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## Tertiary Quality Steering Group (TQSG): update bulletin

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The seventh meeting of the TQSG was held on 6 September 2024.

### TQSG remit and membership

The TQSG has played an important role in shaping the development of Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) and at our meeting we reviewed a refreshed remit for the Group to ensure that it remains relevant and fit for purpose as we enter the implementation phase of the new Framework. Members proposed that the remit place a stronger emphasis on TQEF as a 'shared endeavour' between SFC, institutions, and delivery agencies. They also felt that there should be clearer commitment around the role of TQSG as a vehicle for institutions and other stakeholders to influence the Framework's ongoing development. SFC has taken on board this feedback in a revised remit, and we remain committed to the principle that quality assurance in Scotland is done with, and not to, institutions – the new TQSG remit is an expression of that commitment.

We were also delighted to welcome four new members to the Group. Sai Shraddha Suresh Viswanathan, the new President of NUS Scotland joins the TQSG as co-chair while Katrina Swanton, the new convenor of The Quality Forum, will ensure a strong link with quality practitioners in HEIs. Holly McAdams, a student sabbatical officer at Heriot-Watt University, will help strengthen the student voice on the group, and we hope to announce a new student college sector representative very soon. We also welcomed Victoria Underwood who joins the TQSG as the College Development Network (CDN) observer in recognition of their critical role in supporting the implementation of the TQEF. The refreshed TQSG remit and membership can be found [here](#).

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

The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) updated TQSG on progress with the implementation of STEP, Scotland's new national enhancement activity programme for colleges and universities. The development of STEP has been led by QAA working closely with CDN and through extensive consultation with the sector during 2023 and 2024.

TQSG welcomed progress on STEP and strongly endorsed the new national enhancement topic 'Supporting Diverse Learner Journeys' and its sub themes:

- supporting transitions and pathways

- strengthening engagement, community and belonging
- developing skills and capabilities for learning
- empowering our diverse student bodies.

TQSG noted that the topic will allow the exploration of a wide range of projects relevant to institutional and student priorities while retaining coherence across the programme, but members asked for QAA and SFC to ensure that they clearly communicate the governance arrangements for the programme.

## Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER)

QAA noted that its consultation on TQER, the proposed new tertiary review method, had recently closed. The consultation invited feedback on key features of the TQER and aspects including the balance between assurance and enhancement, the approach to student partnership and engagement in the review, and the support institutions need in the implementation phase. While QAA were not yet in a position to share an analysis of the themes emerging from the consultation, they were able to confirm that there had been a good response from both the college and university sectors. Responses had been constructive or raised issues that QAA were confident could be effectively resolved and would help QAA to refine the new review process.

QAA confirmed that preliminary work for the first two TQER reviews scheduled for AY2024-25 was currently underway and they anticipate publishing the TQER schedule for the full review cycle in the Autumn. The publication of the TQER Guide was planned for October 2024 and would coincide with a recruitment campaign for the reviewer pool for reviews commencing from AY2025-26.

## sparqs Student partnership ambition statement and features

TGSG received an update from sparqs on the development of the Student partnership ambition statement and features, and sparqs' work to ensure that these are embedded across all aspects of the TQEF delivery mechanisms. This will support the development of a shared language and approach to student partnership across the Framework. sparqs have also developed a set of indicators of practice for each of the features, which are designed to support institutions in evaluating their practice around student partnership.

sparqs will publish guidance and resources to support institutions and student associations in their use of the partnership statement and features over AY2024-25 including:

- Guidance on the Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP) by October 2024.
- Guidance on the external review method (TQER) by July 2025.
- Guidance on the national approach to enhancement (STEP) by July 2025.

sparqs noted that they would provide individual support to those institutions currently preparing for external review in advance of publication of its TQER guidance, and that SEAP

guidance due for publication in October would be reviewed and updated in the new year to reflect feedback from institutions on their experience of the first round of submissions. TQSG were mindful of the limited capacity of many students to engage in quality processes alongside their other commitments. sparqs, in recognising this, noted that the ambition statement and features were aspirational and enabling, designed to support institutions reflect on, and enhance, their approach to student partnership.

## Lessons learned workshop

The final part of our meeting took the form of a workshop, with TQSG members asked to consider what aspects of the development of the TQEF had worked well, and what could have been done differently.

TQSG members welcomed SFC's commitment to openness, engagement, and partnership that were characteristic of the 'co-creation' approach to the development of the TQEF. They also welcomed SFC's seconding of sector colleagues as embedded members of the project team leading on the development of the new Framework. The creation of the Steering Group itself had played a key role in influencing the development of the TQEF, but members thought that it could have, at times, been more effectively deployed.

More effective project planning and clarity of purpose at the start of the project would have supported more timely and effective sector engagement. And while sector engagement had been extensive, this could have been better focused on the operational aspects of the TQEF. Communications around the development of the Framework to a wider audience could also have been better, although members acknowledged that this had improved significantly in the latter phases of the project.

Feedback from the workshop will be used by the SFC executive to support the evaluation of the TQEF with a view to informing future practice. Enhancement is a key feature of Scotland's approach to quality assurance, and SFC are keen to use feedback from our partners and stakeholders to refine the TQEF, as well as improving our approach to engagement with institutions, their students and staff in taking forward our work.

The next meeting of the TQSG will be held on **2 December 2024**.