Quality Enhancement and Standards Review

University of Strathclyde

Review Report

May 2023

Contents

Introduction

This is a report of a review under the [Quality Enhancement and Standards Review](#) (QESR) method conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) as part of Phase 1 of the Scottish Quality Enhancement arrangements at the University of Strathclyde.

The review took place on 11 May 2023 and was conducted by a review team, as follows:

- Ms Molly Knight
- Professor David Lamburn
- Ms Donna Taylor.

QESR is Phase 1 of a two-phase approach that enables the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) to fulfil its statutory obligation under Section 13 of the *Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005* to ensure that provision is made for assessing and enhancing the quality of fundable higher education provided by fundable bodies for academic quality and enhancement between 2022-24. The second phase of QAA's external quality review arrangements starts in 2024-25 to coincide with the implementation of new tertiary quality arrangements.

The main purpose of this review was to:

- provide assurance about the provider's management of its responsibilities for academic standards to inform an enhancement-led full institutional review in Phase 2
- provide assurance about the provider's management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities for students to inform an enhancement-led full review in Phase 2
- report on any features of good practice
- make recommendations for action.

About the University of Strathclyde

The University of Strathclyde can trace its roots, as 'a Place of Useful Learning' to 1796 and was granted its Royal Charter in 1964. The University's vision is that of a leading international technological university which is socially progressive and makes a positive difference to the lives of its students, to society and to the world. It has a specific focus on developing a deep integration and relationship with industry through research, innovation and through industry's direct involvement with student learning. The University has a strong and sustained commitment to widening access to and participation in higher education.

The University has a strategic approach to achieving its vision, articulated in its Strategic Plan 2020-25 and, at the time of the current QESR, was consulting internally on the emergent Strathclyde 2030 Strategic Plan. The 2020-25 Strategic Plan has five main goals: outstanding education and student experience; world-leading research; transformative innovation and impact; global engagement; and operational excellence. The University has four faculties: the Faculty of Engineering; the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science; the Faculty of Science; and the Strathclyde Business School.

In 2022-23, the University had a student population of just over 22,350 full-time equivalent (FTE), of whom 66% were studying at undergraduate level, 28% were engaged in taught master's-level provision and 6% in postgraduate research. In the same year, 7.5% of the total student population were studying on a part-time basis and a large proportion (81%) of

these were taught postgraduate students. The institution's student FTE comprised 66% from Scotland, 7% from the rest of the UK and the remaining 27% international (including the European Union).

Findings

From the evidence presented, the review team is confident that the University of Strathclyde is making effective progress in continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision to enable effective arrangements to be in place for managing academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience.

Good practice

The QESR team found the following **features of good practice**.

- **Strategic approach to enhancement:** The University has a very clear and effective approach to strategic planning and an ongoing commitment to enhancing the student experience. The Learning and Teaching ambitions of the Strategic Plan are effectively operationalised through a combination of frameworks, working groups or targeted institutional projects, all driven and managed through its education committees to ensure the student experience is enhanced (paragraph 3).

- **Student partnership working:** The University has continued to build on student partnership working with the creation of the Strathclyde Strategic Alliance (SSA) which complements the Student Partnership Agreement (SPA). This, supplemented by the operation of an effective Student Experience Committee (SEC), the innovative use of student internships, and co-creation of protocols, as well as involvement in joint projects, contribute to achieving mutually beneficial and valuable collaborative working arrangements across both the student body and with university colleagues (paragraph 11).

- **Digital education:** The University has continued to develop and strengthen an effective digital education capacity through a collaborative, deliberate and strategic approach (paragraphs 17-21).

Recommendations for action

The QESR team makes the following **recommendations for action**.

- **Thematic review of professional services:** As the new professional services review process is embedded, the University should produce a timetable of reviews to ensure that all student-facing professional services are systematically reviewed within a suitable timeframe (paragraph 27).

- **PGR teaching:** The University takes action to ensure that its Guidance for Postgraduate Research Students Who Support Teaching and Teaching-related Activities is fully and consistently implemented across the University (paragraph 13).

Institutional approach to quality enhancement

Strategic approach to enhancement

1   The QESR team is confident that the University has in place effective arrangements to monitor, review and enhance its strategic approach to enhancement. The team considered a range of documents, including its Vision 2025, Education Strategy, Learner Experience Framework, Learning and Teaching Improvement Framework, Employability Strategy, and Outcome Agreement report to the Scottish Funding Council, along with minutes from key institutional committees responsible for educational enhancement and monitoring, learning and teaching, and the wider student experience. The team also met with staff and students.

2   The University articulates a clear vision for the delivery of an outstanding education and student experience. Educational strategies align with those of the University and priorities are set annually to deliver the strategy with progress being evaluated against relevant key performance indicators (KPIs). The Education Strategy Strategic Fund ensures the availability of appropriate resources to enable delivery of strategic projects. The institution's Executive Team is leading preparations for the 2030 strategic vision and the QESR team heard from senior staff that a distinctive student experience, combined with high quality learning and teaching activities, will continue to be a major aim. This will be supported by a developing people strategy addressing the needs of students and staff to achieve the education strategy's key objectives.

3   The University's Education Strategy Committee (ESC) leads education enhancement activity through committees which report to it, individuals who lead enhancement initiatives and working groups which focus on specific initiatives. The Committee's membership is inclusive of faculties and professional services, and is served by several members of the University's executive team and the University's Leadership Group. Faculties also have learning enhancement committees and it was evident in the documentation that there are regular opportunities for cross-institutional dialogues as well as discipline-based enhancement activities. For example, the Learning and Teaching Improvement Planning Process engages staff and students as well as faculty and institutional committees in scrutiny, oversight and implementation of enhancements. Similarly, the University's set of core frameworks for enhancing learning and teaching and the student experience are clear, effective and embedded at local discipline level and centrally. The Learner Experience Framework (LEF), which includes a portfolio of performance indicators, brings together a number of strategic projects and captures the richness of the student educational experience including information about internships and opportunities to engage with industry, employers and international placements. The Learning and Teaching Improvement Framework uses student feedback to enhance student education. The University's online and digital learning strategy, combined with enhancements to the digital infrastructure, enable delivery of key educational priorities. The University has a very clear and effective approach to strategic planning and an ongoing commitment to enhancing the student experience. The learning and teaching ambitions of the Strategic Plan are effectively operationalised through a combination of frameworks, working groups or targeted institutional projects, all driven and managed through its education committees, to ensure the student experience is enhanced. It was clear to the team that the University takes deliberate steps to innovate across programmes through its Reflection, Enhancement and Development projects, which have stimulated approaches to employability and sustainability. The QESR team identified the strategic approach to enhancement as a **feature of good practice**.

4   The University's strategy for learning and teaching is further enhanced by its embedded partnership with students to identify opportunities for enhancement. Student representation on committees at all levels of the institution, the recognition of the importance

of student feedback, and the three-year Strathclyde Strategic Alliance underpin the enhancement strategy. Students the QESR team met were positive about their engagement in enhancement activities.

5   Implementation of the University's strategic ambition for education has been accompanied by significant investment in the learning and teaching infrastructure and environment. The new learning and teaching building, opened in 2021, was designed to provide an outstanding infrastructure, supported by innovative technology, and has been greatly welcomed by students and staff for enabling the development and implementation of aspects of the institutional strategy.

6   The University's strategic approach to staff development has continued to ensure effective arrangements for engaging and supporting staff in their development and in enhancing teaching. Annual staff development reviews, supported professional accreditation opportunities, bespoke workshops and a PGR supervisor development programme are among a coherent and comprehensive portfolio of skills development opportunities provided by the Organisational and Staff Development Unit (OSDU) and the Directorate of Education Enhancement to support the development of all forms of teaching and learning. A series of learning and teaching fora are held each year to discuss different approaches to and wider adoption of measures to address issues linked to learning and teaching improvement plans. Staff and students who met the QESR team were positive about the staff development opportunities they experienced.

7   The QESR team noted that previous Sector Enhancement Themes have impacted positively on the institution's strategy, policy and practice in learning and teaching. *Student Transitions and Resilient Learning Communities* have each been linked to strategic priorities. A focus on employability and skills led to the development of the new employability strategy and developments in preparing students for new learning technologies. Students have led on developing resources and the employment of student interns on themes has stimulated the development of new principles and practice for student engagement.

Student partnership

8   The QESR team is confident that the University has effective arrangements in place to monitor, review and enhance its approach to student partnership. The team considered the Student Partnership Agreement, the Strathclyde Strategic Alliance, the Outcome Agreement report, and minutes from key institutional committees, and met with staff and students.

9   The QESR team found that the University has in place policies and procedures to support the engagement and representation of students. The Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) outlines the routes in which the University, Strathclyde Students' Union (Strath Union) and the wider student body will work together in order to enhance the student experience. Introduced in 2018, the SPA is the responsibility of the Student Experience Committee (SEC), and sets the priorities, goals and core values between the University and Strath Union. An additional document - the Strathclyde Strategic Alliance - captures jointly agreed priorities for the University and Strath Union and provides a mechanism for continuity and transition between elected sabbatical officers. In meetings with the QESR team, students outlined the clear partnership working which has been accomplished through the creation and implementation of the SPA goals and activities.

10   The University has an extensive student representation system in place which is detailed in the SPA. Students at programme level select a class representative to attend Student-Staff Liaison Committees (SSLC). In turn, faculty representatives collate the views of the class representatives and feed into faculty-level committees and discussions. There is

evidence of student feedback and participation across all key quality and standards processes including appropriate student representation on key university committees related to quality and standards. Several mechanisms are in place to hear the student voice and encourage increased partnership. At the time of the current QESR, the long running 'You Said We Did' campaign continued to be valuable, complemented by an additional 'Maintaining the Dialogue Survey' which influenced institutional priorities. During the QESR visit, students indicated that the 'Maintaining the Dialogue Survey' had positively supported the level of student engagement across the institution. Approaches to seeking feedback from students include module feedback using the virtual learning environment (VLE) - MyPlace, National Student Survey (NSS), Strathclyde Undergraduate Satisfaction Survey (SUSS), Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), engagement in Staff-Student Liaison Committees and focus groups. Students who met the QESR team spoke positively about the representation roles at both an undergraduate and postgraduate level; however, it was noted that the type and quality of representative training varied across schools and levels of representatives. The team would encourage the University to reflect on student representative training to ensure consistency across the institution.

11 The University's partnership working is particularly evidenced through the work of the Education Strategy Committee (ESC) and the Student Experience Committee (SEC) with both committees having multiple student members. ESC has standing agenda items for both the student voice and student partnership, via SEC. SEC is co-chaired by students and senior staff, and helps inform decision-making, oversees revisions to the SPA, and has notable achievements including the Student-led Digital Transformation Project, securing widening access to graduation bursaries and the creation of a Sexual Health Working Group. The QESR team noted that the SEC annual report described the committee as 'pragmatic, responsive and continues to provide an excellent platform to innovate and continue the work to heighten the student voice with a revitalised focus on strong partnership and effectiveness'. The University has continued to build on student partnership working with the creation of the Strathclyde Strategic Alliance (SSA) which complements the Student Partnership Agreement (SPA). This, supplemented by the operation of an effective Student Experience Committee (SEC), the innovative use of student internships, co-creation of protocols, as well as involvement in joint projects, contribute to achieving mutually beneficial and valuable collaborative working arrangements across both the student body and with university colleagues. The exemplary partnership arrangements (also commended in ELIR 4) were identified as a **continuing feature of good practice**, with particular recognition that the partnership also helps to bring communities together across the University - of particular relevance following the pandemic, to boost the welfare of students.

Action taken since ELIR 4

12 The QESR team is confident that the University has effective arrangements to monitor and review actions taken in response to ELIR 4. In reaching that conclusion, the team considered the ELIR 4 Follow-up report, extracts from Education Strategy Committee Annual Reports to the Senate, and guidance and policy documents resulting from the actions taken. The team also followed up on key aspects in meetings with staff and students.

13 To address the recommendation relating to training for postgraduate research (PGR) students who teach, the University conducted a survey of PGR students. Following the survey on teaching activities, the University established two working groups to develop policies and systems, and to address training provision. Both groups operated across departments, schools and faculties to ensure that PGR students are adequately prepared to undertake support for teaching. Policies and guidance are aligned to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code). The revised policies and procedures are designed to ensure that mandatory training is undertaken by PGRs who support teaching and enable the

tracking of compliance by departments and schools. The implementation of the measures taken is ongoing; in meetings with students the QESR team identified inconsistencies in the application of the University's policies relating to training, recruitment, support and provision of feedback on teaching related activities with some PGR students receiving no training before teaching or assessing and some receiving no feedback on their teaching. The QESR team **recommends** that the University takes action to ensure that its Guidance for Postgraduate Research Students Who Support Teaching and Teaching-related Activities is fully and consistently implemented across the University.

14   Responding to ELIR recommendations relating to student engagement with the work, role and reporting of external examiners, the University revised its procedure and guidelines for external examiners, and updated its Faculty Annual Report (FARs) template to enable monitoring of compliance with the guidance. It also made arrangements for external examiners to meet with students, both during and after the pandemic, and invested in the human resource required to oversee the external examining activity more broadly. The revised guidance indicates that, with appropriate exceptions, external examiner reports are to be made available to students in full. This is undertaken through the Student-Staff Liaison Committees (SSLC). The QESR team was informed that, in practice, instead of providing students with the full external examiner reports, summaries of external examiner reports are provided at SSLCs and Faculty Academic Committees which provide the means to discuss comments with staff. The team noted that the University's policy and practice were not fully aligned and would encourage the University to amend the policy to reflect practice.

15   One recommendation from ELIR 4 related to the University's intention to implement a process for reviewing professional services. Within the recommendation, the University was encouraged to make demonstrable progress within academic year 2019-20 to implement a process for reviewing professional services in accordance with plans it shared with the ELIR 4 panel. As part of its strategy for internal review, the institution analysed sector approaches and determined that a thematic review approach would have benefits over a service-led method, especially in identifying connectivity and enhancement opportunities. A policy and procedure was developed and approved by ESC, and sub-committees reporting to it, in December 2019 and endorsed by the Senate the following month. The first topic chosen was the theme of Student Mental Health and it was intended to progress the review in the spring and early summer 2020. The timeline was impacted by the pandemic but the review was held in the summer term of 2021. The procedure for reviewing professional services is now embedded as part of the University's ongoing internal review approach (see paragraph 27).

16   The QESR team is satisfied, based on the information provided, that appropriate progress has been made with respect to the recommendation on institutional oversight of collaborative provision. The University was recommended to reflect on the information available to the Collaborative Provision Agreements (CPA) sub-group about collaborative programmes to better support its institutional-level oversight of collaborative activity. The institution recognised that there could be better connectivity between the CPA sub-group and available data sources to ensure a unified approach to the initiation, approval and monitoring of partnership provision. The CPA sub-group continues to report to the Senate through the Senate Business Committee but also now meets annually with the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) to consider collaborative partnerships due for renewal. Additionally, QAC submits to the CPA sub-group, a summary report of quality assurance on partnerships agreements and on the student experience.

Sector-wide enhancement topic

17   The QESR team is confident that the University has effective arrangements in place to monitor and review its approach to defining and delivering an effective and inclusive digital/blended learning offering. The team considered the institution's Digital Education Reflective Statement, guidance papers, minutes of key committees and groups, reports, and met with staff and students.

18   The University's strategic commitment to and cross-institutional development of digital and online education activity predates the new Scottish Funding Council tertiary enhancement topic - 'The future of learning and teaching: defining and delivering an effective and inclusive digital/blended offering'. The Strathclyde Online Learning (SOL) Committee developed practices, procedures and standards in digital learning. The institution's Graduate Apprenticeship provision (with multiple modes of delivery) enabled the development of expertise, the infrastructure and student experience to support a rapid expansion of digital delivery during the pandemic. Digital champions perform a key advocacy role in schools and faculties. The QESR team noted key investments in human resource, technical support and IT infrastructure, coherent and comprehensive staff development programmes, and physical high-specification infrastructure. All students are introduced to the University's online learning platform.

19   The governance infrastructure around online, blended and digital education has been developed to be responsive to feedback from students and staff, and to ensure that the expectations for quality and standards in the UK Quality Code are met. The Strath Union Vice-President Education is a member of the SOL Committee. The Student Experience Committee (SEC) considers flexible learning and the Strathclyde Strategic Alliance (see paragraph 11) has deliverables related directly to digital education. e-FIRST working groups ensure agile responses to circumstances and student need while playing a critical role in managing quality and standards. The annual report from the e-FIRST groups 2021-22 reported that these groups have allowed regular information exchange and discussion between faculty, professional service and Strath Union representatives, enabling immediate response to emergent issues including addressing changing Sottish Government advice during the pandemic. Broadly, the University has the same expectations for standards and quality of digital learning as all other forms of its education provision. Accordingly, it is covered in quinquennial reviews, noted in external examiners reports, taken into account in liaisons with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs), and in degree apprenticeship monitoring.

20   The student voice is also at the forefront of the University's approach. The Student Mobile Application allows all students to engage digitally. The STRATHReps: Unified Class Representative Management Project enables engagement with all students, whether studying online or on-campus and the Myplace VLE enables a consistent approach to module evaluation. Internal surveys of the student experience of digital learning have helped to shape the future direction. For example, the development of the Strathclyde Student Insights Learning Analytics Dashboards will enable staff to monitor student online activity and be alerted to potential issues with student engagement. At the same time, the institution is aware of the necessity to ensure that the blend between digital and other forms of learning is sensitive to different discipline approaches.

21   The University's approach to digital education was commended in ELIR 4. The QESR team consider that the University has continued to develop and strengthen an effective digital education capacity through a collaborative, deliberate and strategic approach and has highlighted this as a **feature of good practice**.

Academic standards and quality processes

Key features of the institution's approach to managing quality and setting, maintaining, reviewing and assessing academic standards

22   The QESR team is **confident** that the University has effective arrangements for monitoring and review of its approach to managing quality and to setting, maintaining, and reviewing and assessing academic standards. The team considered the University's Internal Review Framework, Quinquennial Review (QQR) of Academic Provision reports, Thematic review report, approaches to annual monitoring, minutes from institutional committees and met with staff and students.

23   The QESR team found that the University's arrangements for managing quality and setting standards meet the expectations of the Quality Code and align with the guidance issued by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). Procedures are clear and comprehensive, and supported by institutional guidance that promotes a consistent approach across the institution. Institutional policies relating to programme and course development and approval are aligned to sector expectations expressed in the Quality Code, take account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, the *Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework* (SCQF) and relevant qualification frameworks.

24   The Internal Review cycle is predominantly programme focused, beginning with module evaluation and review of external examiner reports. Annual Module Monitoring Reports are used to develop Programme Annual Reports which then inform the development of Faculty Annual Reports (FARs), facilitated by Faculty Academic Committees. The FARs then undergo a peer review process involving the Quality Enhancement and Assurance Team (QEAT), and the Vice Dean (Academic) and Assistant Faculty Manager - both from another faculty. This offers a two-way dialogue providing opportunity for the FAR to be refined accordingly prior to submitting the final version to the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) and the Learning Enhancement Committee (LEC). Intertwined in this approach, QEAT produces a Thematic Review which considers the key themes across the four FARs (good practice, innovation, challenges) and outlines cross-faculty recommendations. The Thematic Reports and FARs are scrutinised at a joint meeting of QAC and LEC as a collegiate institutional approach; follow-up momentum is continued where faculties keep track of actions updating QAC and LEC annually. The QESR team considered the internal review cycle process to be an effective way for the University to distil the work of the four faculties and provide valuable insights to what had worked (and not worked) over the year. It allows the University to share good practice and provides a process to identify, discuss and address challenges.

25   Quinquennial Review (QQR) includes scrutiny of all forms of credit-bearing provision at undergraduate and postgraduate levels for all modes of study. It also considers collaborative provision, continuing professional development (CPD) and continuing education provision, as well as the supervision of postgraduate research students. QAC considers the full reports and coordinates a subsequent follow-up. The QQR process incorporates the Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment (TESTA) methodology which has created a dialogue with students around assessment. This drove the development of an Assessment and Feedback Hub, launched in August 2022, for sharing practice.

26   There is evidence of ongoing continuous improvements to processes; notable areas include the Thematic Review, which routinely identifies areas for enhancement as well as annual programme monitoring and FARs. For example, the recent Student Mental Health thematic review recommended that training opportunities for staff be expanded and rolled out across the institution. The FAR template is tailored at the start of the academic year to

ensure currency, and incorporates the Learner Experience Framework as an appendix. Staff who met with the QESR team agreed that embedding the LEF in the FAR process allows staff to use the data for tracking and monitoring internships, international and industry/employer engagement and other emerging priorities.

27   An outcome from ELIR 4 encouraged the University to make demonstrable progress to implement a process for reviewing professional services (see paragraph 15). There is a Thematic Review of Student Facing Professional Services Policy and Procedure which is embedded as part of the University's ongoing internal review approach. The QESR team noted that reviews will be undertaken biennially with the next theme identified as 'Online Support for the Learner Journey'. The team **recommends** that the University should produce a timetable of reviews to ensure that all student-facing professional services are systematically reviewed within a suitable timeframe.

28   The strategic approach to enhancement has been identified as a feature of good practice by the QESR team. The work of the university committees are key to operationalising the learning and teaching ambitions of the Strategic Plan. The Education Strategy Committee (ESC), with several key groups, frameworks and committees, contribute to achieving goals. These include the e-FIRST Framework; the Learner Experience Framework (LEF); the Learning and Teaching Improvement Framework (LTIF); Strathclyde Online Learning (SOL); Reflection, Enhancement & Development (RED) Projects; the Learning and Teaching Ecosystem; and working groups, among others. The e-FIRST Framework was praised in assisting the University to react quickly to changing environments (paragraph 19). While reporting to Senate through ESC, the QAC and LEC work closely to learn from current practice, and make recommendations for change annually; examples include: continually responding to digital education needs in such a rapidly changing environment, and development of revised guidelines to support students through periods of disruption. Additional groups seek to further enhance practice such as the Careers and Employability Working Group, the Entrepreneurship for All Working Group, and the Race Equality Working Group (reporting to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusions Committee) - all serving distinct functions.

29   The University's approach to oversight of its collaborative activities is fully set out in its comprehensive Policy and Code of Practice on Collaborative Education Provision. A Database of Collaborative Provision is retained and updated regularly. Partnerships are monitored by the Collaborative Provision Agreement (CPA) sub-group chaired by the Vice-Principal. A Collaborative Education Provision Review normally takes place every three years to assess the student learning experience. QAC considers the reviews and reports to the CPA sub-group.

Use of external reference points in quality processes

30   The QESR team is confident that the University has effective arrangements in place to monitor and review its approach to the use of external reference points in quality processes. The team considered the mapping of the quality processes against the Quality Code, minutes from key institutional committees, and met with staff and students.

31   The QESR team found that the University makes effective use of external reference points in the management of academic standards through implementation in regulations, policies and procedures. There was evidence that the Quality Code mapping had been reviewed and endorsed by QAC in February 2023, providing additional assurances that practices were up-to-date and, where they required to be revisited, the mapping provided a good indication of status. The Policy and Procedure for Quinquennial Review of Academic Provision and Internal Review Framework describes how institutional practices and policies

align with the Quality Code, and the Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) guidance to institutions on quality.

32   Institutional policies for programme and module approval are aligned to sector expectations. A defined policy and procedure on programme and module approval ensures a clear and consistent approach is adopted and that Subject Benchmark Statements, the SCQF, PSRB requirements and external input are taken into consideration. Faculty Academic Committees act with delegated authority from the Board of Study with responsibility for scrutinising proposals and recommending to Senate, in close liaison with QAC. The QESR team saw evidence of the use of key reference points in annual monitoring processes, programme approval and in the reports from Quinquennial Reviews. For example, views from external examiners and professional bodies are sought as part of the programme approval process.

33   External examiners comment on academic standards, assessment arrangements, alignment with the SCQF and draw comparisons with provision at other institutions, providing ongoing assurance on the use of external reference points. The University has indicated that it intends to review the external examiner process and report template against the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) External Examining Principals and Supplementary Guidance. External examiner reports considered by the QESR team were positive about the University's management of assessment. Scrutiny of external examiner reports is primarily undertaken within programme teams and other faculty, department and school platforms. QAC has institutional oversight over the external examining reporting process through an annual report which contains analysis of the external examiner feedback, a summary report and numerical breakdown of responses. There is an expectation that the content of external examiner reports and the departmental responses are disseminated to students and discussed at Student-Staff Liaison Committees (paragraph 14).

Use of data and evidence to inform self-evaluation and decision-making

34   The QESR team is confident that the University has effective arrangements in place to monitor and review its approach to the use of data and evidence to inform self-evaluation and decision-making in quality processes. The team considered a range of documentation, including the University's annual reports to SFC, data used by the University for oversight of retention and progression, degree outcomes, complaints and appeals, student disciplinary cases, institutional analysis of annual monitoring, external examiner analysis, student feedback analysis and meetings with staff and students.

35   A range of education committees report to Senate and provide comprehensive annual written reports. QAC has delegated authority from Senate to assure academic standards on its behalf and works with other committees; for example, taking a collaborative approach between QAC and LEC in reviewing quality and enhancement via Faculty Annual Report (FARs) and reporting into the ESC and onto Senate. QAC considers a range of data including analysis of attainment and retention figures, appeals data, annual monitoring data, student feedback data and external examiner report analysis. QAC, using the information provided and following discussion of the data, make recommendations for action - for example, requesting further analysis of the data to investigate reasons for voluntary withdrawal and discussion, and exploration of data at programme level to identify further actions required.

36   The University has clear processes for considering student survey and feedback information that is monitored and used to enhance practice. The University uses a range of

survey mechanisms including student module evaluation, the Strathclyde Undergraduate Student Survey (SUSS), the National Student Survey (NSS) and the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES). Staff responding to student feedback is a mandatory part of the student module evaluation process and all students registered on the module will receive a report summarising the student feedback along with the module leader's response. Students who met the QESR team welcomed the opportunity to give module feedback and suggested that the VLE (MyPlace) was an effective place to complete the surveys and receive feedback on the results and outcomes. Changes as a result of student feedback include provision of better and clearer information to new students, changes to induction arrangements, better and increased signposting to services, improved opportunities to provide feedback, and enhancements to the PGR student experience.

37   Student insight dashboards are being further developed at an institutional level to allow staff, dynamic, customisable views of student survey data. The analysis of student feedback is used to identify institutional campus-specific, and faculty/departmental trends in student satisfaction which are then reported to the University's Surveys and Metrics Working Group and directed for action as appropriate. The University Surveys and Metrics Working Group is an established forum which analyses all survey results and informs thematic reporting. The QESR team recognised the broad work undertaken in the area of data and evidence, noting the Learner Experience Framework (LEF) and associated activities which captures the educational experience through various performance indicators.

38   It was evident to the QESR team that the University was a data-led and data-driven organisation; this contributed to identifying drivers for improvement in which the accuracy and relevance of the data sets was crucial. The team was confident that the University uses data strategically to drive policy development and enhance the student learning and teaching experience both at a university level as well as at discipline level. For example, the University uses NSS data in a nuanced way to ensure that adjustments are made to directly affect students within the discipline area. A discipline-level comparison is undertaken to ensure they are comparing across the sector in specific disciplines and making appropriate changes. In addition, the University analyses data at an institutional level to inform institutional policy, procedures and guidance. The creation of the Assessment and Feedback Hub was, in part, a response to lower NSS scores relating to assessment and feedback.

39   A range of data is available through the Strathclyde Dashboard, SUnBIRD (Strathclyde University Business Intelligence Reports and Dashboard). The QESR team noted close working of the Directorate of Strategy and Planning with the Quality Enhancement and Assurance Team and QAC in accessing and analysing data. Student progression, retention and awards are monitored using SUnBIRD, combined with data from Strathclyde University Retention Framework (SURF), to offer a more in-depth analysis. It was evident to the team that the data available informed internal review activities and reports; however, triangulation of effective systems could always be improved. To investigate what improvements are required, the Directorate of Student Experience is currently reviewing the capabilities of the current Curriculum Management System and a short-life working group is anticipated to take this work forward.

40   Self-evaluation in relation to the internal review process is continuous, not only by the FAR template being refined annually to support current strategic priorities, but also taking cognisance of the outputs arising from FARs and the LEF, highlighting areas of critical importance to the University and informing change. The LEF was viewed positively by the QESR team, as the University used it for self-evaluation and to progress actions and shape future priorities. In the context of student engagement, the University was exploring the extension and application of the LEF as a mechanism to identify criteria for the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR). The University's Continuous Improvement Team

ensures relevant colleagues are given opportunities to contribute with embedded actions within annual plans. Engagement with digital learning and associated surveys and consultations will inform improvements to the University's digital infrastructure with a view to achieving the ideal balance and ongoing dialogue to enhance the student experience.