Borders College Approach to Quality Improvement

September 2024

History of Changes

Version	Description of Change	Authored by	Date
1	Update from 2019	Jayne Gracie	April 2022
2	Update roles & responsibilities	Lynne Gilchrist	May 2023
3	Update roles & responsibilities	Pitra McNeill	September 2023
4	Update following Scottish Government agreement to the SFC Review recommendation to develop a single tertiary quality framework for Scotland's colleges and universities (TQEF)	Pitra McNeill	September 2024

Foreword by the Principal & CEO

"Following extensive consultation with staff, students, and external stakeholders, the Regional Board and the Executive Team of Borders College have developed key Strategic Ambitions and Action Plans, including:

- *Strategic Ambition 2020-2025*
- *Future Skills Strategy 2020-2025*
- *Sustainability Strategy 2020-2025*
- *Equalities Action Plan 2021-2025*
- *Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Students*

These Plans and Strategies articulate our strategic objectives, performance measures, values, and behaviours. In supporting the Plans and Strategies, Borders College recognises that it is essential that quality assurance and enhancement sits at the heart of what we do. More formally, it is a condition of grant that each college in Scotland takes responsibility for quality assurance and improvement within its own institution. The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) have a role to ensure, on behalf of Scottish Government and students, that institutional arrangements are effective.

For these reasons, we have designed our Quality procedures to meet the requirements of the SFC and correlate to the QAA Scotland quality framework Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF)*, encompassing:*

- *Excellence in learning, teaching & assessment.*
- *Supporting student success.*
- *Student engagement and partnership.*
- *Enhancement and quality culture.*
- *Externality.*
- *Data & evidence.*

This is embedded in our approach to quality enhancement and encourages and supports a culture and ethos of quality.
The annual cycle for quality integrates self-evaluation with enhancement planning and performance, and links back to the Strategic Plans and Strategies. We set annual Strategic Priorities with a Supporting Action Plan and these, along with the Risk Register, Equality Action Plan 2021-2025 and the supporting College strategies all inform Borders College curriculum and department-wide enhancement planning. Our approach to quality improvement relies on a continuous cycle of monitoring, planning, action, and evaluation. This ensures we can maintain the standards expected both locally and nationally and supports us to achieve the goals in our Strategic Plans and Strategies."

Peter Smith
Principal & CEO, Borders College

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Introduction

The Scottish Government has agreed to the SFC Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability recommendation to develop a single Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) for Scotland's colleges and universities.

The TQEF will seek to answer the question 'Is the provision delivered by Scotland's colleges and universities of high quality and is it improving?'
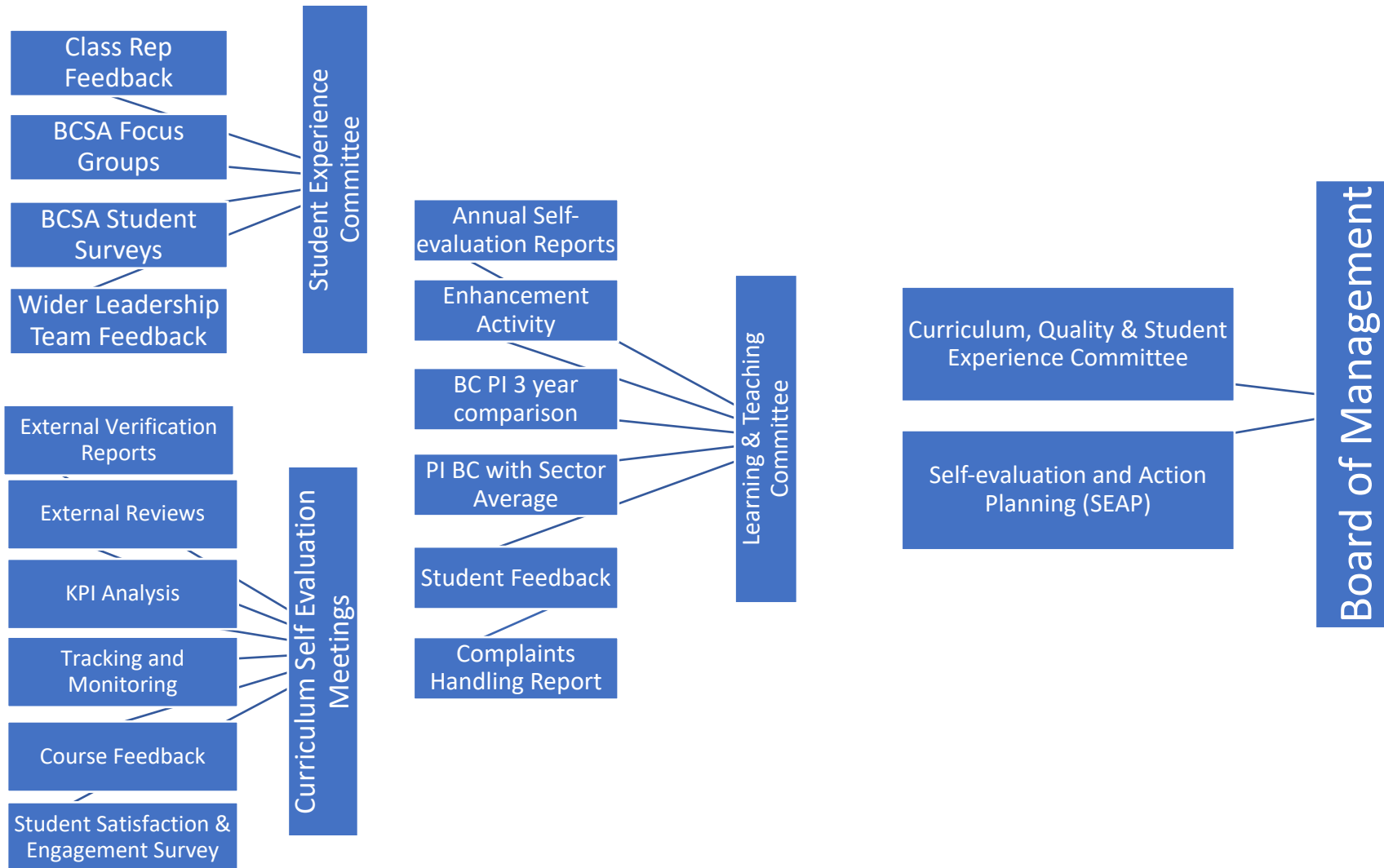
As part of our robust quality assurance processes we monitor and evaluate the quality of our learning and teaching to make sure that the standards of academic awards meet the expectations set out in the UK Quality Code, and that the quality of the student learning experience is being safeguarded and improved.

We have a clear strategic vision of quality enhancement, evaluating our current strengths and areas for development through annual self-evaluation.

The Quality Team and the Borders College Student Association (BCSA) have embedded the SPARQs Student Learning Experience (SLE) model into quality assurance at both programme and organizational levels to review and evaluate all aspects of the student experience.

Quality Assurance and Enhancement

The diagram below illustrates our approach to quality assurance and enhancement:

Student Experience Committee ←
- Class Rep Feedback
- BCSA Focus Groups
- BCSA Student Surveys
- Wider Leadership Team Feedback

Curriculum Self Evaluation Meetings ←
- External Verification Reports
- External Reviews
- KPI Analysis
- Tracking and Monitoring
- Course Feedback
- Student Satisfaction & Engagement Survey

Learning & Teaching Committee ←
- Annual Self-evaluation Reports
- Enhancement Activity
- BC PI 3 year comparison
- PI BC with Sector Average
- Student Feedback
- Complaints Handling Report

→ **Board of Management**
- Curriculum, Quality & Student Experience Committee
- Self-evaluation and Action Planning (SEAP)

Curriculum Meetings
Self-evaluation meetings (August, February and June)

These meetings are held on three occasions throughout an academic year. They enable teams to consider what is going well, what needs to be improved, and identify changes set by the regulatory or awarding body.

The [Guide to Curriculum Meetings](#) provides information to support curriculum teams to reflect, manage and plan the course. These meetings give curriculum teams the opportunity to consider programme content and delivery methods, as well as analysing three-year trends on student success rates. They enable discussion for change and improvement. The minutes of the meeting allow subject areas to gather evidence to help in the production of the annual self-evaluation reports in line with the requirements of TQEF. It is essential students have representation at the February and June meetings, and also where possible, our partners such as work placement providers. Staff are also requested to consider student feedback from previous years.

These meetings are key to our planning and development, and are intrinsically linked to our key college's key strategies. Each year the Assistant Principal (AP) and Directors of Departments complete a self-evaluation, which are invaluable for gathering information and evidence for the overall college Self-evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP). The annual cycle for quality assurance and enhancement integrates evaluative reporting, enhancement planning and performance management.
This all links back to the Strategic Ambition 2020-2025 and Future Skills Strategy 2020-2025.

Tracking and Monitoring Meetings

These are held monthly to:
*   Track and monitor student attendance and progress.
*   Develop strategies to enable students to be successful.
*   Monitor assessment progress against assessment schedule (this means lecturing staff are working to the agreed timeline of the assessment schedule shared with students).

Preparation for Academic Session Meetings

Time is allocated to allow teams to fully prepare for each academic session. These meetings take place during the first two weeks of an academic term (prior to full-time courses starting).

Examples of preparation undertaken include:
*   Staff understand and agree individual and course timetables and interdependencies (cross-referencing) for assessment.

- Updating the IV13 (in line with agreed course structures).
- Developing assessment schedules and uploading to Canvas and ProSolution.
- Reviewing and discussing KPI (Key Performance Indicators) from previous sessions.
- Agree and finalise student induction.
- Meeting with Student Support Team to discuss students with additional support needs and discuss and agree strategies to support these students.

Learning and Teaching Observations

One of the methods through which we can support the direction of our learning and teaching, and assure its quality, is through observation

Our five-year cycle of observations comprises of Formal Lesson observations, Peer observations/ Self-Reflective practice observations and Learning Walks. This ensures our lecturing staff are reviewing, self-reflecting, discussing and developing their professional teaching practice, in a constructive and supportive way, annually.

1. **New Lecturers (Developmental Visit) / Lecturers enrolled onto PDA or TQFE / Lecturers who have not been observed in the past 5 years**

All new staff will have a developmental visit. Those other staff in this category will have a pre-observation meeting, a lesson observation and a post observation self-reflection meeting. They will be observed by a colleague, who is a lecturer, and the observation will be for at least 45 minutes.

The purpose of this observation is to discuss learning and teaching in a supportive and non-judgmental way, to explore any issues and come up with ideas to resolve these issues, and focus on key areas of teaching that could be developed.

Good practice and any areas for development will be documented on the Learning & Teaching Observation Record (LTOR). Summary outcomes and good practice will be shared with the Head of Sector (HoS). Formal observations for professional development equate to 3 hours of a lecturer's yearly continuous professional development (CPD).

2. **Lecturers who have been observed in the past 5 years and had a Learning Walk last year.**

Those staff will engage in Peer Observation and/or Self-Reflection (own or colleague's teaching practice). They will decide on their focus for reflection and take notes when discussing the lesson with peers or reflecting on own practice.

They will then complete and submit a Reflective Practice Log to the Quality Improvement Manager. Self-reflective and peer observations for professional development equate to 3 hours of a lecturer's yearly CPD.

3. **Lecturers who have been observed in the past 5 years and who engaged in reflective practice of own teaching/ peer observation last year**

Those staff will receive a Learning Walk, that will be carried out by a lecturer, and typically last 30 minutes or less. They will agree a focus for the walk, and the observer will look for evidence in both teacher actions and student engagement.

The observer will provide timely and specific feedback, so lecturers can reflect on their performance. A learning Walk for professional development equate to 3 hours of a lecturer's yearly CPD.

Training and Development

Training and Development and Continuing Professional Development for all staff plays a significant role in achieving our objectives for continuous improvement. We provide an annual programme of Training and Development opportunities, prepared in response to individual and college needs, which have been identified, for example, through SPDRs and the College self-evaluation process.
Much of this training is recorded and shared with lecturing staff on their Canvas Learning & Teaching course, which also provides access to a wealth of educational pedagogy materials and theories.

Validation and Approval of Delivery

Borders College is an Approved Centre to run SQA and other awarding body provision. This means we have a responsibility to ensure that all our provision is valid, viable and able to meet the needs of our learners and meets awarding body standards.

The Approval Committee and Approvals Panels approve all assessed units and awards, to ensure that they meet with our internal and external requirements.

Where a curriculum area wishes to deliver a new award, offer a replacement award, or make a minor adjustment to an award, our Approval Procedure sets out team member responsibilities in detail and is supported by the Curriculum Planning and Review Process (incorporating design guidance) and other supplementary guidance and forms.

The procedure requires the Head of Sector to make a costed proposal with the associated documentation to demonstrate the demand, viability, and sustainability of the award to an Approvals Committee, which can require an Approvals Panel to examine the proposal in more detail, and which makes recommendations to the Senior Leadership Team.

Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) and Credit Rating

The College can develop, credit rate and level locally devised awards only where there is no equivalent award available through a nationally recognised awarding body. The details of our approach are in SCQF Credit Rating – Procedures for Creating and Validating Awards, which follows the SCQF requirements.

Internal Verification

Borders College is an Approved Centre to run SQA and other awarding body provision. This means we have a responsibility to ensure that all provision is valid, approved and assessed to the national standard of the relevant awarding body.

We manage the quality of our delivery internally through Internal Verification, and the awarding bodies check this through External Verification. Our Internal and External Verification Policy and Procedure set out team member responsibilities in detail and are supported by supplementary guidance and forms.

Awarding bodies, by arrangement with us, periodically visit subject areas and externally verify learner work; in some cases, they request us to send samples of student work to them. This ensures that we meet the awarding body's standards and ensures maintenance of national standards.

Quality Audits

We carry out internal quality audits through the year.

1. Internal Verification Audit

The Internal Verification Audit enables us to sample our approach to internal verification, to ensure that we are carrying these out consistently and to an appropriate standard. This enables us to address and rectify any issues internally quickly before an external verifier identifies a problem. The outcome of the audit is shared with the curriculum team and discussed at the Learning and Teaching Committee.

2. Learning and Teaching Audit

The Learning and Teaching Audit enables us to sample our approach to learning and teaching materials, again to ensure consistency of standards of approach and that a range of appropriate engaging materials are being used. The outcome of the audit is shared with the curriculum team and discussed at the Learning and Teaching Committee.

Learner Engagement

We aim to ensure meaningful learner engagement, so that students' interests are front and centre of everything we do. Our innovative approach at Borders College is to work in partnership with Borders College Student Association (BCSA).

Each year Borders College's Students' Association (BCSA), establish a Student Experience Committee (SEC). The SEC is chaired by the BCSA President, and this student led forum provides an opportunity to discuss with the college senior managers, all areas of the student learning experience.

A team of Student Representatives are elected to work with BCSA to collate student feedback on a range of Student Learning Experience (SLE) themes from their curriculum area.

The BCSA have developed an Induction Programme for Class Reps, along with a suite of questions for Class Reps to gain feedback from their peers, and report upon to the SEC; all of which is explained in the [BCSA Class Rep Guide](#).

We have crossed referenced the SLE into all our all quality assurance processes and we use the SLE Model at a course, organisational and governance levels, to embed the student's voice into everything that we do.

Learner Feedback

We collect learner feedback, evaluating the curriculum at unit and course level.

We also use a range of mechanisms to collect feedback such as the Annual Student Satisfaction & Engagement Survey, quick pulse surveys and Focus Groups.

These allow for early response to students concern and create the opportunity to respond to these concerns in-year, if this is possible.

Complaints Handling

Our complaints procedure has two stages. We expect the majority of complaints will be handled at Level 1. If the customer remains dissatisfied after Level 1, they can request that we look at it again, at Level 2.

Action is taken to improve services on the basis of complaint findings, where appropriate. We record details of all complaints, the outcome and any action taken, and use this data to analyse themes and trends. Senior management have an active interest in complaints and use complaints data and analysis to improve services. Learning is shared throughout the organisation