



**Regionally Focused – Globally Engaged**

# **Borders College Approach to Quality Improvement**

**April 2022**

## History of Changes

Version	Description of Change	Authored by	Date
1	Update from 2019	Jayne Gracie	April 2022

# Borders College Approach to Quality Improvement

The Regional Board and the Executive Team, following significant consultation with staff, students, and external stakeholders, have developed the key Strategic Ambitions and Action Plans. These include:

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

The Plans and Strategies articulate our strategic objectives, performance measures, values, and behaviours.

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 Education Scotland 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 to relate to the Education Scotland quality framework 'How good is our college?' (HGIOC?)

This has included over the past 2 years our response to the recovery from the impact of the pandemic. We have reviewed and reflected on the following:

- Curriculum, learning and teaching, and assessment.
- Services to Support Learning for Staff and Students.
- Fair Access and Transitions.
- Partnerships and Collaboration.
- Evaluation to Facilitate Improvement.
- [National overview: Colleges | Supporting remote learning | National Improvement Hub \(education.gov.scot\)](#)

This guides our approach to quality enhancement and encourages 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.

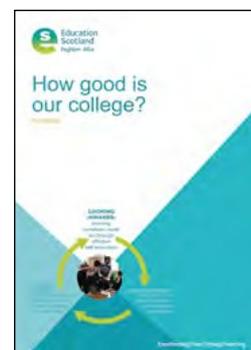
Our approach to quality improvement relies on a continuous cycle of monitoring, planning, action, and evaluation. This ensures we can maintain the standards expected both locally and nationally and supports us to achieve the goals in our Strategic Plans and Strategies.

## Education Scotland's Quality Framework – How Good is Our College?

How good is our college? (HGIOC?) is designed to support and enable colleges to evaluate the quality of their provision and services and to report on progress.

It has four high-level principles:

- Leadership and quality culture
- Delivery of learning and services to support learning
- Outcomes and impact
- Capacity for improvement



## Self-Evaluation and Enhancement Planning

We use HGIOC? to understand current performance, to identify and reflect on what has worked well and to identify opportunities for improvement. This supports forward planning and decision-making to improve our performance and progress, so we deliver positive impact for our learners.

We involve all areas of the College in the self-evaluation process, with individuals and teams contributing to their departmental Self-Evaluation and Enhancement Plan. Teams in each area record strengths and areas for improvement evaluatively, and demonstrate these through evidence, such as PIs, meetings, awards, initiatives etc.

Senior Leadership Team (SLT) take account of all the departmental Self-evaluation and Enhancement Plans, to create a College Self-Evaluation annually that identifies our strengths and areas for improvement and progress, and therefore informs our Enhancement Plans for one year.

Self-Evaluation and Enhancement Plan include:

- Evaluation of strengths and areas for improvement, demonstrated through supporting evidence.
- An annual Enhancement Plan identifying key area for development over the next year, with associated targets and actions.
- Examples of excellent practice that have emerged over the course of the year.

We respond to Education Scotland and SFC by using these to inform full Self-evaluation and Enhancement Plan reports when planning to undertake a Progress Visit (PV) to the College. The report is discussed at the Curriculum and Quality Committee before being signed off by the Regional Board. The report is updated each February and June and taken back to the Senior Leadership Team and the Curriculum and Quality Committee meeting at these times.

## Course Quality Check Points

We incorporate Quality Check Point topics into standard agendas for curriculum Course Team Meetings which take place throughout the academic year. This ensures we monitor progress and quality within each curriculum area, focussing on specific areas at the appropriate time to ensure consistency across the curriculum. [Guide-Course-Team-Block-Team-Meetings-2020 \(1\).pdf](#)

## Block Team Review

Curriculum areas conduct Block Team Meetings twice a year, usually in February and June. This allows teams to evaluate key performance indicators, review performance against targets and report on progress against their portfolio's annual Enhancement Plan.

Teams will have had the opportunity to feed into the monthly Quality Check Points, and use this as well as other information, e.g., course tutor reports, Curriculum and Learning Manager (CLM) focus group meetings, as part of the Block Team Review process to support self-evaluation and share good practice, highlight emerging strengths and areas for improvement.

Teams evaluate learner feedback and prepare necessary reports for the Student Experience Committee (SEC) on planned actions as a result.

## Managing Individual Performance

Between June and October, as an individual member, we each have our annual Staff Performance and Development Review (SPDR). Some staff due to different working patterns have their SPDR out with this timeline.

Our staff are our most valuable resource, therefore supporting and developing staff to enable effective performance of their job roles, is a priority.

The purpose of the SPDR meeting is to enable a meaningful discussion to take place between the manager and the individual member of staff, therefore we structure it around key elements:

- Discussion of the issues raised by the reviewee in their preparation document
- Assessment of performance in relation to criteria appropriate to the job role
- Review of performance against previously agreed targets
- Agreement of appropriate individual targets for the next period that are SMART and set at an appropriate time within the year
- Discussion which identifies training needs and opportunities
- Interim SPDR meetings during a year.

### Training and Development

Training and Development and Continuing Professional Development for all staff are a priority for us, playing a significant role in achieving our objectives for quality improvement. We provide an annual programme of Training and Development opportunities, prepared in response to individual and College needs identified, for example, through SPDRs and the College self-evaluation process.

We are focusing on upskilling staff for o365 Microsoft applications, training for the development of the new Virtual Learning Environment Canvas, training for the new MIS system ProSolution and raising awareness of discriminatory issues and practices experienced by individuals as part of our Equalities Action Plan 2021-2025. Each staff member records their training on the HR 21 platform and reflects on the learning that has taken place.

### 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 SLT must internally 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 CLM 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 SLT.

### Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) and Credit Rating

The College will 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.

Based on the main programmes and qualifications that characterise the Scottish Education and Training System, the SCQF has 12 levels, ranging from National 1 qualifications and SQA Awards at SCQF Level 1 to Doctorates at SCQF Level 12. We achieve credit rating through matching the expected outcomes of an award with

the characteristics described in the generic level descriptors provided within the SCQF.

The SCQF partnership permits us to credit rate our own provision, however, whilst we have credit-rated rate third party provision in the past, this is not something we do currently.

### 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.

### External Verification

- External Verifiers (EV) contact our Quality Assurance Coordinator (QAC) to arrange a timeframe for the visit, agreed with the CLM following discussion with Lead Internal Verifier, Internal Verifier and Assessor
- Relevant assessment materials are gathered in advance; we arrange to have both Assessors and Verifiers available for interview and a small group of candidates if requested in the visit plan
- For SVQs, portfolio areas are required to supply the complete list of candidates, their stage of completion, and the names of the Assessors and Internal Verifiers involved in the assessment and quality assurance process
- The External Verifier gives feedback to the CLM at the end of the visit, detailing any development points or identified good practice
- The awarding body provides a written report on the outcome of the external verification event outlining their findings, good practice, and any areas for improvement. A summary of the report(s) is taken to the Approval Committee and Senior Leadership Team meetings.
- If the External Verifier finds a serious flaw in our assessment and verification of an award, they will apply a sanction; this is often a “not accepted” decision on certification, which means we cannot certify until this decision is formally lifted once we have taken the remedial action stated in the report
- Sanctions can have serious implications for us as a College, so it is important to ensure that action taken is timely and appropriate

## Quality Audits

We carry out internal quality audits through the year.

### 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.

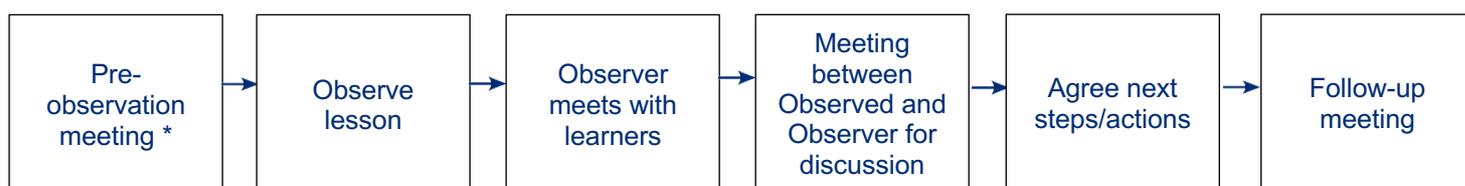
### Learning and Teaching Audit

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.

## Learning and Teaching Observations

One of the methods through which we can support the direction of our Learning and Teaching and assess the quality of teaching and learning is Learning and Teaching Observations.

### The Observations Process



\*Pre-observation meeting – this can be completed as a one-to-one meeting on MS Teams.

Our Quality and Development Specialist (QDS) carries out an annual programme of observations that are developmental in approach, the lecturer and the observer working together to support, review and evaluate their own teaching practice. There is an opportunity for professional dialogue before the observation takes place.

Learners are involved in the process giving feedback on the lesson. The QDS and the Lecturer meet soon after the observation to discuss and mutually agree next steps or actions, and there is a further follow-up meeting to discuss progress. A summary of the lesson observation is forwarded to the CLM for discussion at a review meeting.

As well as being a supportive opportunity for lecturing staff, the observations enable the QDS to identify common themes arising out of them, which in turn generate wider training and development opportunities.

In a year where a lecturer is not due to have a developmental observation with the QDS they can either choose to participate in peer observation with a colleague or carry out a self-reflection and review of their own learning and teaching by recording themselves and reviewing this. Lecturers are asked to reflect on the following:

1. How would you describe our approach(es) to teaching?
2. What are the key factors that shape/have shaped your approach(es) to teaching?
3. Which aspects of your teaching do you feel relatively confident with and why?
4. Which aspects would you like to develop or improve on?

## Learner Engagement

We aim to ensure meaningful learner engagement, to understand more about their learning and teaching needs and learners' perceptions of our delivery.

Each year Borders College Students' Association (BCSA) establish a Student Experience Committee (SEC). This is at the core of student engagement and feedback. A team of Student Representatives work with BCSA to collate student feedback on a range of student experience themes from their curriculum area. The SEC system focusses on collecting feedback enabling the College to identify and monitor issues that are representative of the broader student experience. Aligned with 'HGIOC?' this feedback is shared at quarterly SEC meetings.

SEC approach also ensures relevant managers are present to facilitate swifter resolution of issues. Lead and Class Representatives work with classmates to improve communication between students and staff on day-to-day learning and teaching issues. The additional responsibility placed on Lead Representatives for co-ordination and representation is intended to build a group of engaged student representatives who work regularly with BCSA to improve the student experience within their curriculum area.

## Learner Feedback on Curriculum

We collect learner feedback on the curriculum, evaluating at unit and course level, and support this process with a range of materials. We survey students on a regular basis using quick pulse surveys.

We also use a range of other mechanisms to collect feedback such as the Annual Learner Survey, Focus Groups with CLMs and Principal. [Student-Feedback-Procedure-2018 \(1\).pdf](#)

## Stakeholder Engagement

We aim to ensure meaningful stakeholder engagement, to understand more about their needs and stakeholders' perceptions of our delivery. We need to identify and engage with new stakeholders to make informed decisions, respond quickly to opportunities, collaborate effectively, gather feedback, and generate revenue. We are currently developing a new Stakeholder Strategy that will better inform our future and link to the other key strategic documents.

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