

Communication for University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) and the UHI Academic Partners- May 2026.

Purpose: the purpose of this communication is to provide clarity for UHI and the UHI Academic Partners in relation to

- a. how the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) will engage with UHI in relation to the Self-Evaluation and Action Plans (SEAPs) and
- b. the scope and expectations of Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) and specifically the Self-Evaluation and Action Plans (SEAPs) and the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) as pertains to UHI.

SFC engagement with UHI and UHI Academic Partners in relation to the Self-Evaluation and Action Plan feedback.

SFC recognises the role of the UHI Executive Office as the Regional Strategic Body for UHI and its Academic Partners. For the purposes of the Outcomes Framework and Assurance Model (OFAM), SFC conducts quarterly engagement meetings with the relevant members of UHI Executive Office in relation to the various dimensions of the OFAM. These discussions reference performance of UHI and its Academic Partners and include the High-Quality Learning and Teaching outcome which forms part of the quarter one engagement meetings, informed by the annual Self-Evaluation and Action Plans.

However, the Self-Evaluation and Action Plans (SEAPs) play an important wider role in Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) and both the SFC and the UHI Executive Office understand the desire and need from the partners to receive feedback on their individual SEAPs.

SFC and UHI, specifically the Learning, Teaching and Students directorate, have been working together to agree an approach to reviewing and feeding back about partner SEAPs and are pleased to share the agreed approach here.

UHI and its Academic Partners will continue to work together to prepare and submit the annual SEAPs by the agreed deadline. The SEAPs will be reviewed as per the normal procedure by SFC and Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) colleagues. In addition, UHI colleagues from Learning, Teaching and Students will also review the SEAPs and SFC and UHI colleagues will meet to discuss and agree the feedback for the individual colleges. This feedback will be provided to each of the partners by UHI colleagues, via the Dean of Learning, Teaching and Students. The feedback to each individual partner on their SEAP will be accompanied by an overview of thematic feedback prepared by SFC based on a collective consideration of all UHI SEAPs.

The Learning, Teaching and Students directorate will facilitate the collation of any points or responses raised in relation to SEAP feedback, and SFC and UHI colleagues will meet thereafter to discuss any points arising. The attendance of SFC colleagues at a relevant

meeting where SEAPs are to be discussed, to allow discussion of thematic feedback across all UHI SEAPs, has also been agreed, and the Learning, Teaching and Students directorate will work directly with SEAP leads across the Academic Partners to arrange this opportunity.

SFC will continue to have separate individual engagement meetings with the UHI Executive Office and with SMO as per the current arrangements.

SFC consider that this approach will support the continued recognition of the role of UHI as the Regional Strategic Body, while addressing the need for individual feedback to the partner colleges about their SEAPs.

Scope and expectations of the TQEF

Following the review of the SEAPs submitted in December 2025, some variation in the inclusion of Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) data was identified across the SEAPs. Given the dispersed nature of the HE provision across the partners and the difference in how the data is submitted, we felt it would be helpful for the purposes of the SEAP and the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review process, to clarify expectations about what is in scope for each aspect across the TQEF and how SFC will present the data reports for the external review process.

Scope of the TQEF

The scope of the TQEF as described in the [SFC Guidance on Quality for Colleges and Universities](#) highlights the Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) statutory duty for the quality assurance and enhancement of provision delivered by fundable bodies (i.e., colleges and universities). Recognising that institutions' quality arrangements apply across all their provision, colleges and universities have a strong interest in ensuring these processes are appropriate and effective institution wide, notwithstanding SFC's interest is only in the fundable provision.

To ensure students have access to high quality provision, whatever they are studying, and to avoid duplication, the TQEF is designed to cover all provision. This enables quality arrangements to be considered as follows:

- By SFC as relevant to the fundable provision.
- By QAA as relevant to the scope of the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER).
- By institutions as relevant to all their provision.

Scope of the Self Evaluation and Action Plans (SEAPs)

As noted above, it is recognised that all provision within an institution will be subject to the same/similar quality assurance and enhancement processes. When describing good practice or areas for development or enhancement, the SEAP should focus on the priority areas for enhancement or instances of good practice identified by the institution across all aspects of provision. Where relevant, this may include how student support services enable student engagement and success. For UHI Academic Partners, this should include both Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE) provision and associated data, where this is delivered by the academic partner.

Scope of the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER)

The TQER applies to all Scottish Funding Council (SFC) tertiary education fundable bodies in Scotland. The scope of TQER includes all of the institution's credit bearing provision - that is, programmes of study leading ultimately to awards or credit at Level 1-12 of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The scope of the review will take into account the awarding status of the institution under review. For example, some institutions delivering programmes of study in collaboration with awarding bodies or awarding organisations may have responsibility for the maintenance of academic standards, while institutions with degree awarding powers may have responsibility for the setting and maintenance of academic standards. The review team will take this into account when making judgements, reviewing the institution against only the applicable responsibilities. For those without degree awarding powers, this will include managing provision with awarding bodies. Similarly, for institutions without research degree awarding powers but with postgraduate research provision, the review will focus on matters of quality assurance and enhancement for the postgraduate research student experience.

TQER evaluates, analyses and reports on the management of academic standards, the enhancement of the quality of the student learning experience and enabling student success at institution level. This includes consideration of how academic and student support services contribute to students' ability to engage successfully with their learning. As outlined in the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF), individual programmes of study and subjects are reviewed through institution-led quality activity and the operation and outcomes of this activity will form part of the evidence base for TQER.

TQER is concerned with the learning experience of credit bearing provision delivered by fundable bodies in Scotland of all students, irrespective of their level, mode, language or location of study. The nature of the provision will depend on the context of the individual institution.

Strategic Impact Analysis (SIA)

The Strategic Impact Analysis (SIA) is a key document and reference point produced by the institution for TQER. The SIA complements the SEAP and is intended to support institutions in reflecting on their effectiveness, specifically against the principles of the TQEF, on which TQER is based.

The SIA should be viewed as the overarching commentary. Using the principles of the TQEF, institutions are asked to address the six key areas of the Framework outlining its current context, trends over this timeframe, challenges, opportunities and successes to support the upcoming review, with an emphasis on evaluation and evidence of impact (rather than description of process).

For UHI Academic Partners this should include reference to all provision.

SFC Data Report

As described in the [TQER Guide for Institutions](#), SFC will be sharing an analysis of data that is relevant to the institution's context at the time of the review, with QAA eight weeks prior to the initial visit. This information will be shared with the institution and the review team by QAA as part of review preparations.

For UHI, SFC will prepare a report that focuses on the Higher Education (HE) provision across UHI and its Academic Partners.

For each of the UHI Academic Partners, SFC will provide an individual report that includes the further education data for that partner as collected via the annual Further Education Statistics returns. The UHI HE data report will be updated annually (in the years when UHI Academic Partners are undergoing TQER) and shared with the relevant review teams for additional context.