

A SCOTTISH QUALITY ENHANCEMENT FRAMEWORK

The Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF) is the enhancement-led approach to quality in Scottish higher education. Collaboration and partnership are at the heart of this innovative method. All Scottish institutions have adopted the QEF, which provides public confidence in academic standards and the quality of the student experience in Scotland. The QEF has five key elements:

- enhancement-led institutional review (ELIR)
- institution-led review (ILR)
- Enhancement Themes
- student engagement
- public information.

Further information available at <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/quality-enhancement-framework>.

Enhancement-led institutional review (ELIR)

ELIR is an evidence-based method of peer review, coordinated and overseen by QAA Scotland, whereby all Scottish institutions are reviewed on a five-yearly cycle. It results in a judgement and a set of commendations and recommendations relating to the way the institution is securing academic standards and improving the student experience.

The university has achieved positive judgements in all ELIR cycles. At its last ELIR in 2015-16, the university successfully achieved the following judgement: that the university ‘has effective arrangements for managing academic standards and the student learning experience. These arrangements are likely to continue to be effective in the future.’ This is a positive judgement, which means the university has robust arrangements for securing academic standards and for enhancing the quality of the student experience. The university’s next ELIR will take place in academic year 2021-22.

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework set out a nationally recognised hierarchy of qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification type at each of the levels.

SCQF uses two measures - the level of a programme and the number of credit points awarded. This supports understanding and comparison of Scottish qualifications, and the progression routes between them. SCQF levels are from 1-12, with Levels 7-12 recognised as higher education. All university programmes, including those awarded by SQA, are explicitly placed within the framework. Further details can be found at www.scqf.org.uk/.

UK Quality Code for Higher Education

The UK Quality Code is a key reference point for UK higher education providers for effective quality assurance. It was developed by QAA on behalf of the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment, in consultation with the higher education sector.

The current Code (published May 2018) is based on three elements:

1. **Expectations** which clearly and succinctly express the outcomes providers should achieve in setting and maintaining the standards of their awards, and for managing the quality of their provision.
2. **Practices** representing effective ways of working that underpin the delivery of the expectations, and will deliver positive outcomes for students. These include:
 - a. **Core practices** that must be demonstrated by all UK higher education providers as part of assuring their standards and quality
 - b. **Common practices** that will be applied by providers in line with their missions, their regulatory context and the needs of their students. These are practices common to the underpinning of quality in all UK providers and are mandatory requirements in Scotland.
3. **Advice and guidance** which will help established and new providers alike to develop and maintain effective quality assurance practices.

Advice and guidance

The Advice and Guidance covers 12 areas to support providers to meet the Expectations and Core and Common practices of the Quality Code. Each area includes guiding principles, practical advice and useful resources.

- Admissions, recruitment and widening access
- Assessment
- Concerns, complaints and appeals
- Course design and development
- Enabling student achievement
- External expertise
- Learning and teaching
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Partnerships
- Research degrees
- Student engagement
- Work-based learning.

Further information about the UK Quality Code for Higher Education can be found at <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code>.

Subject Benchmarks

These are used by external examiners, approval panels and reviewers across the UK to make judgements on national standards. Subject benchmarks define the expectations of the standards for the award of qualifications at Masters or honours degree level in a particular subject. They include guidance on the knowledge, skills and abilities expected of a graduate at that level. See www.qaa.ac.uk for full details of the subject benchmark statements.

Academic Standards and Quality Regulations 2020-21
Scottish quality enhancement framework

Expectations for standards		Expectations for quality	
<p>The academic standards of courses meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications framework.</p> <p>The value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time is in line with sector-recognised standards.</p>		<p>Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.</p> <p>From admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.</p>	
Core practices	Common practices	Core practices	Common practices
<p>The provider ensures that the threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications frameworks.</p> <p>The provider ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.</p> <p>Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them.</p> <p>The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent.</p>	<p>The provider reviews its core practices for standards regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.</p>	<p>The provider has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system.</p> <p>The provider designs and/or delivers high-quality courses.</p> <p>The provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.</p> <p>The provider has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience.</p> <p>The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.</p> <p>The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students.</p> <p>Where the provider offers research degrees, it delivers these in appropriate and supportive research environments.</p> <p>Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high-quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them.</p> <p>The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.</p>	<p>The provider reviews its core practices for quality regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.</p> <p>The provider's approach to managing quality takes account of external expertise.</p> <p>The provider engages students individually and collectively in the development, assurance and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience.</p>

