

Quality and Continuous Improvement: Guide for local authorities' sixth form provision

What is the Quality and Continuous Improvement Condition? This is a condition of funding and registration, and requires providers to demonstrate that their provision is of good quality and that they engage with continuous improvement.

What is good quality? Good quality education is that which meets the reasonable needs of learners. It is demonstrated through: positive Estyn inspection outcomes; positive learner outcomes; a good learner experience; and seeking to improve continuously.

What is the Quality Framework? This sets out guidance on how providers can demonstrate that their provision is of good quality. It includes pillars, which are criteria Medr believes demonstrate provision is of good quality and should drive good learner outcomes. Local authorities must take account of this Framework.

How will Medr assess compliance with the Quality and Continuous Improvement condition? Medr will consider the outcomes of Estyn inspections and other external quality assessments alongside data analysis and information.

How does the condition apply to Local Authority-maintained sixth forms? The way in which local authorities demonstrate good quality sixth form provision will be different to other parts of the tertiary education sector, because they are responsible for supporting, and holding schools to account for, standards. They also have a role as curriculum planners, particularly in shaping local curricula and evaluating the quality of teaching and learning.

Local authorities usually consider sixth forms as part of the whole school, and they are also inspected as a single entity. In developing their understanding of their schools, local authorities should explore whether the outcomes for sixth forms are different. They will also want to consider the condition collectively across all their schools.

We set out below some ways in which local authorities could demonstrate that their provision is of good quality, under the pillars of the Quality Framework. This is not intended to capture all practices, nor to set out requirements. It aims to help others reflect on their practice.

Learner engagement – learners have opportunities to engage in providers' decision making, and providers can demonstrate the effectiveness and impact of this engagement

Compliance with the Learner Engagement Code is a legal requirement on the governing bodies of schools with sixth forms themselves, rather than on local authorities. Medr will seek assurance from school governing bodies that they meet the requirements. Through its monitoring Medr will identify where schools would benefit from additional support, training or the sharing of good practice, and may ask local authorities to help facilitate this.

Learner voice – consideration of the views of learners about the quality of the tertiary education they receive

Local authorities may support schools in this through activities such as:

- Meeting with learners to get direct feedback on their experience, and feeding this back to the school for its self-evaluation
- Asking schools for feedback on learner views
- Advising schools on learner surveys and other feedback mechanisms, and supporting the sharing of good practice
- Engaging with staff to understand how the learner voice is taken into account.

Engagement of the governing body – the governing body has active and effective oversight of the quality and continuous improvement of the provider's tertiary education

Local authorities demonstrate this through both their own governance structures, and their support for those of schools. Examples include:

- Consideration of reports such as the use of funding and its impact, through their boards and/or committees
- Supporting schools, including with issues such as attendance, additional learning needs and finance
- Ensuring that information on quality at schools with sixth forms is subject to internal systems of oversight
- Providing training for school governors, including national training, to support governors' understanding of quality assurance, critical friend training, and supporting governors to challenge effectively

- Oversight of collaborative arrangements
- Ensuring that they take account of relevant legislation and guidance
- Attending school governing body meetings and reporting on the governing body's engagement in quality, including oversight of the School Improvement Plan
- Evaluation of the impact of School Improvement Plans

Self-evaluation – Providers undertake regular, rigorous, self-evaluation, planning for improvement, and reflection, which is the basis of the external assessment of quality and planning for continuous improvement

Examples of this include:

- Local authorities' self-evaluations
- Working with schools to ensure that the schools undertake effective self-evaluation to inform continuous improvement planning
- Data analysis, to understand trends and consider priorities

Externality – there will be externality in the assessment of quality and evaluation of planning for continuous improvement, and through other mechanisms including use of benchmarking and external reference points

Local authorities report demonstrating this through:

- Estyn inspection of local government education services
- Estyn inspection of schools
- Regional School Improvement Groups
- The National School Improvement Group
- Report of the National School Improvement Group to Association of Directors of Education in Wales (ADEW)
- Collaborations between schools
- Consideration of data, benchmarks, trends, etc

Continuous improvement – good practice is shared both internally and externally to drive innovation and excellence in the quality of the learning experience across all parts of the tertiary education sector and across all parts of Wales

Ways in which local authorities demonstrate they engage in continuous improvement include:

- Engagement with the National School Improvement Group, which feeds into ADEW
- Engaging with continuous improvement planning through internal mechanisms
- Engaging with secondary heads and colleges
- Supporting school improvement planning, including ensuring that staff and learners are involved in school improvement plans, that plans are effective, and they are being implemented
- Regional collaboration with other local authorities
- Sharing good practice within and beyond the local authority
- Supporting joint commissioning between schools, eg Welsh medium support and leadership training
- Supporting schools in partnership working, eg Welsh medium schools participating in Welsh medium networks, collaboration between local schools

Professional learning and development – providers and Medr support the professional learning and development of members of the tertiary education workforce

Local authorities have shared a number of ways in which they support professional learning, including:

- Using school improvement planning as a vehicle
- Developing bespoke support plans for each school
- Bringing together heads of sixth forms in networks
- Supporting schools to collaborate with each other to share practice
- Identifying individuals who need professional development, and areas where change is needed.

It is likely that local authorities will engage with Dysgu in this area in future.

If you have any questions please contact quality@medr.cymru

Medr

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