



# **Borders College Approach to Quality Improvement**

**February 2026**

## 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
5	Update following name change to Qualifications Scotland (formerly SQA) and Institutional Led Quality Review (ILQR) replacing Learning & Teaching Quality Audit	Pitra McNeill	February 2026

## 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 ‘Vision 2030 – Your College, Your Future’, Borders College’s statement of ambition for the next five years. Our mission is to provide the highest quality learning experience and outcomes, to support business and drive economic growth in the Scottish Borders. Vision 2030 will see us deliver the following strategic outcomes:*

*Improved learner success*

*Sustainable curriculum that meets the needs of our region*

*Increased support to regional businesses*

*Reduced environmental impact*

*An efficient estate and optimal use of technology*

*These Plans and Strategies articulate our strategic objectives, performance measures, values, and behaviours. 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. Our skills and enterprise strategy along with the Risk Register, Equality Outcomes Action Plan 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.

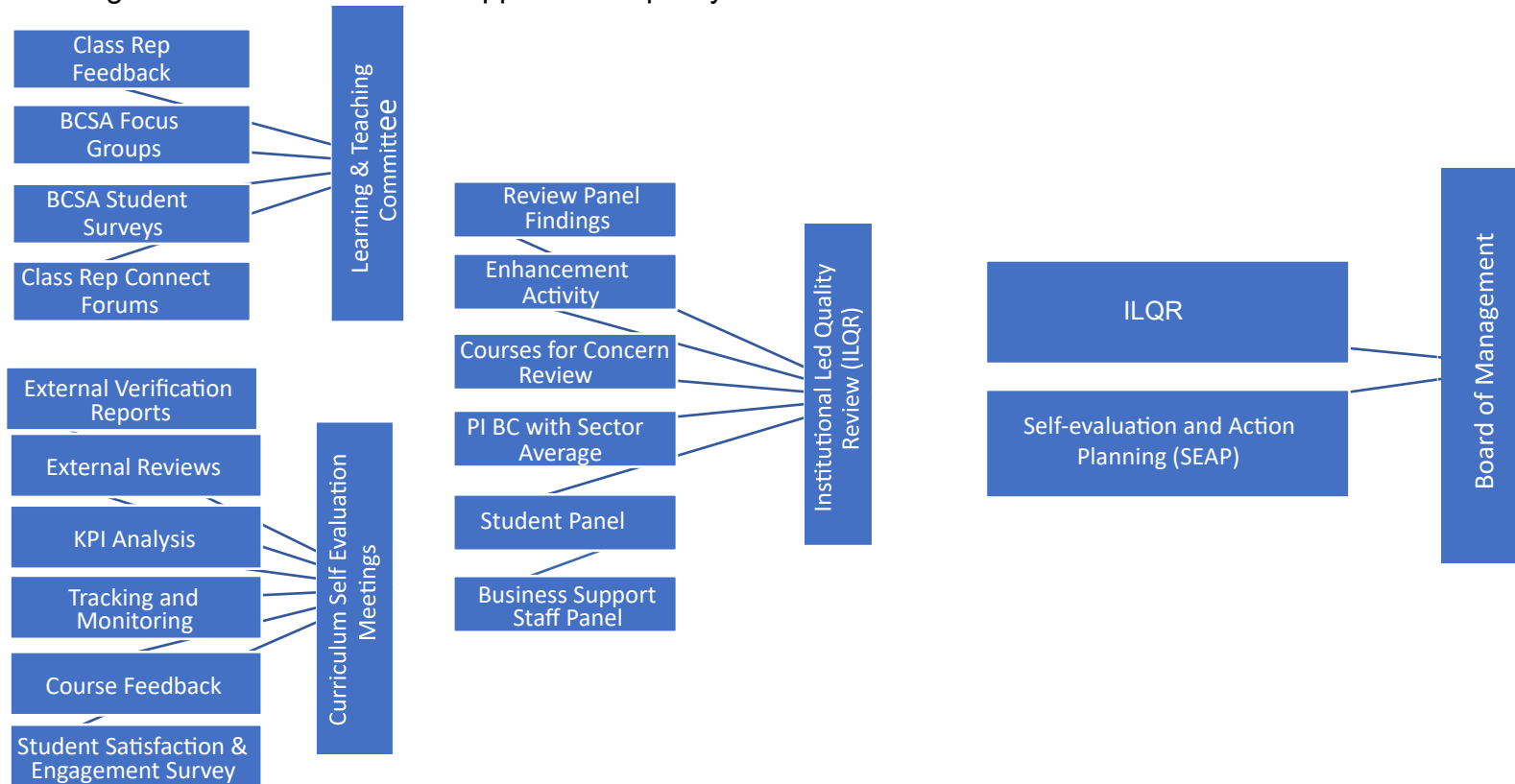
The Quality Team and the Borders College Student Association (BCSA) have embedded the SPARQs [Student Learning Experience \(SLE\) model](#) into quality assurance at both programme and organizational levels to review and evaluate all aspects of the student experience (see Appendix A).

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## Borders College Approach to Quality Improvement

### Quality Assurance and Enhancement

The diagram below illustrates our approach to quality assurance and enhancement



## **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 contribute to the Institution Led Quality Review (ILQR), which is 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 Vision 30's six key strategies.

## **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 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 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 Peer observation.

Our five-year cycle of observations comprises of Formal Lesson observations, Peer observations and Self-Reflective practice observations. 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 be encouraged to have a developmental visit from a mentor or colleague. 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 an experienced 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 Departmental Team Manager (DTM). 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 Peer Observation last year.**

Those staff will engage in a Self-Reflective Observation (own or colleague's teaching practice). They will decide on their focus for reflection.

They will then complete and submit a Reflective Practice Log to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Manager. Self-reflective 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 last year**

Those staff will carry out a have a peer observation of a colleague, that typically last 30 minutes or less. They will agree a focus for the observation, 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 peer observation 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 Staff Performance and Development Reviews (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 Qualifications Scotland 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 Quality & 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. This 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, Business Manager and/or Delivery Team Manager 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.

A reasonable period of time should be allowed between approval and delivery to ensure development of assessments, unit and course materials are of the expected quality and meet the required standards of the college and the awarding body.

## **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 Qualifications Scotland (formerly 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.

## **Institutional Led Quality Review (ILQR)**

We carry out annual ILQR's in the second semester.

This enables systematic self-evaluation and continuous enhancement of Borders College's teaching, learning and support services. The review,

- Promotes improvements to the student learning experience. The process focuses on enhancing the student experience and support for students through review activities.
- Involves students' internal and external perspectives. Students play an active role in the ILQR, and Borders College involves at least one reviewer from outside the organisation.

- Feeds into external quality assurance mechanisms. The outcomes of ILQR are part of the evidence base for external processes like the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER), Institutional Liaison Meetings with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and the Self-Enhancement and Action Plan (SEAP) for the Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

## **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).

Our Student Partnership Agreement demonstrates the relationship that exists between the college and the BCSA, and the continued work to develop a strong and effective Students' Association.

The BCSA President attends the Learning & Teaching Committee reporting on the student experience to the college's Wider Management Team.

A team of Class 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.

We have cross 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 Classroom Focus Groups.

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

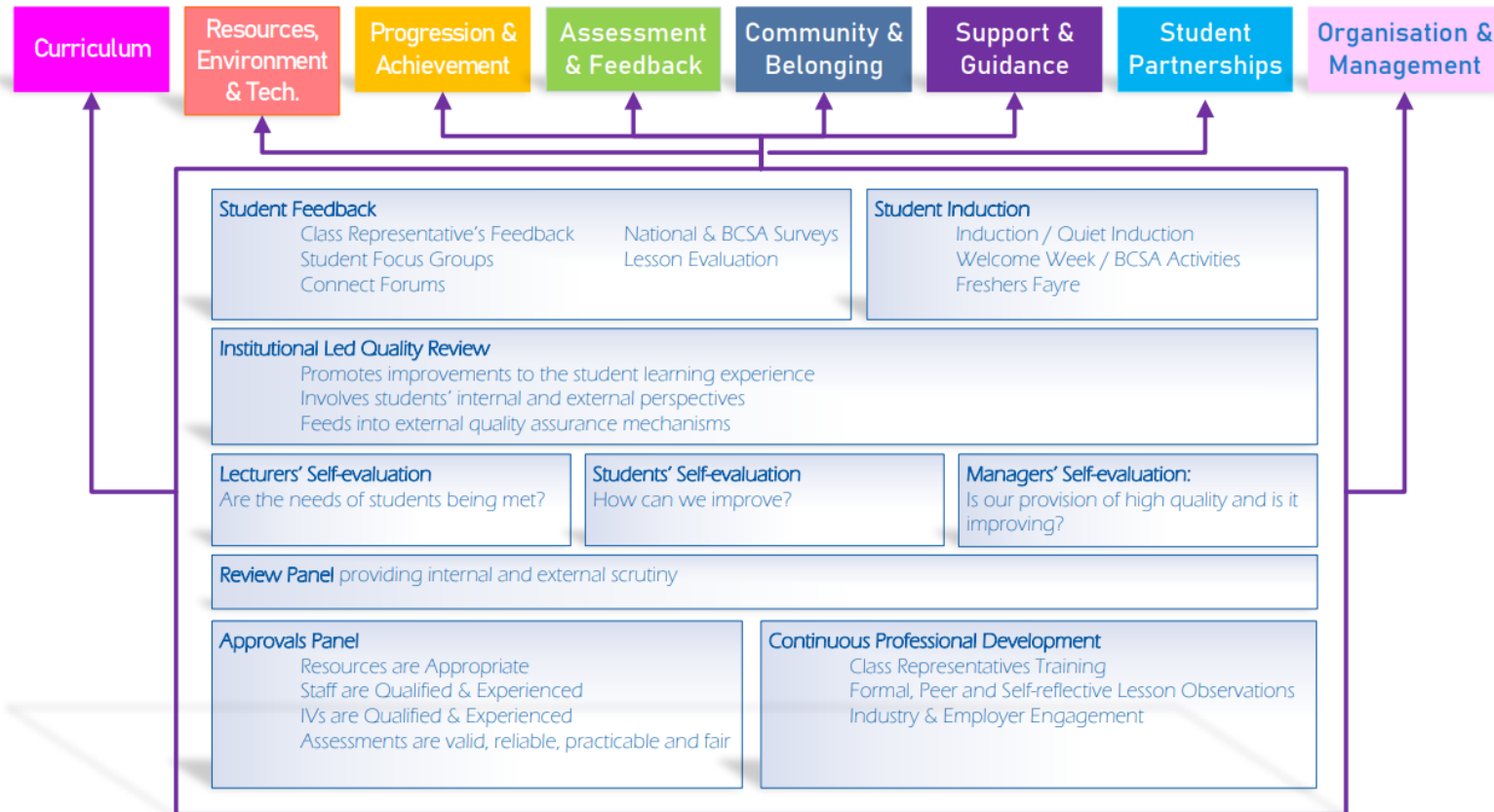
## **Complaints Handling**

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.

## Appendix A Quality Assurance Activities supporting the Student Experience



# Borders College Approach to Quality Improvement

## Further Supporting Evidence

