
SFC Data Analysis for Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to provide the sector with further detail about the data analysis that the SFC will be sharing with the QAA Review team and the institution as part of the Tertiary Quality External Review (TQER) process.

Background - SFC's use of data and evidence

2. As outlined in [SFC's Guidance on Quality for Colleges and Universities 2024-25 to 2030-31](#) it is the continued intention to develop and enhance the use of data and evidence in how we account for public investment in the delivery of high quality learning. SFC holds the responsibility for the published institutional data and will use this to inform:
 - The Assurance Model, including using the data to evidence and inform our understanding of the quality assessment and enhancement through the SEAP and external review, in conjunction with the information we receive from institutions and external quality agencies.
 - Regular engagement with institutions.
 - The external peer review process, through SFC sharing analysis of the data with the TQER review teams.
3. In the college sector, SFC collects and quality assures data on students and the student experience directly from colleges as part of the Further Education Statistical (FES) return. SFC also conducts an annual College Leaver Destination Survey on the destinations of successful full-time college leavers, and the [Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey](#) (SSES).
4. In the university sector, SFC is a statutory customer of the [Higher Education Statistics Agency](#) (HESA) which collects statutory data from Scottish institutions on behalf of SFC. SFC also has access to data from the [Graduate Outcomes](#) (GO) surveys, as well as data from the [Universities and Colleges Admissions Service](#) (UCAS), and jointly owns the [National Student Survey](#) (NSS).
5. Achieving the best outcomes for learning and teaching is dependent on good decisions, shaped from a clear understanding, informed by meaningful analysis. The Data & Analytics teams at SFC are developing self-service management information (MI) to this end, starting with new tools for SFC staff and the ongoing reform of official statistics publications. We will be launching MI dashboards to the sectors over the coming cycles, which will help ensure that the basis of processes such as TQER is a shared understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of institutional learning and teaching activity in the round.

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6. The Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) is an integral part of the Outcome Framework and Assurance Model (OFAM) and provides all the necessary assurance for the High-Quality Learning and Teaching Outcome. As part of the OFAM, a set of core measures has been identified by SFC, which will be used to monitor institutions' contribution towards each outcome. These measures consider previous sector feedback and represent the key information SFC needs to gain an overview of institutions' contribution to each outcome. Where relevant, core measures have been carried over from the previous measures used under Outcome Agreements. Outcome Managers will meet each institution regularly to discuss the outcomes including the core measures. The annual quality engagement (AQE) meeting is one of these engagements and is timed to make best use of the institutional Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP) submission.
 7. The focus of the AQE meeting with SFC will be on institutions' data and performance in the key outcomes described in the SEAP and aligned to the OFAM. The SEAP guidance includes reference to measures related to High Quality Learning and Teaching, Student Interests Access and Success and the Skills and Work-Based Learning Outcomes too, although it is up to the institution whether they include these in their SEAP submission. It is expected that an institution will be prepared to discuss these as part of the AQE discussion and in some instances the same data outcomes will also be discussed in other meetings during the year.
 8. As the OFAM process develops and embeds, it is anticipated that much of the detail that is included in the Data Analysis report will have been discussed with the institution as part of that process as we strive to achieve a greater degree of openness and transparency in the data that is collected, analysed and shared.

Data Analysis for TQER

9. As described in the [TQER Guide for Institutions](#), SFC will be sharing an analysis of data that is relevant to the institution's context at the time of the review, with QAA eight weeks prior to the initial visit. This information will be shared with the institution and the review team by QAA as part of review preparations.
10. As outlined above SFC holds, accesses and/or collects a range of data and it is this data that will be reviewed and analysed by SFC as part of the TQER process. As set out in the SFC Guidance on Quality this may include:
 - Data on student outcomes (quantitative) and how institutions are taking action to improve outcomes (qualitative) for students of all backgrounds, with a particular interest in measures and actions about:
 - Student populations.
 - Retention.
 - Success.
 - Employability.

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- Student survey results (e.g., NSS in universities and SSES in colleges) and how institutions are addressing feedback from such surveys.
 - Programme/course¹ closures and the management of students in flight on those programmes/course.
 - Qualitative information from key stakeholders, such as sparqs, NUS and Student Associations.
 - Staff, student or other feedback (including complaints) on quality and standards.
 - Industry and employer feedback on the preparedness of graduates / leavers.
11. Much of this data and evidence will be collected or be available systematically (e.g., student outcomes data, student survey results, complaints) through existing returns and surveys. Other data and evidence will be utilised as and when it is available or is drawn to our attention (e.g., feedback from industry, employers, and student associations and information about programme/course closures). It is important to note that this data and evidence will be used alongside information from the annual SEAPs and periodic external review reports.
 12. Institutions will not be expected to provide additional data/ reporting to SFC for the purposes of the TQER report. SFC will make use of the range of data and information available through existing reporting mechanisms.
 13. Institutions are expected to comply with the established guiding principles for public information about the quality of educational provision and the student experience. All information should be accurate, honest, accessible, tailored to the intended user, updateable (on appropriate timescales) and re-usable.

TQER Data Analysis Process

14. SFC has identified the key data and evidence that is relevant to the external review process for colleges and universities (see tables below).
15. The analysis of the data will be undertaken as a collaborative process between relevant colleagues across the SFC, including the Outcome Manager for the institution.
16. For each institution undergoing review, there will be meetings of SFC colleagues to explore and discuss the data. The report and associated evidence will be prepared and subject to internal approval prior to submission to QAA.
17. Institutions will have the opportunity to meet SFC to discuss the planned report outline and SFC's reflection of the institution-specific context. Institutions can also ask questions and provide any context that they feel is relevant to the preparation of the report. This meeting will be optional and will not include a discussion about the specific outcomes of the data analysis. The timing of this meeting will be dependent on several factors, but

¹ Programme/course is used to describe a complete programme or course of study and not individual modules (sometimes called courses)

will take place prior to the institutional data analysis report being concluded and submitted to QAA, eight weeks in advance of the initial review visit.

18. Queries about the use of the report in TQER should be directed to QAA.

Indicative measures/data sources to be reviewed in the TQER Data Analysis

19. Please note that these are broadly indicative as some measures may not be relevant to the institutions context while others may be added to help provide greater insight. The combination of demographic information included will vary considerably due to the relative size of an institution and the number of students.

Universities

Principle: Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Metrics	Example data/evidence to be explored and presented
Scope of provision	Evidence Source: HESA student returns. Scope: Number of students enrolled (by FTE ²) across all levels and modes of study across the full range of subject areas, for the five-year period.
Entry qualifications	Evidence Source: HESA student returns. Scope: Entry qualifications of students enrolling (across all levels of study and all domiciles) in previous years. Explore any specific trends or changes in entry quals e.g. A/AS levels, Scottish Highers, Higher National Certificate/ Diploma..
Articulation data	Evidence Source: National Articulation Database (NAD). Scope: Main articulation measure (MAM) data for full-time, first-degree entrants for the institution for the past 5 years (rounded to nearest 5).

² The new Scottish definition of FTE is used; this is consistent between SFC and Jisc. SFC are aware that the change to the way FTE is now derived in the new data futures data model will affect some institutions more than others, depending on how many of their students' studies span academic years. Where SFC believe the definition change may have a significant impact on trends it will be highlighted in the narrative

Enrolment data – undergraduate and post-graduate	<p>Evidence Source: HESA student returns.</p> <p>Definition: CAH groupings are used for subjects.</p> <p>Scope: Student entrant FTE by level of study (first degree, taught and research postgraduate) and subject area for over the five-year period.</p>
Student retention and attainment	<p>Evidence Source: HESA student returns and HESA qualifier returns.</p> <p>Definition: The measure of retention is based on the T3 non-continuation metric, which is calculated by Jisc on behalf of SFC. Retention statistics are reported for Scottish domiciled entrants to first degree programmes.</p> <p>The trend in outcomes is taken from the HESA qualifier returns and includes students of all domiciles on first degree programmes.</p> <p>Scope: Retention of Scottish-domiciled first-degree entrants for Institution vs Sector Average over the five-year period.</p> <p>Trend in first and upper second class honours for qualifying students at first degree level: Institution vs Scottish sector average over the five-year period.</p> <p>Student retention and degree classifications by demographic including for example disability, care experience, ethnicity, sex, age, SIMD.</p>
Note: Retention and attainment data of post-graduate students is not included. The variety of lengths and types of PG studies makes it difficult to calculate and compare outcomes.	
Apprenticeships	<p>Evidence Source: HESA Student Returns.</p> <p>Scope: Graduate apprenticeship entrant data across all frameworks where this is available and relevant.</p>

Review SEAPs for references to these metrics

Principle: Supporting Student Success

Metrics	Example data/evidence to be explored and presented
Graduate Outcomes	Evidence Source: The Graduate Outcomes Survey response data.

Definition:

The definitions are aligned with the HESA published statistics, based on most important activity including interim further study. Figures include UK domiciled graduates of undergraduate degree programmes at the institution, including all modes of study. High skill roles are defined as standard occupational code major groups 1-3.

Figures are grouped by graduate cohort for the five-year period.

Scope:

Response rates (%).

Number and percentage of graduates into employment or study, by level of study, institution vs sector average.

Number and percentage of graduates into “high-skilled” roles.

Percentage of respondents agreeing with each of the three “Graduate voice” questions reflecting on their activities, by level of study, institution vs sector average.

Review SEAPs for references to these metrics

Principle: Student Engagement and Partnership

Metrics	Example data/evidence to be explored and presented
NSS – Headline Outcomes	<p>Evidence Source: National Student Survey (NSS).</p> <p>Definition:</p> <p>All respondents to the NSS.</p> <p>Scope:</p> <p>Overall student satisfaction rate over the five-year period.</p> <p>Performance against Scottish sector average for all individual questions.</p>

Review SEAPs for references to PTES/PRES where relevant

Colleges

Principle: Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Metrics	Example data/evidence to be explored and presented
Scope of provision/ enrolment trends	<p>Evidence Source: Further Education Statistics (FES) returns.</p> <p>Definition:</p> <p>Students meeting the fundability criteria at Scottish Colleges by academic year.</p> <p>Scope:</p> <p>Overall student numbers by enrolment count and full time equivalent (FTE).</p> <p>Relative enrolment count and student FTE split between Further Education (FE) and Higher Education (HE).</p> <p>Enrolment Count and FTE by subject area.</p> <p>Relative enrolment count versus FTE across all subject areas.</p>
Student successful completion, partial completion and withdrawal	<p>Evidence Source: College Performance Indicators, which are calculated from the annual FES returns.</p> <p>Definition:</p> <p>All students within the SFC College PI population.</p> <p>Scope:</p> <p>Overall completion, partial success and withdrawal rate for FE full time (FT) and Part time (PT) students for the period.</p> <p>Overall completion, partial success and withdrawal rate for HE FT and PT students.</p> <p>Successful completion rates and trends, FE (FT and PT) and HE (FT and PT) by demographics including disability, ethnicity, care experience, sex, age and SIMD.</p>

Review SEAPs for references to these metrics

Principle: Supporting Student Success

Metrics	Example data/evidence to be explored and presented
Apprenticeships	<p>Evidence Source:</p> <p>Foundation apprenticeship data held in FES from 2022-23 forwards.</p>

Modern apprenticeship data held in FES (from AY 2024-25 onwards).

Definition: Modern apprenticeships – currently it is within Skills Development Scotland’s (SDS) remit to report on Modern Apprenticeships (MAs), so we will not include any data up to the 2024-25 reporting year.

From 2024-25, a flag to identify MA provision has been incorporated into the Further Education Statistics (FES) returns. SFC does not define what constitutes MA provision and course titles are not uniform across the sector, so individual colleges will need to identify the relevant provision themselves. SFC will begin reporting MA provision from the 2024-25 academic year onwards, as identified through the FES returns flag.

Scope:

Foundation apprenticeships – overall number of students enrolled on Foundation Apprenticeships across frameworks for the period.

Foundation apprenticeships, enrolments by demographic including for example care experience, disability, sex, ethnicity, age and SIMD.

Partnerships

Review of SEAPs

Outcomes of leavers

Evidence Source: College Leavers Destinations data

Definition:

Primary classification of leavers.

Scope:

Outcome of leavers by demographic including for example care experience, disability, sex, ethnicity, age and SIMD.

Review SEAPs for references to these metrics

Principle: Student Engagement and Partnership

Metrics

Example data/evidence to be explored and presented

Student Support and Engagement Survey

Evidence Source: Student Support and Engagement Survey (SSES).

Definition:

All students within the SSES sample for the period. The SSES is collected for students with 4 or more credits (nominally 160+ hours of learning).

Scope:

Overall student satisfaction rates over the period.

Inclusion of satisfaction rate by level and mode of study will depend on the underpinning response rates and robustness of the data.

Response rates over the period with possible breakdowns by level and mode of study.

Review SEAPs for references to these metrics

TQER Data Analysis Report

20. The purpose of the report is to share with the QAA Review Team a high-level analysis of the institutional data to inform the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER). The report provided by SFC to QAA for the purposes of the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) is confidential to the review process and will not be published. SFC will provide the report to QAA who will then share it with the institution.
21. Examples of the report introduction which sets the scene for the Review Team for universities and colleges are included as Annex A and B respectively.
22. The report is not designed to be a fully comprehensive overview of the institution but will give the TQER peer-review team an indication of the scope of activity delivered.
23. This report is only one part of the evidence available to the review team and will be considered by the Review Team within the wider context of the information provided by the institution itself and the in-person discussions with staff and students.
24. Although the scope of the TQER will include all credit bearing activity, SFC can only report on those activities for which it has access to the necessary data and evidence.
25. Where there are restrictions on the data to which SFC has access, or the manner in which it is collected restricts the narrative, this will be noted in the report.
26. It is likely that there will be minor differences between SFC and institutional data, due to differences between the definitions and calculations applied to the institution's data through internal systems, and the information available to SFC through the various returns completed by institutions. This is a known factor and should not ordinarily be a cause for concern.
27. Further to this (for universities), it is noted (as described in the HESA quality notes for 2022-23³) that the introduction of a new collection system, HESA Data Platform and a new data model for the 2022/23 academic year (also known as the Data Futures project) presented some challenges. As a result, in this first year of collection there have been a larger number of data quality issues than observed in recent years. SFC is cognisant of

³ [Who's studying in HE? | HESA](#)

this and will alert the Review Team to this as and where this is particularly relevant.

28. When considering the data, the focus will be on the overarching trend over a period of five years (where this is available), not on minor year on year variations in measures. Comparisons with the Scottish sector average may be drawn where this information is available and a comparison is appropriate. Covid-19 significantly affected a lot of the activity in colleges and universities within this period. As and where we believe this has particularly influenced the figures presented, this will be noted in the report.
29. The five-year period refers to published data available at the time of the data analysis meeting for the individual institution. Where relevant, measures will be considered in the context of student demographics too.
30. For data protection reasons we implement a strategy in published and released tabulations designed to prevent the disclosure of personal information about any individual. This strategy involves rounding all numbers to the nearest multiple of 5, where any value between 0 and 7.5 is rounded to 5, and suppressing percentages and averages based on small populations. When considering populations, the minimum number must be at least 23 in order to calculate the percentage, where the population is less than 23, the percentage is redacted. Additionally, blank entries indicate the absence of data rather than suppressed.
31. The final report will represent a factual, evidence-informed view of the institution.

Next Steps

32. The approach to the analysis and compilation of the institutional reports, will be reviewed as part of our TQEF evaluation. If colleagues have any questions about this process, please contact the Learning and Quality team via quality@sfc.ac.uk.

Annex A: University Data Report Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to share with the QAA Review Team a high-level analysis of the institutional data to inform the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) in academic year 2025.

This report is not designed to be a fully comprehensive overview of the institution, but to give the review team an indication of the scope of activity delivered. Institutions will provide a fully contextualised report with their own data to the review, this report supplements that information and enables the review team to triangulate.

This report is a snapshot at the time of writing and is only one part of the evidence available to the review team. It should be considered within the wider context of the information provided by the institution itself and the in-person discussions with staff and students.

Process

This data utilised in the report is published annually and shared with institutions and SFC for further analysis. The data used to inform this analysis has been prepared for internal use within SFC and is drawn from HESA returns, the Graduate Outcomes and national student surveys, reference may also be made to institutional Outcome Agreements and/or Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP) Reports. The analysis of the data has been undertaken as a collaborative process between SFC colleagues and has been reviewed and signed off internally prior to sharing.

Although the scope of the TQER includes all credit bearing activity, SFC will only report on those activities for which it has access to the necessary data and evidence.

Where there are restrictions on the data which SFC has access to, or the way it is collected restricts the narrative, this is noted in the report.

It is likely that there will be minor inconsistencies between SFC and Institutional data due to differences between the definitions and calculations applied in internal data systems and reporting at the university, and the information available to SFC through the various returns completed by the university, this is a known factor and should not ordinarily be a cause for concern.

Further to this, it is noted (as described in the HESA quality notes for 2022-23⁴) that the introduction of a new collection system, HESA Data Platform and a new data model for the 2022/23 academic year (also known as the Data Futures project) has brought with it new challenges, both for Jisc and users of the system. As a result, in the first year of collection

⁴ [Who's studying in HE? | HESA](#)

there have been many challenges to overcome, some of which have resulted in a larger number of data quality issues than observed in recent years. SFC is cognisant of this and alerts the Review Team to this. Note this does not impact on the Graduate Outcomes or National Student Survey (NSS) data.

When considering the data the focus has been on the trend over a period of five years (where this is available,) and significant year on year changes, but not on minor year on year variations in measures. Comparisons with the Scottish sector average may be drawn where this information is available and relevant. The five-year period refers to the most recent data available at the time of the data analysis meeting for the institution.

Where possible, outcomes have been considered in the context of student demographics but in some instances the numbers included in a particular grouping are too small for reporting purposes. For data protection reasons we implement a strategy in published and released tabulations designed to prevent the disclosure of personal information about any individual. This strategy involves rounding all numbers to the nearest multiple of 5, where any value between 0 and 7.5 is rounded to 5, and suppressing percentages and averages based on small populations. When considering populations, the minimum number must be at least 23 in order to calculate the percentage, where the population is less than 23, the percentage is redacted. Additionally, blank entries indicate the absence of data rather than suppressed data. Totals in the tables are calculated from unrounded figures, therefore figures may not sum to totals due to rounding as well as the inclusion of unknown values.

The report is presented in alignment with the headline principles of [Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework - Scottish Funding Council](#) and the allied metrics.

Annex B: College Data Report Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to share with the QAA Review Team a high-level analysis of the institutional data to inform the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review in academic year 2025.

This report is not designed to be a fully comprehensive overview of the institution, but it is designed to give the review team an indication of the scope of activity delivered by the institution. Institutions will provide a fully contextualised report with their own data to the review; this report supplements that information and enables the review team to triangulate.

This is a “snapshot” at the time of writing and is only one part of the evidence available to the review team. It should be considered within the wider context of the information provided by the institution itself and the in-person discussions with staff and students.

Process

The data used to inform this analysis has been prepared for internal use within SFC and is drawn from FES returns, the College Leavers Destinations and the Student Satisfaction and Engagement Surveys, reference may also be made to Outcome Agreement and/or Self Evaluation and Action Plan reports. This data is collected, analysed and published by SFC annually and shared with institutions for further analysis. The analysis of the data in this report has been undertaken as a collaborative process between SFC colleagues and has been reviewed and signed off internally prior to sharing.

Although the scope of the TQER includes all credit bearing activity, SFC will only report on those activities for which it has access to the necessary data and evidence.

Where there are restrictions on the data which SFC has access to, or the way it is collected restricts the narrative, this is noted in the report.

It is likely that there will be minor inconsistencies between SFC and Institutional data due to differences between the definitions and calculations applied in internal data systems and reporting at the college, and the information available to SFC through the various returns completed by the college, this is a known factor and should not ordinarily be a cause for concern.

When considering the data, the focus is on the overarching trend over a period of five years (where this is available), significant year on year changes but not on minor year on year variations in measures. Comparisons with the sector average may be drawn where this information is available and relevant. The five-year period refers to most recent data available at the time of the data analysis meeting for the institution.

Where possible, outcomes have been considered in the context of student demographics

but in some instances the numbers included in a particular grouping are too small for reporting purposes. For data protection reasons we implement a strategy in published and released tabulations designed to prevent the disclosure of personal information about any individual. This strategy involves rounding all numbers to the nearest multiple of 5, where any value between 0 and 7.5 is rounded to 5, and suppressing percentages and averages based on small populations. When considering populations, the minimum number must be at least 23 in order to calculate the percentage, where the population is less than 23, the percentage is redacted. Additionally, blank entries indicate the absence of data rather than suppressed data. Totals in the tables are calculated from unrounded figures, therefore figures may not sum to totals due to rounding as well as the inclusion of unknown values.

The report is presented in alignment with the headline principles of Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework [Scotland's Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework - Scottish Funding Council](#) and the allied metrics.