

Education Quality Assurance

Conference Highlights - May 2025

Our Aim for the Conference

“To share our new vision for the delivery of NMC Education Quality Assurance (EdQA) services, where we can work together with you to build trust and regulate approved programmes in a safe and supportive way”.

The current context of the NMC: *Professor Melaine Coward, Assistant Director for EdQA*

In this session, we highlighted contemporary news of relevance to AEIs, and addressed key challenges we’re facing at the NMC, including:

- Our organisational culture and [our programme of change](#), following the [independent culture review](#);
- Our new Chair of Council [Ron Barclay-Smith](#);
- The next steps for our [Practice Learning Review](#);
- The recently published [New principles for advanced practice](#) and the next steps towards Standards; and the
- The timeline and how to get involved in our programme of work to [review The Code and Revalidation requirements](#).

Sharing our learning from the academic year 2023/24: Dr Sophia Hunt, Head of EdQA

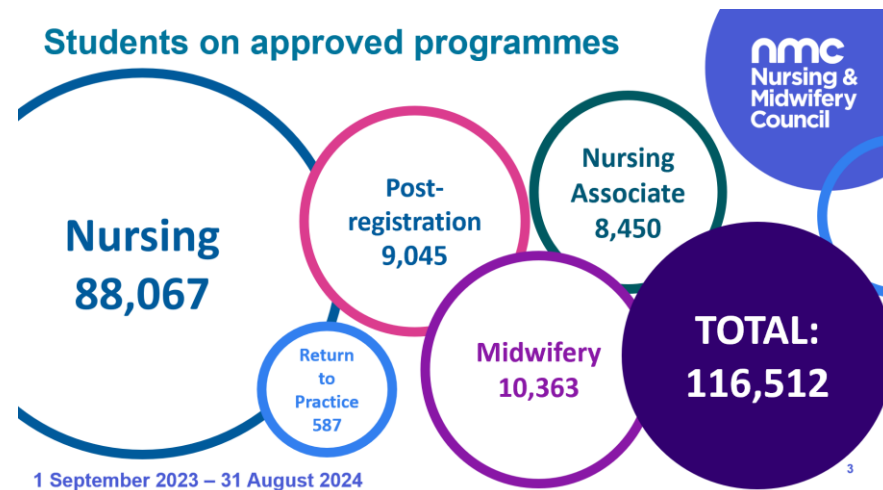
In this session, we transparently shared our findings, recommendations and actions following a pivotal year in EdQA, ensuring the focus remained on our shared purpose: *to ensure the 116,512 students on all NMC approved programmes have the best possible learning experiences to meet our standards and join the register able to deliver safe, effective and kind care.*

A lot happened in EdQA in 2023-24!

- Stakeholder perceptions of Education QA exercise
- Award of contract for our new Quality Assurance Service Partner
- Annual Self Report outcomes 2022-23
- Learning and improvement review, post withdrawal of a programme
- Our highest ever number of critical level concerns
- Our first proactive monitoring since 2018
- Our QASP undertook 133 QA 'events'
- Mandatory Exceptional Report 2024



Students on approved programmes



We highlighted the findings of the [Review of the 2024 Mandatory Exceptional Reports](#) from a four countries perspective and in response to the report we announced key changes to our ways of working.

EdQA announcement: Simulated Practice Learning (SPL) in nursing programmes

- We've written an EdQA Statement on SPL in nursing programmes, to provide clarity to AEIs, practice learning partners and students – we'll send this to all AEIs across the UK who provide nursing programmes and publish this on our website;
- SPL will now be a binary decision at approval – the AEI is approved for up to 600 hours of SPL, or not approved to deliver SPL;
- Approval can be given based on evidence of the AEI's understanding of SPL, demonstrated through AEI plans/policies;
- AEIs who are approved to deliver SPL can change (increase or decrease) the amount of SPL they wish to use in their programmes using their internal minor modifications process; and,
- We'll write to all AEIs who provide nursing programmes signposting the EdQA statement and confirm how this change impacts their provision.

EdQA announcement: Protected Learning Time (PLT) for reflection (counting towards NMC required hours for practice learning)

- We've written an EdQA Statement on PLT for reflection, to provide clarity to AEIs, practice learning partners and students – we'll send this to all AEIs across the UK and publish this on our website;
- AEIs are encouraged to consider and formalise their approach to PLT for reflection, in collaboration with students, practice learning partners and other key stakeholders, to reduce inequity between students;
- AEIs can use an internal minor modification process to make changes to ensure students are and feel treated equitably across programmes; and,
- AEIs should seek guidance and confirmation from EdQA if they're unsure on introducing or continuing with a model of PLT for reflection during the NMC required hours for practice learning.

EdQA announcement: Alternative delivery locations

- We've defined the types of alternative delivery location and will update this on our website;
- We've reviewed the approval mechanisms for each type of delivery location and produced a risk assessment matrix; and,
- The QAA will provide updated guidance on the approval/modifications pathway for adding alternative delivery locations in the next iteration of the QAA Handbook for NMC Quality Assurance Reviews.

Risk assessment And QA activity levels



	AEI Campus		Satellite Site		Partnership		Endorsement	
	New	Approved	New	Approved	New	Approved	New	Approved
New programme	High	Medium	High	Medium	Very High	High	Very High	High
Approved programme	Low	Low	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	High	Medium

	AEI Campus		Satellite Site		Partnership		Endorsement	
	New	Approved	New	Approved	New	Approved	New	Approved
Approved programme	Minor modification	Minor modification	Major modification, online	Major modification, desktop	Major modification, full site visit	Major modification, online	Major modification, full site visit	Major modification, online or visit

We also took the opportunity to discuss specific challenges being faced by AEIs in England, who deliver apprenticeship programmes.

EdQA announcement: Level 7 apprenticeship-only programmes (in England)

- We've designed a fast track route to adding a direct-entry pathway to approved Level 7 apprenticeship only programmes;
- Suitable for programmes that have been approved or modified since 01 September 2022; and,
- AEIs should contact the EdQA team directly to undertake this process (not request an approval event via the QAA or QA Link).

EdQA announcement: Adding Employer Partners to existing apprenticeship programmes (in England)

- We're removing the requirement for AEIs to apply to the NMC to add an Employer Partner – this means, you no longer need to submit an Apprenticeship Modification Form;
- We expect AEIs to have a robust employer partner onboarding process in place to ensure a safe and supportive learning environment for all apprenticeship students, that meets the relevant standards for practice learning;
- All employer partners can now be added in the same way as other Practice Learning Partners and do not require NMC approval, even if the AEI is choosing to partner with an employer with a CQC inadequate rating; and,
- AEIs will be required to provide a full and up to date list of employer partners when requested to do so, therefore should continue to maintain their own records.

Our EdQA Learning and Improvement Journey: *Professor Melaine Coward*

For this session, Melaine talked about her personal journey to the NMC and how over the past year we've used the different areas of our learning to create our own action plan and how this conference marks the start of a new way working with AEs *"where we can work together with you to build trust and regulate approved programmes in a safe and supportive way"*.

The role of EdQA Officers and our new Regional Approach: *Caroline Dobson, EdQA Manager*

We provided an overview of the role of EdQA Officers and how they will support you moving forwards.

Our new regional approach

- Exciting new change!
- Recruited additional staff in order to move to regional approach
- Build open and transparent relationships with our AEs
- Enable a proactive, supportive approach
- Single point of access with dedicated regional inboxes

If your query relates to:

- Interpretation of the NMC standards – EducationandStandards@nmc-uk.org
- Enquires about approvals or modifications – nmc@qaa.ac.uk



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Role of an Education Quality Assurance Officer

- First point of contact for Education Quality Assurance
- Monitoring of concerns
- New programme monitoring
- Processing programme approvals and major modification reports
- QA related queries regarding current approved programmes
- QA Link queries
- ASR queries



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We then introduced you to the EdQA team members and the regional areas they cover.

EdQA announcement: Contacting our Regional EdQA Officers

The following contact details are replacing: QATeam@nmc-uk.org and QALink@nmc-uk.org and Exceptional.Reporting@nmc-uk.org

- EdQA Midlands and East: EdQA.MidsandEast@nmc-uk.org
- EdQA North of England: EdQA.North@nmc-uk.org
- EdQA South of England: EdQA.South@nmc-uk.org
- EdQA London: EdQA.London@nmc-uk.org
- EdQA Northern Ireland: EdQA.N.Ireland@nmc-uk.org
- EdQA Wales: EdQA.Wales@nmc-uk.org
- EdQA Scotland: EdQA.Scotland@nmc-uk.org

We also made sure that AElS are clear on other **Key Contacts** who can help them:

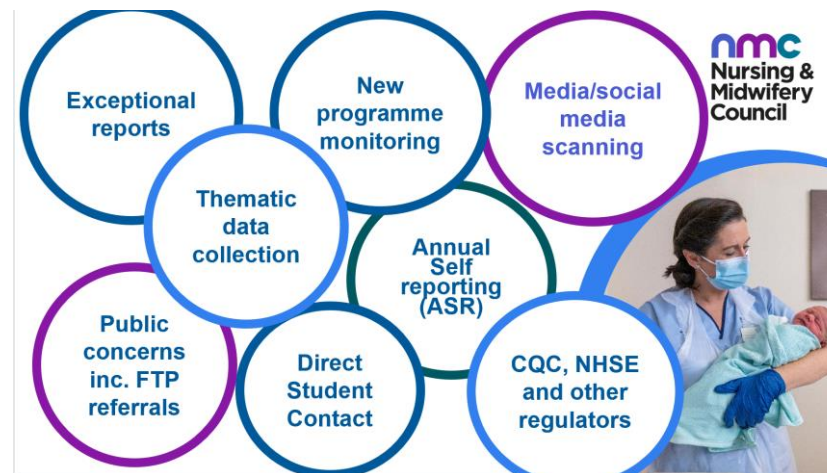
- Education and Standards Team, for interpretation of the NMC standards: educationandstandards@nmc-uk.org
- The Quality Assurance Agency's NMC team, for all approval and modification enquiries: nmc@gaa.ac.uk
- Issues or concerns regarding uploading students to the HEI Portal: heiinfo@nmc-uk.org

Our approach to Concerns Management: *Caroline Dobson*

In this practical session, we provided an outline of our approach to concerns management and then asked attendees to work together, through a series of scenarios. AEI colleagues, supported by the EdQA Team, worked in groups to explore the risks associated with each scenario, and used their knowledge and experience to plan appropriate follow up actions.

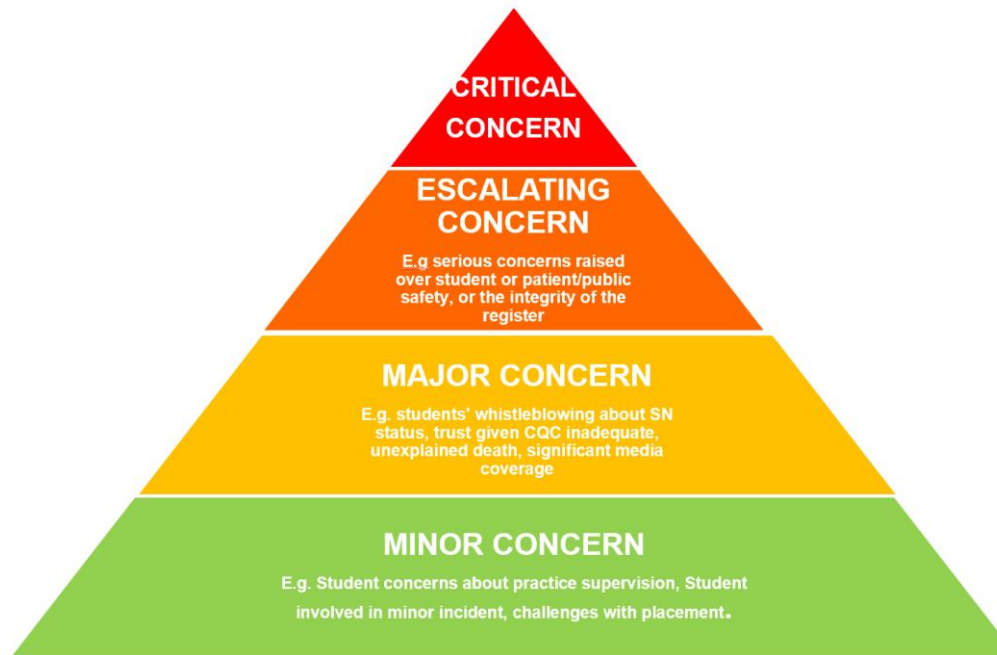
Our approach to concerns

- We use data and intelligence to **inform** everything we do within EdQA
- When looking at **data** we consider and balance all sources of information and intelligence
- This ensures we can undertake **proportionate** and targeted steps
- To engage with and **proactively support** our AEIs and mitigate risks to public safety



We explained how we triage and classify concerns in the EdQA team, and the sort of actions we may take in response. We highlighted that the term 'escalating concern' is an internal terminology to reflect a 'major level' concern where the team wish to consult with the QA Board regarding the appropriate next steps.

AEIs can always ask their Regional EdQA Officer about the NMC's current level of concern and risk assessment of the AEIs response, during meetings or engagement about an exceptional report. We'll share this internal risk assessment information with you in an open and transparent way.



EdQA activities in response

- Review at the NMC Quality Assurance Board
- Regular review meetings
- Request for an action plan
- Meeting with a senior team member
- Meeting with an EQA officer
- ER, clarification emails and/or data return

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Management of Student Concerns: *Krutika Patel, EdQA Officer – South Region*

We've been piloting a new approach to how we receive and handle concerns directly from students. Due to the success of this pilot, we plan on enhancing this and rolling this out over Summer 2025.

We're introducing a Student Concerns form, to ensure we're clear with the student about our regulatory remit (what it is, and what it isn't) and understand more quickly the outcome the student is looking for. Our form means we can identify very quickly if the student has already followed their AEI's processes before contacting us and gain clear consent from the student, if they wish us to follow up directly with the AEI. When this system is up and running, we'll include an overview and link to the pages on our website in our newsletters.

Learning from (and about) Monitoring: *Dr Sophia Hunt*

We know the words 'NMC Monitoring' can cause fear and uncertainty for AEI colleagues, however, when we talk about 'monitoring' we're talking about a whole range of routine NMC processes.

For information, we shared that our new colleagues at the QAA have asked us to add the word 'assessment' to make it clear which activities result in an outcome judgement and a formal report, which must be published, meaning we'll be amending our terminology.

We've also undertaken a listening exercise with AEI's who've experienced our processes, in order to learn from and feedforward the things that matter most to AEI colleagues when undergoing an 'assessment' and we talked through the 'stop, start, continue' feedback.

What do we mean by 'monitoring'?

We're actively monitoring programmes in many different ways:

- Concerns monitoring & exceptional reports
- New programme monitoring
- Enhanced scrutiny
- Annual Self Report
- Thematic monitoring (mandatory exceptional report)
- Listening events
- Monitoring visits (routine or risk based)
- Extraordinary reviews

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Extraordinary Review Assessments

&

Monitoring
Assessment
Visits

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We also talked about the recent pilot of the **Annual Self Report (ASR)** for the academic year 2023/24 and shared the feedback we received from AEIs with attendees.

The feedback we received was overwhelmingly positive about continuing an online form for the ASR, rather than returning to an extensive narrative document. AEIs recognised the need for occasional 'thematic questions' where a more in depth response was required, but overall preferred the approach of the NMC team contacting them to have a discussion, rather than provide a written narrative.

We talked about continuous improvements for the ASR process and **proposed** the timeline for the next ASR cycle, in response to the survey results. AEI colleagues are keen we confirm the ASR timeline as soon as possible, however, were grateful for the opportunity to comment on the proposed timeline (on the slide) before this is confirmed. There was support in the two conference rooms for the proposed timeline and therefore the EdQA team will look to formalise and communicate the precise timeline, based on this additional feedback.

What does that mean for ASR 24-25?

We will:

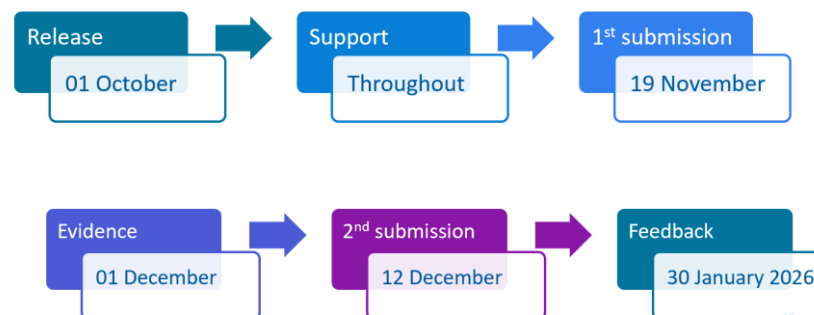
- Send out a clear timetable for the ASR 24-25
- Make sure follow up requirements are clear 'up front'
- Maintain and improve the electronic form
- Host a walk-through webinar, for AEI colleagues who cannot access the YouTube video
- Make improvements to the spreadsheet
- Continue to offer drop-in sessions for support
- Continue to ensure feedback letters are timely

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Proposed ASR 24-25 key milestones



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Listening to You: *Professor Melaine Coward*

We heard feedback from AEIs on the advantages and challenges they are facing in introducing a **Lead Nurse for Education (LNE)** role. We explained how we see the value of this role from an education quality perspective, but we cannot formally require AEIs to introduce this role or specify a time allocation is given.

AEIs have started to build a network for LNEs, which will contact the NMC and request meeting attendance and advice whenever needed.

EdQA announcement: Our Next Conference!

- There was huge support for continuing to provide EdQA Conferences and the next topics will be influenced by the feedback form;
- The most popular future conference topics in the feedback are:
 - Making programme modifications (is it minor or major?)
 - The Practice Learning Review
 - The QA Link;
- We heard from attendees that the next conference would be best held after the next ASR cycle, so we can share our learning; and,
- Some attendees have told us, they're keen to share the learning more widely within their AEI and would like us to offer the conference sessions online, as workshops, for people who were unable to attend. We'll take this suggestion forward.

We'd like to thank everyone who attended our conferences for their engagement and candour, and for providing us with their support, encouragement and constructive feedback as we continue on our learning and improvement journey.

We look forward to seeing you next time!

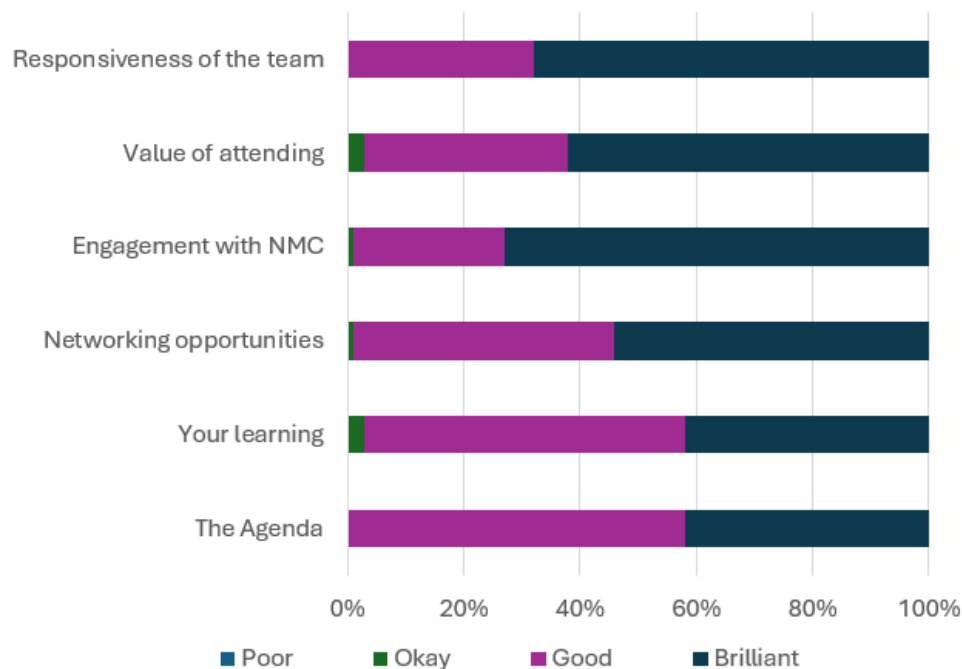
EdQA Conferences - May 2025

Overall survey response rate: **59% of attendees**

Overall, how would you rate the EdQA conference?



0% 0% 1% 16% 83%



Sample of feedback comments:

Finally **feel heard** by the NMC. Such a refreshing approach very well led
Very valuable provided most useful update and **clarity** re processes. Great
to hear about changes implemented and meet new regional officer

Excellent and this should be more regular

A new wave has begun

Change to culture - More efficient, transparent and **helpful**

The positive changes in the NMC. How **empowering** the day has been for
my role.

Best NMC event ever!

Thank you for transparency, listening & **compassionate leadership**

Very positive, proper answers given to questions posed - thank you. Your
transparency today was appreciated.

This was an excellent conference and by far the most **positive** NMC event I
have been involved in during my 20 years in nursing

Key change in culture and it was positive to see that your whole team
seemed to have the same **sense of vision** and positivity

The regional contacts are already helping and great to see such
approachability

Good presenters and opportunity to **speak and share safely**.