



# Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER)

Edinburgh Napier University

This review method  
is ESG-compliant

January 2026

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## About the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review method

The QAA website explains the method for Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) and has links to the TQER handbook and other informative documents.<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 a report of a TQER conducted by QAA at Edinburgh Napier University conducted by a team of five peer reviewers:

- Mr Seth Odei Asare (Student reviewer)
- Mr Mark Charters (Reviewer)
- Ms Julie Grace (Reviewer)
- Professor Alison Green (Reviewer)
- Mrs Lorraine Lavery (Reviewer)

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

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

In advance of the two review visits, the institution submitted a self-evaluative document, the Strategic Impact Analysis, (SIA) and an Advance Information Set, (AIS), the latter arranged around the Sector-Agreed Principles of the UK Quality Code (2024)<sup>3</sup>, and comprising a range of materials about the institution's arrangements for managing quality and academic standards. The SIA and AIS framed the TQER team's analysis and understanding of the operation of the institution's management of their quality and enhancement and enables them to consider the institution's practice in relation to the UK Quality Code, and Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).<sup>4</sup>

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

The review comprised two visits: an Initial Review Visit which, for Edinburgh Napier University, took place on campus on 1-2 December 2025; and a Main Review Visit which took place on campus on 26-29 January 2026.

The judgement for this review can be found on page 2, followed by features of good practice identified by the TQER team and recommendations for action. This is followed by the

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

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

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

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

detailed findings of the review.

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

## Review judgement and findings

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

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

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

### Features of good practice

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

- The University fosters a strong culture of collegiality and partnership across and between academic schools and professional services, which effectively enhances students' learning experiences. **(Excellence in learning teaching and assessment - paragraph 20)**
- The introduction of the University's Curriculum Management Environment has further strengthened the systematic development, review and enhancement of curriculum, supported targeted evaluation and enhancement of programmes and modules, and enabled the University to work collaboratively in meeting its ambitions for curriculum development. **(Excellence in learning teaching and assessment - paragraph 29)**
- The University demonstrates a commitment to compassionate communications, evidenced by a review of tone and style across services, and informed by student wellbeing priorities to adopt a more supportive and empathetic approach. **(Supporting student success - paragraph 76)**
- The University takes a strategic approach to the design and delivery of transition activities which are data-informed, consistently applied and supplemented by tailored approaches to support particular student groups, including college leavers and international students. **(Supporting student success - paragraph 92)**
- The University has a well-embedded and impactful approach to student partnership through the Student Consultant roles in quality and enhancement activities. **(Student engagement and partnership - paragraph 123)**
- The University has made significant progress in the development of data reports and dashboards, data-led monitoring and enhancement culture, including the use of data to support institution-led reviews, annual monitoring and action planning, and career readiness. **(Enhancement and quality culture - paragraph 163)**

## Recommendations for action

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

- Recognising the serious concerns raised by some students as to their experience of clinical placements, the University should, by December 2026, undertake a review of students' clinical placement experiences for the online MSc Nursing programmes to better understand concerns and identify enhancements. This review should be undertaken in partnership with students, including sharing the outcomes and any recommendations with them. **(Excellence in learning teaching and assessment - paragraph 49)**
- The University should develop clear and robust mechanisms for receiving and responding to student concerns about clinical placements to ensure that these are dealt with in a timely and appropriate manner, and that students feel heard about their concerns. In addition, the University should develop clear and robust mechanisms for the recording and oversight of such concerns. **(Supporting student success - paragraph 106)**
- The University should, in partnership with students, continue to work to close the feedback loop. to more visibly and consistently demonstrate how it has responded to student voice to enable students to see that their feedback is considered and responded to at programme, school, campus and institutional level **(Student engagement and partnership - paragraph 140)**
- The University should continue to work with academic staff to reinforce the role and value of annual monitoring as a key quality process, and work to improve return rates of programme and module reports. Where reporting is not completed within specified timescales, the University should develop a mechanism for monitoring and addressing non-submission. **(Enhancement and quality culture - paragraph 164)**
- The University should, as a matter of priority, establish a clear, cyclical approach for institution-led review of its research postgraduate (PGR) provision which fully aligns with the expectations for quality as set out by the Scottish Funding Council and examines the entirety of the PGR student experience. These arrangements should be approved and implemented by the end of academic session 2026-27. **(Enhancement and quality culture - paragraph 168)**

## Contextual information about Edinburgh Napier University

1 Edinburgh Napier University (the University) is a large metropolitan university based at three campuses around the city of Edinburgh: Sighthill, Merchiston, and Craiglockhart. The current academic structure was introduced in 2022-23 and comprises five academic schools: The Business School (TBS); School of Arts and Creative Industries (SACI); School of Applied Sciences (SAS); School of Computing, Engineering and the Built Environment (SCEBE); and the School of Health and Social Care (SHSC).

2 The University offers programmes from levels 7 to 11 on the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), comprising undergraduate, taught and research postgraduate degrees, graduate apprenticeships and short courses. Courses are available on campus, online and through a range of collaborative partners both in the UK and internationally. Outside of arrangements for the delivery of programmes, the University has a number of partnerships with other academic institutions including articulation agreements, joint supervision agreements and study abroad opportunities.

3 In 2024-25, the University had a total student population of around 20,000 students (headcount) studying at one of the University's three campuses in Edinburgh, online through distance learning or through a collaborative partnership with another institution. The student population is split as follows: c.13,000 undergraduates; c.6,500 postgraduate taught; c.300 postgraduate research. Of the 2024-25 student population, c.6,000 were studying part-time and c.2,500 were studying at one of the University's collaborative partners.

4 The University's Strategy ('Shaping Our Future: Driving Distinctiveness') articulates its commitment to building careers for its staff and students, building and strengthening collaborations, making impact through research and knowledge exchange activities and growing sustainably. The University's Learning and Teaching, and Employability strategies further underline the commitment to producing graduates with the skills to succeed in employment, through a focus on embedding employability and work-based and work-related learning and opportunities within the curriculum, and developing strong networks with employers, public, private and third sectors.

5 At the time of the review, the University was undertaking a strategic refresh led by the University's Principal which will result in the development of a new institutional strategy by the end of the academic year 2025-26. While the new strategy is under development, the University is progressing four strategic enhancement areas through its 'Towards 2027' workstream focused on: implementing a refreshed curriculum framework (ENhance), assessment and feedback, inclusive practice and reasonable adjustments, and supporting international students.

## Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment

6 The TQER team found that Edinburgh Napier University is **effective** in achieving excellence in learning, teaching and assessment. The University has appropriate and systematically applied practices in line with sector expectations for achieving excellence in learning, teaching and assessment, including assuring and maintaining academic standards. The University's practices make effective and accurate use of data, evidence and externality to demonstrate impact and are effective in achieving excellence in learning, teaching and assessment.

7 The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence including the Strategic Impact Analysis, Self-Evaluation and Action Plan, university strategies and frameworks relating to learning and teaching and employability, the University's Quality Framework including policies for curriculum development, monitoring and review, samples of monitoring and review reports, thematic institutional analyses, arrangements for staff professional development, and staff and student surveys. The TQER team also reviewed a range of minutes of committees with responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including students and student representatives, academic and professional services staff and senior staff.

## Standards and awarding

8 The University has effective arrangements for securing the standards of awards through appropriate and well-embedded governance structures and arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement. The University sets out arrangements and expectations for assuring quality and standards within its Quality Framework. This framework covers arrangements for the full lifecycle of educational provision including curriculum management (development, approval, change and withdrawal), annual and periodic institution led review, assessment (including internal and external moderation), and managing provision delivered in partnership. The Framework embeds principles and practices of key external reference points including the UK Quality Code, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), QAA Subject Benchmark Statements, and Characteristic Statements, ensuring that provision meets sector expectations. External scrutiny is also a key feature of the Framework through external engagement in development of provision through employer engagement expectations, external membership of review activities and External Examiners in assessment moderation.

9 Responsibility for implementing and operationalising the University's Quality Framework is devolved to school level through the Deans of School, Associate Deans Learning and Teaching (ADLTs), School Academic Leads for Quality and Associate Deans International. The Framework sets out clear lines of responsibility for quality and standards from the Dean of School providing assurance to the University through annual and periodic reviews, to Module Leaders providing assurance of curriculum development, teaching and assessment through annual module review (see paragraphs 156-157).

10 Each School's Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC) provides the formal governance and decision-making body for the Quality Framework and constituent policies and procedures, reporting to the University's Education and Student Experience Committee. ADLTs are members of the University and School ESEC, and University Student Success Committee (SSC) which provides a mechanism to ensure consistent implementation of the framework and the oversight and maintenance of academic standards.

11 The University's Academic Board, through the Quality and Standards Committee (QSC), oversees all matters relating to the quality and standards of learning, teaching and assessment, and the wider student experience. The QSC reports routinely to the Academic

Board through committee minutes and annual reports. The University's Academic Board holds overall responsibility for the planning, development and coordination of the University's academic work including ultimate responsibility for the quality and standards of the University's educational provision.

12 The TQER team was provided with a wide range of evidence by the University which described and evidenced a sustained and well-embedded enhancement-led institutional approach to quality and standards. The documentary evidence was explored through several meetings with staff to examine the effectiveness of these arrangements. Staff who met with the TQER team were clear as to the responsibility for assurance and maintaining standards at the module and programme level through annual module and programme evaluation, and implementation of key policies such as the University's new assessment policy (see paragraph 37). Similarly, senior staff told the TQER team about the ways that reporting and oversight feeds up to university level through school-level reporting led by the Deans and ADLTs. Together this evidence provided the TQER team with confidence that the University has effective arrangements in place for securing academic standards.

13 The University makes effective use of external reference points and frameworks in the development and review of its educational provision. The University's Quality Framework and arrangements for programme approval and amendment make explicit reference to the SCQF, as well as other key external reference points including QAA's Subject Benchmark Statements and Characteristics Statements. The TQER team found evidence that the SCQF was well embedded within programme development and approval processes and is a key reference point for External Examiner reviews. The TQER team heard, in meetings with academic staff, that programme teams utilise reference points from professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) and key quality reference points, including QAA's Subject Benchmark Statements, to review and develop curriculum at the programme and module level.

14 The ENhance Curriculum Framework (see paragraph 21), a key institutional resource which guides curriculum development, also makes explicit reference to the SCQF within its revised principles. For example, the revised principles introduce a Student Development Pathway which supports the development of students' knowledge, skills and dispositions aligned explicitly to the respective SCQF level. The University's Curriculum Management Environment (CME) (see paragraph 27) also makes explicit reference to key external reference points during the development, approval and review of programme and module specifications.

15 The University has previously acted as a credit rating body, offering credit rating for external organisations. All credit rated provision is subject to annual monitoring arrangements to ensure that it is being delivered in accordance with the conditions of its approval and ensure compliance with SCQF guidelines. The University provided evidence of the processes used to quality assure credit rating activity which the TQER team confirmed involve appropriate credit rating processes, review and ongoing monitoring. The University confirmed to the TQER team that it has stopped formally offering credit rating for external organisations. The University states that it is actively working in collaboration with the SCQF Partnership to end existing arrangements and will only progress external credit rating activity when deemed to be strategically important to the University's future ambitions and priorities.

## Strategic approach

16 The University's previous strategic plan sets out a clear expectation that it offers a high-quality educational experience to its students which is ensured through its continual enhancement of its quality arrangements, guided by the Learning and Teaching Strategy. At the time of the TQER review, the University was developing a new institutional strategy, due

to be published by the end of academic year 2025-26. The drafting of the new institutional strategy has been informed by a broader institution-wide review process (titled 'Future Academic Focus'), which examined qualitative and quantitative data to identify areas of excellence and future areas of focus and reported to the University's Academic Board. The review was followed by a widespread consultation with staff and students concerning the future direction of the University, the outcomes of which will also help shape the development of the University strategy. In meetings with the TQER team, senior staff confirmed that the new institutional strategy was still in development and making good progress towards the set approval deadline. Other staff, who met with the TQER team, demonstrated limited awareness of the strategy's development.

17 The University's Learning and Teaching Strategy 2020-2025 identified four areas of strategic focus: student experience, high quality curriculum, contemporary and connected education, and impact focused graduate preparedness. The implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy is led by the Deputy Vice Chancellor at institutional-level and operationalised at school-level through the Deans of School and ADLTs and monitored by the University's ESEC through regular updates and annual reports.

18 At the time of the review, the University was undertaking an evaluation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2020-2025 which was due to be completed by the end of the academic year 2025-26 following the approval of the new University strategy. In the interim, the University was progressing four strategic enhancement areas through its 'Towards 2027' workstream, focused on implementing the refreshed ENhance Curriculum Framework (see paragraphs 21-24), assessment and feedback, inclusive practice and reasonable adjustments, and supporting international students (see paragraph 91) .

19 To support delivery of its strategic ambitions at school level, the University recently completed a review of school leadership roles for learning and teaching. A revised portfolio of responsibilities was established within the role of the Associate Dean Learning and Teaching (ADLT). The ADLT provides oversight and leadership for school-level quality assurance and enhancement and acts as a direct conduit between the School and University to inform and shape strategic planning and embed strategic priorities and workstreams at the school and local level. The ADLTs meet regularly with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Director of Student Services and Academic Registrar and senior colleagues within the Department of Learning and Teaching Enhancement (DLTE) to take forward the University's strategic workstreams. These regular meetings provide space and time to address operational challenges and opportunities identified within the schools.

20 Strong academic partnerships between the University's leadership, academic schools and professional services are a key feature of the University's approach to ensuring strategic alignment, awareness and responsiveness to operational challenges, and collectively enhancing the student learning experience. In meetings with staff in the academic schools and professional services, there was clear evidence of partnership working for enhancement. For example: there are effective collaborations between the Employability and Careers Department that directly support academic programmes through the new Career Readiness approach to shape curriculum (see paragraph 96); the Wellbeing and Inclusion team work closely with academic schools to support the individual learning needs of students; and, there are close working relationships across schools and services to ensure effective student transitions into the University (see paragraphs 88-92). This collaborative approach was also evidenced within the University's quality processes. For example, institution led review (ILR) activities integrate review of professional service contributions within the process requiring a collaborative approach to preparations for review, and during review meetings. The TQER team concluded that the University fosters a strong culture of collegiality and partnership across and between academic schools and professional services, which effectively enhances students' learning experiences, and regard this as a

feature of good practice.

## Curriculum development

21 The TQER team found that the University has effective arrangements in place to ensure programmes remain current and continue to meet the needs of students, employers and industry. The ENhance Curriculum Framework sets out the University's expectations for how curriculum is to be developed in order to meet sector expectations, the needs of learners, and the skills required by current and future employers and industry. The Framework, launched in 2021-22, established a series of curricular themes which inform curriculum design and support staff and students to work in partnership to enhance learning, teaching and assessment. These themes consider sustainability, inclusion, global focus, research and practice integration, employability, digital and information literacy, and citizenship and community.

22 The ENhance Curriculum Framework was implemented through a range of support and development activities including workshops, resources and guidance led by DLTE. Monitoring of the implementation of the Framework utilises the University's existing quality arrangements, requiring programme teams to demonstrate the incorporation of the ENhance themes in their curriculum. Documentary evidence demonstrating that programme teams have embedded the themes within their programme or module curriculum is required as part of annual monitoring, institution-led review and programme development processes. A set of threshold criteria for evidencing each of the Framework's themes within curriculum was developed with an expectation that programmes demonstrate achievement of the criteria in at least three themes within ILR or programme approval.

23 The ENhance Curriculum Framework was reviewed in 2023, evaluating progress with and barriers to implementation. The review identified that the ENhance themes remained relevant in addressing key priorities and areas of focus across the sector. The review also established that the approach to monitoring through quality processes was effective in tracking progress and identifying good practice. The TQER team noted that while there had been good engagement with the implementation of the Enhance Curriculum Framework, it had not supported the University to make progress on key KPIs, such as learning and teaching items within the National Student Survey (NSS) compared to comparator institutions.

24 Following the review of the ENhance Curriculum Framework, the University expanded its focus to include opportunities to enhance authentic assessment, and work to address key challenges with retention, inclusion and belonging. The refreshed framework introduced four principles to directly shape curriculum which incorporated the previous themes and expanded expectations to include:

- **A Student Development Pathway:** to support programmes to evidence and explicitly articulate students' development across modules and provide opportunities for students to work in partnership with staff to influence change.
- **Engaging Learning and Teaching:** to support programmes to build upon relevant pedagogies that promote students' engagement in their learning online and/or on campus in ways that respect diverse individuals and groups of learners.
- **Assessment for Learning:** to support programmes to embed inclusive assessment strategies that promote students' development using relevant and authentic methods that enable their demonstration of learning.
- **ENhance Integration:** to support programmes to embed the ENhance themes

across the programme and evidence these in learning materials, teaching approaches and assessment activities.

25 At the time of the review, the University was working to finalise the Student Development Pathway in consultation with staff and students and beginning to socialise the Framework. Full implementation will commence from 2026-27 through a phased approach, with programmes expected to demonstrate engagement and alignment at their next scheduled ILR engagements. Work was also in progress in academic session 2025-26 to revise quality arrangements through annual monitoring and ILR to reflect the new principles, with monitoring of implementation aligned to the previous threshold approach. A full implementation timeline including expectations by which all programmes should demonstrate threshold achievement will be taken forward through the 'Towards 2027' workstream (see paragraph 18).

26 Staff who met with the TQER team demonstrated a strong understanding of the ENhance Framework, were well informed about the refreshed approach, and expressed a positive view of its direction. Staff particularly welcomed the development of the Student Development Pathway as being more relevant and supportive of students to help identify and develop skills for life beyond their programme. Staff also confirmed that the development of the Pathway had been undertaken in consultation with staff and students, and that support provided for the implementation of the framework, including support to review and develop curriculum, programme and modules provided by DLTE, was effective. The TQER team viewed the institution's open and honest approach to reflection and response to challenges in implementation as effective and evidence of a robust approach to self-evaluation and enhancement. The TQER team also considered the approach to supporting buy-in with staff and supporting and monitoring implementation within core quality processes to be effective

27 The University operates a Curriculum Management Environment (CME) to support and monitor the development, approval and implementation of all credit bearing and non-credit bearing programmes including those delivered in collaboration. The CME captures all information relating to a programme including SCQF levels and credits, programme and module learning outcomes, and learning, teaching and assessment methods and is a key feature of the University's approach to reviewing programmes and ensuring currency.

28 The system tracks progress through the approvals and review process providing a log of outcomes and actions ensuring effective oversight and assurance of development, approvals and review requirements. The CME also supports the University to undertake investigative analysis of programmes and modules in order to identify good practice and areas for enhancement. For example, the School of Computing, Engineering and Built Environment has utilised the CME to review assessment schemes across a range of programmes to identify enhancements such as reducing assessment loads, and to support diversification of assessment methods. The CME has been helpful in supporting staff at programme and module level to engage with and track alignment of curriculum, teaching and assessment to the principles within the ENhance Curriculum Framework (see paragraph 21).

29 Staff who met the TQER team valued the introduction of the CME and saw clear benefits in the tool for managing curriculum changes, supporting programme and module review, and enabling collaboration in curriculum development. The TQER team identified the introduction of the University's Curriculum Management Environment as a **feature of good practice** that has further strengthened the systematic development, review and enhancement of curriculum, supported targeted evaluation and enhancement of programmes and modules, and enabled the University to work collaboratively in meeting its ambitions for curriculum development.

## Monitoring and review

30 The University's Quality Framework sets out procedures for annual and periodic review of all credit-bearing and non-credit bearing programmes, including those that are delivered in collaboration with others. These arrangements ensure currency and relevance of provision and require engagement with external peers as part of their review processes.

31 Annual monitoring is undertaken at the module, programme and school level with academic staff required to reflect on and evaluate the effectiveness of learning, teaching and assessment, and the currency and relevance of curriculum throughout the delivery period and formally report at the end of this period. Annual monitoring utilises a range of data and evidence to inform reflections and reporting including student journey data through module and programme dashboards (see also paragraphs 84-85 and 163), student feedback (see paragraph 140), feedback from External Examiners, and feedback from PSRBs.

32 Module and programme reports are considered at Programme Boards of Studies and feed up to school level with the School Academic Leads for Quality providing a school level report to the University's Quality and Standards Committee. The University's Quality and Standards Committee also receives an overview report of External Examiner reports annually identifying areas of strength and development and provides a university-wide summary of annual monitoring activity to support sharing of practice. The University's arrangements for Institution Led Review takes an integrated approach ensuring appropriate consideration of programmes delivered in collaboration with others, and provision of key student-facing professional services (see paragraph 167).

33 Staff who met the TQER team indicated that quality processes provide a reflective opportunity to review provision and identify enhancements. Staff also discussed engagement with professional bodies and industry as being a key feature of their ongoing reflections to inform curriculum developments and ensure currency. In reviewing a sample of annual monitoring and ILR reporting the TQER team viewed these as effective in assuring quality, driving enhancement and ensuring currency and relevance of provision at undergraduate and taught postgraduate level.

34 Arrangements for ensuring the planning, design, approval, monitoring and delivery of the curriculum delivered through collaborative partnerships is integrated into school and programme reporting. Recently the University have moved into franchise agreements and to support this development, detailed guidance has been developed. Though franchise is new to the University, collaborations have been operating for many years both in the form of transnational education (TNE) and partnerships with domestic colleges. Collaborative provision is overseen by the Collaborative Provision Committee (CPC), led by the Vice Principal (Learning and Teaching) and reporting to ESEC, where insights gained through collaboration can be shared with the wider institution. Staff involved in collaborations also teach on campus-based programmes and liaise closely with partners to bring consistency and sharing best practice to the provision. International collaborations are managed on a day-to-day basis by schools but supported centrally by an international team through which learning from existing collaborations helps inform new partnership arrangements.

35 Through meetings with academic staff and staff with responsibility for management and oversight of collaborative provision it was clarified to the TQER team that annual monitoring at the module level is completed for each instance the module is delivered, be that at the University or with a partner, allowing the Module Leader, programme team and partner staff to discuss any differences in outcomes or experience by students ensuring equity of experience. This is then reviewed at programme level in discussions with partners to consider the totality of provision within and across the programme. In addition, the TQER team heard that the introduction of the CME has further supported equity of experience for

students by ensuring currency of programme and module descriptors with partners, and supported contextualised changes to modules for example aligning assessment schemes to local contexts or regulatory need, but as a first principle maintaining learning outcomes across each instance of the module. This gave the TQER team confidence in the equity of provision across the University's on-campus and collaborative programmes.

36 The TQER team found evidence of processes to review the research postgraduate (PGR) student experience which is overseen by the Doctoral College through annual reporting and thematic review. Annual reporting of the PGR experience is undertaken through a tripartite review structure which operates twice annually at individual PGR student, school and institution level. PGR students complete a review report reflecting upon their progress and achievement with their research and their wider experience as a PGR student which is discussed through an individual review meeting with the student's supervisory team and an appointed independent member of academic staff as chair. Individual outcome reports are then considered at School Research Degree Committees (RDC) to identify, discuss and act to address any concerns affecting individual students. The Committees also identify patterns across the school in order to inform interventions and surface good practice. School level findings are scrutinised by the Doctoral College Examination Board Chair through individual school meetings, following which the Doctoral College Examination Board meets collectively to identify common issues, good practices and enhancements to the programme through the annual Doctoral College action plan (see also paragraphs 134 and 168).

## **Assessment and academic integrity**

37 The University has recently reviewed its Assessment Policy to ensure currency and relevance working in partnership with students to establish a set of principles and expectations for practice. These align to the ENhance Curriculum Framework with key areas of focus for enhancement including inclusion, belonging and retention, as well as employability and student development. During meetings with the TQER team, academic and professional support staff described the new policy as more of a refresh than a fundamental shift in policy and practice expectations and there was generally good awareness from staff of the policy and engagement with it.

38 The University has taken proactive steps to ensure academic integrity in its assessment practice given developments in generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) and to respond to increased cases of academic misconduct captured through its annual reporting. These include the establishment of an Academic Integrity Oversight Committee and appointment of an Institutional Lead and Senior Academic Integrity Officer in each school. DLTE has also worked with staff and students to communicate the risks of inappropriate use of GenAI and academic misconduct, whilst also providing support and guidance on the ethical and appropriate use of GenAI in learning, teaching and assessment. This has led to the development of a published institutional position which supports ethical and transparent use of AI where appropriate, guidance and training for staff and students, and the introduction of a standard assessment coversheet.

39 The University recorded a reduction in academic misconduct cases in session 2023-24 but recognises the ongoing challenges of maintaining academic integrity in response to GenAI tools. These issues continue to be examined through regular discussion at the Quality and Standards Committee. The TQER team observed that schools are taking deliberate steps to amend assessment practices to strengthen academic integrity and note the role the ENhance Curriculum Framework refresh will play in sharing and strengthening practice in this area.

40 Most staff and students who met the TQER team showed a good awareness of the

University's position on GenAI as well as the support for its appropriate usage. The introduction of a new assessment brief and coversheet as part of the revised Assessment Policy was also viewed positively by staff and students. Further examples to support PGR students in the use of GenAI were offered through the Doctoral College. In discussions with the TQER team, however, some students reported uncertainty about the University's position on the use of GenAI. The TQER team encourages the University to continue to communicate its stance clearly to students and to support staff in considering how GenAI should be integrated into learning, teaching, and assessment.

## **Employer engagement and work-based learning**

41 The University Curriculum Management Environment, ENhance Curriculum Framework, and annual and periodic monitoring arrangements set out requirements for employability and enterprise as part of curriculum development and review. Curriculum development processes require that programme team engage with key professional services such as Employability and Careers to ensure consideration of skills needs and explicit embedding of employability within curriculum. The process for programme development asks for specific information on how the programme aligns and supports the University's Employability Strategy including consideration of how employers are engaged as key stakeholders. Programme approval panels are also asked to specifically consider how each programme meets employer and industry needs.

42 Employer engagement in programme development is well established within a number of disciplines through Industry Advisory Boards which are used to ensure programmes remain responsive to the needs of industry and employers (see also paragraph 94). Many programmes across the University are also professionally accredited ensuring alignment of curriculum with employer needs and utilise these accreditations to ensure programmes remain contemporary and relevant to professional industries. To help inform programme development the University is also utilising the new Career Readiness survey to better understand how students feel in relation to their future employability, career ambitions and preparedness. In meetings with academic staff there was clear evidence that programme teams were engaging with this data set as part of their module and programme reviews (see also paragraph 96)

43 The University has set an ambition within its Employability Strategy to grow opportunities for work-based and work-related learning. This is undertaken through a range of credit bearing and non-credit bearing placements across a range of programme and schools.

44 The operation of placements is a partnership between academic staff and the Placements and Practice Learning team within Employability and Careers Department. The TQER team heard that each school has an allocated Placement Coordinator from the Placement Service, who is fully embedded within school processes. Students are supported prior to placement through timetabled 'Preparing for Placement' sessions which are tailored to their programme, as well as to students' learning needs. Academic staff provide support for students in relation to learning and assessment, and the Placements and Practice Learning team provide advice and support should any concerns or issues arise. The TQER team heard that teaching staff valued this partnership working. Teaching staff also clearly understood their safeguarding responsibilities for students whilst on placement.

45 Oversight of placement activity is undertaken through an annual Placement Report produced by the Employability and Careers Department which monitors placement numbers, providers and changes. The department have also recently introduced an 'End of Placement Check-In Form' for both students and employers to review the placement experience and identify areas of strength and enhancement which has formalised and systematised previous

approaches to feedback collection. The quality of learning and teaching within placements along with students' experiences of placement is considered as part of the annual monitoring process and ILR arrangements. Where placements are undertaken within or as specific credit bearing modules these are also subject to module evaluation questionnaires.

46 The University offers nine Graduate Apprenticeship (GA) programmes, with a further programme under the Accounting Framework in development. A robust programme of support and engagement is provided to workplace mentors, including induction training for new mentors; a comprehensive Mentor Guide as well as providing regular check-ins and drop-in sessions every four weeks. Students are prepared for and supported on placement through a consistent approach which includes establishing clear learning objective at the start of the programme agreed jointly by the student, module leader and GA mentor. Progress monitoring of objectives is undertaken through workplace mentor drop-ins and progress review meetings with academic staff. Quality arrangements for GA programmes follow the standard University approach to annual monitoring and ILR activities. The programmes' success is evidenced by 70% of Graduate Apprentices being promoted while on their programme of study. The TQER team noted that the examples of GA alumni mentoring new GA students were particularly positive developments.

47 In meetings with students the TQER team explored their experiences of placements. In these meetings, students studying online MSc Nursing programmes raised a range of serious concerns about their clinical placement experience which included inappropriate behaviour from clinical placement staff such as claims of bullying and racism, a lack of understanding as to how to raise concerns about clinical placement experiences, and a lack of response from university staff where issues had been raised. The TQER team specifically examined these issues with staff from the School of Health and Social Care exploring awareness of these issues and any response, support for students on clinical placement in the NHS, and how concerns can be raised by students.

48 In meetings with staff within the school, the TQER team received confirmation that students are prepared for clinical placement through a range of induction activities including information on the virtual learning environment (VLE), and pre-placement briefings, both of which include specific information as to how students are supported on clinical placement, the roles and responsibilities of placement and University staff to support students, and how students can seek support or raise concerns. The key processes for raising concerns are the Cause for Concern process relating to the student's experience on clinical placement, and the Whistleblowing policy should there be concerns relating to patient safety. Staff within the School of Health and Social Care confirmed to the TQER team that they were aware that some students experienced difficulties on clinical placement and provided support to them including offering the opportunity to escalate concerns with the placement provider or Health Board. Staff raised with the TQER team that some students were reluctant to raise formal concerns, instead wishing to resolve the issues informally or seek support during the clinical placement to achieve a successful outcome.

49 Staff in the School of Health and Social Care confirmed that there are a range of approaches for students to provide feedback on their clinical placement experience including regular touchpoints with their Personal Development Tutor (PDT), clinical placement pulse surveys, as well as reflection sessions during and after the placement with University staff. In addition, students are asked to provide anonymous feedback directly to the Health Board following clinical placement which is routinely shared with the school and formally discussed through an annual Performance Review which the school and Health Board use to explore areas for improvement, including CPD for clinical placement staff. Staff also confirmed that clinical placement feedback and concerns were reported within their standard quality processes including annual monitoring to the school and university.

50 In examining the University's complaints reporting, no complaints were recorded relating to negative placement experiences and no issues were identified in Annual Programme Reports. In reviewing these findings, the TQER team were satisfied that there were no systemic concerns as to the support for students on placements. However, recognising the serious concerns raised by a cohort of students as to their experience of clinical placements, the TQER team **recommends** that the University should, by December 2026, undertake a review of students' clinical placement experiences for the online MSc Nursing programmes to better understand concerns and identify enhancements. This review should be undertaken in partnership with students, including sharing the outcomes and any recommendations with them (see also paragraphs 105-106).

## Learning environments

51 The University's quality processes directly address the effectiveness and enhancement of the learning environment, resources and technologies used to deliver an effective student learning experience. Consideration is given at module and programme-level and is a clear area of investigation through ILR.

52 The University shared with the TQER team that ensuring the ongoing suitability and upgrading of its teaching spaces and facilities is a theme which has been identified through both annual monitoring and ILR processes, and which remains a challenge within current financial climates. The University has established an Estates and Infrastructure Action Plan and Maintenance Strategy to direct the modernisation of existing estate and facilities in response to these themes. The institution's strategic approach enables the prioritisation of investment aligned to need. For example, the University has recently invested in a range of collaborative active learning spaces, as well as a shared learning space for PGR students. Institutional investment in learning facilities was valued by the students who met with the TQER team. The students provided the TQER team with examples of tangible benefits to the student learning experience as a result of investment in facilities, including 24-hour access to the library on the Merchiston campus, which is open to all students.

53 The University's Digital Strategy sets out its strategic ambitions for the digital developments of its estate and learning environments. The strategy is organised around four key areas of focus: Spaces; Services; Skills; and Student and Colleague Experience. Staff shared an example of the ongoing work underpinning the Digital Strategy with the TQER team, outlining the pilot of a range of active learning spaces with module teams to support the use of active learning pedagogies.

54 The University is proactive in its implementation of targeted approaches to enhance the digital student experience. Student Consultants (see paragraph 119) were involved in the design of a template to provide consistency in the use and presentation of VLE sites across the University. Staff and students shared with the TQER team that there was a marked improvement in the consistency of the VLE since the introduction of the templates, particularly highlighting that the template provided clear guidance on the required information to provide students about learning, teaching and assessment.

## Professional development

55 The University has effective arrangements for identifying and supporting the professional development of staff who teach and/or support learning. The University's Academic Appointment and Promotions Framework sets out processes for the recognition and promotion of academic staff through four academic pathways: Research; Learning and Teaching; Enterprise; and Professional Practice. Broader career development guidance is published for all staff which utilises a 70, 20, 10 model: 70% on the job learning, 20% learning through others, and 10% formal training. Development needs for staff are identified

through a range of activities, including induction, annual performance and development reviews (the 'MyContribution' process), workforce planning, strategy development, operational planning, and stakeholder feedback. Institutional quality processes such as annual monitoring, student feedback and review outcomes are also used to identify areas for staff development. All University staff must undertake mandatory training to ensure that they have the essential knowledge and skills required to perform their roles. Staff can request funding for specific, formal professional development opportunities through the Career Development Fund.

56 Oversight of staff engagement with training and development is provided through a dashboard (the 'People Headshot') which is monitored by institutional and school-based leaders. The dashboard includes data on staff engagement with the 'My Contribution' process, promotions, recruitment and professional recognition. The University uses a 'continuous listening model' to evaluate staff engagement and satisfaction, rather than an annual staff survey. The model includes the use of pulse surveys, onboarding and leaver surveys, an agile listening model to gather feedback 'in the moment' through line management and leadership, and regular updates by university leadership through fireside conversations.

57 Specific development and support for learning, teaching and assessment is led by DLTE, which provides centralised support for academic and professional support staff. This includes the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching (PGCert), ENroute CPD Framework as well as specific support for programme development through the Edinburgh Napier Approach to Curricular Transformation (ENACT). ENACT is a new programme that has been designed to directly support staff to engage with and implement the ENhance Curriculum framework. DLTE also play a key role in supporting innovation through the Strategic Enhancement Project fund, open to staff and students from across the University who can bid for up to £500 towards work to support learning and teaching priorities. Applications require student collaboration, utilising the University's Student Consultant scheme and outcomes are featured through the University's learning and teaching conference 'The Gathering'.

58 The University sets the expectation that all early career academic staff complete the PGCert within three years of appointment. The University also expects that all academic staff should achieve HEA Fellowship within two years of appointment with support through the ENroute CPD Framework however, the University recognises that there is currently no formal mechanism to monitor whether this expectation is being met. The TQER team would therefore encourage the University to consider appropriate policy and monitoring processes to resolve this should the expectation remain. Postgraduate students who teach are required to complete the 'New to Teaching' short course offered by DLTE before a teaching contract can be issued and are also supported to work towards professional recognition within the ENroute CPD Framework. At the time of the review, the University reported that 85% of academic staff held a category of HEA Fellowship, above the institutional strategic target of 80%.

59 Senior staff reported that the ENroute CPD Framework and the PGCert provide opportunities for staff to evaluate and develop their practice. Staff also outlined that CPD opportunities provide an institutional vehicle to identify good practice case studies, which have informed development and implementation of the ENhance Curriculum Framework. In meetings with academic and professional service staff 'The Gathering' was identified a key vehicle for sharing practice and supporting innovation which also includes celebration of HEA Fellowship. In meetings with the TQER team, University staff clearly recognised and valued the variety of staff development opportunities available to them and outlined how they supported the University's ambitions for curriculum development.

60 The TQER team heard from senior members of staff that that professional recognition of professional services staff, whilst not tracked as part of their institutional KPIs, was important to the University and clearly embedded within the ENroute framework. In meetings with professional services staff, the TQER team heard that the University takes proactive steps to encourage and recognise the positive contributions they make to the student experience by supporting staff within these areas to pursue professional recognition. Professional services staff shared that the University promotes workplace shadowing and membership of professional bodies to support development and future career ambitions, alongside the provision of regular training and development opportunities. For example, the University has recently introduced LinkedIn Learning as a platform to support specific training needs. The University's proactive and inclusive approach to supporting and recognising both academic and professional services roles in the student learning experience was viewed positively by the TQER team as a further example of fostering a collegiate culture between academics and professional services.

61 Local support and development in each of the academic schools is led by the ADLTs who support academic staff and programme teams to meet institutional strategic priorities by sharing intelligence from institutional and sector developments, and through the provision of specific support and training such as induction activities for new academic staff. University staff clearly identified to the TQER team that the ADLT was a key role in sharing good practice within and across schools. The TQER team also heard that schools host Programme Leader forums to support the implementation of institution-wide initiatives, such as the ENhance Curriculum Framework, and to share good practice.

62 The University provides support and development to staff developing and delivering TNE through the Associate Deans International as well as offering targeted support for those at collaborative partners. Development requirements are identified at the start of any new collaborative partnership agreement and through regular review points. College staff who deliver collaborative provision have been invited to attend and participate in 'The Gathering', the University's annual learning, teaching and student experience conference to share best practice. The TQER team heard that University is also exploring the potential to expand access to the PGCert and ENroute CPD Framework for staff in collaborative partner institutions. It was clear to the TQER team from the evidence provided, and through meetings with academic and professional service staff that the University has effective arrangements for identifying and supporting their professional development and that this also supports the University's ambitions for enhancement.

63 The University has recently redeveloped its peer observation scheme through the introduction of the ENrich pilot, launched in 2024-25. The aim of the pilot was to foster opportunities for colleagues to share practice in learning and teaching across different delivery modes (online, in-person etc). Engagement with the pilot has been limited to date with a recent evaluation of ENrich identifying the need to forward plan opportunities for peer observation within workload planning for staff.

64 Other opportunities for peer learning are supported through the ENroute CPD Framework, which requires self and peer reflection on teaching to support enhancement of practice. The University also identifies and recognises the role of external expertise within its quality processes as an additional form of peer contribution and learning.

65 The University employs a range of mechanisms to support innovation and identify and share good practice, including institutional quality arrangements such as annual and periodic review and dissemination through the University's committees. Staff recognise and value the role of institutional quality processes to support the sharing of innovative practice across the University. For example, the development of the Module Support Partnership (see paragraph 119) emerged as a local development within the School of Computing Engineering and the

Built Environment, before being piloted across the institution.

66 Based upon the evidence reviewed, and engagements with staff and students, the TQER team can confirm that there are effective arrangements and clear evidence of effective practices to ensure excellence in learning, teaching and assessment, including assuring and maintaining academic standards, at the University.

## Supporting student success

67 The TQER team found that Edinburgh Napier University's arrangements for supporting student success are **effective**. The institution has appropriate and systematically applied practices in line with sector expectations for supporting student success that use data, evidence and externality, demonstrate impact and are effective in supporting student success.

68 The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence including retention, success and enhancement plans, institutional regulations, processes, frameworks and strategies, minutes of key committees and internal communications documents. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including senior leadership, academic and professional services staff and students at all levels of study.

69 Supporting the success of its students is embedded within University's governance and quality processes. The University's Student Success Committee, a sub-committee of Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC), provides institutional oversight and monitoring of student success initiatives, student surveys, School Student Success Plans and the institutional Student Retention Action Plan.

70 At school level, Student Success Plans are developed drawing on a range of data and identify strategic priorities to support student outcomes. At programme level, statistical data on student progression and graduate outcomes are used to inform enhancements, which are articulated in annual Programme Enhancement Plans which are monitored and reported on at the Board of Studies.

## Inclusive and individualised support

71 The TQER team found that the University has comprehensive student support services in place designed around the diverse needs of its students by drawing on a range of targeted, evidence-based and inclusive practices. These services are available to all students, including online and collaborative provision students. The University has a central Wellbeing and Inclusion team offering a range of services, including counselling and mental health support.

72 Engagement with the University's online counselling service has increased significantly, alongside rising requests for face-to-face counselling or local support for students based overseas. University staff reported that as mental health remains the leading reason for deferral, strengthening these support pathways is particularly important. The University demonstrates its commitment to supporting the mental wellbeing of its students and staff through its Mental Health Strategy Suicide Safer Plan. Reports on progress are provided to Court, the Inclusion committee and ESEC. There is also a Student Mental Health Agreement between the University and ENSA describing the shared objectives in place.

73 The University's admissions policies support the recruitment of students with diverse needs. The TQER team observed the impact of this policy on the increased number of students with declared disabilities (an increase of 7.5 percentage points from 2019-20). Retention of students with declared disabilities has improved by four percentage points from 2022-23 to 2023-24, evidencing the effectiveness of support. The TQER team heard that students with disabilities were satisfied with the range of support on offer. For example, students spoke positively about the availability of quiet spaces on campus for neurodiverse students. Where students encountered any issues with disability support, they shared with the TQER team that it was easy to raise these issues, and they were dealt with swiftly.

74 The University monitors student success across its diverse student body. The

University's Inclusion Committee has based the University Equality Outcomes (EOs) for 2025-29 on the Scottish Funding Council's National Equality Outcomes (NEOs), which outline where persistent inequalities exist across Scottish further and higher education settings. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Leads within each school use dashboards to analyse success data segmented by protected characteristics and SIMD20, providing a useful evidence base for evaluation. The TQER team noted that the University intends to extend its data dashboard and analysis approach further to support student success amongst a wider range of student demographics. A workshop has been scheduled to identify activities to further support retention and attainment for students with specific characteristics.

75 The TQER team heard a range of effective examples of service improvements that support teams had introduced in response to student feedback gathered through the wellbeing student survey and post-service questionnaires. Examples provided to the TQER team included the introduction of evening counselling appointments and single therapy sessions, adaptations to careers events for students who are more anxious about attending large events and providing a choice of attendance modes for appointments to students with disabilities. The University has recently updated their timetabling policy to adopt a compressed approach to timetabling. The compressed approach supports student attendance on campus and directly addresses student feedback on the challenges posed by the cost-of-living crisis and the costs of travel. The positive impact of this can be seen in the University's National Student Survey results in 2025 which indicate that students are satisfied with the balance of directed and independent study; above the institution's benchmark and a three percentage point increase on the previous year's results. This data was supported by the views of commuting students who had observed improvements in timetabling and expressed their preference for compressed days on campus

76 Compassionate communications are increasingly embedded across the University as part of a deliberate move towards more supportive and student-centred engagement. In partnership with students, communications from different areas of the institution have been reviewed and there is active consideration of standard guidance and consistent signatures to support a coherent and compassionate approach institution wide. This work has received external recognition, with AMOSSHE, The Student Services Organisation, praising the University's approach. The TQER team heard positive examples of previously stress-inducing communications, specifically relating to finance and student results, being revised to adopt a more empathetic tone, demonstrating a tangible impact on practice. The TQER team found that the University demonstrates a commitment to compassionate communications, evidenced by a review of tone and style across services, and informed by student wellbeing priorities to adopt a more supportive and empathetic approach, and regard this as a **feature of good practice**.

77 As part of its implementation of compassionate communications, the University has adopted student-friendly language amending the previous Extenuating Circumstances Regulations to Fit to Sit regulations. Teaching and support staff reported that the process has brought greater clarity and expanded the options available to Personal Development Tutors (PDTs), to provide more proactive individual academic and pastoral support. The TQER team heard that the University is working closely with the Counselling Service to align the Fit to Sit process with the needs of online students and ensure consistent support across all student groups.

78 The TQER team heard that Fit to Sit Regulations have prompted teaching staff to consider removing barriers to assessments for students with disclosed and undisclosed additional support requirements to ensure accessibility for all students. The TQER team further noted that the refreshed ENhance focus on assessment and feedback has prompted teaching teams to review their assessment strategies and diversify assessment approaches to give students greater choice.

79 PDTs support individual students' pastoral and academic support needs. A new PDT framework was created in September 2024, consolidating and standardising practices across the University to provide a consistent and accessible point of contact for students. PDTs understood their role well and could articulate ways in which they had adapted the role to better suit their student cohorts. Students demonstrated awareness of, and interaction with their PDTs. The TQER team heard that students highly valued the role and could provide several examples of meaningful support and guidance provided by PDTs. Relationships between PDTs and students are generally positive and constructive, although a small number of students reported that their PDTs were sometimes unresponsive or were unavailable due to other commitments.

80 PDTs monitor the performance of their individual students and have visibility of individual characteristic data, which they can use to have meaningful discussions with students and signpost them to appropriate support services. The University recently introduced the ability for meeting notes to be shared on the student portal. This new functionality was welcomed by PDTs and students, recognising the value of ensuring a record of meeting to support motivation and continuity of support. The TQER team concluded that the PDT role is a valuable resource and is effective in supporting student success.

81 Students outlined that their lecturers were approachable when academic support was required and consistently signposted students to academic skills and wellbeing services. Students shared that they found support staff responses helpful and timely. In addition, the University has adopted a standard out of office signature for staff emails, signposting students to academic and wellbeing support.

82 Students who met with the TQER team were aware of the range of support available to them and provided positive feedback on their experiences with professional services. Students noted that, in addition to signposting at induction, they received regular communications highlighting available services and that wellbeing support posters were visible around the campuses. Students noted that services were accessible and responsive and that any issues that were raised about services were addressed and satisfactorily resolved. Students reported that counselling appointments are easy to arrange, and students received prompt and reassuring responses at point of contact. Student survey feedback also confirmed wider student satisfaction with support services.

## **Student retention and transition**

83 The University takes a whole institution approach to improving retention supported by an institutional-level Student Retention Plan, which is monitored by the Student Success Committee. School Student Success Action Plans distill the objectives of the University's Student Retention Plan into targeted interventions at school level aimed at improving student engagement, retention, and positive progression.

84 The TQER team observed that University uses data to effectively identify the specific support needs of its students which, combined with active intervention and communication, has shown positive impact on student retention. Data dashboards are used effectively at programme level to inform and support retention activities. The TQER team heard examples of the use of trend data to revise the student induction process, including taking a longitudinal approach to ensure students felt connected and supported during their early student experience.

85 The TQER team found that PDTs systematically undertake student engagement tracking using dashboards, adopting a proactive approach to reduce non-engagement and risk of withdrawal. This systematic approach is further strengthened through close

collaboration with the University's 'Keep on Track' service, which provides dedicated support for students to encourage their return to study.

86 Overall student retention at the University has shown improvement, rising from 85.1% in 2022-23 to 86.8% in 2023-24. Although retention remains below the sector average, clear progress is being made towards closing the gap. In 2023-24, retention on full-time undergraduate programmes improved by four percentage points to 88% and retention on full-time taught postgraduate programmes improved five percentage points up to 83%. During the same period, good degree outcomes increased by 2.1%. The TQER team heard that more recent internal unpublished data indicates that retention has continued to improve.

87 The University is aware of retention and attainment gaps for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) students and work on retention and attainment includes dedicated efforts to address this gap, with cross institutional engagement informing a forthcoming equality and inclusion plan. The TQER team heard that efforts have been made to close the attainment gap for transnational education (TNE) students as noted in its last external review (Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) 2023). Staff described significant additional support embedded into TNE programmes including English for academic purposes. The TQER team heard a specific example where detailed analysis had been undertaken of to identify the cause of the drop in attainment at programme level with effective solutions implemented in specific modules resulting in an improvement in student performance.

88 The TQER team heard that induction is an all-university activity with standard practices and bespoke activities for specific cohorts delivered alongside each other. Induction activity is overseen by a cross-institution welcome and registration coordination group, drawn from academics and support staff, who arrange standard onboarding for all students. The coordination group also has oversight of bespoke induction practices for specific cohorts, such as college, articulating, PhD and international students. This forum plans, reflects on impact and shares good practice.

89 The TQER team found that robust transition support arrangements are in place for students articulating or progressing from colleges. These arrangements include the 'Countdown to Zero' initiative, a tailored programme of events which begins in January each year; a discrete summer transition support programme; delivery of Maths for Engineering to support progression into Engineering degrees; campus visits and a ten-week transition support programme run by the Business School. The TQER team heard that a 'Preparation for University' guide had been co-created with students to prepare incoming students to transition effectively from college. Students who had joined from college felt well prepared for transition to university.

90 PGT and PGR students spoke positively about the transition support they received, highlighting the structured induction, clear introduction to course content and expectations, and helpful familiarisation with the campus. The TQER team heard that a student-led guide had been created to help support new PhD students to transition into the university.

91 Initial induction experience was positive for almost all students, particularly open days, campus visits, departmental inductions, academic skills support, and library sessions. The University has recently introduced a longitudinal induction to support international students who may arrive late. The University recognised that further work is required for late arriving students and confirmed that this was a focus of an upcoming Enhancing the International Student Learning Experience project, part of the 'Towards 2027' workstream (see paragraph 18).

92 The TQER team concluded that the University takes a strategic approach to the design and delivery of transition activities, which are data-informed, consistently applied and supplemented by tailored approaches to support particular student groups, including college

leavers and international students, and regard this as a **feature of good practice**. This strategic approach has resulted in high student awareness of the support services available to them and contributes towards improved student retention.

## Employability

93 The University articulates its commitment to the importance of enhancing students' employability skills in its Employability Strategy. The Strategy sets the ambition that all programmes embed employability within curriculum, and support students to identify professional skills and learning. The Strategy also sets an ambition to enhance the coordination of industry connections and increase access to work-based and work-related learning in programmes so that all programmes ensure they remain responsive to the skills needed by employers. Employability is a key element of the ENhance Curriculum Framework which is identified as one of four key priorities in the 'Towards 2027' workstream. The University has demonstrated its strategic commitment to employability with the creation of a new senior leadership role of Vice Principal Business Engagement, introduced in March 2025, who is responsible for strengthening engagement with industry to benefit the University and its students. The University recognises the contribution it can make to the regional skills system in relation to providing a talented workforce and upskilling people in employment (see paragraph 41). In meetings with academic and professional service staff, the TQER team heard that this ambition was clear to them as a strategic priority with strong engagement with industry in a number of subject areas and schools, and that staff recognise the benefit of the new Vice Principal role

94 The TQER team heard that, where they are present, Industry Advisory Boards function effectively at school and/or subject level, providing direct input on the skills needed by employers and helping to shape the curriculum. A positive example of the impact of the Industry Advisory Boards was evidenced by the Human Resource Management Professional Advisory Group in which industry professionals contributed directly to the development of specialist modules ensuring content reflected developments in the industry. This industry contribution to curriculum design ensured that graduates were equipped with the right knowledge and skills to enter employment. Samples of Industry Advisory Groups meeting notes were provided which showed a diverse range of business representation. However, the TQER team heard that the use of Industry Advisory Boards is not consistent across all schools and programmes, and some staff rely on informal stakeholder contacts or networks for work-related learning. The TQER team therefore encourage the University to consider adopting guidance for Industry Advisory Boards, including terms of reference to standardise the approach across schools to ensure consistency of student experience and clarify the asks of employers and industry stakeholders.

95 The TQER team heard that teaching staff engage well with the Employability theme of the refreshed ENhance Curriculum Framework. Relevant work-related learning opportunities were embedded across some programmes without work experience options as part of the course of study or where students were unable to access placement due to their circumstances. The TQER team heard that these included live project briefs, tasks set by employers, guest speakers and site visits. For example, input from Police Scotland was described as 'bringing to life' delivery in the BSc in Policing and Criminology. This approach to embedding work-related learning opportunities within curriculum supports students to make meaningful connections between their academic learning and employment.

96 The University systematically captures data on the career readiness of their students to improve employability skills development and graduate outcomes. The Career Readiness survey enables the University to better understand how students feel in relation to their future employability, career ambitions and preparedness. Data is collected at registration to inform curriculum planning and track students' development across the life of their

programme. A data dashboard has been created which informs the Employability and Careers service' engagements with schools and programmes and is used effectively to tailor personalised interventions, including sharing insights with academic colleagues to support specific groups of students. This data is also considered as part of the annual monitoring processes. In meetings with academic staff there was clear evidence that programme teams were engaging with this data set as part of their module and programme reviews and that the Employability and Careers service was being proactive in their engagements with schools to utilise the data to inform planning.

97 The TQER team heard examples of how the Employability and Careers Department works with schools to co-create and integrate employability skills development within the curriculum, utilising insights from the Career Readiness survey. More recently, the Department has developed an academic partnership model, using career readiness, exit survey and graduate outcomes data to shape relevant employability content embedded within the curriculum. Examples include codesigning tutorials and assessments for modules such as Nursing's Transitioning to Professional Practice module and integrating career development activities into module learning outcomes in Accounting and Law programmes.

98 The TQER team heard that there was mixed awareness of the Employability and Careers Department among students. Students who had engaged with the department through webinars, the virtual learning environment (VLE) and through individual appointments had positive experiences. Students who had not engaged with the Employability and Careers Department were unsure of the service offer and others had accessed careers advice and support via their PDT. The TQER team heard that where careers conversations take place with PDTs, students particularly valued lecturers drawing on their own industry experience, which helped to contextualise learning and strengthen understanding of career pathways.

99 The TQER team heard about a variety of meaningful accredited and non-accredited work experience and work-related learning opportunities available to students including placements, volunteering, and internships. The examples provided were relevant to the students' courses of study, career interests and industry sectors and were valued by the students. Students appreciated the opportunities to apply theory to practice and enhance their understanding of the skills required to progress to employment. In addition, the University has introduced a new transcript of students' extra-curricular achievements to recognise students' commitment in undertaking representative roles. The TQER team considered the work experience and work-related learning opportunities provided by the University as particularly positive elements of the student experience.

100 The support provided to current students to enhance their employability skills by Employability and Careers Department is complemented by the opportunities offered through Bright Red Triangle (BRT), the University's enterprise hub which provides guidance, training, resources and support to students and alumni to develop business ideas. The TQER team heard that BRT provides a valuable opportunity for students to develop their entrepreneurial and enterprise skills. A recent partnership has been established with Edinburgh College and Queen Margaret University to expand the BRT offer of entrepreneurial support to their students, graduates and staff. The TQER team heard that the BRT is helping to embed entrepreneurial education into the curriculum through a 'train the trainer' model as part of a European partnership and holds monthly European Innovation Academy sessions for academic staff. Entrepreneurship support also includes programmes specifically designed for underrepresented groups. such as female founders, LGBTQ entrepreneurs and minority women in data, resulting in increased participation and strengthened community diversity. Students who met with the TQER team viewed the service positively.

101 From the meetings that the TQER team held with staff and students, the emphasis on employability and enterprise at the University was evident and the graduate employment results demonstrate that the approach taken is having an impact on student outcomes. SFC Graduate Outcome survey data shows that over the past five years, employment rates have exceeded the sector average for UG degree respondents entering employment or further study. Undergraduate respondents to the Graduate Outcomes destination survey entering high-skilled roles have trended above the sector average since 2019-20, exceeding the sector average by 1.5 percentage points in 2022-23. (75% vs. 73.6%). Employability remains a key priority for the University going forward.

## Complaints and concerns

102 The University follows the Scottish Higher Education Model Complaints Handling Procedure. An annual report analysing trends and comparisons on complaints and student conduct is considered by the University's Quality and Standards Committee before it is presented to Academic Board. The TQER team noted that the University website provides comprehensive information on how to make a complaint and publishes annual reports.

103 The TQER team noted that complaint numbers increased in 2023-24 from the previous year, although they remain below levels from earlier years. The four-year average remains higher than earlier periods despite stable student numbers, indicating increased awareness and improved recording in line with sector-wide trends. Complaint categories were largely consistent, with a notable rise in accommodation-related issues and a proportional decrease in staff conduct complaints. The University statistics for complaints handling shows a positive trend in recent years with improvements to the response times and resolution of complaints.

104 The TQER team heard that students and student representatives are aware of how to raise a complaint and are comfortable raising concerns directly with programme leaders or PDTs. In addition, Edinburgh Napier Students' Association (ENSA) offers support to students raising concerns to the University.

105 During the Initial and Main Review Visits, students on the MSc Nursing programmes expressed significant and ongoing concerns with their placement experiences, which they felt remained unresolved despite these issues having been shared with university staff. The TQER team examined these issues with staff from the School of Health and Social Care, exploring the processes for students wishing to give feedback and raise concerns, and how concerns would be surfaced and responded to by the institution (see paragraphs 47-50). The TQER team heard that as MSc Nursing students undertake clinical placements with the NHS, the processes for reporting concerns differ from other placement settings. The TQER team established that complaints relating to MSc Nursing placements are not considered through the University complaints process and that the route for raising concerns about experience on placement is the Cause for Concern process (administered by the NHS and not the University). As this is a formal process, staff confirmed to the TQER team that some students were reluctant to use this process, instead wishing to resolve the issues informally. Staff advised that student feedback on MSc Nursing practice learning placements are gathered via the NHS national system (QMPL) after students have completed their placement rotation. The University is provided with anonymised placement feedback data relating to their student cohort, which is considered at Boards of Study and annual programme management meetings between the University and NHS Education Scotland (NES).

106 Whilst there are a range of approaches for students to provide feedback on their placement experience, the TQER team heard that, although students frequently raise and discuss placement issues with University staff, these issues have not been surfaced through formal feedback channels. The lack of formal recording of concerns about clinical

placements also limits the University's ability to conduct thematic analysis and identify and address trends. The TQER team therefore **recommends** that the University should develop clear and robust mechanisms for receiving and responding to student concerns about clinical placement to ensure that these are dealt with in a timely and appropriate manner, and that students feel heard about their concerns. In addition, the University should develop clear and robust mechanisms for the recording and oversight of such concerns.

107 Overall, the TQER team observed that the university has put significant effort into supporting student success over the last few years with impact being reflected in improving retention figures. Staff at all levels seemed engaged in, and aware of, the purpose of this work and students were aware of sources of support.

## Student engagement and partnership

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

109 The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence including the Strategic Impact Analysis, Ambition for Student Partnership, committee membership and minutes, strategic student engagement enhancement activities and roles, minutes of Student-Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) meetings and involvement in the Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP). In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including students and student representatives, academic and professional service staff and senior staff.

### A culture of student partnership

110 The University's commitment to student partnership was set out in its previous Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) and is more recently articulated in the University-Edinburgh Napier Students' Association (ENSA) Ambition for Student Partnership. The University and ENSA used sparqs 'Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership' as an external reference point in the co-development of their own ambition statement which sets out the strategic objectives and priorities for student partnership, building on the existing good practice in this area which was highlighted at the University's last external review (Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) 2023). The University's ambition is to empower all students to contribute as partners in the student experience and influence change at all levels.

111 The University-ENSA Ambition for Student Partnership is operationalised through an annual focus topic that is supported by an action plan, which is approved and monitored by Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC). An annual Student Engagement Report is provided to ESEC by ENSA and the Head of Student Engagement alongside regular updates to enable ongoing institutional oversight. Student voice has been selected as the 2025-2026 annual focus topic to address the barriers to engagement with student voice mechanisms that have been raised through staff and student feedback.

112 Students are members of core governance committees at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, including the Academic Board, Boards of Studies, Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC), the Academic Committee of the Doctoral College and School Education and Student Experience Committees. This representation brings student voice directly into school and institutional-level decision-making. While student voice is integral at all levels of the University's core governance committees, it is especially important within the institutional ESEC. ESEC's purpose is to oversee all matters relating to student experience, including reporting on external sector requirements such as Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP) and student feedback within School Student Success Action Plans (see paragraph 83).

113 Student partnership is a key area in the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy. The ENhance Curriculum Framework review in 2023 noted that there was a need to connect, engage with and involve students in curriculum development and other ENhance-related activities. The review also identified that student partnership should be embedded within the curriculum to support student belonging and community. The revised ENhance Principles emphasise student co-development and partnership and the role for students in the implementation of the Student Development Pathway (see paragraph 24).

114 The TQER team heard that the Edinburgh Napier Student Community Code (the Code) was created in partnership between ENSA and the University. The Code replaces both the Student Charter and Student Professional Standards used in previous academic years to communicate expectations of student values and behaviours. The four values of the Code (Professional, Ambitious, Innovative, and Inclusive) mirror those in place for university staff, bringing the entire University community into alignment.

115 The University has invested in a Head of Student Engagement role to work closely with ENSA to further foster student partnership at all levels and enable students to influence curriculum development and student experience initiatives. This strategic post is located within the Department of Learning and Teaching Enhancement (DLTE). Key responsibilities include leading on student engagement and partnership initiatives thereby ensuring that students are active contributors to improving learning, teaching and the wider student experience and encouraging partnership working between staff, ENSA and students to co-create solutions. The TQER team noted that the intention for 2025-26 is to increase engagement and build belonging and community, and to reach out to students who are not yet engaged, primarily through the work of the recently recruited campus-level Academic Community Representatives (see paragraph 127). The Ambition for Student Partnership action plan for 2025-26 seeks to introduce monitoring and reporting of diversity of student representatives and there is a focus on direct entry, commuter and international students and students with a disability. The TQER team acknowledged that there is also an awareness that not all students want to be part of a student community.

116 The TQER team heard about the University's commitment to institutional student partnership in the design and delivery of collaborative projects. Examples of collaborative projects included the review of the University's transition resources and activities, student welcome event planning and an initiative to enhance the learning experience of international students. The University's commitment to student partnership is further evidenced through the co-development of the new institutional Sports Strategy, assessment policy, Fit to Sit process, and the design of projects focused on sustainability and raising awareness of gender-based violence among sports teams. The University's 'Towards 2027' workstream (see paragraph 18) incorporates the current student partnership work on Disabled Student Experience Enhancement and the project on Supporting the International Student Learning Journey. The University has taken a partnership approach to its engagement with Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP) (see paragraph 173).

117 The TQER team agreed as a result of reviewing the documentary evidence and meeting with staff and students that the University has an effective culture of student partnership and that significant progress has been made in building effective and positive relationships with ENSA sabbatical officers.

## **Student engagement in quality processes**

118 The TQER team agreed that the University is committed to ensuring that students are provided with opportunities to engage in formal and informal dialogue on the enhancement of their learning experience. Student engagement in review and enhancement activities is an established process within the University's Quality Framework with students contributing to curriculum development and management, annual monitoring, Institution Led Review and Doctoral College Review.

119 The TQER team learned that there is a well-established Student Consultant programme in place at the University with two roles of Student Learning and Teaching Consultant and Student Quality Consultant. Student Learning and Teaching Consultants generate collaborative co-designed approaches to enhancement and Student Quality Consultants contributing to quality processes. The TQER team heard that there are currently

ten such consultants, and fifty in the last three years across the two roles, with a rolling programme of recruitment and training taking place.

120 Student Quality Consultants serve on Institution Led Review (ILR) panels, programme approval panels, and School Quality and Curriculum Management Committees. Student workshops led by Student Quality Consultants have been piloted by DLTE to support ILR preparation using themes from the sparqs Student Learning Experience (SLE) model to gather feedback from students to inform the development of the ILR self-evaluation report. There is a specific role remit to ensure that students are included in programme, school and institutional level reviews to inform and influence change.

121 Student Learning and Teaching Consultants work in partnership with staff on enhancement projects and initiatives to devise student-centred approaches to learning, teaching and assessment. The Module Support Partnership (MSP) in 2023-24 is one example of this effective partnership approach which was developed at school level and is now being adopted across the University. The Module Support Partnership involved identifying ten modules based on performance data. Following peer review and 360-degree feedback from students and staff, the modules were adjusted to improve outcomes and student experience. The TQER team heard from staff and students involved in this process that they found the experience positive and that improved student outcomes had resulted from some of this work. Student partnership work led to the co-creation of virtual learning environment (VLE) guidance to ensure consistency in the navigation, design and layout of module VLE sites. At the time of the review, the Student Learning and Teaching Consultants were undertaking an audit to verify the consistency of implementation of this guidance (see paragraphs 152-153). Student Learning and Teaching Consultants are also involved in Strategic Enhancement Projects which must include their participation to qualify for funding. (see also paragraph 57).

122 The TQER team affirmed that the Student Consultants are provided with training and support from DLTE and their work is disseminated via School ESECs, SSLCs and Boards of Studies and at 'The Gathering', the University's annual learning and teaching conference. Examples of student partnership and engagement demonstrated at 'The Gathering' include students co-presenting the student engagement session, co-chairing parallel sessions and co-presenting on Strategic Enhancement Projects. Student Consultants are also supported, where appropriate, to undertake the University's ENroute Fellowship scheme, with Associate Fellowships being secured by UG as well as PGR students and funded to participate in external conferences.

123 The impact of the University's Student Consultant approach to student partnership was clear to the TQER team. Staff described the sustained impact of Student Consultants in the co-design of enhancement initiatives at school and university level. Examples provided to the TQER team included the University's Student Mental Health Agreement, transition resources and the review of modules, programmes and assessment strategies. In these roles Student Consultants have informed new approaches to assessment, the layout of VLE and more compassionate communications with students (see paragraph 152). The TQER team met with Student Consultants who welcomed and valued the opportunity to contribute to meaningful and demonstrable change at the University. They felt that their contributions were valued on committees and panels and could see the impact of their work through the changes made by the University. The students shared with the TQER team that the Student Consultant role also provided an opportunity to gain valuable transferable skills and recognition for their work, both through participation in conferences and formal recognition on their transcript. The TQER team recognises the University's well embedded and impactful approach to student partnership through the Student Consultant roles in quality and enhancement activities as a **feature of good practice**. This has resulted in effective co-designed enhancement-focused solutions to support excellence in learning, teaching and

assessment and student success.

124 The TQER team explored how PGR students are included in review and enhancement activities and determined that this is achieved through their roles as student representatives, membership of committees and through the tripartite review structure, including the Doctoral College Review Panel and the Doctoral College Thematic Review process (see paragraph 36). The topic for thematic review is determined annually by the Doctoral College Review Panel and is informed by an evidence base that includes the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), university student surveys, and recommendations from the Academic Committee of the Doctoral College and the Doctoral College Student Representatives Group. The TQER team heard that PGR students have been involved in the review of PGR induction resources, in the design of student space to support their studies and can inform changes at subject and school level.

## Student representation

125 Edinburgh Napier Students' Association (ENSA) is responsible for the management and oversight of the formal student representation structures at the University, including the annual election of three sabbatical officer roles. The three roles are equal and collaborative posts with dedicated portfolios for Education and Employability, Societies and Community, and Sport and Wellbeing. There is a formal system of student representatives at programme level for undergraduate (UG), taught postgraduate (PGT) and research postgraduate (PGR) students. The student representation system also includes transnational education (TNE), online and Graduate Apprentice (GA) students.

126 ENSA offers a training programme for student representatives with both online and in-person training incorporating the sparqs SLE model, and development workshops used to support student representatives to develop key skills relevant to their role. ENSA's training programme is supplemented by an online virtual learning environment (VLE) representative site that has been developed by ENSA and the University. Engagement with student representative training has increased since the introduction of in-person training in 2024-25 to supplement the online offering. This more formal training in addition to the skills development workshops offered by ENSA is intended to increase the number of representatives and empower these students to contribute more proactively at meetings. Student representatives shared with the TQER team heard that they welcome the training and support that is provided and that there is a clear value in the skills developed through participation in these roles. The TQER team encourages the University, in partnership with ENSA, to continue to promote the benefits of undertaking student representative roles and share the impact of the contributions of student representatives.

127 The system of Student-Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs) within schools is used to formally enable student representation. These programme-level meetings involve Programme and Module Leaders and class representatives and provide an opportunity for regular discussion of student feedback. The TQER team heard examples from class representatives of where they had contributed to programme changes, but also noted that the University is aware that more needs to be done to assist these representatives in reaching their cohorts more effectively and through the creation of job descriptions. Representatives are also invited to university-wide and school-level fora. Transnational education (TNE) students participate in in-country SSLCs and can also use feedback mechanisms at their local partner. The TQER team noted that three new Academic Community Representative roles were introduced in 2025-26. These roles are formally recruited and paid positions intended to enhance student engagement. Each Academic Community Representative has been allocated to a specific campus and is responsible for improving student engagement in representation and strengthening the connection between schools, ENSA and programme representatives. These three new roles will inform the

development of campus-led initiatives. The creation of the Academic Community Representative roles is an example of increased resourcing for student voice in response to representational gaps.

128 The students who met with the TQER team were generally aware of both the student representative model and of ENSA and were satisfied with the structures in place. There was also recognition by students that not every student would want to or need to engage directly with programme representatives or the students' association. However, students were aware that they could contact ENSA for support should the need arise. The TQER team heard that there is an expectation that student representative details are listed on programme VLE sites, but that this expectation is not consistently met across the University. SSLC minutes and action lists are available on the VLE, but not all students were aware of these, and as a result did not always know of actions taken in response to their feedback.

129 PGR representatives at subject and school level sit on School Research and Innovation Committees and the Academic Committee of the Doctoral College (ACDC). The TQER team also noted that a PGR student representative is a member of the Doctoral College Review Panel, which oversees the annual thematic reviews of the Doctoral College, with the topic for the current review being student voice. (see also paragraph 167)

130 The TQER team noted that the University and ENSA intend to further enhance the existing student representative structures through the monitoring and reporting of the diversity of student representatives, the provision of role descriptors, further enhanced training for representatives, and the delivery of staff development sessions on student partnership working to maximise the impact of representative roles. The TQER team affirmed through its review of documentary evidence and meetings that the model for supporting student representation is effective but encourages the University to continue to enhance the support for, and engagement of, student representatives.

## Student voice

131 The TQER team found that the University provides mechanisms for individual and collective engagement through representation on senior committees and review projects, student representation and student surveys. The TQER team noted that the University has a variety of other formal mechanisms for gathering feedback, including student representative roles in schools, SSLCs, Student Council, Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs), ILRs, student representation on committees at all levels across the University, and service user surveys. The University utilises a variety of student feedback mechanisms in addition to national surveys to ensure that UG, PGT and PGR students all have an opportunity to provide feedback to influence change, as MEQ and some national survey response rates and participation rates in ILR are low.

132 The Student Council is a discussion and decision-making body through which students can take part in a democratic process to hold ENSA sabbatical officers to account and put forward motions for consideration. Feedback from Student Council is fed into the University's Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC) through regular update reports. The TQER team noted that the Student Council is used as a forum to identify and share issues, and to feed back to students on how they have been resolved. A recent activity has been to invite relevant university teams to attend Student Council meetings to hear students' issues and to then report back on actions taken. While this activity is helping to structure and capture responses to student feedback, the TQER team heard that the University recognises that more needs to be done to close the feedback loop with the wider student body.

133 The TQER team welcomed the work by ENSA to ensure that students have an opportunity to influence change. To address challenges of engagement, the Student Council

is open to all students with a simplified process of recruitment. ENSA offer a weekly focused and topical single question on its website and feedback the results through the Student Council. The TQER team heard that ENSA has begun to offer an increased number of events online to enable online, transnational education (TNE) and commuter students to be able to engage with the Student Council to ensure that student voices are representative. A wider range of activities is offered at meetings, including discussion, guest speakers and workshop to increase uptake. ENSA also has a dedicated webpage for TNE students to promote engagement. Online and TNE student representatives can also participate in training.

134 PGR student voice is heard through PGR representatives as members of the Academic Committee for the Doctoral College, the Doctoral College Review Panel and the Doctoral College Thematic Review Panel. PGR students can feed back individually through the research student review process and at subject level (see paragraphs 36 and 168). Themes from PGR student feedback are monitored and reported on through School Research and Innovation Committees and the Academic Committee of the Doctoral College, although the TQER team noted that there is no systematic method to close the feedback loop with PGR students. The TQER team explored with teaching staff how PGR student feedback is responded to. Examples of changes implemented following student feedback were shared with the TQER team, such as the provision of a new PGR space on the Sighthill campus and a reduction in the frequency of progress review meetings for part-time students. The PGR representative also led in the development of a new PGR induction resource.

135 The University, in collaboration with ENSA, is cognisant of the pressures on students, such as caring responsibilities, the need to have external employment due to the cost-of-living crisis and the diversity of the student population, all of whom require different avenues for engagement. A range of alternative methods are now deployed to capture student voice and include touchpoint surveys and the use of online platforms to gather quick in-class feedback. Student focus groups are offered ahead of ILRs to enable students who are unable to attend the ILR panel meetings to contribute. The pilot Listening Event focus group approach was developed in 2025 to gather feedback from international students. This inaugural approach will be further refined and used in future to capture input from the other student groups including commuter students. Students are also able to feed back to academic staff such as Module Leaders, Personal Development Tutors (PDTs) and placement Module Leaders. Student feedback is considered explicitly within university processes at all levels, including at programme level where annual Programme Enhancement Plans consider student feedback alongside a range of other data; at school level within Student Success Action Plans, and at institutional level through the reporting of student survey results and analysis of complaints.

136 The TQER team was advised that students are able to influence University practice at institutional or service level. ILR panels include professional services members and the TQER team heard how this provides an opportunity to hear students' views on how these teams can enhance their services. Professional services are also represented on university and school ESECs. Professional services teams outlined that students are able to influence changes in the quality of the support within the university through participation in end-user surveys to capture targeted student feedback, and local and national surveys.

137 The TQER team heard that campus and institutional changes have been made in response to survey and other feedback mechanisms. These include the provision of relaxation spaces and wellbeing resource displays in the library, investment in new Law resources, the provision of prayer rooms, campus wellbeing space, lockers and laptops and new PGR accommodation in Sighthill. The TQER team heard examples of student feedback from service user surveys informing improvements such as the provision of evening counselling services and single session therapy appointments.

138 Students who met with the TQER affirmed that they had the opportunity to provide feedback on their learning experience and generally felt that they had been heard. UG and PGT students shared programme level examples of how their feedback had been acted upon, including the reinstatement of a module in year 3 which had been moved to year 2 to allow the impacted students to take up the module, changes to timetabling, increased placement opportunities, more timely communication of placement locations to allow students to plan for travel and childcare arrangements, and changes to assessment rubrics. The TQER team heard from students that changes had been implemented because of their input into programme review, including assessment design and scheduling and reading lists.

139 The outcomes of action taken at programme level as a result of student feedback is intended to be communicated through SSLC action lists, Boards of Studies and MEQ closing the loop processes. The TQER team found that this is not always the case with students unaware of how their feedback is leading to changes. The TQER team also heard that the Student Council is a useful vehicle in the identification of school and campus actions, which are shared with the relevant team within the University who then report back to Student Council on progress. The TQER team noted that there are pockets of good practice in how these campus or institutional level changes are communicated but that they are not consistently and routinely fed forward to new and returning students to update them on improvements made in response to their feedback.

140 The TQER team noted that the University had developed SSLC action list templates as a mechanism to generate a rolling record of discussions and to act as a feedback loop to students for UG and PGT students. The TQER team explored the use of these and found inconsistent implementation across schools which has resulted in a lack of understanding and awareness of how student feedback has resulted in changes. The TQER team noted that students are not routinely informed of module changes that had been made as a result of their feedback or changes that had been implemented in response to MEQs from previous iterations of modules. The TQER team heard that guidance is provided to module leaders on closing the loop but that there is variation in how this is implemented. The University recognises that there is room for continued improvement in the communications to students about the impact of their feedback and input. The TQER team **recommends** that the University should, in partnership with students, continue to work to close the feedback loop to more visibly and consistently demonstrate how it has responded to student voice and to enable students to see that their feedback is considered and responded to at programme, school, campus and institutional level.

141 The University uses the National Student Survey (NSS) and Postgraduate Taught and Postgraduate Research Experience Surveys (PTES and PRES) as key performance indicators for tracking progress and determining the impact of its enhancement activities. The TQER team noted that survey outcomes are systematically analysed and shared to enable action planning at school and programme level including within School Student Success Action plans, and to inform professional services' annual planning cycles

142 NSS results for 2025 demonstrate that overall UG student satisfaction has increased to 80% from 78% in 2024. The University's overall UG student satisfaction is now only one percentage point below the Scottish average and is ninth overall in Scotland. Three of the five schools saw increases in their NSS scores from 2024 to 2025. PGT student satisfaction has also increased with satisfaction with resources remaining at a high level. Assessment and Feedback and Organisation and Management remain as areas for improvement. The PGR student overall satisfaction has increased to 85% and exceeds the Scottish and UK sector average. Community and research culture are confirmed as areas for further development by the University in response to student feedback from PRES.

143 Through meetings with staff and students and in reviewing the evidence submitted, the TQER team observed the University's strategic commitment to prioritising student engagement and partnership. The University's mature approach has been recognised in previous external reviews and the TQER team found that the University has continued to build on this successful approach, working with ENSA to create a collaborative and effective culture.

## Enhancement and quality culture

144 The TQER team found that Edinburgh Napier University is **effective** in embedding an enhancement and quality culture across the institution. The institution has clearly identified strategic leadership and governance of the approach to quality assurance and enhancement with the capacity and commitment to identify and address situations that have the potential to pose risk to academic standards, the quality of the learning experience and enabling student success. The institution accurately manages data. The institution's strategic approach uses data, evidence and externality in line with sector expectations and promotes an embedded enhancement quality culture for developing, implementing and evaluating strategies. The institution has made timely and effective progress in formulating, implementing and reviewing actions in response to the findings of last external review (Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) 2023).

145 The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence including strategies, governance and regulatory frameworks, previous reviews and examples of academic quality processes. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including leadership, academic and professional services staff from across the institution, and students at all levels of study.

### A culture of enhancement

146 The TQER team observed that an institution-wide culture of assurance, improvement and enhancement is embedded throughout the University. The priority placed on enhancement and quality assurance by the senior management team supports this institutional culture. The TQER team found clear evidence of quality enhancement being undertaken at all levels of the institution with well-defined mechanisms for reporting and action monitoring between different levels. Effective evaluation of these mechanisms is seen as integral to enhancement activities.

147 Though the review took place at a time when a new institutional strategy was being developed by the University, the TQER team found staff at all levels were clear about priority areas for enhancement including employability and curriculum development through the ENhance Curriculum Framework. The TQER team also observed that both academic and professional services staff are clear about formal governance arrangements, which supports a culture of quality and enhancement at the University. Further strategic leadership is also provided through a range of strategies including the Digital Strategy and Employability Strategy.

148 Staff were clear about their role and responsibility in relation to enhancement and quality assurance. In addition, there was a sense of empowerment amongst staff and students to undertake local enhancement within their own context and share learning and best practice with colleagues. The TQER team heard examples of local enhancement projects being adopted as mainstream, after evaluation, such as the Module Support Partnership (see paragraph 119). Good practice is shared through the governance committee structure, School Academic Leads for Quality and Associate Deans Learning and Teaching (ADLTs) and more widely through the Programme Leaders Forum, the Quality Leadership Forum (for School Academic Leads for Quality) and 'The Gathering', the University's annual learning and teaching conference.

149 The TQER team saw evidence of an enhancement culture through a range of enhancement projects taking place across the University, noting that the approach to enhancement was often 'bottom up' as well as 'top down'. While it was noted that, in the view of the university senior leadership, the effect of the range of projects was greater than the sum of the parts, the TQER team welcomed the intention to manage some of these

projects under a 'Towards 2027' project board. This revised governance approach is intended to provide assurance of consistency and alignment to key themes. The TQER team noted that the staff they met were aware of the themes addressed by 'Towards 2027' as well as the principles of the ENhance Curriculum Framework.

150 The TQER team heard that an enhancement-led thematic review process has been developed to provide an agile means by which the University can quickly and effectively ensure that academic standards are secured and deliver improvements to the student experience in specific areas. Currently, a thematic review is taking place on postgraduate taught (PGT) provision. The Doctoral College has completed a review of admission processes and is now undertaking a thematic review of student voice.

151 The TQER team heard that the University supports an institution-wide enhancement culture through its annual learning and teaching conference 'The Gathering'. The annual conference is used to promote strategic themes and bring innovation from staff, students and external expertise to the fore. Students and staff spoke positively about this event as a way of reinforcing a positive enhancement culture.

152 Student partnership and co-creation are part of the culture at the University. The TQER team saw strong evidence of student partnership initiatives which support quality and enhancement. The TQER team heard from students and staff about the positive impact that the role of Student Quality Consultants is having on quality committees and in review work. The TQER team also noted the availability of funding for devolved Strategic Enhancement Projects, such as a recent call for projects to enhance assessment and feedback. Projects must involve student collaborators to qualify for funding. (see also paragraphs 119-123)

153 The TQER team saw a range of evidence that the culture of enhancement and improvement is making a positive impact on the student learning experience. For example, though only introduced in 2025-26, students were aware of and welcomed the positive changes made by the new Assessment and 'Fit to Sit' policies, which have been co-created with students. Students welcomed that inclusion is a guiding principle in both policies. Students also recognised and welcomed the consistency of layout offered by the new virtual learning environment (VLE) template introduced in 2025-26, though they reported issues with consistency of release and quality of materials on some modules. The TQER team noted that a further area of impact is the introduction of the Module Support Partnership in 2024-25. This partnership initiative was developed at school level and is now being adopted across the University (see paragraph 119)

154 The TQER team noted that both staff and students recognised that there were good opportunities for students to provide feedback to inform enhancement, but students are unclear on how that feedback is used. Though the TQER team observed that academic and professional services staff work in partnership at university and school level, through committees and in annual planning, to respond to some student feedback and other data trends. It was unclear if student feedback is used consistently for enhancement, for example, from module surveys. This is an area of development for the University to close the feedback loop consistently with clear expectations on staff as to how and when this is done. (see also paragraph 140)

155 The TQER team observed that the University is committed to staff development to support quality teaching and enhancement and strongly encourages engagement with PG Cert and HEA Fellowship, when staff are appointed. The University is ahead of sector benchmarks with 85% of academic staff having HEA Fellowship with majority at Fellowship level. The high proportion of academic staff and, notably, professional services staff with HEA Fellowship demonstrates engagement with the Professional Standards Framework (PSF). The TQER team concluded that this engagement, both by academic and professional

staff, provides a strong foundation for an enhancement led approach at all levels of the University.

## Quality assurance

156 The Quality Framework provides a consistent foundation for quality assurance across the University. Elements of the Framework were referred to throughout the review, in particular Institution Led Review (ILR) and the annual monitoring and review processes as well as regulations such as the Assessment Regulations. The effectiveness of the Quality Framework is reviewed on an annual basis and reported to Academic Board, after detailed scrutiny by the Quality and Standards Committee.

157 Institutional academic quality structures, supported by the governance committee and reporting structures throughout the University, are clearly defined with remits and terms of reference in place for the Academic Board and sub-committees. Membership of governance committees includes a range of academic and professional services stakeholders. There is student representation at all levels, showing an integrated approach to student experience across stakeholders. Governance committee meeting notes and minutes are provided for each committee and reflect appropriate matters being discussed, approved, and actioned with data presented at meetings to support decision-making. ADLTs and School Academic Leads for Quality feedback from university level governance committees, monitor quality and share good practice in schools.

158 The TQER team noted that the processes for annual monitoring and ILR are well designed and, in recent years, have been revised to make the processes more effective in assuring quality and supporting enhancement. The ILR process has recently been reviewed and continues to evolve. The University's leadership and quality teams have placed emphasis on these processes as drivers of enhancement in line with strategic priorities, and the TQER team noted that the academic staff they met reflected the importance and function of these processes in the annual cycle of improvement. The TQER team noted the use of external reference points in reporting on annual monitoring and ILRs. In 2024-25 reporting on ILRs was changed to mirror the principles of the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF), which aligned reflection and the flow of evidence to the Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP). The TQER team found the format of reporting on annual monitoring at university level through a one-page summary infographic, which brings together statistics, themes and actions, an effective mechanism for engaging a range of audiences.

159 The question sets for annual monitoring and ILRs have been developed to align with university curriculum principles and other priorities. The question sets include reflection on the contribution of professional services, such as library provision, as an integrated part of delivering the student experience. Reports are routinely shared with heads of professional services (who sit on University ESEC where reporting takes place) and this informs their planning rounds. In addition, professional services staff regularly sit on ILR panels. This inclusion of professional services staff reflects a holistic approach to quality and enhancement culture across academic and professional services.

160 Action plans are captured at module, programme and school levels with progress monitored by the relevant School ESEC and the institutional Quality and Standards Committee and reported to the University's ESEC. The TQER team noted that there is reporting within school committees and via the Quality and Standards Committee to ESEC on learning from institution led review activity and action planning to implement and share learning. ADLTs and School Academic Leads for Quality are important roles in this process. The introduction of electronic forms has assisted in aggregating data for reporting and identifying themes. Rolling action plans are used at school level, which helps to show distance travelled.

161 The TQER team heard from academic staff who shared the positive impact of preparation for the ILR process. Several subject areas described using the Curriculum Management Environment (CME) to refine their modules and programmes in advance of review. They used the system to align learning outcomes and refine assessment strategies, such as the Business School who took the opportunity to increase the use of authentic assessment (see also paragraphs 27-29). In addition, and as an explicit requirement of ILR, subject areas used the ILR process to prompt reflection and alignment of their curriculum to the ENhance Curriculum Framework principles.

162 The TQER team heard evidence of the programme annual monitoring process highlighting modules which required attention. In some cases, this was addressed by using the Module Support Partnership model to undertake a 'deep dive' on the module, involving peer review, expert input and student feedback to make recommendations for enhancement (see also paragraph 121). Academic staff also reflected on the useful impact of rolling action plans from the process which enabled tracking and visibility of distance travelled for staff and students.

163 Using data to inform enhancement and interventions is a priority of the senior team at the University. Staff completing annual monitoring and ILR processes now have access to relevant programme and student data in accessible report or dashboard format to support reflection. By introducing the use of this data within a regular quality process, staff are developing their data literacy across the University, which supports targeted student monitoring and support and data-led enhancement across all activities. The TQER team observed that data is used to effectively identify the support needs of individual students and student cohorts, to inform and support retention activities such as student induction (see paragraphs 84-85), to monitor student engagement and to support students' employability. (see also paragraph 96). The TQER team regards the University's significant progress in the development of data reports and dashboards, data-led monitoring and enhancement culture including the use of data to support institution-led reviews, annual monitoring and action planning, and career readiness as a **feature of good practice**. These inform enhancements at local and institutional level to directly address student needs. The senior team recognised that more training is required to support staff to feel confident using data dashboards and reports, although academic staff indicated that they found the data useful and easy to use after initial formal or informal support was given.

164 Against this background of positive progress in enhancing the annual monitoring process, the TQER team noted that engagement in this process is inconsistent. In 2023-24, 16% of programme leaders in the School of Arts and Creative Industries (SACI) did not submit programme annual monitoring reports and data for 2024-25 shows the completion rates deteriorated further in some schools. The TQER team therefore **recommends** that the University should continue to work with academic staff to reinforce the role and value of annual programme monitoring as a key quality process, and work to improve return rates of programme and module reports. Where reporting is not completed within specified timescales, the University should develop a mechanism for monitoring and addressing non-submission. The University acknowledged the work required in this area and indicated that plans for improvement are currently progressing through the committee approval process.

165 Beyond the quality assurance element of annual monitoring and ILR processes, the TQER team heard from the Quality team and staff at all levels of the University, about the processes' impact on enhancement. The programme of aligning curriculum to the ENhance Curriculum Framework is tied to the ILR timetable. Programme teams conduct work on their curriculum, supported as required by DLTE and other professional services, prior to their scheduled review. Academic staff also spoke about the impact of the CME on this work, as it provides a clear 'single source of truth' for their programmes, enables mapping and alignment of assessments and learning outcomes, and allows stakeholders to co-create

changes throughout the development stage. This data also flows through to the VLE template to provide students with clarity, and complete and accurate information on their programmes. There is a keen sense of enhancement as well as quality assurance running through this process.

166 Overall, the TQER team found that University has a strong culture of assurance and enhancement and at all levels there are staff who actively participate. Action is required however, to ensure that quality processes are not undermined by lack of engagement in some schools. Students are seen as partners in enhancement and quality activity. The increased use of data, accessible at all levels of the university in recent years, has strengthened the University's evidence base for targeted quality and enhancement.

## Externality

167 The TQER team reviewed progress against recommendations from previous external reviews (Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) and Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR)) which the University noted as complete. The QESR 2023 report recommended that the University should develop an institutional approach to reviewing PGR programmes and the wider PGR student experience, ensuring that arrangements are in place for the next academic year. In respect of reviewing PGR programmes, the University established the Doctoral College Review Panel which undertook a thematic review in 2024-25 on admissions processes and are currently undertaking a thematic review of student voice. The TQER team found that there was insufficient use of external members in the thematic review process. Staff also confirmed that there is no agreed schedule for future thematic reviews in place, though there has been one review each year so far, since 2024. (see also paragraph 36)

168 The TQER team noted that the main process for gathering student feedback on the PGR student experience is through annual supervisory meetings at which student progress is also reviewed (see also paragraph 36). Students provide feedback to the independent chair without their supervisor being present. The feedback is then discussed with the supervisors as appropriate and fed back through the Doctoral College committees, aggregating feedback to determine themes and taking individual action as necessary. The TQER team observed that this process combines discussion on student's progress with their studies with giving feedback on their experience, which could make students reluctant to share any concerns. The TQER team did note, however, that the staff and students they met said the process worked well. The TQER team concluded that the current arrangements for the review of PGR provision do not align to the Scottish Funding Council's Guidance on Quality for Colleges and Universities in relation to cycle or externality. The University confirmed that they are taking steps to address this following a recent report and recommendations on the effectiveness of the Doctoral College. The TQER team therefore **recommends** that the University should, as a matter of priority, establish a clear, cyclical approach for institution-led review of its research postgraduate (PGR) provision which fully aligns with the expectations for quality as set out by the Scottish Funding Council and examines the entirety of the PGR student experience. These arrangements should be approved and implemented by the end of academic session 2026-27.

169 There is evidence of the institution's engagement with external institutional peer review in accordance with their policy on Appointing External Academic Peers. External experts are used as Externals Examiners and contribute to ILRs and programme approval. In addition, professional body accreditation and feedback from Graduate Apprenticeship employers is considered, where relevant, in reviews. The Quality and Standards Committee receives annual reports and considers a thematic analysis of the University's External Examiner Reports. While individual responses to External Examiners are provided by the Vice Principal, Learning and Teaching and a summary of the annual reports are shared with all

external examiners, responsibility for acting on comments lies with schools. University-level recommendations are noted and monitored through the Quality and Standards Committee. The TQER team reviewed a range of evidence documenting these processes and concluded that it appears robust.

170 A suggested area of enhancement emerging from QESR 2023, was to use the partnership with ENSA to improve awareness of External Examiner reports and the role of External Examiners more generally among students. The TQER team heard that details of External Examiners are now available on the standard VLE template and details of their role are shared through programme handbooks. The content of External Examiner's reports is available to staff but not routinely to students. Staff are encouraged to share details with relevant students, though it appeared that this practice is inconsistent across subject areas. The TQER team would encourage the University to make External Examiner reports available to students consistently across the University.

171 Several of the University's degrees are accredited by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). PSRBs undertake their own review processes and sometimes take part in ILRs, such as the law degree where the Law Society of Scotland participated in the ILR in addition to their own annual reporting process. The annual monitoring process allows subject areas to holistically reflect on recommendations and comments from PSRBs.

172 Industry Advisory Boards are used in some subject areas, such as in the Business School, which is positive in terms of curriculum development and employability activity. The TQER team noted however, that the remit of these Boards was not consistent, nor was their usage across schools (see also paragraph 94).

173 The TQER team noted that the University has engaged widely with the sector on enhancement activity, bringing benefits to the University and the sector. The University is a member of the Tertiary Quality Steering Group (TQSG) and QAA Steering Group for Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP). The TQER team noted the university-wide commitment to STEP. An internal STEP Steering Group is in place to coordinate institutional engagement, raise the profile of STEP across the university and identify opportunities for staff and students to work together on initiatives related to the STEP topic (Supporting Diverse Learner Journeys). The STEP Steering Group reports to the University's Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC) and receives updates on STEP nationally. In addition, a 'STEP Hub' intranet page has been created to host internally and externally generated information and resources related to STEP. Activities have taken place within each of the five schools which align and contribute to the STEP topic. University staff also participate and act as institutional leads on national projects within STEP. In year one of the STEP topic, 'Supporting Diverse Learner Journeys', was the theme for the annual learning and teaching conference 'The Gathering'.

174 The TQER team found that the University is proactively using external reference points by adopting and mapping their approach and processes to them, where appropriate. Reports from ILRs have been structured under the TQEF Principles to better support the production of the annual evidence-informed SEAP. The annual monitoring and review summary is now also themed against the TQEF Principles. The University have used sparqs Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership, adapted for its own institutional context, to map existing practices and identify areas for development.

175 The TQER team heard that the University recently partnered with JISC on a project to develop resources for re-thinking curriculum and learning design for blended learning. In addition, the University has contributed to sector-wide resources developed by the College Development Network; QAA and sparqs, developing the Tertiary Self-Evaluation Toolkit, to assist in SEAP preparation.

176 At subject level, the TQER team heard that academic staff engage with external enhancement projects. Nursing staff spoke about their involvement in national fora such as a Nursing Taskforce set up by the Minister for Health and Social Care to address culture in the NHS and a high-level group representing Scottish Universities and Scottish Health Boards where policy and wider issues can be addressed.

177 There is good evidence of the University using external outlook to drive innovations and quality improvement. In the area of employability and the local economy, the University is keen to develop better links in the local area to nurture collaboration with industry and improve the employability of its students. The University works closely with Skills Development Scotland and other agencies and professional bodies, such as the NMC and NHS. Two senior appointments have been made in the past year to support further development in this area. Enhancements in curriculum, authentic assessment, placements, support and data to enhance students' employability all contribute to the student experience, equipping the University students to secure graduate level employment.

178 The University conducts outreach work in colleges and schools. For example, academic staff described work with Borders College to enhance maths skills for students who may or may not come to the University, preparing them for degree level study and introducing them to university style education.

179 When innovating, there is evidence that the University uses best practice from elsewhere to inform their initiatives. For example, development of a new Personal Development Tutor (PDT) framework was designed with reference to external standards, providing resources and support to staff. By explicitly aligning internal developments such as the University-Edinburgh Napier Students' Association (ENSA) Ambition for Student Partnership to the recent development of sparqs' Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership and ILR reports to the TQEF principles and the SEAP, the University ensures that it is taking an externally facing evidence-informed approach to enhancement.

180 The University's Centre for Higher Education Research is the largest centre for research at the University and in 2024-25 applied for more than £3M in research funding focussed on higher education. Staff described a research study into university students' use of AI from across the sector which, once completed, will feed into their institutional understanding and approach. The University's research brings evidence from beyond the walls of the University to be applied in learning and teaching and student experience for their own students/

181 Overall, the TQER team saw across both staff and students a clear sense that quality assurance activities contribute strongly to enhancement across the University. Clear mechanisms exist to ensure that findings from quality assurance processes are fed into planning. The University has a strong understanding of how data and student feedback can help identify areas for improvement. Staff showed a willingness, at all levels and across academic and professional services, to engage with improvement activity in partnership with students. There was a clear sense that the University looks outwards to help inform their development and to ensure their approach supports their graduates to succeed in the world of work.

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