



T: 0300 244 4000
E: scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Sir Michael Barber
Nicholson House
Lime Klin Close
Bristol
BS34 8SR

chair@officeforstudents.org.uk

1 October 2018

Dear Michael,

Thank you for your letter of 11 September to John Swinney MSP, Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills, seeking the consent of Scottish Ministers to allow Scottish higher education providers' to participate in year 4 of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). As this area falls within my portfolio of responsibilities your letter has been passed to me to respond.

As you will know, the Scottish Government is fully committed to supporting teaching excellence and ensuring continuous improvement in the higher education sector. Our Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF) approach to quality in Scotland is the key determinant of assessing the provision of quality learning in Scottish higher education institutions. Our distinct approach to quality assurance and enhancement in higher education has been developed through close partnerships within our sector and is underlined by the three principles of student engagement, quality culture and high quality learning.

However, Scottish Ministers have previously given consent to our institutions to participate in the TEF by enabling their voluntary participation and I would not wish to stand in their way of applying to participate in TEF year 4, and the second year of the subject level pilots, should they choose to do so.

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My officials will continue to engage on the development of the TEF to ensure that there are no adverse consequences for students and institutions in Scotland and will keep me fully apprised.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Lochhead". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

RICHARD LOCHHEAD

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