



Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) guidance for elections

A resource to help outline TQEF responsibilities to prospective election candidates

February 2026





Introduction

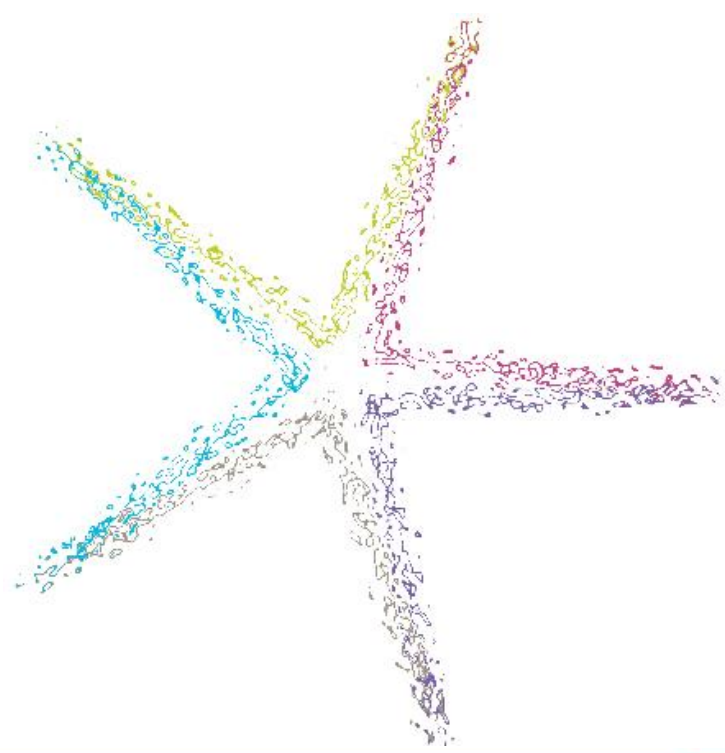
This information is aimed at students' association and institutional staff who run or support student elections. The new **Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF)** introduces the role of a **Lead Student Representative (LSR)** within the external review method, the **Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER)**. The introduction of this crucial role creates new opportunities for elected student officers, who would normally be selected for the LSR role as per the **Quality Assurance Agency (QAA)** [TQER Guidance](#).

The responsibilities of the **LSR** and the overall involvement of the elected officers and the students' association in the quality processes present a new demand on resources for the students' association. This guidance suggests ways to update information to prospective student officers within existing structures. However, sparqs does not suggest that these roles can simply be added onto existing responsibilities. We would encourage institutions, in partnership with students' associations, to consider taking an ongoing strategic approach to review, and further development of future capacity to fully undertake the range of activities associated with the TQEF.

Including the advice, this guide is intended to help candidates for student elections to appreciate the strategic and sector impacts of the role, in addition to regular representation roles and manifesto aims. Tailored guidance will also be sent to institutions before their TQER begins, with a breakdown of their institution's TQER timeline, noting which officer/LSR, current or incoming, will be in the role at each stage.

When preparing content for the upcoming student officer elections, it would be beneficial to highlight the following opportunities so that candidates understand the full scope of the role. It's also important to highlight the support and training that will be offered throughout their term in office to help them. This is especially important ahead of the year an institution will be undergoing a TQER or where there is potential handover to a future officer.

This information supplements the guidance from the [Scottish Funding Council](#) (SFC) and the [Quality Assurance Agency](#) (QAA).





Election materials guidance

TQER

- **Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review involvement** - participating elected officers in the institution's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Reviews (TQER) will provide student perspectives on academic standards and the student learning experience.
- **Lead Student Representative duties** - if chosen as a Lead Student Rep (LSR) you will act as the primary liaison between students and the institution, representing student interests at key meetings and forums.

SEAP

- **Contribution to Self-Evaluation and Action Plan** - elected officers may engage in the development, monitoring, and approval of the institution's Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP), ensuring student voices inform continuous improvement.

ILQR

- **Other Quality Arrangements** - elected officers support broader quality assurance and enhancement activities, including policy consultations, curriculum reviews, Institution-led Quality Reviews (ILQR) and enhancement initiatives, as well as Liaison Meetings with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).

STEP

- **Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme involvement** - Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP) is the national enhancement programme for the Scottish tertiary education sector. You may be invited to be involved alongside fellow officers from colleges and universities to work together to improve and enhance learning, teaching, the student experience and staff development across tertiary provision. The students' association will need to support and communicate regularly with the student chosen to join the STEP Network for your institution.

Opportunities for support from sparqs

Written Practical Guidance

- **SEAP Practical Guidance** – the newly-updated guidance includes an overview of the Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP) process; some suggestions of how students can be involved in the development of the SEAP; and suggested actions for students' associations. The guidance is particularly relevant to students' association representatives and staff but is also a useful resource for all institutional staff involved in the SEAP process.
- **TQER Practical Guide** – this guide has been produced for students' association officers and staff in the tertiary education sector in Scotland. It provides a context and overview to the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) process and makes practical suggestions of what you need to do at each stage. It is also encouraged that institutional staff involved in the review read through this guide and consider how they will contribute to student partnership in the process.
- **STEP Practical Guide** – this guidance provides an overview of Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP) for students' association officers and support staff. The guidance outlines how students' associations and students generally will be involved in STEP and recommends actions for students' associations to take.



Training Opportunities

- **That's Quality!** - sparqs' annual, quality induction event for student officers with an education, learning, and teaching remit and the staff who support them. The event is designed to help new officers engage in quality processes and is a key opportunity for both incoming and continuing student officers with an education remit.
- **Course Rep Training (CRT)** - sparqs has developed and delivered a range of products for the training of course reps in Scottish institutions. These have been designed to enable students to fully engage with quality enhancement processes and help them develop confidence in their role. These training products are outlined on the sparqs website, all of which reps should book via their institution or students' association.
- **TQER Training** for Lead Student Reps – sparqs has designed a support programme for college and university students' associations undergoing a Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER). This dedicated TQER training programme aims to build confidence, knowledge and meaningful engagement across the sector. The training is aimed at Lead Student Reps (LSRs) and the students' association staff who will support them, at institutions who are undergoing the review process in 2025-26 or early 2026-27. If your institution falls into this timescale, **your sparqs Development Consultant will be in touch directly to invite you to our new training programme at the appropriate time.**
- **National Education Officers' Network (NEON) meetings** - sparqs supports a network for student officers in universities and colleges who have an education-focused remit. The network engages participants in discussions and continuing development around key learning, teaching, and quality related sector developments. It provides an opportunity for officers to share best practice, and allows for cross-institutional working on initiatives and projects.

Resources

- **Student Learning Experience (SLE) model** – this resource is designed to sit at the heart of conversations with students, enabling students and staff to work together to identify priorities to enhance the quality of learning. It plays a key role in Scotland's quality arrangements and will continue to evolve alongside the tertiary approach to quality.
- **Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership** - this resource helps identify how partnership approaches can be built into the mechanisms and processes within the tertiary quality arrangements. **The ambition statement is aspirational.** It is recognised that, whilst there is significant good practice across Scotland, to achieve our ambition will require continued enhancement activity and this will be a journey for individual institutions and the sector as a whole.

Further information

Find out who the sparqs Development Consultant for your institution is on the [sparqs website](#). If you have any queries, or for further information, please don't hesitate to get in touch with your Development Consultant, or contact us at admin@sparqs.ac.uk.