

Committee Title	Student Voice					
Date of Meeting	23 October 2023					
Title/Subject	QAA Quality Enhancement and Standards Review – Briefing Note					
Paper Presenter	Prepared by GCU Associate Academic Registrar and Head of Department (Quality Assurance and Enhancement)					
Brief Summary of Issues/Topic	<p>On 6 September 2022, SFC published new guidance to universities on quality for the academic years 2022/23 and 2023/24. The guidance while not specifically described as such, will act as a transition until new arrangements are in place for 2024/25. The context of the new guidance centred on the development of the Scottish Tertiary Quality Framework.</p> <p>In the next two years, there will be Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) and Institutional Liaison Meetings (ILM). QAA Scotland will organise QESR and ILM. In each year, half of institutions will have QESR and half ILM, with institutions undergoing both over the two years.</p> <p>GCU's ILM took place on 10 November 2022. Our next stage of external review under the 2022-24 arrangements will be our QESR scheduled for 6 December 2023. This paper provides Student Voice with a short briefing note on the process, planning and preparations.</p>					
Recommendation(s)	Information	X	Discussion		Approval	
	Student Voice are asked to note the arrangements for QAA QESR with particular attention to section 2.6 around our preparations for QESR and planned student engagement for student representation at the visit.					
Who have you consulted when developing the paper?	PVC Learning and Teaching with the briefing note presented to University Executive Group, Education Committee and Learning Enhancement Sub-Committee.					
Staff/Student Protocol	Yes		No	X	N/A	
Will any decision approved directly affect the work of staff?	Not applicable					
Should the paper be submitted to any other committee following its consideration/approval at this meeting?	A progress update on our preparations will be submitted to SAGE on Wednesday 22 November.					
If yes, please state the committee and proposed date of submission.						

GCU Students' Associate Student Voice – Briefing Note

QAA Quality Enhancement and Standards Review

1. SFC guidance to universities on quality arrangements for 2022-24

On 6 September 2022, SFC published [new guidance](#) to colleges and universities on quality for the academic years 2022/23 and 2023/24. The guidance while not specifically described as such, will act as a transition until new arrangements are in place for 2024/25.

The context of the new guidance centred on the development of the Tertiary Quality Framework (TQF) currently underway. The period 2022-24 acts as the first stage of the next review cycle, in which activity will take place to inform a second stage that will begin in academic session 2024-25 when the new (TQF) is anticipated to come into place.

The SFC has worked with QAA Scotland to develop the quality arrangements for the period 2022-24 that will continue to support quality assurance, improvement and enhancement while also allowing flexibility to work with stakeholders and the sectors to develop a new single tertiary approach over the same period.

For universities, the information set out in the guidance outlines arrangements for external institutional review (Quality Enhancement and Standards Review and Institutional Liaison Meetings), Institution-led Review (ILR), Enhancement Theme activity, public information on quality and the student experience and institutional reporting on quality. The [arrangements](#) for external institutional review have been developed by QAA Scotland (QAAS) to be delivered across two phases to ensure continued compliance with European Standards and Guidelines (2015). The SFC has committed to ensuring compliance with ESG as part of its developing tertiary quality arrangements.

The guidance for universities specifically looks similar to previously, except the alternative review arrangements to Enhancement Led Institutional Review (ELIR) now that the fourth cycle has concluded. In the years 2022-24, there will be Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) and Institutional Liaison Meetings (ILM). QAAS will organise QESR and ILM. In each year, half of institutions will have QESR and half ILM, with institutions undergoing both over the two years. QESR will look at institutional approaches to quality assurance, improvement and enhancement and will include the current principles of self-evaluation, sector reference points and peer and student reviewers at least once (online or in person at the institution).

2. ILM and QESR

GCU's ILM took place on Thursday 10 November 2002, facilitated by the Acting Director for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (QAA). Our QESR is confirmed for **Wednesday 6 December 2023**.

2.1 QESR method

QESR is an enhancement-led method with outcomes based on the evidence considered by the review team. This evidence comprises documentation submitted by the HEI in advance

of the review visit and discussion that takes place by way of meetings with staff and students within the review visit itself.

2.2 Review visit

The review visit will take place over one day and will be held online via MS Teams. During the visit, the review team will continue their considerations of the institution's documentation and hold meetings with staff and students. The review team will share in advance of the visit a list of topics/themes to be explored during the visit based on the documentation submitted. This means the team will pursue matters relating to both the assurance and management of academic standards, and also the enhancement-led work being undertaken by the institution to enhance the student experience. The visit will include opportunities for the review team to clarify matters relating to the progress of the review. The indicative schedule for the review visit is appended below extracted from the [QAA Scotland Handbook for Scottish Quality Enhancement Arrangements \(Phase 1: 2022-24\)](#).

2.3 Review team

QAA Scotland allocates reviewers to QESR teams. Owing to the focused nature of QESR, the composition of the review team will be standard for all HEIs and comprise: one academic reviewer, one student reviewer and a coordinating reviewer. Where possible and practicable, one member of the Phase 1 QESR review team will be drawn from an institution's ELIR 4 review team.

The review team for GCU has been confirmed as follows:

- Professor Phil Cardew, Leeds Beckett University, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) and **continuity ELIR4** review team member (academic reviewer)
- Gulce Baskaya, University of Edinburgh (student reviewer)
- Donna Taylor, University of the West of Scotland, Senior Quality Enhancement Officer (coordinating reviewer)

There are no conflicts of interest with the review team. The review team will be supported by a QAAS officer who will attend the review team's pre-visit meeting and will also join them for the final private review team meeting on the review visit, chairing both these meetings and providing advice as appropriate.

2.4 Findings, reporting and institution response

QESR **findings** will consider how, from the information available to the review team, the institution is continuing to maintain an effective and enhancement-led approach towards the management of academic quality and standards. This will be expressed by a confidence statement as follows:

*From the evidence presented, the review team is **confident** or **not confident** that the institution is making effective progress in continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision to enable effective arrangements to be in place for managing academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience.*

A **report** is produced for each QESR setting out the findings and the underpinning evidence. The report will note concisely the basis on which the review team established its findings. It will include recommendations for action and any instances of good practice to inform Phase

2 activity. GCU will be provided with the opportunity to comment on factual accuracy of the draft report as per the review timeline. The confirmed report will be published on the QAA website.

GCU will be required to publish a **follow-up** action plan 24 weeks after publication of the report (that is, 32 weeks after the review visit). Four weeks prior to publication, institutions are advised to share the draft action plan with the QAAS officer to the review for feedback. The action plan responding to the QESR findings will be published on GCU's website and a link provided to the QAAS officer for inclusion on the QAA website.

2.5 Timeline

The standard timeline for the QESR process has been mapped with the key dates against our confirmed review visit in December 2023 (annex 1. below).

2.6 Preparations for QESR

While the QESR is not a smaller-scale ELIR, it is external peer review and the assessment of the effectiveness of our arrangements in place for managing academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience. Our preparations and planning for QESR will be proportionate to the review ahead while ensuring rigour.

A QESR **steering group** was established in August comprising of key staff and student stakeholders. It is convened by the PVC Learning and Teaching. The Department of Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE) are leading on all aspects of preparation including on student engagement working in close partnership with the GCUSA.

A **short project plan** to sit alongside our QESR timeline is guiding our QESR activity. The plan includes four workstreams – documentation and evidence; representation; event preparation; and internal debrief. The steering group will also consider the most optimum channels to engage staff and students via proportionate communication and interaction. A key focus following submission of our documentary evidence will be to engage students and staff in the process of the QESR and the review event itself.

To inform our fuller understanding of the QESR method, operational aspects and planning, GCU and the GCUSA attended the **QAA HEI QESR briefing** on 8 June 2023. This provided a good opportunity to hear other institutions approaches to QESR planning and understanding. It was particularly useful to hear from QESR reviewers and for them to share their experiences. QAA perspectives on practical elements, presentation of documentation, event running, was also extremely helpful to feed into our preparations and delivery on event day. The opportunity for institutions to get some headspace during the briefing session and to start to think about our planning particularly around student and staff engagement and communication strategies for QESR was helpful. The timing of the briefing was ideal for GCU as the new FTOs had only recently taken up post with the Student President and Vice-President (GSBS) joining alongside GCU and GCUSA staff at the briefing.

Documentary evidence

QAE has gathered all the documentary evidence for the QESR and has uploaded to the QAA SharePoint by their deadline of 11 October 2023. A documentation index has been prepared and populated with the mandatory documentation required by QAA for the review to supplement the evidence upload. The Associate Academic Registrar and Head of

Department (QAE) will facilitate the review by liaising closely with the QAAS officer and coordinating reviewer to ensure the organisation and smooth running of the review process.

A key focus of the QESR will be an update on our progress on our ELIR 4 recommendations. We have taken the opportunity to extend the mandatory documentation to include additional contextual documentation to support our progress on the recommendations which will provide a helpful narrative to the QESR Team. In addition, we have expanded the learning and teaching strategy mandatory documentation to include a suite of supporting SfL evidence.

Throughout the preparation for the review there will be a number of key points of liaison with the QAA officer with lead responsibility for the review. QAA will contact GCU (Associate Academic Registrar, QAE) on 1 November 2023 to provide us with the proposed draft review programme and requests for any additional documentation made by the team. Additional documentation requested by the team should be uploaded to the review site by 15 November 2023. QAA will then confirm the final review programme and participants on 23 November 2023, just under two weeks prior to the review visit. Placeholders have already been made to anticipated staff stakeholders. The Department of Quality Assurance and Enhancement are currently in the process of identifying student stakeholders based on our ELIR 4 experience. The QESR team will want to meet with a wide range of students, across all levels of study, and are likely to be interested in discussing key areas of our strategic foci, e.g. widening participation, graduate apprenticeships, international student experience.

Annex 1. GCU QESR Timeline

Time +/- visit	Actions	Responsibility
11 October 2023 (-8 weeks)	Higher education institution (HEI) uploads submission to review site; team begins work on documentation	GCU
1 November 2023 (-5 weeks)	Review team requests any additional documentation/evidence and proposes a schedule for the visit, including who they would like to meet	Review team
15 November 2023 (-3 weeks)	HEI uploads response to additional documentation/ evidence request	GCU
22 November 2023 (-2 weeks)	Review team holds virtual pre-visit meeting and submits interim text; this meeting is chaired by the QAAS officer, also includes confirmation of the schedule and participants	Review team/ QAAS officer
6 December 2023	One-day review visit (virtual)	GCU/Review team/QAAS officer
13 December 2023 (+ 1 week)	Review team completes draft findings report	Review team
20 December 2023 (+2 weeks)	Report for moderation within QAA Scotland	Review team/ QAAS officer
27 December 2023 10 January 2024 (+3 weeks)	Draft findings report shared with HEI for factual accuracy Date adjusted for Christmas/New Year closure (confirmed by QAAS)	QAAS officer
10 January 2024 24 January 2024 (+5 weeks)	HEI responds on any points of factual accuracy Date adjusted for Christmas/New Year closure (confirmed by QAAS)	GCU
31 January 2024 14 February 2024 (+8 weeks)	Findings report published Date adjusted for Christmas/New Year closure (confirmed by QAAS)	QAA
19 June 2024 (+28 weeks)	HEI shares draft action plan with QAAS officer for feedback prior to publication	GCU/ QAAS officer
17 July 2024 (+32 weeks)	Action plan published on HEI website; link provided for QAA website	GCU

Annex 2. Indicative schedule for review visit

Note: this structure - including timings, number of meetings and proposed attendees at meetings - may be adjusted according to the specific areas of focus that the review team identifies for discussion.

Time	Activity
08.45	Review team arrives/joins virtually and any technology requirements are tested
09.00	Review team holds first team meeting to review and confirm Agendas
09.30-10.00	Meeting with HEI key contact(s) <i>This will vary between HEIs but would typically involve:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HEI quality lead • Vice-Principal with responsibility for learning & teaching • Student Association Vice-President (Education) or nominee
10.00-11.00	Team reflects on any additional context/clarifications from meeting with HEI key contact(s)
11.00-12.00	Meeting with students <i>This would typically be with a group of students reflecting a range of characteristics. Depending on what a review team would like to explore, these may be drawn from all or any of:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student association sabbatical officers • students in representative roles (whether at HEI-level, within schools/departments or for courses) • students who do not hold a formal representation position
12.00-13.30	Team debriefs from student meeting and prepares for staff meeting - includes working lunch
13.30-14.30	Meeting with staff (1) <i>This would typically be with a range of staff, potentially drawn from both academic and professional services, who have experience of quality management processes</i>
14.30-14.45	Short break
14.45-15.30	Meeting with staff (2) <i>This would typically be with senior management and academic staff in lead roles</i>
15.30-17.30	Team debriefs from staff meeting and confirms they have all the evidence required to write the report, including opportunity for any final clarifications with HEI key contact(s). QAAS officer attends from 4.00pm
17.30	Close