



Scotland's Tertiary
Quality Enhancement
Framework

Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER)

Forth Valley College

This review method
is ESG-compliant

May 2025

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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 documents¹. 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 Forth Valley College (the College) carried out by a team of five peer reviewers:

- Ms Cathy MacNab (Reviewer)
- Mr Robin McGregor (Reviewer)
- Ms Diane Mitchell (Reviewer)
- Ms Amy Monks (Student reviewer)
- Professor Richard Tong (Reviewer)

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

In TQER, the 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 (SIA)) and an Advance Information Set (AIS), the latter arranged around the Sector-Agreed Principles of the UK Quality Code, comprising a range of materials about the institution's arrangements for managing quality and academic standards. The SIA and AIS frames 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). A scoping meeting also took place on 2 September 2024 to determine the provision in scope for the review. At the Forth Valley College scoping meeting, it was agreed that all provision was in scope, and it was confirmed that the institution did not currently use its Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework credit rating authority.

The review comprises two visits: an Initial Review Visit which, for Forth Valley College, took place on-campus on 24-25 March 2025; and a Main Review Visit which took place on-campus on 13-16 May 2025.

The judgements 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.

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>

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

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:

Forth Valley College 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 design of high-quality learning environments:** The College provides a diverse range of learning tools, spaces and experiences designed to provide learners with authentic and engaging learning experiences which enable them to transition effectively into employment. (**Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment**)
- **The provision of comprehensive and effective induction and ongoing support for new staff:** The College operates a suite of induction and onboarding activities that effectively embeds new staff within the college community and ensures early support and encouragement to develop in their role. (**Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment**)
- **The comprehensive and effective approach to supporting learner transition:** The College has a comprehensive range of policies, processes and services facilitated by dedicated staff roles which combine to provide highly effective support to learners at all stages of their journey. Student support is particularly effective in relation to transition into college, and from college on to employment or further study and has a demonstrable and positive effect on student success, satisfaction and confidence, including for disadvantaged groups. (**Supporting Student Success**)
- **The positive impact of work to enhance data management and use across all areas of the College:** The College has embedded the awareness, sharing and reflection on data particularly in relation to effective decision-making in curriculum management and planning, and learning, teaching and student support within academic teams and operational/professional services. (**Enhancement and Quality Culture**)
- **The positive, ambitious and enhancement-led staff- and student-centred culture:** The College has created and maintains a positive working environment in which staff feel empowered and encouraged to consistently enhance the learner experience. (**Enhancement and Quality Culture**)

Recommendations for action

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

- **Understanding and ownership of the College's Strategic Plan and Student Learning Experience Strategy:** The College should increase understanding and ownership of the Strategic Plan among staff and students and provide a clear link

between the Strategy, underpinning sub-strategies, and departmental and individual action plans. **(Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment)**

- **Visibility of information relating to complaints:** The College should review how it makes information regarding the process and outcomes of complaints available to students and the public to increase its visibility **(Supporting Student Success)**
- **Strengthening the student voice and its influence:** The College should create further opportunities for the wider student body to influence change and increase student partnership and engagement in quality improvement and evaluation processes. **(Student Engagement and Partnership)**
- **A systematic oversight on quality enhancement initiatives:** The College should implement a more cohesive approach to enhancement activity that evidences strategic oversight, recording and reporting across activities and facilitates broader engagement of staff and students. **(Enhancement and Quality Culture)**

Contextual information about Forth Valley College

1. Forth Valley College (the College) was established in 2005 as a merged regional College serving the needs of the three communities in Falkirk, Stirling and Alloa. The College offers programmes at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Levels 2-10, spanning both further education (FE) and higher education (HE). Programme delivery is distributed across the three College campuses. The College works with several awarding bodies, having devolved authority to deliver Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) qualifications, which comprise the majority of its curriculum offer.
2. The College has established a range of partnerships with local stakeholders which includes Community Planning Partnerships and Local Employability Partnerships in each of three local authorities, Schools and National Health Service (NHS) partnerships and being an active member of the Falkirk Economic Partnership. Partnership delivery includes School-College Partnership activity, with over 900 pupils attending the college each week; Modern Apprenticeship programmes delivering to over 1,100 apprentices; partnership degrees with the University of Stirling, University of Aberdeen, Heriot-Watt University and Strathclyde University; and university articulation agreements with 15 universities.
3. In 2023-2024 the College enrolled around 19,000 students of whom 16% were studying full-time, 51% part time, and 33% through other means (evening work-based or flexible/distance learning). The majority of students were studying for FE qualifications (86%). This split between FE and HE has been consistent over the past four years. A large majority of students (79%) were based at the Falkirk campus, with 16% at Stirling and 5% at Alloa. The College supports learners of school age through to mature students. In 2023-24, 19% of students were under 16 years of age, 32% were between 16-19, 14% were between 20-24, 23% were between 25-44 and 12% were 45 and above. The four largest subject areas at the College are consistently Engineering and Technology, Care and Caring Skills, Business and Administrative Studies, and Construction and Property.
4. Completion and withdrawal rates compare favourably to the sector across both FE and HE. The most recent data from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) (2022-2023) shows completion rates of 67.9% for FE full-time students compared to 63.6% across the sector, 69.6% for HE full-time students (65.5% sector), 87.1% for FE part-time students (77.3% sector) and 83.0% for HE part-time students (78.6% sector). Withdrawal rates similarly compare favourably to the sector for 2022-2023 across all levels and modes. College Leavers Destination data for 2021-22 shows that 95.1% of leavers progressed to a positive destination – 69.2% went on to further study and 25.9% went into employment.
5. The College's ambitions are set out in the 2025-30 Strategic Plan which summarises the fundamental purpose "to deliver excellence in education and skills that are transformational for our students and partners." The purpose is underpinned by four strategic aims relating to delivering an excellent student experience, delivering a sustainable future, promoting equality and wellbeing, and achieving growth through innovation. Each of these aims is supported by a range of high-level metrics to measure success.

Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment

6. The TQER team found that Forth Valley College 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 Plan, Student Learning Experience Strategy, reports from external review, departmental self-evaluation and action plans (SEAPs), minutes from College committees and tours of the three campuses. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including staff, students and employers.

Academic standards and awarding

7. The College ensures that academic standards and awarding practices meet external expectations with overarching responsibility for quality being the responsibility of the Principal and the Senior Management Team (SMT), under the oversight of the Board of Management. Members of the SMT each have strategic responsibility for quality assurance and quality improvement/enhancement within their named area, with further delegation to Directors of Curriculum and heads of services who, with SMT members, comprise the Leadership Management Team (LMT). The LMT meets weekly to discuss operational matters and to consider and approve papers to the Board of Management and Board committees, including Learning and Student Experience Committee (LSE) which provides assistance to the Board of Management on the educational performance of the College.

8. The Vice-Principal Learning and Student Experience has strategic responsibility for the quality of learning and teaching within the curriculum, and the Head of Learning and Quality has functional responsibility for quality matters across the college. This includes monitoring the effectiveness of quality assurance arrangements for all curriculum activities. The Directors of Curriculum have strategic and operational responsibility for the quality of learning and teaching within their departments. A sustained commitment to quality assurance and enhancement is evident across all areas of provision overseen by LMT which is responsible for ensuring the College adheres to the College's quality cycle and scrutinises the outputs and recommendations from relevant reviews.

9. The TQER team found that the College consistently applies sector frameworks, such as the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), to provide clarity around qualification levels and types. This is well-embedded across curriculum areas and aligns with the strategic aims set out in the Student Learning Experience Strategy (SLES) 2025-2030. Evidence confirmed that all programmes are systematically mapped to SCQF levels during curriculum design, validation and annual review stages, ensuring coherence and transparency for students and employers and supporting clear articulation pathways and robust progression opportunities across both further and higher education provision. Staff are confident when advising students on the most appropriate qualification at the application stage and students are clearly aware of the levels of their qualifications and their progression and employment opportunities. Overall, the TQER team agreed that the College's consistent application of sector frameworks ensures that qualifications are clearly understood and appropriately positioned within the Scottish tertiary education system.

10. Curriculum approval processes are robust and ensure alignment with the SCQF, as well as compliance with awarding body expectations and sector standards. The TQER team considered that these were well understood and applied by staff. Engagement with internal verifiers, external verifiers, awarding bodies and professional regulators ensures that qualifications awarded are secure, consistent and reliable.

Strategic Leadership

11. The TQER team found that the College's leadership actively fosters a strong culture of excellence in learning, teaching and assessment driven by a clear and focused strategic direction which is staff- and student-centred. This is articulated in the Strategic Plan 2025-30. Senior leaders have established a vision aligned with national priorities for skills development, digital innovation and inclusion, which underpins the College's approach to continuous improvement across all curriculum and support areas.

12. The College's Student Learning Experience Strategy (SLES) was launched in February 2025 and is one of the underpinning and enabling sub-strategies for the Strategic Plan launched in January 2025. Leadership for the implementation of the SLES, at senior level, sits within the responsibility of the two College Vice Principals (VP Learning and Student Experience and VP Infrastructure and Comms) who have strategic responsibility for all curriculum and support service provision. Periodic reporting to the SMT on actions and progress against SLES objectives provides assurance of high-level monitoring of the outcomes via the Learning, Improvement and Student Experience Committee (LISEC) chaired by the VP Learning and Student Experience. Although the TQER team found evidence of staff engagement in the formation of both the Strategic Plan and SLES, staff were often unclear about their relevance to their area of work and were less able to articulate how it directly influenced their practice (see also paragraph 60). The TQER team **recommends** that the College increase understanding and ownership of the Strategic Plan and Student Learning Experience Strategy among staff and students and provide a clear link between the Strategy, underpinning sub-strategies, and departmental and individual action plans.

13. Leadership priorities are further reinforced through the Learning and Quality Self Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP) 2023-24, which clearly links operational planning to ambitions for curriculum development, digital transformation and teaching excellence. The SMT monitors College performance through LISEC and decision-making processes are evidence-based, with leadership drawing on robust performance data including performance indicator tracking, Listening to Learners (L2L) feedback (see also paragraph 68) and external benchmarking to identify emerging trends and inform enhancement activities.

14. The TQER team noted that distributed leadership is a key feature of the College's enhancement approach. Curriculum Managers and Operations Managers are empowered to lead on quality enhancement, curriculum development and professional learning initiatives at departmental level. Staff are encouraged to participate in leadership development programmes, innovation projects and staff development activities, supporting the creation of a collegiate and improvement-focused culture. However, further strategic oversight would improve cohesion and enhance student partnership and co-creation (see also paragraphs 81-84).

Curriculum planning, design and delivery

15. The TQER team found that the College applies a structured, evidence-led approach to curriculum planning, design, approval, monitoring and delivery. The College's Continuous Curriculum Improvement (CCI) process and programme reviews are central mechanisms for ensuring that programmes of study remain current, aligned to workforce demands and responsive to both regional and national priorities (see also paragraph 81). CCI meetings provide a forum for data-driven reflection and monitoring and discussion of key performance indicators for each area of the curriculum, including schools provision. The CCI process divides the academic year into review milestones, allowing for systematic curriculum monitoring and enhancement. Strategic decisions regarding portfolio developments, including course rationalisation and redesign, are informed by CCI and are clearly evidence-based. These decisions have supported the College in maintaining a curriculum that is regionally relevant and focused on emerging growth sectors such as digital technologies and health and social care.

16. The TQER team noted that the CCI process provides an effective platform for curriculum teams to pilot innovative delivery methods and evaluate their impact on student outcomes. Examples include the development and evaluation of new formative assessment models and differentiated learning strategies, with forums and Learning and Teaching Enhancement projects, supporting the dissemination of effective practice. Through these measures, the College ensures that innovation remains embedded in the culture of learning and teaching, supporting the College's ambition to deliver transformative learning experiences for all students.

17. Departments are well-connected with regional forums, employers and other agencies for example, Screen Scotland. The National Health Service (NHS) Partnership is a positive relationship with evidence of innovative pathways and curriculum offering emerging as a result of this for example, access routes to nursing. The TQER team noted that, while employer engagement is well-established across many areas, the mechanisms for gathering employer feedback that could be used in the CCI process could be more formally applied across all departments (see also paragraphs 19 and 24)

18. The College adopts a systematic and proactive approach to school collaborations, including prioritisation of information sharing to improve the transition process. The School College Partnership is a strong example of productive collaboration, offering meaningful learning opportunities and supporting learner transitions. The partnership is well regarded and reflects a joined-up approach to curriculum planning and delivery. Schools are actively involved in collaborative activity, and learners benefit from joined-up pathways and support across institutions.

Work-based learning

19. Work-based learning (WBL), including Modern Apprenticeships (MAs), is a key area of employer collaboration and the College is a significant provider of MAs in Scotland, working with over 300 employers across a broad range of industries. This responsiveness to employer needs has led to relevant curriculum content that industry partners regard as valuable in delivering workplace-ready employees. Employer feedback is gathered informally through placement evaluations and partnership discussions. However, the College acknowledges that further strengthening of systematic formal employer feedback on WBL experiences collection would enhance the strategic curriculum review process. The TQER team noted that future developments include embedding more formal mechanisms for

capturing employer insights during programme reviews and validation activities and encourage the College to progress this to continue to ensure its awards align closely with sector expectations and regional workforce needs.

20. Key partners, including those from the school sector, praised the relevance and quality of the College's MA and full-time programmes. They highlighted the breadth and depth of the curriculum and its alignment with regional economic needs. Skills development and employability are widely recognised as core strengths and unique selling points of the College by schools and employers. The TQER team concluded that the College's approach to employer engagement reflects a strong commitment to co-designing provision that responds to regional and national skills priorities and the widening access agenda.

21. The TQER team found that the College places significant emphasis on the quality assurance of WBL across its curriculum portfolio. For work-based assessment, consistency and reliability in assessing student progress across different work-based settings and employer environments is overseen by College WBL Assessment Managers through three-monthly standardisation meetings. Curriculum teams work closely with employers to monitor the quality of learning opportunities, ensuring alignment with programme learning outcomes and sector requirements and systematic processes for monitoring the quality of WBL provision are firmly embedded within the broader CCI process. Regular reviews of WBL programmes ensure that learning outcomes remain current, assessments are fit for purpose and student experiences are positive and closely aligned with industry standards. The introduction of the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) and Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP) is expected to further strengthen the College's evaluation of WBL quality across all departments.

22. The TQER team considered that students undertaking WBL are well supported by the College. The College has established partnership agreements with employers and placement providers, outlining expectations regarding the support, mentoring and assessment of WBL students. Work based assessors and apprenticeship officers provide in-placement support, addressing issues proactively and enhancing the overall student experience competently applying Skills Development Scotland frameworks. Work based assessors liaise effectively with apprenticeship officers to provide wider student support. Employer feedback and apprentice progress are reviewed systematically through placement visits and review meetings.

23. The College also plays an active role in relevant sector networks and collaborates across the tertiary landscape. For instance, the College's partnership with the University of Stirling and the fast-track HNC model exemplifies its commitment to collaborative working and curriculum innovation. Other examples include cross-college working groups, the Skills Transition Centre (STC) advisory board, and regular engagement with Technical Expert Groups (TEGs) for Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs). This cross-sector work further strengthens its contribution to the regional skills agenda and supports a more joined-up approach to learner pathways and progression.

24. The TQER team considered that Forth Valley College demonstrates a strong external outlook, with well-established links to employers, schools, university partners and wider stakeholders. These relationships are influencing the College's direction and supporting innovation across a range of areas. While this collaborative approach is clearly embedded in practice, the TQER team considered that there may be benefit in capturing these

engagements through more structured mechanisms to ensure learning and impact are consistently tracked and shared. The recent launch of Listening to Employers may address this if feedback is captured effectively and actioned.

25. Overall, the TQER team concluded that the College has a coherent and responsive approach to curriculum management, underpinned by strong use of evidence and stakeholder engagement to ensure that programmes meet current and future workforce needs.

Learning environments

26. The TQER team found that the College provides high-quality physical and digital learning environments that support an inclusive and accessible student experience. Significant capital investment across all of the campuses has resulted in facilities and learning spaces that meet the needs of a diverse student population. Specialist resources, including laboratories, virtual welding equipment, skills simulation suites and creative arts studios, enable vocational learning experiences that align with current sector expectations in high-quality industry-leading facilities across all campuses. Staff and students that the TQER team met expressed high satisfaction with their learning and working environment and resources. The College has demonstrated a clear commitment to digital transformation, with substantial developments in the use of technology to enhance learning and teaching. Digital skills development for both staff and students is embedded within curriculum design and professional development planning, ensuring that students are equipped with essential digital competencies for future success.

27. Employers consistently report that College graduates are well-prepared for the workplace, equipped with a strong mix of industry-specific knowledge and transferable soft and essential skills. Students benefit from high-quality learning environments and access to industry-standard equipment, enabling them to transition smoothly into employment. Investment in physical learning environments has also been informed by wider sector and industry developments. In the care sector, the introduction of “Skills Simulation Suites” has enabled the delivery of situated learning in realistic environments. The Skills Simulation Suites and other innovative work-based spaces are designed to reflect real-world contexts and prepare students for progression into employment. These spaces are designed to be dynamic and adaptable, allowing teaching to be tailored to individual student needs. Students expressed enthusiasm about these spaces, noting how they contribute to a more engaging and relevant learning experience.

28. The TQER team noted that learning environments are subject to continuous evaluation through mechanisms such as student surveys and monitoring through the CCI process to ensure responsiveness to evolving student needs. Although responses rates are low, student satisfaction surveys report positive feedback regarding access to facilities and digital resources. However, staff recognise that further progress is required to standardise the use of digital tools across and within programmes to enhance the student learning experience. Future plans include the continuous evolution of learning spaces to encourage adoption of emerging technologies such as simulation, virtual reality and artificial intelligence-assisted learning tools. The TQER team considered that these strategies place the College in a strong position to deliver an effective student learning experience. The TQER team found that the College provides a diverse range of learning tools, spaces and experiences designed to provide learners with authentic and engaging learning experiences which enable

them to transition effectively into employment and consider this to be a feature of **good practice**.

29. The TQER team considered that the College provides an individualised learning experience for all its students facilitating flexibility around learning experiences. The College's virtual learning environment (VLE) was widely praised for enabling on-demand access to a broad range of learning resources. Both staff and students highlighted regular use of digital platforms to enhance and supplement on-campus learning. Students were also positive about the e-resources available through the Learning Resource Centre. However, awareness and usage varied by campus. For example, Higher National students at the Alloa campus appeared less familiar with these tools compared to their peers in Falkirk and Stirling.

30. Students expressed strong appreciation for the flexibility provided by lecturers regarding assessment scheduling and completion. Many reported being able to negotiate deadlines, which helped them manage competing responsibilities. Staff also signposted this approach to assessment flexibility and stressed their willingness to support such a method where appropriate, although students identified a lack of consistency regarding the adherence to assessment deadlines and multiple assessment opportunities. Some students voiced concerns that excessive flexibility could be unfair, particularly when peers who submitted work late appeared to face no penalties, despite others meeting deadlines diligently.

Staff development

31. The TQER team found that the College demonstrates a strong strategic commitment to supporting the professional development of its teaching and student-facing staff by recognising the contribution that staff make to deliver its mission of 'Making Learning Work' stated in the College's Strategic Plan. Professional development is clearly aligned with College priorities outlined in the Strategic Plan 2025-30 and the Student Learning Experience Strategy 2025-30, both of which emphasise the importance of continuous learning to drive excellence in learning, teaching and assessment.

32. Coordination of professional development activity is undertaken at both College and departmental level, through mechanisms including the Learning and Quality SEAP and Professional Review and Development (PRD) process. The TQER team noted that staff appraisals and annual review processes ensure individual development needs are linked to College priorities. A comprehensive continuous professional development (CPD) framework exists for new staff, encouraging participation in short courses, professional updating activities and sector events as well as formal qualifications like the Teaching Qualification in Further Education (TQFE) and Professional Development Awards (PDAs). CPD activities are strategically linked to priorities, including digital learning enhancement, teaching pedagogies and leadership development. Staff are provided with time in which to undertake development, and the College also holds an annual staff event to focus on areas identified for college-wide development with recent examples including Trauma-Informed Practice and Academic Quality processes. The TQER team heard from staff that they felt supported and encouraged to pursue relevant development opportunities, and they were able to provide examples of courses, secondment opportunities and locally provided training from which they had benefited.

33. The College's focus on digital skills development is particularly strong and has been supported in recent years through the College's Learning and Digital Skills Academy which was designed to upskill staff in digital teaching methodologies, hybrid delivery models and the adoption of emerging technologies. Staff development activities encourage new pedagogical approaches, including skills simulations, use of artificial intelligence (AI), project-based learning and the use of technology-enhanced assessment tools. Future plans include expanding leadership pathways for middle managers, increasing opportunities for embedding digital pedagogy more comprehensively across all departments.

34. All new staff complete a structured induction programme which is tailored to the needs of their individual roles. This can begin prior to starting their role with pre-induction activities such as orientation of campuses and meeting with colleagues. Formal induction typically takes place over two-four weeks and includes an introduction to College policies, a meeting with the Principal, and induction to IT systems. New teaching staff are provided with mentoring, both for teaching and for the use of digital systems, which provides one-to-one support during the early phases of their career at the College. All new teaching staff undertake the TQFE which includes observation of their teaching as part of the programme. A refresh of the induction process in 2024 added review points to give an opportunity for dialogue between the new staff member and their line manager. Staff who have experienced the refreshed process reported that they were given clear goals for their development and felt fully supported throughout. From the evidence, the TQER team considered that the College operates a suite of induction and onboarding activities that effectively embeds new staff within the college community and ensures early support and encouragement to develop in their role and that this provision of comprehensive and effective induction and ongoing support for new staff is a feature of **good practice**.

35. Sharing of good practice among peers is facilitated through communities of practice (such as AI and research), Curriculum Managers' Forum, cross-college events, enhancement projects and Short Life Working Groups (SLWGs). Staff routinely engage in structured reflective practice through mechanisms such as annual programme review and course team meetings. The CCI process also ensures that self-evaluation and peer-led quality enhancement activities are undertaken systematically across all departments. Staff also evidenced a culture of self-reflection and evaluation and a commitment to constant enhancement outside of these formal processes.

36. The College acknowledged there is no formal requirement for peer observation of teaching although teaching staff clearly demonstrated that they reflect on and evaluate their teaching. Programme review which happens twice each academic year is the mechanism for teams to reflect on the quality of their teaching. Although currently, the outcomes of programme review are not collated, the integration of these into the new Learning and Quality SEAP is intended to address this gap. These developments are expected to strengthen strategic oversight and further embed a culture of enhancement based on rigorous self-reflection and collaborative peer learning. The TQER team endorses the College's direction of travel to developing a more consistent approach to evaluating the quality and impact of learning and teaching.

37. The TQER team found that the College promotes a culture of innovation across learning, teaching and assessment within its strategic direction and operational activities. Innovation is identified as a core principle for driving improvement and enhancing the student experience within the Strategic Plan 2025-30. Innovation is supported at all levels

through leadership initiatives, targeted professional development and structured enhancement activities aligned to sector priorities such as digital transformation and inclusive practice. However, a more systematic approach to innovation could enhance teaching, learning and assessment (see also paragraphs 78-80).

Supporting student success

38. The TQER team found that Forth Valley College's arrangements for supporting student success are **effective**. The College has appropriate and systematically applied practices in line with sector expectations for supporting student success that uses 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 the Student Learning Experience Strategy, key policies relating to student support, minutes of key committees, the Inclusion and Student Support (ISS) SEAP, and tours of the three campuses. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including staff, students, employers and schoolteachers.

Enabling student success

39. The College's commitment to inclusive and empathetic support is articulated in its Student Learning Experience Strategy (SLES), which is based on the sparqs (student partnerships in quality Scotland) Student Learning Experience Model. The SLES outlines high-level objectives related to student support provision and guides collaboration between academic and professional support teams to deliver a suite of services across all campuses.

40. The TQER team considered that effective communication between curriculum teams and specialist services enhances the quality of student support at the College. The Learner Development Worker (LDW) role is central to this, acting as the student's main contact for academic and pastoral support. All FE students have scheduled LDW sessions each week which provides dedicated time for one-to-one meetings and coordinated group support activities. Additional support roles at the College include additional support workers providing in-class support for specialist groups, Learning Skills and Resources Assistants providing information and study support in Learning Resource Centres and Mental Health Mentors providing wellbeing and mental health support. This broad network ensures effective support at each campus. During the review, students consistently reported feeling well supported, and staff believe this positively impacts retention and engagement. The TQER team noted that despite the strengths of this broad support network, both staff and students expressed occasional confusion about whom to approach for specific support and the TQER team were of the view that there would be benefit in reviewing these roles to ensure there are no overlapping responsibilities which could add to student uncertainty regarding the optimal point of contact.

41. The Student Mental Health Agreement, developed in partnership with students and approved by the Student Council, outlines interventions to promote wellbeing. This includes a counselling service, which is available through an external provider. The student Mental Health Mentor role provides additional targeted expertise and capacity to support student wellbeing. While the College does not offer an in-house out-of-hours support, the TQER team noted that students are signposted to services such as the NHS and Samaritans via staff email signatures, the student app, and the VLE.

42. The Department for Inclusion and Student Support (ISS) was established following a restructure of student support services in 2020-21 in response to key challenges identified through internal and external evaluation (including a surge in additional support needs (ASN) requests). This led to the creation of new roles, including Support and Guidance Advisors, and Learning Support Advisors, aligned to specific academic teams, and changes to the

delivery of key interventions including learning support, guidance tutoring, counselling, study skills, and mentoring. Further refinement of the student services restructure introduced the Learning and Inclusion Facilitator (LIF), an academic role working alongside the LDW providing subject-specific learning support. While staff undertaking the LIF role are clearly supported, the TQER team noted that effectiveness of this role is unclear as there appears to be only limited deployment of the role within specific areas, and a lack of evaluation of its impact to date. College evaluation of ISS shows modest improvements in student retention, attainment, and satisfaction since its introduction. The ISS team's work is further shaped by the Head of ISS's involvement in the Continuous Curriculum Improvement (CCI) process for each academic department, ensuring alignment between academic and support leadership and informing strategic priorities. (see also paragraph 15)

43. The TQER team found that ASN students at the College are well supported through the "Triple S" (Student Support System) and the detailed Personal Learning Support Plan (PLSP) process. This ensures that critical student information is efficiently managed and easily accessible to staff, reducing the need for students to repeatedly explain their circumstances. A named contact for all students with a PLSP ensures tailored support, and students can declare needs at multiple points in their journey or self-refer at any time. Teaching teams disseminate PLSP arrangements via Triple S, with LDWs ensuring implementation and monitoring of adjustments throughout the year.

44. The TQER team considered that an effective, well-resourced and accessible range of academic, pastoral, and financial support is available at the College, and there is strong equity of access across Falkirk, Stirling and Alloa campuses. Students expressed strong appreciation for the quality of support provided by College staff and highlighted their enthusiasm, kindness, and approachability, noting that both teaching and support staff appeared to genuinely care about their students and the service that they provide.

45. The TQER team concluded that the College support services are offered equitably. Students engaged in distance learning, part-time, online, or work-based study are entitled to the same support services as their full-time, on-campus peers. All campuses, learning resource centres, and flexible learning spaces are accessible during core advertised hours, including evenings. All students, including those on school-college programmes, were aware of the available support services. Most expressed high satisfaction with the level and type of support received. Despite increased demand, student satisfaction with support services, as reported in recent Listening to Learners (L2L) survey results, remains high.

Transitions

46. The College's applications, admissions, conversion, and "keep warm" processes are well-organised and effectively implemented. The TQER team noted that students consistently reported positive experiences, and staff demonstrated strong understanding of their roles in the recruitment journey. Staff also described effective collaboration across teams to support smooth transitions into college.

47. The TQER team considered that the College provides effective and individual support for its wide range of learners to transition into the College learning environment. As part of the admissions and PLSP process, bespoke support arrangements are in place for priority groups such as care-experienced students, carers, exceptional entrants, neurodivergent students, and those from Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) backgrounds. "Get Ready to Learn" was initially provided as summer workshops for care-experienced and referred pupils and following its success is now offered to all students. These workshops allow students to attend the College, engage in campus tours, informal learning activities and meet key members of staff prior to their enrolment. First delivered in 2022-23, the Get Ready to Learn campaign has demonstrated strong retention outcomes and is now being extended to other FE cohorts. Comprehensive learning needs disclosures are encouraged, and at-risk groups are monitored through personalised approaches. From the pre-application stage, these students can access a range of enhanced support services, such as named single points of contact, campus visits and guided tours, individual meetings, and bespoke induction sessions. Staff and students describe a proactive and comprehensive approach to identifying and supporting at-risk and vulnerable individuals. Key support staff work closely with academic teams to enable early identification and timely intervention.

48. A suite of bespoke support arrangements is in place for school-leavers, particularly those under 18 who may require additional help transitioning from school to college. Data-sharing agreements with all three local authority partners have further strengthened these transition arrangements. The School Partnership Team supports the College's ambition to enhance transitions through the development of a pre-summer transition period in June, which has helped pupils feel more confident and relaxed about starting their courses. School pupils reported positive experiences and felt well-prepared for their next steps. Many expressed intentions to return as full-time students based on these positive experiences. The College is committed to supporting school transitions and regularly participates in secondary school progression and careers events. Staff and students alike reported that these engagements help raise awareness of opportunities and support smooth transitions into further education.

49. The TQER team found strong and consistent evidence of a well-organised and implemented approach to student induction. Students receive a structured seven-week induction programme, which is formally timetabled, facilitated by LDWs and inclusive of academic, corporate, and student support guidance. 'MetaLearn', the College's mechanism for embedding meta-skills across all full-time courses, is embedded in these weekly induction sessions to develop soft skills early in the student journey. The TQER team noted that students spoke very positively about the support received during their early college experience, particularly during induction.

50. Employability and careers support is enhanced by the presence of careers offices on campus, and students also benefit from a wide range of online support and guidance

resources via the VLE and the student app. The Learning Resources Centre (LRC) provides guidance on study skills, information literacy, and digital skills, and students reported LRC staff as being knowledgeable and helpful.

51. The College maintains strong relationships with several universities and has numerous well-established articulation agreements in place. These enable seamless progression to higher education and optimise transitions along the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Students described College staff as friendly, approachable, and knowledgeable about progression pathways, and had clear and well-developed plans for their next steps, shaped by weekly sessions with LDWs, on-campus access to careers advice, information and guidance and conversations with curriculum and support staff.

52. The TQER team considered that the College provides tailored and individualised learning pathways for students from diverse backgrounds. A new initiative launched in January 2025 targets exceptional school leavers/pupils who have struggled to engage with traditional full-time winter-leaver programmes. This initiative uses a bespoke online e-learning platform to deliver on-demand resources remotely to students/pupils unable or not suited to attending college in person. Initial feedback from partner schools has been positive, though some expressed a preference for the programme to lead to a formal qualification rather than being a college certificate. In response to concerns from local schools, where pupils often felt conflicted between attending college and remaining in school, the College introduced a new school pathway. This pathway embeds technical and vocational education within the full-time school curriculum. The T:QUAL framework, with multiple exit points at various SCQF levels, supports highly structured and supported transitions to tertiary education. The College acknowledges challenges in this area as some schools have expanded their own “college-style” provision, particularly in the care curriculum which has impacted pupil progression to college. The College is addressing this challenge through the schools CCI process.

53. The TQER team considered that the College’s comprehensive and effective approach to supporting learner transition to be a feature of **good practice**. They found evidence of a comprehensive range of policies, processes and services facilitated by dedicated staff roles which combine to provide highly effective support to learners at all stages of their journey. Student support is particularly effective in relation to transition into college, and from college on to employment or further study and has a demonstrable and positive effect on student success, satisfaction and confidence, particularly for disadvantaged groups.

Employability, skills development and lifelong learning

54. The College collaborates with all three local authority community planning and employability partnerships to deliver a cohesive regional approach to skills development. A notable example is the £4 million Skills Transition Centre (STC), developed as part of the Falkirk Growth Deal. This facility supports individuals, businesses, and communities in adapting to workplace changes and focuses on Net Zero skills and green job opportunities. It also positions the College as a key stakeholder in regional redevelopment following the closure of the INEOS oil refinery at Grangemouth. While core skills are embedded in some programmes, they are taught separately in others. Student awareness of core skills development varied across groups. Some staff expressed concern over the lack of a clear strategy for integrating core skills into the curriculum. Addressing this has already been identified as a priority for academic year 2025-26.

Concerns and complaints

55. The TQER team found that the College has appropriate mechanisms to anticipate and deal with student concerns and complaints. The College has adopted the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) model Complaints Handling Procedure, and students can raise complaints formally through a dedicated online form. Oversight of formal complaints sits within Corporate Services who prepare a review of Stage 2 complaints on an annual basis to monitor any trends, and report to the College's Audit Committee.

56. The TQER team observed that there is limited student awareness of the Stage 1 complaints process with most students reporting that they would raise concerns informally with their lecturer, Curriculum Manager, or LDW. These complaints are not formally recorded, limiting the College's ability to conduct thematic analysis and identify trends. The SPSO Model Complaints Handling Procedure for further education states that colleges should publish an accessible annual complaints performance report on their website each year, in addition to quarterly complaints reports outlining actions taken to improve college services. These reports should be easily accessible to the public however, the TQER team could not find evidence of such reports on the College website. The TQER team **recommends** that the College reviews how it makes information regarding the process and outcomes of complaints available to students and the public to increase its visibility.

57. The College is currently reviewing stakeholder feedback and response structures, and Learning and Quality will have a more prominent role in the complaints process from next academic year. The TQER team endorses this direction of travel and considers this an opportunity to enhance institutional learning through improved collation and oversight of both formal and informal complaints. Robust safeguarding arrangements are in place across all campuses and staff demonstrated clear understanding of how to access specialist safeguarding support when needed.

Data and externality

58. The TQER team found that the College uses externality effectively to support student success. The College rolled out trauma-informed practice training in 2023 in response to the changing learner need. Progress toward becoming a Trauma-Informed College has been accelerated through collaboration with the College Development Network, other colleges, and the Learning and Quality team. This initiative includes introductory training for all staff; a

rolling CPD programme, use of the College Development Network audit tool, and the establishment of a Trauma-Informed Community of Practice. Staff spoke positively about the initiatives, noting increased confidence and the positive impact on teaching and student support strategies.

Student engagement and partnership

59. The TQER team found that Forth Valley College is **effective** in student engagement and partnership. The College's approach to student engagement and partnership is systematic and strategic. The College ensures the quality of the student learning experience is continuously improved based on the voice of students in line with sector expectations. The College 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 Learning Experience Strategy, Student Partnership Agreement, student survey results and tours of the three campuses. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including senior staff, Students' Association staff, sabbatical officers, and students from different levels of study and campuses including class representatives.

Strategic approach

60. The College's Student Learning Experience Strategy (SLES), launched in February 2025, includes an aim to systematically embed student engagement and partnership across all levels of decision making. Leadership for the implementation of the SLES, at senior level, sits with two College Vice Principals (VP Learning and Student Experience, and VP Infrastructure and Comms), who have strategic responsibility for all curriculum and support service provision. The College's Students' Association (SA) President and Vice President are members of the College Board of Management and the Learning and Student Experience Committee (LSE). Periodic reporting to the Senior Management Team (SMT) on actions and progress against SLES objectives provide assurance of high-level monitoring of the outcomes via the Learning, Improvement and Student Experience Committee (LISEC) which is chaired by the VP Learning and Student Experience. The President of the SA actively participated in the shaping and content of the SLES and raising awareness of this. However, the TQER team did not find evidence of systematic wider student participation in creating the SLES or in planning for the operationalisation of it. Furthermore, students met during the review were not aware of strategic aims contained within the SLES (see also paragraph 12).

61. The College has recently introduced Self-Evaluation and Action Plans (SEAPs) for academic departments (including school partnership), Learning and Quality, and ISS, which provide an annual opportunity for self-evaluation against the principles of the TQEF, including student engagement and partnership. However, the TQER team noted that internal/departmental SEAP process has not yet had sufficient time to be embedded to evidence any impact of improvements in student engagement and partnership working to date. The SA President and Vice President input to the Curriculum Managers' Forum as indicated in their operational plan. This helps promote awareness of SA activities such as their role in induction and Welcome Week at the start of each term.

62. The Student Partnership Agreement 2024-25 reflects the College's commitment to co-creation, shared decision-making and strengthening the student voice in shaping learning and teaching. The TQER team noted that only the SA President was directly involved in the development of the Partnership Agreement and awareness of it amongst other sabbaticals and elected officers was low. The College Principal has regular pre-scheduled meetings with SA sabbatical officers, during which there are discussions on SA objectives, progress and action setting. These meetings are valued by senior staff and the sabbatical officers and

provide opportunities for shared agenda setting, progress monitoring and discussion of Student Association objectives, including agreement on SA budget allocations.

Student representation

63. The SA has an elected President who works across all campuses on a scheduled rotational basis. The SA President is supported by a Vice President and a number of elected officers including an Education Officer, Welfare Officer and a number of Diversity and Inclusion Officers. Elected postholders attend national training and are paid for their roles. The SA is college funded, has budget autonomy and is supported well by college staff. Supporting staff members include a SA and University Partnership Manager, a Student Engagement Co-ordinator and a SA administrator, who provide effective support for the operational delivery of SA-related activities such as class representative training, student community Teams channel, newsletter and Welcome Week induction. The SA develops an annual operational plan and effectively self-evaluates against key themed objectives set within the plan, including the performance of the SA itself.

64. The SA has dedicated, well-equipped office space in a prominent location within campuses across the college. The SA President and Vice President have a whole college remit across all learning sites. Student survey feedback evidences that most students are aware of the SA role and how to contact them, however active engagement with the SA was not found to be widespread or uniform across all sites and not all students are familiar with office bearers and their roles within the SA. Students are aware of activities such as Freshers' events/Welcome Week and opportunities to join clubs and societies and engage with these where work and caring responsibilities allow.

65. The TQER team noted the range of ways that the SA engages with, and acts as a voice for, the wider student body. 'Tell us Tuesdays' is a SA initiative inviting students to drop in to SA offices, or complete an online tool, and comment on thematic topics linked to their student experience. A College Student Newsletter is made available on the student intranet and highlights student feedback from the Listening to Learners (L2L) surveys. Feedback from the student body is shared with the Principal during Student Council meetings and scheduled meetings between the Principal and SA, and prompts actions (see also paragraph 70).

66. Class representatives are recruited by staff, the SA, or nominated by fellow students. Awareness of the role of the SA and information about the student representation system is included in student induction with most students across all campuses expressing awareness of their class representative and the opportunity to engage in the class representative system. The SA is responsible for class representative training. Training for new class representatives is offered online or in person and an annual Class Representative Conference takes place on each campus, hosted jointly by the SA and Quality and Learning staff, providing opportunities for student networking and supporting the representative role. The TQER team found that not all elected class representatives undertook training, citing timetable clashes with in-person training dates and times. Those who participated in online training had mixed feelings about the effectiveness of this in supporting them undertaking the role. Apprentices and students on block release programmes expressed more limited opportunities to engage and the TQER team identified this as potentially restricting opportunities for certain cohorts to engage in student voice mechanisms.

67. College staff and the SA President have recognised the challenge in recruiting and retaining class representatives and have implemented a number of changes to increase engagement and retain class representatives beyond their initial recruitment/selection. Information relating to the role has been made available in a variety of formats such as videos and other online materials and a class representatives' online space has been created with notifications sent regularly to create a sense of community. An accreditation scheme was also put in place in academic year 2024-25 to incentivise and reward class representatives' participation at training and events. The TQER team endorses this area of work and encourages the College to continue to consider how appropriate training and support is provided to all class representatives, and how engagement between staff teams and class representatives can be enhanced and sustained.

Student voice

68. The TQER team noted the College's approach to gathering feedback from the student body. L2L is the main process for engaging students in providing feedback to enhance quality and applies to all curriculum and support areas across the College campuses and includes all students. The L2L survey is bi-annual with the first survey undertaken as a class group to engender confidence and awareness of the system. Following the first teaching block subsequent L2L surveys are designed for individual responses and are accessible by all learners via the student intranet. In addition, student users of supports services are routinely asked to feed back on their experience of the services. Students also confirmed they are encouraged to provide feedback in a variety of informal ways such as through their Learner Development Worker.

69. Data from L2L is included within the Continuous Curriculum Improvement (CCI) process and directly informs management decisions, for example, regarding the provision and procurement of key support resources. The TQER team found that understanding and awareness of the L2L mechanism for feedback among students from across all campuses is high. However, response rates across L2L phases are low (ranging from 30%-40% depending on the curriculum area), potentially limiting the representativeness of the feedback across courses and campuses. Additionally, the College acknowledges that its focus on promoting L2L may have contributed to low participation in the Student Funding Council Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey. The College recognises student participation in surveys as an area for improvement and plans to develop a formal mechanism for students to engage more directly in the internal SEAP process. Additional future plans include enhancing student participation in strategic planning and governance structures.

70. Student Council meetings provide an additional mechanism to hear the student voice at the College. These meetings, which take place twice-yearly at each of the three campuses, are the decision-making forum for the SA. They are used to gather student views and for senior staff to share progress on actions taken. These events have resulted in positive joint College and SA measures to improve the student experience, for example, the development and co-creation of a Student Mental Health Agreement 2024-25.

71. While the TQER team observed a number of mechanisms in place to support student engagement in quality, such as the class representative system and L2L, they considered that these could be enhanced to more effectively engage the wider student body. They also observed opportunities to increase partnership working between students and the College.

The TQER team **recommends** that the College strengthens the student voice and its influence through creating further opportunities for the wider student body to influence change and increases student partnership and engagement in quality improvement and evaluation processes.

Closing the feedback loop

72. Informing students of the results of L2L surveys, and the actions taken in response to student feedback is led by Curriculum Managers and is standardised across all departments using a feedback template document which is also shared with the Learning and Quality Team. Not all students were aware of this formal mechanism to close the feedback loop. The TQER team found that this process is relatively new and inconsistently applied across departments, with class representatives not yet routinely included in its delivery. At course level, students are mostly aware of how their feedback is used to make changes in-year or in future years through individual staff highlighting changes. Some students were able to report on changes made following feedback, including instances of modified course or unit content, or timetable changes to better meet their needs. Other students, particularly students on shorter or more flexible delivery patterns, such as apprentices or part-time learners, were unaware of whether or how their L2L feedback had influenced decision-making and were less able to comment on whether feedback had led to meaningful change during their course of study.

73. The TQER team considers that Directors of Curriculum work effectively within their areas of responsibility to take account of student feedback within self-evaluation activities. Student survey feedback informs action planning in curriculum through the CCI process, and in professional services through SEAPs. This has led to enhancements that support students, including their academic development, such as the introduction of a Learning and Inclusion Facilitator (LIF) role in some departments. The CCI process also informed changes in the school link transition methods which were enhanced to provide better induction and boost confidence in school pupils attending college for the first time.

Enhancement and quality culture

74. The TQER team found that Forth Valley College **is effective** in embedding an enhancement and quality culture across the College. The College 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 College accurately manages data. The College'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 College 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 minutes for key committees, Continuous Curriculum Improvement (CCI) process documents and examples of implementation and Self-Evaluation and Action Plans (SEAPs) for academic departments, learning and quality and student support services. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including senior staff, academic and support staff, employers, and students.

Strategic approach

75. The College demonstrates a strategic approach to enhancement through its Strategic Plan, and underpinning Student Learning Experience Strategy (SLES). The SLES articulates a commitment to improving student outcomes through the effective use of data, robust processes for self-evaluation and inclusion of students in quality assurance processes, and feeds into the Professional Review and Development (PRD) of all senior managers.

76. The TQER team found that senior leadership at the College has worked to embed a strong culture of assurance, improvement, and enhancement, with clear evidence of emerging strengths across the College. Senior leaders are visible across campuses and there is a strong sense of one college rather than individual campuses. The College has simplified committee structures to reduce bureaucracy and enhance engagement.

77. Learning Improvement and Student Experience Committee (LISEC) is the key committee through which enhancement is driven, monitored, and evaluated at the College. LISEC is a cross-college committee representing key roles and departments, including the Students' Association (SA), which meets quarterly to provide leadership, strategic direction and drive operational improvement of the student experience. The creation of Short Life Working Groups (SLWGs) identified through CCI, Curriculum Managers' Forum or other processes are approved by LISEC along with implementation of any recommendations emerging from these groups.

Enhancement and innovation

78. The TQER team considered that College staff at all levels are supported to adopt a data-driven approach to evaluation and enhancement planning. Within academic departments, the CCI process, led by Directors of Curriculum and Curriculum Managers uses analysis and evaluation of student recruitment, disclosures, withdrawals, student survey feedback and partial success data at departmental level. Teaching staff complete the performance indicator (PI) predictor tool using student attendance and attainment data to monitor the outcomes for individual students and identify learners at risk of partial success at key points in the academic year. Data use is also embedded in the practice of student support and professional services teams, for example, in the communications and marketing, and student administration teams' use of recruitment and enrolment data, and at college level in the use of regional skills and school leaver destinations data for curriculum planning.

79. The College has invested in and developed effective data-dashboards to make the range of data accessible to all staff. Staff from Curriculum Managers to support staff, spoke positively about the College's drive to streamline systems, improve cross-campus communication, and demystify data through appropriate software and tools. This has created a stronger sense of ownership and responsibility among staff, though understanding of strategic goals could be strengthened and clearer links made between strategy, operational activity, and day-to-day delivery. The College plans to further extend its effective use of data through the creation of a College corporate dashboard to show progress against performance indicators in the College's Strategic Plan. The TQER team consider that the College has embedded the awareness, sharing and reflection on data particularly in relation to effective decision-making in curriculum management and planning, and learning, teaching and student support within academic teams and operational/professional services. The TQER team consider the positive impact of work to enhance data management and use across all areas of the College to be a feature of **good practice**.

80. The TQER team found that enhancement and innovation is encouraged at the College. This is articulated through the College's Strategic Plan and its focus on staff within the Strategic Aims, and embedded within the CCI and programme review processes through which programme and curriculum teams are empowered to identify and implement actions to improve the student experience. Academic and professional services staff that the TQER team met with spoke about leading enhancement and innovation within their areas of work and articulated how their ability and confidence to do so resulted in their uptake of opportunities provided by the College. This included participation in Curriculum Managers' Forum and Short Life Working Groups and undertaking TQFE and other staff development opportunities. Staff survey feedback confirms this view within the wider staff body. The TQER team consider the positive, ambitious and enhancement-led staff- and student-centred culture in which all staff feel empowered and encouraged to consistently enhance the learner experience to be a feature of **good practice**.

81. The CCI process (see also paragraph 15), as a further mechanism for enhancement, operates at department level with meetings including members of the Leadership and Management Team, Directors of Curriculum and Curriculum Managers. The process prompts in-year actions to address any immediate concerns, and progress against these actions are monitored at the following CCI meeting. The TQER team observed that the CCI process is well embedded and valued by Directors of Curriculum and Curriculum Managers

as a key mechanism through which they can reflect on practice, act on feedback, and enhance learning and teaching over time. However, central reporting of cross-college actions at strategic level was not clearly evidenced.

82. Within academic departments, annual self-evaluation and action planning occurs through an end of year programme review at programme level and through internal Self Evaluation Action Plans at academic department level aligned to the TQEF. Professional services also engage in self-evaluation; until annual year 2023-24 this self-evaluation was based around the How Good is Our College? Framework but now uses the SEAP process. The TQER team considers that engagement with the SEAPs is not yet consistent across all curriculum and service areas. Some teams demonstrate strong reflective practice, while others require further development. Academic teams that use the CCI process appear to be more confident on actions required to address areas of concern. Strengthening consistency in self-evaluation and reflection would help the College build a clearer picture of what is working well and where further improvement is needed.

83. The TQER team noted other mechanisms for enhancement and improvement that exist at the College such as the Curriculum Managers' Forum (a monthly forum to share practice between Curriculum and Operations Managers) and Short Life Working Groups (SLWGs) which are created as a response to emerging issues identified through various processes such as CCI, programme review, student feedback and discussion at the Curriculum Managers' Forum. All SLWGs report their progress to LISEC.

84. The TQER team considered that enhancement and improvement activities which take place at the College are currently initiated by different processes and mechanisms. While all are driven by reflection, and are data-informed, the TQER team considered they lacked strategic oversight, without formal and consistent governance arrangements which clearly define the processes for the selection, delivery, monitoring and reporting of enhancement activities. As a result, the connection between overall strategies (such as the Strategic Plan, and Student Learning Experience Strategy) the different enhancement initiatives, and action planning and reporting processes are not clear or well understood by staff who expressed uncertainty as to how the outcomes of these feed into wider strategy and decision-making processes. This suggests an opportunity to clarify lines of communication, authority and ensure actions from local enhancement activities are visible across the College. The TQER team **recommends** that the College implements a more cohesive approach to enhancement activity that evidences strategic oversight, recording and reporting across activities and facilitates broader engagement of staff and students.

External outlook

85. The TQER team found that Forth Valley College is an active and engaged participant in the wider tertiary education sector and demonstrates a strong commitment to sector-wide enhancement activity. The TQER team found that the College shows a strong awareness of the regional economic landscape and has established extensive and effective collaborations with industry, employers and partner organisations across a wide range of sectors. Strategic partnerships with organisations such as NHS Forth Valley, University of Stirling, Babcock and leading companies in the construction, digital and energy sectors have contributed directly to curriculum development and the creation of new programmes. These partnerships help to ensure that curriculum developments remain relevant and responsive to the needs of

local stakeholders and reinforce the College's identity as a key contributor to the regional economy.

86. Employer engagement activity was consistently highlighted as a strength by employers and school and university partners. Employers spoke positively about the College's approach, praising its professionalism, collaborative attitude, and high standard of customer service. Stakeholders also praised the College's responsiveness to feedback, highlighting the impact of collaborative curriculum design and shared transition planning on the learner experience.

87. The TQER team found that Forth Valley College is making effective use of external quality review activity to inform its direction and enhance the student experience. The College has considered feedback and recommendations from previous Education Scotland visits and created comprehensive action plans to address several any issues raised, which are monitored by the Leadership Management Team (LMT).

88. The TQEF is clearly influencing the College's priorities and shaping its approach to quality improvement. While some aspects are still embedding, the impact of this framework is increasingly visible in strategic decision-making. The College has made a positive and proactive start in engaging with external institutional peer review. The College's decision to volunteer for the first round of the TQER reinforces its commitment to innovation and sector engagement and demonstrates a commendable level of openness, ambition, and willingness to learn. This early engagement reflects a confident approach to quality enhancement and a clear interest in constructive dialogue with external partners.

89. The College has engaged with national initiatives such as Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP) and the College Development Network Changing Learner Journey programme, and has supported staff to take part in secondments, enabling them to contribute to, and bring back learning from, wider sector developments. This engagement has helped the College remain responsive to emerging sectoral priorities, such as embedding meta-skills, supporting trauma-informed practice, and developing flexible pathways for non-traditional learners. Their investment in staff development supports a culture of outward-looking practice and shared learning. The TQER team observed that the College effectively draws on external sources to inform its practice. The College's staff development activity reflects external influence and responsiveness to sectoral priorities. For example, trauma-informed practice and themes from the Changing Learner Journey have been integrated into staff development, following feedback from staff themselves. These initiatives are helping to shape a more inclusive and learner-centred culture.

90. Overall, the TQER team considered that College's engagement with sector enhancement activity is wide-ranging and constructive. It is well placed to continue drawing on this engagement to inform internal improvement, support innovation, and respond to the evolving needs of students, employers, and the wider community.

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