Annex B: Guidance of the Self-Evaluation and Action Plan

What is the purpose of the SEAP and how will it be used?

1. In academic year 2024-25, the SEAP will replace the annual report and statement of assurance on Institution-Led Review for universities. It will also replace the Evaluative Report and Enhancement Plan (EREP) which formed part of the quality arrangements in colleges informed by the 'How Good is our College' framework, but was paused during COVID. For both colleges and universities, the SEAP will replace the learning and quality aspects of the outcome agreement process.

2. The SEAP is designed for use by institutions (including Governance committees, staff and students), the SFC and the QAA.

Institutions

3. The SEAP will:

   - Support institutions to reflect on annual institutional quality assurance and enhancement activities and outcomes, including on progress made since their last external review, and to identify and plan for key strategic enhancements, which will be articulated through the action plan.

   - Provide institutional oversight to:

     o Ensure that the Accountable Officer is sighted on, and has ownership of, the quality of the student experience, academic standards and academic integrity. Only once the Accountable Officer is satisfied with the thoroughness and effectiveness of the evaluation and action-plan should it be submitted to SFC.

     o Enable the institution's governing body to be sighted on the key priorities for the provision and enhancement of learning and teaching.

   - Demonstrate to staff and students how their contribution to the activities that impact the quality assurance and enhancement of learning, teaching and the student experience are collated and used to document and drive strategic enhancement within the institution.

Scottish Funding Council

4. The SEAP will:

- Form the evidence base for individual institutions in relation to the high-quality learning and teaching outcome of the Outcomes Framework and Assurance Model and will also contribute to other outcomes of the framework, e.g., 'Student interests, access and success' and 'Skills and work-based learning' outcomes.

- Support annual institutional engagement with SFC and, along with the wider aspects of the TQEF, provide SFC with assurance on the effective use and impact of public investment to deliver high-quality learning provision.

- Contribute to the identification of key themes arising from quality assurance and enhancement activities for consideration by and dissemination to key stakeholders across the sector.

Quality Assurance Agency

5. The SEAP will:

- Be used as part of the evidence base for the TQER.

- Be used to inform the QAA of annual institutional progress with the outcomes of the TQER and engagement with enhancement activities, including the STEP.

- Support the Institutional Liaison Meetings with the QAA.

Self-Evaluation and Action Plan Guidance

Scope

6. All SFC-funded activity (credit-bearing and non-credit bearing) falls within the scope of the SEAP for universities and colleges, however there will be differences between institutions in terms of the extent to which non-credit bearing activity will feature in the SEAP. Institutions will not be required to include in their SEAP, details of non-SFC funded non-credit bearing activity. It is however, recognised that all provision within an institution will be subject to the same/similar quality assurance and enhancement processes and institutions should focus on what the priority areas are within the context of the institution, when describing good practice or priority areas for development or enhancement, as this may have relevance to TQER.

General

7. **Overview**: It is recognised that quality processes are both assurance and self-evaluative exercises and the SEAP is designed to complement and support the self-evaluation approach rather than be a separate exercise. The SEAP reports on an institution's existing self-evaluation activities (for example, annual monitoring and subject and support services ILQR), reflecting on the outcomes of institutional quality arrangements, supporting data and evidence and the resulting priority areas of focus and impact. This culminates in a concise, high-level summary of themes and an associated action plan. Institutions may find it helpful to treat the self-evaluation and in particular the action plan as live documents that can be revisited and updated throughout the year.

8. **Link to TQER**: The SEAP and the supporting data and evidence used to prepare it, will form part of the Advanced Information Set that will contribute to TQER. Institutions are therefore advised to clearly reference any evidence that is used as the basis for the SEAP and to ensure these evidence sources are kept readily available to support preparation, and/or submission, for their TQER. The supporting documentation **should not** be submitted with the SEAP.

9. **Institutions undergoing external peer review**: there will be no requirement for institutions undergoing review to submit a SEAP in the same academic year (e.g. if an institution is being reviewed in AY2025-26, then they will not be required to submit a SEAP describing the outcomes of AY 2024-25). This will enable institutions to focus on preparing for the review and developing their Strategic Impact Analysis. SFC will draw assurance on the quality of learning and teaching from the outcome of the external review.

10. **Length and focus**: The SEAP should be a concise distillation of key high-level themes from the previous academic year. It should **not** include descriptions of processes or extracts of policy or other documents held by the institution. Institutions should use a layout and format that suits their context, however, the indicative word count for the self-evaluation element should be in the region of 5,000 words (excluding the action plan). The action plan should be of a length that suits the needs of the institution and incorporates any actions arising from the last external review.

11. **Students as Partners**: Institutions should, in the longer term, plan to engage students as partners in the preparation of this annual SEAP and in the monitoring of the implementation of the actions. Student partnership is a key aspect of the TQEF, which is expected to develop and mature over time. Institutions will be encouraged to consult the sparqs Student Partnership ambition statement and features and accompanying resources as they are developed, when considering how to address this.

12. **Submission**: The final document should be submitted to SFC by the 30 November (or the

first working day in December, where the 30 November falls on a weekend or bank holiday). It should be a reflection on the previous academic year, with scope to add any recent significant information.

13. **Statement of Assurance**: The final document must be reviewed and signed off by the Accountable Officer in advance of submission. It is not a requirement that the SEAP be reviewed and approved by the Governing Body prior to submission, however the SEAP should be shared with the Governing Body to support their oversight of quality assurance and enhancement. It is for the institution to determine when to do so based on their own governance schedules. The SEAP should include the formal annual statement of assurance to SFC. The statement of assurance is included as Annex B. The Accountable Officer must sign the statement of assurance and indicate when it was endorsed.

Self-Evaluation Narrative

Introduction

14. The self-evaluation component of the report focuses on the Principles of the TQEF that have been co-created and are jointly owned with the sector.

15. For each Principle, the institution is expected to provide their evaluation of what has gone well (since the last SEAP or other evaluation), progress against and impact of previously identified actions and areas for further enhancement based on the data and evidence gathered **during the academic year**.

16. The self-evaluation should focus on in-year progress and be a **summary** that highlights the areas of focus at an institutional level and contextualises the actions that the institution intends to take to address weaknesses or achieve further enhancements. Alongside students, the summary should also (where relevant) include reference to the role of externals, for example: employers, schools, academic partners, etc., in evaluation.

17. All aspects of an institution's provision (i.e., all SCQF levels and modes of delivery) should be self-evaluated, but the content of the SEAP should focus on the outcomes of quality assurance processes, themes arising and strengths or areas for enhancement at an institutional level. Discussions with SFC based on the SEAP submission will focus on the outcomes associated with funded provision.

18. The report **must not** include descriptions of routine quality assurance processes. The institution should outline significant changes that have occurred during the past year and/or areas that are being enhanced or developed (or where appropriate) are a continuation of an initiative that was started previously and continues to be a focus in

the coming year.

Evaluation of the Principles

19. Within the guidance for each Principle there are prompts that institutions may find helpful in undertaking their evaluation and identifying areas of good practice and areas for enhancement or development. This is supported by further detail in the SEAP Guidance Annex C for the 'Learning, teaching and assessment' and the 'Supporting student success' principles.

20. The Principles diagram, includes key activities and sources of data/evidence that have been identified by the sector and mapped to each principle. Extracts of each principle have been included in this guidance and should be used for reference. It is not expected that institutions evaluate every point. Institutions should consider what data and evidence is appropriate to their own context and best highlights key areas of focus for enhancement or development in the current year.

21. Although there are separate 'Data and evidence' and 'Externality' Principles, these **do not** require separate sections within the evaluation as they underpin the four headline principles. The relevant data and evidence should be set out by institutions in relation to each Principle as per the guidance provided and the outcomes of external activities and feedback, should inform the evaluation of the relevant Principles.

Headline Principles

Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment

Excellence in learning, teaching & assessment

- Academic standards and awarding
- Strategic leadership of learning and teaching
- Curriculum planning, design and delivery
- Learning environment, resources and technologies
- Professional development
- Currency of learning and teaching
- Peer review and evaluation of learning, teaching and assessment
- Innovation in learning, teaching & assessment

22. In evaluating 'Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment', consideration should be given to the **outcomes** of institutional quality assurance processes associated with learning, teaching and assessment (e.g., external feedback, annual monitoring of all provision including Transnational Education [TNE] and work-based learning, student

outcomes, appeals and student conduct/ academic integrity etc.) and the evidence they provide to address the following questions at an institutional level:

- What strengths and areas for enhancement or development have been identified as a result of the analysis of student outcomes and evaluation data (SEAP Guidance Annex C)?

- What strengths and areas for enhancement or development have been identified as a result of external independent advice and feedback from, for example: PSRB activity, External Examiners, External Verification activity and External Stakeholders?

23. In considering the wider evidence (SEAP Guidance **Annex C**), has the institution identified any additional specific strengths that have been achieved, or areas for enhancement or development in relation to learning, teaching and assessment.

24. Institutions should encourage staff to utilise the sparqs Student Learning Experience Model in the underpinning activities that contribute to this principle and in particular outcomes from discussions with students based on the reflective questions associated with the following four building blocks i.e. Curriculum; Resources, Environment and Technology; Learning and Teaching Delivery and Assessment and Feedback.

Supporting student success

25. In evaluating 'Supporting student success' consideration should be given to the **outcomes** of institutional quality assurance processes associated with supporting students to succeed and the themes arising from the range of internal quality assurance processes including professional services review along with any external feedback that may be relevant. Consideration should be given to the following key questions:

- What strengths and areas for enhancement or development, relevant to student support have been identified because of the analysis of student outcomes and evaluation data (SEAP Guidance **Annex C**)?

- What (if any) specific strengths or areas for enhancement or development have been identified (during this year) in relation to:

  - Student transitions?

  - Student support (including wellbeing and inclusion)?

  - Student community?

  - Employability, skills development and lifelong learning?

26. Institutions should encourage staff involved in providing services to support students to utilise the Student Learning Experience Model when evaluating their provision and in particular the outcomes of discussions with students based on the reflective questions that relate to "Progression and Achievement", Community and Belonging", "Support and Guidance" and "Organisation and Management" building blocks.

Enhancement and quality culture

Enhancement & Quality Culture

- Institution wide culture of assurance, improvement and enhancement
- Institution-led review/activity and action planning
- External institutional peer review
- Sector enhancement activity
- Impact of collaboration
- External outlook – globally responsive

27. This section should include a focus on external peer-led review, progress with follow-up activity and engagement with sectoral enhancement activity. The key messages from external review should be distilled to inform this self-evaluation and actions arising from external review should be incorporated into the action plan. In subsequent years, this section should also include an update on in-year progress with the outcomes of external review.

28. In evaluating 'Enhancement and quality culture', the institution should ask itself:

- How has the institution addressed areas for development/ recommendations arising from the last external (peer) review?

- What (if any) changes the institution has made as result of external benchmarking (e.g. to the UK Quality Code or other sector reference points) or as a result of other external feedback (e.g. Awarding Body or PSRB outcomes), that have helped the institution manage the quality of its provision?

- How effectively has the institution engaged in sectoral enhancement activity and what impact has this had?

- What (if any) enhancements have been achieved through collaborative (local, regional, national or international) activity?

Student engagement and partnership

29. In completing this section, institutions should identify key areas of strength or areas for enhancement or development that focus on developing student partnership (at local and strategic levels) and promoting student engagement, including student representation and responding to the student voice.

30. In evaluating 'Student engagement and partnership', institutions should utilise the Student Partnership ambition statement and features and the Student Learning Experience (in particular the outcomes of discussions with students based on the reflective questions that relate to 'Student Partnership' building block) to inform their reflections.

31. Where the outcomes of student engagement (e.g., themes arising from student voice mechanisms, including internal and external surveys) have informed changes to other principles (e.g., learning, teaching and assessment or supporting student success), this should be covered under those principles to avoid duplication.

32. Institutions should include a high-level narrative, evaluating any key changes (or ongoing trends that need to be addressed) in their internal and/or external student surveys e.g., National Student Survey (NSS) and/or Student Support and Engagement Survey (SSES) outcomes, compared to the previous year. Where institutions participate in the Post-Graduate Taught Experience (PTES) and Post-Graduate Research Experience Survey

(PRES), these should be included too.

33. Examples of activities that showcase student partnership and progress towards the Student Partnership ambition statement and features, would be beneficial in this section, but should not duplicate content that has already been included elsewhere.

Underpinning Principles

Externality

34. Evaluation of External institutional peer review and sector reference points/requirements should be embedded on the "Enhancement and quality culture" principle and feedback from external specialists/experts, should be included according to the principles that it is most relevant to.

Data and evidence

35. When addressing each Principle, the institution should reflect on what key data and evidence they have drawn upon to evaluate themselves. This can include data that forms part of the annual returns to SFC/HESA etc. but may also include their own internal data and evidence.

36. Institutions are encouraged to use their own data when considering the specific data measures for the SEAP, as the timing of the submission will not align with the official publication of data. It is recognised that this may result in some variations but these can be discussed as part of the ongoing engagement with SFC. The SEAP should demonstrate an institution's ability to evaluate its own data and identify strengths and areas for

enhancement and development. In doing this evaluation the institutions should consider their own internal benchmarks and may find it useful to compare with sector benchmarks where these are available.

37. Guidance about the key data measures has been included in the SEAP Guidance **Annex C**, however institutions are **not** expected to include reference to all the measures listed. It is for individual institutions to determine which measures they should include based on their evaluation and the resulting strengths or areas for enhancement or development, identified as a result.

38. Where an institution opts to include narrative about key data measure(s) under a principle, it should quote the key institution level outcome for the academic year and (where appropriate) a brief commentary on the **three-year** trend associated with the measure to demonstrate the underpinning evidence that has led to the identification of the strength or area for enhancement or development.

39. The underlying data and evidence does **not** need to be provided with the SEAP submission, but will be expected to be made available to SFC on request or to the QAA as part of the external review process. As noted in the introduction it is recommended that the institution cross reference to the underpinning source of evidence and ensure these sources are readily accessible and to support discussions with SFC and/or preparations for external review.

Action Plan

40. The action plan should be a consolidation of the planned institution level enhancement activities arising from the self-evaluation. It is recognised that institutions may already have their own action plans in place, and it may be appropriate for that action plan to be submitted with the self-evaluation. However, a template is included as an annex to this guidance to support institutions.

41. The template aligns with the action plan that will be used by the QAA as part of the TQER and associated follow-up stages. The intention being that institutions can incorporate the plan created following future TQERs into the SEAP and ongoing progress can be monitored through the SEAP submission and ILMs, thereby avoiding unnecessary duplication.

42. When using the template below, the actions should include the following detail:

- The principle and planned area for enhancement, recognising that there may be more than one area for enhancement under a specific principle and an area of enhancement may support more than one principle.

- The action to be undertaken and the planned impact or outcomes of this action. The actions should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely.

- The milestones and associated target dates for implementation, and

43. Who is the responsible or lead person for the action (this should be set out as post titles rather than individuals' names).

SEAP Guidance Annex A: Action Plan Template

Action Plan 20XX – 20XX

The plan should link directly to the institutional evaluation of the Principles and should prioritise strategic actions arising from the narrative. In addition, the actions arising from commendations or recommendations identified through external review, should also be embedded into this action plan to ensure alignment with overall institutional priorities and to streamline reporting processes. This action plan should be a live document utilised by the institution to focus on strategic quality assurance and enhancement activities on an ongoing basis. The timeline for the completion of actions should be suited to the nature of the activity and the context of the institution.

The guidance, included in blue font in the table below should be deleted prior to submission.

Principle and Area for enhancement or development.	Action(s) and planned impact/ outcomes	Milestone (s/ target date(s), continuing/ carried forward (c/f)	Responsible/ Lead
Each Principle may have more than one area for enhancement or development.	*The actions should reflect the milestones or individual process steps that need to be taken to achieve the planned outcome The actions should be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely.*	*It is not expected that all actions will be completed in one year. If an action is continuing or carried forward from a previous year, this should be noted here.*	*Use post titles here rather than individual names*
Example: *Supporting student success*	***Example:*** *School managers develop plans for a systematic approach to providing accurate and timely data to programme managers, and ensure all staff are supported in using this data effectively.* *Outcome: Provide quick insights to better inform programme managers on areas for enhancement*	***Example:*** *introduction of new dashboard and induction programme with in-year data on student progression,*	***Example:*** *Academic Development Committee*

		withdrawals, and attainment by December 2024	
	Add rows as required		

Note: it may be useful to include a key to expand any acronyms used in the action plan

SEAP Guidance Annex B: Statement of Assurance

Statement of Assurance: *As the Accountable Officer for [name of institution], I confirm that I have considered the institution's arrangements for the management of academic standards and the quality of the learning experience for AY [year just elapsed], including the scope and impact of these. I further confirm that I am satisfied that the institution has adequate and effective arrangements to maintain standards and to assure and enhance the quality of its provision. I can therefore provide assurance to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) that the academic standards and the quality of the learning provision at this institution continue to meet the requirements set by SFC.*

Signature:

Accountable Officer (Name):   **Date:**

SEAP Guidance Annex C: Supporting detail relating to the principles

1. Key outcomes and evaluation data to be considered at an institutional level should include those listed in this annex, however there is no expectation that institutions should include all the measures or points listed below. Institutions should only include those where there have been specific changes that have led to developments or enhancements.

Excellence in Learning and Teaching

2. Key outcomes

   - Recruitment, admissions, retention, achievement and progression data.

   - Numbers of students on placements or work-based programmes.

   - For degree level provision, undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research degree outcomes.

3. Wider aspects of learning, teaching and assessment that could be considered include the following:

   - The maintenance of academic standards.

   - Curriculum planning and delivery, i.e., to ensure that its curriculum offer meets student and employer needs.

   - Plans to make any changes to the curriculum (i.e., new course provision or course closures) and what measures are in place to manage these changes.

   - The maintenance and enhancement of the learning environment (i.e., the physical and digital environment).

   - Professional development, peer review and evaluation of learning, teaching.

   - Innovation in learning, teaching and assessment that the institution wishes to identify and share.

Supporting Student Success

4. Key outcomes

   - Performance against Commission for Widening Access (CoWA) targets.

   - National equalities outcomes.

   - Protected characteristics data.

- Graduate outcomes/ student destinations.

- Complaints.