

Response ID ANON-1QM5-498N-Q

Submitted to Draft guidance and general determination for Teacher Qualification in Further Education (TQFE): consultation
Submitted on 2024-04-25 18:42:33

Entry Requirements

1 Do you consider that the Teaching Qualification in Further Education (TQFE) guidance document as detailed in this consultation is suitable in relation to entry requirements, including on equivalency and recognition of prior learning?

Yes

Please provide further comment below:

Model scheme of provision

2 Do you consider that the Teaching Qualification in Further Education (TQFE) guidance document as detailed in this consultation is suitable in relation to: content, nature and duration, and assessment of the programme

No

Please provide further comment below :

Further education, and therefore the training of further education educators, plays a vital role in enabling Scottish citizens to contribute to national goals and priorities. The draft guidance states that the model of provision indicates the “range of issues and detail the Scottish Government expects to be included within submissions” (p.14). While it is made clear that it “is not intended to be exhaustive or prescriptive” (p. 14), current issues addressed in the guidance seem siloed and incomplete, and do not reflect the direction in which Scotland is going on social, economic, and environmental dimensions.

This is a crucial gap in the TQFE as currently delivered as well as in the draft guidance, as we will highlight throughout this response. We argue that the guidance must be adapted to better reflect our national goals and priorities.

Some of the policies, strategies and developments that indicate these national goals and priorities include:

General

- National Performance Framework
- National Strategy of Economic Transformation
- Wellbeing and Sustainable Development (Scotland) Bill (in development)
- Circular Economy Bill

Education specific

- Withers Review
- Climate Emergency Skills Action Plan
- SQA: Learning for sustainability integrated across refreshed units and the Next Gen HN qualifications
- Learning for Sustainability Action Plan – 3-18 settings & Curriculum for Excellence entitlement to Learning for Sustainability for all learners

The current model of provision does not address this range of issues representatively of the national developments, which is why we argue that changes need to be made to the guidance. These suggestions are based on focus groups that were held with college practitioners and university TQFE providers from seven institutions across Scotland.

3.1 Statutory requirements

Bullet point 6: “the procedures that are in place to enhance the growth and development of the programme, including reflecting new or growing national educational priorities. ”

Learning for Sustainability (Lfs) is a growing national educational priority (see SQA integrating sustainability in all new qualifications and the NextGen HN programme, the development of the Lfs Action Plan for 3-18 Learning Settings, Withers report).

Yet, for the lecturers we consulted with, who were graduates of, or current TQFE students at, University of Aberdeen and University of Stirling, neither sustainability generally nor Lfs was addressed during their programme iteration.

For example, a lecturer currently undertaking the TQFE (graduating this year) stated that she had not actually encountered the term sustainability in her programme. When we subsequently explained the concepts of sustainability and Lfs, she could point to several parts of her practice that address sustainability issues. She explained that these sustainability-focussed activities were driven by the sustainability ethos of her institution, rather than what she learned in the TQFE. She expressed she would have appreciated guidance around the terminology and importance of sustainability in the TQFE to better understand the relevance of her practice to national goals.

Tutors and curriculum managers from different colleges reflected this: They felt that staff that had undertaken the TQFE programme did not have knowledge of sustainability. This is substantiated by research such as that undertaken by CDN in Scotland as part of the Workforce Survey (see for example pp 28-32 in the 2022 report). One college curriculum manager stated adding training around sustainability into the TQFE was “a no brainer” and this would address existing gaps in lecturer knowledge around sustainability.

This clearly indicates that Lfs, a growing national educational priority, has not been integrated into the TQFE. Accreditation guidance should ensure that such educational priorities are addressed by institutions who provide the TQFE programme to close this gap – for example through the suggestions in the following sections.

3.2 Professional values

Bullet point 2: “an outline of how the Standards are connected to, explored and elaborated upon during the course of the programme.”

Sustainability is explicitly mentioned in two of the lecturer standards (1.2.5 and 2.3.5). Yet all our interviewed college practitioners (TQFE undertaken at Stirling and Aberdeen) mentioned that the TQFE does not equip programme participants with even basic understanding of sustainability. They had not heard the term used or explained in the programme despite it being in the Professional Standards. This points to an imbalance or lack of consistent approach of how the standards are addressed as part of the TQFE.

Proposed change to the guidance:

Clarify that all standards should be explored by students at least at a superficial level and terminology and importance of standards should be addressed. More enquiry-based methods can then allow the deeper engagement with a selection of the standards, as is currently common practice.

3.4 Programme design

Generally, feedback suggested that both university and college practitioners valued the general enquiry-based nature of TQFE programmes. However, college practitioners cautioned that this often led to an incomplete understanding of important teaching issues. The programme should also be highlighting key concepts that lecturers need to be aware of (including environmental and social issues, from climate change to neurodiversity). Not all concepts can, or should, be touched on in depth, but a broader understanding should be developed through explicit training that provides at least a basic overview of the issues. College practitioners argued that the guidance should encourage this and criticised that this is currently not the case. Specifically regarding sustainability, a university practitioner involved in the delivery of the TQFE programme addressed that “it would be really good to look at programme design specifically; like, how can we make sure sustainability is in there?”

Another university practitioner stated that “care must be taken to ensure any CPD does not become a compliance based approach but seeks to empower colleagues to address issues of sustainability equitably with other inclusive practices.” This highlights the importance of an integrated approach to social and environmental issues.

Regarding existing points in the guidance, we propose the following changes:

Bullet point 1: The guidance states that submissions should demonstrate “the application of the Professional Standards for College Lecturers.” – see previous suggestion around the incomplete coverage of standards. A similar change could be made to this paragraph.

Bullet point 5: “an outline of how the programme is designed to develop and promote equality and diversity and empowers students to adopt these principles in practice.”

Equality and diversity are addressed and highlighted here, yet other related issues that are closely interconnected with equality and diversity, and the wider social justice agenda, are omitted. This partial requirement around equality and diversity stands opposed to the overall range of issues and national priorities that educational and non-educational policies and developments address (see beginning of response to this question)

We do not propose that the TQFE programme should, or can, cover all of these issues in depth. However, we argue that creating an understanding of the complexity and connectedness of social, environmental, and economic issues is important.

Proposed change to the guidance - addition under 3.4:

(Submissions should provide) “an outline of how the programme supports students to develop an understanding of the breadth and connectedness of social, environmental, and economic issues, to support their learners in making responsible decisions to contribute to a fairer, greener Scotland.”

Bullet point 6: “an outline of how the programme prepares students to work with a wide and diverse range of learners, with a specific focus on meeting learners’ needs.”

One key learner need is to develop resilience, agency and self-efficacy around tackling social and environmental issues, as evidenced by recent research (one example is the 2023 report by Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health: 49% of 16-25 year olds in the UK were either very worried or extremely worried about climate change).

Specifically regarding environmental sustainability, one interviewed college practitioner shared: “it’s frustrating for our students, because they hear [about the environmental crises] and they’re stressed, but it also adds to their mental health load... they don’t feel empowered. Our jobs as educators is to make them feel empowered.”

Our interviews highlight that currently, TQFE does not equip lecturers to support students to meet their needs. In the future, accredited institutions should ensure that the TQFE programme support lecturers to empower their students to take action around issues that are important to them, including sustainability issues. Training around this should form a part of the TQFE, and therefore should be considered to be added into the accreditation guidance.

Proposed change to the guidance:

“an outline of how the programme prepares students to work with a wide and diverse range of learners, with a specific focus on meeting learners’ needs and building the skills, knowledge and agency to address issues that are important to them.”

3.5 Content of the programme

Bullet point 1: “an outline of how students are supported to develop an understanding of educational literature to underpin their practice, in areas such as: Educational theory; Developing positive relationships.”

Feedback from college practitioners strongly suggested that the guidance should be more explicit on “educational theory” to encourage (1) critical engagement with the theories and (2) a more practical focus.

(1): As one college practitioner phrased it: “[Educational theory] is so broad, I think it needs to be more specific. (...) Critiquing educational theory as well, not just learning the theory, thinking about it, deep learning, implications of these theories for your practice, the ethics, the social justice, the sustainability, dealing with behaviours, neurodiversity”

This need for more critical engagement with theories was also reflected in the perspectives of university practitioners, who highlighted the importance of sustainability: “We need to examine the assumptions and key beliefs that drive a lot of practices and thinking. And the sustainability agenda is vital.”

Furthermore, consulted practitioners suggested that pedagogical methods and ethos needs to change in order to adapt to our current fast-paced societies. Information is always available, yet not always reliable, and often changing. Lecturers will not always be able to know more than the student:

“We need to change the rhetoric – it’s OK that we sometimes know less than the students, we can be the facilitators, (...) being honest with our students that we are in the learning process with them. For staff we need to make them feel comfortable in not knowing all the answers, and helping the students

to find the answers and critiquing that information in the world.”

(2) College practitioners perceived a lack of application of theory to practice: “[TQFE needs to] get more specific on the things that an educator needs to understand – that is not just the theories, but the application of theory into practice and applying it to different issues.”

In one specific example, this overly theoretical focus had resulted in poor performance in a TQFE candidate’s job interview for a pre-approved post, as one curriculum manager reported: “When she came to interview, she was just talking about theory, and she wasn’t giving us anything that was demonstrating that she knew how to actually use it tangibly (...) if there had been a more practical focus earlier, she may have been able to secure a preapproved post earlier, and demonstrate [the application of theories in practice] earlier, but unfortunately she couldn’t, and I think some of that may have been to do with the structure of the TQFE.”

Proposed change to the guidance:

“an outline of how students are supported to develop a critical understanding of educational literature and relate this to their practice, in areas such as: Educational theory; The role of contemporary social and environmental justice issues in for college learners; Developing positive relationships”

Bullet point 3: “an outline of how students are supported to develop an understanding of current national policy and to make a positive contribution.” This requirement currently is not fulfilled by all TQFE providers. As highlighted previously, not all current TQFE programmes develop an understanding of the national social, environmental, and economic sustainability policies and ambitions, despite these being key national and educational priorities. This may impede candidates to make a positive contribution to these agendas.

Policies and priorities are changing regularly, and obviously not all policies could be listed explicitly in the guidance. However, we argue that an understanding of sustainability needs to become a part of every TQFE student’s experience to ensure these policies, some of which are listed at the beginning of this response, are on their radar.

To achieve this coherently across different TQFE programme providers, the development of this understanding must be included in the guidance.

3.9 Assessment

Bullet point 3: “an outline of the range of assessment methods used to measure student’s progress, including information about teaching observations.”

College practitioners’ feedback suggested that this range of assessment methods must be balanced to ensure meaningful learning alongside the development of academic skills. A key barrier in the current programme, according to college practitioners, is that too much time and resources are spent on technical aspects of academic writing (formatting essays, utilising referencing systems). Practitioners highlighted that academic writing skills need to be developed, and essays are a valid way to do this. However, essays need to be balanced out with other forms of assessment that allow for engagement and discussion to enable meaningful learning that practitioners can relate to practice.

As one practitioner supporting TQFE candidates phrased it: “TQFE needs to look at how it’s assessed, so that it is more about the engagement with the content and real deep thinking (...) rather than, can you write an essay and use Harvard referencing. I spend hours trying to support my staff doing [Harvard referencing] instead of the stuff that’s the most impactful in the classroom after they finish TQFE. (...) It shouldn’t be about the way it looks and how the referencing comes across”.

The University of Strathclyde’s TQFE model was mentioned as a positive example of achieving more meaningful learning and methods, and as having had a positive impact on other programmes becoming more creative about assessment methods as well.

Proposed change to the guidance:

“an outline of the range of assessment methods used to measure student’s progress, including information about teaching observations, and how these methods are balanced to ensure both academic skills development as well as meaningful learning and relation to practice.”

Bullet point 4: “an outline of how peer and self-assessment is modelled in the programme, including how this supports the learning experience of students.”

Practitioners highlighted the importance of learning from others as part of the TQFE: “sharing with your colleagues, that’s the main thing of the TQFE that comes out with my candidates. That’s the goal, hearing from others and learning from others.” We therefore propose that the guidance should be more explicit about peer and self-assessment as key aspects of learning.

Proposed change to the guidance:

“an outline of how peer and self-assessment is modelled as a key component in the programme, including how this supports the learning experience of students.”

Further questions

3 Do you have any further comments that you consider to be relevant to the Scottish Ministers’ determination?

Please give us your views:

Our focus groups with college practitioners highlighted significant gaps in the TQFE supporting lecturers to understand and integrate sustainability (understood here as the interconnectedness between social, environmental and economic factors, and the need to act responsibly to meet needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs) into initial teacher education. This stands in contrast to sustainability being a key theme in national priorities strategies as well as educational policies. While the programme by the University of Strathclyde was highlighted as an excellent example of delivering a meaningful learning experience that included sustainability, other institutions seem to lack this in their delivery of the TQFE programme.

This also poses the risk to fall behind developments in other devolved nations. For example, the Department for Education’s Sustainability and climate change strategy for the education and children’s services systems cuts across all education sectors has the vision of the United Kingdom as the world-leading education sector in sustainability and climate change by 2030. Developments based on this strategy include the increased prioritising of sustainability as part of learning and teaching in the FE sector. Through integrating sustainability / Learning for Sustainability (LfS) into the TQFE and the accreditation guidance, the Scottish FE sector has a chance to keep pace and not fall behind the curve.

University practitioners involved in the delivery of the TQFE programme shared some nuanced views on the integration of LfS. Some institutions see embedding sustainability into the TQFE as being key: “I think it should be part and parcel of what we’re doing because it’s not a ‘bolt-on’, it’s learning ‘for’

sustainability. It's not learning 'about' it."

On the other hand, university practitioners expressed concerns around needing clearer guidance and indicators around sustainability: "The GTCS need to make clear their expectations as part of the accreditation process so that we all know the target that we're going to meet, because at the moment I would find it difficult to comment on how sustainable our programme is because I don't know what criteria specifically you would be measuring it against." We recommend to collaborate with relevant sector bodies and organisations to develop a more clearly outlined approach to ensuring the integration of LfS, and sustainability more generally. These organisations include EAUC Scotland and Learning for Sustainability Scotland, as well as relevant sector bodies such as SQA and CDN. Guidance to support lecturers to understand sustainability and integrate LfS into their practice is available and consistently further improved and developed, and can therefore be drawn upon to support the integration of LfS in the TQFE.

Last but not least, integrating LfS more strongly into the TQFE would be in line with developments on the 3-18 curriculum level, and LfS being a golden thread through recent educational reports such as the Muir, Hayward, and Withers reports. These reports highlight the emphasis young people place on social and environmental issues and their demand for learning and empowerment to take action.

As one university practitioner phrased it: "It's about future-proofing: as things move forward, your 'client group' will be coming through with [sustainability] capabilities based on the fact that they're doing things like maths, geography, history, whatever else they're doing in secondary, also integrated ESD [ESD, Education for Sustainable Development, is the international conceptualisation of LfS] in their Highers."

About you

What is your name?

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Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

Organisation

What is your organisation?

Organisation:
EAUC Scotland

The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

Publish response with name

We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Yes

I confirm that I have read the privacy policy and consent to the data I provide being used as set out in the policy.

I consent

Evaluation

Please help us improve our consultations by answering the questions below. (Responses to the evaluation will not be published.)

Matrix 1 - How satisfied were you with this consultation?:
Slightly dissatisfied

Please enter comments here.:

The questions were quite vague and difficult to answer unless people specifically engaged with the guidance in depth. This inhibited responses from FE practitioners, who this consultation is highly relevant to, but who do not have the capacity to engage with the draft guidance document in detail.

Matrix 1 - How would you rate your satisfaction with using this platform (Citizen Space) to respond to this consultation?:
Slightly satisfied

Please enter comments here.: