Appendix 1

QAA SCOTLAND

Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework

Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER)

Short Guide

This review method is ESG compliant

October 2024

Contents

Introduction **1**
Key features of TQER 1
Key stages in the Tertiary Quality Enhancement method **4**
Pre-review preparation and activity 4
The evidence base for TQER 6
Review visits 8
TQER findings 11
Follow-up activity 13

Introduction

This guide briefly sets out how provision delivered by colleges and universities will be reviewed. It is intended primarily for institutions going through Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER). Full details and arrangements can be found in the TQER *Guide for Institutions*.

Key features of TQER

TQER has the following key features:

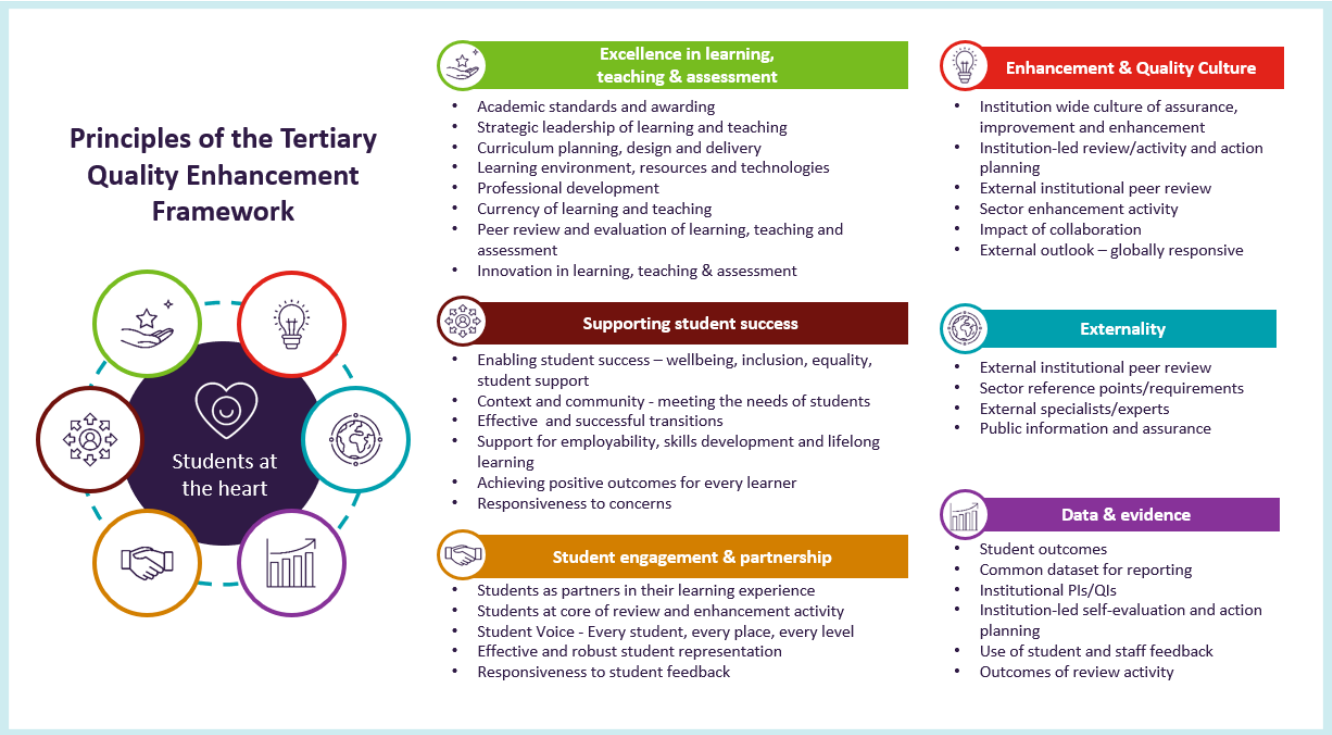
- external peer review
- review against the principles of the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF)
- review visits
- student engagement and partnership
- evidence and criteria-based judgements and findings
- published report and follow-up activity.

External peer review

TQER is carried out by teams of external 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 size and composition of the review team will be tailored to the characteristics of the institution under review.

Review against the principles of the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework

The external peer review team will look at an institution's effectiveness in meeting the principles of the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF).



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?

Review visits

Every TQER will include two visits to the institution by the review team:

- an **Initial Review Visit**, comprising meetings with the institution's leaders and then focusing on meetings with a broad, representative range of students
- a **Main Review Visit**, which will comprise meetings with a range of the institution's stakeholders including internal staff and external stakeholders.

The precise timing and length of each of these, and the online/in-person nature of each of them, will be discussed with the institution at the scoping meeting, taking account of context including number and nature of campuses and students.

Student engagement and partnership

TQER puts students at the forefront of the method. Student engagement in the review should help the review team to understand what it is like to be a student at the institution and how student partnership in decision-making, quality assurance and quality enhancement processes enhance the student learning experience.

The student contribution takes a number of forms:

- The appointment of a Lead Student Representative as the main point of contact between the review team and the student body.
- Student meetings and engagements which form the basis of the Initial Review Visit and will shape the lines of enquiry for the Main Review Visit.
- Source of evidence and co-author in the institution's Strategic Impact Analysis (SIA) (a self-evaluation document prepared for the review).
- Formal meetings with the review team across a range of areas.
- Student reviewers are full and equal members of TQER review teams.

Evidence and criteria-based judgements and findings

In TQER, 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. The judgement and findings confirm there can be public confidence in the institution's qualifications and in the quality of the learning experience it provides for its students.

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:

- Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment
- Supporting student success
- Enhancement and quality culture
- Student engagement and partnership.

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

Alongside the overarching judgement, the review team will identify features of good practice and make recommendations for action.

Published report and follow-up activity

The outcomes of TQER will be published in a written report. The report will be structured according to the four principles of the TQEF and, within each, the review team will also reflect on the effectiveness and impact of the institution's use of externality, and data and evidence. All outcomes from Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) will include follow-up activity, including the completion of an action plan. The level of follow-up activity will depend on the outcomes from the review.

Key stages in the Tertiary Quality Enhancement method

Pre-review preparation and activity

Sector preparation events

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

Institutions should prepare 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
- appointing their Institution Quality Contact
- appointing their Lead Student Representative
- developing their Strategic Impact Analysis in partnership with the student body
- compiling the Advance Information Set for the institution (a set of existing documentation submitted by an institution to support the review).

Scoping and review specification meeting

Approximately eight months prior to the review, QAA Review Managers will arrange a scoping meeting with the institution. 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.

Scoping meeting

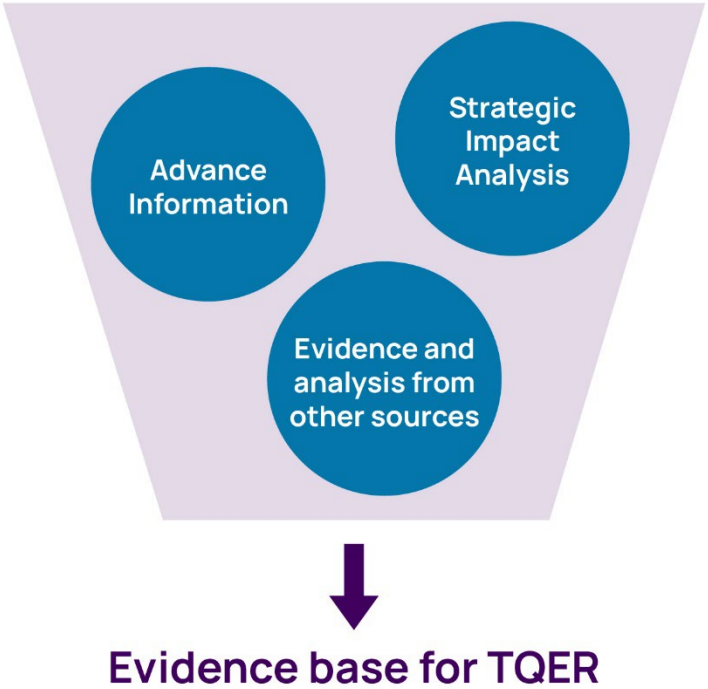
- Key dates and milestones
- Size and profile of review team
- Submission of evidence

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.

Pre-review preparation and activity

TQER action	When	Institution action
Review manager (RM) confirmed TQER dates proposed	c 10 months before review	Confirm institution quality contact Work with RM to find dates
Sector preparation events RM ongoing liaison	In review year	Attend sector preparation events Ongoing liaison
Scoping Meeting with RM	c 8 months 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
SCQF submits desk-based analysis (where required) and QAA 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

The evidence base for TQER



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. Documents submitted by the institution are required by the review team 10 weeks before the Initial Review Visit. Submission is by way of an upload to a secure review site.

Strategic Impact Analysis

The Strategic Impact Analysis (SIA) is a key document and reference point produced by the institution. This is used by an institution as a self-evaluation against the principles of the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework. 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. There is an expectation that students will be fully involved as key partners in the preparation of the SIA and that the SIA is clearly signed off by the Accountable Officer and a representative of the student body, reflecting co-ownership.

The SIA should have four main sections which address four of the six principles:

Strategic Impact Analysis

- Introduction
- **Achieving excellence in learning, teaching and assessment**
- **Supporting student success**
- **Developing a strong enhancement and quality culture**
- **Student engagement and partnership**
- Final summing up

Each of these sections 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.

Each of the four main sections of the SIA should also focus on providing information that answers the questions:

How do you use data and evidence to inform strategic decisions (what do you do and why)?

How do you know your approach is successful (how well does it work/help you to achieve your aims)? How do you know this (evidence of impact)? And what could you do to be even better?

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

The concluding section offers institutions the opportunity to identify what they could do even better.

As a guide, the SIA should normally be no more than 20 pages in length and include only evidence that is relevant to support the text. Institutions will complete the work on their Strategic Impact Analysis and upload it with the Advance Information Set to a secure portal at least 10 weeks prior to the Initial Review Visit.

Advance Information Set

The Advance Information Set (AIS) 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. While the SIA is prepared specifically for the review by the institution, the AIS 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 AIS. 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.

Data and analysis from other sources

The data 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.

Review visits

Initial Review Visit

The purpose of the Initial Review Visit is to:

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

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.

The Initial Review Visit involves the whole review team and the QAA Review Manager and is anticipated to take place over 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.

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; 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.

Initial Review Visit

TQER action	When	Provider action
Review team private meeting to discuss initial thoughts, confirm draft schedule and request participants for the Initial Review Visit	4 weeks prior to Initial Review Visit	No action required
Initial Review Visit meeting schedule and participants confirmed	2 weeks prior to Initial Review Visit	Confirm schedule and participants
Initial Review Visit	Date notified in Review Specification	Manage the schedule and operational requirements of Initial Review Visit

Main Review Visit

Main Review Visit

- consideration of documentary evidence
- regular contact with key contacts
- meetings with staff, students and stakeholders
- final meeting with the review team and key institution contacts to seek clarifications if required.

The Main Review Visit will last between two and five days, depending on the size and complexity of the provision. 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. The Main Review Visit will vary across institutions. Some elements will, however, be common.

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 with a variety of staff and students, and with 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, the review team may elect to make use of other types of engagement. 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 of the review visit

On the final day of the Main Review Visit, the review team and the QAA Review Manager will hold a private meeting to consider:

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

Main Review Visit

TQER action	When	Provider action
Additional documentation requests and indicative Main Review Visit schedule and list of participants sent to institution	1 week after Initial Review Visit	Receive additional documentation request; consider Main Review schedule and work with Review Manager to finalise
Additional documentation received (where requested)	3 weeks after Initial Review Visit	Submit additional documents
Confirmation of Main Review Visit participants	4 weeks after Initial Review Visit	Confirm attendees for Main Review Visit
Main Review Visit	6-8 weeks after Initial Review Visit	Manage the schedule and operational requirements of Main Review Visit

TQER findings

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.

Key Outcomes letter and report

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

Key Outcomes letter and report

TQER action	When	Institution action
Institution receives provisional judgement(s) and finding(s)	2 weeks after Main Review Visit	Receive provisional judgement(s) and finding(s)
Report editing and moderation by QAA	2 weeks after Main Review Visit	No action required
Draft report to institution for comment on factual accuracy	6 weeks after Main Review Visit	Comment on factual accuracy
QAA prepares press release	9 weeks after Main Review Visit	Provide a quote for the press release and send to QAA
Report published	12 weeks after Main Review Visit	Produce action plan
Date action plan required	12 weeks after report publication	Action plan submitted
Follow-up activity, including updating in the SEAP and annual quality engagement	Ongoing	Continue ongoing liaison with Review Manager

TQER report

Six weeks after the last day of the Main Review Visit, the QAA Review Manager sends the draft review report to the Principal, Institution Quality Contact and Lead Student Representative for comment on factual accuracy. The institution is given a three-week period in which any factual inaccuracies may be identified. A single, agreed response from the institution and its student body should be returned to QAA. The report will be published on the QAA website 12 weeks after the last day of the Main Review Visit. The TQER report will set out the evidence and conclusions of the review in more detail. Detail on the structure of the report is set out in the Guide for Institutions - **Annex K: TQER Report Structure**. 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

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.

Action plan and Institutional Liaison Meetings

Routine follow-up is the requirement for all institutions to submit an action plan within a maximum of 12 weeks following the publication of the TQER report. The action plan will be considered as part of Institutional Liaison Meetings (ILMs) which are a component of external quality arrangements and support the 'no surprises' and liaison approach to information sharing. 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.

Action plan and Institutional Liaison Meetings

- Required for all outcomes (effective, partial effectiveness, not effective)

TQER re-review

For 'partially effective' and 'not effective' outcomes, a TQER re-review will take place a maximum of two years after the original TQER visit. 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.

TQER re-review

- Required for 'partially effective' outcomes (may be desk-based)
- Required for 'not effective' outcomes
- May be supplemented with additional QAA liaison visits

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