1. **Purpose of the Paper**

   This paper informs the committee of QAA Scotland’s interim quality arrangements for 2021/22.

2. **Previous Consideration By / Further Approval Required**

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<tr>
<th>Board/Committee</th>
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<tr>
<td>Previously considered/approved by</td>
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<td>Further consideration/approval required by</td>
<td>QAC 26 January 2022</td>
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3. **Recommended Action**

   The Committee is invited to note the information provided regarding QAA Scotland’s interim quality arrangements for 2021/22.

4. **Discussion**

   4.1 The Quality Assurance Agency Scotland (QAAS) has responsibility on behalf of the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) to oversee the quality of higher education provision in Scotland. This responsibility is set out under Section 13 of the *Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005*.

   4.2 Due to the ongoing impact of the pandemic and to allow the Scottish Government to respond to the recommendations set out in the SFC Review of Coherent Provision and Sustainability which has potential implications for quality arrangements in Scotland and the developments of the next review method for the sector, 2021/22 has been deemed a transitional year and as such, interim arrangements have been put in place for the management of quality assurance and enhancement by QAAS on behalf of the SFC. In normal circumstances, academic 2021/22 would have been a development year where no ELIR take place and during this period the guidance for the next round of ELIR would be developed.

   4.3 The University’s named contact at QAAS normally undertakes an ELIR Annual Discussion each year. During this transitional year, the QAA Outcome Agreement with SFC requires QAAS to increase QAA liaison engagement. As such the usual ELIR Annual Discussion will be replaced by two institutional liaison visits to provide opportunity to better understand successes and challenges around the management of quality and standards. The purpose, timing and focus of the two meetings is detailed below:

   **Meeting One: Quality Processes**

   **Purpose:**
   To focus on institution-led quality processes, outcomes and themes from the processes and the institution’s mapping to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code).

   **Timing:**
   15 February 2022

   **Topics:**
   (i) Update on Institution-led Review (ILR). This might include themes from the institution’s annual report to SFC, outcomes from the reviews themselves, the method of review being employed, and any changes/revisions to the review schedule.
(ii) Update on the institution’s approach to annual monitoring including any changes to policies/procedures, any themes arising from these reports which are considered at an institutional level and expectations around addressing actions.

(iii) Consideration of any key themes and areas of learning for the institution arising from any appeals, complaints and disciplinary cases.

(iv) Institutional analysis of awards/attainment gaps and any trends in the data.

(v) Update on matters related to assuring and maintaining the quality of academic standards and learning and teaching – this might include items being discussed at the key institutional committees responsible for quality, learning and teaching, and student experience.

(vi) Discussion on the institution’s approach to maintaining its mapping to the Quality Code.

(vii) Other matters that the institution may wish to discuss linked explicitly to quality assurance and enhancement matters, for example, the outcome of PSRB reports/visits.

Attendees: Head of Quality / Quality Officer from the institution, QAAS Liaison Officer

Meeting Two: Strategic Developments and Approaches

Purpose: To focus on strategic developments linked to learning and teaching, sector themes, student engagement and ELIR progress.

Timing: May / June 2022

Topics:

(i) Update on strategic developments linked to learning and teaching, and sector themes – for example, these might include approaches to digital/online learning; equality, diversity and inclusion; ongoing support for student transitions and institutional support for students with disruptive learning.

(ii) Current developments in student engagement at the institution – this might include progress with activity highlighted in the student partnership agreement or equivalent document.

(iii) Progress with ELIR relevant to the institution’s position in the cycle – this could include the Follow-up report, and/or progress with actions arising from ELIR.

(iv) Progress and engagement with the current Enhancement Theme – a strategic update on the progress of work in the institutional plan and consideration of the budget.

(v) Discussion on the extent to which the institution makes use of materials developed through the Enhancement Themes, Focus On projects and other related activity. This would provide an opportunity to share information on the impact of the Themes and Focus On outcomes and resources.

(vi) Information sharing on matters relevant to ELIR and the Enhancement Themes – this might include updating QAAS on strategic developments at the institution and/or sharing current sector activity.

(vii) Student feedback and student survey results – this might include an annual summary and/or analysis of student feedback from internal and external surveys.

(viii) Other matters to be followed up from Meeting 1.

(ix) Other matters that the institution and/or students’ association wish to discuss.
Attendees: Suggested attendees are Deputy Principal (Learning & Teaching); Head of Quality; Student President; Student Vice-President (Education); QAAS Liaison Officer.

4.4 For both visits, there is not an expectation that institutions will prepare materials specifically for the Institutional Liaison Meetings but rather QAAS encourages institutions to use reports / committee papers that have been produced for internal purposes. For each visit, a set of supporting documents is requested as detailed below. This information is required to be submitted two weeks in advance.

Meeting One

- The definitive internal document(s) describing the approach taken to Institution-led Review, including information about the forward schedule of reviews.
- The Institution-led Review reports completed since the previous annual discussion meeting and, where relevant, the follow-up from any previous ILR reports discussed at earlier annual discussions.
- Any internal documents analysing the outcomes from Institution-led Reviews or evaluating the approach used.
- The annual institutional report to SFC regarding Institution-led Reviews or related matters for session 2020-21.
- The definitive internal document(s) describing the approach taken to annual monitoring and any annual institutional reports considering the outcomes from this process for session 2020-21.
- Minutes from the meeting of the key institutional committee responsible for the oversight of quality and standards for 2020-21.
- A mapping of the institution’s policies and practices to the Quality Code.
- The HEI’s annual report/analysis of appeals, complaints and discipline cases.
- Institutional analysis of awards/attainment gaps – the data for session 2020-21 and any trend analysis the institution has done over the last five years.

Meeting Two

- The institution’s current Learning and Teaching Strategy or equivalent and any other supporting strategy and policy documents.
- Information relating to developments in student partnership working at the institution including any Student Partnership Agreement.
- The institutional ELIR action plan(s).
- Information relating to any changes in the institutional approach to quality enhancement.
- The institutional annual summary and/or analysis of student feedback from internal and external student surveys linked to the quality of teaching and learning and the broader student experience, such as the National Student Survey.

4.5 Following both meetings, the QAAS Officer will write a short summary report which will be shared with the institution to:

- Summarise the key topics explored and discussions that took place during the meeting.
- Confirm any action points.
- Record any observations or recommendations made by the QAAS Officer to the institution.

- Confirm whether it is the QAAS Officer’s view that the institution continues to have appropriate arrangements in place to assure itself that the academic standards and quality are maintained.

5. **FURTHER INFORMATION**

Further information is available from Ruth Taylor, Vice-Principal (Education) (ruth.taylor@abdn.ac.uk) or from Gillian Mackintosh, Director of Academic Services & Online Education (g.mackintosh@abdn.ac.uk).

17 January 2022

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