EFFECTIVE SELF-EVALUATION REPORTING IN SCOTLAND'S COLLEGES

A REPORT BY HM INSPECTORATE OF EDUCATION FOR THE SCOTTISH FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING COUNCIL

October 2007

Contents

Foreword

The publication of *Effective Self-evaluation Reporting in Scotland's Colleges* follows the publication in August 2007 of the final report of the Joint Quality Review Group (JQRG) of the Scottish Funding Council to Council members.[1] The JQRG report:

> 'sets out the Joint Quality Review Group's final proposals for quality enhancement and assurance processes in the college and university sectors.'

The overall model for the quality system proposed in the JQRG report is based on the three key principles of:

- high quality learning across all provision;
- student engagement; and
- a culture of quality and continuous improvement.

It is intended that these be delivered through three key areas of activity which build on the effective practices which already exist within both the university and college sectors. These are:

- college and university-led evaluation;
- external review; and
- Scotland-wide enhancement activities.

The JQRG report places considerable emphasis on the role of institution-led quality processes.

> 'Institutional culture is the most important element in our system for enhancing and assuring quality. A pervasive and embedded commitment to reflecting on and improving what institutions do, how they support learners, how they engage with students, and the standards they maintain, is essential to achieving our goals for quality. External review cannot and should not take the place of institutional evaluation, reflection and action. It is essential that every aspect of our approach continues to emphasise the responsibility, ownership and accountability for quality that falls to institutions.'

The findings and recommendations of *Effective Self-evaluation Reporting in Scotland's Colleges* are central to discussions in the college sector about how to carry out self-evaluation as effectively as possible, and further develop effective institutional quality cultures, one of the key principles of the JQRG report. The findings and recommendations should therefore be considered in tandem with the JQRG report's focus on the role of internal quality enhancement and assurance systems in meeting the needs of learners. Its findings and recommendations will contribute to the consultation process on the JQRG report, due to be completed by Spring 2008.

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[1] Final report from the Joint Quality Review Group to Council, 2007, www.sfc.ac.uk/about/new_about_council_papers/about_papers_17aug07/SFC_07_113_ANNEX.pdf - 2007-08-30

1. Introduction

Self-evaluation is one of the cornerstones of quality in Scotland's colleges. It is a key process used by colleges to improve continuously the services they provide for learners and other stakeholders. Its purpose is to help college staff evaluate evidence in order to identify:

- what they are doing well;
- any weaknesses they need to address: and
- what they have to do to make a good experience for learners even better.

It aims to create a sense of ownership in staff for actions to improve the quality of the services they provide to learners and therefore a greater commitment to ensuring that quality improvement actually does take place.

Self-evaluation is broadly defined to include any process which helps college staff, individually or collectively, to achieve the above aim with input from learners and other stakeholders. It includes activities such as:

- obtaining the views of learners and other stakeholders;
- collating and analysing performance indicators (PIs) for learner outcomes such as retention, achievement, attainment and progression;
- identifying trends and using benchmark information;
- analysing key messages from the external and internal operating environment;
- considering the findings of external and internal moderation and internal audits;
- observing learning and teaching;
- engaging in professional reflection and discussions both formally and informally.

The outcomes of self-evaluation include:

- identification of weaknesses that need to be addressed;
- identification of good practice for dissemination;
- information on the quality of provision for college staff, senior managers and boards of management;
- intelligence that helps college staff and managers to plan for the future.

Self-evaluation is followed by:

- drawing up plans for improvement;
- monitoring the achievement of targets and the impact of actions;
- dissemination and promotion of good practice; and
- giving assurance on the quality of provision, including affirmation and celebration of practice where appropriate.
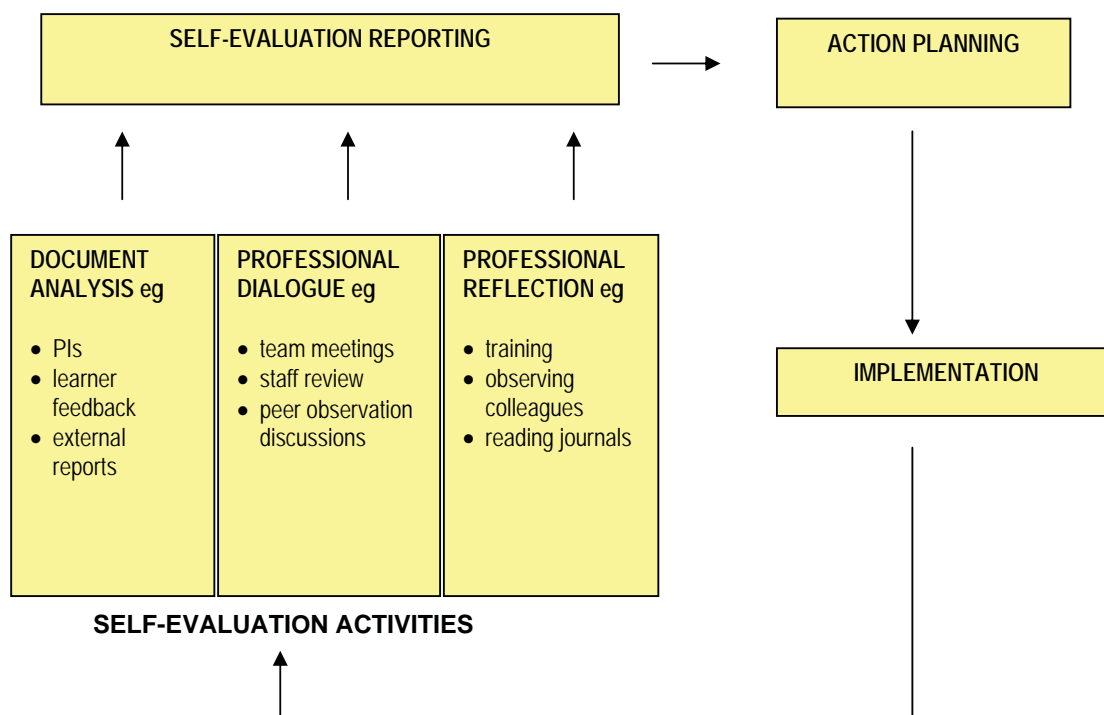
Although college staff carry out and integrate the above activities throughout the year, most are also involved in a more formal self-evaluation reporting process. This process usually takes place annually. Its characteristics are that it is carried out in

teams and it evaluates evidence from the activities listed above against a quality framework. It culminates in a written, graded self-evaluation report which includes a quality improvement action plan. This is the recorded summary of all self-evaluative activities. The different ways colleges carry out this formal process are detailed in section 4. For the purposes of this report we have defined this formal process as **self-evaluation reporting,** and it is the main focus of the report.

The main purpose of this process is still, of course, to facilitate quality improvement in colleges. This includes mechanisms for colleges to enhance quality by identifying and disseminating good practice uncovered through the self-evaluation process. However, the self-evaluation reporting process has an important further purpose. Through the production of self-evaluation reports, it can provide assurance to senior managers and, in some cases, boards of management that services to learners are being properly monitored, evaluated and improved by college staff. Self-evaluation reports are almost always only disseminated within colleges at present. They are made available to HMIE prior to external review but are not routinely disseminated either to external stakeholders or to learners. However, ratification at senior management levels within colleges, together with evaluation by HMIE of the effectiveness of a college's self-evaluation processes provides a degree of assurance to stakeholders that college staff take improvement seriously. The interconnecting roles of quality improvement and quality assurance make self-evaluation reporting a vital component of the interface between organisational capacity building and accountability.

In order to make a distinction between self-evaluation reporting and other ongoing self-evaluation processes which take place outwith the formal one, this report refers to these wider processes as **self-evaluation activities.** Amongst these activities, instances where staff meet and discuss what they have been doing are defined in the report as **professional dialogue**. This includes, for example, team meetings, staff review and development interviews, internal moderation discussions or the conversations which follow peer observation. Finally, the report defines as **professional reflection** the occasions where individual college staff consider the impact of their own performance and use this insight to improve their practice. This might take place, for example, when a member of staff has attended a training session, observed colleagues in action or read a professional journal. There is of course, a clear relationship between professional reflection, professional dialogue, wider self-evaluation activities and the formal self-evaluation reporting process, as the diagram below demonstrates.

THE SELF - EVALUATION CYCLE

| SELF-EVALUATION REPORTING | → | ACTION PLANNING |

DOCUMENT ANALYSIS eg	PROFESSIONAL DIALOGUE eg	PROFESSIONAL REFLECTION eg
• PIs • learner feedback • external reports	• team meetings • staff review • peer observation discussions	• training • observing colleagues • reading journals

| IMPLEMENTATION |

SELF-EVALUATION ACTIVITIES

Colleges carry out self-evaluation reporting in teams. In this report these teams are defined in three groups. **Teaching teams** are those with direct involvement in curriculum delivery, but they may include non-teaching staff. **Support teams** are those which provide all other services within the college. **College management teams** are those involved in college-wide self-evaluation. These teams may include senior and middle managers. The report uses the term **college teams** when all three groups are being referred to.

The publication in 1998 by HMIE of *Quality Matters*: *Quality Improvement through Self-evaluation*,[2] marked the formal beginning of self-evaluation against a quality framework in all of Scotland's colleges, although a draft version had been issued a year before. This publication was expected to lead to colleges carrying out their own internal review through self-evaluation with the same degree of rigour as HMIE. It promoted internal ownership of quality improvement, with HMIE providing an independent, external view of college provision against which colleges could validate their self-evaluation. From 1998, most colleges embarked on self-evaluation by devising procedures that built upon their existing quality processes. Today, self-evaluation is a well-embedded process that involves most college staff in some way. It is carried out as a matter of established practice in curriculum areas, and increasingly, in support areas. Colleges treat it seriously and strive to support and improve it.

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[2] *Quality Matters: Quality Improvement Through Self-evaluation*, (Edinburgh) The Scottish Office, 1998

The HMIE publication, *Improving Scottish Education* (2006)[3] commented:

> 'In recent years most colleges have demonstrated increased maturity in developing and implementing systems and procedures to help deliver effective learning experiences for a wide and expanding range of learners and to meet the needs of society and the economy. Where programme teams have implemented rigorous and well-informed self-evaluation processes, this has often led to improvements in the learner experience. However, weaknesses are still prevalent in the approaches of some programme teams and colleges to quality assurance and improvement activities.'

Currently, HMIE expects self-evaluation reporting to be in place in Scotland's colleges but external review teams do not explicitly seek to test the validity of self-evaluation reports, as happens in some other education review models in Scotland and the rest of the UK.[4] However, HMIE does explicitly compare self-evaluation grades with review grades and provides colleges with written summaries of strengths and weaknesses for all elements reviewed.[5]

This report analyses what different stakeholders within the college sector expect of self-evaluation reporting almost ten years after its inception, and identifies what they believe needs to be in place to make it more effective. It also draws on relevant published reports. It evaluates whether self-evaluation reporting as it is currently carried out in colleges fulfils all these collectively-held expectations and whether it really does help college staff effect substantial improvements in services to learners. It also cites examples of practice that have a positive impact on self-evaluation reporting.

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[3] *Improving Scottish Education,* HMIE 2006
[4] Examples of these models can be found in appendix 1
[5] Analysis of concurrence between HMIE and self-evaluation grades is detailed in appendix 4

2.   Methodology

The report draws on evidence from the analysis of HMIE reports on 29 college reviews that have taken place since January 2005, especially those sections on quality assurance, quality improvement, learning and teaching and learner progress and outcomes. Desk research on reports and literature from the college and higher education institution (HEI) sectors in Scotland and the rest of the UK, and information about other quality systems, formed essential background evidence for the report.

In addition, inspectors visited six colleges and held structured interviews with senior managers, department heads and team leaders, teaching and support staff and learners. Interviews also took place with senior managers in four other colleges. Telephone and face-to-face interviews took place with key representatives from the college and HEI sectors. Self-evaluation reports and other quality documentation collected for college reviews and provided by other colleges were analysed. HMIE held focus group sessions on early messages from this report with representatives from seven out of the ten colleges visited during the fieldwork for the report.   Similar discussions took place with members of the Scottish Further Education Unit (SFEU) *Quality Community of Practice (formerly the Quality Improvement Forum).* A full list of those colleges and organisations consulted is shown in Appendix 2.

3.   Summary of findings

Most learners enjoy a positive learning experience in Scotland's colleges and most achieve their learning aims. Analyses of review reports by HMIE demonstrate that overall the quality of the learner experience is improving, though there are still areas which colleges need to address.

Self-evaluation activities and self-evaluation reporting are well embedded into quality processes in Scotland's colleges. Almost all college staff are familiar with the self-evaluation reporting process and most have been involved with it, especially in teaching teams.

Self-evaluation reporting has a positive impact overall on improvement in services to learners. It has encouraged a culture of reflection and questioning amongst college staff, and underpins a focus on continuous improvement.

Positive attitudes overall to self-evaluation reporting in Scotland's colleges provide a sound basis on which to develop it further and give it even more prominence within quality processes. Almost all colleges are engaged in improving the effectiveness of self-evaluation reporting through involvement of external development agencies or through internal support, training and guidelines. They are also committed to developing skills in professional reflection and professional dialogue.

Self-evaluation reporting is most effective when it builds on and reports the findings and impact of professional dialogue and other self-evaluation activities. Colleges do not always make this linkage well. Self-evaluation reporting is least effective when it is carried out in isolation from these other processes.

When college staff are actively involved in continuously improving provision through ongoing professional dialogue which underpins and runs parallel to self-evaluation reporting, many express the view that professional dialogue has more direct impact on improvement in learning and teaching than formal self-evaluation reporting. Professional dialogue provides college staff with more immediate and private mechanisms for addressing concerns. However, because evidence of these discussions is not generally well documented in self-evaluation reports, opportunities to provide assurance that they are taking place are often missed by colleges.

Most colleges support self-evaluation reporting by providing their teams with robust performance data and by implementing effective monitoring systems. Most provide helpful guidelines and support for self-evaluation reporting and also synchronise self-evaluation reporting cycles and operational planning cycles well.

Over-prescriptive approaches to the use of quality frameworks constrain the capacity of college staff to contextualise self-evaluation reporting, or to generate holistic, innovative approaches to quality improvement.

The quality of self-evaluation reports has generally improved over the last four years, but still varies widely. A few provide very full, well-evidenced evaluations of services

and their impact on learners and include clear action plans with SMART[6] targets. Most, however, are descriptive rather than evaluative and do not analyse evidence rigorously enough. They are insufficiently focused on learning and teaching, retention and attainment, or on team performance. They are also insufficiently clear or detailed. This means that currently, self-evaluation reporting in Scotland's colleges is not always carried out as well as it could be. It also means that many colleges are unable to provide assurance through their self-evaluation reports that all teams are effective at continuously improving their services to learners.

Action planning following self-evaluation reporting is mostly insufficiently detailed and not comprehensive. Most action plan targets are insufficiently specific or measurable. This is particularly evident around learning and teaching, and retention and attainment, and usually results from insufficient identification or evaluation of these issues in the self-evaluation reports.

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[6] Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timebound

4.   How colleges currently carry out self-evaluation reporting

All of Scotland's 43 colleges carry out self-evaluation reporting, in virtually all teaching teams, and, increasingly, in support and college management teams. Each college has devised its own way of carrying out self-evaluation reporting to suit its internal planning cycles and organisational structures.

All colleges carry out self-evaluation reporting based on external quality frameworks. Teaching teams currently use the nine quality elements in Area A of the SFC/HMIE quality framework of 2004, *curriculum resources, processes and outcomes.* These are commonly known as the 'A' elements. Self-evaluation reporting by college management teams focuses on Area B of the SFC/HMIE quality framework, *leadership and quality management.* This area has seven quality elements, known as the 'B' elements.[7]

Support teams also use or adapt the SFC/HMIE framework and, in many cases, also use other external self-evaluation reporting toolkits. Those most commonly used include:

- *Resources and Services Supporting Learning* for learning resource teams;[8]
- *Bootstrap* for ICT support teams;[9] and
- *Bursaries and College Managed Student Support Funds* for college bursary teams.[10]

SFEU was commissioned by the *Quality Community of Practice* to consult with college support staff and drawn up a set of generic indicators for support areas.[11] Some colleges have adopted this set of indicators for use alongside the SFC/HMIE framework.

Many colleges also use other quality frameworks to evaluate different aspects of their services. Chief among these is *Investors in People*[12], which focuses on people management and people development and *Charter Mark*[13], the UK Government's national standard for excellence in customer service. A small number of colleges also carry out self-evaluation using the *European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model.*[14]

All colleges carry out self-evaluation reporting cyclically. Because of the emphasis in HMIE external review on *learning and teaching process*, (A5 in the framework) and *learner progress and outcomes* (A7), most teaching teams carry out self-evaluation reporting using at least A5 and A7 in a yearly cycle. The other 'A' elements may be

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[7]The framework elements are listed in Appendix 3

[8]Resources and Services Supporting Learning: a Service Development Quality Toolkit, SFC/SLIC 2003, www.slainte.org.uk/slic/index.htm;

[9]Bootstrap – The ICT Services Toolkit, Jisc infonet, 2004, www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/Resources/evalkit/toolkit-database/ev006;

[10]Bursaries and College Managed Student Support Funds Self-evaluation Toolkit, SFEU, www.sfeu.ac.uk/search/Bursaries+and+College+Managed+Student+Support+Funds+Self-evaluation+Toolkit

[11] Developing a Framework for the Self-evaluation of Support Services, SFEU, 2006

[12] www.investorsinpeople.co.uk/About/Pages/roleofiipuk.aspx

[13] www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/chartermark/

[14] see appendix 1

reviewed either every year, every two years or only where they impact significantly on the *learning and teaching process* (A5) or *learner progress and outcomes* (A7). Support team self-evaluation reporting also varies in frequency, with the most common frequency being once per year. Colleges also vary in how frequently they carry out college-wide self-evaluation reporting, but almost always carry it out prior to external review. Within a four-year cycle, almost all college teams that carry out self-evaluation reporting will have covered all aspects of their provision at least once.

Although HMIE does not specify exactly how quality frameworks should be used, there is an expectation that a college will have used the SFC/HMIE framework to some extent in its self-evaluation reporting prior to external review. In almost all cases, college teams award each element in their reports an evaluation grade based on the same four-point scale used by HMIE for external reviews. These are:

> Very good – major strengths
> Good – strengths outweigh weaknesses
> Fair – some important weaknesses
> Unsatisfactory – major weaknesses

College organisational structures impact on how self-evaluation reporting is carried out and by whom. Most colleges apply a degree of aggregation in departments (sometimes known as faculties or schools) which have a number of small teams. Teaching team self-evaluation reporting is most commonly led by the programme team leader, but in some cases quality framework elements or even preparation of the whole self-evaluation report is carried out by department heads. This is usually a reflection of the size of departments and the number of teams.

Most support teams carry out self-evaluation reporting in their operational departments and there is less aggregation into larger departments. Where aggregation does occur it is most commonly where team reports are subsumed into the college self-evaluation reports (the 'B' elements). This happens most frequently to self-evaluation reports on learning resources, guidance, staffing or quality.

College teams carry out self-evaluation reporting in different ways. In the majority of cases, self-evaluation reporting takes place with members of the team present. This might be at a specific set-aside time in which team members jointly construct the report, or it may be carried out incrementally during regular scheduled team meetings. In more than a few colleges the team leader will draft a report outwith a team meeting and circulate it to members for comment, or place it on a shared computer drive so that staff can contribute to it. Team leaders sometimes do this to capture the views of part-time or remotely situated staff members, even where a whole team meeting is planned.

Most colleges attempt to schedule self-evaluation reporting to make best use of performance indicators or to ensure its findings can inform operational planning. Thus A7, *learner progress and outcomes*, is often evaluated in the autumn when the performance indicators for the previous year have been audited, and A5, *learning and teaching process,* is commonly evaluated in the spring when staff have had time to get to know current learners.

Almost all colleges operate a monitoring system for self-evaluation reporting and the progressing of quality improvement action plans. In some colleges, this is in the form of a written report from senior or quality managers on how well self-evaluation reporting has been carried out. In other colleges, it may take the form of face-to-face meetings between college teams and senior managers who monitor how well action plans are being achieved and discuss wider quality or planning issues. Many colleges have rigorous internal review processes which mirror the external ones operated by HMIE.

Colleges have devised a diverse range of proformas for self-evaluation reporting. In some cases the quality framework prompts are reconfigured in the form of questions. In others, teams are asked to identify not only strengths and weaknesses but areas of good practice. Reports vary in style, from narrative form to bulleted headings, or a combination of both.

5.   Shared understanding of self-evaluation reporting

Summary of discussions with the college sector

There is a consensus that self-evaluation reporting has developed a great deal since its inception and is now well embedded into college quality processes. All colleges and sector representatives share the view that together with the wider self-evaluation activities that include professional reflection and dialogue, self-evaluation reporting has a major role to play in quality improvement in colleges, and should continue to be supported and developed.[15] They understand the importance of the place of self-evaluation reporting in quality systems.

Colleges and sector representatives are fully committed to the aims of self-evaluation activities and reporting, but recognise that now is a useful time to review how well their processes fulfil these aims. While the sector is clearly focused on continuous improvement in many different ways, there are variations in how well self-evaluation reporting is carried out. Some colleges are concerned that a few staff take part reluctantly or as a formal response to requirements, because they understand that self-evaluation reporting works best if it is valued by staff who are committed to it..

Scotland's colleges are highly complex environments and each one is different. They vary a great deal in size, and have a wide range of learners[16] and programmes. Change is very rapid in colleges. They need to be able to continuously respond to this complex and changing environment in order to keep on attracting learners and fulfil their learning and support needs. Colleges recognise that self-evaluation reporting makes good use of environmental intelligence to improve provision and usefully support college strategic planning. Most importantly, it provides an agenda for change in the form of an action plan which has its origins in shared understanding of reality and, if carried through properly, leads colleges directly to improved services for learners.

Well-led self-evaluation activities impact on staff in other useful ways, by underpinning the development of positive quality cultures. This is important because it maintains the focus of all staff on improvement and enhancement and helps them fulfil wider college aims.

Discussions with college staff and sector representatives helped to define the characteristics of effective self-evaluation reporting set out in the next section. They cover how self-evaluation helps staff improve services to learners and what has to be in place to help staff make it work well.

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[15] Improving Scottish Education, HMIE 2006; and
Learning to Improve: Quality Approaches for Lifelong Learning, Scottish Executive, 2005
[16] Unlocking Opportunity, The Difference Scotland's Colleges Make to Learners, the Economy and Wider Society, Scottish Executive, 2006

6. Characteristics of effective self-evaluation reporting

Characteristics of effective self-evaluation reporting are summarised below in the green boxes under six main themes. Following each theme is a summary of strengths and areas for development in Scotland's colleges. Accounts of practice which has had a positive impact on self-evaluation in colleges appear in the pale orange boxes after a number of these sections.

6.1 Theme 1: Team working

Self-evaluation reporting is effective when it provides a mechanism for college staff to collectively identify, share and agree ways of improving and enhancing the services they provide.

The collective aspect of self-evaluation reporting is particularly important. When effective self-evaluation activities and reporting take place amongst a group of people with a common purpose, they generate positive team interaction, creative thinking and collaborative, efficient approaches to improving and enhancing services for learners. These features encourage the whole team to take responsibility for outcomes and to feel positive about their work. In order to be effective self-evaluation reporting has to be well structured, wide ranging and include the views, knowledge and experiences of all members of the team. Staff are more likely to be open with each other and not feel threatened by self-evaluation reporting in colleges which have supportive working relationships and a non-blaming culture. The skills of leaders are critically important in facilitating self-evaluation reporting discussions, prioritising outcomes and drawing up action plans to which everyone has agreed.[17]

Strengths

Most colleges try to involve as many staff as possible in self-evaluation reporting, either by including them in the meetings convened to construct the report or by giving them the opportunity to comment on reports. Almost all college managers and full-time curriculum staff, and increasing numbers of support staff, are involved in these processes.

The majority of team leaders have developed useful skills in constructing, leading and managing self-evaluation reporting team meetings and carry out this part of the process well. A few are exceptionally well organised, sensitive to underlying staff concerns, good at defusing contentious issues and good at extracting key messages from wide-ranging group discussions.

Self-evaluation reporting team meetings are generally productive when there is enough time allocated to them and when team relationships are already positive. In most cases the production of the self-evaluation report helps to articulate team concerns effectively, including college-wide issues.

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[17] PDA Advanced Diploma in Quality Improvement, SQA, 2007

When department reports aggregate themes from individual team reports or are the result of self-evaluation reporting on wider departmental themes, more than a few highlight major issues effectively and generate action plans that are common and applicable to all teams within the department. There are a few examples of well-constructed links between curriculum team self-evaluation reports and college-wide self-evaluation reports.

In most cases quality improvement action plans are the result of agreement by team members, who therefore have a shared understanding of how to take the actions forward.

Areas for development

In most colleges, part-time staff and staff who work in outreach locations are less involved in self-evaluation activities and reporting than other staff. A few feel marginalised from the outcomes of these processes as a result.

The majority of aggregated department reports are too general to provide action plans which are meaningful to their constituent teams. Cross-college self-evaluation reporting is not always carried out systematically and outcomes are rarely shared with all college staff, except occasionally prior to external review.

Although most college staff find discussions in self-evaluation reporting team meetings stimulating and interesting, producing the report and action plan is less successful as a team activity because it is difficult for a group of people to systematically scan and collate all the relevant evidence. More than a few self-evaluation reports and quality improvement action plans are poorly structured and not fully comprehensive.

It is rare for college management team or teaching team self-evaluation reports to be critical of the team's own performance. This is particularly evident around the evaluation of learning and teaching. It is more common for support team self-evaluation reports to identify team actions which are based on critical comments from internal and external clients.

During self-evaluation reporting team meetings, most team leaders find it difficult to address areas of underperformance and very difficult to record them in self-evaluation reports. A few of these team leaders even feel that their loyalty to the team would be questioned by team members if they reported team areas for improvement too openly.

SET-ASIDE TIME

Several colleges carry out self-evaluation reporting on days when all staff can work together without learners present. This allows staff to dedicate time to the process, without interruption. It also means that staff can work in cross-curricular and cross-college teams. In some cases colleges ensure that part-time staff can also attend these sessions. Quality managers are able to offer on-the-spot support and senior managers can participate in action planning with staff.

6.2   Theme 2: Commitment of college teams

Self-evaluation reporting is effective when college staff value it as a means of continuously improving services for learners.

College commitment to carrying out self-evaluation reporting properly is critical in order for it to have value, otherwise it can become an exercise in compliance. Staff who value the process are more likely to carry it out thoroughly and honestly and are more likely to follow through on resulting quality improvement action plans. The attitudes and skills of team leaders in particular, have a significant influence on the attitudes of team members, and therefore the outcomes of self-evaluation reporting. Teams value the process more when they have scope to contextualise self-evaluation reporting and adapt quality frameworks so that they are relevant to their learners' specific needs. This provides teams with actions which have real meaning to their members.[18] The operational level of the teams carrying out self-evaluation activities influences the level of detail of the reports and how fully staff are committed to implementing action plans. Staff value self-evaluation reporting more when senior managers value it, are assured by it and follow through on college-wide issues raised in the report

Strengths

Overall, college staff have positive attitudes to quality improvement, including self-evaluation reporting. Most colleges demonstrate commitment to self-evaluation reporting by having strategies for improving it, and comprehensive arrangements for implementing it.

Most college managers and college staff consider that self-evaluation activities and reporting have encouraged a culture of reflection and interrogation amongst staff which has positively influenced quality improvement. However, most consider that evidencing this in self-evaluation reporting is not effective enough.

The majority of reports address the prompts in quality frameworks within clear local contexts. The most specific and detailed self-evaluation reports are produced by small teaching or support teams.

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[18] Jackson, 'The role of evaluation in self-regulating higher education institutions', in Jackson (ed) *Managing Quality and Standards in UK Higher Education* (Higher Education Quality Council, 1997)

Senior managers usually follow through on actions appropriately allocated to them in teaching and support team self-evaluation reports and quality improvement action plans, or justify why they are unable to do so. They are most likely to follow through on actions which will help the teams realise wider college aims. Effective follow-through by senior managers on actions allocated to them leads to college staff valuing the process more.

When college staff are actively involved in continuously improving provision through ongoing professional dialogue which underpins and runs parallel to self-evaluation reporting, many express the view that professional dialogue has more direct impact on improvement in learning and teaching than formal self-evaluation reporting. This includes team meetings, staff review and development interviews, internal moderation discussions or the conversations which follow peer observation, as well as informal discussions amongst staff. They believe that discussions in these situations are immediate, often private and focused on solving problems or sharing positive experiences quickly. They also consider that the potential adoption of good or innovative practices is a highly effective trigger for well-focused professional dialogue which analyses current practice.

More than a few colleges have developed peer review and team teaching systems which underpin supportive professional dialogue on learning and teaching. Most teaching staff are committed to developing their professional skills through dialogue with others, alongside their involvement in structured self-evaluation reporting.

For most college staff, self-evaluation reporting is valued as a means of summarising, evidencing and recording the outcomes of other self-evaluation activities, especially professional dialogue. It helps them to reflect on past actions and focus on whether they have improved quality, in a structured and systematic way.

Most college staff also feel that self-evaluation reporting provides a useful mechanism by which teams can communicate their findings to senior managers. In this way teams can provide assurance that they take quality seriously and actively seek to improve their services. However, most staff believe that self-evaluation reporting of itself is less effective as a means of directly initiating improvement because it is usually carried out at such a remove from events.

College staff are evenly split in their views about the impact of grades on self-evaluation reporting. Some staff consider that they enable teams to measure the quality of the services they provide to learners and help them aspire to improve. However, others feel that discussing and agreeing grades distracts from the main purpose of self-evaluation reporting – evaluating the learner experience and planning action for improvement.

Areas for development

Although most colleges are committed through their strategic planning to improvement in self-evaluation reporting, translation into specific actions in college-wide staff development plans is unusual in colleges.

In spite of colleges' overall efforts at embedding self-evaluation reporting into quality systems, a few have not been able to generate ownership of the process amongst all team leaders and staff. A few staff consider it to be solely an exercise in compliance, driven either by managers or by HMIE. This is especially so when there is little time to carry it out. A few team leaders also consider that an annual cycle is too short to carry out meaningful self-evaluation reporting.

For a majority of college staff an over-prescriptive approach to using quality frameworks for self-evaluation reporting constrains their ability to adapt them to their own needs and therefore make the outcomes meaningful to their learners. Reports which follow the quality framework in an over-prescriptive way can be superficial and lack high level evaluations of the learner experience. Most staff, however, agree that structure is important and that the SFC/HMIE quality framework provides comprehensive and useful prompts for self-evaluation reporting.

FOCUS ON THE FUTURE

When colleges have participated in sector-wide initiatives to improve learning and teaching, for example Focus on Learning 2[19], TESEP (Transforming and Enhancing the Student Experience through Pedagogy)[20] or the development and implementation of new Scottish Qualifications Authority Higher National qualifications[21], this has encouraged staff to evaluate their own practices productively, in a forward-looking way. Because many staff work in teams to implement ideas, they have found being observed in class by team members a useful and non-threatening way to evaluate the impact of their new approaches. The discussions which result are often described as creative and exciting and staff felt they learned a great deal from them.

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[19] Focus on Learning 2: Steps to Employability (http://www.sfeu.ac.uk/fol2

[20] http://www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/elearning_sfc/sfc_tesep.aspx

[21] http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/411.html

6.3 Theme 3: Evidence

Self-evaluation reporting is effective when college teams gather, analyse and respond to key messages from various sources of evidence, including other evaluations.

Effective self-evaluation reporting relies on properly analysed evidence, not simply on the opinions of team members or on hearsay. Most importantly, teams must evaluate where their strengths and areas for improvement lie based on the interpretation of the key messages from gathered evidence. Evidence includes performance indicators (PIs), trend patterns and benchmarks, and the views of those who use the college services – learners and other stakeholders. Accurate and timely provision of data are essential if it is to be useful. Analysis of the underlying reasons for high or low learner performance indicators is a particularly important way for teaching teams to identify successes and deficiencies in the learner experience. Evidence generated through professional dialogue is particularly useful, including where staff assess their own or each others' performance. Professional dialogue and professional reflection provides an important source of evidence about how well staff have effected improvement in learning and teaching.[22]

Strengths

Almost all colleges have highly effective systems for providing accurate up-to-date PIs on learner retention and attainment for teaching teams to analyse in self-evaluation reports.

Most self-evaluation reports by teaching teams at least acknowledge low value PIs. Where reports analyse underlying reasons for these in more detail, these sections usually demonstrate detailed staff knowledge of individual learners' circumstances.

All colleges use a comprehensive range of methods to obtain feedback from learners, employers and external bodies. Most teaching teams and support teams which impact directly on learners cite learner feedback in the evidence base for their self-evaluation reports, and more than a few detail the outcomes of learner questionnaires in terms of satisfaction percentage rates.

A few colleges are piloting recording systems for gathering ongoing evidence from professional dialogue and other self-evaluation activities and using these systems to provide useful information for further discussions as part of self-evaluation reporting.

Areas for development

The majority of self-evaluation reports do not comprehensively analyse underlying reasons for low retention and attainment other than learners' personal circumstances or backgrounds, nor do they analyse trends. A few reports do, however, link low retention and attainment to ineffective guidance. Detailed analysis of low programme or unit attainment is sometimes addressed in self-evaluation reporting on

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[22] Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher, Stephen D. Brookfield, Jossey-Bass, 1995

programme design.[23] Resulting actions include removal of units which are too difficult, change in running order of units or integration of units. It is rare for analysis of low attainment to consider the impact of the quality of learning and teaching.

It is unusual for self-evaluation reports to benchmark their PIs against corresponding subjects and areas in the rest of the college sector.

It is very rare for learners to be involved directly in discussion as part of self-evaluation reporting, or to have the opportunity to comment on self-evaluation reports.[24] [25]

In most cases, professional dialogue about learning and teaching is not well evidenced in self-evaluation reports. It is exceptionally rare for the outcomes of peer observation to be included in self-evaluation reports. Most weaknesses relating to learning and teaching in self-evaluation reports concern resourcing issues rather than learning and teaching issues.

LINKING EVIDENCE TO EVALUATION

A few colleges have devised ways of gathering evidence from wider self-evaluative activities on an ongoing basis. In one case, staff use quality logs consisting of written evidence assembled throughout the academic year. This helps them to keep track of formal meetings, informal discussions and learner issues in a methodical way. This enables staff not only to cite sources of evidence, but recall what the underlying issues were and why they were significant.

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[23] A1 in the SFC/HMIE Quality Framework
[24] Student Representation in Scottish Further Education Colleges, HMIE, 2006
[25] The final report from the SFC Joint Quality Review Group gives learner engagement a very high profile as one of its three key principles of an effective quality system, SFC, 2007, (see foreword)

6.4   Theme 4: Action plans

Self-evaluation reporting is effective when it generates a clear agenda for team action (a *quality improvement action plan*) aimed at improving services to learners.

The generation of a clear, agreed agenda for action with specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART) targets is the most important outcome of self-evaluation reporting. Quality improvement action plans are only fully effective when they target all major areas for improvement and actions are allocated to specific people. Of course, action plans must not just be agreed but acted upon and actually result in improvements to services. The regular monitoring of progress on specified actions, whether within the team itself or by senior college managers, is critically important to them being carried out effectively. It is important that colleges evaluate the impact of previous actions, and do not just record that they have taken place. Only then can colleges be certain that self-evaluation reporting has been effective and has resulted in improvement.

Strengths

Almost all self-evaluation reports result in an action plan with objectives for improvement. Most targets are assigned to specific members of staff for action, though not always members of the reporting team. Most have timescales for achievement..

Action plans are mostly well monitored in team meetings or more widely in meetings with senior management. Most actions are carried out to the time specified, or teams record justifications for their non-completion.

The outcomes of previous action plans usually feature in self-evaluation reports. However, in most cases, they are simply recorded as being 'achieved', 'ongoing' or 'carried over'.

Areas for development

Although specified actions in quality improvement plans are usually attributed to identified members of staff, timescales can sometimes be vague, often described as 'ongoing', and most have objectives which are not expressed as specific, measurable targets. In more than a few plans, objectives are very vague and use phrases such as 'continue to consider strategies for improvement in retention', or 'investigate ways of implementing action learning where possible'.

The majority of quality improvement action plans do not specifically address low levels of retention and attainment evidenced by low PIs. They rarely set out specific strategies to improve learning and teaching.
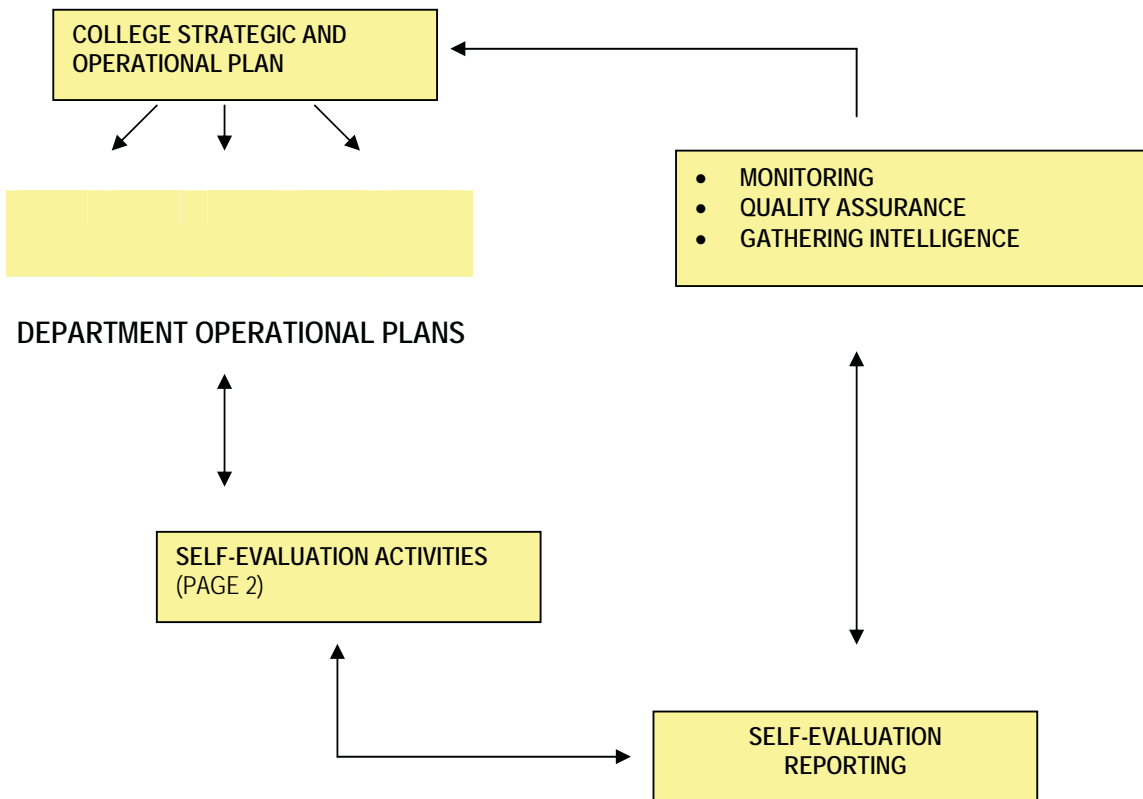
The impact of actions taken to bring about improvements to the learner experience is rarely evaluated specifically.

6.5   Theme 5: College-wide approaches

Self-evaluation reporting is effective when college systems support it and colleges use it to gather intelligence for whole-college planning.

Well-coordinated college systems for managing self-evaluation reporting are essential to its success. These include supportive monitoring by senior management and coordination of team and college planning systems. Well-thought-out proformas, clear guidelines, the provision of time for self-evaluation activities and reporting and well-targeted training and support are all helpful. Self-evaluation reporting helps to address wider college strategic and operational aims when resulting local action plans dovetail with college ones. Such dovetailing provides colleges with assurance that college aims have been understood by operational teams. Analysing accurate team self-evaluation reports allows senior managers to systematically identify the health of the constituent parts of the organisation through the filter of operational expertise. They can identify where good practice, strengths and areas for improvements lie, where resources and support should be targeted, or where changes in services need to be made. They can also monitor how well self-evaluation reporting is carried out and see where skills in it need to be better developed amongst team leaders and staff. Self-evaluation reports which evaluate services in the light of developments in the external operating environment provide senior managers with useful business planning intelligence. When college managers carry out college self-evaluation reporting, key messages from teaching and support teams provide an important evidence base.

College planning cycle

COLLEGE STRATEGIC AND
OPERATIONAL PLAN

- MONITORING
- QUALITY ASSURANCE
- GATHERING INTELLIGENCE

DEPARTMENT OPERATIONAL PLANS

SELF-EVALUATION ACTIVITIES
(PAGE 2)

SELF-EVALUATION
REPORTING

Strengths

HMIE college review reports awarded grades of *very good* for quality assurance in 45% of cases and *good* in 48% during the current review cycle (January 2005 to April 2007). The relevant sections of these reports highlight not only the effectiveness of self-evaluation reporting systems, but also the effectiveness of other self-evaluation activities and quality systems.

Self-evaluation reporting cycles are usually well timed to gather evidence from other self-evaluation activities and quality processes including programme team meetings, learner feedback events, internal and external moderation, and internal audit.

Almost all colleges are actively engaged in improving self-evaluation activities and reporting, through the involvement of external support agencies and through internal support systems. A few colleges have successfully piloted new SQA professional development units[26] which aim to improve staff performance in self-evaluation reporting.

Colleges are almost always highly supportive of their staff and focused on developing them to their fullest potential, even if staff are experiencing difficulties. Most colleges strive to generate non-blaming quality cultures. When they get feedback on self-evaluation reports from senior or quality managers, staff mostly find it clear, constructive and influential on how well they carry out self-evaluation reporting in the future.

More than a few college-produced guidelines are comprehensive and thoughtful. Proformas for self-evaluation reporting are usually clear and easy to use.

Most team quality improvement action plans address college-wide operational planning aims, albeit indirectly. Departmental operational plans are often aggregated from team action plans and usually address college operational aims more directly. College proformas for departmental operational plans are frequently designed to link them to college operational plans.

Where monitoring meetings take place, senior college managers usually use them effectively to support college teams and to discuss issues about internal and external operating environments constructively with staff. Most senior managers find these meetings helpful for identifying improvement strategies with staff and for targeting support and resources. Most senior managers also find them useful for identifying and disseminating good practice amongst college teams.

A few colleges carry out college management self-evaluation reporting systematically as part of their own planning, monitoring and improvement process. Where this happens, evidence is usually gathered effectively from a wide range of sources, including appropriate team leaders, staff and external stakeholders. These reports usually demonstrate a well-coordinated approach to identifying and addressing college-wide weaknesses.

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[26] PDA Advanced Diploma in Quality Improvement, SQA, 2007

Most senior managers are well aware of where these are deficiencies in the quality of self-evaluation reporting within colleges. Most quality managers act effectively on this knowledge to provide additional support.

Areas for development

In a few cases training and support is not sufficiently targeted at those who find self-evaluation reporting difficult or who are new to it.

The quality of self-evaluation reports directly influences how well they can provide intelligence for senior managers. Those which are not comprehensive, sufficiently evaluative or based on evidence contribute little to wider college planning.

Most college management self-evaluation reports (against the 'B' elements) are written as a precursor to HMIE review and not as part of a regular and systematic process. It is rare for these reports to cite major concerns.

College management self-evaluation reports do not always include input from a wide enough range of sources for resulting outcomes to enjoy widespread staff ownership. It is also rare for the resulting reports to be systematically and comprehensively shared with staff.

Although senior managers feel they have widespread knowledge of the internal and external operating environment through professional dialogue with colleagues, most colleges do not carry out formal analysis of common themes in self-evaluation reports to inform wider college strategic planning.

COLLEGE GUIDELINES

Several colleges have drawn up useful guidelines for their staff to help them carry out self-evaluation reporting. A few colleges use self-evaluation reporting proformas with quality indicators reconfigured as questions. Staff find this helps them to take a more holistic approach to the prompts in the quality framework and see them as starting points for discussion rather than a checklist for compliance.

SELF-EVALUATION AND PLANNING

In one college, staff were able to input information to an online database which was configured so that it directly linked departmental self-evaluation reporting outcomes and action plans to the college strategic aims. The online facility allowed staff at all sites to access the database and view reports, plans and progress for all college areas. Managers could also use this up-to-date information to produce college reports and inform team meetings. This joined-up approach to self-evaluation reporting helped staff contextualise it within wider college aims.

6.6   Theme 6: Reporting

Effective self-evaluation reporting enables college teams to generate reports which provide assurance on whether they are effective at continuously improving their services.

Self-evaluation reporting has to be carried out properly for it to be effective and valued, and for its findings to be relied on as a basis for quality improvement. It therefore has to be thorough and self-critical. It has to cover all the relevant ground, genuinely reflect the experience of learners and be based on sound evidence. Most importantly, in order for self-evaluation reporting to have meaning, it has to actually evaluate services and not simply describe them. Without this filter of interpretation, it cannot provide assurance that college teams fully understand what the evidence tells them nor that they know whether they are responding to its messages. If this happens, self-evaluation reporting becomes a marginal, compliance-driven process. Self-evaluation reports have to be written in a way which demonstrates that the self-evaluation reporting process has been carried out effectively. Reports need to communicate their findings usefully to different people. They have to be detailed, clear and meaningful, otherwise they are difficult to moderate, whether by internal or external bodies. Reports also have to be recognisable to those team members who contributed to the self-evaluation, and reflect the shared discussions. The skills of those writing these important reports are critical to their impact.

Strengths

HMIE college review reports have awarded grades of *very good* in 34% of cases and *good* in 51% for quality improvement during the latest review cycle.[27] They almost always highlight staff commitment to improvement and how colleges have effected improvement overall.

There are more than a few examples of very well-constructed and very well-evidenced self-evaluation reports. They are detailed and comprehensive, and the product of shared input. These reports honestly identify appropriate strengths and areas for improvement and result in agreed action plans with SMART targets. Such examples are often found in colleges which carry out a range of highly effective self-evaluation activities and have comprehensive monitoring systems and well-targeted support for staff. In most of these colleges, services to learners have improved over time, though it is rarely evidenced how much of the improvement is directly attributable to self-evaluation reporting and quality improvement action planning.

Areas for development

Although there are examples of well written self-evaluation reports, the majority neither give enough detail nor have sufficient clarity to provide full assurance about the quality of services or that quality improvement is being well enough addressed. A few reports do not adequately justify their grade profiles. It is unusual for teaching

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[27] www.hmie.gov.uk

teams, or college management teams particularly, to be self-critical in self-evaluation reports and to award themselves grades of *fair* or *unsatisfactory,* even where PIs and other evidence indicate that there are serious problems. Where college teams record grades of *fair* or *unsatisfactory*, it is usually in the area of resources.

The majority of reports are written descriptively, not evaluatively. In overly descriptive reports, the links between text, identified areas for development and action plans are often tenuous.

Quality improvement action plans are only as effective as the underlying self-evaluation activities and reports. In a majority of cases, insufficient evaluation or analysis of underpinning evidence in the self-evaluation report results in action plans that do not effectively address weaknesses, particularly in retention and attainment.

7. Recommendations

Colleges should:

- encourage and facilitate self-evaluation activities such as professional dialogue, especially on learning and teaching, retention and attainment;

- ensure that self-evaluation reports and quality improvement action plans record the impacts that previous actions arising from these processes have had on improving quality for learners and other stakeholders;

- ensure that self-evaluation reporting by teaching teams focuses on learning and teaching, and retention and attainment, and involves the rigorous analysis of evidence, including PIs;

- ensure that self-evaluation reporting is evaluative rather than descriptive;

- ensure that quality improvement action plans use SMART targets; and

- provide targeted training and support to improve evaluative skills and self-evaluation report writing, using appropriate training materials such as the PDA Advanced Diploma in Quality Improvement.

SFC, in consultation with the college sector and HMIE, should:

- explore the benefits of developing a review model which moderates how effectively colleges are using self-evaluation activities and reporting to provide assurance of ongoing quality improvement in colleges.

HMIE ACTIONS

HMIE will:

- develop with SFC and in consultation with the college sector, a revised quality framework for Scotland's colleges and associated guidance which helps college teams to contextualise the self-evaluation process and generate innovative and effective approaches to it;

- encourage self-evaluation activities such as professional dialogue, especially on learning and teaching, retention and attainment as part of existing follow-through arrangements and future engagement with colleges; and

- disseminate exemplars of good practice in self-evaluation reporting.

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Appendix 1

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Other models of self-evaluation

England

Self-evaluation – or self-assessment as it is more commonly known – sits very much at the heart of inspection models in England. The requirement in England in relation to self-assessment is much more explicit than in Scotland. A recent report published by Ofsted in July 2006 – *Best practice in self-evaluation, A survey of schools, colleges and local authorities*[28] - highlighted that:

> 'Colleges have a relatively long history of self-evaluation since they became independent corporations in 1993. They have been expected to develop quality assurance systems based on a self-critical assessment of their provision. In 2001, when Ofsted and the Adult Learning Inspectorate became responsible for inspecting colleges, a college's self-assessment report, together with data on students' outcomes, became the starting point for inspection. Since 2005, college inspection has been matched more closely to the quality of provision, with good colleges being inspected with a lighter touch. Such arrangements therefore place more emphasis on a college's self-assessment.'

Providers are required to complete an annual self-assessment report that evaluates all aspects of their provision, accredited and non-accredited. This generally comes from their continuous process of self-assessment. The chief purpose of self-assessment is to support the provider's own work on quality improvement and to measure progress against its own mission and goals.

The recently revised approach of the planning and funding bodies, and the inspectorates now places much greater emphasis on risk assessment, based on an evaluation of the capacity of the provider to maintain and improve quality. A climate of trust is required in which a provider's staff are constructively self-critical about their performance. Providers are required to demonstrate understanding of what they do well, what needs improving and how improvement can be monitored, achieved and evaluated. According to the Learning and Skills Council,[29] the key test of the resulting self-assessment report is its ability to demonstrate how high quality is sustained and improvement is ensured.

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[28] www.ofsted.ac.uk
[29] www.lsc.gov.uk

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) Scotland

From 2003 to 2007, QAA Scotland operated an Enhancement-Led Institutional Review model (ELIR).[30] This followed extensive consultation which concluded that in general:

> 'Scottish higher education institutions had in place effective quality management systems relating to the experience of students and the standards of their awards, and that the subject provision experienced by students was highly satisfactory or better.'

The model was operated as part of the overarching Quality Enhancement Framework containing five elements: subject review coordinated by the HEIs; student engagement in quality management; an agreed set of public information; a national programme of enhancement themes and ELIR. It was also operated through a partnership between QAA Scotland, the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (formerly SHEFC, now SFC), Universities Scotland, the National Union of Students (NUS) and the Coalition of Higher Education Students in Scotland (CHESS).

This has resulted in a change in the focus of external review to go beyond how institutions quality assure provision for students to encompass also how they actively enhance it. An important part of the review model up to 2007 was a cycle of subject reviews carried out internally, following SHEFC guidelines (which stated that the cycle should not be longer than six years). An institution's operation of subject reviews was considered during ELIR, which itself took place every four years and was supported by annual discussions between QAA officers and institutional representatives.

The starting point for each ELIR was the institutional reflective analysis, which evaluated the institutions' ability to learn from what had happened in the past in order to inform the future. Institutions were expected to address three key questions: 'where are we now?', 'where do we want to be in the future?' and 'how are we going to get there?' They were also expected to identify the range of reference points they used within their own quality systems and procedures, including the QAA's own code of practice, the views of external professional bodies and, very importantly, the views of students. Case studies were appended to the reflective analysis which demonstrated the institution's strategic approach to quality enhancement. The reflective analysis provided ELIR teams with essential information which helped them to scope further enquiry during the review visits.

At subject level, institutions were required to provide assurance that they annually monitored the academic standards of awards and quality of provision. They were expected to devise systems in which the outcomes of subject level self-evaluation were considered, within departments and schools, and used to inform institutional strategic planning. Each institution devised its own methodology for doing this, which was expected to adhere to the relevant section of the QAA Code of Practice.

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[30] www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/ELIR/handbook/Scottish_hbook_preface.asp

This subject area report was drawn from a range of sources, including performance indicators and feedback from students.

In the colleges which are partners in the UHI Millennium Institute (UHI), all provision from SCQF Level 7 and above was reviewed under the QAA model between 2000 and 2006. Provision below that level was reviewed by HMIE. UHI also participated in an ELIR in 2007.[31]

The European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model

The EFQM Excellence Model was published in 1991 as an umbrella framework against which organisations could assess their services and identify ways of improving them. The Excellence Model is primarily a framework for self-assessment against nine criteria, divided into two groups, enablers and results, which taken together, are designed to provide organisations with key areas to review and improve.[32] There are different techniques for carrying out self-assessment which help provide different levels of detail. The EFQM Excellence Model is used by more than 20,000 European private and public sector organisations, including two of Scotland's colleges. Organisations can apply for awards from EFQM at different levels in recognition of how far they have developed against specific quality criteria.

The Excellence Model is primarily aimed at making companies more competitive, but its basic principles have been adapted for educational and other public sector self-evaluation in Scotland. HMIE has developed an overarching quality framework based on the EFQM model which provides a systematic structure for self-evaluation over nine key themes, and addresses a tenth theme, the evaluation of the overall capacity for improvement, at the end of this process. This framework has been adapted for use in other education sectors, including schools, community learning and development and the education functions of local authorities.[33] Other public sectors, including social work and the police are also in the process of developing quality frameworks based on the EFQM.

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[31] www.uhi.ac.uk

[32] European Framework for Quality Management, www.qualityscotland.co.uk

[33] How good is our school?: the Journey to Excellence, HMIE, 2007

How good is our community learning and development?2, HMIE, 2006

Quality Management in Education, HMIE, 2006

<div align="right">**Appendix 2**</div>

Colleges involved in discussions for this report

- Lauder College
- Angus College
- Clydebank College
- West Lothian College
- Dumfries and Galloway College
- Perth College
- Lews Castle College
- Glasgow College of Nautical Studies
- Elmwood College
- Cardonald College

Other organisations consulted:

- Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council
- Scottish Further Education Unit
- Association of Scottish Colleges
- UHI Millennium Institute
- Ofsted/Adult Learning Inspectorate
- Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in Scotland

<div align="right">**Appendix 3**</div>

Standards and quality in Scottish Further Education (SFC/HMIE)

Quality framework for Scottish FE colleges
May 2004

Area A: Curriculum resources, processes and outcomes

Elements:
A1   Programme design
A2   Accommodation for learning and teaching
A3   Equipment and materials
A4   Staff
A5   Learning and teaching process
A6   Assessment
A7   Learner progress and outcomes
A8   Guidance and learner support
A9 Quality assurance and improvement

Area B: Leadership and quality management

Elements:
B1   Educational leadership, direction and management
B2   Access and inclusion
B3   Guidance and support
B4   Resources and services to support the learner
B5   Staff
B6   Quality assurance
B7   Quality improvement

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Appendix 4

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Analysis of grades

It is not formally part of the HMIE review model to validate college's self-evaluation grades. However, evidence from a sample of 24 HMIE college reviews carried out between January 2005 and June 2007 was analysed to identify patterns of concurrence between self-evaluation reporting grades and HMIE grades.

The sample focused on college management team and teaching team self-evaluation reports ie the B elements (Leadership and Quality Management), A5 (Learning and Teaching Process) and A7 (Learner Progress and Outcomes).

B Elements: Leadership and quality management

% of HMIE grades lower than self-evaluation grades   27
% of HMIE grades higher than self-evaluation grades   8
% of concurrence between HMIE and self-evaluation grades   65

A5 Learning and teaching process

% of HMIE grades lower than self-evaluation grades   16
% of HMIE grades higher than self-evaluation grades   10
% of concurrence between HMIE and self-evaluation grades   74

A7 Learner progress and outcomes

% of HMIE grades lower than self-evaluation grades   20
% of HMIE grades higher than self-evaluation grades   6
% of concurrence between HMIE and self-evaluation grades   74

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