

Quality terminology

Quality - In the context of being a student representative, quality refers to the standard of everything to do with learning, teaching, assessment, and the additional support to ensure this happens within an institution. When quality is referred to it usually means “how good is this?”

Quality Assurance – Quality assurance approaches aim to ensure that existing standards are met.

Quality Enhancement - Quality enhancement is about how learning and teaching can be improved. It refers to all the work that an institution, departments and individuals do to make learning and teaching better.

Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF) - The Quality Enhancement Framework is a set of national arrangements agreed between the Scottish Funding Council, the Quality Assurance Agency Scotland, NUS Scotland and Universities Scotland. Essentially, the framework (or QEF) is the tool that institutions use to ensure that a high quality learning experience is being achieved.

Although the QEF is a national framework, each institution uses the framework differently. You may never hear of the QEF, or you might hear about it all the time. Simply put, the QEF is the system that a university uses to know that its degrees, teaching and learning, and everything relating to the overall delivery and support of the learning experience, is of the highest standard.

The QEF has five pillars:

Student Engagement - Student Engagement is not only an individual strand in the Quality Enhancement Framework, but is an important part of every other strand within the QEF. Student involvement in the other parts is integral to the success of the QEF. All students should have a responsibility and an opportunity to improve learning within their institution. [A Student Engagement Framework for Scotland](#) (available in the Resource Library on the sparqs website) is a document endorsed and owned by all the sector agencies and representative bodies in the university and college sector. The framework consists of five key elements of student engagement, and six features of effective student engagement.

Institution-led Review (ILR) – ILRs are internal reviews which the university conducts itself. Universities have a lot of flexibility around what they do for an Institution-led Review. This could be a review of subjects or disciplines, reviewing a particular topic that has many dimensions. This could be a review of all the support services; a review of the post-graduate taught experience; or a review of the curriculum. All Institution-led Reviews should have students on the leading group. If a panel is reviewing a subject or discipline, there will be a student reviewer on the panel. The outcomes of all ILRs should be published and made available to staff and students.

Public information on quality – Public information refers to all information that is published and available to the general public about the student experience. It is required that an institution displays all information it thinks is relevant to its provision of ic programmes,

accommodation, extra-curricular activity, etc. This information must be aimed to its students (current and potential), employers and other stakeholders.

Public Information includes internal and external information, for example:

- The university's own surveys; Institutional-led Review reports; programme feedback
- National surveys such as the National Student Survey (NSS), Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES); Key Information Sets; Which? University; ELIR Review Reports.

Enhancement theme(s) – Enhancement themes are unique to the Scottish Higher Education Sector. They exist to improve the student learning experience by encouraging university staff and students to share examples of innovative practice in higher education from across Scotland, and the world. The focus or themes of the Enhancement Themes are chosen by a committee of senior academic managers and student representatives, and they are managed by QAA Scotland on behalf of the sector as a whole. The current Theme for 2014-2017 is Student Transitions. More information on Enhancement Themes can be found at:

www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk

Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) - This is the external review process for universities. In 2016 the length of the cycle was extended to 4+1 years. Universities are reviewed externally by Scottish, English and international peers, and student reviewers. The purpose of the external reviews is for QAA Scotland to be confident in the institutions' own quality assurance processes and focus on areas which the institutions have chosen to enhance. More information about the role of the students' association in the ELIR process is available in [sparqs ELIR Guidance](#) (available in the Resource Library on the sparqs website).

Management of quality - This refers to the institution's approach to managing the overall student learning experience. Universities need to have processes and procedures in place to ensure that learning and teaching is of a high standard, and this is known as 'management of quality'. In a student context, management of quality is relevant as it refers to how all students (including sabbatical officers, class reps and other students) are involved in these various processes and procedures to improve the standard of learning and teaching. All students have a responsibility and should have an opportunity to improve learning within their institution.

Student Learning Experience - the [Student Learning Experience](#) refers to all elements of a student's experience during their time at their institution. There are seven different elements: Curriculum, Learning Resources, Learning and Teaching Process, Assessment and Feedback, Progression and Achievement, Guidance and Support, Quality Enhancement and Assurance. (available in the Resource Library on the sparqs website).

Student Partnership Agreements - Student Partnership Agreements are a way in which students' associations and institutions can promote ways in which students can interact with staff at their institution to improve quality. They're also an opportunity to agree a set of three to five priority areas upon which the students' association and institution will work together, in partnership. More information about SPAs is available in the [sparqs Student Partnership Agreement Guidance](#) (available in the Resource Library on the sparqs website).

Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) – The introduction of the TEF was announced by Universities Minister Jo Johnson last year and detailed in the Higher Education [Green](#) and [White](#) Papers. The aim of the TEF is to monitor and assess teaching quality in universities. It is set to come into force from 2017-18. It is likely to use a set of metrics including NSS (National Student Survey) and DHLE (Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education) data, as well as an external assessment panel, to review the quality of teaching at an institution. At this stage it is unclear if all Scottish universities will enter into the TEF.

Quality Code – UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) defines and sets out the expectations all providers of UK higher education are required to meet. The Quality Code gives all higher education providers a shared starting point for setting, describing and assuring the academic standards of their higher education awards and programmes and the quality of the learning opportunities they provide.

Sector Agencies

sparqs - student partnerships in quality Scotland is a development agency that exists to assist and support students, students' associations and institutions to improve the effectiveness and engagement in quality assurance and enhancement in institutions across Scotland. More information can be found at - www.sparqs.ac.uk

Scottish Funding Council - The Scottish Funding Council is a public body which distributes money to universities and colleges on behalf of the Scottish Government. They are ultimately responsible to the Government for the spending of this money, and so they oversee the quality of learning and teaching provision to ensure that standards are high. More information can be found at - <http://www.sfc.ac.uk/>

NUS Scotland - A confederation of students' associations across Scotland whose purpose is to promote, defend and extend the rights of students as well as to develop and champion strong students' unions. More information can be found at - <http://www.nus.org.uk/en/nus-scotland/>

QAA Scotland - Quality Assurance Agency for Scotland - The agency that is responsible for monitoring and advising on standards and quality, which includes conducting the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) and supporting the Enhancement Themes. More information can be found at - www.qaa.ac.uk

Universities Scotland - Universities Scotland is the representative body of Scotland's 19 higher education institutions. More information can be found at <http://www.universities-scotland.ac.uk/>

Where to find out more...

WonkHE

<http://wonkhe.com/>

Times Higher Education

www.timeshighereducation.com

Guardian Higher Education

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/higher-education>

University World News

<http://www.universityworldnews.com/>

Higher Education Policy Institute Blog

<http://www.hepi.ac.uk/category/blog/>