

# ***External quality arrangements for Scotland's colleges***

***updated August 2012***

## CONTENTS

	page
<b>FOREWORD</b>	
1. <b><u>EDUCATION SCOTLAND QUALITY FRAMEWORK</u></b>	1
2. <b><u>EXTERNAL REVIEW METHODOLOGY</u></b>	3
3. <b><u>ANNUAL ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN EDUCATION SCOTLAND AND EACH COLLEGE</u></b>	8
4. <b><u>ASPECT REPORTS</u></b>	12
 <b><u>Annex 1</u></b>	 17
<b>The quality indicators: indicative themes for external reviewers</b>	
 <b><u>Annex 2</u></b>	 32
<b>Learner engagement: an overview</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Engagement of learners in enhancing their own learning</li><li>• Engagement of learners in enhancing college programmes and college services</li><li>• Engagement of learners in enhancing the work and life of the college</li><li>• Context of <i>Learner engagement</i></li></ul>	
 <b><u>Annex 3</u></b>	 35
<b>College nominee</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The role of the college nominee</li><li>• The involvement of the college nominee in external review activities</li><li>• Identification of the college nominee</li><li>• Training for the college nominee</li></ul>	
 <b><u>Annex 4</u></b>	 37
<b>Outcomes of external review</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Judgements of effectiveness</li></ul>	

## FOREWORD

The publication of *External quality arrangements for Scotland's colleges, September 2008* signalled what was then seen as an innovative and radically different approach to the evaluation of college provision by HM Inspectors. Building on the growing effectiveness of colleges' own self-evaluation and quality enhancement processes, I believe these arrangements subsequently proved to be very effective in providing the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and other stakeholders with key assurances about the quality of the learner experience in Scotland's colleges over the last four years.

The sector broadly embraced these arrangements, with many colleges using the framework of quality indicators contained within them as the foundation of their own quality enhancement processes. The arrangements retained *confidence statements* for the expression of the outcomes of external review. They also introduced a new *confidence statement to evaluate learner engagement*. Colleges particularly welcomed this new confidence statement, which built upon their existing well-established processes for listening to and involving learners in influencing their own learning.

Indeed, Education Scotland's recent summary review of inspection findings over approximately the same period, *Quality and improvement in Scottish education - trends in inspection findings 2008-11*, reports positively on the quality and standards in colleges over this four-year cycle. In its commentary on colleges it states:

*Most learners continue to experience high quality learning and teaching. (They) are progressing well, developing their knowledge and understanding and a range of useful vocational and personal skills. Positive relationships between learners and staff result in most learners being sufficiently confident to raise issues about their learning directly with teaching staff. In almost all colleges, learners play an important role by contributing to internal review and self-evaluation of programmes and college services. All colleges are led well and most are enhancing the quality of their services for learners and other stakeholders. Partnership working with a range of employers, schools, community groups and local and national agencies is particularly strong and effective.*

In September 2010, the Quality, Equality and General Purposes Committee of SFC began to consider further updating of the arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement in Scotland's colleges. The Committee agreed that, over the last four-year cycle, the existing arrangements had worked well. That is my view also, and I was pleased to see recognition that some of the more progressive aspects of the arrangements have received particularly good feedback. For example, Annual Engagement Visits (AEV), the development and use of genuine professional dialogue by colleges and reviewers, and the contributions made by Student Team Members, to name but a few. To reflect further progress made by the sector, the Committee sought updates to a number of themes, including balance and further proportionality across all of the arrangements, learner engagement, aspects of public information, and reporting.

In partnership with NUS/*sparqs* and our other educational colleagues from the College Quality Working Group, Education Scotland has designed the updates detailed in this publication. The move from *confidence statements* to an overall *judgement of effectiveness*, supported by fuller evaluative paragraphs, will strengthen our ability to provide clarity of reporting to all of our stakeholders. The increased focus on partnership working – a strength of the college sector – is a timely enhancement to the scope of external review. Furthermore, the enhanced guidance for learner engagement will be helpful to learners and college staff alike in continuing to improve the sector's already well-established approaches in this very important area.

I am delighted now to be able to introduce the updated arrangements to you in this publication. Looking forward, I am confident that the changes we have made are well adapted to the sector's needs. We now have a set of arrangements to take forward which will help colleges and their Boards drive continuous improvement during this time of change and which, as a result, will continue to serve Scotland's learners well.

Bill Maxwell  
Chief Executive  
Education Scotland

# 1 EDUCATION SCOTLAND QUALITY FRAMEWORK

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The indicators in this edition of *External Quality Arrangements for Scotland's Colleges, updated August 2012* are arranged under the **three key principles**, addressing **four questions** which Education Scotland is adopting for evaluation purposes:

### High quality learning:

- How well are learners progressing and achieving relevant, high quality outcomes?
- How effective are the college's learning and teaching processes?

### Learner engagement

- How well are learners engaged in enhancing their own learning and the work and life of the college?

### Quality culture

- How well is the college led and how well is it enhancing the quality of its services for learners and other stakeholders?

These four powerful questions are set out in a quality framework of **nine elements** in:

- [\*Education Scotland quality framework for the external review of Scotland's colleges, updated August 2012\*](#)

and further in the form of *challenge questions* in:

- [\*Education Scotland quality framework for the external review of Scotland's colleges, updated August 2012 \(interrogative version\)\*](#)

## 1.2 USING THE FRAMEWORK OF QUALITY INDICATORS IN EXTERNAL REVIEW

The quality framework provides a structure for external review which can be used in different ways.

It includes indicators which Education Scotland can use to reach a professional judgement of the extent to which *High quality learning*; *Learner engagement*<sup>1</sup>; and *Quality culture* are being delivered in Scotland's colleges. This set of **reference quality indicators** brings together evaluations of:

**Element 1: Key performance outcomes**

**Element 2: Impact on learners and other users of college services**

**Element 5: Education, training and lifelong learning**

**Element 8: Partnerships and resources**

**Element 9: Educational leadership and direction**

Together, these **reference quality indicators** will provide the minimum requirements for Education Scotland to form evaluations summarised in a judgement of effectiveness<sup>2</sup>. Other quality indicators in the framework may be used as required in a proportionate way when other significant factors are identified.

## 1.3 USING REFERENCE QUALITY INDICATORS AND SOURCES OF EVIDENCE

The gathering of evidence on which to base evaluations will be kept manageable by carefully planned sampling. The key sources of evidence during external review will come from professional discussions, from what reviewers actually observe, from data of various sorts, and from the views of people who are closely involved with the college, such as learners, employers and partner agencies, as well as staff. Where weaknesses in practice are identified, reviewers will find it helpful to check out the written guidance and documentation of the college. Such documentation could include programmes of study, teaching staff plans, programme materials, policies, procedures and guidelines and minutes of meetings. What is written down will be cross-referred with what actually happens. Similarly, progress reports on enhancement plans will be checked against what has actually been delivered. What really matters is the impact of all the key activities in the college on learners, their learning and the impact on other stakeholders.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Annex 2 [Learner engagement: an overview](#)

<sup>2</sup> See Annex 4 [Outcomes of external review](#)

## **2 EXTERNAL REVIEW METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This section describes the main features of the updated Education Scotland external review methodology to be applied in Scotland's colleges over the period 1 August 2012 to 31 July 2016. The updated review methodology, and the quality framework around which it is structured, continues to take account of the role of external review in the public sector and places more emphasis on high level strategic issues such as the organisational capacity for and commitment to internal review and self-evaluation, a focus on performance outcomes and impact on users, partnership working and effective leadership and management. There is a continued emphasis on institutional ownership of quality and recognition of greater diversity of practice in internal review and self-evaluation. Opportunities for learner engagement in external review remain key to the updated review methodology. Proportionate approaches to external review are enhanced in the updated arrangements, with fewer mandatory quality indicators in the framework, and increased opportunity to include additional quality indicators within the scope of external review, in order to reflect the individuality of each college.

### **2.2 Aims and objectives of external review**

External reviews are designed to:

- support and promote quality enhancement in colleges to provide the best possible experience for the learner;
- provide information to Scottish Ministers and the public on the quality of colleges and the education and training they provide;
- provide an independent evaluation to assist colleges in informing prospective and current learners of the quality of the college's programmes and services;
- evaluate colleges against the three key principles of *High quality learning*, *Learner engagement*, and *Quality culture*;
- complement college-led internal review and self-evaluation;
- draw upon information gathered through annual engagement and other evaluative activities with each college;
- contribute to a strategic overview of quality across the sector for SFC; and
- identify excellent practice.

In realising the above aims, external review will provide a breadth and depth of review that is proportionate to the intelligence held by SFC and Education Scotland on a college's capacity to deliver *High quality learning*, *Learner engagement*, and a *Quality culture*.

### **2.3 Key features of external review**

Scotland's colleges will continue to be reviewed over a four-year period. The scope of reviews in 2012-16 will be determined from intelligence established and updated through the annual engagement process and other evaluative activities.

Adjustments may be made to the timing of external reviews compared to previous four-year cycles, to reflect changing information about the context and effectiveness

of each college. The external reviews will be structured according to the quality framework [Education Scotland quality framework for the external review of Scotland's colleges, updated August 2012](#). The proportionate approach to reviews will be enhanced. Colleges having a strong track record and where the conclusions of annual engagement are consistent with college effectiveness, will normally receive the minimum form of external review. The review will be based on the reference quality indicators, which provide the minimum requirements for Education Scotland to evaluate the college against the three key principles of *High quality learning, Learner engagement, and Quality culture*. Other colleges may be reviewed with varyingly greater depth of investigation and/or wider samples of provision. In these circumstances, review teams will use other quality indicators in the framework in a proportionate way to form evaluations where other significant factors are identified.

The external review will continue to include a generic review of learning and teaching. Education Scotland will agree with colleges the sampling approach to be used on a particular review. The review will aim to provide an independent judgement of the quality of learning and teaching in the college and evidence on the effectiveness of college-led internal review and self-evaluation of learning and teaching. However, where intelligence and risk analysis signal concerns in specific subject areas, the review of a college may be supplemented by the additional subject review of learning and teaching in these specific areas.

The generic approach will allow reviewers to continue to be less constrained by defined subject areas and to sample across all curriculum areas and modes of learning. It is intended to broaden and promote professional dialogue about learning and teaching and pedagogy beyond the confines and expectations of specific subject areas. The generic approach also aims to encourage the dissemination of excellent practice in learning and teaching across curriculum areas.

Reviewers will continue to report the outcome of external review in terms of strengths and areas for further development. They will use one of the overarching *judgements of effectiveness*<sup>3</sup> to summarise their overall evaluation of the college.

## **2.4 The external review process**

The phasing of external reviews of colleges in academic year 2012-13 will be over the period January to May 2013. Thereafter, reviews will generally commence in late October and extend through to May in each academic year. Approximately eight weeks before the review, Education Scotland will brief the college principal, the chair of Board of Management (BoM), managers, the student association and learner representatives about the external review process. At this stage, the managing inspector will confirm the scope of the review, which will be based on the outcomes of the AEV and other evaluative processes, updated by latest intelligence on the college.

In the pre-review period, the managing inspector will liaise with the college and explain the scope of the review including the nature and extent of any additional

---

<sup>3</sup> See Annex 4 [Outcomes of external review](#)



activity necessary beyond the standard form of review. The managing inspector will work closely with the principal and the college nominee<sup>4</sup>. The college will be invited to provide current information for the review team. The managing inspector will agree with the college the sampling approach to be used for the generic review of learning and teaching.

The external review will normally last for three days, usually over the period Monday to Wednesday. However, this may be extended for larger colleges. On Monday morning, the review team will be briefed by the principal and senior management team. Over the period spent in the college, the review team will:

- engage with learners;
- observe episodes of learning and teaching and provide feedback to each member of teaching staff or other learning facilitator on strengths and areas for development;
- conduct meetings and undertake other activity required to determine the extent of concordance between documentary evidence and practice;
- evaluate evidence against the reference quality indicators; and
- identify key strengths and areas for development.

On the final day of the external review, a sub-group of the review team will return to the college to provide oral feedback on the findings of the external review, including the **provisional** judgement of effectiveness and supporting statements. In the third week following the review, Education Scotland will confirm in writing the findings of the review and the confirmed judgement of effectiveness and supporting statements after moderation has taken place.

## **2.5 Composition and deployment of review teams**

Where annual engagement activity signals college effectiveness, the review team is likely to include a managing inspector, team members who will be a combination of HMI and associate assessors, plus a student team member. The number of reviewers will be adjusted to take account of the size and complexity of college.

Where areas for development are evident through the annual engagement process, additional reviewers will be appointed to extend or enhance coverage of subject and/or cross-college themes. These additional, proportionate review activities will normally be carried out at the same time as the activities in the standard form of review. Education Scotland will give due consideration to requests from colleges for additional engagement by reviewers to undertake additional review activities.

---

<sup>4</sup> See Annex 3 College nominee

## **2.6 Expressing the outcomes of external review**

Education Scotland will express the outcome of and evaluations from external review through an overarching judgement of effectiveness. Such judgements will express the outcome for a college as:

- effective;
- limited effectiveness; or
- not effective.

This overarching judgement will be further detailed by four supporting statements.

A report on the external review will normally be published on the Education Scotland website within eight working weeks following the completion of the external review.

## **2.7 The college nominee**

Education Scotland will ask colleges to identify a senior manager with a comprehensive strategic overview to fulfil the role of college nominee. This senior manager will play a key role in supporting the smooth operation of the external review. The role of college nominee enhances the previous review co-ordinator role<sup>5</sup>.

Before the review, Education Scotland will discuss and agree with each college the proposed nature and levels of reviewer engagement with managers and staff. Education Scotland will encourage college senior managers to work in partnership with reviewers to identify appropriate evidence.

## **2.8 Follow-up to external review**

All colleges will be required to address areas for development and main points for action identified during external review. Education Scotland will follow up progress against these actions through HMI visits. Where an external review results in an overarching judgement of limited effectiveness or not effective, SFC will request Education Scotland to conduct a formal follow-up review of the college. The scope of such reviews will be customised to address the specific context of each college.

One year on from publication of the external review report, all colleges are required to submit to SFC, and later publish, a report on their progress against the actions arising from the external review.

---

<sup>5</sup> See Annex 3 College nominee

## **2.9 Concerns**

The managing inspector and review team will work closely with the college nominee to ensure that all required information and evidence is made available to the review team. This relates to information to be provided prior to and during the external review.

If, after the external review is complete, a college believes that the review team has arrived at an evaluation or overarching judgement of effectiveness in the absence of all relevant information or evidence, the college should submit any additional evidence in writing to the managing inspector within five working days of the oral feedback by the review team. This material must consist of evidence which is new in nature and is not a further submission of evidence of the type already considered by the team. Education Scotland will consider additional new evidence and convey the decision to the college in writing, after full consideration by the team.

Any other concerns should be raised in the first instance with the managing inspector by college managers during the course of the review. If the matter is not resolved to the satisfaction of the college, it should be raised with the Assistant Director responsible for the college external review programme, who will seek to resolve the issue.

## **2.10 Complaints**

If concerns are not satisfactorily resolved through the processes outlined in 2.9 above, the college should pursue the matter through Education Scotland's published complaints procedure, which is available at [www.EducationScotland.gov.uk](http://www.EducationScotland.gov.uk).

### **3 ANNUAL ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN EDUCATION SCOTLAND AND EACH COLLEGE**

#### **3.1 General principles for Pre-visit analyses and Annual engagement visits**

- focus on the three key principles of *High quality learning; Learner engagement; and Quality culture*;
- primary emphasis on impact and outcomes during Pre-visit analyses (rather than inputs and processes, which may also be included in AEV visits);
- prognostic/predictive validity of data, information and methods used;
- the use for Pre-visit analyses of only publicly available data and information, or such data and information that colleges provide to SFC or the college HMI;
- signals of potential excellence and potential risks identified by Education Scotland (mainly prior to AEV visits); and
- signals of potential excellence and potential risks evaluated during AEV visits through discussion with managers and staff, and engagement with learners.

Education Scotland will seek to answer, annually, three questions in conversation with the college. Does our analysis and engagement suggest that:

- learners will (continue to) progress well and achieve, relevant high quality outcomes?
- learners will (continue to) engage in and enhance their own learning and the work and life of the college?
- college leadership will (continue to) enhance the quality of services for learners and other stakeholders?

#### **3.2 Pre-visit analysis**

##### **Purpose**

- to analyse available data and information to create a draft agenda for the subsequent AEV visit; and
- to identify any signals of potential excellence, signals of potential risk or important aspects on which there is no, insufficient or apparently contradictory data or information.

##### **Focus and nature of activity**

- a desk exercise carried out by HMI within Education Scotland and, possibly, AAs;
- will use existing data and information such as from recent reviews and post-review action plans, college HMI visits, reports from Education Scotland aspect tasks, and from other scrutiny and quality bodies;
- will use annual college reports to SFC and public-domain information such as performance indicators (informed by trend analysis where feasible) and college reports on the impact of equalities policies; and

- Education Scotland will not expect colleges to provide any data or information that is not already in (or is legally required to be in) the public domain or provided to SFC. However, colleges may provide such information if they wish.

### **Scale and timing**

- normally one day of activity for two HMI/AAs; and
- first Pre-visit analysis in September 2012 and all completed in the first year by May 2013.

#### Indicative sources of data and information for *Pre-visit analysis*:

- student data analysed for trends;
- outcome agreements and college plans;
- college reports on the impact of their equalities policies;
- college annual BoM report to SFC;
- any other published self-evaluation or internal review reports;
- recent Education Scotland external review reports and college post-review action plans;
- any previous Education Scotland annual engagement summary;
- fieldwork for subject-based aspect reports;
- reports on the college by other scrutiny or quality bodies, such as Investors in People etc.;
- college audited accounts or financial reports; and
- any other public or SFC-provided information, or information provided by the college to the college HMI.

### **3.3 Annual engagement visit**

#### **Purpose**

- to share the findings of the Pre-visit analysis with the college;
- to explore any signals of potential excellence, potential risk or important aspects on which Education Scotland have no, insufficient or apparently contradictory data or information;
- to inform Education Scotland's annual sectoral report to SFC;
- to provide SFC with assurance that the college manages data well, using it to affect improvement; and
- to underpin the proportionality, scope, depth and timing of external reviews by Education Scotland.

## Focus and nature of activity

- will be evaluative, but not a mini external review;

will focus on:

- the three key principles including, in terms of outcomes, the wider achievement of learners and the progression of learners; and
- how the college has addressed any issues from the previous external review or previous annual engagement activity;

will include consideration of:

- equality and diversity;
- international aspects; and
- excellent practice;

will comprise:

- professional dialogue with managers and staff;
- engagement with learner representatives, other groups of learners and, possibly, other key stakeholders; and
- consideration of other college documents as appropriate.

## Scale and timing

will normally:

- involve two HMI or one HMI and one AA for one day; and
- be led by the college HMI (as an extension of the college HMI role)

will exceptionally be on a larger scale if:

- concerns were expressed in the overarching judgement of effectiveness from the last external review;
- findings from the Pre-visit analysis indicate major concerns; or
- the college has requested, and Education Scotland has agreed to, a more extensive or detailed engagement.

Education Scotland will:

- carry out first-year visits starting in October 2012 and completing by May 2013 of the first year and each year of the cycle thereafter;
- contact the college **six** weeks before the visit to agree a suitable date;
- contact the college **four** weeks before the visit to present a draft agenda for discussion;
- agree the final agenda with the college **two** weeks before the visit;
- confirm that the college has involved learners in the setting of the AEV agenda;

- invite the college to nominate examples of excellent practice, of which up to two may be considered during the visit, and any others logged for prioritisation and possible exploration by the college HMI at a later date; and
- give short, oral feedback to the principal, senior managers and learner representatives at the end of the visit.

### **3.4 After the AEV**

Education Scotland will:

- complete written feedback on the AEV activity;
- send a written summary of the findings of the AEV activity to the college and SFC;
- agree any desirable actions with the college and any role for the college HMI, and possibly other specialist Education Scotland staff in support;
- present the written summary at a subsequent meeting with the principal and the college BoM (or a relevant Board sub-committee); and
- ask the college to contribute to preparing examples of excellent practice for inclusion on the *Showcase for Excellence* website, as appropriate.

## **4 ASPECT REPORTS**

### **4.1 Overview**

The updated arrangements will involve Education Scotland carrying out a number of aspect reports each year. These reports may include evaluations of the effectiveness of learning and teaching processes and of how well learners are progressing and achieving high quality outcomes in a number of colleges involved in fieldwork visits where a particular subject is being reviewed. Reports will be based on the *Education Scotland quality framework for the external review of Scotland's colleges, updated August 2012*. As appropriate and feasible, they will also draw upon evidence from college reviews. A number of cross-sectoral thematic reports may also be produced each year on wider aspects of college activity.

Partnership working and evidence from bodies such as subject networks, sector skills councils, employers, Scottish Qualifications Authority, Scotland's Colleges and other agencies would also inform the final reports. Published reports will include examples of excellent practice. Main recommendations for colleges and other stakeholders will also be identified. The published reports and subsequent engagement with learners, staff and managers in the college sector and other agencies will be designed to build capacity in the sector and achieve improvement and enhancement for learners.

### **4.2 General principles for aspect reports**

Within individual subject areas or specific themes each report may provide:

- a Scotland-wide perspective on the quality of learning or the effectiveness of colleges relating to a particular theme;
- the identification and dissemination of excellent practice; and
- quality enhancement of learning and teaching or other aspects of college activity.

Each report will be founded on the three key principles of:

- high quality learning;
- learner engagement; and
- quality culture.

Prior to work commencing on any aspect task, Education Scotland will agree and confirm the task specification with SFC.



### **4.3 Purpose of the subject-based aspect reports (sector-wide)**

The published reports will inform the sector on:

- how well learners learn;
- how well they are taught;
- how successful learners are;
- the extent to which programmes meet the requirements of industry, community, Higher Education Institutions, government;
- how well programmes are resourced;
- innovation and excellence in the curriculum;
- progression routes for learners; and
- recommendations for improvement or enhancement.

### **4.4 Purpose of the thematic aspect reports (sector-wide)**

The published reports will inform the sector on:

- how well the aspect is embedded and understood across Scotland's colleges;
- impact of the aspect on learners, staff and stakeholders in the sector;
- support an agenda for improvement and enhancement;
- identify examples of excellent practice; and
- inform subsequent annual engagement activity or external review.

### **4.5 Purpose of the subject-based aspect reports (colleges involved in fieldwork)**

For colleges involved in fieldwork the process will:

- provide an external evaluation of subject provision;
- support an agenda for improvement and enhancement;
- provide high quality professional dialogue with reviewers;
- create opportunities to explore developmental issues through professional dialogue;
- identify examples of excellent practice;
- allow excellent practice to be shared across the sector in the final report; and
- inform subsequent annual engagement activity or external review.

#### **4.6 Purpose of the thematic aspect reports (colleges involved in fieldwork)**

For colleges involved in fieldwork the process will:

- provide an external evaluation of how well the aspect is embedded and understood in the college;
- assess the impact of the aspect on learners, staff and other users of the college;
- support an agenda for improvement and enhancement;
- provide high quality professional dialogue with reviewers;
- create opportunities to explore developmental issues through professional dialogue;
- inform subsequent annual engagement activity or external review; and
- identify examples of excellent practice.

#### **4.7 Selection of colleges**

Fieldwork will involve a representative sample of colleges. These will be identified through analysis of FES data, to include colleges with a high proportion of activity compared to sector norms and colleges with rural and urban catchments. Additionally, Education Scotland will invite colleges to volunteer to be involved in specific aspect reports. Fieldwork will normally involve a maximum of ten colleges in any aspect report. In some aspect reports, fieldwork may also involve a questionnaire to all colleges offering a particular subject area.

#### **4.8 Focus and nature of activity for subject-based aspect reports**

The subject-based aspect reports will normally involve two reviewers visiting each college in the sample on two occasions. Each report will have a task manager who will be responsible for making arrangements for reviewers to visit colleges, preparing the paperwork for the visits and producing the published report.

The task manager will contact the principal of the college to discuss the college's involvement in the aspect report. The principal will be asked to nominate appropriate staff to contact before the visits commence in order to make suitable preparations for reviewer activities.

The task manager will ensure that a timetable for visits covering an appropriate range of activity is agreed with the relevant college managers. The types of activity that will be planned at this stage will include scheduling observations to cover the range of provision in the curriculum area, setting up meetings with groups of learners and staff, and facilitating discussions with local employers and/or community groups.

Colleges will normally be contacted by the task manager between August and September to negotiate their involvement and make appropriate arrangements for the visits. Before the visits commence, the task manager will request the nominated member of staff to provide the most recent internal review report for the relevant area within the college. The college will also be asked to verify a performance indicator analysis undertaken by Education Scotland for the curriculum area.

In each academic year, the visits will commence from October and be completed by the following April. The Service Level Agreement (SLA) between SFC and Education Scotland will detail the individual subject areas chosen for the tasks.

#### **4.9 Focus and nature of activity for thematic aspect reports**

The thematic aspect reports will normally involve one reviewer visiting each college involved. Each report will have a task manager who will be responsible for making arrangements for reviewers to visit colleges, preparing the paperwork for the visits and producing the published report.

The task manager will contact the principal of the college to discuss the college's involvement in the aspect report. The principal will be asked to nominate appropriate staff to contact before the visit commences in order to make suitable preparations for reviewer activities.

The task manager will ensure that a timetable for the visit covering an appropriate range of activity is agreed with the relevant college managers. The types of activity that will be planned at this stage will include scheduling meetings with learners, managers, staff and external partners or stakeholders. Reviewers will wish to see relevant evidence and examples of the impact of the college's work in regard to the aspect/theme which the report is considering.

Colleges will normally be contacted by the task manager between August and September to negotiate their involvement and make appropriate arrangements for the visits.

In each academic year, the visits will commence from October and be completed by the following April. The SLA between SFC and Education Scotland will detail the individual themes chosen for the tasks.

## Annex 1

### THE QUALITY INDICATORS: indicative themes for external reviewers

#### ELEMENT 1: KEY PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES

This element is concerned with the college's progress in achieving key educational aims, objectives and targets and with the extent to which the college takes action that results in enhancement. It is also concerned with progress against targets and performance indicators associated with learner retention, progress and attainment over a three-year period, and explores the extent of learner progression to further learning or employment. It also considers how well the college has responded to legislation and national directives.

#### QUALITY INDICATORS

#### THEMES

##### 1.1 Achievement of educational aims, objectives and targets

- Progress on key aims and objectives
- Achievement of targets and key performance indicators

*How well does the college perform against its educational aims, objectives and targets?*

##### 1.2 Retention, attainment and progression trends

- Retention and attainment over a three-year period
- Progression to further learning or employment over a three-year period

*How effective is the college at achieving and maintaining high levels of retention, attainment and progression?*

##### 1.3 Adherence to statutory principles

- Relevant legislation
- Relevant directives and regulations
- Requirements of statutory bodies

*How well does the college adhere to its statutory principles?*

## **ELEMENT 2: IMPACT ON LEARNERS AND OTHER USERS OF COLLEGE SERVICES**

This element is concerned with how well the college identifies and responds to the needs of learners and other users and provides opportunities for engagement with learners. It looks at the appropriateness, accessibility and effectiveness of its programmes and its services to support learners and learning. It considers how well the range, levels and modes of delivery and assessment assist participation, transition and engagement. It evaluates how effectively learning opportunities are promoted and targeted to under-represented or minority groups. It evaluates learner progress, attainment and wider achievements in vocational and essential skills, and learner progression to further learning and employment. It considers learner satisfaction with the programmes and services of the college.

### **QUALITY INDICATORS**

### **THEMES**

#### **2.1 Accessibility, flexibility and inclusiveness of programmes and services**

- Identifying and responding to needs
- Arrangements to support learners and learning
- Range and flexibility of delivery and assessment modes
- Promoting and targeting learning opportunities

*How accessible, flexible and inclusive are college programmes and services?*

#### **2.2 Relevance of programmes and services to learner needs**

- Range and levels of programmes
- Extent to which programmes assist transition and progression
- Learner engagement
- Preparation for employment and further learning
- Information, advice and support services
- Learner satisfaction

*How well do programmes and services meet learner needs?*

**ELEMENT 2: IMPACT ON LEARNERS AND OTHER USERS OF COLLEGE SERVICES**

**QUALITY INDICATORS**

**THEMES**

**2.3 Learner progress, attainment and wider achievement**

- Progress from prior learning and attainment
- Attainment of qualifications
- Success in award schemes and competitions
- Achievement of core and essential skills including employability, citizenship, sustainability and health and wellbeing
- Achievement of learner aspirations
- Learner satisfaction

*How well do learners make progress, attain qualifications and achieve more widely?*

## ELEMENT 3: IMPACT ON STAFF

This element is concerned with how well the college engages staff in meeting college aims and objectives. It focuses on the college's effectiveness in promoting a collegiate approach and keeping staff informed about college directions and priorities. It evaluates the motivation and engagement of staff in contributing to the work and life of the college. It explores how well staff reflect on and share effective practice, and the effectiveness of teamwork.

### QUALITY INDICATORS

### THEMES

#### 3.1 Motivation and engagement

- Staff knowledge of and action to achieve college aims and objectives
- Communication arrangements
- Staff involvement in planning

*How well does the college motivate staff and secure their engagement in setting and achieving college targets?*

#### 3.2 Reflection and professional discussion

- Evaluation of learning and teaching and other services
- Identifying good practice
- Sharing and adopting good practice

*How well do staff reflect on and participate in professional discussion to enhance learning, teaching and other services?*

#### 3.3 Impact of teamwork

- Staffing arrangements within cross-college teams
- Information sharing within and among teams
- Collaborative working

*How well do staff work together in their own teams, and more widely in the college?*



## ELEMENT 4: IMPACT ON EMPLOYERS AND COMMUNITIES

This element is concerned with how well the college's provision meets the needs of employers and of the communities it serves. It explores the effectiveness of arrangements for engaging with key interests and priorities at local and national levels and evaluates the college's responsiveness to current and anticipated needs. It considers the level of satisfaction of employers and communities with the programmes and services of the college. It also explores the effectiveness of arrangements for providing programmes and services to meet specific needs.

### QUALITY INDICATORS

### THEMES

#### 4.1 Relevance of programmes and services to the economy and to employers

- Links and partnerships with employers and industry bodies
- Use of labour market information and demographics
- Responsiveness to economic priorities
- Employer participation and influence in the design and evaluation of programmes and services
- Arrangements to meet specific needs of employers
- Employer satisfaction with college programmes and services

*How well does the college serve local and national employers?*

#### 4.2 Relevance of programmes and services to the needs of communities and other learning providers

- Links and partnerships with other learning providers and community and voluntary organisations
- Participation and influence of community organisations and other learning providers in the design and evaluation of programmes and services
- Arrangements to meet specific needs of communities and other learning providers
- Stakeholder satisfaction with college programmes and services

*How well does the college serve its communities and other learning providers?*

## **ELEMENT 5: EDUCATION, TRAINING AND LIFELONG LEARNING**

This element is concerned with how well the college helps its learners to maximise their potential and to make informed choices about their learning and employment goals. It evaluates the effectiveness of arrangements to advise and prepare individuals before entry. The extent to which the college helps learners take responsibility for their own learning and in planning towards further learning and employment goals is evaluated. It considers the effectiveness of learning, teaching and assessment. It explores the extent to which programmes and services aid access and transition and provide support. The effectiveness of collaboration among teaching staff, support staff and external agencies in providing these programmes is also evaluated.

### **QUALITY INDICATORS**

### **THEMES**

#### **5.1 Programme design**

- Promotion of equality and diversity
- Curriculum content, structure and resources
- Arrangements to meet needs of specific groups

*How well does the college design and deliver programmes and services to meet the needs of learners from all backgrounds and circumstances?*

#### **5.2 The learning process**

- Learner motivation and active participation
- Use of resources by learners
- Development as reflective learners
- Development of independence in learning
- Learner progress

*How well do learners learn?*

## ELEMENT 5: EDUCATION, TRAINING AND LIFELONG LEARNING

### QUALITY INDICATORS

### THEMES

#### 5.3 The teaching process and its context

- Planning of learning activities by staff and learners
- Application of professional and subject knowledge and use of resources by staff
- Appropriateness and range of teaching approaches
- Promotion of learner confidence and engagement through quality of relations between and among staff and learners
- Learning environment and climate for learning
- Sustainability in delivery of learning activities
- Promotion of achievement and standards

*How well do planning, teaching and the use of resources ensure effective learning?*

#### 5.4 Assessment for learning

- Planning and scheduling of assessment
- Methods of providing feedback and encouraging reflection on progress
- Assessment to promote learning and affirm achievement
- Arrangements for learners with additional support needs

*How well is assessment used to promote effective learning?*

## ELEMENT 5: EDUCATION, TRAINING AND LIFELONG LEARNING

### QUALITY INDICATORS

### THEMES

#### 5.5 Information, guidance and support

- Information to potential learners
- Arrangements for learners to set goals and reflect on learning
- Curricular and vocational guidance
- Access to and use of services to support learning

*How well are potential and current learners provided with information, advice and support?*

#### 5.6 Enhancement of learning and teaching through self-evaluation and internal review

- Involvement of learners, staff and external stakeholders
- Analysis and evaluation of programmes and learning and teaching
- Planning for improvement and enhancement
- Effectiveness of action taken

*How well does the college sustain continuous enhancement of learning and teaching through self-evaluation and internal review activities?*

## **ELEMENT 6: PROVIDING DIRECTION AND FACILITATING CHANGE**

This element is concerned with the effectiveness of college planning for the range of programmes and services it provides. It considers the range of policies, strategies and plans, the extent to which they are understood and acted on by staff and their impact on college operations. It evaluates planning for the delivery of programmes and services and the extent to which the college plans for and manages change

### **QUALITY INDICATORS**

### **THEMES**

#### **6.1 Planning**

- Communication of plans and associated action and targets
- Strategic planning
- Operational planning
- Team planning

*How effective are college planning processes?*

#### **6.2 Action to achieve aims, objectives and targets of plans**

- Communication of plans and associated action and targets
- Identification and agreement of standards for achievement of actions
- Management of the implementation of actions

*How effective is action to achieve aims, objectives and targets of plans?*

#### **6.3 Managing and responding to changing environments**

- Review and development of policies and procedures across college functions
- Review and development of portfolio of programmes
- Response to changing operating conditions
- Managing risk

*How well does the college recognise and respond to changes in its environments?*

**ELEMENT 6: PROVIDING DIRECTION AND FACILITATING CHANGE**

**QUALITY INDICATORS**

**THEMES**

**6.4 Planning for and managing change**

- Approach to innovation
- Communication with learners, staff and other stakeholders
- Monitoring and reviewing progress and effectiveness of new developments

*How well does the college plan for and manage change?*

## ELEMENT 7: MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT OF STAFF

This element is concerned with the qualifications and experience of staff and the quality of their relations with colleagues, learners and external stakeholders. It is concerned with recruitment, selection, deployment and retention of staff and with workforce planning. It addresses the relevance and effectiveness of continuing professional development and review of staff in supporting individuals and supporting the college's strategic direction.

### QUALITY INDICATORS

### THEMES

- 7.1 Qualifications and experience of staff**
- Relevance and currency of staff qualifications, skills and experience
  - Staff links with current practice in subject areas

*How relevant and current are staff qualifications, skills and experience?*

- 7.2 Working relationships with colleagues, learners and external stakeholders**
- Among staff
  - Between staff and learners
  - With external stakeholders

*How productive are the working relationships among staff, learners and external stakeholders?*

- 7.3 Recruitment, selection and retention of staff**
- Internal and external recruitment and selection
  - Sufficiency of staff
  - Clarity and relevance of staff remits
  - Arrangements to avoid discrimination and promote equality
  - Occupational health arrangements

*How effective is the college in recruiting, selecting and retaining staff?*

- 7.4 Workforce planning**
- Identification of current and future skills requirements
  - Deployment of individuals and teams to meet business needs
  - Balance of skills, styles and behaviours within teams

*How effective is workforce planning?*

**ELEMENT 7: MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT OF STAFF**

**QUALITY INDICATORS**

**THEMES**

**7.5 Continuing professional development and review**

- Professional development of staff to meet business needs
- Professional review of staff to meet business needs
- Professional development of new staff and those undertaking new roles

*How effective is the college in developing its staff?*



## ELEMENT 8: PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCES

This element is concerned with the effectiveness of the college's partnerships with communities, other learning providers, employers and other agencies. It considers how well the college seeks out appropriate links and uses them to develop programmes and services to enhance the learner experience. It focuses on collaboration to design programmes and services, support learners, enhance flexibility and promote equality. It also considers the management of resources for learning and the use of management information.

### QUALITY INDICATORS

### THEMES

#### 8.1 Partnership working with communities, other learning providers, employers and other agencies

- Strategic links
- Collaborative arrangements to promote access and inclusion
- Responsiveness to requirements of other agencies
- Involvement of external agencies

*How extensive and effective are college partnerships with communities, other learning providers, employers and other agencies?*

#### 8.2 Management and use of resources and learning environments

- Planning, deployment and monitoring of resources
- Use of management information
- Sufficiency, adequacy and accessibility of accommodation and facilities
- Sufficiency, adequacy and accessibility of ICT resources
- Sufficiency, adequacy and accessibility of learning equipment and materials
- Arrangements for learners with additional support needs
- Arrangements to promote sustainability of resources

*How well does the college manage and use its resources and learning environments?*

## ELEMENT 9: EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND DIRECTION

This element is concerned with the leadership of the college's educational provision. It considers the extent to which national policies and local factors influence the Board of Management and the senior management team in setting educational aims and objectives. It evaluates the effectiveness of the leadership of planning and delivery of the college's programmes and of its services to support learners, learning and teaching. It also explores the extent to which there is a culture of quality improvement and enhancement in the college.

### QUALITY INDICATORS

### THEMES

#### 9.1 Educational aims, objectives and targets

- Clarity and comprehensiveness
- Responsiveness to national policies and local issues including environmental sustainability
- Staff understanding and commitment
- Match between strategic aims and objectives, and operational planning

*How appropriate and influential are the college aims, objectives and targets?*

#### 9.2 Leadership for learning and teaching

- Vision and direction of the curriculum
- Strategies for improving learning and teaching, learner engagement, retention, achievement and attainment
- Team leadership
- Staff development strategies
- Involvement and motivation of staff

*How effective is the leadership for learning and teaching?*

## ELEMENT 9: EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND DIRECTION

### QUALITY INDICATORS

### THEMES

#### 9.3 Leadership for services to support learners

- Vision and direction
- Responsiveness to legislation and national guidance
- Planning, coordination and enhancement of services
- Team leadership
- Staff development strategies
- Links to external agencies providing resources, services and information

*How effective is the leadership for services to support learners?*

#### 9.4 Leadership for enhancing quality and maintaining an effective quality culture

- Vision and direction
- Staff commitment to quality culture
- Learner and staff engagement in college internal review and self-evaluation
- Criteria and procedures to support quality enhancement
- Action planning for improvement and enhancement
- Impact of internal review and self-evaluation
- Improvement and enhancement trends

*How effective is the leadership for enhancing quality and maintaining a quality culture?*

## Annex 2

### **Learner engagement: an overview**

*Learner engagement* is one of the three key principles on which the updated quality arrangements are based. Across the sector, colleges in Scotland are devising and implementing ways of involving learners in decision-making processes at programme and college levels. College staff are increasingly involving learners in negotiating and agreeing what they will learn and how they will learn. Learners provide feedback on how well learning and teaching approaches, programmes and college services meet their needs. Colleges are using feedback from learners to make improvements to programmes and services. Staff are involving learners in working together to enhance and enrich the learning experience and the work and life of the college. Managers are involving learners in decision-making processes at college level, through meaningful involvement of learners in cross-college groups, sub-committees of the governing body and the full Board.

The principle of *Learner engagement* seeks to capture and evaluate the effectiveness of colleges in involving learners in these activities.

For the purposes of reaching a shared understanding and for clarification, *Learner engagement* should be considered as follows:

#### **Engagement of learners in enhancing their own learning**

(This includes engagement of learners in enhancing programmes and services at individual, programme and college levels)

This refers to how effective the college's arrangements and staff are in enabling learners to:

- contribute to personalising their own learning experience, for example, through selecting units and modes of learning;
- influence and contribute to planning and shaping their own learning through learning activities, project work and self-directed learning. (This links with learning and teaching in terms of how well staff involve learners in these activities);
- influence and contribute to the shaping of learning and teaching approaches within learning activities. (This links with learning and teaching in terms of how well staff involve learners in this process);
- support each other in extending and enhancing their learning, for example participating in peer review, peer teaching, buddying and mentoring activities; and
- take responsibility for their own learning, through recording, monitoring and reflecting on their progress, for example through the effective use of *personal learning plans* or equivalent, and discussions with staff.

This also includes:

### **Engagement of learners in enhancing college programmes and college services**

This refers to how effective the college's arrangements and staff are in enabling learners to:

- engage in providing feedback to staff on how well learning and teaching, programmes and college services meet their needs. (This links with learning and teaching, and quality culture in terms of how effectively staff involve and encourage learners to participate in these activities); and
- participate in and use the class representative system meaningfully and effectively.

It also refers to:

- how well learners' views are collated and represented to college staff, for example learner representation on college forums and informal communication arrangements. (This links with quality culture and leadership in terms of how well learner representation is organised and conveyed to staff and learners);
- how well staff convey to learners the actions they have taken as a result of learner feedback;
- how well learners are involved in contributing suggestions for improving college services, for example residential and support services, and college facilities; and
- how well the college ensures that all learners develop the skills required to participate effectively in engagement to enhance their own learning.

### **Engagement of learners in enhancing the work and life of the college**

This refers to how effective the college's arrangements and staff are in enabling learners to:

- plan and contribute to college events and activities;
- engage in community and external events as part of, or as a result of, their college experience; and
- apply their skills for the benefit of the college and wider community.

It also refers to:

- how well the college supports and enables the Students' Association or equivalent student body and its officers, whilst ensuring the integrity of the Association's constitution; and
- how well the college ensures that all learners develop the skills required to participate effectively in engagement to enhance the work and life of the college.

## **Context of *Learner engagement***

*Learner engagement* flows through almost all aspects of the work and life of colleges. Colleges may wish to use the following high level questions to consider how well *Learner engagement* is captured within their strategic and operational processes.

- How well does the college provide clear direction to learners and staff on how it will engage learners in the enhancement of their own learning; the improvement of college programmes and services, and the enhancement of the work and life of the college?
- How well do college policies and practices take sufficient account of the full spectrum of learners?
- How well do college policies, practices and representation arrangements promote and reflect equality and diversity?
- How well do college recruitment arrangements and programme planning processes provide sufficient opportunity for learners to personalise their learning experience?
- How well do college communication systems ensure that learner views are recorded and forwarded to appropriate and relevant college departments?
- How well do learning and teaching strategies and procedures take sufficient account of the need to engage learners in shaping their own learning and class activities?
- How well do lesson planning processes incorporate learner contribution to the shaping and evaluation of class activities and learning and teaching approaches?
- How well do quality assurance and enhancement processes engage learners sufficiently in informing improvement?
- How well do college staff inform learners of the improvements they have made to programmes and services as a direct result of learners' feedback/suggestions?
- How effective are college links with the student body in promoting productive communication?
- How effective are communication arrangements in promoting and ensuring learner engagement in the enhancement of college and wider community activities?
- How well does the college evaluate the engagement of learners at class, programme and college level?
- How effective are college procedures for conveying the views of learners to the BoM/Governors?

## Annex 3

### College nominee

#### 1 The role of the college nominee

The inclusion of a college nominee in external review aims to:

- reinforce and support partnership working between Education Scotland and colleges in assuring and improving provision in Scotland's colleges;
- further develop a culture of partnership, openness and transparency in evaluating and reporting on the quality of provision;
- provide a point of reference for Education Scotland reviewers prior to, during and after external review and annual engagement activities;
- provide a point of reference for college staff prior to, during and after external review activities; and
- increase opportunities for college staff to engage in activities which contribute to continuing professional development and succession planning.

#### 2 The involvement of the college nominee in external review activities

The college nominee will be involved in the external review of their college. The following table indicates the types of activities the college nominee may undertake.

External review	Activity
Prior to the review	Act as the primary contact between Education Scotland and the college.
	Work with the Managing Inspector (MI) in the scoping and planning of review activities.
	Work with the MI in the production of the pre-review commentary.
During the review	Direct reviewers to sources of evidence across the college, including the appropriate staff with whom to discuss specific issues.
	Attend meetings of the review team (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday evenings) in order to provide information or clarification where necessary. The college nominee has no evaluative role.
	Work with MI to ensure effective communication between the review team and the college.
	Attend and contribute to the sharing of findings with college staff.
After the review	Collaborate with the MI in the early stages of production of the report of review findings.

### **3 Identification of the college nominee**

As stated above, the role of the college nominee is to reinforce and support partnership working between Education Scotland and colleges in assuring and improving provision in Scotland's colleges. It is therefore important that colleges have ownership of selecting the member of staff who will carry out this role.

This is a new role. Most (but not all) colleges have staff who have experience of carrying out the role of associate assessor (AA) or college review coordinator (CRC). However, the role of college nominee is different and although AA or CRC experience may be useful, it should not be viewed by colleges or Education Scotland as prerequisite for staff undertaking the role of college nominee. The following provides a guide for colleges when nominating a member of staff.

#### **The college nominee should have sound knowledge and understanding of:**

- all aspects of the work of the college, including analysis of data;
- college planning processes, strategic priorities and direction of travel;
- college quality assurance and enhancement processes;
- the regional and local contexts and partnership arrangements;
- external quality arrangements for Scotland's colleges;
- Curriculum for Excellence; and
- current national directives and sectoral priorities.

#### **Experience in the following would be helpful but not mandatory:**

- working with Education Scotland as an associate assessor;
- carrying out college review co-ordinator role in external review;
- working with national bodies in a developmental or evaluative role;
- managing cross-college functions; and
- working with local external partners in the planning and co-ordination of college provision.

### **4 Training for the college nominee**

An annual one-day training programme will be delivered to all college nominees prior to their college external review.



## Annex 4

### Outcomes of external review

#### Judgements of effectiveness

Education Scotland will use an overarching statement of effectiveness to summarise the outcomes of external review. The judgement of effectiveness takes into account all the evidence gathered through the external review and related evaluative activities. Such judgements will express the outcome for the college as:

- effective;
- limited effectiveness; or
- not effective.

This overarching judgement will be further detailed by four supporting statements which substantiate the judgement of effectiveness. Education Scotland will continue to evaluate and report according to the three key principles and supporting statements will be related to these:

Key principle 1 – High quality learning (two supporting statements)

Key principle 2 – Learner engagement (one supporting statement)

Key principle 3 – Quality culture (one supporting statement)

Judgements of effectiveness and supporting statements will provide stakeholders with assurances, or otherwise, about the quality of a college's provision. These judgements are based on trends and track record of a college, the findings at the time of the external review, and the college's capacity to continue improving.

**A judgement of *effective*** indicates that the college has in place **effective** arrangements to maintain and enhance the quality of its provision and outcomes for learners and other stakeholders. This judgement means that, in relation to quality assurance and enhancement, the college is led well, has robust arrangements and is likely to continue to improve the quality of its services for learners and other stakeholders.

**A judgement of *limited effectiveness*** indicates that the effectiveness of the college's arrangements to maintain and enhance the quality of its provision and outcomes for learners and other stakeholders is **limited**. This judgement means that there are some strengths in the college's arrangements for quality enhancement. However, there are weaknesses in arrangements for *high quality learning* and/or *learner engagement* and/or *quality culture*. If not addressed, the importance of these weaknesses will continue to **limit the effectiveness** of the college's arrangements.

**A judgement of *not effective*** indicates that the college's arrangements to maintain and enhance the quality of its provision and outcomes for learners and other stakeholders are **not effective**. This judgement means that there are significant weaknesses in the arrangements for *high quality learning* and/or *learner*

*engagement* and/or *quality culture*. There is a high probability that, without significant and comprehensive action, with external monitoring and support, the college will fail to improve current low-quality provision and outcomes to an acceptable level. Education Scotland does not have evidence that the college has the capacity and commitment to identify and implement effective and comprehensive action.