



**Impact of institutional audits on programme
review and teaching and learning**

Norman Sharp

Director

QAA Scotland

n.sharp@qaa.ac.uk

Overview

- Key contextual factors
- Impact on programme review
- Impact on Teaching and Learning

KEY CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

Why? To make life better for students

How? Create quality not compliance culture

What?

- psychological: everyone's business
- management/quality framework

Impact on programme review

- Systematically stronger
- More effective institutional ownership of quality – sustains quality culture
- More over-arching development
- Linked to systematic institutional planning of quality enhancement

Requirements for programme review in Scotland

- A maximum cycle of 6 years to cover all subjects
- Must involve students
- Must involve externals
- Must produce reports which are available to QAA Scotland – discussed with QAA annually and subject to audit

Impact on teaching and learning

- External evaluation – impact promising (some comments attached)
- Whole focus of institutional review is the enhancement of the student learning experience (Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR))
- Good practice disseminated across sector

Impact on teaching and learning contd.

Probably most important – ELIR picks up challenges for the sector in which development can be shared in **Enhancement themes – development activity shared across the country.**

Recent examples -

- Assessment
- The first year experience – developing autonomous learners
- Research/teaching links – developing graduate attributes

Some questions to consider

- Should our focus be to assure or enhance quality or are the two inextricably linked?
- Does externality inevitably lead to compliance?
- What are the challenges in developing a quality culture in institutions?

Some findings of the external evaluation

'The ... (Lancaster and Open University) evaluation... clearly states that *'the approach to quality that we review here is ambitious, distinctive and, so far, successful.'* The evaluators described the approach being taken as *'a culture shift – away from top-down compliance-inducing processes to participative and critical supported self-evaluation: away from audit and towards improvement... away from mechanistic models based solely on inputs and outcomes and towards more sensitive other forms of evidence of cultural change, while maintaining rigour and challenge.'*

'institutions are increasingly willing to lay out areas of imperfect practice and publicly consider ways in which they could improve on them in coming years.' They noted that *'the quality enhancement framework (QEF) is distinctive, the creation of the sector and the sponsoring agencies. There is a sense that it is owned by the higher education 'community'.... This is a policy implementation strategy that has at its heart the ideal of consensual development, the evidence on which suggests that it has the potential to be strong, appropriate and effective theory of change in this context.'*

‘The Scottish QEF is distinctive... We note evidence of international interest in it and... the QEF has evoked widespread global interest. We see value in sustaining, even extending these activities. The prospect of direct involvement of the international voice in quality processes has been discussed and has widespread support.’