

Glossary for University Education Officers 2017

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. The university sector in Scotland has defined enhancement as *'taking deliberate steps to bring about continuous improvement in the effectiveness of the learning experience of students.'*

Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF) - The Quality Enhancement Framework is a set of national arrangements agreed between the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), the Quality Assurance Agency Scotland (QAA), 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:

1. **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.
2. **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 review panel. 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. For further information on engaging students in ILR, see the [sparqs Practice Guide for Universities and Students' Associations](#) (available in the Resource Library on the *sparqs website*).

3. **Public information on quality** – Public information refers to all information that is published and available to the general public about the student experience. An Institution is required to display all information it thinks is relevant to provision of its programmes, accommodation, extra-curricular activity, etc. This information must be aimed at 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 (KIS); Which? University; ELIR Review Reports. (See more information about surveys and data on page 4)

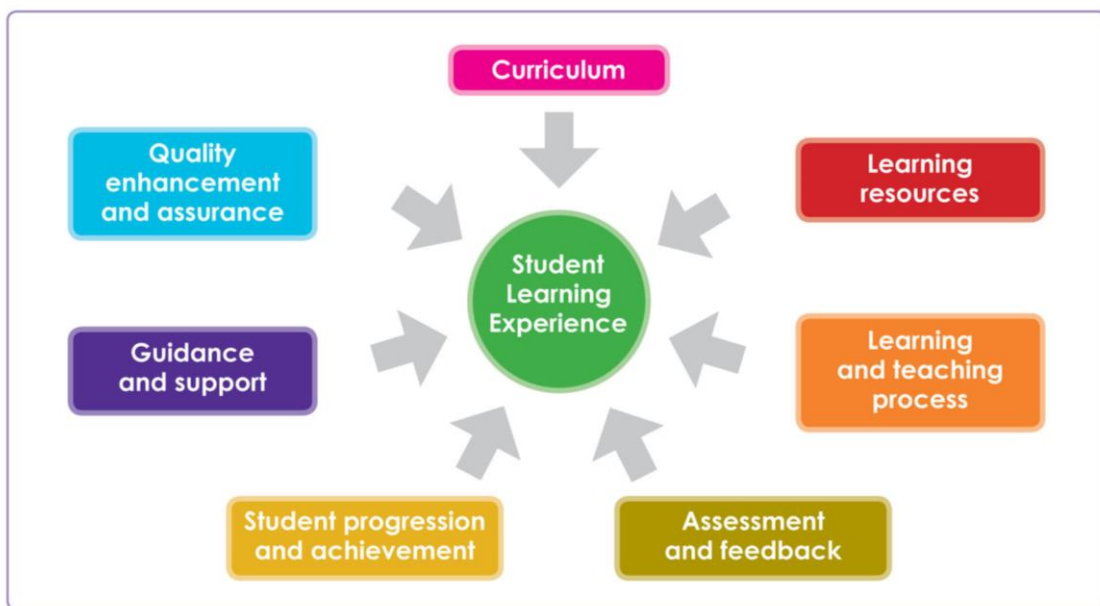
It's also important to note that universities are also subject to **Competition and Markets Authority (CMA)** guidance regarding their compliance with competition law. This includes what information is transparent to students and how it is presented. More information about CMA and universities' obligations in this area is detailed in the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)'s [Guide to providing information to prospective undergraduate students](#).

4. **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 new Theme, running from 2017-2020 will focus on using evidence for enhancement. More information on Enhancement Themes can be found at: www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk.
5. **Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR)** - This is the external review process for universities. In 2016 the length of the cycle was extended to 5 years (reviews over 4 years and a year of development) and the new ELIR 4 cycle will run between 2017-2022. External review panels are made up of academic, professional service and student reviewers. The purpose of the external review is for the review team (and QAA Scotland, as the body tasked to oversee the review process) to be confident in the institutions' own quality assurance processes and their capacity for enhancement. More information about the role of the students' association in the ELIR process is available in the forthcoming sparqs new Guidance on ELIR 4.

Outcome Agreements - Outcome Agreements set out what colleges and universities plan to deliver in return for their funding from the Scottish Funding Council and how the institution meets Scottish Government priorities. Outcome Agreements are negotiated between the institution and an SFC Outcome Agreement Manager. Priority areas for Outcome Agreements are - widening access; high quality learning and teaching; world-leading research; greater innovation in the economy and high performing institutions. There is an expectation that students are involved in the Outcome Agreement Process. For more information on Outcome Agreements see the SFC's [Guidance for the development of University Outcome Agreements: 2017-18 to 2019-20](#).

Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) – The [ESG](#) provide a common understanding of quality assurance of learning and teaching in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). Institutions and quality assurance agencies use the ESG as a reference document for internal and external quality assurance systems. ELIR in Scotland is ESG compliant.

Student Learning Experience (SLE) - the [SLE](#) (developed by sparqs and a key component of Course Rep Training), refers to all elements of a student’s experience during their time at their institution. There are 7 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 (SPAs) - Student Partnership Agreements are a way in which students’ associations and institutions can promote how 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 aim of the TEF is to monitor and assess teaching quality in universities. Participating institutions are awarded a rating to indicate the level of teaching quality that they provide. For the moment assessments are made at an institutional level, but there are plans to develop subject-level TEF in the future. The first year of the TEF (confusingly called TEF 2) was year 2017-18. It used various metrics as proxies to measure teaching excellence, including NSS (National Student Survey) and DLHE (Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education) data. Participating institutions also have to submit a written provider submission that provides contextual information and supports their case. While TEF is not compulsory in Scotland, 5 Scottish institutions chose to participate in TEF 2 in 2017-18. For more information on TEF 2 see the [operational guidance](#).

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.

Surveys and data

Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE – pronounced Deli), in the future to be known as 'Graduate Outcomes' – DLHE is a national survey of graduates which collects information about what they are doing six months after qualifying from their course. DLHE has undergone a review and from December 2018 the new survey *Graduate Outcomes* will be used. DLHE is one of the metrics used in TEF.

Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) – LEO data measures how much UK graduates of different courses at different universities are earning now, either one, three or five years since graduating. It does this by linking up tax, benefits, and student loans data. LEO data is historical so cannot be used to predict a graduate's future earnings. For more information see WonkHE's [Beginner's guide to LEO data](#).

National Student Survey (NSS) – the NSS is a national survey of final year undergraduate students of all higher education institutions across the UK. The survey consists of 27 core questions that gather feedback on a student's experience of studying a course. The purpose of the survey is to "contribute to public accountability, help inform the choices of prospective students and provide data that assists institutions in enhancing the student experience". NSS was updated for 2017 to include new questions, including a new section on Student Voice. NSS is one of the metrics used in TEF.

The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) – PRES is a nation survey of postgraduate research students organised by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) which asks them to comment on their learning and teaching experience.

The Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) - PTES is a national survey of Master's level students organised by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) which asks them to comment on their programme and learning and teaching experience.

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 - 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 - <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/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/>

Higher Education Academy (HEA) – is the national body for enhancing learning and teaching in higher education. It awards fellowships as a method of professional recognition for university teachers, produces research, provides consultancy and runs a number of student surveys including the UK Engagement Survey (UKES), Postgraduate Taught Survey (PTES) and Postgraduate Research Survey (PRES). More information can be found at - <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/institutions/hea-scotland>

Sector Committees

Teaching Quality Forum (TQF)

Membership - University middle-management types involved in quality and, (as observers) sparqs, HEA, NUS Scotland, Universities Scotland, and the SFC. The Forum is administered by QAA Scotland.

TQF is a network for university quality staff and provides an opportunity to discuss sector issues and feed back to other meetings/committees making decisions. It is also a chance to update people on sector developments or research. A representative from TQF will feed back Forum views to SHEEC/UQWG on issues being discussed – for example changes to ELIR, etc. The current Chair of TQF is Dr Jack Aitken, Director of the Senate Office at the University of Glasgow. The Deputy Chair is Nicola Milton, Executive Officer to the Proctor at the University of St Andrews.

Universities Quality Working Group (UQWG)

Membership – QAA Scotland, a representative from SHEEC, Universities Scotland, a representative from TQF, HEA, sparqs, SFC, NUS Scotland and a student representative.

UQWG brings together representatives from a range of sector organisations (and other committees) to consider the university quality arrangements. UQWG is run by the SFC to monitor the overall quality arrangements for the university sector – most recently to help to oversee the review of the Quality Enhancement Framework. The current Chair of the UQWG is Professor Peter McGeorge, Vice Principal for Learning & Teaching at the University of Aberdeen.

The Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC)

Membership - QAA, senior representatives of all Scottish universities (usually VPs of Learning & Teaching), NUS Scotland, sparqs, SFC, and 3 student representatives.

SHEEC plans and directs sector wide enhancement activities, including enhancement projects and the Enhancement Themes. It is important as it's the group that chooses the Theme and oversees its delivery. The current Chair of SHEEC is Professor Peter McGeorge, Vice Principal for Learning & Teaching at the University of Aberdeen. The Deputy Chair is Dr Alastair Robertson, Director of Teaching and Learning Enhancement at the University of Abertay.

Enhancement Theme Theme Leaders' Group (TLG) *Subject to change!*

Membership – one staff and one student representative from each university.

The Theme Leaders' Group brings together staff and students who work on the Theme at their own institutions. The Theme Leaders' Group makes recommendations and decisions on the direction and work of the Theme and monitors Theme activity. The Chair of the Theme Leaders' Group is Professor Karl Leydecker, Vice-Principal (Learning & Teaching) at the University of Dundee.

Where to find out more...

WonkHE (pronounced wonky)

<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/>