

# TQF Bulletin, Spring 2020

Welcome to the TQF Bulletin - your quick guide to the activity of the Teaching Quality Forum.  
Please feel free to share this with colleagues who might find it valuable.



The second meeting of session 2020-21 took place on 12 March 2020 at the University of Strathclyde. There were three main items of discussion: quality arrangements and adverse circumstances; graduate apprenticeships; and the future shape and role of TQF.

'Adverse circumstances' might include extreme weather conditions or industrial action, but in this instance, discussion was dominated by institutions' responses to the current **coronavirus** outbreak.

Institutions recognise the need to prioritise the safety of students and staff, and the importance of pragmatism and flexibility. Institutions are aiming to continue operating, but with careful contingency planning and close monitoring of the situation. Examples of specific measures include:

- **Liaising closely with partner organisations** (degree awarding bodies; Further Education partners; other collaborative partners; public sector partners such as the NHS; Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies) to ensure alignment and continuity as far as possible
- **Limiting in-person contact** by conducting business online and preparing for more home working
- **Restricting travel**, including advising international students not to return to the UK at present
- **Cancelling or restricting field trips** (including in the UK), and exploring alternative provision
- Producing **guidance on remote working for staff and students**
- **Preparing to conduct learning, teaching and assessment activity online**; planning for additional pressure on IT systems
- Considering the **quality implications of online assessments**, particularly when these essentially become 'open book' assessments due to their online nature
- Considering the **accessibility of online activity** (do all students have the necessary technology to participate?)
- Offering **blanket extensions** of two weeks for students who are self-isolating
- Preparing for possible **shortages of exam invigilators**
- Prioritising **award-bearing stages of courses**, and learning outcomes not already assessed
- Creating **audit trails** of changes made to assessment procedures that can be used to inform external examiners and assessment boards
- Considering the **impact on routine quality activity** such as Institution-Led Review; moving quality activity online where appropriate and practical.

Institutions shared practice around several aspects of the delivery of **graduate apprenticeships**. Many of the colleagues attending indicated that their institutions were integrating the quality arrangements for graduate apprenticeships into their regular quality processes and practices, such as annual monitoring.

In terms of **the inclusion of 'Graduate Apprenticeship' in award titles**, practice varies across the sector. Colleagues agreed that there were arguments for and against this, and that, while there may not be a need for a uniform approach, it was important that there should be clarity for students and employers about the award titles. Following discussion, it was agreed that degrees achieved by a graduate apprenticeship route did not involve additional assessed work compared to degrees achieved by other routes. It was recognised that there are distinctive elements of the graduate apprenticeship model, such as the requirement for specific employer support, but a number of other aspects, such as work-based learning, are key parts of degrees achieved by other student modes. There was considerable appetite for further discussion and sharing practice around the delivery of graduate apprenticeships, including exploring guidance for **workplace mentors**, and this will be returned to at future meetings.

Colleagues revisited a discussion about the **future shape and role of TQF**, and broadly endorsed the recommendations of the subgroup that met in January:

- Colleagues are **encouraged to propose items for discussion**, and are reminded that proposing an item does not result in a commitment to lead the discussion
- We will introduce an informal **buddy scheme** to ensure that new members feel welcomed and supported to engage with TQF
- **Host institutions** are encouraged to provide informal input to meetings, perhaps introducing their teams over lunch
- Colleagues at QAA Scotland will continue to investigate an **online discussion space**, and lead on the development of the TQF **webpage** to clarify the remit and raise the profile of the Forum.

Discussion then turned to the relationship between TQF and the [Quality Strategy Network \(QSN\)](#). Since the October meeting, the Convener and Vice-convener had explored with Lee Jones and Victoria Korzeniowska (the Chair and Deputy Chair respectively of QSN), how the two bodies might work together more closely. QSN are receptive to greater involvement from TQF in UK-wide consultations and events, which will help to build the profile of the Forum and ensure that Scottish sector voices are heard. Forthcoming QSN events include a [symposium in Brighton in May](#) and its annual conference in Birmingham (17 & 18 September).

In sector agency updates, [sparqs](#) reported that their next training session for student officers will take place in July. QAA Scotland have launched [a short survey](#) to gather feedback on sector-level resources produced as part of the current Enhancement Theme. Please circulate and complete this as appropriate.

The next meeting of TQF will be on 11 June 2020 at the University of Dundee.

**TQF is a forum for sharing practice on matters of teaching quality, and colleagues are encouraged to suggest items for discussion. Please [get in touch with QAA Scotland](#) if you would like to share practice from your institution or learn more about practice across the sector.**