



This review method  
is ESG-compliant

# Quality Enhancement Review

Cardiff University

Review Report  
March 2026

This document is available  
in English and Welsh

# Contents

<b>About the Quality Enhancement Review method .....</b>	<b>1</b>
About this review.....	1
<b>About this report.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1. Contextual Information about the provider, student population and the review.....</b>	<b>2</b>
Summary information about the provider, including strategic framework, organisational structure .....	2
Composition, key trends and anticipated changes in the student population, including information on retention, progression and outcomes .....	2
Commentary on how the provider supports national priorities .....	3
Commentary on the preparation for the review, including how provider and students worked in partnership in review preparation .....	3
Summary of the nature and rationale for the enhancement priorities identified for the review and in the self-analysis .....	4
Summary of the provider's follow-up to the previous review.....	4
<b>2. Review judgements and findings .....</b>	<b>5</b>
Commendations.....	5
Recommendations .....	5
Areas of ongoing development .....	5
<b>3. Statement on the provider's strategic approach to enhancement.....</b>	<b>6</b>
Commentary on the strategic approach taken to planning enhancements to the student experience .....	7
Commentary on the actions taken to ensure effective implementation of enhancement priorities .....	8
Commentary on the process of evaluation and reporting on the results of enhancement priorities, and how this informs future progress and enhancement activities.....	9
<b>4. Commentary on the provider's support and enhancement of the student learning experience .....</b>	<b>11</b>
Use of external reference points to support and enhance the student learning experience .....	11
Views and feedback from students .....	12
Developments to enhance learning and teaching arranged through partnerships with students .....	12

Effectiveness of the teaching and learning strategy in improving the quality of learning opportunities .....	13
Effectiveness and evaluation of initiatives to enhance learning and teaching .....	14
Academic, pastoral and learning support for students .....	15
Recruitment and training of staff including staff development .....	15
Dissemination of good practice .....	16
Summary of the arrangements for the support and enhancement of the student learning experience.....	17
<b>5. Academic standards and quality processes .....</b>	<b>19</b>
Developments in the provider's approach to managing quality and standards.....	19
The use of quality processes to confirm the continued effectiveness of the provider's management of standards .....	20
The use of quality processes to confirm the continued effectiveness of the provider's management of quality.....	21
The contribution of the provider's quality processes to ensure improvement and enhancement of the student learning experience .....	22
A summary of the effectiveness of the arrangements for securing academic quality and standards .....	23
<b>6. Collaborative provision .....</b>	<b>25</b>
Information on the extent and nature of collaborative provision and plans for change (including work-based learning) .....	25
Developments in the provider's approach to quality and standards.....	25
The use of quality processes to confirm continued effectiveness of provider's management of collaborative provision .....	26
A summary of the effectiveness of the approach to managing collaborative provision including arrangements for securing academic standards and enhancing the student learning experience.....	26

## About the Quality Enhancement Review method

The QAA website explains the method for [Quality Enhancement Review \(QER\)](#) and has links to the QER handbook and other informative documents.<sup>1</sup> You can also find more information about the [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education \(QAA\)](#).<sup>2</sup>

### About this review

This is the Report of the QER conducted by QAA at Cardiff University. The review visit took place on 2-5 March 2026. The review was conducted by a team of four reviewers:

- Dr Matthew Leeke
- Mr Mark Cooper
- Ms Sarosh Azhar
- Ms Ariane O'Rourke (Student Reviewer)

QAA reviews are evidence-based processes. Review judgements result from the documents review teams see, the meetings they hold, and drawing upon their experience as peer reviewers and student reviewers. In advance of the review visit, the provider submitted a self-evaluative document (the Self-Analysis), contextual information about the nature of their provision and students, and a range of materials about the provider's arrangements for managing quality and academic standards.

In this review, the QER team makes judgements on:

- the requirements of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) Part 1 for internal quality assurance
- the relevant baseline requirements of the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales.

It is possible for the judgements to be expressed in three levels which indicate whether the provider 'meets these requirements', 'meets them with conditions', or 'does not meet requirements'. More detail on these categories is provided in the QER Handbook.

The QER review also makes a statement about the provider's strategic approach to enhancing the student learning experience.

### About this report

The judgements for this review can be found on page five, followed by any commendations, recommendations for action and areas of ongoing development identified by the review team. This is followed by detailed findings of the review.

These reports provide an information base for the production of thematic reports that identify findings across providers in Wales.

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

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

# 1. Contextual Information about the provider, student population and the review

## Summary information about the provider, including strategic framework, organisational structure

1 Cardiff University (the University) was founded in 1883 and has existed in its current form since 2005. It is a research-intensive, comprehensive university and a member of the Russell Group. The University's strategy, Our Future, Together, sets out its direction to 2035 and articulates its mission to co-create and share new knowledge to deliver a better world for future generations.

2 The University Council is responsible for the strategic direction and oversight of the University while the University Executive Board (UEB) is responsible for institutional management and delivery of the strategy. A new corporate governance structure came into effect from 2025-26 and Senate, the principal academic authority, approved changes to academic governance arrangements in November 2025 to enhance its oversight of research-related matters and better align sub-committees within Senate's remit.

3 The University is organised into three Colleges (Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences; Biomedical and Life Sciences; and Physical Sciences and Engineering) comprising 24 Schools currently, reducing to 16 from 2026-27. Each College is led by a Pro Vice-Chancellor, the Head of College, who is also a member of the UEB. The University is reviewing its professional services structures to ensure these align with the new academic framework, with phased implementation planned from July 2026. It currently employs 5,765 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff, of which 2,655 FTE are academic staff.

4 The University currently has four taught education partnerships. One partnership in China leads to a double award and is active while the remaining three partnerships involve franchise arrangements with three academic partners in Wales. Two of the franchise partnerships are in the teaching out stage and one is under review.

## Composition, key trends and anticipated changes in the student population, including information on retention, progression and outcomes

5 In 2025-26, there were 28,722 full person equivalent enrolments, consisting of 22,998 undergraduate (UG) students (representing 80% of the student population), 4,216 postgraduate taught (PGT) students (15% of students), and 1,508 postgraduate research students (PGR) (5% of students). The composition of the student population has changed since 2018-19, reflecting growth in the UG student population (17%) and decreases in PGT and PGR enrolments (20% and 13% respectively). Home students account for 85% of enrolments, with international students representing 15% of students. Full-time study is the predominant mode of delivery (94%) for undergraduate provision.

6 Transnational education is projected to grow through the University's branch campus in Kazakhstan and through partnerships in Singapore and China. An initial cohort of 316 students was enrolled at the Kazakhstan campus in the 2025-26 academic year.

7 Retention and progression rates have improved following Covid-19 related declines, though withdrawals remain most common during the transition from Year 1 to Year 2. Graduate prospects have strengthened, with the University ranked 12th in the UK Employability Rank 2026 (Times Higher Education). Some narrowing of awarding gaps has also been achieved through inclusive education interventions designed to foster a sense of

belonging, empower students to fulfil their potential through inclusive learning and teaching, and develop inclusive mindsets through the identification of barriers to learning. The University is mobilising a Student Success programme to support at-risk students and reduce disparities in outcomes.

8 The Institute for Flexible Lifelong Learning, which is to be operational by late spring 2026, is expected to expand flexible, modular, and part-time provision while a new Graduate School, to be launched for September 2026, is expected to enhance postgraduate research recruitment.

## **Commentary on how the provider supports national priorities**

9 Cardiff University aligns its institutional strategy, Our Future, Together, with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, integrating the Act's seven well-being goals and five ways of working into operational planning. Strategic objectives are closely mapped to the priorities of the regulator, Medr, with particular emphasis on widening participation, fair access, and enabling students from all backgrounds to achieve their potential.

10 Commitments set out in the annual Fee and Access Plan focus on engaging underrepresented groups and supporting successful transitions into higher education. The University also acts as an anchor institution for the Cardiff Capital Region Investment Zone, contributing to regional economic renewal, supporting approximately 1 in 135 jobs in Wales.

11 Civic engagement and sustainability are advanced through initiatives such as a Liveable Futures programme, which pilots innovative approaches to interdisciplinary collaboration and aligns with Welsh Government legislation to act sustainably for future generations. The Flexible Lifelong Learning service will support national and UK industrial strategy priorities by expanding flexible, modular, and part-time provision to develop a highly skilled workforce.

12 The University promotes the Welsh language and bilingual student experiences through the Cynllun Cynefin framework, which underpins efforts to increase Welsh-medium provision and support the development of bilingual graduates. Together, these strategies demonstrate the University's sustained alignment with national priorities across education, skills development, regional economic contribution, and social and environmental well-being.

## **Commentary on the preparation for the review, including how provider and students worked in partnership in review preparation**

13 Preparation for the QER was led by a Steering Group chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience, with membership including university staff and the Students' Union (SU) President and the Head of Student Voice and Advice at the Student's Union (SU). The SU elected to submit a separate, supplementary submission, with advice and input provided by university staff during its preparation.

14 The Self-Analysis drew on input from staff across the University and incorporated information previously considered by university committees. The development of the institutional strategy, Our Future, Together, involved the 'Y Sgwrs Fawr' (The Big Conversation) consultation exercise, which included collaboration with staff and students.

15 Feedback from the student submission highlighted the need for improved engagement regarding large-scale structural changes, which the University has acknowledged and is addressing. These preparations ensured that both staff and student perspectives contributed to the review process and supported a comprehensive evaluation of the University's quality and enhancement arrangements.

## Summary of the nature and rationale for the enhancement priorities identified for the review and in the self-analysis

16 The University's enhancement priorities for this review are drawn from its strategic approach to education enhancement, institutional performance data, and sustained partnership with students. They are informed by the University's Education and Student Experience (ESE) portfolio (2021-24), subsequent strategic developments under Our Future, Together, and analysis of National Student Survey (NSS) outcomes, progression and awarding gap data, and regulatory monitoring.

17 The four enhancement priorities selected as case studies for the review reflect areas of strategic investment and institutional challenge and are at different stages of maturity as noted below.

- **Priority 1: Academic Staff Development**

A strategic institutional initiative focused on strengthening teaching capability and culture through a unified academic development ecosystem and Advance HE-accredited Fellowship Programmes. This priority represents an implementation and evaluation-stage enhancement.

- **Priority 2: Digital Learning Environment**

A University-wide transformation programme to improve consistency, accessibility and effectiveness of digital learning provision for students and staff. This is an implementation-stage enhancement, aligned with broader learning environment and infrastructure investment.

- **Priority 3: Curriculum Development**

A programme to enhance programme design processes, coherence, inclusivity and student-centred curriculum development, responding to evidence of inconsistent practice and declining NSS learning opportunities scores. This is an early implementation-stage enhancement, addressing identified structural and process challenges.

- **Priority 4: Rethinking Assessment**

A strategic initiative to improve assessment and feedback practices in response to student dissatisfaction and inconsistent institutional approaches. This is an implementation-stage enhancement, with a focus on sustainable, student-centred assessment design.

18 Collectively, these priorities demonstrate a move from foundational enhancement activity to a more ambitious, integrated programme aligned with the University's long-term strategic ambitions for innovation, inclusion and global-civic impact.

## Summary of the provider's follow-up to the previous review

19 The 2020 QER resulted in one commendation and one affirmation. The review team did not make any recommendations. The commendation highlighted the Cardiff Undergraduate Research Opportunities Programme (CUROP) and the opportunities it provides for students to engage with research. The affirmation recognised the steps taken to implement a revised annual monitoring process. In response, the University developed an action plan jointly with the SU, which has been monitored by the Academic Standards and Quality Committee. Progress has focused on building on the recognised strengths, ensuring ongoing enhancement of student engagement with research, and embedding improvements to the annual monitoring process across academic programmes.

## 2. Review judgements and findings

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

- Cardiff University **meets** the requirements of the ESG Part 1 for internal quality assurance.
- Cardiff University **meets** the relevant baseline regulatory requirements of the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales.

This is a positive judgement, which means the provider has robust arrangements for securing academic standards, managing academic quality and for enhancing the quality of the student experience.

### Commendations

The QER has identified one commendation, which is summarised below.

- The effectiveness of the Learning and Teaching Academy as an institutional vehicle for enhancing learning and teaching.

### Recommendations

The QER makes one recommendation.

- That the University strengthens student voice mechanisms so that the purpose of representation is clearly understood, support structures for representatives are consistent, and engagement with the wider student body is effective.

### Areas of ongoing development

The QER has identified three areas of ongoing development, which are summarised below.

- Embed Artificial Intelligence initiatives to help secure their full effectiveness.
- Strengthen the 'one University' culture across the institution to improve alignment, ensure consistency, reduce fragmentation and embed senior leaders' intent for a cohesive organisation.
- Continue to monitor the arrangements for managing overseas provision, recognising that some partnerships are still in their early stages, and maintain a structured and consistent approach to oversight so that emerging risks can be identified promptly and mitigated effectively.

### 3. Statement on the provider's strategic approach to enhancement

20 The University's strategic approach to enhancement is reflected in its overarching *Our Future, Together* strategy, which sets the direction to 2035 and emphasises a deliberate approach to the enhancement of the student learning experience. The University's future priorities for education and student experience are informed by the strategy, with the current programme of work building on the enhancements delivered through the 2021-24 Education and Student Experience (ESE) portfolio enhancement programme of projects under the three thematic headings of Success for All, Inspiring Teachers, and Inclusive and Innovative Learning Environments. Evidence of activity undertaken and progress made was provided through case studies, project examples and supporting documentation including a data pack and a comprehensive ESE programme closure report (October 2024) indicating key achievements and benefits delivered by the ESE programme and lessons learned. The Future Ready: ESE Transformation programme: Turning Strategy into Action, and improved ESE data collection, reporting and analysis enable the University to identify where improvements have been made and areas requiring further attention.

21 The University identified four specific enhancement priorities for this QER:

- Enhancing Academic Staff Development
- Enhancing the Digital Learning Environment
- Enhancing Curriculum Development Processes
- Enhancing Assessment and Feedback Practices.

22 The four enhancement priorities, which are at different stages of maturity, are a subset of the ESE activity previously undertaken. The review team explored these priorities in more detail with senior staff, academic staff, professional services staff, and with students.

23 The review team explored the deliberate steps taken by the University to enhance the student learning experience through examining the use of evidence to plan, implement and evaluate the student learning experience. As part of this report, the review team provides commentaries on its findings of these three areas in the sections below.

24 The overall outcome of the enhancement-led approach to the review and the review team's consideration of the enhancement priorities is a statement on the University's strategic approach to enhancement of the student academic experience. The review team makes the following statement on the University's strategic approach to enhancement of the student learning experience:

*25 The University's strategic approach to enhancement is deliberate, well-resourced and closely aligned to its ESE sub-strategy and the emerging Future Ready programme. Enhancement is organised through a coherent portfolio of priorities, supported by formal governance and annual enhancement reporting, and translated into practice through institution-wide projects, including, among others, those on academic staff development, curriculum development, the digital learning environment and rethinking assessment. A particular strength is the effectiveness of the Learning and Teaching Academy (LTA) in supporting implementation across Schools and in embedding enhancement activity in academic practice.*

*26 The University takes account of feedback and recommendations from the student body through a range of mechanisms, including the Student View process, student representatives, Student Experience Partners and the Cardiff 100 panel, and student feedback has informed enhancements at both institutional and programme level. At the*

*same time, there is a need to strengthen student voice mechanisms so that the purpose of representation is clearly understood, support structures for representatives are consistent, and engagement with the wider student body is effective. Overall, the University demonstrates a strategically coherent approach to enhancement, while recognising the need to strengthen consistency of experience across the institution.*

## **Commentary on the strategic approach taken to planning enhancements to the student experience**

27 The review team found that the University's approach to planning enhancements to the student learning experience is grounded in a clearly articulated institutional strategy, developed through a large-scale and deliberate consultative process. The current strategy, Our Future, Together, formally approved by the Council in July 2024, was produced through Y Sgwrs Fawr, an institution-wide engagement exercise involving over 2,100 staff, students, and alumni through surveys, town hall events, and structured futures workshops. Its conclusion was a strategic mission focused on co-creating and sharing knowledge for future generations, with excellence in the student experience positioned as a central institutional priority. Enhancement priorities are operationalised through a Future Ready programme, which provides a coherent planning framework through which strategic ambition is translated into targeted activity at institutional and School level.

28 The University set out that the rationale for the current enhancement priorities builds directly on the work of the ESE programme, a structured portfolio of projects delivered between 2021 and 2024 in response to evidence of declining student satisfaction and performance. The review team noted that the transition from this programme to the current Future Ready workstreams represents a deliberate and evidenced planning progression, in which the earlier programme established foundational conditions for the more ambitious transformation now being pursued. The Self-Analysis provides a credible account of this continuity of strategic intent, and the review team's meetings with senior leaders confirmed that enhancement priorities have been identified and sequenced in direct response to performance evidence.

29 The University's selection of priorities is informed by a data-driven evidence base drawing on National Student Survey (NSS) outcomes, degree awarding gap analysis, graduate destination data, and progression and retention metrics. Progress is tracked through University Success Measures (USMs), reported to Council on a quarterly basis, providing a systematic mechanism for assessing whether enhancement activity is translating into measurable improvements for students. The University's senior leaders consider this data infrastructure to be central to the University's approach to institutional accountability, enabling enhancement investment to be directed where evidence indicates the greatest need.

30 Subsequent to the Our Future, Together strategy approval, student priorities have been formally integrated into enhancement planning through the annual SU Student View submission. This generates a published institutional response and has led to the development of targeted workstreams, including in relation to the postgraduate research experience and Welsh language provision.

31 The review team learned, however, that students' experience of involvement in the planning of significant institutional changes has not been consistent. The Student Submission raises concerns about the depth of consultation in major structural processes, where engagement was experienced as more informational than co-productive. Students confirmed that their ability to influence planning decisions at School level was limited and variable. The review team considered these concerns to be substantive and directly connected to the recommendation on student voice (see paragraph 50).

## **Commentary on the actions taken to ensure effective implementation of enhancement priorities**

32 The review team observed that the University has adopted a coherent, project-based framework for implementing its four enhancement priorities highlighted within the review (Academic Staff Development, Digital Learning Environment, Curriculum Development and Rethinking Assessment), organised around a structured progression from initiation through delivery to embedding and sustaining. Implementation activity is governed through the Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC), with accountability through Senate and Council, providing clear institutional oversight and ensuring that enhancement activity is subject to systematic monitoring and formal reporting. Annual Enhancement Reports (AERs) provide a structured mechanism through which progress and impact is assessed at institutional level, enabling the University to identify where further action is required and to plan successive stages of enhancement activity. The review team considered this to be a well-structured and appropriately governed implementation framework, reflecting a mature institutional approach to managing large-scale educational change.

33 The LTA has been central to the effective implementation of enhancement priorities across the University's Schools. Academic staff were consistently positive about the quality and responsiveness of LTA engagement, noting that the Academy operates both proactively and reactively, deploying specialist staff to work alongside Schools to design bespoke workshops and provide targeted support that is sensitive to disciplinary context and local need. Schools also approach the LTA to seek guidance and support in areas they have themselves identified as requiring development, reflecting a genuinely reciprocal professional relationship that supports the embedding of enhancement activity at School level. The LTA also functions as an effective institutional vehicle for convening and disseminating good practice across the University, including through its annual Learning and Teaching Conference at which innovations developed within individual Schools are shared more widely across the University.

34 The review team found that across each of the four enhancement priorities implementation has been pursued at pace and at considerable scale. In the area of Rethinking Assessment, the LTA delivered approximately 48 workshops to support all 24 Schools in implementing revised marking, moderation and feedback policies, with bespoke guidance resources developed for each School to ensure that implementation was contextually appropriate rather than generic. More than 1,500 staff are engaged with curriculum design activities, inclusivity workshops and LTA development activity in support of the Curriculum Development priority. The Digital Learning Environment programme, which began as a pilot in 2022, was supported by a dedicated Digital Education team in which each School was paired with a named team member to provide sustained implementation support throughout the transition to the new platform. Across the Academic Staff Development priority, over 1,000 Fellowship awards have now been made through the University's Advance HE accredited programme, representing a significant and sustained institutional investment in the professional development of academic staff.

35 The review team heard from students that they have been actively involved in the implementation of enhancement priorities through structured partnership mechanisms. Paid Student Experience Partners contribute to curriculum development activity, the piloting of new resources and the testing of revised assessment approaches, while the Cardiff 100 consultation panel provides a representative pool of students drawn from across programmes, modes of study and student characteristics, whose input is sought on specific development projects. Student co-creation has been evident across several priorities, including in the development of the Academic Integrity module, which was designed in collaboration with Student Experience Partners and has been live since 2024, and in the co-production of group work guidance and assessment criteria within individual Schools. The

review team found these to be positive examples of genuine student partnership in the implementation of enhancement activity.

36 The evaluation of emerging challenges, such as the embedding of Artificial Intelligence (AI), remains in its early stages and requires more systematic and consistent institutional guidance. The review team heard that the University's approach to embedding artificial intelligence within assessment design is being developed through a two-lane framework distinguishing secure from non-secure assessment, though this framework had not yet been disseminated to Schools at the time of the review visit. The University's Artificial Intelligence (AI) working group had met for the first time only in the week preceding the review, and the review team noted that no students had been included in its initial membership. Students confirmed that guidance on AI use is experienced inconsistently across modules and programmes, with the missing element identified as discipline specific guidance on how to study and engage with AI tools within their field, rather than simply whether AI use is permitted in a given assessment. Whilst the evidence demonstrates a well-resourced and strategically coherent approach to implementation, the review team identified the need to embed Artificial Intelligence initiatives to help secure their effectiveness as **an area of ongoing development**.

37 More broadly, the review team noted that the consistency with which enhancement priorities are experienced by students continues to vary across Schools, and that whilst institutional frameworks, maturity models and enhancement tools provide a sound structural basis for consistent practice, their application across the University remains uneven. The University has acknowledged this challenge and the forthcoming Academic Future restructuring, which will consolidate the University's provision into 16 Schools within three Colleges from 2026-27, is intended in part to address the longstanding variation in how students experience enhancement activity across different parts of the institution. The review team identified the need to strengthen the 'one University' culture across the institution to improve alignment, ensure consistency, reduce fragmentation and embed senior leaders' intent for a cohesive organisation as **an area of ongoing development**.

### **Commentary on the process of evaluation and reporting on the results of enhancement priorities, and how this informs future progress and enhancement activities**

38 The University has established a formal framework for the evaluation and reporting of its enhancement priorities, primarily through the AER. This mechanism is strategically distinct from the Annual Quality Report (AQR). While the AER is specifically designed to document the progress, rationale, and impact of improvement activities, the AQR provides assurance that baseline requirements and standards continue to be met. The AER is reported through ESEC and the AQR through ASQC, with both reports subsequently considered by Senate and Council which maintain accountability and oversight. The review team observed that this dual reporting structure ensures that the University can identify where further action is required while planning successive stages of enhancement activity.

39 The University uses several structured frameworks and data-driven tools to evaluate the effectiveness of its initiatives. A dedicated benefits realization framework monitors project outcomes against USMs, which include student satisfaction, awarding gaps, and graduate outcomes. To support this, Business Intelligence dashboards track leading indicators to identify specific areas requiring intervention. Furthermore, evaluation is informed by a wide range of evidence-based inputs, including NSS outcomes, internal student feedback, and regulatory monitoring. The University's focus on student partnership using the Student Experience Partners system, alongside the introduction of the Cardiff 100 consultation panel in 2025/26, also demonstrates evaluation and improvement. Practical enhancements such as the Academic Integrity module and co-produced assessment criteria

further illustrate how evaluative feedback has been translated into concrete tools and improvements for students.

40 The review team consider that this evaluative reporting cycle serves as a critical link between current activity and future strategic planning. Assurance processes and quality monitoring trigger targeted enhancement; for instance, identifying low NSS scores or awarding gaps directly informs the selection of new priorities. Future progress is currently being transitioned into the Future Ready programme (2025-2028), which aligns reporting with specific workstreams for Student Success, Curriculum 2035, and Flexible Lifelong Learning. This transition demonstrates a move from foundational enhancement activity toward a more ambitious programme aligned with long-term goals for innovation and inclusion. Additionally, the Academic Future restructuring (consolidating academic provision under 16 Schools) is intended to address inconsistencies in the student experience identified through previous evaluation cycles.

41 Despite a well-resourced and strategically coherent framework, the review team observed that high-level institutional metrics do not yet reliably reflect consistent improvements at the individual programme level, with impact unevenly distributed across the University. As noted in paragraph 37, strengthening the 'one University' culture should help to achieve greater consistency across the University.

42 Key initiatives such as Future Ready programme and Academic Future restructuring signal an ambition to move beyond metrics-driven improvement toward a sustainable approach to enhancement. The review team heard that realising this ambition will require the University to ensure that measurable gains at the institutional level translate into meaningful and consistent changes in the student experience across all programmes and Schools.

## **4. Commentary on the provider's support and enhancement of the student learning experience**

43 The review team is confident that the University has effective arrangements in place to support and enhance the student learning experience. The review team considered a range of documents to better understand the means by which the University is able to assess and monitor the effectiveness and impact of its strategic approach to support and enhance the student learning experience. These documents included the Education and Student Experience (ESE) sub-strategy and Future Ready materials, the terms of reference, minutes and associated papers for key committees with responsibilities for academic standards, quality and the student experience, including the Academic Standards and Quality Committee, the Programme Approval and Revalidation Subcommittee (PARSC), the Awards and Progress Committee and the ESEC, the Annual Quality Reports (AQRs) and AERs, the Institutional Expectations for programme structure, design and delivery, Degree Outcomes Statements, enhancement case studies relating to curriculum development, the digital learning environment and rethinking assessment, and Student View reporting and institutional responses. Meetings with staff and students confirmed the positive steps taken to enhance the student learning experience whilst also identifying areas requiring further attention, including, for example, achieving greater consistency in the student experience across Schools. The review team heard that the move to 16 Schools from 2026-27 and process re-design should help to address this.

### **Use of external reference points to support and enhance the student learning experience**

44 The University makes structured and explicit use of external reference points to support and enhance the student learning experience. The University's evidence base shows clear institutional mapping against the UK Quality Code and the European Standards and Guidelines, linking external expectations to internal policies, processes and governance arrangements. At programme level, the PARSC is required to ensure that recommendations are consistent with Academic Regulations and with the University's Institutional Expectations for programme structure, design and delivery. These Institutional Expectations provide a clear framework for programme design and review, including learning outcomes, credit and level, assessment patterns and review cycles, thereby supporting the consistent incorporation of external frameworks and professional requirements into the design of learning opportunities. This was reinforced in meetings with academic staff, where the review team heard that programme development and revalidation activity is guided by a clear set of institutional expectations, with mapping against graduate attributes helping Schools and subjects to identify gaps and areas for improvement, while allowing appropriate disciplinary flexibility.

45 The review team also found evidence that external reference points are used not only for threshold assurance, but to sustain the relevance, comparability and fairness of provision. The Degree Outcomes Statement 2024 sets out how degree outcomes and classifications are monitored through the academic quality system, while the register of professionally accredited programmes demonstrates systematic engagement with professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) requirements where relevant. The AQR confirms that Examining Boards and external examiners provide assurance on academic standards to the Awards and Progress Committee prior to conferment of awards, and records that in 2024-25 no concerns were raised regarding academic standards. External reference points, including PSRB requirements and sector expectations, are embedded into approval and review processes as part of normal academic governance rather than being treated as a separate compliance exercise, and institutional "non-negotiables" around matters such as inclusion, accessibility and employability are built into approval

documentation while still allowing Schools flexibility in local implementation. Taken together, the review team considered Cardiff's use of external reference points to be coherent, appropriately governed and effective in supporting and enhancing the student learning experience.

## **Views and feedback from students**

46 The University has invested substantially in mechanisms for capturing and responding to student feedback. The Student Voice Framework, co-created with the SU and embedded in institutional governance, establishes clear expectations across a layered set of mechanisms including the annual Student View, module enhancement, Student-Staff Panels (SSPs), and institutional surveys. The deployment of Student Engagement Officers (SEOs) across 14 Schools has contributed to measurable improvement: NSS Student Voice theme scores increased by 16 percentage points from 2021 to 2025, with Schools in receipt of SEO support recording higher gains than those without. The University acknowledges that Cardiff's relative position, while significantly improved, remains in the third quartile of the higher education sector.

47 The effectiveness of feedback mechanisms varies across Schools. The student submission reports that no School submitted all required SSP minutes to the SU in 2023/24, and in 2024/25 only two Schools met this requirement. The SSP structure and effectiveness differs materially across Schools, with pre-meeting arrangements between student representatives well-established in some areas but unknown to staff in others. Some staff reported relying primarily on informal contact, which, while valued locally, limits assurance that feedback is systematically captured and acted upon across all programmes.

48 PGT and PGR students feel less visible within feedback and partnership processes than UG students, with lower continued engagement across SSP cycles at postgraduate level noted by academic staff. The University has acknowledged that student engagement around the 'Our Academic Future' proposals was experienced as reactive and has committed to a formal protocol for student engagement in large-scale organisational change in response, though evidence of its operationalisation was not available at the time of the review.

## **Developments to enhance learning and teaching arranged through partnerships with students**

49 The University has developed a structured approach to student partnership in enhancement, with the Student Voice Framework and the Student Experience Partners scheme providing the principal mechanisms for co-creation. The Student Experience Partners scheme employs approximately 30 students annually to work alongside staff on enhancement projects, and alongside the Cardiff 100 academic representative network. The scheme provides an important complement to the formal representative structure, enabling more direct and sustained student contribution to enhancement than the existing SSP system has consistently delivered. Students and staff confirmed there is responsive and constructive engagement at programme level.

50 The review team found that the formal representative structure presents an area for development. Student representatives and sabbatical officers indicated that the current structure, with class-level representatives connecting directly to the SU executive without sufficient intermediate structures, limits the overall effectiveness of the system in channelling student views into quality processes at all levels. The purpose and mechanisms of the different representation avenues available to students were not consistently understood by students, which the review team considers presents a risk to effective engagement with the wider student body. Students are formally represented on all major University committees

and in programme approval and revalidation processes, and student consultation has informed curriculum and policy development including the Academic Feedback Policy and Curriculum 2035. However, inconsistency in SSP compliance limits assurance that partnership activity operates to the same standard across all Schools. The review team **recommends** that the University strengthens student voice mechanisms so that the purpose of representation is clearly understood, support structures for representatives are consistent, and engagement with the wider student body is effective.

51 The SU formally raised concerns about the depth and timing of student consultation on the 'Our Academic Future' proposals, and the student submission describes communication on major structural changes as experienced by students as reactive rather than proactive. The University has committed to a student engagement protocol for large-scale organisational change, which the review team considers an appropriate response. The review team notes that more effective and compassionate communication with students throughout periods of institutional change would further strengthen the partnership relationship.

### **Effectiveness of the teaching and learning strategy in improving the quality of learning opportunities**

52 The review team found that the University's teaching and learning strategy is effective in improving the quality of learning opportunities because it is clearly articulated, institutionally governed and translated into a substantial programme of enhancement activity. The ESE sub-strategy and the Future Ready transformation narrative position educational enhancement as a multiyear institutional priority, supported by a portfolio of work focused on student success, inspiring teachers, and an innovative and inclusive environment. Progress is monitored through AERs, which are considered through the ESEC and reported onwards to Senate and Council, indicating that the strategy is embedded within formal governance and oversight arrangements rather than operating as a series of disconnected projects. The review team considered this to provide a clear strategic and operational framework for improving learning opportunities across the institution.

53 The effectiveness of the strategy is also demonstrated by the way in which strategic priorities have been translated into institution-wide initiatives with visible reach and scale. The enhancement case studies show sustained work across academic staff development, curriculum development, the digital learning environment and rethinking assessment, with a consistent focus on improving learning design, assessment practice, consistency of student experience and the inclusivity of provision. Staff described the Learning and Teaching Academy (LTA) as central to turning strategic intent into practical change, both through proactive institutional leadership and through bespoke support tailored to individual Schools and disciplinary contexts. The review team heard, for example, that more than 1,500 staff had engaged with curriculum design and inclusivity activity linked to the Curriculum Development priority, that the Digital Learning Environment programme was supported through named contacts for each School, and that all 24 Schools had received support to implement revised marking, moderation and feedback policies. The review team considered this evidence of implementation at pace and scale to be a significant indicator of strategic effectiveness.

54 The review team also found evidence that the strategy is improving learning opportunities in ways that are meaningful to students. Several enhancement activities were explicitly shaped by student feedback or direct student involvement, including work on assessment and feedback, digital learning design and curriculum development. Students and student representatives described examples of positive change, including clearer structures within the digital learning environment, more consistent approaches to assessment design in some areas, and opportunities to contribute to enhancement activity

through Student Experience Partners and Cardiff 100. At the same time, students also described some variability in how far institutional priorities are experienced consistently across Schools and programmes, particularly in relation to assessment practice, communication and guidance on the use of artificial intelligence. The review team therefore concluded that the teaching and learning strategy is effective and has delivered substantial improvements to the quality of learning opportunities, while noting that the consistency with which students experience these benefits across the institution remains an **area for ongoing development** as the University continues to strengthen the 'one University' culture.

## Effectiveness and evaluation of initiatives to enhance learning and teaching

55 The University's approach to enhancing learning and teaching is delivered principally through the LTA, a dedicated institutional unit of approximately 60+ staff that provides comprehensive development, advisory and delivery support to Schools across the institution. The LTA operates both proactively and reactively: specialist staff actively reach out to Schools to identify development needs and design bespoke programmes of support, whilst Schools in turn approach the LTA to seek assistance with areas they have themselves identified as requiring development. The review team considers that this reciprocal relationship reflects a genuinely embedded institutional culture in which enhancement of learning and teaching is understood as a shared and collaborative endeavour between the LTA and academic colleagues. The LTA is further supported by 35 paid Student Experience Partners who contribute to enhancement activity across a range of priorities and whose involvement in the LTA's work signals a substantive institutional commitment to student co-creation of the kind that goes beyond the merely consultative.

56 Academic staff from across multiple Schools affirmed the quality, responsiveness and disciplinary sensitivity of LTA support, noting in particular the value of working with specialist LTA officers to co-design workshops aligned precisely to individual School need, demonstrating clearly the multi-faceted effectiveness of the LTA's work in practice. The LTA's Advance HE accredited Fellowship programme has resulted in over 1,000 Fellowship awards, with staff reporting that participation had materially improved their pedagogical knowledge, changed their teaching practice and increased their confidence and sense of belonging in the academic space. Student co-creation is substantively embedded within LTA activity, with concrete examples including the co-production of the University's Academic Integrity module (live since 2024) with Student Experience Partners, and the development of group work guidance co-produced by students and staff. The "Unboxing Your Inbox" project, developed through student co-creation with LTA support, won a national award, reflecting achievement recognised beyond the University. These outcomes, taken together with improving trends in NSS results and student progression and award data that the University attributes in part to its enhancement programme, provide meaningful evidence that enhancement initiatives are translating into improvements in the student learning experience.

57 The University evaluates the effectiveness of its enhancement activity through a combination of performance data, AERs, module review processes and structured maturity models covering Inclusive Education, Digital Learning and Student Voice. AERs are considered through the ESEC, providing formal institutional oversight of whether enhancement priorities are delivering their intended impact. The LTA additionally functions as the University's primary mechanism for sharing good practice across Schools, including through its annual Learning and Teaching Conference, which convenes colleagues from across the institution around key thematic areas and draws on innovations and case studies from individual Schools, enabling cross-disciplinary learning at scale (see paragraph 90).

58 The review team **commends** the University for the effectiveness of the LTA as an institutional vehicle for enhancing learning and teaching. This is demonstrated through its proactive and bespoke engagement with Schools, its central role in mobilising academic staff to gain professional recognition for their teaching practice, its embedding of authentic student co-creation within enhancement activity, and its function as the University's primary convener for the sharing and dissemination of good practice. The University's approach to staff professional recognition through the LTA is explored further in paragraphs 63 and 64.

## **Academic, pastoral and learning support for students**

59 The University provides academic, pastoral, and learning support through the Centre for Student Life (CSL), established in 2021, integrating health and wellbeing, disability services, money and advice, academic study skills, and student futures provision, supported by the Student Connect first-contact service. There is general student awareness of the CSL and the routes available for support, though understanding of available services and how to access them was not consistently evident across all student groups.

60 Academic support is delivered through the Personal Tutor system, underpinned by a policy setting minimum standards for contact. The University's own review identified inconsistency in the scope and delivery of the personal tutor role across Schools and limited use of data to inform proactive support. ESEC endorsed a shift towards a Student Success model in January 2024, transferring pastoral responsibility to professional Student Progress Teams working alongside academic advisers, though this transition was at an early stage at the time of the review and its impact on consistency of support has yet to be evidenced. Training for personal tutors is available through the LTA, but consistent monitoring of take-up across Schools was not evident.

61 The Student Submission identifies significant concerns about access to wellbeing services, reporting waiting times of up to 18 weeks for counselling and 11 weeks for wellbeing appointments as of February 2025. NSS performance on awareness of mental wellbeing support stood at 70.1% against a sector benchmark of 77.1% in 2024, resulting in a specific action plan submitted to the regulator. PGR students reported that services appear designed primarily for UG students, with term-time-only operation of some provision not reflecting the nature of research programmes, and pastoral staff identified placement and commuter students as groups requiring more proactive outreach.

## **Recruitment and training of staff including staff development**

62 The University has established a comprehensive suite of guidance to support academic and professional services staff recruitment, delivered through an institutional intranet-based system that covers all stages of the recruitment lifecycle from role creation through to appointment. A Human Resources Manager is required to review all job descriptions and person specifications before posts are advertised, providing a quality assurance check at the point of role definition and ensuring alignment with the Cardiff Academic and Cardiff Professional frameworks which are embedded as standard in the design of academic and professional services roles. Interview panels are required to be constituted in accordance with defined criteria, with criteria referenced interviewing used to support consistent and equitable assessment of candidates. The University introduced its Diverse Interview Panel initiative in April 2024, under which all posts are published on a dedicated MS Teams site to actively seek the involvement of ethnic minority staff as panellists, in direct alignment with commitments set out in the University's Strategic Equality Plan 2020-2024 and its Race Equality Charter obligations. The review team considered the recruitment guidance suite to be coherent, appropriately governed and well aligned with the University's equality commitments, noting the Diverse Interview Panel initiative as a positive and proactive step towards embedding greater diversity within recruitment practice.

63 The University's approach to staff development is underpinned by a clearly articulated framework that links professional development, performance review and academic career progression. Engagement with the Cardiff Academic framework is expected of all academic staff, with nine of the 14 framework requirements forming a defined baseline standard against which engagement with the education domain is assessed as part of the annual Professional Development Review (PDR). Education is explicitly positioned as a core component of performance progression, so staff are expected to demonstrate engagement with learning and teaching enhancement rather than treating it as supplementary to their primary responsibilities. A range of structured Continuing Professional Development (CPD) pathways supports this expectation in practice, including role specific development, for example, dedicated CPD for staff taking on personal tutoring responsibilities together with weekly drop-in career development sessions and formal promotion pathways that are now considerably clearer and more explicitly aligned to CPD engagement and PDR outcomes than was previously the case. The University also provides mandatory paid training for graduate tutors, delivered through the LTA, which frequently serves as the first substantive point of contact between early career teaching staff and the LTA and acts as a gateway to further collaboration and development activity.

64 The University's investment in accredited professional recognition for teaching represents one of its most significant areas of staff development activity and an area in which the LTA plays a central and highly effective role. As noted in paragraph 58, the review team commended the LTA for its effectiveness in mobilising staff to gain professional recognition for their teaching practice, with the Advance HE accredited Fellowship programme having generated over 1,000 Fellowship awards to date. Staff confirmed that participation in the programme had materially improved their pedagogical understanding, changed their day-to-day teaching practice and enhanced their confidence within the academic space, including for non-academic staff for whom Fellowship had also strengthened their sense of belonging and professional identity in that context. Fellowship engagement is aligned with the Academic Promotions Framework and embedded within the CPD Strategy Group governance structure, providing formal institutional reinforcement for the programme's strategic significance. The review team noted that the scale of Fellowship participation is impressive. The University acknowledged that engagement is not yet uniform across all Schools, and that PDR alignment and CPD Strategy Group oversight represent the primary institutional mechanisms through which more consistent engagement is being actively promoted.

## **Dissemination of good practice**

65 The University has established a range of mechanisms to support the dissemination of good practice in learning and teaching, with the LTA functioning as the institution's primary vehicle for sharing and embedding effective practice across its Schools. As noted in paragraph 58, the review team commended the LTA for its effectiveness in this role. The LTA's annual Learning and Teaching Conference serves as the main institutional convening mechanism, bringing together colleagues from across the University around key thematic areas and providing a structured forum through which innovations developed within individual Schools are shared more widely across the University. The LTA also uses its bespoke support offer as a deliberate mechanism for cross-School learning, with specialist staff drawing on the experience of one School to inform the development activity of another, ensuring that good practice does not remain siloed within the disciplines in which it originates. An illustrative example of this approach is the School of Chemistry's development of a multilingual glossary of technical terms, produced with LTA summer intern funding, which was presented at the annual conference and subsequently shared with other Schools where it was considered relevant.

66 Beyond the conference and bespoke support offer, the University has developed a range of additional tools and resources to support the structured dissemination of effective practice. The Learning Central Good Practice Guide provides a baseline reference point for digital learning standards across the University and was developed with student voice incorporated, reflecting the University's wider commitment to ensuring that the rationale for good practice is understood by students as well as staff. The LTA has also developed an Educational Development Toolkit. The Toolkit was launched in October 2023 and was specifically designed to embed the sharing of good practice as a routine institutional process rather than a time limited activity. The Education Development team draws on external sources of good practice to inform and refresh its development offer, including in areas such as decolonising the curriculum, which ensures that the University's approach to dissemination is outward-looking and informed by sector-wide developments as well as its own internal evidence base. In the area of academic staff development, good practice is sustained and shared through a community of learning, lesson plans and the Learning and Teaching Conference, providing multiple reinforcing channels through which effective approaches to teaching are maintained beyond individual project cycles.

67 The University employs a suite of maturity and enhancement models, covering Inclusive Education, Digital Learning and Student Voice, as structured frameworks through which good practice is identified, benchmarked and disseminated at School level. A review of digital learning modules carried out against benchmark and enhanced criteria found that approximately half of the sample reviewed had improved, and the exercise also enabled the University to identify themes where further development support was needed, demonstrating that the model was functioning as an evaluative as well as a dissemination tool. The review team considered the requirement that modules on the digital learning platform do not automatically roll over from one year to the next was a well-considered design feature, actively prompting staff to refresh their provision in line with the good practice guide rather than allowing module content to become stale. The review team noted that the University acknowledged variation in engagement with the maturity and enhancement models across Schools and considered that ensuring more consistent application of these frameworks across the institution remains a priority.

## **Summary of the arrangements for the support and enhancement of the student learning experience**

68 The review team is confident that Cardiff University has appropriate and effective arrangements in place to support and enhance the student learning experience. Enhancement initiatives across the University's four priorities are well structured, purposefully governed and demonstrably implemented at scale, with the LTA serving as an outstandingly effective institutional vehicle for the design, delivery and evaluation of enhancement activity (see paragraph 53). Student co-creation is substantively embedded within this activity, with the Cardiff 100 consultation panel, 35 paid Student Experience Partners and a range of co-produced enhancement resources, including the Academic Integrity module and group work guidance, providing concrete evidence of genuine and meaningful student partnership rather than tokenistic involvement. The University's use of data and external benchmarking to drive and evaluate enhancement, including the shift to subject-level sector benchmarking and clearly defined targets for PGT provision, further strengthens the connection between quality assurance activity and the continuous improvement of the student learning experience.

69 The University's arrangements for the recruitment and development of staff are coherent, well governed and aligned with institutional equality commitments. The structured recruitment guidance suite, together with the Diverse Interview Panel initiative introduced in April 2024, reflects a proactive approach to embedding equitable practice at the point of appointment. Staff development is meaningfully aligned to the Cardiff Academic framework

and the annual Professional Development Review cycle, with Fellowship participation generating over 1,000 awards and staff confirming that participation had materially changed their teaching practice and enhanced their professional confidence. The dissemination of good practice operates through multiple reinforcing channels, with the annual Learning and Teaching Conference, bespoke LTA support, the Learning Central Good Practice Guide and an Educational Development Toolkit in development providing a layered and increasingly systematic approach to ensuring that effective practice is shared and embedded across Schools.

70 The review team noted that the consistency of the student experience across Schools remains variable, and that this represents an **area of ongoing development** for the University. Evidence across review meetings indicated that the effectiveness of student voice mechanisms, the frequency and quality of Student-Staff Panel meetings, the closing of the feedback loop with students and the depth of engagement with enhancement frameworks were reported as uneven across Schools, with outcomes dependent in some instances on the disposition of individual staff rather than on assured institutional processes. The review team noted that the University's forthcoming restructure to 16 Schools within three Colleges from 2026-27 was intended in part to address this inconsistency by strengthening governance and oversight at College level (see also paragraphs 87 and 95).

## 5. Academic standards and quality processes

71 The review team is confident that the University has effective arrangements for managing and enhancing its academic quality and standards. The review team considered a range of documents reflecting changes and enhancements to the University's academic standards and quality procedures since the 2020 QER. These changes have included strengthened oversight of quality and standards to drive continuous improvement, and integration of the Quality and Standards Team within the LTA to enable a more cohesive approach to academic development. Enhancements have also been made to programme approval and revalidation processes to ensure continued alignment with sector recognised standards and benchmarks, and to establish a shared understanding of the new institutional expectations for programme design through guidance and targeted support. Examples of the University's risk management approach and internal audits were provided and thematic analyses of external examiner reports has led to revisions to the Marking and Moderation Policy and Academic Feedback Policy arising from a Rethinking Assessment project. Staff and students spoke of the benefits of the changes made.

### Developments in the provider's approach to managing quality and standards

72 The University has demonstrated an evidence-informed commitment to strengthening its approach to academic quality and standards since the 2020 QER. The integration of the Quality and Standards Team within the Learning and Teaching Academy alongside the creation of a dedicated Dean for Academic Quality role, reflects a strategic shift away from compliance-oriented assurance towards a model in which quality and enhancement are treated as complementary functions. This repositioning creates the institutional conditions for quality processes to drive genuine improvement rather than simply confirm adequacy. The schedule of systematic review and updating of core academic policies further supports continued fitness for purpose of the regulatory and procedural framework.

73 A significant development has been the introduction of the two-phase revalidation process in 2022/23, scrutinised by the Programme Approval and Revalidation Subcommittee (PARSC) to ensure alignment with relevant credit and qualifications frameworks, subject benchmarks, and the University's own Institutional Expectations for programme design approved by the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) in February 2023. The establishment of the Education Development Service (EDS) to support staff through this process has further strengthened consistency in programme design. Taken together, these initiatives serve to link assurance and enhancement in that, while the Institutional Expectations for programme design provide an assurance mechanism, ensuring programmes consistently meet minimum expectations for structure, level, credit, and assessment patterns, the EDS provides an enhancement support mechanism operating within the quality framework.

74 The evolution from Annual Review and Enhancement into a continuous review and enhancement process represents one of the most substantive governance improvements. By embedding review activities into the annual committee cycle and linking these to School Enhancement and Effectiveness Plans, the University has moved from retrospective reporting to a more dynamic and responsive approach, with the Annual Quality Report (AQR) providing critical and reflective assurance to both Senate and Council.

75 The University's internal reviews and audit outcomes have revealed significant procedural gaps. Limited assurance findings from audits of In-Year Resits (2021-22) and the Result Notification Process (2022-23) identified weaknesses in data capture and marking accuracy. The institutional response has been proportionate, including the creation of a resit

register, updates to the student record system, and the commissioning of a Marks Processing Project. The closure of this project in 2026 is to include evaluation of the sustainability of improvements achieved following the restructure of professional services staff in education teams.

76 The review team found that thematic analysis of external examiner reports has provided evidence for targeted policy development, most notably the Rethinking Assessment project, which delivered revised Marking and Moderation and Academic Feedback policies in 2023/24. This demonstrates a strong and direct link between external scrutiny and institutional policy reform. A planned External Advisor for Academic Standards role is expected to provide additional institutional-level oversight to complement programme-level external examining.

77 Student engagement in quality processes has also strengthened, with evidence from the AQR 2021-22 identifying low NSS scores in student voice, and the AER documenting measurable improvements following the roll out of the Student Voice Framework, enhanced Student-Staff Panels and the Closing the Feedback Loop campaign. However, the University acknowledges that awarding gaps remain variable across some cohorts and requires continued attention.

78 Overall, the evidence demonstrates that the University has made genuine progress in managing quality and standards, underpinned by mature governance, a more integrated approach to enhancement, and a willingness to act decisively on audit findings.

### **The use of quality processes to confirm the continued effectiveness of the provider's management of standards**

79 The University has established a clear governance framework through which the continued effectiveness of its management of academic standards is confirmed. Committee constitutions and terms of reference show that responsibility for standards is distributed through a structured set of institutional bodies, including the ASQC, PARSC, and the Awards and Progress Committee, with the ASQC reporting annually to Senate and Council through the AQR. This provides a defined route for institutional assurance and enables standards issues to be considered through formal governance rather than through isolated local processes. Arrangements are understood by staff as part of the normal cycle of assurance, with standards-related issues escalated through established committee routes and with central oversight intended to ensure that institutional expectations are applied consistently.

80 The AQRs for 2021-22 to 2024-25 provide evidence of how these quality processes operate in practice to confirm the continued effectiveness of standards management. Across the reporting cycle, the reports draw together evidence on academic standards, degree outcomes, external examiner and Examining Board assurances, academic integrity, student cases and thematic issues requiring action planning or process refinement. In particular, the 2024-25 Annual Quality Report records that the Awards and Progress Committee received assurance from Examining Boards and external examiners prior to the conferment of awards and that no concerns were raised regarding academic standards. The review team considered this a significant point of assurance because it demonstrates a formal institutional mechanism through which standards are tested and confirmed before awards are made. The review team's discussions during the visit reinforced this view, with staff explaining how Examining Board and external examiner assurance is synthesised and reported through governance structures rather than being treated as a purely administrative end point.

81 Evidence relating to student outcomes also supports the continued effectiveness of standards management. The Degree Outcomes Statement 2024 explains how degree

classifications and outcomes are monitored through the academic quality system, using comparative and internal evidence to support fairness, transparency and ongoing review. More generally, the University's progression and award data and associated institutional reporting provide a basis for identifying patterns and potential areas of concern, while targeted process improvement work, including the marks processing project, indicates that the University has been willing to identify operational risks and respond through specific interventions designed to strengthen reliability and consistency. Institutional analysis of assessment patterns and outcomes is used to inform local and central conversations about risk, and process changes have been introduced where weaknesses in operational reliability have been identified. Taken together, this suggests that the University's standards management is not static but is kept under review through a combination of governance, data scrutiny and process improvement activity.

82 The review team nevertheless noted, from both the documentary evidence and the visit meetings, that the consistency with which standards-related quality processes are experienced and enacted at School level is not entirely uniform. Evidence from meetings suggested some variation in the effectiveness of local processes and in the reach of monitoring activity across Schools. However, this did not lead the review team to question whether standards were being effectively managed at institutional level. Rather, the review team concluded that the University's quality processes provide an effective framework for confirming the continued effectiveness of standards management, with secure institutional assurance mechanisms in place and positive evidence that these mechanisms are being used to monitor risk, confirm standards and refine processes over time.

83 The review team concluded that the University meets the relevant baseline regulatory requirements and has effective practices for managing academic quality and academic standards.

### **The use of quality processes to confirm the continued effectiveness of the provider's management of quality**

84 The University has established a structured framework of quality assurance processes designed to confirm the continued effectiveness of its management of academic quality, embedded within formal governance arrangements that provide assurance through cyclical monitoring, evaluation and escalation of issues at appropriate institutional levels. Institutional oversight is provided through a committee structure in which the ASQC, chaired by the Dean for Academic Quality, holds primary responsibility for quality assurance matters as a sub-committee of Senate and the Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC). ASQC advises ESEC on matters of enhancement identified through the academic quality framework, while reporting on quality assurance matters may proceed directly to Senate where appropriate, with overall accountability maintained through Senate and Council. The PARSC provides formal scrutiny of programme design and assessment, ensuring that institutional quality expectations are applied consistently at the point of approval and re-approval. The review team noted that external reference points, including the UK Quality Code and Medr's Learner Engagement Code, are embedded within validation and approval processes, and that the University had identified a clear institutional lead in the Dean for Academic Quality as the point of responsibility for the coherent operation of quality processes across the University.

85 The University operates a comprehensive annual monitoring framework drawing on a range of qualitative and quantitative evidence, including NSS outcomes, module evaluations, student feedback, progression and award data, and reflective evaluation at programme and School level. A development noted by the review team as particularly important was the University's shift from benchmarking performance internally against its own historical data to benchmarking externally by subject against the wider sector, representing a more rigorous

and outward looking standard of comparison. For PGT provision, the University has established a clear measurable target, with all thematic areas expected to achieve 85 per cent positivity in the University Postgraduate Taught Survey, at institutional and College level, and Schools holding clearly defined targets against which performance is assessed. NSS outcomes trigger a structured institutional response at School and College level, with action plans put in place where concerns are identified and plans reported to Medr accordingly. The University illustrated the effectiveness of this process in practice through the example of the C21 North Wales medical education programme, where declining student satisfaction identified through NSS and module evaluations led to a targeted action plan, followed up both online and in person, resulting in improvement in student satisfaction.

86 The University's programme approval and revalidation processes provide a further mechanism through which the quality of provision is scrutinised and confirmed on a cyclical basis. All programmes are subject to revalidation as a holistic examination of the full range of assessments within a discipline, with no programme validated without student input, and institutional expectations set out norms for assessment design including the reduction of assessment burden and volume. Assessment and feedback leads are in place in every School, with all Schools required to produce and annually update an academic feedback strategy, providing a consistent institutional baseline for assessment quality that is monitored through the review and enhancement cycle. Where concerns arise through the complaints process, the University has established a Student Cases system to formalise casework management, supported by a triage arrangement and, where required, external assistance to manage periods of high volume, demonstrating a responsive and structured approach to identifying and addressing quality-related issues as they arise.

87 The review team considered the overall framework of quality processes to be well structured, appropriately governed and increasingly effective in connecting quality assurance activity with institutional decision-making and targeted intervention. Evidence from review meetings indicated the consistent application of quality processes at School level remained variable, with the effectiveness of mechanisms such as closing the feedback loop with students, the frequency of Student-Staff Panel meetings and the reach of annual monitoring activity reported as uneven across Schools. The University acknowledged this as a longstanding challenge and indicated that the forthcoming restructure to 16 Schools within three Colleges from 2026-27 was intended in part to address the inconsistency of experience across the institution by clarifying governance responsibilities and strengthening oversight at College level.

## **The contribution of the provider's quality processes to ensure improvement and enhancement of the student learning experience**

88 The review team found that the University's quality processes make a substantive contribution to the improvement and enhancement of the student learning experience because they are connected not only to assurance and oversight, but also to action planning, enhancement activity and institutional follow-through. The documentary evidence shows that the University has established an annual reporting cycle in which AQRs and AERs are used to identify themes, surface risks, monitor progress and inform institutional action. These reports are considered through formal governance routes, including ASQC, ESEC, Senate and Council, which means that quality intelligence is capable of shaping institutional decision-making rather than remaining at the level of local monitoring. The team considered this to be an important strength because it links quality processes directly to enhancement planning and institutional prioritisation.

89 There is also clear evidence that the University uses its quality processes to identify areas where the student experience requires improvement and to support targeted institutional responses. The enhancement priorities on academic staff development,

curriculum development, the digital learning environment and rethinking assessment are supported by structured reporting and evaluation, with AERs and enhancement case studies providing a mechanism through which progress, impact and future actions are reviewed. In meetings, staff described how quality and enhancement intelligence is triangulated across student feedback, performance data and local experience to inform interventions, and how this has led to targeted support for Schools in areas such as curriculum design, assessment and feedback, and digital learning practice. The review team heard that these processes are not understood as separate from enhancement activity, but as the means through which priorities are refined, support is directed and progress is monitored over time. This gives the University a stronger basis for ensuring that enhancement activity is evidence-informed and institutionally coordinated.

90 The LTA is a particularly important part of the way in which quality processes contribute to enhancement in practice. The evidence shows that issues and priorities surfaced through institutional monitoring are translated into development activity, bespoke School support and institution-wide initiatives through the LTA's work. Academic staff described the LTA as both responsive and proactive, drawing on institutional evidence and local need to shape interventions that improve learning design, assessment practice and inclusivity. The review team therefore considered that the University has an effective mechanism for converting quality intelligence into practical enhancement activity, and this strongly supports the commendation relating to the effectiveness of the LTA as an institutional vehicle for enhancing learning and teaching.

91 Students also provided evidence that quality processes can contribute directly to improvement and enhancement, although with some variation in visibility and consistency. The review team heard examples of changes made in response to student feedback, including improvements in digital learning organisation, aspects of assessment and feedback practice, and opportunities for student involvement through Student Experience Partners and the Cardiff 100 initiative. However, students also indicated that the effectiveness of closing the feedback loop and the clarity of student voice mechanisms were uneven across the University. The team concluded that the University's quality processes do make an effective contribution to improvement and enhancement of the student learning experience, but that the full benefit of these processes is not yet experienced consistently in all parts of the University. This judgement is aligned with the recommendation to strengthen student voice mechanisms so that the purpose of representation is clearly understood and support a more consistent "one University" culture.

92 The review team considered that the University's quality processes are increasingly effective in connecting quality assurance, enhancement activity and institutional decision-making. They provide structured routes through which evidence about the student experience can be identified, escalated and acted upon, and they have supported a substantial programme of enhancement work with demonstrable reach across the institution. While some inconsistency remains in how improvements are experienced at School and programme level, the University has effective quality processes that contribute meaningfully to ongoing improvement and enhancement of the student learning experience.

## **A summary of the effectiveness of the arrangements for securing academic quality and standards**

93 The review team is confident that the University has effective and well-governed arrangements in place for securing academic quality and standards. The governance framework is clearly articulated, with defined responsibilities distributed across the ASQC, the PARSC, and the Awards and Progress Committee, each operating within terms of reference that establish formal accountability routes to Senate and Council. The AQR provides the primary institutional mechanism through which standards management is

confirmed on a cyclical basis, drawing together external examiner assurance, Examining Board confirmation prior to conferral of awards, degree outcomes monitoring, academic integrity reporting, and thematic analysis to inform action planning and process improvement. The review team considered this to provide a coherent and formally embedded basis for institutional oversight of academic quality and standards.

94 The effectiveness of these arrangements is further demonstrated by the way in which quality processes connect assurance activity to institutional decision-making and targeted enhancement. The University's shift to external subject-level benchmarking, the introduction of defined measurable targets for PGT provision, and the use of AERs alongside AQRs as companion documents create a quality infrastructure capable of informing strategy prioritisation and directing institutional resources. The introduction of the Marking and Moderation Policy, the marks processing improvement project, and the structured response to declining NSS satisfaction scores through School-level action plans reported to the regulator are illustrative of a university that uses its quality processes to identify operational risk and responds through specific, evidenced interventions. Students are formally represented within this system at all levels of the governance structure, providing a degree of student oversight of quality processes that complements the professional assurance mechanisms.

95 The review team noted, however, that the consistency with which quality processes are experienced and applied at the School level continues to vary, and that this represents an **area of ongoing development** in the context of strengthening the 'one University' culture. Evidence across review meetings indicated that the effectiveness of feedback loop closure and the depth of engagement with quality enhancement frameworks were uneven across Schools. The University acknowledged this as a longstanding challenge and indicated that the forthcoming restructure to 16 Schools within three Colleges from 2026-27 was intended in part to address this inconsistency by clarifying governance responsibilities and strengthening oversight at the College level. The review team considered these arrangements for securing academic quality and standards to be effective at the institutional level, while noting that realising the full benefit of those arrangements consistently across all parts of the University remains a priority.

## 6. Collaborative provision

### Information on the extent and nature of collaborative provision and plans for change (including work-based learning)

96 The University's collaborative taught portfolio currently reflects a period of strategic transition, characterised by a move away from legacy arrangements towards a more globally oriented, reciprocal transnational education (TNE) network. While the 2025-26 Taught Education Partnerships Register identifies partnerships comprising one active double award (BA Modern Chinese Dual Degree with Beijing Normal University), two franchise partnerships ending (BTh and MTh Theology with Cardiff Baptist College, and MBBCCh North Wales with Bangor University) under teach-out arrangements, and one franchise partnership under review (BEng Integrated Engineering Degree Apprenticeship with Gower College), there is evidence of a robust framework for managing this scale and complexity. The implementation of the consolidated Education Partnerships Policy represents a significant governance improvement, effectively integrating placement learning and study abroad into a unified risk management structure. The Taught Education Partnerships Register provides a basis for understanding scale, location and mode of collaborative provision, including double awards and joint arrangements.

97 Additionally, the University's strategy includes an ambition to establish a network of well-developed, reciprocal TNE partnerships. The emergence of high-priority developments such as Cardiff University Kazakhstan, Singapore Institute of Management, and Tianjin University indicates an ambitious shift in institutional scope. The Kazakhstan initiative demonstrates a sophisticated category of provision that requires, and is receiving, rigorous evaluative focus regarding regulatory alignment and the equivalence of the student experience. Consequently, while the current number of active partnerships is modest, the University's trajectory suggests a deliberate and well-governed expansion of its collaborative provision footprint.

### Developments in the provider's approach to quality and standards

98 The University's Education Partnerships Policy has been designed around three guiding principles reflecting the need for degree programmes to be designed and delivered in accordance with the University's regulations, policies and procedures and meet the requirements of the Institutional Expectations for programme design; the University is responsible for 'owning' and 'managing' programmes if it is the awarding institution; and there is a clear monitoring, review and risk management framework. The review team heard that the Education Partnership Sub-Committee (EPSC), under delegated authority from Academic Quality and Standards Committee, is responsible for reviewing quality and standards of partnership activity in line with the policy. Robust assurance is evidenced by the 2023-24 formal review of the Beijing Normal University partnership, which ensured that academic standards were secure prior to reaffirmation, and the implementation of enhanced monitoring for the theology and medicine teach-outs to safeguard the student experience during closure. Due diligence for new partnerships provide further confirmation of appropriate oversight of these initiatives within the context of a clearly defined regulatory framework to ensure alignment with home campus standards.

99 Complementing these safeguards, deliberate enhancement activities are visible in the post-review curriculum refresh for Beijing Normal and the transition of the Year of Study Abroad to a pass/fail model, which effectively simplifies credit recognition. Additionally, the adoption of a placement management system has improved institutional transparency and consistency. The Annual Quality Report (2024-25) outlines a developing policy framework and the introduction of new implementation areas. Collectively, these actions indicate an

active, evolving approach to maintaining quality and standards across the University's collaborative provision.

## **The use of quality processes to confirm continued effectiveness of provider's management of collaborative provision**

100 The University's quality framework for collaborative provision demonstrates a sophisticated integration of baseline assurance and proactive enhancement. Core mechanisms, including moderator reports, Link Tutor oversight, and EPSC scrutiny, function as robust internal controls that consistently safeguard academic standards and the student experience. This is further reinforced by a risk-based classification system, which serves as a critical evaluative tool for calibrating monitoring and intervention levels. The 2023-24 consolidation of diverse protocols into a unified Education Partnerships Policy represents a significant institutional enhancement, streamlining governance and maturing the University's management of complex partnerships.

101 The establishment of the EPSC, with its cross-functional expertise, further elevates this approach by transforming oversight into a vehicle for identifying enhancement opportunities. By explicitly integrating moderator findings into programme enhancement plans, the University successfully closes the loop between retrospective assurance and prospective improvement. While the current evidence indicates that collaborative provision is effectively nested within the overarching academic quality system, its long-term efficacy will rely on the consistent application of these standards across geographically and operationally diverse partnerships. The recent harmonization of due diligence and quality procedures provides a solid foundation for institutional learning, positioning the University to refine its oversight while strategically enhancing the quality of its global provision.

## **A summary of the effectiveness of the approach to managing collaborative provision including arrangements for securing academic standards and enhancing the student learning experience**

102 While the University has successfully established a formal governance structure and a policy framework for managing collaborative provision, there remains a strategic opportunity to further enhance the robustness of risk monitoring across its diversifying global portfolio. The existing mechanisms, including the Education Partnerships Policy consolidation and due diligence, provide a vital foundation for baseline assurance; however, as the University's TNE footprint expands, these processes would benefit from a more granular, pre-emptive approach. To ensure long-term institutional resilience, the review team considers that there is scope for the University to develop and implement sophisticated, partner-specific risk triggers that take account of the unique regulatory and operational environments of overseas partners to ensure that academic standards and the student learning experience remain consistently protected in line with the University's strategic ambitions.

103 The review team identified as **an area of ongoing development** the need for the University to continue to monitor the arrangements for managing overseas provision, recognising that some partnerships are still in their early stages, and maintain a structured and consistent approach to oversight so that emerging risks can be identified promptly and mitigated effectively.

**QAA3061 - R14820 - May 26**

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