Education Scotland
Foghlam Alba

Arrangements for the inspection of private colleges and English language schools

February, 2023

Contents

Background

1.1 Introduction

In Scotland, Education Scotland's HM Inspectors of Education are responsible for providing educational oversight of provision offered by private colleges or English language schools, up to and including Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 8. These organisations are referred to as 'providers' and are either (a) existing, or are seeking to become, a Student Sponsor on behalf of Home Office UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI), or (b) delivering provision funded by the Student Awards Agency Scotland (SAAS).

1.2 Context

The scope of educational oversight inspections will be determined by intelligence gathered through evaluative activities and liaison with either UKVI or SAAS. Each provider will receive an initial inspection. The frequency of further engagement and/or routine monitoring will be based on the outcome of the initial inspection or notified changes from the organisation.

1.3 Aims and objectives of educational oversight inspections

In line with the principles of inspection and review and building on previous educational oversight inspection arrangements, HM Inspectors will work with providers to:

- provide assurance to Scottish Ministers, the public and other stakeholders of the quality of provision offered by private colleges and English language schools;
- support providers in applying effective quality improvement and enhancement approaches to deliver the highest quality of provision and improve outcomes for learners;
- assess the impact of each provider's own quality assurance and enhancement approaches to evidence improvement;
- apply engagement approaches that are responsive to the needs of learners, staff and key stakeholders;
- minimise requirements for providers to produce additional documentation;
- take account of the views of learners, staff and key stakeholders to assess performance;
- apply proportionate and differentiated approaches to allocate time and resources to where they are most needed;
- provide constructive and appropriately detailed feedback;
- promote capacity building and
- complement internal inspection, self-assessment procedures and UKVI or SAAS monitoring arrangements.

1.4 Key features of educational oversight inspections

Educational oversight inspections will consist of a programme of activities including:

- inspection of key documentation and performance data;
- observation of learning and teaching;
- professional dialogue with provider managers and staff;
- professional dialogue with learners and key stakeholders.

Inspections will focus on evaluating and grading performance against **three key principles.** These are:

- Outcomes and Impact
- Service Delivery
- Leadership and Quality Culture

Grading will be allocated using a six-point scale (further detail is included in and).

At the end of the inspection, HM Inspectors will provide verbal feedback to the provider and will publish a report summarising the inspection outcomes within six weeks. The report will be shared with Scottish Government Ministers and UKVI or SAAS.

2. The educational oversight quality framework

The educational oversight quality framework is used by HM Inspectors to reach a professional judgement regarding the quality of the learning experience delivered by a provider.

Educational oversight inspections focus on answering **five high level questions** that underpin the **three key principles**. These are:

Outcomes and Impact
- How well are learners progressing and achieving relevant high quality outcomes?
- How well do we meet the needs of our stakeholders?

Service Delivery
- How good is our delivery of learning and teaching?
- How good is our management of the delivery of learning and teaching?

Leadership and Quality culture
- How good is our strategic leadership?

In exploring these questions, HM Inspectors apply **eleven core QIs** from the educational oversight Quality Framework. However, additional QIs may be included in educational oversight inspection to take account of the context of a provider. The **eleven core QIs** are as follows:

Outcomes and Impact

How well are learners progressing and achieving relevant, high quality outcomes?

- 1.2 Retention, attainment, and achievement trends
- 1.3 Adherence to statutory principles and fulfilment of statutory duties

How well do we meet the needs of our stakeholders?

- 2.2 Relevance of provision to learner needs

Service delivery

How good is our delivery of learning and teaching?

- 5.1 Equality and diversity
- 5.2 The learning process
- 5.3 Teaching for effective learning
- 5.4 Context and planning for learning and teaching
- 5.5 Assessment for learning
- 5.6 Information, guidance, and support

How good is our management of the delivery of learning and teaching?

- 5.7 Enhancement through self-evaluation and internal review

Leadership and Quality culture

How good is our strategic leadership?

- 9.4 Developing and maintaining a quality culture

3. The inspection process

3.1 The role of the Lead Inspector

Educational oversight inspections will be planned and organised by a Lead Inspector (LI) who will manage all aspects of the inspection process. The LI will notify the provider of the proposed inspection date six weeks prior to the inspection and will brief the provider about the inspection process and confirm the scope of the inspection.

3.2 The role of the nominated inspection coordinator

Prior to the inspection, the LI will work with the provider to agree arrangements for engaging with managers and staff and gathering appropriate evidence. Providers will be invited to identify an appropriate staff member (normally a senior manager) with an appropriate level of strategic overview to take on the role of **inspection coordinator**. The inspection coordinator will work with the LI and inspection team to assist the smooth operation of the inspection. The role of inspection coordinator is to:

- act as the primary contact and liaison between the inspection team and the organisation;
- clarify managers', staff with team roles and responsibilities;
- direct HM inspectors to sources of evidence across the organisation, including the appropriate staff with whom to discuss specific issues; and
- be present at evening inspection team meetings.

3.3 Inspection planning

Before the inspection, the LI will liaise with the inspection co-ordinator to discuss the scope of the inspection. Each provider will be invited to submit any relevant and current information to the inspection team in advance. The LI will then plan an appropriate programme of activities for each inspection.

Educational oversight inspections typically last 3 days and the LI will ensure that inspections are planned to take account of the business and operational needs of the provider. This may require inspection to take place over a longer period to enable the inspection team to engage with managers, staff, and learners.

3.4 Composition and deployment of inspection teams

Inspection teams will comprise a minimum of two HM Inspectors. Team size may be increased to take account of the scale of activity of larger providers.

3.5 Using sources of evidence

Gathering of evidence will be planned to enable appropriate sampling and cross-referencing. All inspection team members will be appropriately trained in gathering and using sources of evidence to inform evaluations.

The key sources of evidence used during inspection are:

- professional dialogue with managers and staff,
- observation of practice,
- data and evidence provided by the provider, and
- the views of learners and other stakeholders.

HM Inspectors will examine documentation used by the provider, such as policies and strategies, programme information and materials, teaching plans and records of meetings. They will assess the impact of the providers arrangements for quality assurance and action-planning for improvement and progress made towards achievement of targets.

3.6 Expressing the outcomes of inspection

HM Inspectors will express the overall outcomes of inspection using a six-point grading scale.

These are:

- Excellent - Outstanding and sector leading;
- Very good - Major strengths;
- Good - Important strengths with some areas for improvement;
- Satisfactory - Strengths outweigh weaknesses;
- Weak - Important weaknesses; and
- Unsatisfactory - Major weaknesses.

Grades will be inter-related. For example, if there are important areas for development in Learner progress and outcomes or in Learning and teaching processes,

it is unlikely that Leadership and quality culture will be graded better than Good. An exemplification for each of the grades can be found in Appendix 2. Should a provider receive a grade of *Weak* or *Unsatisfactory*, the inspection team will undertake a follow-up inspection within an agreed timeframe to evaluate progress made by the provider to address main points for action.

3.7 After the inspection

Within six weeks of completion of the inspection, the LI will produce a written report of inspection findings and outcomes. The report will identify areas of positive practice and areas for development along with grades awarded for each of the three elements
and any main points for action. The report will also provide information about next steps, including the possibility of a return visit by HM Inspectors. All providers are required to address any areas for development or main points for action within agreed timescales.

The report will be issued to the provider, shared with Scottish Government, UKVI or SAAS, and will be published on the Education Scotland website.

4   Conduct of inspection teams

During inspection, all activities should focus on the best interests of learners and promote an open and honest exchange built on mutual respect and equity of status. The principles of engagement are outlined in the PRAISE framework.

At the start of meetings, HM Inspectors should ensure all participants understand the purpose of engagements and intended outcomes from the discussions. During meetings, all participants should be encouraged to contribute their views.

Requests for participants to provide documents to support evidence should only be by exception, as additional documentation must be kept to a minimum.

5   Concerns

If a provider has concerns with a judgment or grade, they should submit additional evidence in writing to the LI within two working days of the verbal feedback. This material must be new in nature and not a resubmission of evidence previously considered by the team. HM Inspectors will review the new evidence and after full consideration by the inspection team, the LI will convey the outcome to the provider in writing.

During the inspection, the provider should raise any issues regarding the inspection process with the LI. If the matter is unresolved, the provider should contact the Head of Scrutiny responsible for the external inspection programme, who will seek to resolve the issue.

6   Complaints

If concerns are not satisfactorily resolved through the processes outlined above, the provider should pursue the matter through Education Scotland's published complaints procedure.

Appendix 1 The Quality Indicators: indicative themes for HM inspectors

ELEMENT 1: KEY PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES		
This element is concerned with the organisation's progress in achieving key educational aims, objectives and targets and the extent to which the organisation takes action that results in enhancement. It is also concerned with progress against targets and performance indicators associated with learner retention, progress, and attainment, and explores the extent of learner progression to further learning or employment where appropriate. It also considers how well the organisation has responded to legislation and national directives.		
QUALITY INDICATORS		
1.1	**Achievement of educational aims, objectives, and targets**	• Progress on key aims and objectives • Achievement of targets and key performance indicators • Performance data and measures showing improvement against agreed targets over three-year period
1.2	**Retention, attainment and achievement trends**	• Retention and attainment trends • Wider achievement trends
How effective is the organisation at achieving and maintaining high levels of retention, attainment and achievement for all learners?		
1.3	**Adherence to statutory principles and fulfilment of statutory duties**	• Relevant legislation • Relevant directives and regulations • Requirements of statutory bodies • Meeting expectations regarding access, equality, and diversity
How well does the organisation fulfil its statutory duties to comply with legislation?		

ELEMENT 2: IMPACT ON USERS OF ORGANISATION'S SERVICES
This element is concerned with how well the organisation identifies and responds to the needs of learners and other users and provides opportunities for engagement with learners. It looks at the appropriateness, accessibility and effectiveness of its programmes and its services to support learners and learning. It considers how well the range, levels and modes of delivery and assessment assist participation, transition and engagement. It evaluates how effectively learning opportunities are promoted and targeted to specific groups. It evaluates learner progress, attainment and wider achievements in vocational and essential skills and learner progression to further learning and employment where approppriate. It considers learner satisfaction with the programmes and services of the organisation.

QUALITY INDICATORS		
2.1	**Accessibility, flexibility, and inclusiveness**	• Identifying and responding to needs • Arrangements to support learners and learning • Range and flexibility of delivery and assessment modes • Promoting and targeting learning opportunities
How accessible, flexible and inclusive are organisation programmes and services?		
2.2	**Relevance of provision to learner needs**	• Range and levels of programmes • Extent to which entry and exit points assist transition • Learner engagement • Preparation for employment and further learning • Embedding of ethos of equality and diversity • Embedding of sustainability • Learner satisfaction
How well do programmes meet the needs of learners?		
2.3	**Progress, attainment, and wider achievement**	• Progress from prior learning and attainment • Attainment of qualifications • Success in award schemes and competitions • Achievement of essential skills including core, personal, learning, employment, citizenship
How well do learners make progress, attain qualifications and awards and achieve more widely?		

ELEMENT 3: IMPACT ON STAFF		
This element is concerned with how well the organisation engages staff in meeting organisation aims and objectives. It focuses on the organisation's effectiveness in promoting a collegiate approach and keeping staff informed about organisation directions and priorities. It evaluates the motivation and engagement of staff in contributing to the work and life of the organisation. It explores how well staff reflect on, share effective practice and the effectiveness of teamwork.		
QUALITY INDICATORS		
3.1	**Motivation and engagement**	• Staff knowledge of and action to achieve organisation aims and objectives • Communication arrangements • Staff involvement in planning
How well does the organisation motivate and engage with staff in contributing to the setting and achievement of organisation aims and objectives?		
3.2	**Reflection and**	• Evaluation of learning, teaching and other services • Identifying good practice

	professional dialogue	• Sharing and adopting good practice

How well do staff reflect and participate in professional dialogue to improve and enhance the learning experience?

3.3	Effectiveness of teamwork	• Staffing arrangements within cross-organisation teams • Information sharing within and among teams • Collaborative working

How effective is teamwork within departments and across the organisation?

ELEMENT 4: IMPACT ON EMPLOYERS AND COMMUNITIES

This element is concerned with how well the organisation's provision meets the needs of employers and of the communities it serves. It explores the effectiveness of arrangements for engaging with key interests and priorities at local and national levels and evaluates the organisation's responsiveness to current and anticipated needs. It considers the level of satisfaction of employers and communities with the programmes and services of the organisation. It also explores the effectiveness of arrangements for providing programmes and services to meet specific needs.

QUALITY INDICATORS

4.1	Relevance of the provision to the economy and to employer needs	• Links and partnerships with employers and industry bodies • Use of labour market information and environmental demographics • Employer participation and influence in the design and evaluation of programmes and services • Arrangements to meet specific needs of employers • Employer satisfaction with organisation programmes and services

How well does the organisation serve local and national employers?

4.2	Relevance of provision to the needs of communities	• Links and partnerships with community and voluntary organisations • Participation and influence of community organisations in the design and evaluation of programmes and services • Arrangements to meet specific needs in communities • Satisfaction in communities with organisation programmes and services

How well does the organisation meet the needs of communities?

ELEMENT 5: EDUCATION, TRAINING AND LIFELONG LEARNING

This element is concerned with how well the organisation helps its learners to maximise their potential and to make informed choices about their learning and employment goals. It evaluates the effectiveness of arrangements to advise and prepare individuals before entry. The extent to which the organisation helps learners take responsibility for their own learning and in planning towards further learning and employment goals are explored. It considers the effectiveness of learning, teaching and assessment. It explores the extent to which programmes and services aid access and transition and provide support. The effectiveness of collaboration among teaching staff, support staff and external agencies in providing these programmes and services is also evaluated.

QUALITY INDICATORS

5.1	**Equality and diversity**	- Promotion of equality and diversity - Curriculum content and resources - Arrangements to meet needs of specific groups

How proactive is the organisation in targeting services to meet the needs of learners from all backgrounds?

5.2	**The learning process**	- Learner motivation and active participation - Use of resources by learners - Development of independence in learning - Development of reflective practice - Learner progress

How well do learners learn?

5.3	**Teaching for effective learning**	- Application of professional and subject knowledge - Appropriateness and range of teaching approaches - Use of resources by staff - Promotion of achievement and standards

How well does teaching and the use of resources ensure effective learning?

5.4	**Context and planning for learning and teaching**	- Quality of relations between/among staff and learners - Planning of learning activities - Learner involvement in planning - Learning environment and climate for learning

How effective is the context and planning for learning and teaching?

5.5	Assessment for learning	• Planning and scheduling of assessment • Methods of providing feedback and encouraging reflection on progress • Arrangements for learners with additional support needs
How well does the organisation use assessment to promote effective learning?		
5.6	Information, guidance, and support	• Information to potential learners • Arrangements for learners to set goals and reflect on learning • Curricular and vocational guidance • Access to and use of services to support learning
How well does the organisation provide potential learners and learners with relevant information, guidance, and support to enhance access, retention, and learning?		
5.7	Enhancement through self-evaluation and internal review	• Involvement of learners, staff, and external stakeholders • Analysis and evaluation of programmes and services • Planning for improvement and enhancement • Effectiveness of action taken
How well does the organisation sustain continuous improvement and enhancement through self-evaluation and internal review activities?		

ELEMENT 6: PROVIDING DIRECTION AND FACILITATING CHANGE		
This element is concerned with the effectiveness of organisation planning for the range of programmes and services it provides. It considers the range of policies, strategies and plans, the extent to which they are understood and acted on by staff and their impact on organisation operations. It evaluates planning for the delivery of programmes and services and the extent to which the organisation plans for and manages change.		
QUALITY INDICATORS		
6.1	Planning	• Strategic planning • Operational planning • Team planning
How effective are organisation planning processes?		
6.2	Implementation of action to achieve aims and objectives of plans	• Communication of plans and associated action and targets • Identification and agreement of standards for achievement of actions • Management of the implementation of actions

How effective is the organisation in implementing action to meet aims, objectives, and targets of plans?		
6.3	**Mapping and responding to the environment**	• Review and development of policies and procedures across organisation functions • Review and development of portfolio of programmes • Response to changing operating conditions • Managing risk
How effective is the organisation in reviewing and developing the curriculum in response to changing environments?		
6.4	**Planning for and managing change**	• Approach to innovation • Communication with learners, staff and other stakeholders • Monitoring and reviewing progress and effectiveness of new developments
How well does the organisation plan for and manage change?		

ELEMENT 7: MANAGEMENT AND SUPPORT OF STAFF		
This element is concerned with the qualifications and experience of staff as well as the quality of their relations with colleagues, learners and external stakeholders. It is concerned with recruitment, selection, deployment, retention of staff and with workforce planning. It addresses the relevance and effectiveness of continuing professional development and review of staff in supporting individuals and supporting the organisation's strategic direction.		
QUALITY INDICATORS		
7.1	**Qualifications and experience of staff**	• Relevance and currency of staff qualifications, skills and experience • Staff links with current practice in subject areas
How relevant and current are staff qualifications, skills and experience?		
7.2	**Working relationships with staff, learners and external stakeholders**	• Among staff • Between staff and learners • With external stakeholders
How productive are the relationships between the organisation, its staff, learners and external stakeholders?		
7.3	**Recruitment, selection, deployment, and retention of staff**	• Internal and external recruitment and selection • Sufficiency of staff • Clarity and relevance of staff remits

		•	Arrangements to avoid discrimination and promote equality
		•	Occupational health arrangements

How effective is the organisation in recruiting, selecting, deploying, and retaining staff?

7.4	Workforce planning	•	Identification of current and future skills requirements
		•	Deployment of individuals and teams to meet business needs
		•	Balance of skills, styles and behaviours within teams

How effective is workforce planning in the organisation?

7.5	Continuing professional review and development	•	Professional development of staff to meet business needs
		•	Professional review of staff to meet business needs
		•	Professional development of new staff and those undertaking new roles

How effective is the organisation in developing its staff?

ELEMENT 8: PARTNERSHIPS AND RESOURCES

This element is concerned with the effectiveness of the organisation's partnerships with communities, other learning providers, employers and other agencies. It considers how well the organisation seeks out appropriate links and uses them to develop programmes and services to enhance the learner experience. It focuses on collaboration to design programmes and services, support learners, enhance flexibility and promote equality. It also considers the management of resources for learning and the use of management information.

QUALITY INDICATORS

8.1	Partnership working with communities, other learning providers, agencies and employers	•	Strategic links
		•	Collaborative arrangements to promote access and inclusion
		•	Responsiveness to requirements of other agencies
		•	Involvement of external agencies

How extensive and productive are organisation partnerships with communities, other learning providers, agencies and employers?

8.2	Management and use of resources and learning environments	•	Planning, deployment, and monitoring of resources
		•	Use of management information
		•	Sufficiency, adequacy, accessibility of accommodation and facilities
		•	Sufficiency, adequacy, and accessibility of ICT resources

		• Sufficiency, adequacy, accessibility of learning equipment and materials • Arrangements for learners with additional support needs • Arrangements to promote sustainability of resources
How well does the organisation manage the use of resources and learning environments?		

ELEMENT 9: EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND DIRECTION

This element is concerned with the leadership of the organisation's educational provision. It considers the extent to which national policies and local factors influence the senior management team in setting educational aims and objectives. It evaluates the effectiveness of the leadership of planning and delivery of the organisation's programmes and of its services to support learners, learning and teaching. It also explores the extent to which there is a culture of quality improvement and enhancement in the organisation.

QUALITY INDICATORS

9.1	Educational aims, objectives and targets	• Clarity and comprehensiveness • Responsiveness to national policies and local issues including environmental sustainability • Staff understanding and commitment • Match between strategic aims and objectives, and operational planning
How appropriate, clear, and influential are the vision, aims, objectives and targets of the organisation?		
9.2	Leadership for learning and teaching	• Vision and direction of the curriculum • Strategies for improving learning and teaching, retention, achievement and attainment • Team leadership • Staff development strategies • Involvement and motivation of staff
How effective is the leadership for learning and teaching?		
9.3	Leadership for services to support learning	• Vision and direction • Responsiveness to legislation and national guidance • Planning and coordination of services • Links to external agencies providing resources, services, and information
How effective is the leadership for services which support learners?		
9.4	Developing and maintaining	• Learner engagement in organisation internal review and self-evaluation arrangements

a quality culture	• Staff engagement in organisation internal review and self-evaluation arrangements • Internal review and self-evaluation policy and arrangements • Roles and responsibilities for quality enhancement • Implementation of quality procedures • Identification of areas for improvement and enhancement • Action plans • Improvement and enhancement trends
How effective is the organisation in developing and maintaining a quality culture?	

Appendix 2: Grades used in reporting

Excellent	Outstanding and sector leading
Very Good	Major strengths
Good	Important strengths with some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	Strengths just outweigh weaknesses
Weak	Important weaknesses
Unsatisfactory	Major weaknesses

The six-point scale is a tool for grading the quality indicators. It is mainly used by Education Scotland, local authorities and other governing bodies for the purpose of national and/or local benchmarking across a number of establishments. It should be appreciated 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 applied consistently.

An evaluation of **excellent** applies to this aspect of the organisation's work which is of a very high quality. An evaluation of excellent represents an outstanding standard of provision which exemplifies very best practice and is worth disseminating beyond the current provision. It implies that very high levels of performance are sustainable and will be maintained.

An evaluation of **very good** means this aspect of the organisation's work is characterised by major strengths. There are very few areas for improvement and any that do exist do not significantly diminish learners' experiences. While an evaluation of very good represents a high standard of provision, it is a standard that should be achievable by all. It implies that it is fully appropriate to continue to provide learning without significant adjustment. However, there is an expectation that the centre will take opportunities to improve and strive to raise performance to excellent.

An evaluation of **good** means this aspect of the organisation's work is characterised by important strengths which, taken together, clearly outweigh any areas for improvement. An evaluation of *good* represents a standard of provision in which the strengths have a significant positive impact. However, the quality of learners' experiences is diminished in some way by aspects in which improvement is required. It implies that the centre should seek to improve further the areas of important strength but take action to address the areas for improvement.

An evaluation of **satisfactory** means this aspect of the organisation's work is characterised by strengths which just outweigh weaknesses. An evaluation of satisfactory 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. However, while the weaknesses will not be important enough to have a substantially adverse impact, they do constrain the overall quality of learners' experiences. It implies that the centre should take action to address areas of weakness while building on its strengths.

An evaluation of **weak** means this aspect of an organisation's work is characterised by some strengths, but where there are important weaknesses. In general, an evaluation of weak may be

arrived at in several circumstances. While there may be some strengths, the important weaknesses will, either individually or collectively, be sufficient to diminish learners' experiences in substantial ways. It implies the need for prompt, structured and planned action on the part of the centre.

An evaluation of **unsatisfactory** means this aspect of an organisation's work is characterised by major weaknesses, requiring immediate remedial action. The learners' experience is at risk in significant respects. In almost all cases, staff responsible for training evaluated as unsatisfactory will require support from senior managers in planning and carrying out the necessary actions to effect improvement. This may involve working alongside other staff or agencies in or beyond the immediate support given by the centre.

Appendix 3: The PRAISE framework

The following principles have been identified as underpinning best practice:

Purpose – being clear about the overall purpose of the engagement with an establishment and retaining this throughout. Creating a shared agenda with staff in the establishment and amongst other Education Scotland colleagues who may be involved in initial or ongoing engagement.

Relationships – building and maintaining constructive relationships throughout the process as the basis of a high-quality engagement, providing support and challenge.

Awareness – maintaining a high level of awareness of the context in which staff are operating, of their feelings and reactions to the engagement process and of Education Scotland staff's own approach and its impact.

Information gathering – careful inquiry to gather and understand information. Retaining an objective stance, testing assumptions, and assimilating data before identifying what is working well, and where support would be beneficial.

Sharing information – communicating thoroughly throughout the engagement process to prepare and inform staff. Encouraging staff to be open in providing their perspective and providing appropriate feedback as the engagement process progresses.

Enabling – treating people with respect, engaging them in professional dialogue, recognising their efforts and providing conclusions in a constructive way to encourage ownership and learning to take place.

Purpose – being clear about the overall purpose of the engagement and retaining this throughout. Creating a shared agenda with staff in an establishment and amongst other Education Scotland colleagues who may be involved in initial or ongoing engagement.

What works well?

Before the engagement activity
- be prepared well in advance;
- ensure you know as much as possible about the establishment's context and bear this in mind throughout the conversation;
- have an open mind to others' ideas and perspectives; and
- create a shared understanding of purpose of the engagement.

During the engagement activity
- build a shared agenda – establish common ground and a commitment to working together;
- refer back to purpose of the engagement activity to confirm type and range of information required;
- retain focus on priorities in managing own and others' time;
- use a coaching approach to the discussion to enable the participants to fully explain their thinking and support them to self-identify and overcome obstacles;
- focus on quality of recovery planning; and aim to support improvements, minimising negative impact to those involved;
- manage staff/stakeholder expectations of the process; and

- demonstrate that the discussion has your full attention.

End of the engagement activity
- keep in mind the desired outcomes – use to inform **how** to deliver conclusions from the engagement;
- offer suggestions from effective practice perspective; and
- agree a timeline for further contact if required.

Relationships – building and maintaining constructive relationships throughout the process as the basis of a high-quality engagement, providing support and challenge.

What works well?

Before the engagement activity
- make a friendly first contact early, to set a positive tone and good first impression;
- be accessible to respond to queries in a timely manner; and
- provide information to explain and reassure the supportive nature of the meeting.

During the engagement activity
- aim to develop an equal relationship to reduce the barrier your job role can create;
- establish an appropriate tone;
- treat others with respect;
- demonstrate empathy with their experience;
- retain a good-humoured manner;
- model an open communication style;
- provide reassurance to staff about the integrity of the process to maximise value and accuracy of conclusions; and
- choose an appropriate time and manner of sharing tricky messages.

End of the engagement activity
- use humour carefully – or not at all;
- be mindful of style and tone of delivery;
- allow the person to hear and accept the messages;
- seek acknowledgement of the message, adjusting pace;
- acknowledge emotional response in others - e.g. long silence, allow space, then move on;
- monitor response to the sharing of messages; and
- agree a timeline for further contact if required.

Awareness – maintaining a high level of awareness of the context in which staff are operating, of their feelings and reactions to the engagement process and of Education Scotland staff's own approach and its impact.

What works well?

Before the engagement activity
- recognise the context and previous experience of the establishment to anticipate concerns or difficulties;
- ensure that unnecessary disruption is not created in planning contact and activity;
- contextualise the briefing for staff – make it personal;
- seek to understand any issues that might be affecting staff morale or ability; and

- seek to understand any issues which may be affecting a learning situation - e.g. behavioural difficulties/turnover of staff.

During the engagement activity
- recognise pressures staff may be under in manner and timing of contacts in addition to those related to the engagement activity;
- retain awareness of own style and its impact on others;
- maintain calm and controlled demeanour;
- recognise your own reactions and respect other people's; and
- if in doubt, stop and ask – phone a colleague to talk things through.

End of the engagement activity
- set up arrangements to create an appropriate atmosphere where possible;
- help the listeners get beyond taking conclusions personally;
- ensure efforts to improve are suitably acknowledged;
- focus on own contribution to ensuring conclusions are received constructively; and
- take confidence from thoroughness of own work, evidence and organisation behind you.

Information gathering – careful inquiry to gather and understand information. Retaining an objective stance, testing assumptions, and assimilating data before identifying what is working well, and where support would be beneficial.

What works well?

Before the engagement activity
- use ongoing engagement guidelines – plan the order and structure; and
- prioritise and decide what matters, without trying to cover everything at once.

During the engagement activity
- ensure fair and thorough coverage of evidence;
- stay open and objective when gathering the facts;
- keep thinking and reflecting;
- seek first to understand, before reaching conclusions;
- start with open questions, follow up to probe further;
- listen carefully and examine information before making decisions about how to act;
- record and gather information which takes account of freedom of information (FOI) and GDPR requirements;
- ensure evidence base for conclusions is sound and will withstand challenge;
- share findings as you go;
- triangulate information, analyse, then synthesise the information gathered;
- allow flexibility in the timetable/schedule of contacts.

End of the engagement activity
- ensure the information for sharing conclusions is accurate and developmental;
- be as constructive as possible;
- ensure conclusions are thorough and balanced;
- ensure coverage is proportionate;
- anticipate a planned, structured challenge from leaders;
- ask for further information for challenge; remain objective; and
- allow scope for adapting the conclusions in the light of further additional information.

Sharing information – communicating thoroughly throughout the engagement process to prepare and inform staff. Encouraging staff to be open in providing their perspective and providing appropriate conclusions as the engagement progresses.

What works well?

Before the engagement activity
- provide helpful, advance information for all involved, especially if a multi-site provision;
- check briefing has been useful and understood; and
- consult with the establishment to identify possible obstacles during process.

During the engagement activity
- create enough time for conversations and professional dialogue;
- reflect, summarise what you have heard; and
- arrange further contacts as necessary to follow up on specific points as they emerge – allow managers to respond.

End of the engagement activity
- explain process of gathering information as well as conclusions;
- clarify the features that informed the conclusions;
- use recorded notes/text during final sharing of conclusions;
- create opportunities for further dialogue and contacts to aid clarity and understanding;
- share conclusions confidently and objectively; and
- in presenting conclusions, provide well-judged examples to help people to understand.

Enabling – treating people with respect, engaging them in professional dialogue, recognising their efforts and providing conclusions in a constructive way to encourage ownership and learning to take place.

What works well?

Before the engagement activity
- aim to make the experience positive for everyone working alongside;
- encourage staff to ask questions;
- set a supportive, encouraging tone; and
- acknowledge the pressures an engagement activity can create and how you can help to minimise these.

During the engagement activity
- demonstrate genuine desire to learn about the uniqueness of the establishment and to help them to improve;
- invite staff and stakeholders to share what they feel proud of and recognise their efforts to improve;
- encourage them to contribute thoughts about what needs to change or develop;
- reassure staff that your expectations are realistic;
- show interest in their intent as well as their action;
- encourage staff to take ownership in providing additional information;
- involve staff in professional dialogue; peer-to-peer;
- nurture discussion – generate a dynamic that fosters thinking, reflection, openness;
- help staff to self-evaluate; and
- share conclusions that are positive, as well as guidance on ways to improve further.

End of the engagement activity

- share structure of the engagement activity guidelines; encourage people to take ownership;
- build on the positives; give credit wherever possible; convey areas for further development constructively;
- share conclusions in a supportive manner;
- recognise good practice and achievement;
- acknowledge commitment and effort;
- when necessary, explain what is needed to achieve the next level;
- use phrases that are positive and forward looking e.g. 'not yet' and/or 'have begun to';
- provide guidance on strategies to move forward;
- share examples of excellence from others; and
- provide conclusions directly to staff, as much as possible.