



Universities Scotland statement on participation in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)

July 2022

Scotland has had an enhancement-led approach to quality in universities since 2003. This does not mean that enhancement replaces assurance, but rather recognises the importance of continuing to build on and improve what we do. Collaboration and partnership are at the heart of this innovative method. This quality enhancement framework (QEF) supports institutions in managing the quality of the student learning experience at the level of the discipline and at the institutional level. It also provides public confidence in academic standards and the quality of the student experience.

The Scottish Funding Council works in partnership with universities, students, and quality bodies continually to develop our quality enhancement framework and publishes guidance for universities that sets out its quality and standards requirements. The review process is regularly evaluated and evolves to reflect changes across the Higher Education sector and the aspirations and expectations of stakeholders. It is also evidence based and incorporates a focus within the review processes on student experiences and outcomes.

Our current quality enhancement framework has five elements:

- **Enhancement-led institutional review:** External experts (including students) review how institutions manage quality and enhance the student experience. The [Quality Assurance Agency \(QAA\) Scotland](#) conducts these reviews.
- **Institution-led review:** Institutions regularly review subject areas and student support services. Review teams include students and external experts.
- **Enhancement themes:** All Scotland's universities work together to address common issues and enhance the student experience. Students are a central part of this work. The national programme of Enhancement Themes is led by the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC) and managed by QAA Scotland.
- **Student engagement:** partnership with students is central to institutional work to enhance learning and teaching and to national work on quality. We have an agency, [spargs](#), that supports this.
- **Public information:** information on quality is accurate and accessible for a range of audiences.

Recently the [Office for Students \(OfS\)](#) in England published a [consultation](#) on the revised model for the teaching excellence framework (TEF). This is mandatory in England and optional for universities in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. OfS intend TEF to play a key role in enhancement in English universities.

Having considered the TEF carefully, Scottish universities have decided not to participate. As stated above, we have our existing systems of enhancement and a need to meet requirements from the Scottish Funding Council as set out in the Quality Enhancement Framework. These existing systems offer the oversight and externality required to ensure quality of outcome and experience for students. Given this extensive present activity, we do not think that TEF will add value for students at Scottish universities.



We intend to work with stakeholders to produce a short joint statement on the approach to enhancement in Scotland. This will explain to prospective students, their parents/carers and advisers, and other interested parties how enhancement works in Scotland. SFC is currently reviewing its quality arrangements and so we intend to wait until closer to the publication of the TEF results to draft this statement so it can reflect the outcomes of the review.

ENDS

