

Tertiary Enhancement Topic

What is the Tertiary Enhancement Topic?

For the next two academic years (2022-23 and 2023-24), the agencies working in quality in the education sector will carry out work on a **Tertiary Enhancement Topic**, as advised by the Scottish Funding Council. This is in light of a move towards a joint approach to quality in colleges and universities.

The enhancement topic is:

"The future of learning and teaching: defining and delivering an effective and inclusive digital/blended offering."

The topic is relevant to both colleges and universities, as all institutions had to learn some lessons during the forced move to online learning during COVID restrictions. Now that institutions are going back to more in-person teaching, we can strive to keep some of the benefits that came out of that emergency situation. However, we should not lose everything that was learnt, specifically as there is evidence that online learning was beneficial to some groups of students. There is also evidence that other groups of learners did not achieve as well. It is therefore crucial to understand what aspects should be kept.

Why is this relevant to me and what do I need to do?

There is plenty of anecdotal evidence about what aspects of online learning work better and about how learners would like to keep on learning. We are asking students' associations and students' unions to collect this evidence and any survey data you may have carried out during the last couple of years, and focus your conversations with students and course reps on aspects of their learning experience with specific reference to online learning. That way, the students' association can feed into the enhancement topic discussion providing data and experiences from their students, and the topic will be developed in partnership with students.

sparqs will deliver updates on the project and organise activities during the regular meetings of **SESN** (Student Engagement Staff Network) and **NEON** (National Education Officers' Network).

Please make sure you know when the next meeting of the relevant staff or officer network takes place and sign up for it. . . .

SESN	NEON
Aimed at staff working in SAs and institutions with a remit of student engagement.	Aimed at sabbatical officers with a remit in education and representation.
<u>SESN sign-up link</u>	<u>NEON sign-up link</u>



At our events, we will discuss your experience with online and digital learning. As a generic guideline, think about:

- How has your institution made decisions about how much to keep online and how much to keep in-person? Was it made on the basis of data on student achievement, on listening to student feedback, or for logistical reasons?
- How has this year been with regards to online and in-person learning? Is there any difference from last year, in light of online learning?
- Is there a clear policy about decisions about online learning?
- Does the institutional policy translate to practice at a course level?
- How were students involved in those decisions?
- What are the implications for students of the policy decisions that have been made on online learning? Overall, are students happy with the institution's decisions?
- Are there any particular groups of students which have been adversely affected? Has it been particularly good for some groups of students?
- What are some of the key issues you can highlight under the topic of online learning?
- Are you doing existing work in this area, or have you got anything planned on the topic?

What questions can you ask your students, within the context of online learning?

Below, you will find some questions split into areas of the [Student Learning Experience](#) model, which can be useful when having a discussion with your students and course reps about specific elements of their learning experience, related to online learning and possibly blended learning. You can use some of these questions, or all of them, to inform your institution on students' views related to the Tertiary Enhancement Topic.

Questions about curriculum:

- Has your curriculum been adapted or modified in any way to include online learning?
- Is there a curriculum outline provided?

Questions about learning resources:

- Have you been provided with adequate equipment to complete your studies?
- Do you have access to, and have you been supported to use, appropriate learning technologies, including new software and online tools?
- Have you been supported to access subject-specific facilities (e.g., labs, studios, theatres, computing rooms, etc.) or alternatives in an online environment?
- Have you had the opportunity to discuss your preparedness for learning in a digital environment and access appropriate support and upskilling if required?
- If you are studying a practical course, do you have access to the resources/tools/materials you need?
- In courses for which you are not able to access the library on campus, do you have access to equivalent learning materials online?
- How much guidance and support do you get with use of VLE for learning and teaching?
- Are you able to access core course materials (lecture slides, reading lists, notes, etc.) on the VLE?
- Are the lectures and other class learning materials easily accessible?



Questions about learning and teaching process:

- If you have any learning in an online environment, have you been given tasks that involve learning off-screen and the chance to take regular/appropriate breaks?
- If your course uses an online/blended approach, do you feel all learning is appropriately covered and you are supported to engage in an online environment?
- Are there opportunities for asynchronous learning using video lectures and online materials which you can access whenever you like?
- Do you have enough contact time with your lecturers/tutors?
- Are there opportunities for peer-to-peer learning? Do you have opportunities to meet with your classmates in an online learning environment?

Questions about assessment and feedback:

- Are there opportunities for flexible or personalised assessment, or alternative assessment options, including the opportunity for online assessments?
- Have you experienced any barriers to engaging in any of your assessments?

Questions about progression and achievement:

- Have you identified any gaps in your knowledge or skills, including digital skills, due to how or where you transitioned from and into the institution?
- Do you feel you have been provided with the opportunity to develop your knowledge base and skills, including digital skills, to prepare you for future education, training or employment?
- Before the start of the semester, were you kept up to date on what is being done to prepare for students' arrival and kept informed of what your student experience may look like this year?
- Have you had the opportunity to attend induction events, either online or in-person? Did you experience any particularly creative approaches to the delivery or content of these induction events?
- Are you able to progress easily from one module to the next?

Questions about guidance and support:

- Have you been given the option to access academic, personal, and careers support either in-person, online or both?
- Have you experienced any innovative ways of developing and maintaining a sense of community on your course?
- Has your institution or department offered a way for you to engage with students and staff more informally?
- Have you been made aware of how to contact and access support services, including mental health services, either in-person or online?

Questions about quality enhancement and assurance:

- Are you given opportunities to feed back to senior staff members at your institution on issues you are facing, e.g. through the opportunity to attend online or in-person 'town-hall' style meetings, where students can raise issues directly with senior leaders?

Further information

If you have any queries around the Tertiary Enhancement Topic, please contact Gloria Laurini, Development Consultant – gloria.laurini@sparqs.ac.uk