



Scotland's Tertiary
Quality Enhancement
Framework

Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER)

University of St Andrews

This review method
is ESG compliant

April 2025

Contents

About the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review method	1
About this review.....	1
Review judgement and findings	2
Features of good practice	2
Recommendations for action	2
Contextual information about the University of St Andrews	3
Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment	5
Supporting student success	11
Student partnership and engagement	18
Enhancement and quality culture	22

About the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review method

The QAA website explains the method for Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) and has links to the TQER handbook and other informative documents.¹ You can also find more information about the [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education \(QAA\)](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/types-of-review/tertiary-quality-enhancement-review).²

About this review

This is a report of a TQER conducted by QAA at the University of St Andrews and carried out by a team of four peer reviewers:

- Alison Blackburn (Reviewer)
- Liam Brady (Student Reviewer)
- Dr Claire Carney (Reviewer)
- Professor Brian Green (Reviewer)

TQER is an evidence-based process. Review judgements are based on the documents that TQER teams scrutinise and the meetings they hold, and are informed by their experience.

In TQER, the TQER team makes a judgement on whether, currently, the institution meets sector expectations in managing academic standards, enhancing the quality of the learning experience it provides and enabling student success and, further, has the quality assurance and enhancement arrangements in place to enable this into the future.

In advance of the two review visits, the institution submits a self-evaluative document (the Strategic Impact Analysis and an Advance Information Set, the latter arranged around the Sector-Agreed Principles of the UK Quality Code and comprising a range of materials about the institution's arrangements for managing quality and academic standards. The Strategic Impact Analysis and Advance Information Set frame the TQER team's analysis and understanding of the operation of the institution's management of their quality and enhancement and enables them to consider the institution's practice in relation to the UK Quality Code and Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

The review comprises two visits: an Initial Review Visit which, for the University of St Andrews, took place on-campus on 10-11 March 2025; and a Main Review Visit which took place on-campus on 22-24 April 2025.

The judgement for this review can be found on page 3, followed by features of good practice identified by the TQER team and recommendations for action. This is followed by the detailed findings of the review.

TQER reports provide an information base for the production of thematic reports that identify findings across tertiary institutions in Scotland.

1 About TQER: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/types-of-review/tertiary-quality-enhancement-review>

2 About QAA: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us>.

Review judgement and findings

For information about the review judgement and findings refer to the [Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review: Guide for Institutions](#).

Based on the information presented, the TQER team judges that:

The University of St Andrews is **effective** in managing academic standards, enhancing the quality of the learning experience and enabling student success.

Features of good practice

The TQER team identified the following **features of good practice**:

- **The strategically-driven and well-co-ordinated support for, and promotion of, learning and teaching:** The University's support for driving excellence in learning and teaching is reflective of a strategic partnership approach delivered through a comprehensive range of formal and informal mechanisms. **(Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment)**
- **A comprehensive and effective approach to student support:** The University operates a comprehensive and inclusive approach to student support which is delivered through anticipatory and targeted measures, underpinned by the strategic use of data to inform interventions. This is further strengthened by cohesive 'wrap-around' provision, facilitated through effective collaboration between Professional Student Services and Academic Schools. **(Supporting Student Success)**

Recommendations for action

The TQER team makes the following **recommendations for action**:

- **Transparency of information for applicants regarding fees for external placement years:** The University should review its communications with regard to the tuition fees payable for an external placement year on the Integrated Masters programmes in Biology and Chemistry to ensure complete transparency for applicants. **(Supporting Student Success)**
- **Parity of the postgraduate student experience:** The University should consider further steps to ensure parity of the postgraduate student experience, both taught and research, with that of undergraduates. This consideration should include student representation mechanisms, ways of building a sense of community and the locus for strategic leadership of the postgraduate student experience at the University. **(Student Engagement and Partnership)**
- **Clarity in governance arrangements:** The University should progress the intended governance review in order to ensure clarity of decision making. **(Enhancement & Quality Culture)**

Contextual information about the University of St Andrews

1 Founded in the early 15th century, the University of St Andrews (the University) is Scotland's first university and the third oldest in the English-speaking world. The University's buildings are distributed throughout the town centre and the North Haugh and, in 2020, the University opened the Eden Campus, which includes Walter Bower House and the Entrepreneurship Centre, in the nearby village of Guardbridge.

2 A research-intensive university, St Andrews is structured into four faculties – Arts, Divinity, Medicine and Science – but, for the purposes of managing academic standards, quality and enhancement, the primary organisational units are the eighteen Schools. These are led by Heads of School supported by other key roles within each School, including Directors of Teaching, Directors of Postgraduate Studies (Taught and Research), Directors of Research, Directors of Impact and Innovation, Employability Officers and Wellbeing Officers.

3 St Leonard's College also exists within the University structure for postgraduate students, with both taught and research postgraduate students being members of St Leonard's College in addition to their home School, or research centre or institute. The College has a physical space in the form of the Old Burgh School but exists in essence as a concept to support a postgraduate community. The University also has a Global Office which manages study abroad, collaborative programmes and strategic partnerships, and supports international activities more widely.

4 The University's ambitions are set out in the 2022-27 University Strategy which summarises the fundamental goal "to attract and nurture the best staff and the most promising students from around the world, and provide an environment in which they can produce their best work for maximum societal benefit." Objectives are grouped under five central themes, or pillars, which are intended to have a direct bearing on the learning and teaching as well as the broader student experience. These five pillars are: World-Leading, Diverse, Digital, Sustainable and Entrepreneurial.

5 In 2024-25, the total student population of the University was 10,218, comprising 8,381 undergraduate students, 931 postgraduate taught students and 906 postgraduate research students. The University is internationally diverse, with over 125 countries represented in the 2024-25 student population and just over two-fifths of the total population (45%) being international students. At postgraduate level, internationally domiciled students make up around three-fifths of the population (60% for postgraduate taught and 59% for postgraduate research). Between 2020-21 and 2024-25, the total population grew by 1% with most growth at undergraduate level (up by 5%). The total international population grew by 4% overall and by 13% at undergraduate level. At the time of the review, the University's ambitions are, through a planned approach, to expand the offer of online provision, most of which is postgraduate taught, and short courses. Data provided by the University show that, in 2023-24, 99.6% of the undergraduate population either completed successfully or progressed, while the figure for postgraduate taught students was 99.0%.

6 The University also works proactively to attract and support applicants from a broad range of backgrounds and characteristics, including the Gateway and Pathway programmes. These are subject-tailored programmes that have been specifically designed to offer additional support and guidance for students who have experienced some disadvantage in

their schooling, have alternative qualifications, or narrowly missed meeting standard entry requirements owing to mitigating circumstances, and they include pre-arrival and transitional support.

7 In common with the wider UK sector, the University acknowledges, and is making substantial efforts to meet, the challenges presented by: financial constraints; the impact of artificial intelligence on curricula and the integrity of assessment; and significantly increased demand for student support. Recent developments include expansion of provision in Medicine, notably the Scottish Community Orientated Medicine (ScotCOM) programme in partnership with NHS Fife.

Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment

8 The TQER team found that the University of St Andrews is **effective** in achieving excellence in learning, teaching and assessment. The institution has appropriate and systematically applied practices in line with sector expectations for achieving excellence in learning, teaching and assessment, including assuring and maintaining academic standards. The institution's practices make effective and accurate use of data, evidence and externality to demonstrate impact and are effective in achieving excellence in learning, teaching and assessment. The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence including the Strategic Impact Analysis (SIA), the Education and Student Experience Strategy, minutes from key committees, follow-up to previous external reviews, policy and guidance documents associated with module and programme development and oversight, data and reporting to inform action planning, annual monitoring and arrangements for institutional and School review of learning and teaching. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including staff and students.

9 The University has in place a range of strategic committees supported by a number of education and student experience-focused working groups. Oversight of the student experience and academic standards is via the Education Strategic Management Group (ESMG) and the Student Experience Strategic Management Group (SESMG), convened by the Vice-Principal Education (Proctor) and Director of Student Experience respectively. These groups oversee new developments and facilitate change aligned to the Education and Student Experience Strategy, reporting into the University's Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC), Postgraduate Research Committee (PRC) and Senate and also to the Principal's Office and Court as appropriate.

10 The TQER team was provided with a detailed evidence set through the SIA and supporting Advance Information Set which described and evidenced a sustained and embedded enhancement-led institutional approach to academic quality and standards. The documentary information, which was explored further in discussions during review visits, confirmed to the TQER team that there was consistent, cross-institutional adoption and application of University academic quality policy and guidance, for example through Annual Academic Monitoring and University-led Reviews of Learning and Teaching (URLTs) and related follow-up reporting.

11 Academic Assurance Group, reporting to Audit and Risk Committee and Court, oversees risks that may impact the delivery or quality of learning and teaching and scrutinises actions taken to mitigate any challenges reported. Academic standards are routinely monitored by the Academic Monitoring Group (AMG) and ESGM. The AMG also has oversight of student retention, achievement and progression. This incorporates focused analysis for students with protected characteristics and those from widening participation backgrounds. The TQER team noted the positive addition of an Accessibility and Inclusion Manager to the Student Services unit. The AMG is supported by a Collaborations and Partnerships sub-group which oversees the management of external collaborative provision and partnerships, including arrangements for securing academic standards and enhancing the student learning experience.

12 From the evidence presented, the TQER team concluded that the University operates a comprehensive and embedded approach to analysis and reporting on student attainment, module grades and awards, supported and informed by in-depth evaluation of widening

participation and attainment at School and programme levels. Through discussions in meetings, the TQER team also affirmed the effectiveness of the well-established mechanisms for annual monitoring and learning and teaching quality review at School and programme level. In addition to the formal oversight provided through the governance structures, the TQER team confirmed the additional benefit and value from the widespread provision and use of a range of supporting information, including the “Teaching Factsheets” which provided all staff with a clear and comprehensive overview of programme-related data to better-understand student attainment and feedback.

13 The TQER team considered the systematic consideration of annual monitoring reports – which is then used to inform dissemination events and good practice-sharing of themes, actions and annual summaries at School and institutional levels – to be influential in achieving effective practice. In particular, the TQER team found evidence that, increasingly, there are deliberate efforts to include postgraduate students who are involved in learning and teaching activity in these events and practice-sharing opportunities, further strengthening the impact of the approach and ensuring its effectiveness.

14 The University’s strategic commitment to, and support for, an outstanding student experience and enhanced research-led educational offer permeates the institutional strategy. Implementation of the supporting Education and Student Experience Strategy is overseen by the ESMG and SESMG. As noted, these groups are convened by senior, institutional leaders with members representing Schools, professional services, student support teams and the Student’s Association.

15 Priorities and responsibilities are distributed across both groups with ESMG focused on academic policy, guidance and quality matters associated with curriculum enhancement and development, entrepreneurship, sustainability technology-enhanced learning, teaching and learning infrastructure and postgraduate portfolio growth and enhancement. SESMG is responsible for key elements of support for the student experience including support service provision, wellbeing, community and belonging, and employability. Co-ordination and sharing of best practice is overseen by the University’s LTC and PRC. The TQER team’s meetings with staff from across the University suggested some overlap in activities but also indicated the combined effectiveness in relation to a culture focused on education innovation and enhancement.

16 The TQER team noted some complexity in relation to the University’s committee and education governance reporting lines, and the number and range of sub-groups (see also paragraphs 78-79). While encouraging the University in its planned governance review, members of the TQER team acknowledged that the close working between the Vice-Principal Education (Proctor), the Assistant Vice-Principal (Dean of Learning and Teaching) & Provost, the Director of Student Experience, the Associate Deans, the Associate Provosts and the Students’ Association sabbatical officer, the Director of Education, provided a coordinated, institution-wide focus on delivery of strategic priorities. This observation was confirmed in meetings with School leaders of learning and teaching, including Directors of Teaching, Directors of Postgraduate Studies (Taught) and Directors of Postgraduate Studies (Research), as well as academic-related and professional and support services staff and student representatives. The TQER team identified the key role of Director of Teaching in each School, and the institutional support for the Directors of Teaching, as core to supporting effective operations and identifying potential for innovation and enhancement of the student experience.

17 The TQER team found clear evidence that the leadership at both institution and School levels is fully committed to supporting staff to innovate and enhance learning, teaching and assessment. The TQER team noted, in particular, the positive impact of the Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) Division working within the International Education and Lifelong Learning Institute (IELLI). Although IELLI was only launched at the start of the academic year 2024-25, staff who met with the TQER team were unanimous in commending the support provided by IELLI, providing examples in relation to digital education, learning and teaching environments, digital classrooms, digital skills and upskilling for staff and postgraduate research students, academic integrity and the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence, and digital accessibility. The TQER team also considered that a distinctive strength of approach was, again, the inclusion of postgraduate research students with teaching and assessment responsibilities who are able to access a range of staff development opportunities provided by IELLI linked to certificated provision in academic practice and professional accreditation and fellowship.

18 As a further example of the University's strategic support for excellence in learning, teaching and assessment, the TQER team noted the introduction of Educational Development Leave, whereby staff can apply for a semester's leave to develop educational expertise or enable new and innovative educational offerings. The University recognises the key role of Heads of School in resourcing leave for individuals, which is more challenging in some Schools than others. Nonetheless, where Schools have been able to support Educational Development Leave, the TQER team found evidence of the positive impact on both individuals and programmes, with examples of direct actions and scholarship incorporating student internships and partnership-working as well as supporting the development of enhanced national and international collaboration and networking at discipline level.

19 From the documentary evidence and conversations throughout the review visits, the TQER team recognises the University's strategically-driven and well-co-ordinated support for, and promotion of, learning and teaching delivered through a comprehensive range of formal and informal mechanisms as a feature of **good practice**. Examples of good practice include formal development opportunities linked to annual development review; regular, informal "Directors of Teaching Lunches" organised by the leadership team and IELLI; specific support for postgraduate research students who teach and the inclusion of them in the dissemination of good practice; thematic analysis, review and dissemination of best practice linked to key findings from annual monitoring at school and institutional level; and the support for and promotion of an education-focused career pathway, including the opportunity for Educational Development Leave.

20 Comprehensive and detailed information was scrutinised by the TQER team during the review, outlining module and programme design, approval and review, and annual monitoring and URLT. The TQER team was satisfied that the information demonstrated appropriate use of the UK Quality Code, QAA Subject Benchmark Statements, Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework levels and, where appropriate, Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies standards. The TQER team agreed that these provided clarity around level and type of award and, where relevant, credit allocation. The TQER team confirmed through meetings that there was understanding and consistent application of the robust and well-established processes set out in the documentation.

21 Academic standards are routinely monitored by the AMG, reporting to the ESGM. This

approach is effective in indicating where institutional enhancement, change, or development is needed and is an approach that ensures academic Schools, student-facing professional services and student support units are all engaged in relevant and co-ordinated activity. The TQER team saw further evidence of this embedded and sustained approach reflected through the comprehensive URLT follow-up, evaluative reports which address actions through the review process and additionally demonstrate thoughtful consideration of inclusivity as well as of quality and standards.

22 Additional assurance is provided by the Curriculum Approvals Group which oversees the approval process for emerging programmes across all provision including resources as well as academic rigour. The TQER team considered this oversight as a strength of practice, particularly in light of the institutional priority to grow online provision and increase the postgraduate taught portfolio.

23 The TQER team found strong evidence of effective partnership working between Schools and Careers Centre staff at all stages in the learner journey, with well-established links and activities, including annual partnership meetings, to review results and reports relating to School-specific Career Readiness and Graduate Outcomes. These data are then used to agree and establish a range of School-based co-ordinated activities and priorities for the coming academic session (see also paragraph 50). Increasingly, these activities and events are organised in partnership with the Careers Centre and the Enterprise Centre, often including alumni and local and national industry and business groups.

24 School-based Employability Officers, working with student-facing services including student experience, careers and entrepreneurship, were considered by the TQER team to provide a particularly valuable opportunity to enhance industry engagement and identify and develop work-based learning and placement opportunities that are focused on discipline need and relevance. Activities include externally-led on-campus presentations and workshops as well as industry experiences formally embedded in programmes.

25 A notable feature of the University's provision is the Vertically Integrated Project initiative (VIP), which originated from the Georgia Institute of Technology in the USA and was brought to St Andrews in 2019. In these modules, teams of students of different levels and across disciplines work on a research project, incorporating authentic assessment. Students and staff spoke enthusiastically about the opportunity the VIP offered to enhance their skills and their employability.

26 The recently-approved Employability Strategy, which identified growth potential and aims to create more extensive opportunities across the University, was considered by the TQER team to be a positive development (see paragraph 51). In meetings during the review visit, the TQER team also heard more details about the current expansion and plans for further growth in the School of Medicine. From the activity described, the TQER team was confident that plans were carefully thought out, and provided further opportunities for enhancing external engagement, increasing partnership-working across the NHS network and creating additional professionally-accredited opportunities for students.

27 The University has a unique campus combining buildings of national historical significance throughout the town alongside modern facilities designed specifically to further institutional strategy and support and enhance research-informed teaching and learning. The Teaching Infrastructure Steering Group (TISG) works closely with IELLI and the TEL division

within IELLI to support infrastructure that enhances the student learning experience. TEL works with academics, Schools and programme teams to develop learning and teaching spaces and, where appropriate, advise on the purchase of relevant technology and equipment to enhance provision, for example by creating a more consistent technical infrastructure. The TQER team also heard about the work of TEL in supporting the further upskilling of staff through digital education, and the development of digital environments, classrooms, skills and digital accessibility.

28 This work also aligns with the Education and Student Experience Strategy and complements the University's wider ambition and actions to improve accessibility for cohorts and students across all parts of the campus, recognising the increasingly diverse needs of students and staff. Activity in relation to this is informed by an audit undertaken by the Space and Asset Management Committee to assess accessibility and inclusivity across the University's diverse teaching estate. This will remain an ongoing action, but the TQER team noted positive feedback from students and staff regarding developments to date, for example the improved facilities for commuter students, the creation of spaces for collaborative learning and relaxation, and dedicated workspaces for postgraduate students.

29 The TQER team noted that the University has a range of formal and informal processes and mechanisms to support both academic staff and those in professional and student support roles in their professional development. All staff undergo annual review development conducted by their line manager. The TQER team heard examples of how this process helps identify individual and role-related developmental needs and ambitions, with opportunities provided to attend a wide range of workshops, apply for – and progress through – professional accreditation and fellowship via IELLI, other role-specific continuing professional development (CPD) and support for postgraduate research students who teach. The TQER team again noted the key role played by Directors of Teaching in helping identify and address CPD needs and develop offerings for colleagues as well as relating to their own key roles. In discussions with the TQER team, Heads of School and senior leaders referenced the Director of Teaching role as being useful preparation prior to being a Head of School, and the TQER team noted the valuable support provided for staff to develop within and through these roles. The TQER team also considered the dedicated education-focused career pathway, with promotional opportunities facilitated through the annual review process, to be a positive approach and further evidence of the University's strategic commitment to excellence in learning, teaching and assessment and ongoing enhancement of the student experience.

30 The TQER team also recognised the importance and impact of the role performed by IELLI in co-ordinating and enhancing the skills of staff, including postgraduate research students, by providing support and developmental opportunities. This includes supporting the University's taught Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PG CAP), and also the St Andrews Recognition Scheme ,STARS, which is an Advance HE-accredited scheme that provides participants with structured opportunities and support to reflect on their practice and prepare a claim for recognition against Advance HE's Professional Standards Framework. IELLI also works closely with senior leaders, Heads of School and Directors of Teaching to provide focused development, for example linked to strategic priorities around digital learning and education enhancement. The TQER team saw further examples responding to needs and innovations identified through annual monitoring and the University-led Review of Learning and Teaching (URLT) outcomes and follow-up reports. The TQER team also considered that the University's practice of extending access to PG

CAP modules to all teaching staff, including postgraduate research students who teach, for purposes of personal development was a particularly valuable approach.

31 Peer observation remains a standing item on the agenda for URLT, and the TQER team confirmed that feedback is included in School reports and annual summaries, indicating an effective approach and systematic use of available information. In addition, as part of the training for postgraduate research students who teach, IELLI supports peer review of their teaching. The TQER team heard from postgraduate research students and from School Directors of Postgraduate Studies (Research) how this helped support the development of the research students and also ensure the standard of learning and teaching for the receiving students.

32 The TQER team noted the University's commitment to continued research-led teaching, education enhancement and digital innovation as identified in the University Strategy and the Education and Student Experience Strategy and the related action planning. On scrutinising the documentation submitted, and exploring in meetings these strategies and their implementation, the TQER team was assured of the robust implementation of enhancement-led approaches across the University. This was apparent to the TQER team through investment and upskilling in digital innovation and infrastructure; further investment and an increasing focus on entrepreneurship and sustainability; and through the creation of dedicated teams to support and drive quality online provision and student support.

Supporting student success

33 The TQER team found that the University of St Andrews's arrangements for supporting student success are **effective**. The institution has appropriate and systematically-applied practices in line with sector expectations for supporting student success that use data, evidence and externality, demonstrate impact and are effective in supporting student success. The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence including policies and procedures to support student wellbeing, minutes from key oversight groups and committees, and reports evaluating key data. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including staff and students.

34 The University offers two entry routes for undergraduate students applying from atypical backgrounds for higher education. The Gateway programme is for school leavers who have not achieved the standard minimum entry requirements owing to contextual factors that prevented them achieving their potential; and the Pathway programme is for students progressing from particular educational backgrounds, for example a college. Targeted support is offered to widening access students on the Gateway and Pathway programmes through enhanced induction and transition support. This enhanced support includes a named contact in Student Services as a source of help and guidance. Further, care-experienced students also have targeted support and a named contact within Admissions, as well as Student Services, who continues as a primary contact beyond the initial admissions process and who can help students access relevant support services within the University as well as liaise with academic Schools. The team heard that very positive relationships are built with these students and many stay in touch and return to work in some form in the support services. Further confirmation of the extent and positive impact of the arrangements was heard during meetings with students who spoke about the value they gained from the additional support, particularly the pre-induction week which allowed familiarisation with the University, other students and how lectures and tutorials worked.

35 The TQER team learnt from students that those taking an external placement year as part of the Integrated Masters in Biology or Chemistry were required to pay the full tuition fee for that year but could obtain a loan from the Student Loan Company (or a grant in the case of the Student Awards Agency for Scotland) for only half of that amount. While the University makes needs-based scholarships available, these do not fully cover the shortfall in funding. The TQER team heard from students that the requirement to pay the full tuition fee for the placement year had surprised many of their peers, who had been unaware of it, and they cited examples of students who had found the cost prohibitive and had to transfer courses rather than continue on the Integrated Masters. The TQER team also heard that this cost, with the uncertainty around knowing whether they would be able to obtain a paid placement and whether they would receive scholarship support from the University, gave rise to considerable anxiety amongst the cohort, in particular for those from less advantaged backgrounds.

36 In reviewing the way in which this was communicated to students, the TQER team noted that the relevant programme pages advise that the normal tuition fee for a full academic year will be charged for the external placement, although this is under a heading of "Funding and scholarships" rather than "Fees", and that other webpages give fuller information. The TQER team also saw evidence that this fee requirement is included in the mandatory pre-departure briefing for students delivered in the April prior to departure (that is, the third year of the programme). The TQER team's view was, however, that this information

is not made fully explicit to applicants at a sufficiently early stage and the standard offer letter requires the applicant to click on other links in order to understand the position. In the opinion of the TQER team, given that charging a full fee for an external placement year is atypical in the sector and that there will be a shortfall in funding for the student, it should not be assumed that the applicant will appreciate this and the situation should therefore be clearly specified within the offer letter. The TQER team recognises that the University is aware of students' concerns and is in discussion with them. To help progress this situation, the TQER team **recommends** that the University reviews its communications with regard to the tuition fee payable for an external placement year on the Integrated Masters programmes in Biology and Chemistry to ensure complete transparency for applicants.

37 The University has very positive data on student success and retention, achieving 99.3% retention rate for undergraduate students and 98.4% for postgraduate taught students. A broad provision of curriculum is offered, with students supported in building their own degree. Every student has an academic advisor and students choose their module and degree pathway in consultation with that advisor, with annual matriculation being contingent on completion of that meeting. The students who met the TQER team spoke positively about their ease of access to academic staff. Online students, in particular, were very positive about their experiences, commenting both on their access to staff and the responsiveness of those staff, describing how they felt 'seen' as a student. Separately, the TQER team heard that the University was a 'kind' place to be a student.

38 The University operates an 'Academic Alert' system which is applied at module level and is issued to students who miss an academic checkpoint. In addition, the TQER team heard details of a Student Engagement Dashboard which the University has developed and is currently testing with Student Services to identify and address anomalies before considering wider implementation. This Dashboard collates various data sets to provide a high-level wellbeing level indicator for all students and has the potential to highlight those who may be disengaging from their studies. The TQER team considered this a promising development and encourages the University in its work to progress and implement this more widely.

39 The University is sensitive to the changing nature of the student body, citing in particular the rising number of commuter students, a marked increase in mental health issues being reported by students, and decreasing engagement with studies owing to a range of factors, including financial pressures. The University's consideration of learner engagement in studies is documented through the Academic Monitoring Group (AMG). The TQER team also noted the University's observations that, while the volume of issues has increased, the situation is exacerbated by the complexity of the issues and the intersectionality or multiplicity of challenges, which is making responses more difficult, both in terms of student expectations and the limits of what the University can support. In response, the University has put in place a comprehensive student support system which is available to all students, including online students. The TQER team found evidence of strong, supportive and consistent partnership working between Schools and professional student support services. As part of these arrangements, every School has at least one Wellbeing Officer whose role is to raise awareness of existing support for student wellbeing and mental health in the University. The Wellbeing Officer also provides support on academic matters in cases of extenuating circumstances where mental health and/or wellbeing is raised. They also work closely with Student Services and meet with them monthly.

40 The TQER team considered that the University's comprehensive and inclusive approach to student support was a feature of **good practice**. They found strong and consistent evidence of a partnership approach between Student Services and Academic Schools that incorporated anticipatory and targeted support for all students, with a particularly thoughtful and careful application for Gateway, Pathway and care-experienced students through the individualised and extended support offered by way of a consistent point of contact. This approach also included systematic use of data to inform interventions and, by incorporating close partnership working between professional student support services and Schools, ensured 'wrap-around' support for students.

41 The University demonstrated awareness of its responsibilities in relation to student welfare and accessibility in learning, teaching and assessment, including cognisance of recent court rulings in this area. The TQER team viewed a comprehensive 'Flexible Adjustments' Policy which demonstrated consideration for those with a declared disability or list of conditions and which also made consideration for those with no support plan or disclosed disability, detailing the potential options available to staff and students and the impact of decisions. The TQER team heard details of a series of information sessions conducted by the University on the implications of recent court rulings, supported by a set of Frequently Asked Questions, to support staff's understanding and awareness of their responsibilities and options. Other examples of work in this area that were provided to the TQER team included a 'Future of Assessment' day for the School of Biology and work within the School of Mathematics and Statistics in completing a progressive and phased approach to auditing and updating materials on the virtual learning environment to ensure accessibility. The TQER team also heard that the International Education and Lifelong Learning Institute (IELLI) and the Digital Accessibility Officers were fundamental to these developments, working in partnership with Schools, and further work was in progress to enhance accessibility, including the introduction of Universal Design for Learning and the provision of 'Digital Accessibility Basics' courses for staff.

42 From the evidence presented, the TQER team was confident in the University's commitment to designing more inclusive and alternative assessment practices, with examples of varied and thoughtful assessment approaches illustrated through the URLT. In conversation with the TQER team, students described the variety of assessments available and were positive about the learning experience this provided. The TQER team also saw evidence relating to IELLI's work in this area, with a number of staff development workshops in designing and delivering assessment types available to staff, and heard of the positive impact of this support.

43 In addition to the work on assessment design, there is a comprehensive University Lecture Capture Policy, which the TQER team explored further as part of the review visit. The TQER team found that students were very supportive and welcoming of Lecture Capture, describing how they used it to support their learning. The TQER team heard some commentary, however, from staff and students, about inconsistent provision and quality, and also delayed upload of videos beyond the five days set out in the policy, some of which was attributed to technical issues. While acknowledging significant work in this area by the University, the TQER team recognised that some challenges continue and encourages the University to continue monitoring adherence to the Lecture Capture Policy and exploring opportunities both to support staff and improve the technical quality of the outputs.

44 The University is also conducting a piece of work to assess the accessibility and

inclusivity across the teaching estate, a considerable part of which presents particular challenges relating to the historical nature of some of the University's estate. The TQER team noted the University's efforts with regard to ensuring all students could access facilities and also the ongoing commitment to make provision for groups of students with particular needs, for example commuter students.

45 The University has a range of policies and procedures in place to address challenges of wellbeing, inclusion, equality and support. The TQER team observed that the University had a Mental Health Strategy in place with review date of May 2024. On further enquiry, the TQER team learnt, however, that this had recently been superseded by a series of Mental Health commitments endorsed by the University Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (UEDIC) and Student Experience Strategic Management Group (SESMG) in March 2025, and which include a set of enabling functions, for example the creation of a communication framework. The commitments, which are set out in the University's Mental Health and Wellbeing Commitments, are structured using the Student Minds Mental Health Charter and will be monitored by the SESMG and a proposed Disability and Wellbeing Monitoring and Delivery Group. The TQER team was reassured through this that the University had a robust approach to supporting mental health and these further developments were designed to maintain currency of approaches.

46 *Diverse* is one of the five key pillars of the University Strategy and the commitment to promotion of a culture of inclusivity and equality for staff and students was evident to the TQER team throughout meetings with students and staff. For the 2024-25 academic year, the University revised the Central Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee into the UEDIC whose overarching purpose is to have oversight and ensure progress of the University's aims for *Diverse St Andrews* and ensure it meets equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) legislative requirements and removes barriers. The TQER team noted that the new arrangements also helpfully include a University Equality Forum which will provide a mechanism of sharing across Schools and departments to achieve a joined-up approach to EDI. The University has also established an EDI Project Fund enabling staff and students to apply for funds to support key projects. This is supported by a comprehensive set of webpages with relevant information and a range of supported projects.

47 The University has in place a series of student transition support toolkits, including a pre-arrival transitions toolkit for undergraduate students joining the University, transition to honours level study, postgraduate taught students and study abroad. The TQER team received a helpful and comprehensive demonstration of the toolkit including the background and continued development, and how enhancement was continuing through research connected with the University's Neuroscience department. Quantitative and qualitative data collected from student engagement with the toolkit are provided to Directors of Teaching to inform them of relevant and pertinent characteristics identified in the new student body; the over-arching results also go to central professional services, enabling targeting of support for new students. The TQER team learnt that there are plans to launch a postgraduate research student transition toolkit for 2025 entry.

48 The team heard that a programme of transition support is also in place for placement and study abroad students via the Global Office. Pre-departure briefings are delivered to students in the April prior to their placement or period of study abroad and students are assigned a Study Abroad Advisor who will meet them three times in the year, twice in person and once virtually. Feedback from students studying abroad is gathered by the Global Office.

The study abroad mobility review provides qualitative information on students' experience and this is used to improve information to students and study abroad programmes. The TQER team considered that, through the suite of toolkits, additional programmes for non-traditional students, and the support for students going abroad, the University provides comprehensive and effective transition support that is research-informed, continually reviewed and enhanced.

49 One opportunity for further enhancement to transition arrangements that the TQER team suggests the University might consider relates to the provision of transition support for online or digital students. The nature of these students is inevitably very diverse and a reasonable proportion of them are likely to have had a break from studies. While the digital learners who spoke to the TQER team were very positive about their experiences and commended the University for its support for them and the quality of their experience, some of them did also note that they would have benefitted from digital on-boarding to University systems at the outset of their programme, particularly to help them navigate the different systems and feel more confident in their use of them.

50 While the National Student Survey indicates that satisfaction rates in the undergraduate population are sector-leading, the University is aware that the results for postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students, through the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) respectively, indicate some challenges. Throughout meetings with postgraduate students, both taught and research, the TQER team heard that a sense of community was a key issue for them. A common theme in reflections was that, while they valued their academic studies and staff, they described the institution as 'an undergraduate university', with a range of examples provided, including activities and opportunities fixed around the rhythm of the undergraduate academic year (including internships), mass communications that appeared to be aimed at undergraduate students (for example, in relation to entrepreneurial opportunities), a student voice system that found them regularly omitted from key fora, particularly within Schools, and very limited common space in a practical location that could support the development of a community. The TQER team recognises that the University is aware of some of these issues and is working to address them but **recommends** that efforts continue to ensure parity of the postgraduate student experience (taught and research) with that of undergraduates (see paragraphs 68-71).

51 The University achieves very strong graduate outcomes for students, with 96.1% of full-time UK-domiciled students progressing to positive destinations. The University has a range of employability support delivered within Schools and by the Careers Centre, contributing to the University's approach to achieving Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment. The Careers Centre recently underwent a University-led Review of Learning and Teaching (URLT) in April 2023, resulting in positive findings and a series of commendations. The TQER team heard that partnership agreements are in place with every School, each of which has an Employability Officer. An annual meeting is undertaken to look at data and take account of anticipated needs of students from undergraduate through to postgraduate research, and to plan appropriate activities for the year (see also paragraph 26). The TQER team heard examples of how the Careers Centre works with Schools to incorporate careers development in the curriculum, with an emphasis on preparation for lifelong employability skills rather than focusing on a first job. The TQER team considered this to be a very positive and proactive approach to working with Schools and students.

52 IELLI, which offers a range of employability and academic skills development, supports the work of the Careers Centre and Schools with its aims to enhance and improve the visibility of the educational expertise of staff teaching and the provision of co-curricular skills support for students. In addition, graduate attributes are incorporated into programme approval ensuring they are fully embedded throughout curriculum delivery. The TQER team learnt that the Graduate Attribute portal to support this work has also been recognised in external awards.

53 The University indicated to the TQER team that it recognises the importance of employability in student choice of where to study and has recently approved a new Employability Strategy. The Strategy sets out a series of high-level principles and objectives for delivery of the Strategy up to 2028. At the time of the review, the TQER team ascertained that work was about to commence on the development of a 'formal action plan' setting out timelines, dates of delivery and lead staff. In addition, the TQER team learnt that the Employability Strategy Implementation Group (ESIG), led by the Director of Careers and the Assistant Vice-Principal (Dean of Learning and Teaching) and Provost, has been established and will oversee delivery.

54 The University offers a considerable number of internships – both paid and unpaid opportunities, and varied in scope – for undergraduate and postgraduate students. In exploring these opportunities with students during the review visits, the TQER team heard that internships generally worked well for undergraduate students, but postgraduate taught students found the rhythm of their academic year was not conducive to them engaging in opportunities. In ascertaining the nature and impact of internships, the TQER team heard many examples of student internships that were focused on enhancing the student experience and for which there had been a tangible impact. These included projects to develop more student-friendly communications; develop subject-specific materials to support transition to University; improve induction for students; develop accessibility resources; and improve the end-to-end experience for online students. The TQER team struggled, however, to piece together the different opportunities and their varying natures, for example differentiating between those internships that were to the benefit of the University and those which foremost provided the individual student with a work experience opportunity that was primarily valuable to them personally. The new Employability Strategy sets out to ensure that the internships are more visible and advertised and co-ordinated across the institution. The TQER team supports this ambition and encourages the University to consider how all internships might be co-ordinated and located through one point of access.

55 Another key pillar of the University Strategy is *Entrepreneurial* and the University has established an Entrepreneurship Centre based at its Eden Campus in Guardbridge. The TQER team found that engagement with the Entrepreneurship Centre was limited, with students citing challenges of the geographical location relative to where their studies were based, and perceptions formed from communications that they were not usually the target audience for any activity. The TQER team found, however, that the students who had engaged with the Centre spoke of a very positive experience. This included activity that supported the effective engagement of online learners who were remote from St Andrews. Staff who met with the TQER team added that a number of activities that supported the *Entrepreneurial* pillar of the Strategy were not necessarily badged as such but were embedded in the curriculum and communicated to students as 'development of entrepreneurial mindset' in the Module Evaluation Questionnaire (MEQs) process. The TQER team recognised that this was another valid approach to addressing the

Entrepreneurial pillar of the Strategy but suggest the University may consider other ways to promote the work of, and opportunities provided by, the Entrepreneurship Centre, for example through more targeted communications.

56 While degree outcomes are very strong, with 88.1% of undergraduate awards in 2022-23 being an Upper Degree (First Class or Upper Second Class), the University is aware that there are statistically significant attainment gaps for students categorised as Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic (BAME), having a disability and or coming from a widening access backgrounds and this is included in the considerations of the AMG, which monitors design and availability of student support arrangements to enable student success. Statistically significant attainment gaps identified by the University for the 2022-23 cohort through its internal monitoring include: disability (89.3% of those students with no declared disability achieved an Upper Degree compared to 84.7% of those declaring a disability); UK-domiciled BAME (89.8% of UK-domiciled White students achieved an Upper Degree in comparison to 79.6% of UK-domiciled BAME students); and UK-domiciled Access-coded students (93.1% of those without an Access coding achieved an Upper Degree in comparison to 82.8% of those who did have an Access coding). While retention and attainment for all these student characteristics are still high in the context of the sector overall, the TQER team saw evidence that the University is carefully monitoring data and continuing to be proactive in its efforts to enable students from different groups to excel, with comprehensive support available.

57 The AMG receives annual reports on academic appeals, complaints, academic misconduct and fitness to practise cases in Medicine. Minutes provided to the TQER team showed evidence of a thorough approach to consideration and discussion, and there was also follow-up action identified, tracked and monitored through later meetings. Outcomes of URLTs are also reported to the AMG and areas both of good practice and for development are identified, with associated action plans developed to address areas of concern.

58 The University follows the *Scottish Higher Education Model Complaints Handling Procedure* and an annual report on complaints is made to AMG. The most recent annual report available to the TQER team was for 2023-24. This indicated that complaint numbers have reduced and confirmed there were no trends in complaints or identifiers of significant failures across the University. The annual report always includes a section on “Organisational Learning” and, from their review of this, members of the TQER team were confident that the University was carefully evaluating the evidence available and reflecting on any need for improvement and opportunities for enhancement. The TQER team noted that the University website provides comprehensive information on how to make a complaint and publishes annual reports. The TQER team also saw evidence that confirmed the University makes effective use of a range of other information sources and opportunities that enable early resolution of potential issues and heard from students of informal meetings that enabled them to feedback on their learning experience.

Student partnership and engagement

59 The TQER team found that the University of St Andrews is **effective** in student engagement and partnership. The institution's approach to student engagement and partnership is systematic and strategic. The institution ensures the quality of the student learning experience is continuously improved based on the voice of students in line with sector expectations. The institution works in partnership with students to use data, evidence and externality to develop, implement and evaluate the student learning experience. The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence including the Student Partnership Agreement, Student Academic Representation Policy, Staff Student Consultative Committee minutes, and Student Voice reports. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including staff and students. While the term 'student partnership' was not widely understood by the students the TQER team met, the TQER team was able to confirm that, in most areas, the University was working collaboratively with students to achieve shared goals.

60 The Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) sets out the University's view that 'By developing active staff-student partnerships, we can achieve better outcomes and harness the collective creativity and energy of our staff and student communities for the good of St Andrews, irrespective of level or mode of study.' The recent refresh of the Agreement, undertaken by the University and the Students' Association in 2024, has taken account of feedback from students to identify areas for improvement and shared priorities for the 2024-27 period. The TQER team heard that the new SPA is anticipated to deliver greater effectiveness through more clearly articulated expectations, meaning it could now be used to hold people to account, and it had already enabled spin-off projects such as enhanced guidance for staff.

61 The Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR), which took place in January 2024, identified the University's approach to student partnership as a feature of good practice, in particular the achievement of increased diversity and expertise of students participating in University committees through the Reimagining Representation initiative. The TQER team attested to the inclusivity of the engagement opportunities available, but recognised the challenge identified by the Students' Association that, in having devolved these opportunities across the wider student representative body in order to gain greater diversity of student voice, this has created potential gaps of sabbatical strategic oversight and the ability to jointly advocate in multiple spaces. The TQER team is supportive of the intention to consider, within the University's planned governance review, where and how students are represented.

62 University-led Reviews of Learning and Teaching (URLTs) are one of the key quality assurance mechanisms and students serve as team members on these reviews (a sabbatical officer or elected academic representative representing taught students and a postgraduate student representing postgraduate research students). A 'Student Voice' report is available to the panel as part of the review. This is authored by an elected student representative from within the School and identifies what is working well and what requires improvement. The example seen by the TQER team was considered to be thoughtfully and constructively written. The TQER team saw evidence of Student Voice reports being drawn upon within the URLT, and of clear engagement with the student body as part of that process. From a student who had been a member of a URLT panel, the TQER team heard that this had been a very positive experience for which they had been appropriately

supported and prepared.

63 The TQER team evaluated an extensive information set relating to data, metrics and student voice which Schools, programme and module teams use to inform reflections and future planning. As part of the work in addressing the previous external review outcome (QESR), the University's review of Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs) had identified the need for a mid-semester temperature check. The University and Students' Association have worked closely to implement a revised, interim approach to mid-semester feedback. This encourages a joint approach to designing and disseminating the feedback mechanisms, and to analysing and addressing the findings, plus closing the feedback loop and communicating actions undertaken in response. New software has been procured in order to implement fully the new 'MFQ' (module feedback questionnaire) approach. This mechanism for the student voice complements feedback from other sources, including internal and external surveys and external examiner reports and summaries. The TQER team was satisfied that, building on staff and student feedback, the University is further refining the MEQ process with a view to generating higher response rates, particularly amongst the postgraduate student population. Thus, evident progress had been made in addressing the QESR recommendation.

64 As part of its vision to be world leading, the University states that it will, "Ensure students are integral partners throughout the educational and student experience as we extend our community digitally." In addition to the engagement mechanism examples above, the representation structures described below and the internship opportunities outlined in Supporting Student Success (see paragraph 54), the TQER team learnt of the way in which the University's Education Development Leave initiative had enabled two students to co-author a journal article with a member of staff. The students were paid as internees but the significant benefit for them was to be able to work as equal partners with the staff member and experience peer review and journal publication.

65 The Student Academic Representation Policy determines the formal framework for student representation and sets out the role and remit of Staff Student Consultative Committees (SSCCs), Student Presidents and class representatives. The Students' Association runs training programmes for student representatives (both undergraduate and postgraduate). The TQER team noted that students are represented on an extensive range of University committees and working groups at all levels although it also noted some variability in how the Schools engage with representatives.

66 The Students' Association has identified some inconsistencies in approaches to student representation between Schools and has worked with the University to address these through revisions to the Student Partnership Agreement to establish common understandings. At postgraduate level, the University has found representative roles have been increasingly difficult to recruit to and, in 2024-25, the roles of postgraduate taught president and postgraduate research president have become paid part-time roles on the Students' Association Executive to increase accessibility. However, School President positions oversee only the undergraduate student experience within their respective areas, with there being no equivalent role for postgraduates. Students reported that some School Presidents made efforts to support postgraduates but that their role was not designed to cover this, and that there were inconsistencies across Schools in how postgraduates were represented.

67 The majority of the undergraduate students whom the TQER team met confirmed that their views were sought and listened to and that they had been able to influence developments in the quality of the student learning experience within the University. Examples of where students have been able to influence University practice at institutional level included amendments to the academic calendar, the establishment of twice-per-semester University Academic Fora for the open discussion of student experience issues, and the introduction of applicant tours tailored specifically for postgraduate taught students. At a local level, students gave examples of where their feedback had been taken on board in changes to assessment weighting, room changes and being given early sight of the timetable for the upcoming year.

68 Other students, in particular postgraduates, were less positive about their experience of their voice being heard (see paragraph 50). Postgraduate students whom the TQER team met characterised the University as undergraduate-focused and spoke of some policies and practices that they felt did not recognise the different rhythms of the undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research academic years and of survey questions being inappropriate for them. The University recognises that it is less successful at providing a postgraduate student experience which matches that of the undergraduates and is working with the Students' Association to deliver improvements in this regard.

69 In conversation with the TQER team, postgraduate research students confirmed they were aware of the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) but that participation was low, and they saw little evidence of the University responding. The view expressed was that there was generally responsiveness to their feedback at a local level but not centrally. Postgraduate research students were keen to have the PRES results promoted and shared with them, and the opportunity provided to comment on the results, which they suggested might help mitigate the low response rate to the survey itself.

70 While postgraduate students were aware of St Leonard's College as the University's postgraduate centre, and acknowledged its efforts to provide a sense of community for them, they felt that it had had limited success in this, and that its location in the Old Burgh School, a little distance away and where undergraduate teaching also took place, was not suitable.

71 The TQER team noted that the role and title of Provost, as head of St Leonard's College, was currently combined with the role of Assistant Vice-Principal (Dean of Learning and Teaching), but that those roles might be separated out at the end of the current academic session, with review of job descriptions. In the view of the TQER team, this will provide a good opportunity for consideration of the needs of the postgraduate community. The Provost is supported by Associate Provosts for Education and Students; however, these positions are described as supporting taught postgraduate learning and teaching matters, not postgraduate research student matters. The TQER team **recommends** that the University considers further steps to ensure parity between the experience of postgraduate students, both taught and research, with that of undergraduate students. This consideration should include student representation mechanisms, ways of building a sense of community, and the locus for strategic leadership of the postgraduate student experience at the University.

72 As outlined above, the University has a variety of mechanisms for gathering feedback, including MEQs, student representation on committees at all levels across the University, SSCCs, and Student President roles in Schools. The TQER team learnt of the various ways

in which the University acts on that feedback and communicates action taken, for example through 'you said, we did' and in a 'feedback dialogue' area of a School building, and members of the TQER team also saw evidence of this in SSCC minutes. In a further example, at the Libraries Open Forum, students had criticised the Academic Alert messaging, leading to revised templates being developed in partnership with students.

73 As noted above, the University has taken steps to ensure that diverse student voices can influence change through its Re-imagining Representation project. Additionally, the University uses mechanisms, such as MEQs and mid-year surveys, for a universal cross-institutional approach, with School Presidents being given significant autonomy in designing questions and sparqs' Student Learning Experience SLE model being used to structure and inform the questions. The newly-created Student Feedback Initiatives Fund supports professional service units to gather feedback through activities such as focus groups and surveys, with the aim of enhancing the services provided to the student community and with a focus on creating a culture of inclusivity. Professional services are supported in considering the most appropriate feedback mechanism. While at an early stage, indications are that this initiative has supported an increase in engagement, for example the numbers of students taking part in the library's user testing sessions.

Enhancement and quality culture

74 The TQER team found that the University of St Andrews is **effective** in embedding an enhancement and quality culture across the institution. The institution has clearly identified strategic leadership and governance of the approach to quality assurance and enhancement with the capacity and commitment to identify and address situations that have the potential to pose risk to academic standards, the quality of the learning experience and enabling student success. The institution accurately manages data. The institution's strategic approach uses data, evidence and externality in line with sector expectations and promotes an embedded enhancement quality culture for developing, implementing and evaluating strategies. The institution has made timely and effective progress in formulating, implementing and reviewing actions in response to the findings of last external review. The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence, including the institution's Education and Student Experience Strategy, the action plan following the University's 2024 QESR, its annual monitoring and internal review processes and papers and minutes from committees and groups. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including staff and students.

75 The Education and Student Experience Strategy seeks to promote 'a quality culture throughout the institution, encouraging dialogue between staff and students to ensure that we have a shared goal in the quality assurance, improvement and enhancement of our practices.' The TQER team confirmed that enhancement aspects of quality assurance processes, such as Annual Academic Monitoring and University-led Reviews of Learning and Teaching (URLTs) were well embedded and had resulted in benefits such as the sharing of experience between Schools in entrepreneurialism and decolonising the curriculum.

76 The TQER team learnt of the support given by the University's International Education and Lifelong Learning Institute (IELLI) to embed enhancement, including support for Advance HE Fellowship applications, delivery of the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice, and co-ordination of the Annual Academic Monitoring Dissemination Event (see also paragraph 80). IELLI works closely with the University's Community for Evidence-Led Practice in Education which aims to promote evidence-led practice across the University, with a specific focus on education. Heads of School spoke of the value of this work in sharing good practice through, for example, the organisation of seminars with external speakers and the promotion of events taking place across Schools.

77 The TQER team heard that the team overseen by the Vice-Principal Education (Proctor) provides strong leadership with regards to embedding an institution-wide culture of assurance, improvement and enhancement. Governance arrangements, however, were unclear to a number of staff in their discussions with the TQER team.

78 The Education Strategic Management Group (ESMG) and the Student Experience Strategic Management Group (SESMG), the governance bodies responsible respectively for the Education and Student Experience Strategy and for the student experience priorities within the Strategy, share almost identical terms of reference but report through separate routes: ESGM to Learning and Teaching Committee, Postgraduate Research Committee and the Senate, and SESMG to the Principal's Office. The broad rationale was given as a need to keep pastoral/student experience elements distinct so that they did not get lost in an academic-focused committee, but it was also recognised that this was not always clear-cut

and sometimes items went down more than one route. While the TQER team appreciated the argument that wide deliberation was desirable where there was a range of stakeholders, differing understandings of the final locus of approval for strategies were evident in discussions with staff. A particular confusion appeared to lie around employability, where the Employability Working Group reports into both ESG and SESMG and where there were conflicting views on the final approval body of the Employability Strategy. The TQER team was advised that this, as it was a strategy, had been approved by the Principal's Office, whereas policies were approved by Senate. Other colleagues, however, did not appear familiar with this distinction.

79 The TQER team noted that the University intends to resume a governance review which it had initiated some eighteen months earlier, with a view to looking at definitions; consultative, reporting and decision-making lines; student representation; and opportunities for widening the pool of committee chairs. The TQER team **recommends** that the University progresses its intended governance review in order to ensure clarity of decision making.

80 The Academic Monitoring Group (AMG) plays a key role in deriving institutional learning from quality review activity, through its consideration of annual thematic reports on external examiner feedback, student surveys, academic misconduct, achievement, attainment gaps and module grade distributions. The Annual Academic Monitoring Dissemination event, attended by each School's Director of Teaching and a 'plus one', is held to look at the themes coming out of that year's annual monitoring process, with presentations and discussions. At the most recent event, Generative AI was the lead topic and best practice was shared, resulting in guidance to support School approaches.

81 The TQER team heard examples of similar enhancements arising from the URLT process, where concerns raised by students about inconsistent late submission rules had led to an institution-wide policy and improved consistency. In the case of a professional services URLT, a review of the Library URLT outcome recommended closer working with Schools; this has been actioned and has had a positive impact on online programmes particularly.

82 The University's QESR report in January 2024 was very positive, with one recommendation: that 'the University should implement strategies that actively enhance student engagement and completion rates with Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs). The University submitted its action plan to address this in August 2024. Steps already taken include the introduction in 2024-25 of an interim mid-semester module feedback process.

83 The TQER team learnt also of wider engagement by staff with external peers, through academic subject associations, where forms of assessment and curriculum developments are discussed, and with external examiners where there has been dialogue about new types of assessment, especially around challenges of AI-generated essays. Professional services also draw upon their networks to share good practice.

84 The University, through a student internship, has carried out research on the impact of its projects funded under the Enhancement Themes initiative, Resilient Learning Communities, which ran across the Scottish higher education sector from 2020 to 2023. The enhancement theme offered small funding opportunities for projects, ranging from £200 – £1000. This was used by both staff and students for local projects focusing on student support, innovative teaching, collaboration and policy influence. Eight of the projects created resources to enhance student well-being, contributing to an improved student experience; six projects submitted reports to University committees, influencing policy decisions, such as

the Lecture Capture Policy; and three projects established partnerships with external organisations, such as the Quality Scotland Resource Library.

85 As part of a QAA research project on the impact of the 20 Years of Enhancement Themes, the University has reflected on the impact of Themes activity on student experiences and student outcomes and identified a substantial list of positive impacts, in areas such as academic skills, wellbeing, assessment feedback, flexible teaching spaces and learner analytics. These are now embedded into practice and in a number of cases have been further developed. The Transitions toolkits, for example, which were originally introduced for undergraduate pre-arrival, have successfully progressed into support for Honours level transition and have been very well received by students.

86 The University has regular engagement with its study abroad partners and employers through site visits, online meetings and annual conference engagement, providing opportunities to share best practice, to exchange policy and process updates, and to innovate in support of student experience on both sides. Additional monitoring is put in place for all new collaborative programmes with Advisory Groups and longer tenure of external examiners to support continuity in the earlier stages.

87 The TQER team was able to see evidence of the extension to its collaborative partners of the University's enhancement-based approach through examples of outcomes of a joint seed funding scheme with partners, one with the University of Padua and the other with Charles University (Univerzita Karlova, Czech Republic). In these examples, the seed funding had, respectively, facilitated the holding of a workshop on AI and assessment and the development of a module plan for an online module which has the potential to be taught jointly between the two universities.

88 The TQER team heard of a number of examples of enhancement with regard to the University's graduate entry MBChB programme (ScotGEM), taught in collaboration with the University of Dundee. Feedback had indicated that the structure of the programme, where students moved between institutions, had led to anxiety in students and as a result work has been done to support the transitions through closer linkage of the two universities' support services, introducing students at an earlier stage to the staff of the other institution and keeping staff of both universities visible and accessible throughout their programme.

89 The University's external outlook is informed by key drivers such as engagement with subject disciplinary groups and dialogue with external examiners. As noted above, these have been particularly useful in discussion of types of assessment and the challenges of AI-generated essays. The University is also closely engaged with the wider external landscape through professional services networks, particularly in areas of EDI and student support, and was the first higher education institution to be awarded Gender-Based Violence Charter status in 2023.

QAA2969 - R14774 - July 25

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2025
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland