



Scotland's Tertiary
Quality Enhancement
Framework

Institutional Liaison Meetings (ILM)

Guidance for Institutions

2024-25

March 2025



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Quality Enhancement
Framework

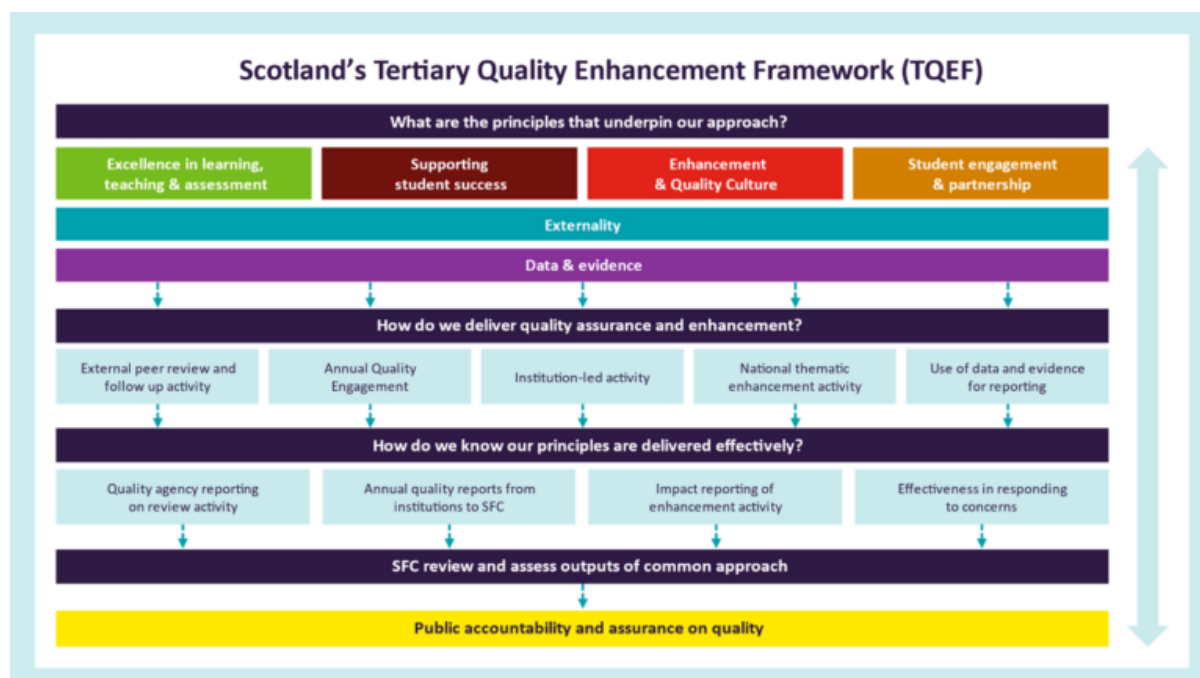
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Institutional Liaison

What is Institutional Liaison?

Institutional liaison is an element of Scotland's [Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework \(TQEF\)](#) which is the quality assurance and enhancement framework for further and higher education provision delivered by Scotland's colleges and universities. The TQEF seeks to answer the question: *'Is the provision delivered by Scotland's colleges and universities of high quality and is it improving?'*. Institutional liaison will play a key role in answering that question.



Institutional liaison is one component of Annual Quality Engagement (AQE) involving engagement with both the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). Further information about the role of Annual Quality Engagement can be found in the [SFC Guidance on Quality for Colleges and Universities AY 2024-25 to AY 2030-31](#).

What is the Purpose of Institutional Liaison?

From AY 2024-25, QAA will undertake a programme of Institutional Liaison Meetings (ILMs) with each of Scotland's colleges and universities. ILMs will take place to consider developments in, and the impact of, an institution's enhancement approach, and progress since the last external review.



Each institution has been assigned a dedicated contact at QAA, who will schedule and coordinate the ILM. These meetings, along with the regular contact the institution will have with QAA, through the ad hoc provision of advice and guidance and institutional engagement with Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP) activity, will support the 'no surprises' approach that the Scottish tertiary education sector has adopted. The 'no surprises' approach means that institutions can seek advice from, and share information with, QAA in relation to quality matters, engendering trust, confidence, and openness.

Institutional Liaison Meetings will be the mechanism through which QAA can:

- discuss progress against actions taken on external review recommendations
- discuss engagement with enhancement activities, including STEP
- identify areas of effective practice in relation to quality and enhancement
- gather sector intelligence that will enable us to identify key risks, issues and challenges institutions are facing on campus across the Scottish tertiary sector
- support the sector at an institutional and national level through providing advice and guidance, and links into networks of practice, or signposting to resources and other institutions
- report high-level findings from ILMs and other activity in an annual statement of assurance

What is the relationship between Institutional Liaison and Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER)?

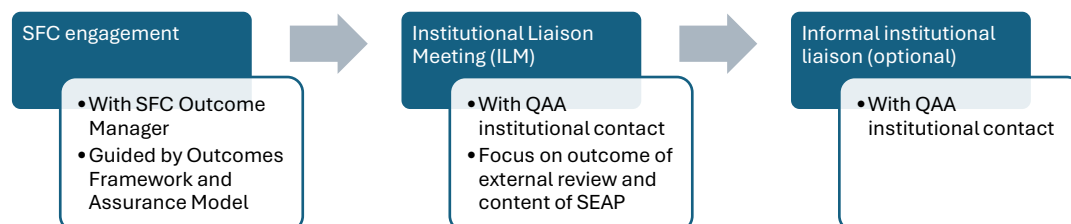
Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) is the new external peer-led and enhancement-focused review method for Scotland's tertiary sector. All outcomes from TQER will include follow-up activity and the requirement for each institution to submit an action plan which will be considered as part of their formal ILM. The level of follow-up activity will depend on the outcomes from the review.

Each ILM will include discussion on the progress against developing and disseminating areas of good practice and actions taken on TQER recommendations, and engagement with enhancement activity, including STEP. The discussion will also provide a formal opportunity for institutions to seek, and for QAA to provide, independent advice on matters relating to quality.

When will Institutional Liaison take place?

QAA meets formally with institutions on an annual basis, except in those years where an institution is undergoing external review.

Formal Institutional Liaison Meetings will normally take place following the annual quality engagements with SFC. ILMs will usually be held in the spring, with most engagements being completed by the end of April.¹



What activities will Institutional Liaison involve?

Once a year a formal institutional liaison meeting will focus on discussion of the most recent external review and follow-up from that review. The Self Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP) will also form a key part of the discussion. **Each ILM will be scheduled for approximately two hours and conducted either as an in person visit or online. For AY 2024-25, the first ILMs will be conducted in person.**

This meeting is held between the QAA institutional contact and a small group of staff and student representatives from the institution.

Suggested attendees from the institution are²:

- Head of Quality (or equivalent)
- Deputy or Assistant Principal (Learning & Teaching) (or equivalent)
- Students' Association/Union Vice-President (Education) (or equivalent)

Student involvement is a key part of the ILM process. In addition to student attendance at the meeting, institutions are expected to consult with their student representatives to ensure there is understanding of the purpose of the meeting and to support students' contribution to the discussion. This is to ensure that matters that are relevant to the student interests are covered. The indicative agenda at **Appendix B** can support institutions to prepare students for the meeting. Sparqs have also produced the Student Learner Experience (SLE) model,

¹ NB: Institutional Liaison Meetings in AY 2024-25 may also be held in May depending on scheduling.

² This list is indicative and does not preclude other relevant colleagues within the institution and its students' association/union from participating.



which is designed to support student engagement with a range of quality processes including TQER and ILMs. This resource is available from the sparqs [website](#).

At the meeting QAA will highlight any matters to be reviewed at the subsequent visit (formal ILM or informal meeting). Where concerns arise about the timeliness or effectiveness of actions being undertaken in response to external review outcomes, these will be discussed at the meeting along with any rationales or mitigations put in place by the institution.

QAA will consider whether any escalation is required including potential notification to SFC. Any information provided to SFC will use the notes from the meeting which the institution will have seen and have had an opportunity to comment on factual accuracy. From this information, SFC may wish to instigate further action where there is unsatisfactory progress.

Documentation to support ILMs

Discussion at ILMs will focus on a set of discussion points, supported by a set of evidence. (This will be of existing material, or information already prepared for other purposes. Institutions will not be required to prepare any additional or bespoke documentation).

For 2024-25, the ILMs will be supported by the following documentation:

- the most recent Self Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP),
- outcomes of recent external review and the response to those reviews (e.g., review reports, action plans and progress reports)

Institutions may also choose to submit additional documentation where they feel this may support ILM discussions (see Appendix A for indicative sources).

The evidence base for ILMs will expand in future years to include many of the resources listed as optional for 2024-25, or specific sources such as:

- TQER action plan
- any institutional action plan(s) and information about Institution Led Quality Review (ILQR) including the schedule, method used and any evaluation of that method
- information relating to the institution's engagement with enhancement activity, including STEP
- information relating to changes in the institution's approach to quality enhancement, including changes arising from developments in the UK Quality Code and from new activity at the institution
- information relating to developments in student partnership and engagement at the institution.

This extended evidence set is intended to reflect that ILM is complementary to TQER and materials prepared for ILM will form part of the evidence base for TQER. As noted above, this



documentation will be drawn from existing material and institutions are not expected to prepare bespoke material for their submission.

For each annual ILM, institutions will not be required to resubmit any material unless there have been changes since the previous submission. This includes from the previous ILM, SEAP submission or TQER submission. Where changes have been made, an institution should discuss with their QAA contact in advance whether the full document should be resubmitted or whether a brief exceptions update indicating changes is more appropriate.

Institutions will receive the agenda in advance of the ILM as part of the handbook. Any additional documentation is submitted by the institution two weeks in advance of the meeting.

Informal Institutional Liaison

There is also the opportunity for other meetings or contact to take place between institutions and QAA across the year. QAA can provide advice and guidance on quality matters and create a structured opportunity to, for example:

- Support transition to TQER and the new Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF)
- Focus on enhancement activities and the impact of those activities
- Highlight and discuss emerging challenges and opportunities to work collaboratively on solutions
- Highlight successful or innovative practice
- Share methods for capturing and enhancing the student voice

Informal meetings would typically take place in the latter half of the academic year, after an institution's formal ILM.

Enquires

For any questions related to this document, please contact your QAA Institutional Contact or nations@qaa.ac.uk.

Resources

Appendix A: Institutional Liaison Pre-Meeting Submission

Please note that this is an indicative list that will support submission beyond AY 2024-25. SEAPs and action plans from previous external reviews are the only forms of documentation required for ILMs in AY 2024-25.

Documentation/evidence	Required for 2024-25	Optional
Most recent SEAP	✓	
Report and action plans emerging from the last external review	✓	
Enhancement topic-related activity (including STEP)		✓
A copy of the institutions current Learning and Teaching Strategy or equivalent, supported (where appropriate) by <ul style="list-style-type: none"> any action plan (or equivalent) supporting the delivery of this Strategy for the current academic session evaluation of previous session's action plan (or equivalent) 		✓
Data used by the institution internally for oversight of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> retention and progression outcomes complaints and appeals student disciplinary cases <p>These should include analysis of any trends and attainment gaps for the last five years</p>		✓
A copy of the institution's approach and process for undertaking institution-led quality review (ILQR), including arrangements for considering Professional Services review		✓
ILQR reports undertaken since last ILM		✓
Follow up of any previous ILQR reports discussed at last ILM		✓
A copy of an institution's approach to annual monitoring		✓
Minutes of key institutional committees		✓
A copy of the current Student Partnership Agreement (or equivalent) with the Students' Association (or equivalent)		✓

Appendix B: Institutional Liaison Meeting – Indicative Agenda

Institution	
QAA Attendees	
Institution Attendees	
Date	

1. **Welcome, introductions and apologies**
2. **Overview of ILM purpose and role in TQEF (QAA)**
3. **Overview of Institutional Context (Institution)**
 - Strategic priorities (institution and Students' Association)
 - Current challenges and opportunities
4. **Institutional approach to enhancement**
 - Strategic approach to enhancement
 - Key docs: Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP)
5. **Action taken since External review**
 - Progress since last external review and update to action plan
 - Key docs: external review report and action plan
6. **Student Partnership**
 - Institutional approach and key features of student partnership
7. **Sector-wide enhancement topic (Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme)**
 - Institutional overview of engagement with enhancement activity and STEP
8. **Academic standards and quality processes**
 - Key features of the institution's approach to managing quality and setting, maintaining, reviewing and assessing academic standards
9. **Questions and close**