**Education Scotland – advice and guidance on grading 2017-18 Evaluative Reports**

1. **General overview**

Grades were not published alongside college Evaluative Reports in 2016-17. However, as part of the developmental approach, colleges undertook useful grading exercises as part of their internal processes. These were further considered in pre‑endorsement and endorsement discussions which included college HMI and Regional Outcome Agreement Managers. The **Supplementary Guidance for College Evaluative Reports and Enhancement Plans for AY 2017-18** indicated that Education Scotland would issue separate advice and guidance on grading, including grade descriptions.

1. **The six-point scale – grade descriptions**

The six-point scale is a tool for grading the **three areas** within the college quality framework – **How good is our college?**

* **Outcomes and impact (QIs 3.1 and 3.2)**

How good are we at ensuring the best outcomes for all our learners?

* **Delivery of learning and services to support learning (QIs 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4)**

How good is the quality of provision and services we deliver?

* **Leadership and quality culture QIs 1.1 and 1.4)**

How good is our leadership and approach to improvement?

It should be noted that, in the college context, when a grading is applied, it is for the **whole area** and not for individual quality indicators (QIs), or themes. Individual QIs or themes should not be graded. Bear in mind that awarding levels using a quality scale will always be more of a professional skill than a technical process. However, the following general guidelines should be consistently applied:

* An evaluation of **excellent** means that this aspect of the college’s work is outstanding with excellent practice worthy of dissemination. The experiences and achievements of all learners are of a very high quality. An evaluation of excellent represents an outstanding standard of provision which exemplifies very best practice, based on achieving equity and inclusion and a deep professional understanding which is being shared beyond the college to support system-wide improvement. It implies that very high-levels of performance are sustainable and will be maintained.
* An evaluation of **very good** means that there are major strengths in this aspect of the college’s work. There are very few areas for improvement and any that do exist do not significantly diminish learners’ experiences. An evaluation of very good represents a high standard of provision for all learners and is a standard that should be achievable by all. There is an expectation that the college will make continued use of self-evaluation to plan further improvements and will work towards improving provision and performance to excellent.
* An evaluation of **good** means that there are important strengths within the college’s work, yet there remains some aspects which require improvement. The strengths have a significantly positive impact on almost all learners. The quality of learners’ experiences is diminished in some way by aspects in which improvement is required. It implies that the college should seek to improve further the areas of important strength, and also take action to address the areas for improvement.
* An evaluation of **satisfactory** means that strengths within this aspect of the college’s work just outweigh the weaknesses. It indicates that learners have access to a basic level of provision. It represents a standard where the strengths have a positive impact on learners’ experiences. While the weaknesses will not be important enough to have a substantially adverse impact, they do constrain the overall quality of learners’ experiences. The college needs to take action to address areas of weakness by building on its strengths.
* An evaluation of **weak** means there are important weaknesses within this aspect of the college’s work. While there may be some strengths, the important weaknesses, either individually or collectively, are sufficient to diminish learners’ experiences in substantial ways. It implies the need for prompt, structured and planned action on the part of the college.
* An evaluation of **unsatisfactory** means there are major weaknesses in this aspect of the college’s work which require immediate remedial action. Learners’ experiences are at risk in significant respects. In almost all cases, this will require support from senior managers in planning and carrying out the necessary actions to effect improvement. This will usually involve working alongside agencies who can provide support, or with staff in other colleges.

1. **Further advice**

In carrying out the grading exercise for the Evaluative Report for 2017-18, colleges should reflect on the document circulated to the sector by SFC – **Supplementary Guidance for College Evaluative Reports and Enhancement Plans for AY 2017‑18.** The three high level principles should not be graded in isolation of each other. There must be clear linkages between the three areas as described in the guidance.

In carrying out the grading exercise, it is suggested that colleges start with the judgement for **Outcomes and impact**, followed by **Delivery of learning and services to support learning** and finally **Leadership and quality culture**.

The following examples are provided to illustrate **unlikely combinations**:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| High level principle | Proposed grade |
| Outcomes and impact | satisfactory |
| Delivery of learning and services to support learning | good |
| Leadership and quality culture | very good |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| High level principle | Proposed grade |
| Outcomes and impact | good |
| Delivery of learning and services to support learning | very good |
| Leadership and quality culture | excellent |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| High level principle | Proposed grade |
| Outcomes and impact | weak |
| Delivery of learning and services to support learning | very good |
| Leadership and quality culture | good |

1. **Capacity for improvement**

Capacity for improvement should not be graded. However, based on the findings drawn from evaluations across the three high level principles and the grades awarded, the college is required to write a short narrative to answer the question:

* **What is our capacity for improvement?**

1. **Grading methodology – some helpful suggestions**

Colleges may want to consider how the grading discussions should be concluded for the Evaluative Report, to ensure accuracy and robustness. College HMIs are available to support this process. The following are suggestions:

* a grading exercise/meeting could be organised once the Evaluative Report is complete, but before submission to SFC and Education Scotland;
* it would be good practice to include the college HMI and the Regional Outcome Agreement Manager at this grading meeting;
* where the college has Associate Assessors or Quality Champions, their contributions might be useful in the grading meeting; and
* good practice would also encourage colleges to include a member of the Student Association in these discussions.