
Tertiary Quality Steering Group (TQSG): update bulletin

The fourth meeting of the TQSG was held on 25 September at SFC offices in Edinburgh.

Leadership of the Tertiary Quality Project (TQP)

TQSG members noted their thanks to James Dunphy for his contribution to the project as he leaves SFC to take up a secondment with Advance HE. To ensure continuity Jacqui Brasted, SFC Deputy Director, Assurance and Outcomes – who has oversight of the TQP as well as SFC’s wider review of its assurance and outcome arrangements – will act as Chair of the TQSG for the duration of the project.

Naming the new framework

The Project team continues to consult with college and university sector representative groups on a name for the new framework that effectively describes its key themes and characteristics. A small group of representatives from Colleges Scotland and Universities Scotland will be convened to evaluate a range of options, with a view to SFC finalising a name in the coming few weeks. An announcement of a new name will accompany a refresh and relaunch of the project website.

External review cycle

The QAA led a discussion seeking views on options for managing the proposed new external review cycle for colleges and universities. Members expressed little enthusiasm for an intelligence-led approach to planning the cycle, noting that a risk-based focus was at odds with an enhancement led-approach – although it was recognised that an element of a risk-based focus may be required in either the method or the review schedule.

Members also remained unconvinced of the benefits of a regional approach to organising reviews beyond resource efficiencies for QAA. QAA clarified that this option was solely a means of organising reviews was not intended to lead to collaborative or cross-referenced reviews within a region. Left open, however, was the question of whether some institutions within a region may wish to volunteer for some kind of regional focus.

TQSG’s preference was for an historical approach based on past review schedules and time passed since previous reviews. While no final decisions have been made on the rationale for the order of reviews - e.g. alphabetically – members stressed the importance of openness and transparency in QAA’s approach to organising the review cycle.

Self-evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP)

During a workshop session TQSG members evaluated two versions of the proposed SEAP template, refined by SFC from a draft developed jointly by the [CDN Quality Steering Group](#) and [The Quality Forum](#) as part of the TQP [monitoring and self-evaluation workstream](#). It is intended that in the new framework the SEAP will be used to facilitate annual self-evaluation and enhancement within institutions, inform annual engagement and periodic reviews of intuitions, and provide assurance to SFC on academic standards and the quality of the student experience.

While there was general agreement that the questions raised in both versions of the template would be helpful in facilitating effective self-reflection, members noted the need for clarity in the drafting of the template, supporting guidance, and statement of purpose to ensure the focus of SEAPS was on outcomes for students, and not solely or predominantly a static account of process. There was caution too around whether a compendium of consecutive SEAPs would, in fact, achieve the context and reflection that a 4-year reflective analysis currently offers. Given the comprehensive nature of some of the questions, members suggested flexibility in how institutions respond, with perhaps some questions better approached in dialogue rather than in writing.

SFC will use the input from the discussion to finalise a revised draft SEAP template for piloting by a representative group of volunteer colleges and universities in the coming few weeks.

The next meeting of the TQSG will be held on **16 January 2023** where amongst other items members will review progress with the SEAP pilot. Regular updates on progress with the Tertiary Quality Project will be made available on the [project website](#).