

TQF Bulletin, Summer 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.



Our final meeting of session 2019-20, on 11 June, was a landmark in more ways than one. It was our first Zoom meeting - members contributed through a mix of audio and text chat, which made for a rich discussion with lots of sharing of practice. Sadly, it was also Jack Aitken's last meeting as Convener. We were sorry not to be able

to mark the occasion in person, but there was an outpouring of thanks and good wishes. Members also extended congratulations to Nichola Kett, our new Convener. Nichola's appointment leaves vacant the position of Vice-Convener. We'll be running an election over the summer - please consider running!

As at the March meeting, much of the meeting was dedicated to sharing responses to COVID-19, with an emphasis on planning for the 2020-21 session. Members agreed that the **student experience, and student engagement**, were ongoing priorities. Many institutions had evidence that student engagement had in fact improved following the online pivot, raising questions about what could be learned and how student partnership might develop as a result.

The online pivot had also created a need for rapid approvals of **changes to delivery**. Members reported accelerated processes, such as offering blanket approval for online/blended delivery, and only more substantial changes requiring committee approval. Members also shared their approaches to managing the risks associated with accelerated approval processes, including keeping records of changes that had received blanket approval, and adapted student feedback mechanisms. The [Scottish Funding Council \(SFC\)](#) expects that institutions will provide students with clear and transparent information about delivery. Some institutions reported that they have updated guidance and report templates for **external examiners**. Members briefly discussed **academic transcripts**: while some institutions were including a supplementary note about no detriment policies, members were sensitive to potentially stigmatising 2020 graduates. QAA has produced [COVID-19 support and guidance](#) on [transcripts](#) and a wide range of other topics.

Members agreed that workload management was a key challenge, and that process streamlining would be important in quality activities including **institution-led review (ILR)**. Some reviews were proceeding as planned, while other institutions were revisiting their ILR schedules. ILR processes were being streamlined where appropriate, and it was expected that reviews would include a focus on COVID-19. Some members reported that their colleagues had asked to retain existing schedules and processes, and that where ILR had been run online, student feedback suggested that opportunities for engagement had enhanced. It is expected that this year's institutional reports to SFC should include text on how the HEI had managed ILR and related activity both during the pandemic and the impact on the future schedule.

Members agreed that we have the skills and expertise to rise to these challenges. We're all learning and developing good practice - we just need to keep sharing it, and supporting each other.

Cathy Milligan provided an update on **Graduate Apprenticeships (GAs)**. These are subject to the same quality arrangements as other degree programmes, and must also align with [Skills Development Scotland \(SDS\)](#) frameworks. In Autumn 2019, SDS launched a pilot project to examine quality arrangements for GAs, in partnership with Robert Gordon University, the University of Glasgow, the University of Strathclyde, the University of Dundee and Edinburgh Napier University, along with QAA Scotland. SDS has devised a process for mapping their expectations and quality assurance requirements with the Quality Code. Practice varies between GAs: in particular, work-based learning components can be shaped by requirements for professional accreditation. A short-life project is underway to look in more detail at the role of employers in designing and delivering GAs. This project has been paused due to COVID-19, but when it resumes, Cathy will engage further with colleagues.

Dawn Martin updated members on her [Enhancement Themes project](#) on **using evidence in annual monitoring and review**. She had run a workshop at QAA's [Quality Insights](#) event in February 2020, which had proved a valuable opportunity to share our learning with colleagues from across the UK, who face broadly similar challenges. One participant had enquired about running a similar workshop at their own institution, and Dawn has been in discussion with Clare Parks (QAA Scotland) about developing this idea.

Members were invited to comment on two papers. The first was an official **Description document intended to summarise higher education in Scotland**, for inclusion in the diploma supplement when students graduate. This was hosted on the [NARIC](#) website but had not been updated for several years. An updated version had been considered by the Quality Arrangements for Scottish Higher Education (QASHE) group. TQF members were encouraged to contact Ailsa Crum with any detailed comments, and to identify whether they were using the statement in degree supplements or elsewhere.

The second paper, from [Universities Scotland](#), contained **six principles of effective degree algorithm design**. TQF members noted that it was not currently common practice to review algorithms every five years but members could see some potential benefits in doing so. There was some discussion in the chat box about potentially aligning such a review with other activity such as ELIR preparation.

In sector agency updates, [spargs have established an online hub](#) where they are publishing their COVID-19 guidance. Their planned summer events will go ahead, but online and with programmes revised to ensure that they are COVID-19-relevant. AdvanceHE have launched their project [Creating Socially Distanced Campuses and Education](#), and member benefit reports are in production, along with a capstone report that will be available to everybody. QAA encourage members to engage with [our COVID-19 support and guidance](#), [Focus On: Technology Enhanced Learning Resource Hub](#), and [Enhancement Conference Resources](#).

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. You can also join the [TQF Yammer Network](#).