



Scotland's Tertiary
Quality Enhancement
Framework

Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER)

Dumfries and Galloway
College

March 2026

This review method
is ESG compliant

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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 documents.¹ You can also find more information about the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA).²

About this review

This is a report of a TQER conducted by QAA at Dumfries and Galloway College carried out by a team of four peer reviewers:

- Miss Lisa Doonan (Reviewer)
- Dr David Gourley (Reviewer)
- Mrs Angela Lewis (Reviewer)
- Ms Amy Monks (Student reviewer)

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

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

In advance of the two review visits, the institution submitted 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 (2024),³ and comprising a range of materials about the institution's arrangements for managing quality and academic standards. The SIA and AIS framed the TQER team's analysis and understanding of the operation of the institution's management of their quality and enhancement and enabled 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).⁴

The TQER team has considered the institution's alignment to the UK Quality Code (2024). Having reviewed the evidence provided by the institution, the TQER team found there to be alignment.

The review comprised two visits: an Initial Review Visit which, for Dumfries and Galloway College, took place on 10-11 February 2026; and a Main Review Visit which took place on 24-26 March 2026. Both visits included some online and hybrid meetings. The visits also included several demonstrations.

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>.

3 The UK Quality Code: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/2024>

4 ESG: <https://www.enqa.eu/esg-standards-and-guidelines-for-quality-assurance-in-the-european-higher-education-area/>

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

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

Review judgement and findings

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

Dumfries and Galloway 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 College's robust and consistently applied SCQF credit rating system that supports the development of responsive and high-quality provision, strengthening learner progression opportunities and ensuring alignment with learner needs and wider sector expectations. **(Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment- paragraph 19)**
- The College's transformational approach to establishing strategic partnerships with regional employers and the local authority, which leads to an enhanced student experience, improved employability outcomes and alignment with local skills needs. **(Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment- paragraph 29)**
- The College's use of peer observation combined with the use of the online learning platform and critical reflection effectively identify and address staff development needs and opportunities to innovatively enhance the learning experience. **(Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment- paragraph 49)**
- The College's agility in responding to changing learner needs that supports students to succeed. **(Supporting Student Success- paragraph 64)**
- The College's approach to digital services transformation that enables student success through a personalised learning experience. **(Supporting Student Success- paragraph 75)**
- Student involvement in the peer observation process, which allows students to have a voice in the enhancement of their learning and teaching experience. **(Student Engagement and Partnership- paragraph 85)**
- The College's clear strategic vision which encourages a shared ethos leading to a college-wide culture of continuous assurance and enhancement and drives student success. **(Enhancement and Quality Culture- paragraph 101)**
- The College's systematic approach to continuous self-evaluation and enhancement across curriculum and support areas that leads to sustained improvement in student outcomes. **(Enhancement and Quality Culture- paragraph 109)**

Recommendations for action

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

- The College should review the visibility of online student support, information and services to raise awareness and equity of access among all students. **(Supporting Student Success- paragraph 76)**
- The College, in collaboration with the Students' Association, should work to develop

more opportunities for meaningful student partnership in college-wide activities to foster a more strategic approach to working with students as partners. **(Student Engagement and Partnership- paragraph 88)**

- The College, in collaboration with the Students' Association, should work to increase student voice and student representation opportunities, particularly among student groups where engagement is low, to ensure that all student voices are heard and represented. **(Student Engagement and Partnership- paragraph 89)**
- The College should continue to develop and implement its approach to Institution-Led Quality Review in line with the requirements set out in the Scottish Funding Council's guidance. **(Enhancement and Quality Culture- paragraph 110)**

Contextual information about Dumfries and Galloway College

1 Dumfries and Galloway College (the College) is based in the south west of Scotland, serving the region through delivery of further (FE) and higher education (HE) programmes at two campuses in Dumfries and Stranraer. The College also delivers some provision fully online. The primary hub for delivery is the Dumfries campus (representing 96% of students in 2024-25), with the Stranraer campus delivering targeted, community-focused provision. The College operates in a rurally dispersed community. 45% of the College's lecturing staff are part-time.

2 The portfolio of programmes delivered at the College is tailored to the evolving needs of stakeholders, including learners, schools, apprentices and employers. Provision is delivered across six curriculum areas from SCQF Levels 2-10, with the majority being FE. The College's six curriculum areas are: Business, Enterprise, Digital Technology and Creative Industries; Lifestyle: Beauty, Hair and Hospitality; Education and Access; Health, Social Care and Sport; Engineering and Renewable Transport; and Sustainable Construction. Across the curriculum areas, the College works with a range of awarding bodies, with Qualifications Scotland⁵ representing the largest number of qualifications. The College uses its credit rating authority to credit rate internal provision at SCQF levels 1-2 and 4-6 and has one third-party credit rating arrangement with Powering Futures at SCQF Level 6. The College also delivers Modern and Foundation Apprenticeships.

3 The College has a range of partnerships with local stakeholders, including School-College partnerships with 16 secondary schools, the local authority and key regional employers including the National Health Service, Stena, and Natural Power. The College also contributes to local and national fora, including the Regional Economic Partnership, Education and Skills Committee and the Convention of the South of Scotland, and is a core member supporting regional growth and skills alignment in key sectors, including Net Zero, Health and Social Care and Early Years. The College has a partnership with the University of the West of Scotland (UWS), and delivers three co-designed degree programmes in business, cyber security and creative practice. UWS have had a co-location arrangement, which includes some shared services, on the College's Dumfries campus since 2023.

4 In 2024-25, the College had approximately 5,145 students, of which 88% were studying FE (72% part-time, 16% full-time) and 12% studying HE (6% part-time, 6% full-time). As part of this delivery, 324 students were Modern Apprentices and 400 were Senior Phase pupils. The College supports learners of all ages, and in 2024-25, 40% of students were 30 years old or older, 30% were aged 16-19, 12% were aged 20-24, 9% were aged 25-29 and 9% were aged less than 16 years old.

5 The most recent data from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) (2023-24) demonstrates successful completion rates above the Scottish sector average: 71% for FE full-time (67% sector average), 90% for FE part-time (80% sector average), 72% for HE full-time (67% sector average), and 89% for HE part-time (82% sector average). The College has been above the Scottish sector average for successful completion across all modes of study since 2022-23. For the period 2019-20 to 2023-24, the largest subject areas were care, construction and engineering.

6 The College's strategic plan, *Mission 2030*, was launched in 2025 and follows the previous strategic plan, *Ambition 2025*. *Mission 2030* sets out the College's purpose 'to

5 Qualifications Scotland replaced the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) on 1 February 2026.

empower individuals to reach their full potential and enable lifelong learning'. The strategy has four key pillars: 'Future Skills - Our Students', 'Our Future Workforce - Our People', 'Future Education - Our Learning', and 'Future Growth - Our Partners', which each have four strategic outcomes. *Mission 2030* demonstrates alignment with broader strategies including, for example, the SFC's strategy for building a responsive and sustainable education system and the Regional Economic Strategy.

Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment

7 The TQER team found that Dumfries and Galloway 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.

8 The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence including the College's strategic plan: *Mission 2030*, the Strategic Implementation Plan (2025-28), the Teaching for Learning Framework, external review reports, DG-SEE (Stop-Evaluate-Enhance) reports, the Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP) for 2024-25, and committee documentation. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), teaching and support staff, students, partners and employers and received a range of demonstrations.

Academic standards and awarding

9 The TQER team found that the College demonstrates robust and systematic arrangements to ensure that academic standards and awarding practices meet external expectations and remain secure, consistent and reliable over time. These arrangements are underpinned by strong governance, clearly defined policies and procedures, and effective operational practice, providing confidence to students, employers and awarding bodies.

10 The College's strategic responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement is held at the highest level of the College, with the Principal and SLT providing leadership and oversight, supported by governance through the Board of Management. The TQER team considered that this structure ensures a coherent, institution-wide approach to maintaining academic standards and driving continuous improvement. Operational responsibility is devolved across the organisation, with members of the SLT holding strategic accountability within their areas, and with further delegation to the six Curriculum Managers and key specialist roles including the Performance Manager and Learning and Teaching Innovation Manager. The TQER team were of the view that this distributed model supports a culture of shared ownership and accountability of quality assurance and enhancement, enabling consistent implementation of quality processes and responsive, data-informed decision-making across all curriculum areas.

11 The TQER team considered that the College's academic governance structures provide robust and continuous oversight of quality assurance, with Academic Council undertaking high-level scrutiny of academic performance, including retention and achievement, ensuring that standards are regularly reviewed and maintained. This is complemented by the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC), which monitors key performance indicators (KPIs), awarding body feedback, complaints, surveys and evaluative data, ensuring that academic standards and awarding practices are systematically reviewed and reported to the Board of Management. The TQER team observed that, together, these structures provide assurance that standards are secure, consistent and subject to ongoing scrutiny.

12 The TQER team found that the College's approach is further strengthened through a comprehensive framework of policies and procedures governing assessment practice. For example, the Assessment Policy provides a rigorous and equitable framework aligned to awarding body requirements, ensuring that assessment instruments are valid, reliable and aligned with national standards. The Assessment Policy is supported by robust internal and external verification processes (see paragraph 14), secure handling of assessment materials

and clear arrangements for assessment planning and feedback, ensuring consistency of assessment decisions across programmes.

13 The TQER team found that the integrity of assessment is reinforced through a clearly defined Malpractice and Maladministration of Assessment Procedure, which provides a transparent and robust mechanism for identifying, investigating and addressing risks to the validity of assessment and certification. The Malpractice and Maladministration of Assessment Procedure ensures that the credibility of qualifications is protected and that any issues are managed proactively and in line with awarding body expectations. Furthermore, this procedure reflects the College's focus on Authentic Assessment and Feedback as one of the four strategic outcomes of the College's strategic plan. The TQER team noted that the College also ensures that assessment is inclusive and equitable through formal arrangements for students with additional support needs (see also section **Supporting student success**), confirming that adjustments are applied consistently and in accordance with awarding body guidance, while maintaining the integrity of standards.

14 The TQER team found that assessment practice is also strengthened through alignment with awarding body and industry requirements. For example, apprenticeship delivery is governed through formal contractual arrangements which clearly specify requirements for registration, assessment, internal verification and certification, ensuring compliance with national standards and consistency across delivery. Assessment decisions are subject to continuous internal and external scrutiny. The TQER team learned that the College has strengthened its approach to external verification, including the attendance of staff at Qualifications Scotland events, the use of pre-delivery checklists, and the use of development visits from Qualifications Scotland. The College has also introduced the role of Verification Group Leaders who are responsible for external verification readiness at curriculum level which has enhanced internal accountability and consistency of practice. This has led to a marked reduction in corrective actions and recommendations from awarding bodies over time, evidenced in annual awarding body reports from the last three years. Awarding bodies have commended the College for the quality of candidate evidence, effective and developmental feedback practices, and increasing use of innovative approaches to assessment. Industry external review activity further highlights the College's effective use of digital technologies, including video-based feedback in construction, to support assessment and learner development. The TQER team were of the view that these approaches to assessment practice enhance the reliability and consistency of assessment across different delivery modes and contribute to improved learner outcomes. The TQER team also found that the College's approach to self-evaluation, through the DG-SEE model, further supports the robustness of academic standards and awarding, and noted the College's recent development of an Institution-Led Quality Review (ILQR) process. The College's approach to self-evaluation and ILQR is considered by the TQER team at paragraphs 105-110.

15 The TQER team observed that data is used routinely across the College to support the assurance of academic standards and the reliability of awarding practices. Data is embedded within the DG-SEE model (see paragraphs 105-109), where curriculum and support teams review performance, student feedback and outcomes on a regular, block-by-block basis. This approach ensures that issues relating to assessment, progression and learner performance are identified early and addressed promptly, supporting the consistency and integrity of academic standards. Performance data, including retention, attainment, progression and student satisfaction, is routinely monitored through governance structures such as Academic Council and the LTC. These governance structures provide systematic oversight of academic performance and ensure that trends and risks are identified and acted upon at institutional level, reinforcing the security and comparability of standards over time. At an operational level, Curriculum Managers and teams use course-level data, supported by data dashboards, to monitor learner progress and implement targeted interventions to

maintain standards and improve outcomes. Student feedback data is also used effectively to inform the evaluation of learning, teaching and assessment practices. The College's use of data is complemented by portfolio review processes and self-evaluation reporting, where data is used to identify strengths, address areas for development and inform continuous improvement in assessment and delivery. The TQER team also found that data from external sources, including awarding body reports and external verification activity, is used to validate internal judgements and ensure alignment with national standards and expectations.

16 Overall, the TQER team were of the view that the systematic use of data supports a robust and evidence-informed approach to quality assurance, ensuring that academic standards and awarding practices remain secure, consistent and reliable over time. The TQER team recognised the progress made in the College's data journey and its growing use of data to inform practice and noted that the College plans to make further data dashboards and training more widely available to staff. The TQER team also learned of the College's planned enhancements to strengthen data tracking of withdrawals and early leavers. Consequently, the TQER team encourages the College to build on its current approach to using data by further reducing barriers to staff engagement with data systems and enhancing the accessibility and consistency of data dashboards. Additionally, the TQER team were of the view that strengthening collaboration between academic and support services will support more effective, institution-wide use of data to drive quality enhancement and improve the student experience. Therefore, the TQER team encourages the College to continue this work, ensuring that data is used more systematically to identify patterns, understand underlying causes and inform targeted interventions to improve retention and student success.

Use of frameworks

17 The TQER team found that the College makes effective and increasingly innovative use of relevant frameworks, including the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), to provide clarity, consistency and assurance around the level and type of qualifications delivered. This ensures that awards are transparent, comparable and trusted by students, employers and partner institutions.

18 At a strategic level, the College demonstrates a clear commitment to maximising the opportunities presented by the SCQF, including the use of its credit-rating powers to respond to emerging skills needs, regional priorities and enhance access. The TQER team considered an expert opinion report from the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership (SCQFP) based on the 14 modules and programmes that the College has credit-rated since 2022 and noted that the College's management framework, scrutiny and governance was reported as effective by the SCQFP. Evidenced considered by the TQER team demonstrated that the College's credit rating activity, and use of the management framework, has enabled responsive curriculum development, targeted gap analysis and the upskilling of learners in priority areas such as health care and engineering. This reflects a forward-looking approach to qualification design, aligned to both institutional strategy and external workforce demand in line with its strategic aims. This strategic intent is supported by a well-established and consistently applied credit rating framework, underpinned by a clearly defined, multi-stage process and supported by standardised documentation. These arrangements ensure that SCQF levels and credit values are applied accurately and consistently in line with national expectations, with clear audit trails supporting decision-making and approval processes. The College also operates a robust and embedded system for the review and ongoing monitoring of its credit-rated provision, ensuring continued alignment with SCQF principles. A structured monitoring cycle is in place to confirm the continued appropriateness and currency of SCQF levels and credit points, alongside defined review periods that support short-term assurance and long-term validity. These processes are supported by effective use of data and external reference points, providing confidence

that qualifications remain relevant, credible and aligned with sector standards. The College's application of the SCQF is evident across a broad portfolio of provision, ensuring clarity of qualification type and level across the learner journey.

19 The TQER team observed that, through close collaboration with partners and effective use of credit rating flexibility, the College designs provision that supports articulation, meets specific skills demands and enhances learner progression. This demonstrates that the College moves beyond compliance to use the SCQF as a strategic tool for curriculum innovation and system-wide alignment. The impact of the College's approach to credit rating is evident, with clearer progression pathways, improved alignment between further and higher education, and increased opportunities for learners to access and progress within education and into employment. For example, staff who met with the TQER team reported that one of the College's credit-rated mathematics units, 'Numeracy for Health and Social Care' (SCQF Level 5), is accepted by two universities as entry requirements for two health and social care related courses, affirming that the credit-rated units have the same academic standing as the associated awarding body provision. The College partners with Powering Futures to provide a third-party credit rating service for the unit 'Powering Future Challenge' (SCQF Level 6). First credit-rated in 2022-23, this unit certificated approximately 700 students across schools in Scotland in 2024-25. As a result of the success of this partnership, the TQER team heard that Powering Futures have referred another organisation to the College to develop another cross-Scotland programme. Staff reported to the TQER team that the College plans to build on its current suite of credit-rating activity within its capacity. The College's approach also gives confidence among external stakeholders, including universities and employers, in the consistency, credibility and relevance of the College's qualifications. The College's robust and consistently applied SCQF credit rating system that supports the development of responsive and high-quality provision, strengthening learner progression opportunities and ensuring alignment with learner needs and wider sector expectations was identified by the TQER team as a **feature of good practice**.

Strategic leadership

20 The TQER team concluded that the College's leadership is effective in enabling and sustaining a culture of excellence in learning, teaching and assessment across the College, underpinned by a clear strategic vision, strong governance arrangements and well-embedded quality assurance and enhancement processes. The College's *Mission 2030* strategy articulates an institutional commitment to excellence and innovation, positioning the student learning experience as a central priority and aligning this with national and regional skills needs. Staff who met with the TQER team reflected the student-centred approach articulated within the *Mission 2030* strategy. The TQER team found that the College's leadership has established a structured and coherent approach to pedagogical development through the Teaching for Learning Framework, which aligns professional standards, institutional learning priorities and systematic observation of teaching practice (see paragraphs 46-49).

21 The College's leadership embedded a systematic and institution-wide approach to self-evaluation and enhancement through the DG-SEE model, which is applied consistently across curriculum and support areas (see paragraphs 105-109). The TQER team found that leadership oversight of performance is effective, with curriculum performance, retention, and attainment reviewed regularly at SLT, Academic Council and Board of Management committee level, ensuring that enhancement activity is closely aligned to institutional priorities (see also paragraph 15).

22 The College's approach to awarding body engagement and curriculum planning further demonstrates effective leadership of quality assurance and enhancement processes.

Awarding body activity is centrally coordinated by the Performance Team, ensuring consistency of practice and appropriate oversight across all areas of provision, while curriculum planning is informed by detailed performance and admissions data, industry advisory boards and other employer engagement feedback to ensure that provision remains responsive to student demand and workforce needs (see paragraphs 23-29).

Curriculum planning, design and delivery

23 Evidence considered by the TQER team demonstrated that the College adopts a collaborative and intelligence-led approach to curriculum planning, design, approval, monitoring and delivery, ensuring that programmes of study remain current, meet student needs, support progression pathways, and reflect changing workforce demands at local, regional and national levels. The College engages actively in regional and national economic and skills planning forums, including the Regional Economic Partnership and other strategic groups, as well as operating industry advisory boards to draw on up-to-date labour market intelligence to inform curriculum design and review. The TQER team found that the College's approach ensures that curriculum provision is aligned with regional economic priorities and emerging sector requirements, supporting employability and economic development outcomes. Partners and employers who met with the TQER team commended the College's positive relationships with local businesses in ensuring that curriculum design is informed by current industry needs resulting in relevant, up-to-date programmes that enhance student employability and align with regional workforce demands (see paragraph 24).

24 Strategic intelligence is embedded within formal curriculum planning and approval processes, enabling the College to respond proactively to changes in workforce demand and funding opportunities. This is evidenced through successful bids for strategic national initiatives, such as Wind Turbine Technician training developed in partnership with Natural Power, thus demonstrating the College's ability to align curriculum provision with emerging industry needs. Industry representatives who met with the TQER team spoke positively about collaborating with the College to develop and 'fine tune' course content and the pipeline of skills required by industry.

25 The scale, breadth and diversity of the College's provision provided further evidence to the TQER team that curriculum design meets a wide range of learner needs and supports clear progression pathways. In 2024-25, the College delivered programmes across SCQF Levels 2-10, including full-time, part-time, apprenticeship and school partnership provision, demonstrating a comprehensive and inclusive curriculum offer for the region. The TQER team identified that this breadth of provision supports multiple entry and exit points, enabling learners to progress within and beyond the institution in line with their aspirations and abilities. For example, the College has developed three co-designed degree pathways with the University of the West of Scotland (UWS), including new SCQF Level 10 provision, in the subject areas of business, cyber security and creative practice in response to different elements of regional skills needs. This development has enhanced local access to higher education and supports clear progression routes for learners (37 learners in 2024-25, rising to 67 in 2025-26). The strategic partnership with UWS is considered by the TQER team to have a positive impact on progression pathways and access to higher education within the region.

26 The TQER team found that curriculum planning is underpinned by a robust quality assurance framework, for example through twice-yearly portfolio review and the in-year DG-SEE, and routine use of data, by national and regional data, learner feedback and in-year performance monitoring (see also paragraphs 105-109). Additionally, curriculum planning is aligned to regional priority sectors, which ensures that provision is responsive to both learner demand and workforce requirements. Curriculum design is employer-informed and pathway-focused, with engagement from industry partners to ensure that programmes embed current

occupational skills and technologies. Evidence considered by the TQER team demonstrated that programmes are structured to provide clear progression routes across SCQF levels, avoiding duplication and strengthening articulation to employment or further study. The TQER team also found that flexible delivery models, including blended and digital approaches, widen access for diverse learner groups, while inclusive principles of curriculum design ensure that provision meets a broad range of student needs. The impact of these arrangements is evidenced through strong performance outcomes, with successful completion rates above sector averages (see paragraph 5) across multiple modes of study and learner groups. The TQER team were of the view that this indicates that the curriculum is aligned to workforce needs and effective in supporting student success and progression. The College's ability to maintain and grow strategic provision, for example the co-designed pathways with UWS and the development of the renewable energy curriculum with Natural Power (Wind Turbine Technician course), despite reductions in funding and credit allocation further demonstrates the effectiveness of its curriculum planning processes.

27 The TQER team observed that collaboration with the local authority has had a significant impact on strengthening Senior Phase provision, including improvements to attainment (see paragraph 109) and creating structured pathways into further education, apprenticeships and employment. The TQER team learned that the relationship, through the College Academy (an arrangement offering a number of qualifications that school pupils can study as part of their Senior Phase choices) and established since late 2010s, was originally about 'hands on courses' that could not be delivered in schools. This relationship has progressed to focus on pathways for students in the region, including through a hybrid model: students going to the College and lecturers from the College going into schools. The College has also hosted the local council's Advancing Innovative Manufacturing in the south of Scotland (AIMS) Project for almost six years, demonstrating sustained collaboration, particularly within engineering and construction. The partnership was described to the TQER team as highly effective. The TQER team heard that engagement extends beyond this area to include health and social care, with joint activity such as co-hosted events focused on talent attraction, recruitment and retention. The TQER team found that the College's relationships with local businesses and active participation in the regional employability and skills partnership ensure that curriculum development remains aligned with local workforce needs and priorities. The College's leadership reflected positively on the strength of the relationship with the local authority and representatives of the local authority who met with the TQER team noted the College's willingness to continue developing this relationship.

28 Evidence considered by the TQER team also demonstrated the College's responsiveness in addressing barriers to access, particularly in rural areas, through the introduction of online programmes and micro-learning platforms to widen participation and enable more flexible engagement. The TQER team were of the view that Foundation Apprenticeships in key sectors continue to provide important early pathways into vocational learning and employment, thus supporting progression and skills development for school pupils.

29 The TQER team concluded that partnerships with industry and public sector organisations make a direct and measurable contribution to curriculum relevance and workforce alignment, particularly in priority sectors such as health, renewable energy and maritime industries. Collaboration with the National Health Service and UWS partners has enabled the co-design of innovative approaches to workforce development, including the Health Care Foundation Academy, which supports progression into health careers and has received national recognition. The TQER team heard that early evaluation indicates that this model is effective in addressing sector-specific skills gaps and supporting learner progression, although ongoing evaluation will be required to assess long-term impact. Industry partnerships, including those supporting renewable energy provision, have created clear pathways into employment and demonstrate strong alignment between curriculum

design and regional economic priorities. The TQER team identified, as set out in paragraphs 23-29, the College's transformational approach to establishing strategic partnerships with regional employers and the local authority, which leads to an enhanced student experience, improved employability outcomes and alignment with local skills needs as a **feature of good practice**. The College's collaborations with external partners are further considered by the TQER team in paragraphs 116-119.

Work-based learning

30 The TQER team found that the College ensures the quality of learning, teaching, assessment and the student learning experience in work-based learning through a structured and systematically monitored approach, supported by employer engagement and robust quality assurance processes. Strengthening career readiness and work-based learning experiences is one of the objectives of the College's *Mission 2030* Strategy and is included in the Strategic Implementation Plan 2025-28 as part of the 'Future Skills' pillar.

31 Leadership of work-based learning has been further enhanced through the restructuring of management arrangements, including the introduction of dedicated roles of Skills Delivery Manager, Apprenticeship Skills Coordinators, and Work Based Learning Team Leaders to strengthen oversight and accountability. The TQER team considered that this revised structure supports improved monitoring of learner progress, clearer lines of responsibility and more consistent oversight of delivery and performance across programmes.

32 The TQER team found that learning and teaching in work-based settings (for example, Modern Apprenticeships, Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs), professional qualifications, work placements, work-based learning) is designed to be relevant, current and directly linked to workplace practice, ensuring that students who undertake work-based learning develop skills that are immediately applicable in the workplace. Work-based programmes are delivered across a geographically dispersed region and span SCQF Levels 5-10, providing access to high-level vocational qualifications and supporting progression within employment and to further study. Some programmes have work experience placements as part of their course, which students find helpful in preparing them for their future careers and the world of work, with these placements sometimes leading to paid employment. The TQER team found, for example, that within beauty therapy provision, students are required to source their own clients to support the completion of assessment requirements. While this approach reflects industry practice and can enhance employability skills such as communication, organisation and client management, the TQER team heard that it can also present challenges for some learners. The TQER team found that employers generally view students as well prepared for the workplace, particularly in relation to their technical skills, professionalism and understanding of industry requirements. Employers who met with the TQER team reported that students demonstrate strong practical competence and are equipped with the foundational skills expected at entry level. Furthermore, employers who met with the TQER team noted the development of Generative Artificial Intelligence skills as an emerging skills need.

33 The TQER team also found that the College demonstrates effective oversight of subcontracted provision, ensuring that external partners meet the same standards for learning, teaching and assessment as internally delivered programmes. Partnership working with organisations such as Glasgow Training Group (GTG) and other training providers is supported by clear quality assurance arrangements, with ongoing monitoring and evaluation to ensure consistency and alignment with institutional expectations.

Learning environments

34 The TQER team found that the College ensures its learning environments, resources and technologies deliver an effective and increasingly high-quality student learning experience through a strategic, evidence-informed approach to digital and physical infrastructure. The TQER team heard that the College has made progress in aligning its learning environment with its strategic ambitions for flexible, accessible and inclusive learning, supported by sustained investment and systematic evaluation of performance. Developments in digital learning, estate planning and student-centred design demonstrate a commitment to enhancing the learning experience across all modes of delivery.

35 The TQER team observed that the transformation of the virtual learning environment (VLE) has had a positive impact on learner engagement and the quality of online learning. Despite a reduction in overall enrolments at the College (5,580 students in 2019-20 compared to 5,165 in 2023-24), learner interaction with the VLE has increased substantially, with activity levels and average engagement per learner rising, thus demonstrating more purposeful use of digital resources. The introduction of VLE minimum standards and course design rubrics has improved the consistency and structure of the online learning experience, ensuring that learners are provided with clear guidance, expectations and access to high-quality learning materials across all programmes. The TQER team found that these developments have resulted in a more coherent and effective digital learning environment, which supports student engagement and independent learning. Accessibility within the digital environment has also improved, reflecting an institutional focus on inclusion and equitable access to learning. Improvements in accessibility scores and the increased availability of accessible content demonstrate progress in ensuring that digital resources meet diverse learner needs, which is explored by the TQER team in paragraphs 59-60.

36 Students who met with the TQER team reflected positively on the VLE and online resources, recognising their importance in supporting flexible and accessible learning. Students further reported that the VLE provides clear access to learning materials, assessment and feedback, which supports independent study and enables them to revisit content as required. Students who met with the TQER team also valued the increased use of digital and blended learning approaches, particularly the flexibility this offers in balancing study with other commitments. Student survey data (Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey and Early Experience Student Survey) indicates high levels of student satisfaction with online learning materials, with performance exceeding sector benchmarks and overall student satisfaction increasing in recent years, thus demonstrating the effectiveness of the College's digital learning environment. Investment in digital platforms and structured course design has further strengthened the quality and accessibility of online provision. The TQER team were of the view that the introduction of VLE minimum standards and course design rubrics have improved consistency and clarity across programmes, helping students better understand expectations and navigate their learning.

37 The Teaching for Learning Framework provides a coherent structure for the use of digital technologies, with the VLE acting as the central hub for course delivery, assessment and feedback. This approach ensures consistency of learner experience across programmes and supports both formative and summative assessment practices within a structured and accessible digital environment. The TQER team found that this approach enables a more integrated and consistent use of technology in learning and teaching, supporting staff and student engagement. The findings in paragraphs 35-37 contribute to the feature of good practice identified by the TQER team in paragraph 75.

38 The College's approach to physical learning environments is similarly strategic, with estate planning aligned to curriculum needs and future growth areas. Learning spaces are reviewed and developed to ensure they are fit for purpose and support modern, flexible

methods of delivery, including collaborative, practical and independent learning. Investment in teaching spaces, including upgrades to digital connectivity and interactive technologies, ensures that physical environments effectively support blended and technology-enhanced learning. For example, the introduction of an immersive nursery experience for Early Years students to give a more authentic learning experience, which was valued by students who met with the TQER team.

39 Evidence considered by the TQER team demonstrated the College's commitment to responding to student feedback in the development of learning environments and resources. Learner survey data indicates high levels of satisfaction with both physical and digital learning environments, with improvements observed over time in key measures of student experience. The TQER team were of the view that the College has used this feedback effectively to identify and address gaps in provision, including plans to enhance quiet study spaces and social learning environments, and therefore ensures that the student voice informs ongoing development. The TQER team concluded that this responsive approach contributes to a more inclusive and student-centred learning environment.

Staff development and innovation in learning and teaching

40 The TQER team found that the College provides effective and structured support for the professional development of teaching and student-facing staff, ensuring that staff capability directly contributes to the quality of learning, teaching, assessment and the overall student experience. Professional learning is strategically aligned with institutional priorities through the Teaching for Learning Framework. The Teaching for Learning Framework provides a coherent and structured approach to pedagogical development and enhancement by integrating professional standards, digital learning approaches and reflective practice, to ensure that staff development is systematic and clearly linked to improving teaching quality and student outcomes.

41 The TQER team found that staff development is embedded within an institutional culture of continuous professional learning, supported by clear governance and leadership oversight. Academic Council holds responsibility for the continued professional development of staff and for shaping pedagogical strategy, ensuring that staff capability is considered within academic quality and enhancement and is integrated into wider institutional planning, curriculum development and quality processes. The TQER team also learned that the role of Learning and Teaching Innovation Manager (established in 2022) supports staff development through promoting reflective practice, organising peer observation activities and facilitating the sharing of good practice. The TQER team were of the view that this role ensures that staff development is evidence-informed and directly enhances the quality of learning, teaching and the student experience.

42 Evidence considered by the TQER team demonstrated that staff are supported through a structured programme of professional learning, beginning with a formal academic induction programme for all new teaching staff which provides a foundation in professional standards, curriculum frameworks, digital systems and teaching methodologies. This structure ensures that staff are well prepared to deliver high-quality learning experiences from the outset. The TQER team found that 84% of lecturing staff at the College hold the Teaching Qualification in Further Education (TQFE) or equivalent qualification, and staff who do not hold a teaching qualification are supported to undertake recognised professional qualifications, ensuring that all teaching staff develop the necessary pedagogical skills and understanding required for effective delivery. This structured approach supports consistency in teaching practice and contributes to a strong baseline of professional competence across the College.

43 The TQER team found that student-facing support staff are supported in their

professional development through a structured and responsive approach aligned to institutional priorities. Staff benefit from a phased and ongoing induction process, delivered in a 'bite-sized' format across the academic year, which supports understanding of systems, policies and strategic priorities. Support service staff can access accredited qualifications, specialist training and internal leadership programmes such as the 'Reaching Further' Programme, which is aligned to the College's strategic plan and enhancement planning.

44 Ongoing professional development is supported through a range of structured and flexible opportunities, including Career Long Professional Learning, College Development Days and targeted Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities. These initiatives focus on key areas such as inclusive practice, digital learning, assessment design and student engagement, ensuring that staff development is aligned with institutional priorities and emerging sector needs. Staff reported to the TQER team that these professional development opportunities support reflection on practice and enable the adoption of new and innovative teaching approaches, contributing to improved learner experience.

45 The TQER team found that the Professional Review and Development (PRD) process, forming part of the College's Quality Assurance Policy, provides a structured mechanism for identifying individual development needs and linking these to professional standards and institutional priorities. The recent revision of the PRD process, including alignment with General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) requirements and implementation of a digital system, has resulted in increased staff engagement (from 53% rising to 96% over the last three years) and more focused professional dialogue. This ensures that professional learning is planned, monitored and evaluated to support continuous improvement in teaching practice.

46 The TQER team found that the College's approach to peer review and evaluation is effective, systematic and embedded within its culture of enhancement as part of the Teaching for Learning Framework. The TQER team were of the view that peer review and evaluation make an impactful contribution to the continuous improvement of learning, teaching, assessment and the student experience across the College. At the core of the Teaching for Learning Framework is the Observation of Learning process, which provides a structured and systematic model for peer-supported evaluation of teaching practice, aligned with the College's pillars of learning and professional development. Peer observation is explicitly positioned as a developmental process, supported by structured reflective frameworks and professional dialogue, which has resulted in high levels of staff engagement and ownership of improvement activity.

47 Staff engage in peer observation activity that incorporates evidence of student engagement, learning behaviours and teaching effectiveness, followed by reflective professional dialogue with a peer (who must be outside of the observee's department) and an Advanced Practitioner. This is informed by a model for critical reflection, which the TQER team found strengthens the depth and quality of evaluation by encouraging staff to move beyond descriptive reflection to critical analysis of the impact of teaching practice on learning. Staff who met with the TQER team reported that this multi-perspective approach enhances their understanding of how their teaching is experienced by learners and supports more targeted and meaningful improvement in practice. Advanced Practitioners have a key role in leading the peer observation work across the College, supporting staff development, facilitating peer learning and promoting the sharing of effective practice across curriculum areas. Staff engagement with peer observation is high, with 100% of active lecturing staff participating in observation activity in 2024-25. Staff confirmed to the TQER team that the College's peer observation approach supports reflection, innovation and continuous improvement in teaching practice and has a positive impact on their professional development. The TQER team heard examples of the positive impact of peer observation including that of a lecturer in Early Years moving away from PowerPoint based teaching to

more engaging and dynamic approaches where students take responsibility for their own learning, which has led to an increase in student success rates. Senior leaders who met with the TQER team recognised the challenge of students with additional support needs and noted that the effective teaching practice and delivery which is encouraged by the peer observation process is key to supporting students to succeed.

48 Innovative approaches to professional learning are evident through college initiatives such as the use of an online learning platform with guides and resources on practical strategies and techniques for enhancing learning and teaching, which provide accessible, evidence-informed strategies to support teaching practice. Evidence considered by the TQER team demonstrated that staff uptake with the online learning platform is high (99% of staff engaged in 2025), which reflects its perceived value and impact on teaching. The use of the online learning platform is reflected on as part of the DG-SEE process and staff who met with the TQER team reported that the platform's resources enhance confidence, support the development of more dynamic and inclusive teaching methods, and contribute to improved student engagement and satisfaction. A staff member shared an example of the platform's impact with the TQER team, whereby a National Progression Award (NPA) in Scots Law had been developed into an online course in 2025-26 using the online learning platform to develop and guide the development of the course's learning environment and embed online practice. Previously delivered in person with six candidates in 2024-25, there were 52 candidates for the NPA in Scots Law online course in 2025-26, which reported high retention rates at the time of review. The impact of the online learning platform is evidenced through high levels of staff engagement in professional learning and positive outcomes for students. Improvements in teaching practice, including increased use of digital technologies and more inclusive and student-centred approaches, have contributed to high levels of student satisfaction across key indicators in student satisfaction surveys. This includes, for example, overall satisfaction and questions relating to responsibility for learning, teaching methods, development of knowledge and skills and online learning materials. Alignment of professional development with institutional strategy and quality processes ensures that staff capability continues to evolve in ways that enhance the student learning experience.

49 The TQER team were of the view that integration of the online learning platform within the reflective model of peer observation further enhances the effectiveness of peer review by providing practical, evidence-informed strategies that staff can apply directly to their teaching. The TQER team considered this approach to be a key driver of pedagogical innovation at the College. The TQER team found that the online learning platform acts as a bridge between reflection and action, enabling staff to translate insights gained through the model for critical reflection into specific pedagogical improvements. The TQER team found that the use of peer observation, supported by digital tools and structured implementation stages, enables staff to identify barriers to learning, test new approaches and embed effective practice over time. The TQER team were of the view that this supports the systematic adoption of innovative teaching methods, including active learning, differentiated instruction and formative assessment, which contribute to improved learner engagement and outcomes. The TQER team identified, as a **feature of good practice**, that the College's use of peer observation combined with the use of the online learning platform and critical reflection effectively identify and address staff development needs and opportunities to innovatively enhance the learning experience.

50 The TQER team found that the College enables innovation in learning, teaching and assessment through a strategic, structured and evidence-informed approach, which integrates digital transformation, pedagogical development and systematic evaluation. Innovation is positioned as a core component of *Mission 2030*, with leadership ensuring that new approaches are aligned to learner needs, workforce demands and wider sector developments. The LTC plays a key role in this approach by actively reviewing trends in education, encouraging innovation and ensuring that curriculum development reflects

emerging pedagogical and technological opportunities. Teaching staff who met with the TQER team reported the College's willingness to support innovation in teaching and learning, in line with *Mission 2030*.

51 The TQER team found that the College has implemented initiatives, centred on the VLE and supported by dedicated governance structures including a Digital Development Working Group, to ensure alignment and consistency across platforms and practices. Standardised frameworks such as VLE minimum standards, course rubrics and design templates provide a foundation for innovation, enabling staff to develop creative and flexible approaches within a consistent and quality-assured structure (see paragraphs 35-37). The TQER team were of the view that the balance between standardisation and flexibility is effective in supporting innovation while maintaining a consistent learner experience.

52 The College's leadership has also enabled innovation through targeted investment in digital infrastructure and learning technologies, ensuring that staff have access to the tools required to redesign learning, teaching and assessment. The TQER team considered that the introduction of accessibility tools and enhanced digital platforms supports more inclusive approaches to curriculum delivery and enables staff to respond effectively to diverse learner needs. The TQER team were of the view that this investment has strengthened the College's capacity to innovate and adapt to changing educational contexts (see also paragraph 59).

53 The TQER team concluded that the College demonstrates well-established, systematic and consistently applied approaches to excellence in learning, teaching and assessment that align with sector expectations and support the effective assurance and maintenance of academic standards. Central to this is an embedded culture of placing students at the heart of all activity; ensuring that learning, teaching and assessment practices are designed to deliver a high-quality inclusive student learning experience. Across the College, practices are underpinned by a clear strategic framework and informed by the robust use of data, evidence and external reference points. This enables the College to evaluate impact effectively, respond to student needs, and deliver continuous enhancement. The TQER team were of the view that the emphasis on student-centred approaches was evident in both strategic priorities and operational practice, with staff demonstrating a clear commitment to supporting learners to achieve their full potential.

Supporting student success

54 The TQER team found that Dumfries and Galloway College's arrangements for supporting student success are **effective**. The institution has appropriate and systematically applied practices in line with sector expectations for supporting student success that uses data, evidence and externality, demonstrate impact and are effective in supporting student success.

55 The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence including the Onboarding, Retention and Attainment Policy, Safeguarding Policy, student survey data, Student Partnership Agreement, service area enhancement plans, the Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP) for 2024-25, the Strategic Implementation Plan (2025-28), Recognition of Prior Learning Policy, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Mainstreaming Report, Student Advisor Disability reports, Jisc Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) Review, Academic Council minutes, and the staff Quality Handbook. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including staff and students, and received a range of demonstrations.

Enabling student success

56 The TQER team found that the College demonstrates effective and, in several areas, innovative practice in the design and delivery of support arrangements that enable student success, and address inclusion, wellbeing and equitable outcomes. Evidence of impact is clear, with the College reporting completion rates exceeding sector averages for SIMD10 (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation), care-experienced, disabled and ethnic minority students, indicating that support arrangements are both inclusive and effectively targeted. An example of inclusivity includes the establishment of the DG-Cares initiative. This initiative forms part of the College's corporate parenting commitment to ensure that every care-experienced learner is offered an interview as part of the admissions process. This targeted initiative has supported increased participation and growth in learner numbers amongst care-experienced students.

57 The strategic consolidation of student services (including advisers, education support, engagement and admissions) under a single leadership model in 2020-21 coupled with other student success initiatives has further strengthened coherence and accessibility of student support, correlating with improved outcomes, reduced withdrawal rates and enhanced support for priority groups. Some examples of the College's student success initiatives include an enhanced and consistent induction approach (including welcome days, personalised outreach through an artificial intelligence (AI) communication system - see paragraph 67); early identification of students who may feel anxious about attending (see paragraph 58); and personal tutor support (see paragraph 68). Regular feedback through student surveys is particularly beneficial to learners by providing reassurance, helping them settle quickly, building a sense of belonging, and ensuring timely support is in place to promote retention, wellbeing, and success. Learners highlighted to the TQER team that they had the opportunity to take part in a range of induction activities designed to help them settle into college life and build confidence. Students who met with the TQER team described activities focused on developing relationships, improving morale within the classroom, and strengthening meta-skills including communication and group work. Students also noted opportunities to work in small groups and supportive immersive settings to help them get to know each other before starting assessed group activities.

58 The TQER team were of the view that a whole-college approach to wellbeing and safeguarding is evident. This approach includes strong alignment between safeguarding systems, retention and student success, and increased referral rates (120 referrals to a range of student support services – for example, wellbeing advisors, counsellors or study

skills who provide direct support or coordinate appropriate interventions - at the time of review in 2025-26 compared to 104 in total for the previous academic session) reflecting student confidence and effective processes. The TQER team found that this is underpinned by an institutional ethos that positions data use, reflection and enhancement as a collective endeavour, where staff across academic and support areas actively engage with shared evidence. For example, the use of icons on data dashboards supports the identification of students with additional learning needs or particular characteristics (such as care experience, additional learning needs or winter leavers) to inform timely, coordinated interventions and continuous improvement. Initiatives such as digital onboarding (resulting in a 42.6% reduction in IT support requests), welfare referral pathways, named Student Advisors and targeted campaigns (for example, 'Keep Warm' - a programme to keep students engaged, reassured, and prepared to successfully start their studies) demonstrate a proactive and preventative model of support.

59 In line with the *Mission 2030* strategy, the College has adopted a staged digital-first approach to strengthen infrastructure and ensure that every learner who wishes to engage in teaching and learning can do so. Recognising the need to move from previously inconsistent online systems, the TQER team found that the College has made significant progress in creating a more coherent and accessible digital environment, with a focus in recent years on digital accessibility implemented through a phased approach in line with capacity. The TQER team found that support teams have worked proactively to ensure that core learning resources meet accessibility requirements and are inclusive for all students. Students also benefit from clear and accessible routes to engage with support services (academic and pastoral), via digital self-referral or tutor referral (available to all staff and students on the VLE). Evidence considered by the TQER team demonstrated that the College's sustained investment in digital access has enhanced inclusion, improved learner engagement, and enabled real-time data sharing and collaborative action to support student success.

60 The TQER team noted the College's proactive use of an accessibility tool on the VLE. The accessibility tool is used to monitor accessibility, generate reports on module content, and provide fully downloadable alternative formats for learners who are unable to access materials digitally, which demonstrates a commitment to inclusive practice. The use of the tool has led to an overall institution-wide VLE accessibility score of 83.8% in 2024-25 (compared to 73.4% in 2022-23), with a content accessibility score of 98.6%. The TQER team were of the view that this supportive approach helps remove barriers to learning, enhances the student experience, and supports student success across the College.

61 The TQER team explored the College's development of student success initiatives, including the development of 'DG-PALS' (Peer Academic and Language Support) to provide peer academic and language support to students for whom English is a second language. Staff who met with the TQER team reported that this initiative was set up in response to an analysis of referrals to the Education Support Team, which identified common referral issues among such students where English was not their first language; including challenges with reading and writing in class. DG-PALS initially provided a central point for academic support for these students. The initiative was later further expanded, in partnership with the Students' Association, to include community-building information and activities. Staff who met with the TQER team highlighted that approximately 80% of students engaged in DG-PALS went on to achieve their qualification. The TQER team also explored this initiative with students who noted its role in helping them better understand assessments and addressing language-related challenges, particularly through in-class support that allowed them to ask clarifying questions.

62 While the TQER team were of the view that current student support practice is strong, emerging sustainability challenges were evident. For example, the College has experienced a significant increase in learners requiring additional support (14.8% to 19.4% across a two-

year period) and a rise in demand for educational support (28% across a three-year period); both of which are recognised by the College. Staff reported to the TQER team that without corresponding staffing growth, the current model may be approaching operational limits. Notwithstanding this, the TQER team recognised that the College demonstrates a clear strength in its agile and responsive approach to changing learner needs. For example, staff who met with the TQER team reported the redesign of the Education Support Team model: moving from Education Support Workers providing a one-to-one approach in class to providing support to wider groups of students, therefore providing support to students beyond those who have had a needs assessment. Additional examples that have supported a rise in learners receiving support alongside improved outcomes include: support strategies delivered in partnership with tutors and IT services and using a data-informed approach, including needs assessments; the use of icons to more easily identify learner needs (see paragraph 58); tracking learner profiles, and analysing those at risk of disengagement. The TQER team heard that these enhancements ensure that critical student information is efficiently managed and easily accessible to staff, reducing the need for students to repeatedly explain their circumstances. The TQER team concluded that these examples reflect a proactive and solutions-focused culture, where the College has responded to its evolving student demographic with innovation and flexibility. The College's agility provides confidence to the TQER team of its capacity to respond to future demand, although longer-term sustainability planning remains important.

63 The TQER team found that the College is effective in responding to the specific needs of its regional and student context, demonstrating strong commitment to contextualised and inclusive provision. Digital innovation is a strength, with onboarding portals, single sign-on systems and enhanced infrastructure reducing barriers to access and improving retention, particularly within FE full-time provision. Targeted digital inclusion initiatives and improved connectivity for rural and low-income learners directly address regional inequalities and support equitable participation. For example, through the provision of laptops for students via the 'Lapsafe' scheme (which includes approximately 120 laptops in Dumfries and 24 in Stranraer). Staff reported to the TQER team that the laptops are often all used during busy periods at the College, and that, separately, old staff laptops are repurposed and provided to students for their learning. Additionally, students reported opportunities to use specialist equipment, including, for example, photography equipment that can be used during the working week. The TQER team were of the view that this further enables student success by providing access to costly equipment, thus promoting improved equity of access. Digital enhancement initiatives and external reviews (for example, voluntary participation in the College's Jisc VLE review) further evidence a proactive culture of openness and responsiveness to feedback. In response to the Jisc VLE review, the TQER team found that the College introduced VLE minimum standards and course design rubrics, ensuring greater consistency in how courses are structured and presented to students (see paragraphs 35-36). As a result, this change has improved clarity of expectations, navigation and the overall learner experience. The College also enhanced its use of accessibility tools and monitoring, resulting in measurable improvements in the accessibility of learning materials (see paragraph 60).

64 Wellbeing and engagement initiatives, including the Active Campus programme, demonstrate a holistic approach to student support; integrating physical, mental and social wellbeing. Support is further contextualised through partnership working and community engagement. The embedding of Youth Workers across campuses has resulted in high engagement (1,471 students across 215 sessions – including wellbeing activities and equality events), which has supported mental health, equality and inclusion outcomes. The TQER team learned of additional student interventions such as hardship funding, food parcels and winter support packages, which reflect a responsive approach to socio-economic challenges within the student population. The TQER team noted that these initiatives are complemented by structured academic support mechanisms, including named

Student Advisors and targeted retention interventions, which are driven in part by digital risk registers. The College uses a weighted retention scoring system that draws on live data including attendance, VLE activity, enrolment history, engagement, and unit outcomes to enable staff to track student risk levels over recent periods and target timely interventions. The TQER team were of the view that the College demonstrates increasing sophistication in its use of data, moving towards predictive analytics (for example, risk scoring and engagement indicators), enabling earlier and more targeted interventions to support student success (see also paragraph 15). The College also demonstrates reflective practice through self-evaluation processes, for example the DG-SEE process (see paragraphs 105-109), to identify rising support needs as part of ongoing quality processes. This approach has led to the implementation of targeted responses internally and in collaboration with local partners. For example, the TQER team learned that the College expanded student referrals (see paragraph 58) by training work-based assessors to make referrals for student support needs. The TQER team identified, as a **feature of good practice**, the College's agility in responding to changing learner needs that supports students to succeed.

Transitions

65 The TQER team found that the College provides a coherent and effective approach to supporting students across the full lifecycle. Strategic planning through service area enhancement plans demonstrates a structured approach to managing the learner journey, including reflection, action planning and continuous improvement.

66 The TQER team were of the view that College's applications, admissions and 'Keep Warm' (see paragraph 58) processes are well-organised and effectively implemented. Students who met with the TQER team reported positive experiences regarding open events, which included clear information, advice and guidance sessions and impartial course advice as well as conversations with specific subject tutors. Students described the advice they had received on choosing the right level of course as the 'best' advice for them. Staff who met with the TQER team demonstrated strong understanding of their roles in the recruitment journey. Staff also described to the TQER team the effective collaboration across teams to support smooth transitions into college. For example, the new digital onboarding portal was developed following feedback from 2023-24 data analytics about the form and nature of applicant/new starter queries. IT support requests, which were one of the main barriers to engagement reported by students, reduced by 42.6% in 2024-25 after the introduction of the portal.

67 The TQER team found that the availability of digital onboarding, induction resources and digital skills programmes ensure that students are well-prepared for study and/or work placement. The College has strengthened its approach to student onboarding and transition through the implementation of an AI communication system (in use since 2021). Operating via WhatsApp, the AI communication system provides an accessible and familiar communication channel for students (with 96% of students registering to use the platform, demonstrating its reach) through which the College runs 10-12 targeted campaigns each year including onboarding communications and health and wellbeing check-ins. The TQER team were of the view that this approach enables consistent and timely engagement across the learner journey and observed that automated responses generate real-time insights that allow staff to identify emerging needs and direct students to appropriate support services. Emerging needs are also identified on application to the College through information and links to needs assessments as part of the application process. Additionally, initiatives such as the internally credit-rated 'Digital Skills for Learning and Work' unit (SCQF Level 5) embed progression-focused skills from the outset (focused on supporting students to enhance digital learning on entry to college through to employment). Proactive and collaborative initiatives further strengthen transition and progression pathways, with programmes such as Scottish Widening Access Programme (SWAP) Access, and the University of the West of

Scotland (UWS) Health Care Foundation Academy demonstrating effective partnership working to support access, articulation and progression into employment and higher-level study. The TQER team concluded that, together, these approaches reflect a coordinated, student-centred model supporting student success through early engagement and inclusive practice study.

68 The TQER team considered the College's arrangements for personal tutoring. The College's current personal tutoring model assigns each further education (FE) course a dedicated personal tutor, supported by protected time, to deliver regular, structured engagement with students focused on academic progress, personal development, and learner success. The College's personal tutor guidance for FE was considered by the TQER team and noted that personal tutors act as a key point of contact within curriculum areas, work closely with colleagues to provide guidance and support, deliver at least one tutorial per block for each student, and maintain ongoing monitoring of attendance, engagement, and achievement. Additionally, evidence noted that personal tutors also have a role in identifying concerns early through tools such as learner retention data, and in coordinating timely referrals to specialist support services where needed. Furthermore, the guidance noted that all interactions and actions are recorded to ensure continuity and accountability, enabling the College to provide consistent, targeted support that enhances the student experience and promotes retention and success. In practice, the TQER team found that personal tutoring arrangements for FE are broadly effective across the College. Students who met with the TQER team indicated that they feel well supported and able to access support when needed, reinforcing the importance of the tutor-learner relationship. All FE courses are assigned a personal tutor, with students generally aware of who their tutor is, while higher education (HE) courses operate a named tutor model (a named point of contact) rather than the formalised personal tutoring structure provided to FE students. The College reported that the differences in personal tutoring arrangements for FE and HE students were due to changes in national funding arrangements in recent years. Student feedback suggests some variability in how tutorial time is experienced, with some learners receiving dedicated one-to-one support while others report it being used more flexibly for activities such as catch-up sessions. Evidence considered by the TQER team also suggests that attempts to deliver personal tutor tutorials outside of timetabled sessions, for example, through online delivery, have led to reduced student engagement. The TQER team learned that the current personal tutor approach is under review through Academic Council, with the aim of strengthening consistency and clarifying expectations, as practice across provision remains inconsistent.

Employability, skills development and lifelong learning

69 The TQER team found that the College demonstrates effective and developing practice in employability and skills development. Strategic intent is articulated within the Strategic Implementation Plan (2025–28), aligned to *Mission 2030: 'Future Skills-Our Students'*, with a focus on enhancing employability, upskilling and reskilling opportunities, including certification pathways and industry-aligned learning. Examples of embedded employability exist, particularly within vocational disciplines such as health and social care, construction, and hair and beauty. This is further supported by initiatives such as the internally credit-rated 'Digital Skills for Learning and Work' unit (SCQF Level 5) and the adoption of the Meta Skills Framework in partnership with external bodies including Skills Development Scotland (SDS), industry partners and Dumfries and Galloway Council. The Advancing Innovative Manufacturing in the south of Scotland (AIMS) Project, delivered in partnership with Dumfries and Galloway Council, is a further example of the College's approach to employability and skills development. The College's work with the local authority also includes a Personal Development Award (PDA) in communities programme that promotes lifelong learning by enabling staff across the local authority to gain formal recognition of their existing skills and experience. Delivered by the College, the PDA

provides an accessible route for employees in community roles to achieve a qualification while continuing in work. This flexible, work-based approach supports continuous professional development and supports and promotes an ongoing culture of lifelong learning within the workforce.

70 Employability and careers support is enhanced by the presence of SDS careers offices at the Dumfries and Stranraer campuses. Staff members can refer learners to the SDS team and learners can self-refer for support (see paragraph 58). Additionally, the Student Portal (the College's online student platform) allows students to book appointments with SDS directly and includes links to 'My World of Work' (SDS's career and information website). At the time of review, the TQER team found that SDS had had 180 interactions with students across the College in 2025-26, and the College had started recording departmental engagement with SDS to better understand impact. The Learning Resources Centre (LRC) also plays an important role in supporting student success by providing access to essential library services, including borrowing and returning books, reserving resources, and offering study spaces. In addition, the LRC delivers frontline support through guidance on study skills, information literacy, and digital skills, helping students to develop the skills needed for academic achievement. Students also benefit from a range of online careers support and guidance available on the VLE.

71 The impact of employability and skills initiatives is demonstrated by high levels of positive learner feedback regarding preparedness for next steps after college. For example, within the Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES) 2024-25, more than 90% of respondents across all modes of delivery either strongly agreed or agreed that 'My time at college has helped me to develop knowledge and skills for the workplace'. Employers who met with the TQER team reported that the College prepares learners effectively for the world of work, reporting that students arrive work-ready at entry level, and programmes are a strong first step on specialist pathways, with opportunities for progression or further study. Partners including UWS reported to the TQER team that students transitioning from SCQF Levels 7 and 8 into degree-level study are well prepared and confident in their understanding of the curriculum, and employers confirmed learners' strong skills and techniques, enabling them to integrate quickly into industry.

72 The TQER team found that the College supports lifelong learning by offering inclusive, flexible provision (see paragraph 69) that meets the needs of its regional community. In addition, where gaps in skills and provision are identified, evidenced examples (for example, SWAP Access) have been created and facilitated to support learner success. The College enables learners to develop and extend skills through lifelong learning through a commitment to widening participation, recognition of prior learning, and clear progression pathways into higher level study or employment. The TQER team were of the view that this is complemented by effective support, which ensures that learners are equipped to engage in ongoing education, personal development and employability.

Supporting diverse learners

73 The College demonstrates an effective approach to delivering an individualised learning experience, supported by strong digital infrastructure, inclusive policies and personalised support mechanisms. The Onboarding, Retention and Attainment Policy provides a comprehensive framework which integrates equality, safeguarding and recognition of prior learning, ensuring that provision is responsive to individual learner needs.

74 The TQER team identified digital capability as an institutional strength. The TQER team found that the College's approach to digital capability is effectively leveraged to support flexible, personalised learning through the VLE and Student Portal. Ongoing enhancements

to analytics and digital services further support tailored interventions and improved learner engagement. The TQER team found that the College has invested in digitally enhanced systems that reduce barriers to access, strengthen engagement and improve retention, including onboarding portals, single sign-on systems, enhanced infrastructure and accessible communication platforms that support students from pre-entry through to progression to higher education or employment. A particular strength is the AI communication system (see paragraph 67). The College's commitment to digital inclusion further strengthens equitable participation across its regional context. Targeted initiatives to improve connectivity for rural and low-income learners directly address barriers to participation including, for example, the 'Lapsafe' laptop loan scheme (see paragraph 63).

75 The College's strong digital culture is further evidenced through the 2023 Jisc VLE review, which confirmed digital capability being effectively leveraged to support student success. The TQER team found that through a dynamic digital services enhancement plan, the digital landscape at the College is constantly evolving to support learner, staff team and management requirements. Collectively, digital initiatives, coupled with ongoing and continuous enhancement activity and reporting, demonstrate a coherent digital transformation strategy and ethos that facilitates the personalisation of the learner experience, removes barriers to participation, and supports successful transition, retention, achievement and progression across the College. The TQER team identified, as a **feature of good practice**, the College's approach to digital services transformation that enables student success through a personalised learning experience.

76 The TQER team found that the College provides an effective, well-resourced and accessible range of academic, pastoral and financial support resources which are available in person and digitally. Students who met with the TQER team expressed strong appreciation for the quality of support provided by staff, commending their enthusiasm, kindness and approachability. Teaching and support staff who met with the TQER team demonstrated a commitment to student wellbeing and success. Campuses, learning resource centres and communal spaces are accessible during core advertised hours, and most students who met with the TQER team demonstrated awareness of support services, and high levels of satisfaction with the type and quality of support received. The TQER team heard that while tutors are a valued and trusted first point of contact for many learners, discussions with students suggested that some were less clear about where to access support beyond their tutor. The TQER team were of the view that this may result in students accessing support primarily through reactive or informal channels rather than through dedicated specialist services. The TQER team considered that enhanced visibility, clearer signposting and more consistent promotion of online support resources would strengthen students' ability to navigate services independently, help reduce potential inequalities between different learner groups, and maximise the impact of the College's existing high-quality support provision. The TQER team recognised that the College serves a wide range of learners on different modes of delivery across the region and online. In this context, the TQER team were of the view that further consideration of how online support services are promoted and accessed across different learner groups would help ensure increased visibility and consistency of awareness and equitable access for all students. Therefore, the TQER team **recommends** that the College should review the visibility of online student support, information and services to raise awareness and equity of access among all students.

Concerns and complaints

77 The TQER team found that the College has appropriate mechanisms to anticipate and deal with student concerns and complaints, including through use of surveys and informal resolution (see section **Student engagement and partnership**) and the College's Complaints Handling Procedure. Students are informed about complaints, appeals and

disciplinary processes during induction, with access to relevant policies, procedures and complaint forms available through the Student Portal and external website, including a 'Have Your Say' function. In practice, concerns are raised through staff members. Students who met with the TQER team were confident about how to raise concerns, with the first point of call being their tutor.

78 Oversight of complaints is the responsibility of the Senior Leadership Team who collate and review complaints on an annual basis to monitor any trends, take any necessary action and report to the College's Audit Committee. The College's Academic Council also monitor complaints throughout the academic year to ensure learning. The College's Complaints Handling Procedure follows the requirements of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO), which includes the publication of statistical reports, quarterly and annually, on the College website. The TQER team found that, generally, there are a low number of complaints at the College, therefore trend analysis is limited. In meetings with students, 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 with their lecturer or personal tutor in the first instance. The TQER team encourages the College to review how it makes information regarding the process and outcomes of complaints available to students and the public to increase its visibility.

79 The TQER team found that the College has rolled out trauma-informed practice training in response to changing learner needs. Progress toward becoming a Trauma-Informed College has been accelerated through collaboration with the College Development Network. The TQER team heard that the College has moved its disciplinary policy and procedure to a more trauma-informed approach. The effectiveness of this approach is evidenced by a reduction in disciplinaries: 242 in March of 2024-25, and 214 at the time of review in 2025-26. The College also reported 22% fewer minor disciplinaries, and attributed this success to the revised, trauma-informed language of the policy and procedure.

80 The TQER team concluded that the College demonstrates well-established, systematic and consistently applied approaches to supporting student success that align with sector expectations and effectively assure inclusive, high-quality learner outcomes. Central to the College's approach is a culture that places students at the heart of decision-making and service design, ensuring that support arrangements are responsive to wellbeing, inclusion, equality, transition and progression needs across a diverse regional student population. Across the College, practice is underpinned by clear strategic frameworks and strengthened through the robust use of data, evidence and external reference points to identify need, target interventions and evaluate impact. The TQER team were of the view that the College's approach enables proactive response to changing learner circumstances, removes barriers to participation, and delivers continuous enhancement. The College's student-centred ethos is evident in strategic priorities and day-to-day practice, with staff demonstrating a commitment to helping learners access support, succeed in their studies, and progress confidently to further learning or employment.

Student engagement and partnership

81 The TQER team found that Dumfries and Galloway College is **effective** in student engagement and partnership. The institution's approach to student engagement and partnership is systematic and strategic. The institution ensures the quality of the student learning experience is continuously improved based on the voice of students in line with sector expectations. The institution works in partnership with students to use data, evidence and externality to develop, implement and evaluate the student learning experience.

82 The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence including the Strategic Impact Analysis, student representative structures, the Student Partnership Agreement (SPA), Students' Association reports, Student Experience Committee (SEC) meeting minutes, class representative meeting minutes, student satisfaction survey data and reports, the College Quality Assurance policy and key committee documentation. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including staff and students, and received a range of demonstrations.

A culture of student partnership

83 The TQER team found that students are represented across a wide range of committees, working groups and governance structures, including the Board of Management, Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC), Academic Council, Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee and the Board Development Committee. Representation across committees ensures that the student voice is represented at multiple levels of the College's decision-making. The College introduced a Student Experience Committee (SEC) in 2024-25 which meets three times per year (once per block), to connect lead representatives with college leaders and support student-led enhancement aligned to college-wide key performance indicators (KPIs). Due to its recent establishment, the impact of the SEC is yet to be fully realised, however students and staff who met with the TQER team spoke positively of its role in strengthening student engagement in decision-making processes. Staff who met with the TQER team noted the opportunity to work with SEC on the development of enhancements at the College. A recent example included the resolution of a Wi-Fi issue, which was actioned and overcome through engagement with the SEC.

84 Information on student engagement mechanisms and the class representative system is made available in the Quality Handbook and forms part of the College's Quality Assurance Policy. This supports staff understanding of the role of the Students' Association, the purpose of the class representative system, and where and how staff should engage with students to ensure the student voice is effectively heard. Staff and students who met with the TQER team reported working together with the Students' Association to gather and share student feedback, noting MS Teams as an effective communication channel.

Student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement

85 The TQER team found that the College's Quality Assurance Policy includes a series of student engagement mechanisms to ensure student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement activity, including student representation (see paragraphs 89-90), the SEC (see paragraph 83), student surveys (including the Early Student Experience Survey (ESES) and Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES)) and the DG-SEE (Stop-Evaluate-Enhance) (part of the College's annual monitoring process, see paragraphs 105-109). Furthermore, the College's Teaching for Learning Framework, a key component of the Quality Assurance Policy, includes students as part of the annual staff Observation of Learning process where students in the observed class share their feedback on the observed session. The peer and student feedback is subsequently reflected on in the professional discussion, which ensures that students have direct input to their learning and

teaching delivery across all subject areas across the College. Students who met with the TQER team highlighted their experience of the Observation of Learning process and remarked positively on the opportunity to provide direct feedback on teaching and learning through this process. The TQER team noted the widespread engagement with the Observation of Learning process (100% of active lecturing staff taking part in 2024-25) and recognised student involvement in the Observation of Learning as providing comprehensive feedback on students' immediate teaching and learning experience. The TQER team identified, as a **feature of good practice**, student involvement in the peer observation process, which allows students to have a voice in the enhancement of their learning and teaching experience. The impact of the College's approach to peer observation on students' learning and teaching experience is further explored by the TQER team in paragraphs 46-49.

86 Evidence considered by the TQER team demonstrated that student feedback is integrated into the College's quality processes, for example, in the DG-SEE process, monthly departmental enhancement meetings and the college-wide evaluation for each of the three blocks across the academic year. This results in the embedding of the student voice throughout self-evaluation processes and subsequent enhancement activities. Other student voice mechanisms include participation in committees, engagement in teaching staff peer observations, portfolio review, service review and regular surveys. The TQER team were of the view that, together, these approaches contribute to continuous improvement informed by student feedback. Furthermore, the TQER team found that student voice is embedded across the College through a wide range of structured mechanisms that ensure learners can be involved in shaping their educational experience. For example, for English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), teaching staff collect feedback on exit cards after lessons to gather immediate feedback from students. This approach has resulted in the encouragement of open dialogue, refinement of parts of the course content and support offered to better meet the needs of students. Additionally, in the department of Computing, students were asked about the value of mock-exams. Students provided feedback that the mock-exams were valuable and made them feel more confident going into summative exams, which was considered as part of DG-SEE.

87 The College makes effective use of external support to strengthen student engagement and partnership in quality processes, particularly through engagement with student partnerships in quality Scotland's (sparqs) 'That's Quality!' event, Institutional Associate Trainer training and the Student Learning Experience (SLE) model. Although the SLE model is not explicitly used in the DG-SEE process, students and staff who met with the TQER team understood that the SLE model is mapped to the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) principles, which are used as themes in the DG-SEE. The TQER team also heard that the SLE model was included in the student representative training conference (see paragraph 89) and that future class representative meetings with the Students' Association (taking place monthly) will use the SLE model to focus discussion on different elements of the student learning experience using the SLE building blocks.

A strategic approach

88 The College and the Students' Association have developed a Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) outlining a shared vision and goals for student partnership at the College. However, the TQER team was unable to identify where the SPA was being used in practice to shape partnership activities with students across the College. Staff who met with the TQER team recognised this position and explained that the College was in the process of embedding the SPA in day-to-day learning, teaching, and support. The TQER team also learned that a new version of the SPA was, at the time of review, with the Board of Management for approval. As a result, the TQER team found limited evidence of the SPA informing practice. The TQER team noted that the College has recently introduced the SEC

to promote partnership working, with positive feedback, but the TQER team were of the view that it is too early to gauge its success or longer-term impact (see also paragraph 83). Furthermore, the TQER team observed that the College's strategy, *Mission 2030*, does not make reference to working in partnership with students. Staff who met with the TQER team reported that students were not directly consulted during the development of the College's strategy, although the strategy was informed by student feedback collected via other mechanisms (for example, the class representative system). The TQER team therefore **recommends** that the College, in collaboration with the Students' Association, should work to develop more opportunities for meaningful student partnership in college-wide activities to foster a more strategic approach to working with students as partners.

Student representation

89 The TQER team observed that the College has a clearly structured student representative system that consists of class representatives and lead representatives, which feed into the SEC and the Students' Association. The Students' Association have one full-time student president, and two part-time vice presidents (one based at each campus). In 2024-25, the College introduced a target of having at least one student representative per curriculum area at each SCQF level. At the time of review, the TQER team heard that approximately 79% of SCQF levels had a class representative. The introduction of lead representatives to the class representative system intended to broaden representation across all campuses and online. The TQER team learned that the target number of class representatives had been achieved (over 100% increase in 2025-26 compared to 2024-25) and attendance at a student representative conference training event in 2025-26 was good (46 attendees out of 82 student representatives across Dumfries, Stranraer and online). However, the College recognised that class representative engagement remains low with 15%-20% of representatives engaging in meetings and that part-time, distance, online and apprentice student participation in partnership and representative activities remains low, indicating a lack of equity across different modes of delivery. This was confirmed in meetings with the TQER team where several students demonstrated little engagement with the formal side of student representation, and some believed they did not have a student representative due to their course or mode of delivery. The TQER team explored the challenges with student representative recruitment with staff who noted low uptake on the Stranraer campus and confirmed that Curriculum Managers lead targeted engagements with students where no class representative is in post. Staff who met with the TQER team further noted that the College has an ongoing action from Academic Council about increasing involvement and engagement for online learners. The TQER team observed that the College is aware of the challenges of engaging with student representatives and has identified this as a priority area for development. The College also recognised that recruitment for student representatives may be sufficient but genuine partnership and meaningful engagement is more challenging. The TQER team **recommends** that the College, in collaboration with the Students' Association, should work to increase student voice and student representation opportunities, particularly among student groups where engagement is low, to ensure that all student voices are heard and represented.

90 The TQER team learned that, prompted by external feedback, the College has taken action to enhance student representation. The College's Education Scotland Annual Engagement Visit Report (May 2024) highlighted that most learner representatives had not received sufficient training to help them undertake their role effectively. As a result, the College's Students' Association representation model was enhanced and, in August 2025, the College established a new Students' Association staff role: Student Engagement and Capacity Lead, to lead activities to address some of the challenges in student representation (including training, continuity of student representatives and communication). With the introduction of two vice president roles and a Student Engagement and Capacity Lead, the College has shown a commitment to the growth and development of the Students'

Association, which can support the wider college student representative system more effectively. With the introduction of the Vice President role on the Stranraer campus, the TQER team heard that the Students' Association are more visible across the two campuses and can engage with a wider range of students. The Students' Association demonstrated successful advocacy for students, through working with class and lead representatives and using student feedback to provide feedback to the local council on challenges facing students as a result of a reduced bus service in the region. The College also ran a student representative conference in 2025-26 (see paragraph 89).

Student voice and the feedback loop

91 The TQER team found that the College has a structured and improvement-focused approach to responding to student feedback, with processes such as the annual Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP), DG-SEE, annual self-evaluation and periodic Institution-Led Quality Review (ILQR) ensuring that student feedback is systematically captured, analysed and acted upon. Use of student feedback is enhanced by the use of data, including survey participation rates, satisfaction measures and real time dashboards, enabling timely identification of trends and informing enhancement activity. Since the introduction of the ESES in 2022-23, participation rates have improved from 40.5% to 80% in 2024-25. Similarly, the SSES participation rate increased by 11.4% over three years to reach 62% in 2024-25. The College recorded above the Scottish sector average for overall student satisfaction at 97.4% for the SSES in 2024-25. Overall satisfaction in the SSES has increased every year since 2020-21 and has exceeded the Scottish sector average since 2022-23.

92 The TQER team found that College mechanisms such as 'You Said, We Did' provide evidence of responding to student feedback, which is also provided via the student representatives' and course MS Teams channels, the SEC and through informal conversations with staff at the College. These feedback mechanisms help to ensure students know the value of providing their feedback. The Students' Association share examples of college-wide changes as a result of student feedback through a 'You Said, We Did' campaign, however the College noted that visibility and timeliness need to improve and a formal multi-channel communication platform is planned. One initiative introduced in response to student feedback is staff 'walkabouts' at lunchtime to help support more positive student behaviour. The 'walkabouts', discussed with the SEC ahead of implementation, provide visible opportunities for informal engagement between students and senior leaders, demonstrating responsiveness to student ideas and increased accessibility of leadership.

93 The TQER team concluded that the College demonstrates an effective approach to student engagement and partnership, underpinned by a clear and systematic quality enhancement framework. Students are involved in shaping their learning experience through representation across governance and committee structures, participation in quality assurance and enhancement activities, and structured feedback mechanisms embedded within institutional processes (for example, DG-SEE). The College makes consistent and effective use of student feedback and data to inform evaluation, enhancement and decision-making. Engagement is further strengthened through partnership working between students, staff and the Students' Association, supported by external frameworks and training. While the College shows clear commitment and progress in this area, the TQER team identified opportunities to strengthen strategic partnership working and to ensure more equitable engagement across all modes of study.

Enhancement and quality culture

94 The TQER team found that Dumfries and Galloway College is **effective** in embedding an enhancement and quality culture across the institution. The institution has clearly identified strategic leadership and governance approaches to quality assurance and enhancement with the capacity and commitment to identify and address situations that have the potential to pose risk to academic standards, the quality of the learning experience and enabling student success. The institution's strategic approach accurately uses data, evidence and externality in line with sector expectations and promotes an embedded enhancement quality culture for developing, implementing and evaluating strategies. The institution has made timely and effective progress in formulating, implementing and reviewing actions in response to the findings of last external review.

95 The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence including minutes from key committees, self-evaluation documents, the Strategic Implementation Plan (2025-28), the Stranraer Action Plan and internal and external review documents. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including senior staff, teaching and support staff, students, partners and employers.

Embedded quality culture and leadership

96 Evidence considered by the TQER team demonstrated that the College is effective at embedding an enhancement-led quality culture. The College demonstrates a strategic approach to enhancement through *Mission 2030* and its associated Strategic Implementation Plan (2025-28). The College has clearly defined senior leadership and governance structures in place which provide the institution with assurance, drive enhancement and support the translation of the College's mission into operational practice. The Vice Principal of Curriculum and Student Experience is responsible for the overarching strategic leadership and governance of quality assurance and enhancement, supported by the Director of Learning and Teaching and the Director of Student Experience and Innovation.

97 The TQER team found that the College has a clear strategic vision underpinned by the College's *Mission 2030* strategy. The Principal and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) have a shared ethos and ambition to build excellence in learning, teaching and the student experience by striving for pedagogical excellence in the classroom. The success in developing an all-college approach to quality assurance and enhancement, with self-evaluation having been a key focus of the College's previous strategy (*Ambition 2025*), is evidenced through sustained improvements in student outcomes (see paragraph 5) and student satisfaction (see paragraph 91).

98 The TQER team heard from a wide range of staff, partners and employers who are engaged in embedding *Mission 2030*, demonstrating a college-wide culture of assurance, improvement and enhancement. The TQER team found that this culture has led to investment in people, processes and systems to drive forward the ambition. For example, through the development of service area enhancement plans, which are dynamic and continually evolving, and the investment in the development of digital systems and competencies (see also paragraph 59). Additionally, the TQER team noted that the recently updated Quality Assurance Policy requires all members of the SLT to complete a self-evaluation and action plan (SEAP) for their directorate (see also paragraph 106), informed by the College strategy and enhancement activity across all college teams, which is regularly monitored via SLT meetings.

99 The TQER team found that the enhancement and quality culture is supported through a college-wide Professional Review and Development (PRD) Policy and Procedure, which

forms part of the Quality Assurance Policy. This is further supported by the College's new staff internal leadership programme, 'Reaching Further', which was developed from the College's PRD process. This programme includes the opportunity for staff to work on strategic projects linked to *Mission 2030* and the College's self-evaluative activity. A current 'Reaching Further' project is focusing on the enhancement of meta-skills, with the Director of Learning and Teaching as the executive sponsor. The TQER team were of the view that this aligns with the strategic level aims of enhancing meta-skills recognition and integration and further advances the College's response to previous external review (see paragraphs 111-112).

100 The TQER team found that the College's Performance Team are pivotal in the successful implementation, delivery and enhancement of processes and procedures. The Performance Team provide oversight and periodic analysis across all curriculum and support areas with particular success in the further development of the DG-SEE (Stop-Evaluate-Enhance) model to identify college-wide evaluation themes which have supported targeted enhancement activities (see paragraphs 105-109). There is a strong leadership culture of providing a high-quality student experience through the provision of learning and teaching excellence. This is underpinned by effective use of data to inform quality assurance and enhancement activity and reporting. The TQER team found that the College adopt a data-informed real-time evaluative approach for all staff, with clear standardised guidance available in the Quality Handbook. The use of data dashboards is embedded within the College's processes and evidenced in proforma and action plans. The TQER team found the College's DG-SEE process to be well-established across both curriculum and support teams (see paragraphs 105-109). Staff and key partners have a shared ambition for students, the College and the region, illustrating that the culture is having an impact beyond the College (see paragraphs 116-119).

101 The College's *Mission 2030* strategy demonstrates the strategic vision that has built upon the success and impact of the *Ambition 2025* strategy (described as 'internally focused' to the TQER team), which led to student outcomes above the Scottish sector average and improvements in overall student satisfaction. The College's *Mission 2030* considers the ambition of the College more widely, aligned to regional and national strategies, including the Regional Economic Strategy, the National Strategy for Economic Transformation and the education reform landscape. As set out in paragraphs 96-101, the TQER team identified the College's clear strategic vision which encourages a shared ethos leading to a college-wide culture of continuous assurance and enhancement and drives student success as a **feature of good practice**.

102 The College enhancement and quality culture encourages staff to be 'active leaders of change' which is evidenced in their sense of ownership and *Mission 2030* ambitions. The Board of Management and Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) monitor the direction and performance of learning and teaching and the quality of the student experience. The LTC are responsible for ensuring that appropriate mechanisms are in place to monitor the quality and inclusivity of the student learning experience against the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF). The LTC also review the College's Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP) and monitor key performance metrics in advance of presentation to the Board of Management. The membership includes non-executive staff and student board members, college leaders responsible for learning and teaching, and a governance professional. The LTC meet a minimum of four times per annum to ensure that in-session performance monitoring and enhancement activity is undertaken. The TQER team found that the LTC provides a strategic lens with oversight of internal and external reports and outputs from review activities, and the committee reviews/approves the strategic risk register and policies in advance of presentation to the Board of Management.

103 At the time of review, the College had recently updated its Quality Assurance Policy to

align it with the TQEF principles (see also paragraph 105). The TQER team heard that once new policies are approved, they are communicated to all staff via the human resources system that requires sign-off by individual staff members that new policies have been read. This is monitored by the six Curriculum Managers. Policies undergoing significant changes will also be shared via college fora, such as the Curriculum Leadership Group, and continuous professional development sessions.

Stranraer campus

104 The College is a multi-campus institution, with two campuses: Dumfries and Stranraer. While Dumfries is the largest campus, provision at Stranraer (representing 4% of the student population in 2024-25) is strategically important in fulfilling the College's community-based and regional strategic priorities. The SLT recognised the significance of this campus in serving the local community, student needs and attracting viable cohorts and have therefore developed a Stranraer Action Plan to provide a strategic focus in the west of the region. The TQER team noted that the Stranraer Action Plan targets enhancement in five priority areas: learning and teaching, curriculum, partnerships, estates use, and promotion and messaging. The TQER team met with staff and students from the Stranraer campus as part of the visits and were informed of improvements in overall withdrawals (reduced by 15%) and the halving of further withdrawals. There has been success in specific subject areas; for example, hair and beauty have seen retention rise to 85%. The College reported that from 2025-26, the Stranraer Action Plan will be revised to take a more outward-looking and community needs approach. The TQER team encourages this refocus to enable the College to continue its mission of serving the diverse needs of the region.

Self-evaluation and institution-led quality activity

105 The TQER team found that a key strength of the College is its systematic and embedded approach to continuous self-evaluation and enhancement across both curriculum and support service areas, which directly informs quality assurance processes and drives improvement. The TQER team learned that self-evaluation was a key pillar of the College's previous strategic plan: *Ambition 2025*. The College's approach to its quality assurance and enhancement system is provided through the Quality Assurance Policy and Quality Handbook for staff. The Quality Assurance Policy, overseen by the Vice Principal of Curriculum and Student Experience, has recently been updated to reflect alignment with, and reference to, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Outcomes Framework and Assurance Model, SFC Quality Guidance, TQEF Principles and the UK Quality Code. The Quality Assurance Policy has four key pillars: external frameworks, student engagement (see also paragraphs 84-85), strategic evaluation, and staff evaluation and sets out the responsibilities of all staff: curriculum and support managers, SLT, the College Management Team and the Performance and Audit Teams.

106 Strategic evaluation includes annual monitoring through portfolio and service review (twice yearly) with all curriculum and support areas having enhancement plans. The TQER team observed that the College also operates a periodic evaluation of curriculum areas and support services (reviewed on a three-year cycle) and each member of the SLT is required to complete a SEAP for their directorate. Staff self-evaluation activity includes the College's internal self-evaluation system: DG-SEE. This evaluation provides in-year reflection undertaken using data and student and stakeholder feedback during each of the three blocks of the academic year across curriculum and support areas and culminates in an end of block report for staff and a whole college report. Themes from the DG-SEE influence enhancement plans considered in portfolio and service review. The DG-SEE was launched in 2021-22 and replaced the previous end of year report. The DG-SEE platform was demonstrated to the TQER team, who observed alignment to the TQEF principles, prompts for reflection relevant at different points of the academic year (for example, consideration of

early withdrawal data in block one for curriculum areas and start of year processes for support services) and opportunities to record good practice and enhancements. The use of DG-SEE is supported by regular enhancement meetings, and enhancement plans capture actions from the process. The TQER team noted that one of the College's priority areas for development is enhancing completion rates of DG-SEE (70% at the time of review) and providing further self-evaluation guidance.

107 The TQER team explored the effectiveness of the College's evidence-informed planning and quality assurance through the DG-SEE model with staff and students. Staff who met with the TQER team reported that this approach supports regular reflection on practice, informed by data, student feedback and external review activity, and contributes to a shared understanding of quality and improvement across teams. Staff who met with the TQER team spoke positively of the DG-SEE platform, noting a change from the use of MS Forms to the online platform as a key change leading to significant improvement in effectiveness and engagement (40% increase in engagement). Staff remarked positively that the DG-SEE system provides the opportunity for in-year changes as well as the evidence to support bigger changes. Examples of changes included a curriculum redesign for a National Certificate in Early Years following identification of student withdrawal through DG-SEE and external sector feedback that the course required updating to meet current sector needs. As a result of changes implemented, the TQER team heard that a 5% improvement in retention had been achieved. Additionally, support staff identified that the implementation of a Spring Study Day, in year 3 of operation in 2025-26, had been evaluated through the DG-SEE and found that, on average, 92% of students involved went on to achieve their qualification.

108 Institutional processes such as the DG-SEE model, portfolio and service review, Institution-Led Quality Review (ILQR) (see paragraph 110) and enhancement planning ensure that performance data, student feedback and external scrutiny are triangulated and used effectively to identify areas for development and implement targeted actions. Actions are recorded and tracked through enhancement plans, thereby providing a central point for actions arising from the College's quality processes. The TQER team considered that this approach has demonstrable impact with actions (in addition to those in paragraph 107) taken in response to internal and external feedback such as strengthening assessment processes, standardising documentation and enhancing verification practices leading to measurable improvements in compliance, consistency and reliability of awarding practices (see paragraphs 14). The TQER team agreed that this evidenced a mature and embedded quality culture focused on continuous improvement. The findings in paragraphs 105-108 contribute to the feature of good practice identified by the TQER team at paragraph 101.

109 The effectiveness of the College's self-evaluation activity is reflected in sustained improvements in student outcomes, with full-time further education (FE) success rates improving significantly over time (71% in 2023-24 compared to 65% in 2020-21), with the College now exceeding sector averages for successful completion (see also paragraph 5). Additionally, the TQER team recognised that Senior Phase attainment, a key strategic focus of the College, has increased from 49% in 2021-22 to 86.1% in 2023-24, demonstrating the effectiveness of the College's approach to learning, teaching and assessment (see also paragraph 27). Additionally, student feedback highlighted through DG-SEE has resulted in changes that have enhanced the student experience. The TQER team identified, as a **feature of good practice**, the College's systematic approach to continuous self-evaluation and enhancement across curriculum and support areas that leads to sustained improvement in student outcomes.

110 The TQER team found that the College introduced an approach to ILQR in 2025-26, representing the periodic evaluation of curriculum areas and support services. The TQER team recognised that this process, forming part of the 'strategic evaluation' activities in the College's Quality Assurance Policy, contributes to and supports ongoing evaluation and

enhancement. At the time of review, the ILQR process was in its early stages, with a three-year timetable of reviews made available to the TQER team, and the first curriculum areas and support services having undergone some ILQR activity. Staff guidance on the ILQR process considered by the TQER team provided information for curriculum and support services shaped by the TQEF principles, including a process overview, preparing for review (including information on evidence sets), the review event, and actions following the review event. The TQER team explored the development and implementation of the ILQR process with the College as part of the visits, and staff reported that the ILQR process is collaborative, involving staff, students and industry. Curriculum staff confirmed that a recent ILQR had involved direct engagement with industry to ensure that the curriculum was fit for purpose. Early indicators are that ILQR has facilitated improvement actions in the beauty and digital services areas. The TQER team **recommends** that the College should continue to develop and implement its approach to Institution-Led Quality Review in line with the requirements set out in the Scottish Funding Council's guidance. This should include, for example, introducing external representation to strengthen objectivity and evaluative rigour, in line with the requirements set out in the SFC guidance.

External institutional review and engagement

111 The TQER team explored action taken since last external review (Education Scotland, May 2024) as part of the review. The TQER team found that Education Scotland had identified 10 areas for development and two areas for action in the College's Progress Visit Report (January 2023), and that significant progress was made in response, resulting in no areas for action returned in the subsequent Education Scotland Annual Engagement Visit (AEV) Report (May 2024). Two areas for development were highlighted in the AEV report, which have been progressed: training for learner representatives (see paragraphs 89-90) and a consistent approach for learners to record their development of meta-skills (the latter was retained from the College's Progress Visit in January 2023). Education Scotland highlighted effective practice and strong progress against improvement priorities, with confidence expressed in the College's capacity to improve. The TQER team were of the view that the progress between the two engagements (January 2023-May 2024) demonstrate the College's responsiveness to actions arising from external review.

112 Meta-skills enhancement remains a key focus across the College with activity, improvement and sharing of good practice threaded across the organisation and driven from a strategic level through the Strategic Implementation Plan (2025-28). The TQER team noted that there was no single approach to meta-skills at the time of the review, but that the College aims to develop a meta-skills 'passport' for students; the first phase of which is currently being tested in the engineering and construction departments. This work is being further developed via a project sponsored by the Director of Learning and Teaching and led by a member of staff engaged in the 'Reaching Further' programme (see paragraph 99). The TQER team noted that progress in this area has been recognised externally, with identification of meta-skills as a key strength in a supportive review (an engagement to obtain oversight of provision and triangulate how apprentices are supported to develop the required knowledge, skills, and behaviours to be successful in their apprenticeship and subsequent career) by the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) in October 2024. The supportive review in the department of Construction noted the ongoing monitoring of learner development of meta-skills, the displaying of information about meta-skills (via QR codes on workshop walls) and the embedding of meta-skills in learning as strengths.

113 The TQER team also noted that the College's recent Education Scotland Modern Apprenticeship review (February 2025) returned a 'Very Good' rating in Leadership and Quality Culture, Service Delivery, and Safeguarding. Opportunities for development included raising Skills Development Scotland (SDS) completion rates, which is included in the Strategic Implementation Plan further illustrating the College's responsiveness to external

review. Additionally, in 2025-26, the College is tracking engagement with SDS to understand departmental engagement with this service.

114 The TQER team found evidence of the College's response to awarding body external verification and quality assurance feedback. The Performance Team maintain records of the outcomes of awarding body activities including databases capturing actions and recommendations and identified good practice across all curricula. The TQER team are of the view that through these actions, the Performance Team provide effective oversight and monitoring. The TQER team noted that an Annual Awarding Body Report includes actions for enhancement assigned to the appropriate verification group lead. To support the College transformation strategy, a Jisc Infrastructure Review was recently undertaken. The Jisc Infrastructure Review noted that the College demonstrated multiple areas of best practice, including the adoption of data management policies that include data classification and expiry information and the IT department's oversight of all associated procurement above an agreed threshold. The TQER team were of the view that sector-specific review, including CITB supportive review activity, further highlights strong leadership of learning, effective use of technology in assessment and strengths in skills development.

Engagement in sector enhancement activities

115 The TQER team found that the College have been involved in three national project streams through Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP); with engagement from the Students' Association, Performance Team and the Vice Principal of Curriculum and Student Experience. The College is the lead for the 'Pedagogy for Transitions: Setting Students Up for Success through Enquiry Based Learning' project, demonstrating its commitment to supporting student success at a sector level. Furthermore, the College is a partner for the 'Supporting Access, Progression and Successful Outcomes in Disabled Student Communities (SAPSO)' and 'Strategies to Support Student Engagement and Partnership Within an Increasingly Time-Poor and Cash-Poor Student Population' projects. Staff who met with the TQER team demonstrated awareness of the aims of STEP and described active participation in a small number of sector-wide projects, including collaborative activity with partner institutions. While the STEP-related enhancements to the student experience were not yet evident at the time of the visit, the TQER team were of the view that this finding aligns with the current phase of national implementation. Staff who met with the TQER team reflected that the College has started to capture and share emerging practice internally, with plans to formalise oversight through the establishment of a STEP committee, indicating a reflective and strategic approach to embedding STEP priorities over time. The TQER team were of the view that it is too early to evaluate the impact of the College's engagement in STEP.

Collaborations and external outlook

116 The TQER team learned that *Mission 2030* deliberately incorporated partnership working as part of the strategy and was designed to be more 'outward focused' than *Ambition 2025* by involving, for example, the Regional Economic Partnership (REP), the Education and Skills Committee and the local authority. The TQER team found that the College collaborates with partners to develop and design programmes and that the College quality culture is embedded within their key partnerships. The TQER team heard from employers that the enhancement of provision aligns with regional priorities (for example, the development of the co-designed Wind Turbine Technician course to address a regional and national skills gap – see also paragraph 24) and local authority partners reported a well-established relationship with the College which has strengthened following the COVID-19 pandemic. The local authority relationship via the College Academy has facilitated collaborative curriculum development, resulting in improved student outcomes on Foundation Apprenticeship programmes (see also paragraphs 27-28). The collaborative

relationship with the local authority is further evidenced through the success of the Advancing Innovative Manufacturing in the south of Scotland (AIMS) Project which the College has hosted for a number of years (see also paragraphs 27 and 69). The relationship with the local authority has been further enhanced through the development of the Early Years Steering Group, led by the Curriculum Manager: Education and Access, and LEAP (Life Skills, Employability and Pathways), with the view to enhancing the curriculum to meet industry requirements and promote work readiness. An example of a change to the curriculum made as a result of industry feedback is the redesign of a National Certificate in Early Years (see paragraph 107).

117 The College's collaborative work with external partners and organisations directly supports student success by enhancing the relevance, quality, and progression value of its provision. For example, the College's partnership with the University of the West of Scotland (UWS) (see paragraph 25), the top destination for students articulating via progression over a four-year period, has enabled enhanced access to SCQF Level 9 and 10 programmes in the region across a range of subjects. The TQER team heard that there is strength in the shared approach to curriculum development and a sense of collaborative partnership working with UWS. The TQER team noted that the co-location of UWS and the College provides a unique opportunity for cohesive collaboration.

118 The TQER team recognised that further collaboration between the College, UWS and the National Health Service has resulted in the development of a co-designed Health Care Foundation Academy with the aim of enhancing the Senior Phase pathway. The Health Care Foundation Academy provides a pathway for school pupils to gain valuable skills and practical experience in a key sector. The TQER team noted that the College plans to evaluate the long-term impact of the collaboration. Engagement with other employers, including Stena and Natural Power, further strengthens impact by embedding real-world insight into the curriculum, helping students to develop the skills, knowledge, and professional awareness required for the workplace. The TQER team were of the view that these partnerships also create opportunities for work-based learning and progression into employment, ultimately improving student outcomes and ensuring learners are well-prepared for sustainable careers. The College operates industry groups in each curriculum area to ensure that industry informs the curriculum (see also paragraphs 30-33). In meetings with the TQER team, the College shared that 98% of the region are Small Medium Enterprises, making collective industry voice more challenging to capture, which has influenced the development of employer reference groups (opportunities for curriculum areas to engage with industry representatives). Additionally, the TQER team recognised that the presence of SDS on both campuses has enhanced the operational collaborative partnership, resulting in improvements in organisational alignment, the provision of meta-skills development within the curriculum and provides direct career readiness support to students.

119 The TQER team recognised that the College has effectively driven innovation and enhancement across the region. The College engage in regional planning at strategic and operational levels via key fora such as the REP, the Education and Skills Committee and the Convention of the South of Scotland. The TQER team found that employers and regional partners reported strong collaborative relationships with the College, which have driven enhancement via the co-creation of curriculum solutions in key sectors including refining the renewable energy Wind Turbine Technician course, which has been running successfully for three years. The TQER team found that relationships with the College were valued by regional partners, who noted their wish to further develop relationships and delivery portfolios with the College. The College has worked with employers to establish work placement schemes and courses in key sectors, aligning skills development with industry needs. The TQER team identified the College's approach to SCQF credit rating as a feature of good practice (see paragraph 19), which further supports the College's collaborations and external outlook in meeting regional skills needs. The findings in this section (paragraphs 116-119) contribute to the feature of good practice identified by the TQER team at paragraph

29.

120 The TQER team concluded that the College has an institution-wide culture of continuous assurance and enhancement and makes effective use of external institutional peer review, external specialists/expertise, industry engagement and collaborative partnerships in its approach to enhancement and quality culture. In addition, the College makes effective use of data and evidence to promote a shared ethos and understanding of its strategic direction.

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