UPDATES TO THE SCOTTISH FUNDING COUNCIL GUIDANCE TO UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES ON QUALITY 2022/23 AND 2023/24

1. PURPOSE OF THE PAPER

This paper will provide an overview of the updated Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Guidance to Universities and Colleges on Quality for 2022/23 and 2023/24. The guidance was updated for 2023/24; this paper provides a summary of the changes and any requirements of the University therein.

2. PREVIOUS CONSIDERATION BY / FURTHER APPROVAL REQUIRED

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3. RECOMMENDED ACTION

The Quality Assurance Committee / University Education Committee is invited to discuss the paper.

4. GUIDANCE TO UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES ON QUALITY

4.1 The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Guidance to Universities and Colleges on Quality for Academic Year 2022/23 and 2023/24: Refresh was published on 17 August 2023. The guidance is to inform Scotland’s colleges and universities of refreshed quality arrangements for academic year 2022/23 and 2023/24.

4.2 As noted in Section 8, the guidance outlines interim quality arrangements for 2022/23 and 2023/24 to give colleges and universities clarity and consistency while also allowing appropriate flexibility for continued development of a tertiary approach to quality outlined in the SFC Review of Coherence and Sustainability.

5. CHANGES FOR 2023/24

5.1 The SFC have reviewed and updated the guidance in advance of 2023/24 to reflect and respond to the development of new tertiary arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement to be implemented from 2024/25. There are several changes and clarifications as outlined below:

5.2 Student Partnership

5.2.1 Addition of reference to ensuring a coherent and effective strategy in place for student partnership.

5.2.2 Addition of reference to the Student Learning Experience and Student Partnership models, which Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland (sparqs) was tasked with leading. In 2023/24, sparqs will test the models across the tertiary sector and work with quality agencies consider their integration into the new common approach to quality assurance and enhancement.
5.3  Tertiary External Quality Review Method and Enhancement Approach

5.3.1 Addition of information pertaining to the development of the tertiary quality review, and the expectations to engage with this system once implemented in 2024/25.

5.4  Ad Hoc Requests on Information about the way Institutions are Securing Academic Standards and the Student Learning Experience

5.4.1 Addition of a statement which advises that institutions may be asked for additional requests for information, for example information pertinent to industrial action. This information may be requested directly from SFC or via the quality agencies.

5.5  Reporting on Quality 2023/24

5.5.1 Addition of information pertaining to reporting on quality for academic year 2023/24. The University will be expected to complete a Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP) for submission to SFC and the quality agency by 30 November 2024. The specific information for the SEAP is currently under development, in consultation with the sector. It is likely to include: a summary of institutional quality assurance and enhancement activities; an evaluation of key data and evidence; and a strategic action plan identifying areas for improvement and enhancement.

5.5.2 It is intended that the SEAP will reduce the burden of reporting to SFC and that it will be used to facilitate annual engagements between institutions and the quality agency. It will also form part of the documentary evidence for the periodic external peer review.

5.5.3 The final template and guidance will be issued in Spring 2024.

5.6  Outcome Agreement

5.6.1 Addition of information pertinent to the Outcome Agreement arrangements for 2023/24, noting the requirement to provide a summary of how the University will demonstrate that students at all levels experience a high-quality, safe, and supportive learning experience, enabling them to succeed.

5.7  External International Review: Transnational Education (TNE)

5.7.1 Addition of information pertinent to the Quality Evaluation and Enhancement of UK Transnational Education (QE-TNE) scheme.

5.7.2 The SFC encourages all Scottish degree awarding bodies engaging in TNE to participate in QE-TNE from 2023/24. SFC will make participation in QE-TNE a requirement for Scottish degree awarding bodies engaging in TNE from academic year 2024/25.

5.8  Professional Services Review

5.8.1 Addition of clarification that the SFC expects that institutions’ approaches to the review of professional support services should be systematic, planned and timely, covering all non-academic services or departments that contribute to the overall student learning experience, and considering their effectiveness and interactions with academic units.

6.  Future Quality Arrangements

6.1 Regular updates on progress with the development of the Tertiary Quality Project will be provided on the Tertiary Quality Project webpages throughout academic year 2023/24.
7. **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Further information is available from Ruth Taylor (Vice-Principal, Education), ruth.taylor@abdn.ac.uk; Steve Tucker (Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement), sj.tucker@abdn.ac.uk; Gillian Mackintosh (Director of Academic Services and Online Education), g.mackintosh@abdn.ac.uk; or Liam Dyker (Acting Assistant Registrar, Academic Services), liam.dyker2@abdn.ac.uk.

25 August 2023

**Freedom of Information/Confidentiality Status:** Open