

College Quality Arrangements 2023-24

During this academic year (2023-24), while the sector continues the work to shape a common framework for quality in further and higher education, colleges and universities will still carry out separate quality arrangements. Last year, all colleges in Scotland received either an **Annual Engagement Visit (AEV)** or a **Progress Visit (PV)**, as explained in our [previous briefing note](#).

This year, colleges can expect an AEV to take place round the same period as their visit the previous academic year. In addition to the AEVs, most colleges will also host a **thematic review visit**.

Annual Engagement Visit (AEV)

AEV's are light touch, short visits, usually lasting one day and taking place on-site, in person. In attendance will be the HMI link inspector for the college, an Associate Assessor (AA) and a Student Team Member (STM). Other HMIs may be involved as and when required.

Topics explored during the visit will cover the following themes:

- Learner progress and outcomes.
- Approaches to assuring and enhancing the quality of learning and teaching, including professional updating.
- Learner engagement.

If the institution was requested to produce a progress report as a result of the previous year's visit, this will be reviewed during the visit. After the AEV, colleges will receive an initial verbal report/outcome, providing assurance of the quality of the learning experience and where relevant identifying aspects requiring further improvement. This will be followed by a subsequent written report that will be shared with the college and the Scottish Funding Council. A short statement confirming the outcomes of the visit and next steps will be published.

Students' associations (staff and officers) are expected to be involved in the visit as they will be informed about its schedule by the relevant college department, likely the quality team, which will schedule some preparatory meetings to discuss the upcoming visit, focusing on work done and any actions progressed from the previous year's report.

Thematic Reviews

In 2023-24, in order to support improvement in aspects of college sector performance, HMIs will undertake a programme of thematic reviews evaluating three topics:

- (a) One regional thematic review focusing on learner progress and outcomes.
- (b) One national subject review of Care.
- (c) One national thematic review focusing on approaches to meeting the additional needs of all learners.



Each college will participate in at least one of these thematic reviews. The first topic will be explored at a regional level, and it involves colleges in the Glasgow area. The second and third topics will involve at least ten colleges. Information about these thematic reviews was circulated by Education Scotland in September 2023 and timings and schedules of each visit will be agreed with the institutions.

These reviews will support the evaluation of approaches and impact, providing depth of intelligence about the individual organisations involved, along with providing information to inform capacity-building and future approaches to improvement and enhancement. These may be used collaboratively with partner quality bodies, such as QAA Scotland and sparqs, to explore quality provision and capacity for improvement.

The findings from the thematic reviews will strengthen the collective knowledge of providers to meet current and projected economic priorities at local, regional, and national levels. HM Inspectors will also seek to identify and share examples of highly effective practice during thematic reviews, highlight what is working well, and make recommendations about what needs to improve.

Our support

In terms of sparqs' support, we will continue to utilise our existing NEON (National Education Officers' Network) and SESN (Student Engagement Staff Network) meetings and we will circulate this briefing to students' associations and get in touch where possible to discuss the thematic reviews.

What you can do to prepare

We advise all students' associations to read last year's visit report and reach out to their senior management team if they have not received it. This will be essential to find out if there are things the students' association needs to action.

In the meantime, make sure you collate all data you gathered while talking to students, to form an evidence base which you can use to discuss any points arising during the visit.

As explained above, the thematic reviews are in addition to the AEVs, and are not inspections of the work of the students' association. As each college will host at least one review visit, it is estimated that the students' association will receive notification by their quality department of which review they are hosting, and be invited to any preparatory meetings.

sparqs is also carrying out two projects following thematic reviews (a) and (c) more closely, therefore each students' association hosting one of these two reviews will be contacted individually to provide specific support.

Further information

If you need further support and information, please get in touch with Gloria Laurini, Development Consultant, at gloria.laurini@sparqs.ac.uk.