standard and guidelines (ESG 2015) | Sector-agreed principles and key practices to which ESG Standard aligns |
|---|---|
| **1.7 INFORMATION MANAGEMENT**<br><br>Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.<br><br>**Guidelines:**<br><br>Reliable data is crucial for informed decision-making and for knowing what is working well and what needs attention. Effective processes to collect and analyse information about study programmes and other activities feed into the internal quality assurance system.<br><br>The information gathered depends, to some extent, on the type and mission of the institution. The following are of interest:<br>• key performance indicators<br>• profile of the student population<br>• student progression, success and drop-out rates<br>• students' satisfaction with their programmes<br>• learning resources and student support available<br>• career paths of graduates.<br><br>Various methods of collecting information may be used. It is important that students and staff are involved in providing and analysing information and planning follow-up activities. | **Principle 4 - Using data to inform and evaluate quality**<br><br>Providers collect, analyse and utilise qualitative and quantitative data at provider, departmental, programme and module levels. These analyses inform decision-making with the aim of enhancing practices and processes relating to teaching, learning and the wider student experience.<br><br>a A consistent, coherent and evidence-informed strategic approach to the collection, storage and management of data is employed across the provider. The provider makes explicit the type and level of data utilised (such as departmental, programme, module level) and the policies and processes that underpin its use in the maintenance of academic standards and the assurance and enhancement of quality.<br><br>b Staff and students are aware of the types of data gathered and how it is stored and used in the management of quality and standards.<br><br>c When designing and operating monitoring and evaluation arrangements, staff and students adhere to ethical and data protection requirements relating to gathering and submitting data for national data sets, regulatory purposes, and internal monitoring and evaluation.<br><br>e Providers in partnership arrangements (including the student representative body, where applicable) ensure data sharing agreements and reporting requirements are clearly stated, understood and reviewed periodically.<br><br>f Data is collected and analysed in ways that enable providers to understand and respond to the needs of their student populations - promoting equality, diversity and inclusion, and environmental sustainability. |

| ESG Standard and guidelines (ESG 2015) | Sector-agreed principles and key practices to which ESG Standard aligns |
|---|---|
| **1.8 PUBLIC INFORMATION**<br><br>Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to-date and readily accessible.<br><br>**Guidelines:**<br><br>Information on institutions' activities is useful for prospective and current students as well as for graduates, other stakeholders and the public.<br><br>Therefore, institutions provide information about their activities, including the programmes they offer and the selection criteria for them; the intended learning outcomes of these programmes; the qualifications they award; the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used; the pass rates; and the learning opportunities available to their students as well as graduate employment information. | **Principle 7 - Designing, developing, approving and modifying programmes**<br><br>Providers design, develop, approve and modify programmes and modules to ensure the quality of provision and the academic standards of awards are consistent with the relevant Qualifications Framework. Providers ensure their provision and level of qualifications are comparable to those offered across the UK and, where applicable, *The Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area*.<br><br>7b A definitive set of documents are produced from the design, development, approval and modification processes, which are held securely and act as the primary source of information about each programme. Similar but proportionate arrangements are in place for modules and smaller units of study.<br><br>**Principle 9 - Recruiting, selecting and admitting students**<br><br>Providers operate recruitment, selection and admissions processes that are transparent, fair and inclusive. Providers maintain and publish accurate, relevant and accessible information about their provision, enabling students to make informed choices about their studies and future aspirations.<br><br>9b Providers offer information that supports prospective students, and their advisers for recruitment and widening access purposes, in making informed decisions. Providers meet their legal and regulatory obligations in relation to the information presented about themselves and their provision or any changes they make to programmes and modules. |

| ESG Standard and guidelines (ESG 2015) | Sector-agreed principles and key practices to which ESG Standard aligns |
|---|---|
| | 9d All teams involved in the application, selection and admissions processes ensure information about the applicant journey is consistent and clear. Specific elements of the selection process are clearly defined and any programme or module changes that can impact decision making are communicated swiftly and consistently to enable all parties to exercise informed choice.<br><br>**Principle 10 - Supporting students to achieve their potential**<br><br>Providers facilitate a framework of support for students that enables them to have a high-quality learning experience and achieve their potential as they progress in their studies. The support structure scaffolds the academic, personal and professional learning journey, enabling students to recognise and articulate their progress and achievements.<br><br>10a Accessible, relevant, accurate and timely information is offered to students and the staff supporting them throughout the learning journey about the provider, programme of study, wider opportunities for development and availability of support services. |
| **1.9 ONGOING MONITORING AND PERIODIC REVIEW OF PROGRAMMES**<br><br>Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned or taken as a result, should be communicated to all those concerned. | **Principle 5 - Monitoring, evaluating and enhancing provision**<br><br>Providers regularly monitor and review their provision to secure academic standards and enhance quality. Deliberate steps are taken to engage and involve students, staff and external expertise in monitoring and evaluation activity. The outcomes and impact of these activities are considered at provider level to drive reflection and enhancement across the provider.<br><br>5b The methods for monitoring and evaluation activity are documented to clarify their aims, objectives, intended actions |

| ESG Standard and guidelines (ESG 2015) | Sector-agreed principles and key practices to which ESG Standard aligns |
|---|---|
| **Guidelines:**<br><br>Regular monitoring, review and revision of study programmes aim to ensure that the provision remains appropriate and to create a supportive and effective learning environment for students. They include the evaluation of:<br><br>• the content of the programme in the light of the latest research in the given discipline, thus ensuring that the programme is up-to-date<br>• the changing needs of society<br>• the students' workload, progression and completion<br>• the effectiveness of procedures for assessment of students<br>• the student expectations, needs and satisfaction in relation to the programme<br>• the learning environment and support services and their fitness for purpose for the programme.<br><br>Programmes are reviewed and revised regularly involving students and other stakeholders. The information collected is analysed and the programme is adapted to ensure that it is up-to-date. Revised programme specifications are published. | and targets. They are explicit about how they will be conducted, the nature of evidence (data) to be considered and the form of reporting, along with key indicators of success.<br><br>5c Staff and students are engaged in monitoring and evaluation activities and receive appropriate training and support to undertake them.<br><br>5e Improvements and enhancements that have been implemented as a result of monitoring and evaluation are, in turn, monitored and evaluated to ensure their impact is positive and remains fit for purpose.<br><br>5g Programmes and modules are monitored and reviewed regularly by internal and external peers, employers and students, in line with the provider's strategic approach to quality and standards. Outcomes from processes required from funding, accrediting, professional and approval bodies feed into monitoring and review.<br><br>**Principle 7 - Designing, developing, approving and modifying programmes**<br><br>Providers design, develop, approve and modify programmes and modules to ensure the quality of provision and the academic standards of awards are consistent with the relevant Qualifications Framework. Providers ensure their provision and level of qualifications are comparable to those offered across the UK and, where applicable, *The Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area*.<br><br>7d Policies and processes that support the design, development, approval and modification of programmes and modules are published on each provider's website and are easily accessible to key stakeholders. |

| ESG Standard and guidelines (ESG 2015) | Sector-agreed principles and key practices to which ESG Standard aligns |
|---|---|
| | 7e External engagement and evaluation form a component part of the design, development, approval and modification process.<br>7f The design, development, approval and modification processes align with providers' policies and practices on equity, equality, diversity and inclusion, and environmental sustainability.<br>7g Students are involved meaningfully in the design, development, approval and modification of programmes and modules. |
| **1.10 CYCLICAL EXTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE**<br>Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.<br><br>**Guidelines:**<br>External quality assurance in its various forms can verify the effectiveness of institutions' internal quality assurance, act as a catalyst for improvement and offer the institution new perspectives. It will also provide information to assure the institution and the public of the quality of the institution's activities.<br><br>Institutions participate in cyclical external quality assurance that takes account, where relevant, of the requirements of the legislative framework in which they operate. Therefore, depending on the framework, this external quality assurance may take different forms and focus at different organisational levels (such as programme, faculty or institution).<br><br>Quality assurance is a continuous process that does not end with the external feedback or report or its follow-up process within the institution. Therefore, institutions ensure that the progress made | **Principle 1 - Taking a strategic approach to managing quality and standards**<br>Providers demonstrate they have a strategic approach to securing academic standards and assuring and enhancing quality that is embedded across the organisation.<br><br>1f External expertise is a key element of the strategic approach to managing quality and standards.<br><br>**Principle 6 - Engaging in external review and accreditation**<br>Providers engage with external reviews to give assurance about the effectiveness of their approach to managing quality and standards. External reviews offer insights about the comparability of providers' approaches and generate outcomes that providers can use to enhance their policies and practices. Reviews may be commissioned by providers, form part of a national quality framework or linked to professional recognition and actively include staff, students and peers. They can be undertaken by representative organisations, agencies or professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) with recognised sector expertise according to the provision being reviewed. |

| ESG Standard and guidelines (ESG 2015) | Sector-agreed principles and key practices to which ESG Standard aligns |
|---|---|
| since the last external quality assurance activity is taken into consideration when preparing for the next one | 6a External review, whether optional or required by national quality frameworks or accrediting bodies, is built into the provider's strategic approach and aligns to internal quality and standards monitoring and evaluation activity.<br>6b Providers use outcomes from external review and accreditation as a catalyst for ongoing improvement and strategic enhancement of the student learning experience.<br>6d Providers who engage in external review understand the UK national regulatory and legislative contexts in which they operate and the different approaches, forms and focus they may take. Providers may engage colleagues with international expertise, in addition to those familiar with UK requirements.<br>6e Providers understand the requirements and process for external reviews that may be required by regulators in partner delivery locations. |

## Summary table

| ESG Standard | Relevant sector-agreed principles and key practices | ESG Standard | Relevant sector-agreed principles and key practices |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1.1 Policy for quality assurance | Principle 1: Taking a strategic approach to managing quality and standards<br>Key practices: a, b, c, d, e | 1.6 Learning resources and student support | Principle 3: Resourcing delivery of a high-quality learning experience<br>Key practices: b, d, e, f, g<br>Principle 10: Supporting students to achieve their potential<br>Key practices: a, b, c, d, e, f<br>Principle 11: Teaching, learning and assessment<br>Key practices: a, b, c, e, f |
| 1.2 Design and approval of programmes | Principle 5: Monitoring, evaluating and enhancing provision<br>Key practice: g<br>Principle 7: Designing, developing, approving and modifying programmes<br>Key practices: a, c, e, g<br>Principle 11: Teaching learning and assessment<br>Key practice: b | 1.7 Information management | Principle 4 - Using data to inform and evaluate quality<br>Key practices: a, b, c, e, f |
| 1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment | Principle 2: Engaging students as partners<br>Key practices: a, b, d<br>Principle 5: Monitoring, evaluating and enhancing provision | 1.8 Public information | Principle 7: Designing, developing, approving and modifying programmes<br>Key practice: b<br>Principle 9: Recruiting, selecting and admitting students |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Key practice: c<br>Principle 11: Teaching learning and assessment<br>Key practices: a, b, c, d, f | | Key practices: b, d<br>Principle 10: Supporting students to achieve their potential<br>Key practice: a |
| 1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification | Principle 4: Using data to inform and evaluate quality<br>Key practices: a, b<br>Principle 5: Monitoring, evaluating and enhancing provision<br>Key practice: b<br>Principle 7: Designing, developing, approving and modifying programmes<br>Key practices: a, c<br>Principle 9: Recruiting, selecting and admitting students<br>Key practices: a, b, d | 1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes | Principle 5: Monitoring, evaluating and enhancing provision<br>Key practices: b, c, e, g<br>Principle 7: Designing, developing, approving and modifying programmes<br>Key practices: d, e, f, g |
| 1.5 Teaching staff | Principle 4 - Using data to inform and evaluate quality<br>Key practice: d<br>Principle 9: Recruiting, selecting and admitting students<br>Key practice: c<br>Principle 10: Supporting students to achieve their potential<br>Key practice: d<br>Principle 11: Teaching, learning and assessment<br>Key practice: c | 1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance | Principle 1: Taking a strategic approach to managing quality and standards<br>Key practice: f<br>Principle 6: Engaging in external review and accreditation<br>Key practices: a, b, c, d, e |

# Annex T: SCQF duty for quality assurance of credit rating activity

TQER will be the mechanism through which credit rating activity for the SCQF for colleges and universities is tested, replacing existing processes. Through TQER, it will be confirmed that appropriate arrangements are in place for credit rating, vetting and confirmation processes, as well as the ongoing monitoring of credit rated provision and third parties. SCQF will subsequently confirm an institution's status to continue as a credit rating body.

Credit rating processes and any associated approval, monitoring and review processes should be designed in line with the SCQF principles contained within the SCQF Handbook and should include arrangements to ensure that:

- the allocation of SCQF levels and credit points is robust and appropriate and the process to do so is in line with SCQF principles
- there are appropriate quality assurance and governance arrangements in place
- there is suitable scrutiny and monitoring of any third-party credit rating
- there are appropriate arrangements in place for recognition of prior learning in line with SCQF principles.

As part of the review process, certain documents, as outlined in Annex E: Advance Information Set, will be shared with SCQF Partnership (SCQFP) and SCQFP officers will provide the review team with a desk-based analysis of the documentation based on the requirements of the SCQF principles and best practice. Documentation is only required in alignment with the definitions below.[5]

The documentation submitted should give an institution the opportunity to:

- demonstrate that it has the appropriate processes, management, quality assurance and governance around SCQF credit rating activities
- demonstrate it is operating in line with the SCQF principles as laid down in the SCQF Handbook and that it can demonstrate those processes in action
- provide evidence to support that there is suitable scrutiny of and robust deliberations around the decision-making process that leads to the allocation of SCQF level and credit.

The desk-based analysis from SCQFP will form an additional evidence source for the review team. This will have the same standing as all other documentary evidence, and it will remain for the review team to consider how this will inform outcomes and recommendations. The analysis

[5] For colleges: This will include any programmes for which the college has credit rated using its authority as a credit rating body, including those it has credit rated for third-party organisations. This will therefore include any programmes deemed to be a credit bearing micro-credential which has been credit rated by the college. It will not include any other programmes which may be on the SCQF that they deliver for other awarding bodies (but have not credit rated) - for example, Scottish Qualifications Authority.

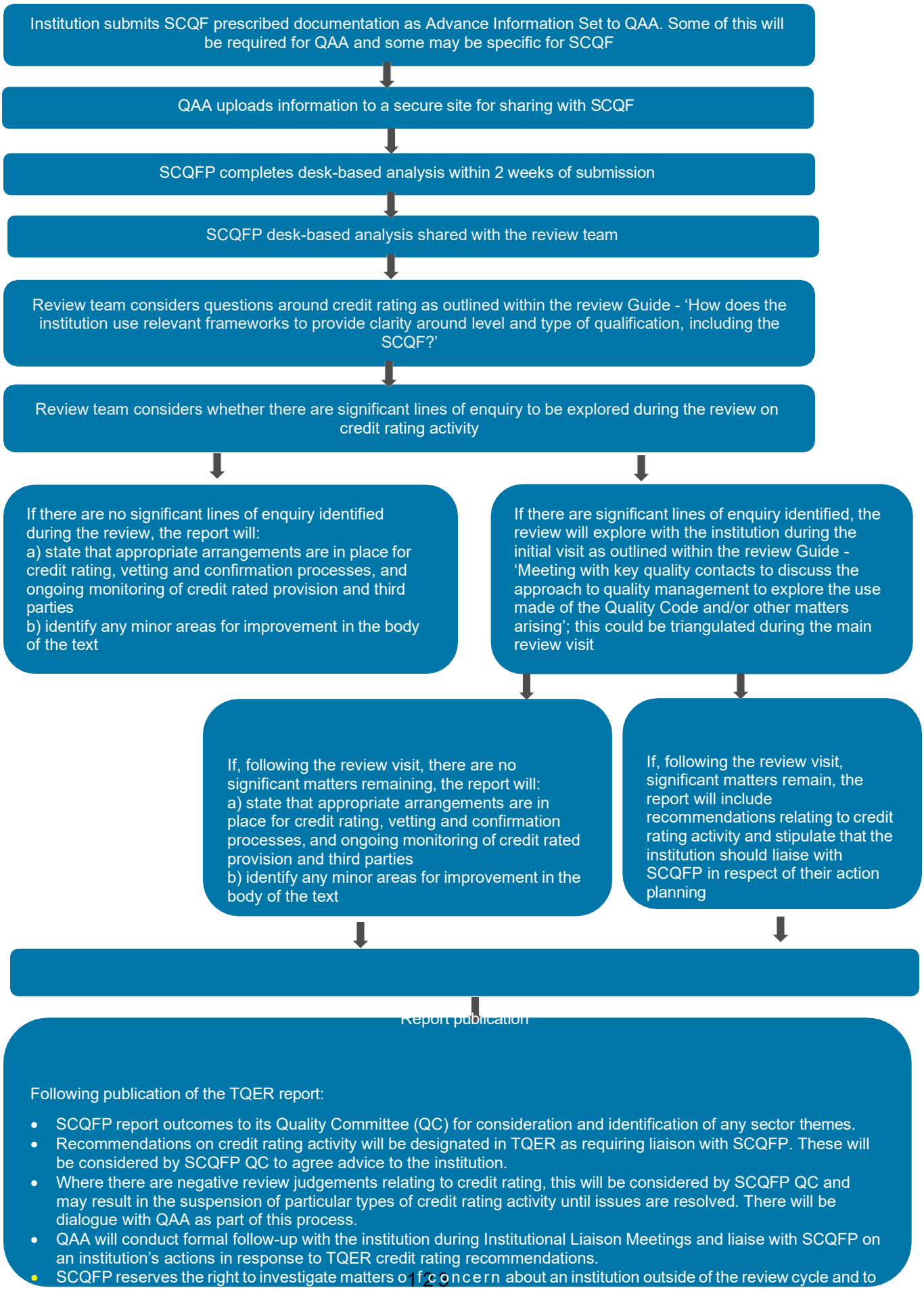
For universities: This will include any programmes which the institution has formally credit rated but will not include any qualifications awarded under degree awarding powers. It will include any other programmes for which the university has formally allocated SCQF level and credit, including those that it credit rates for third parties.
Note: third-party credit rating does not include internally credit rated programmes that are owned and awarded by the university but delivered through collaborative partners (those would be considered internal programmes for this purpose). This will also include any programmes deemed to be a credit bearing micro-credential but not those that have already been fully credit rated as part of a full award under degree awarding powers (for example, not a unit or module from an existing credit rated undergraduate degree or postgraduate degree).

will comment on the evidence to support the effective management, scrutiny and governance in place for the allocation of SCQF level and credit points, effective review and monitoring processes, and effective processes for risk assessment and governance of third-party activity. Where there is insufficient evidence, the analysis will identify areas of potential further exploration to support the review team's lines of enquiry. The SCQFP officers will not form part of the review team. TQER reports will state whether appropriate arrangements are in place for credit rating, vetting and confirmation processes, as well as the ongoing monitoring of credit rated provision and third parties. Following consideration of the TQER report, SCQFP will confirm an institution's status to continue as a credit rating body.

Where there is a recommendation arising from review that relates to credit rating activity and monitoring then SCQFP would similarly be asked to provide an analysis of information pertaining to the action plan submitted as part of the Institutional Liaison Meeting.

SCQFP reserves the right to investigate matters of concern about an institution outside of the review cycle and to discuss with both the institution and quality agency and to report separately to the SCQF Quality Committee and Board if required.

## SCQF process diagram



# References


Bologna Process - European University Association

Characteristics Statements - QAA

Professional Standards for Lecturers in Scotland's Colleges - GTC Scotland

Quality Evaluation and Enhancement of UK TNE - QE-TNE - QAA

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework - SCQF

SCQF Handbook

SCQF Level Descriptors

SFC Guidance to Colleges and Universities on Quality - Scottish Funding Council

Scottish Quality Concerns Scheme - QAA

Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (2015) - ESG, Brussels, Belgium

Student Engagement Framework for Scotland - sparqs

Student Guide to Using Evidence (2019) Austen, L & Jones Devitt, S - Enhancement Themes, QAA Scotland

Student Learning Experience Model (2023) - sparqs

Subject Benchmark Statements - QAA

Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) principles - Scottish Funding Council

UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning - Advance HE

UK Quality Code - QAA

UK Quality Code, Advice and Guidance - QAA



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