



Scotland's Tertiary
Quality Enhancement
Framework

Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER)

University of Aberdeen

February 2026

This review method
is ESG compliant

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About the Tertiary Quality Enhancement review method

The QAA website explains the method for Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) and has links to the TQER handbook and other informative documents.¹ You can also find more information about the [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education \(QAA\)](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us).²

About this review

This is a report of a TQER conducted by QAA at the University of Aberdeen carried out by a team of five peer reviewers:

- Ms Beth Brownlee (Reviewer)
- Dr Suzanne Crozier (Reviewer)
- Professor Tina Harrison (Reviewer)
- Mrs Dawn Martin (Reviewer)
- Mr Edward Pollock (Student reviewer)

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

In TQER, the TQER team makes a judgement on whether, currently, the institution meets sector expectations in managing academic standards, enhancing the quality of the learning experience it provides and enabling student success and, further, has the quality assurance and 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),³ and comprising a range of materials about the institution's arrangements for managing quality and academic standards. The SIA and AIS framed the TQER team's analysis and understanding of the operation of the institution's management of their quality and enhancement and 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).⁴

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

The review comprised two visits: an Initial Review Visit which, for University of Aberdeen, took place on-campus on 9–10 December 2025; and a Main Review Visit which took place on-campus on 2-5 February 2026.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Review judgement and findings

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

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

Features of good practice

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

- The robust oversight of quality processes through the Quality Assurance Committee that supports a consistent approach and sharing of practice across the University to inform enhancement of the student experience. **(Excellence in learning and teaching - paragraph 10)**
- The considered approach to growing the University's transnational education (TNE) portfolio, building on established effective arrangements resulting in a mature partnership model that responds to the local delivery context and positively influences practice, both for the University and its partner institutions. **(Excellence in learning and teaching - paragraph 17)**
- The University's effective embedding of the Aberdeen 2040 strategic themes throughout the curriculum, making the strategy visible and impactful at all levels. **(Excellence in learning and teaching - paragraph 21)**
- The work undertaken to develop the virtual learning environment which extends beyond course content and information to include employability tools, closing the feedback loop with students, and a consistent structure that provides all students with comprehensive information and supports an equitable student experience. **(Excellence in learning and teaching - paragraph 45)**
- The University's provision of effective student support and wellbeing services, underpinned by partnership between professional services and academic Schools, that creates a proactive and caring environment for students. **(Supporting student success - paragraph 82)**
- The strategic and effective approach to support for student employability and skills development, which enables students to recognise, develop and articulate their employability skills. **(Supporting student success - paragraph 94)**
- The University's embedded approach to listening to the student voice, and staff commitment to enhancing the student experience which has led to meaningful change for students. **(Student engagement and partnership - paragraph 128)**
- The University's proactive approach to staff development enhancement activities led by the Centre for Academic Development which aligns with both strategic priorities and locally identified needs. **(Enhancement and quality culture - paragraph 142)**

Recommendations for action

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

- The University should continue to develop its planned approach to ensuring that external examiners with responsibility for collaborative provision provide oversight of student work at partner institutions within their annual reports to ensure comparability of standards and outcomes. **(Excellence in learning and teaching - paragraph 19)**
- Building on established mechanisms, including consideration through Internal Teaching Review (ITR), the University should develop its arrangements for Professional Services Review to include greater externality from professional services to support the identification and sharing of good practice and highlight areas for further enhancement. **(Excellence in learning and teaching - paragraph 30)**
- The University should strengthen its approach to assessment feedback to ensure greater consistency, equity, and transparency. **(Excellence in learning and teaching - paragraph 71)**
- The University should continue to ensure clear and consistent communication of assessment expectations, so that all students understand the criteria against which their work will be assessed, how marks are allocated and how grades contribute to awards to support students to succeed. **(Excellence in learning and teaching - paragraph 72)**
- The University should review the datasets which are considered within course and programme review and ensure that staff are supported in the consistent use of this data to better understand and enhance the student outcomes and experience. **(Enhancement and quality culture - paragraph 146)**

Contextual information about University of Aberdeen

1 The University of Aberdeen (the University), founded in 1495, is one of the six ancient universities in the United Kingdom (UK). It was established to serve the north-east of Scotland with a foundational purpose of being open to all and dedicated to the pursuit of truth in the service of others. The University has two campuses in Aberdeen. Its main campus at King's College (Old Aberdeen) and a secondary campus at Foresterhill. It also operates a campus in Doha, Qatar, and delivers programmes through the Aberdeen Institute at South China Normal University (SCNU). In September 2026 the University campus in Mumbai, India is planned to open.

2 The University holds taught and research degree-awarding powers and awards academic credit from SCQF levels 7–12. It offers 423 undergraduate (UG) and 410 postgraduate taught (PGT) programmes across a wide range of disciplines, in addition to a range of opportunities for research provision. The University also undertakes credit-rating activity at SCQF levels 5–7.

3 The University's strategy, Aberdeen 2040, launched in 2020, sets the institutional direction to 2040. It is built around four strategic themes (Inclusive, Interdisciplinary, International and Sustainable) and contains twenty commitments. The Education Strategy for the period 2025–30 outlines several priorities shaped by the institution's strategic commitments and the broader Aberdeen 2040 vision (see also paragraph 22).

4 In 2023–24, the University recorded 11,995 FTE students, the lowest level since 2019–20. In 2024–25, the student population increased to 14,041 FTEs: 10,890 UG, 2,293 PGT, and 857 postgraduate research (PGR) students. This included 8,654 Scottish-domiciled, 1,323 from the rest of the UK, and 4,064 international students, with the largest growth coming from international enrolments, up from 2,835 FTE students in 2023–24. The Doha campus enrolled 459.6 FTE students in 2023–24, and the Aberdeen Institute at SCNU enrolled 996.46 FTE students. Most students enrolled at the University are under 25 years of age and study full-time. Retention rates remain above the sector norm and have done so for several years. The number of students declaring a disability and those with care experience continues to rise. Students from SIMD20 communities are declining, reflecting low regional deprivation levels.

5 The University's governance structure comprises three pillars: the governing body (Court), the academic body (Senate), and the executive (Senior Management Team). Senate is responsible for academic matters relating to teaching and research and is supported by several committees. These committees include the University Education Committee (UEC), which provides strategic oversight of education and the wider student experience, and the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), which oversees quality assurance, policy development, and the safeguarding of academic standards (see also paragraph 10).

6 The University is organised into twelve Schools, each operating within an agreed management and governance structure. Each School has a Head of School, Director of Education, Director of Research, and a School Administration Manager. All Schools have a School Executive, School Education Committee, School Research Committee and a School Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee. In addition, schools have Staff-Student Liaison Committees (SSLC). The approach to SSLCs varies across schools some are

arranged by programme, others by level of study.

7 At the time of the TQER the University was undergoing significant change, shaped by sector-wide financial pressures and internal measures such as voluntary severance and early retirement schemes, alongside changes within the Senior Management Team. To support the institution through this period, the strategic programme Adapting for Continued Success (ACS) has been established. Discussions have begun on a new operating model and several workstreams have been agreed which are overseen by a Strategic Programme Board.

Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment

8 The TQER team found that the University of Aberdeen is **effective** in achieving excellence in learning, teaching and assessment. The institution has appropriate and systematically applied practices in line with sector expectations for achieving excellence in learning, teaching and assessment, including assuring and maintaining academic standards. The institution's practices make effective and accurate use of data, evidence and externality to demonstrate impact and are effective in achieving excellence in learning, teaching and assessment. The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence including the Strategic Impact Analysis (SIA), the 2023-24 Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP), minutes from key committees, the University's Academic Quality Handbook, examples of quality reports covering Internal Teaching Review (ITR - the University's Institution Led Quality Review process), Annual Programme Reporting (APR), Annual Course Reporting (ACR) and external examining, and the data underpinning these processes. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including executive and senior leaders, academic and professional service staff, students and student representatives from the University and its partner institutions.

Academic standards and awarding

9 The TQER team found that the University has established a strong framework for the oversight of the student experience and academic standards. The Academic Quality Handbook (AQH) sets out comprehensive regulations for undergraduate (UG), postgraduate taught (PGT) and research (PGR) degrees, covering programme approval, monitoring, assessment, external examining, collaborative provision, and research degree processes. The documentation reviewed by the TQER team, including an overview of institution and School level committee structures, minutes, and committee papers, demonstrated effective governance arrangements.

10 The Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) reports to Senate and oversees quality assurance and academic standards for all taught and collaborative provision. The Academic Policy and Regulations Group (APRG) supports regulatory development and reports to QAC. QAC minutes demonstrate oversight of Internal Teaching Review (ITR), Annual Programme Review (APR), Annual Course Review (ACR), external examining, and policy updates. QAC has introduced a peer review model for core quality processes. Each School has a School quality assurance representative on QAC, as well as providing advice to their Heads of School and School colleagues on quality assurance and enhancement matters the School quality assurance representative has responsibility for reviewing quality assurance in a separate School. The TQER team heard from staff that the School QAC role is well supported and is a catalyst for sharing practice and implementing enhancement. For example, it was noted that peer feedback on APRs and External Examiner Reports provides alternative perspectives and supports the identification of improvements. QAC members seek to make connections between colleagues from different Schools, based on their role as peer reviewers. Documentary evidence provided included detailed peer reviews of APR, showing constructive scrutiny, identification of good practice, and recommendations for improvement. The TQER team considered the robust oversight of quality processes through the QAC that supports a consistent approach and sharing of practice across the University to inform enhancement of the student experience to be a **feature of good practice**.

11 The University Education Committee (UEC) is responsible to the University Senate for the strategic oversight of education matters relating to UG, PGT, and taught elements of PGR, and for the wider student experience relating to matters impacting on student success, and the development of approaches to educational innovation. Minutes evidenced monitoring of the education risk register, policy development, data informed enhancement and staff development (including Generative Artificial Intelligence). The Employability and Enterprise Committee (EEC) and Student Support and Experience Committee (SSEC) support UEC's remit.

12 School Education and Research Committees provide local oversight and clear reporting routes to institutional committees. Directors of Education sit on UEC, and School QAC representatives also serve on School Education Committees. Staff confirmed these structures support effective two-way communication, with recent policy development (for example GenAI and postgraduate regulations) illustrating this statement. The TQER team agreed the reporting lines to be transparent and effective.

13 The TQER team found externality central to securing academic standards. ITR guidance requires at least two external subject specialists per panel, which was confirmed in reviewed reports. External examiner Reports are considered by relevant committees, with responses from programme teams and QAC. The team noted effective action on external examiner feedback, including moderation changes that led to revised marking and moderation procedures. Students who met with the TQER team had mixed awareness of the External Examiner role and their annual report, some students knew reports were available on the virtual learning environment (VLE) (see also paragraph 44, 147) The TQER team heard from students of an instance where an External Examiner had been consulted and intervened positively regarding alignment of exam questions with the curriculum, confirming some student awareness of the External Examiner role.

14 Currently the University does not produce an overarching summary of themes from External Examiner Reports, but there is an aspiration to do so. In the interim, oversight of External Examiner Reports is conducted at School level supported by the QAC peer review model. The TQER team considered the current approach to be effective for sharing practice but would encourage the University in its ambition to consider the potential benefits of preparing a broader thematic report that complements the existing approach (see also paragraph 19).

15 The TQER team confirmed that external frameworks are embedded in curriculum design and review, with new programmes required to align with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), Subject Benchmark Statements and other relevant benchmarks. ITR guidance reinforces engagement with Subject Benchmark Statements and professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) expectations. The Centre for Academic Development (CAD) provides guidance on writing SCQF-aligned learning outcomes. Staff reported that PSRB requirements inform curriculum design, and QAC minutes showed institutional consideration of PSRB implications, including for assessment. The University's credit rating activity takes the form of online access courses at SCQF levels 5, 6 and 7. These access awards can enable students to gain admission to university, college or other professional training programmes (e.g. teacher training). The approval, review, and monitoring processes for credit rating activity are the same as those for provision that falls within the scope of degree awarding powers, examples of which were provided to the TQER team. The TQER team received the desk-based analysis report from the SCQFP that made recommendations for the University around the following: formalising

the credit-rated process into a dedicated stand-alone procedure document; enhancing decision-making and review templates to include explicit justification and checking of SCQF level and credit; updating student certification to include the SCQF logo; and establishing an institutional policy on the lifecycle and re-approval of credit ratings. The TQER team heard from staff that the areas identified in the SCQFP report had either been completed or were in the process of being addressed at the time of the visit.

16 The University undertakes annual mapping of its quality processes to the UK Quality Code through Academic Policy and Regulations Group (APRG), which maintains the mapping as a live document. Detailed scrutiny of selected principles within the UK Quality Code and the incorporation of any relevant updates are undertaken at APRG meetings. QAC minutes confirmed structured discussion, including the transition to the 2024 version of the UK Quality Code and the University's mapping approach. Committee minutes also evidenced engagement with wider sector reference points, including the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) principles, the Scottish Government's Entrepreneurial Campus Blueprint and the Scottish Tertiary Education Statement on GenAI. The TQER team concluded that the University makes appropriate and effective use of relevant frameworks, including the UK Quality Code, Subject Benchmark Statements, SCQF levels and PSRB standards.

Collaborative provision

17 The University has a growing transnational education (TNE) presence and work is underway to open a campus in Mumbai, India in 2026, with the strategic aim of increasing TNE student numbers to approximately 50% of total student FTE. Growth is planned incrementally, building on successful long-standing partnerships with the Al Faleh Group in Qatar and South China Normal University in China. The TQER team heard from staff that the University has developed substantial TNE expertise over nearly a decade and that further expansion will be supported by rigorous due diligence and appropriate resourcing, reflecting the risks and demands of high-quality overseas provision, and building on lessons learned both in relation to challenges and positive practice (see also paragraph 20). Staff from the University and its partner institutions provided various examples of enhancement activities such as peer review and staff and student visits to Aberdeen, highlighting the reciprocal benefits of TNE that ultimately inform the student experience in Scotland and the wider global context of the University's TNE portfolio (see also paragraph 154). The considered approach to growing the University's transnational education (TNE) portfolio, building on established effective arrangements resulting in a mature partnership model that responds to the local delivery context and positively influences practice, both for the University and its partner institutions is considered a **feature of good practice**.

18 Quality processes for approving, monitoring and reviewing collaborative provision mirror those used in the main Aberdeen campus. APR and ITR include scrutiny of TNE provision, as evidenced in reports viewed by the TQER team and confirmed by partner institution staff. In addition, annual collaborative partner reports are submitted to QAC covering pass rates, quality assurance, student experience, appeals, complaints, academic misconduct and future priorities. QAC minutes show that these reports inform identification of good practice.

19 Examiners' meetings are combined for all campus locations including partners ensuring oversight of student performance and moderation. All work is marked and moderated by the main Aberdeen campus with limited delegation permitted subject to QAC

approval. Partner staff confirmed participation in examiners' meetings and engagement with External Examiner Reports. The TQER team reviewed External Examiner Reports for TNE partner programmes and noted inconsistency in distinguishing between the main Aberdeen campus and partner campus delivery. The TQER team heard from staff that the University plans to include location specific appendices in the report template. The TQER team endorses this approach and **recommends** that the University should continue to develop its planned approach to ensuring that external examiners with responsibility for collaborative provision provide oversight of student work at partner institutions within their annual reports to ensure comparability of standards and outcomes (see also paragraph 13).

20 Additional mechanisms that provide assurance of quality and standards of collaborative provision include initial approval processes for new partners, evidence of which was considered for the University's new partnership in Mumbai, and a five yearly partner review and refresh of due diligence, an example of which was provided for a longer standing partner. The TQER team scrutinised collaborative agreements setting out the respective roles and responsibilities of the University and its partner institutions. Staff with responsibility for managing partnership activity informed the TQER team that there is a risk register for each partnership, allowing for identification of any emerging issues and a timely response. It was the view of the TQER team that collectively, these measures are robust and proportionate to the different types of collaborative partnerships held by the University and that they are consistent with sector reference points and expectations (see also paragraph 17).

Strategic Leadership

21 The TQER team considers that leadership actively enables and sustains a culture of excellence in learning, teaching, and assessment. This culture is evident at every level of the organisation and across all areas that contribute to the student learning experience, resulting in continuous enhancement. The overarching institutional strategy, Aberdeen 2040, sets out the University's commitments for the period up to 2040 (see also paragraph 3). The TQER team determined that Aberdeen 2040 is well embedded within planning and quality processes, promoting a shared understanding and consistent staff engagement. School Action Plans are explicitly aligned with the Aberdeen 2040 themes (see also paragraph 22). The new course proposal template similarly requires identification of the Aberdeen 2040 themes that will apply in the context of the course curriculum. The TQER team found examples of consideration of Aberdeen 2040 in ITR and reflection through APR. In discussion with teaching staff, the TQER team heard a robust and enthusiastic articulation of the value of the strategic themes to guide curriculum development. Several examples were provided related to delivering an international curriculum, preparing students for employment and embedding sustainability. The TQER team considered the embedding of the Aberdeen 2040 strategic themes throughout the curriculum, making the strategy visible and impactful at all levels to be **a feature of good practice** (see also paragraph 34, 78, 90, 135).

22 The TQER team heard from staff that the 2025–30 Education Strategy is undergoing further development as part of the Curriculum Transformation Project and Adapting for Continued Success. It is based on the ambitions for education set out in Aberdeen 2040 and the commitments overseen by the Education Team. The Strategy is described in its evaluation as being structured around three pillars which are Collaborative Learning Culture, Innovative and Interdisciplinary and Global Perspectives aligned with Aberdeen

2040, alongside two cross-cutting lenses: inclusive education and wellbeing, and continuous quality enhancement (see also paragraph 136). The Education Strategy drives the implementation of the education-related commitments, supported by institutional and School Action Plans (SAPs) detailing School-level activity. These commitments cover learning culture, innovative course and programme design, global employability, international opportunities, and education for sustainability. At the time of the TQER, the University had recently reviewed the 2020–25 Education Strategy. The TQER team found overall good progress toward the relevant Aberdeen 2040 commitments, supported by KPIs such as National Student Survey (NSS) metrics, league table positions, staff survey results, and the percentage of students undertaking international studying abroad. Examples of positive progress against KPIs included improved league table positions, an increase in the number of students studying abroad, and some improvements in NSS results, albeit there were also some fluctuations, in some cases associated with changes to NSS methodology. The TQER team considered the use of data within the Education Strategy evaluation to be effective in terms of clearly tracking progress and, highlighting both improvements and areas for further enhancement. Actions and associated KPIs have been agreed for 2025–26 to be refined following completion of the Adapting for Continued Success programme and the Curriculum Transformation Project to ensure alignment with institutional direction (see also paragraph 7). The TQER team considered this phased approach to the development of the Education Strategy 2025-30 appropriate given the scale of institutional change.

23 The TQER team considered examples of School Action Plans. Whilst noting some variation of approach, the team concluded that overall, the current planning process within the Schools is effective. The examples provided included reflection on progress against previous years' actions as well as a forward plan with identification of resource requirements. Clear alignment with institutional strategy was evident (see also paragraph 21). Teaching staff highlighted the consultative approach to the School planning processes as a particular strength, noting the valuable and structured opportunities arising through these processes for deep engagement with priorities such as equality, diversity and inclusion and decolonising the curriculum. The TQER team learned that the planning process will be subject to review once the outcomes from Adapting for Continued Success are known, with the overall ambition to streamline approaches, while retaining aspects that have proved effective (see also paragraph 7).

Curriculum planning and design

24 The TQER team found that the University operates robust and coherent processes for planning, designing, approving, monitoring, and delivering the curriculum, ensuring programmes remain current, responsive to student needs, and aligned with workforce skill requirements. The Curriculum Management System (CMS) effectively supports the approval, amendment, and withdrawal of programmes and courses. The TQER team scrutinised comprehensive documentation outlining arrangements for Programme and Course Approval, ACR, APR, and ITR. The Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) provides strategic oversight of programme design, approval, and monitoring processes. All new programme and course proposals, as well as amendments, require QAC approval. Scrutiny occurs monthly at dedicated QAC meetings, a recent enhancement intended to strengthen oversight and consistency. Action logs reviewed by the TQER team demonstrated detailed QAC feedback on learning outcomes, assessment, and programme content, with Schools required to respond as a condition of approval. The TQER team concluded that these processes are robust, consistently applied, and aligned with sector expectations and

benchmarks.

25 ACRs are informed by data and evidence (see also paragraph 143-146) with a strong emphasis on student feedback gathered through Course Feedback and Reflection Forms (CFRFs) and Staff-Student Liaison Committees (SSLCs). ACRs support the completion of Annual Programme Reports, which are considered by the School Education Committee and QAC. The TQER team scrutinised multiple examples of ACRs and APRs, confirming that these are reflective and action oriented. The TQER team heard from teaching staff that they consider ACR and APR to be effective, both in terms of identifying areas for enhancement, and sharing good practice within the Schools and across the University. Examples of QAC reviewers' feedback on APR showed that QAC is effective in drawing out key themes. The QAC minutes provided to the TQER team also highlighted good practice and areas for enhancement arising from APR. Examples of good practice which were wide-ranging, included the use of TESTA to identify areas of overassessment, positive developments around decolonisation, and an innovative approach to neurodiversity inclusion. Areas for attention, again wide-ranging, included addressing an increase in misuse of GenAI, improving pass rates, and enhancing visibility of 'You Said We Did' communications.

26 The ITR process which is the institutions ILQR process is conducted once every five years at School level, covering all UG, PGT, and PGR provision, including collaborative programmes (see also paragraph 18). The TQER team considered examples of ITR reports, which demonstrated wide ranging and enhancement-oriented discussion around matters including, but not limited to, institutional strategy, learning and teaching, assessment and feedback, employability, student support and representation, the staff experience and workload, and equality, diversity and inclusion. The TQER team scrutinised the documentary evidence provided for the ITR process and learned from the reports that ITR panels engage with a wide range of staff and students, including through pedagogic partnership sessions where staff and students are invited to join an open-ended discussion of challenges and potential solutions informed by a small number of key prompt questions.

27 The QAC has a remit for oversight of ITR reports and action plans, which are updated and submitted to QAC annually. The TQER team heard that the ITR process offers flexibility to the Schools in terms of how they respond to recommendations and that QAC can offer guidance on implementing actions arising from ITR. The QAC minutes provided evidence of this in practice, demonstrating effective oversight and dialogue between QAC and the Schools.

28 The ITR process also includes the process for the University's review of professional services and therefore gives consideration of the impact of the work of professional services in the context of the Schools. The TQER team heard from professional services staff that they support the preparations for events and join the ITR meetings. Reports from ITR are shared with heads of professional services to inform practice, where appropriate. Recommendations around professional services arising from ITR processes are also visible through consideration at QAC and other senior committees with professional services representation. The TQER team saw evidence in the ITR reports of reflection on the role of professional services staff in relation to employability, student support, staff development and academic administration. Examples of recommendations related to the work of professional services included consideration of wellbeing support for students on residential fieldtrips, enhancing the study abroad experience in partnership with the Go Abroad Team, and developing mentorship support for staff on teaching and scholarship contracts.

29 The TQER team learned that ITR complements other established mechanisms for reviewing professional services, including annual evaluation for some services. The TQER team viewed the results of surveys where professional services are considered, including the Aberdeen Student Experience Survey (ASES), and heard from staff that professional services are proactive in responding to this feedback. It was reported to the team that the Student Support and Experience Committee (SSEC) plays an important role in oversight of survey data, and examples of this were seen in the SSEC minutes. Further, the TQER team heard from professional service staff that there is a degree of external benchmarking of professional services through sector networks and external accreditation for some services.

30 Overall, the TQER team concluded that there is effective oversight of the contribution of professional services to the student experience. However, it was noted that the external reviewers in ITR, which integrates professional services review, are subject specialists rather than sector peers from professional services, meaning that they are not well placed to provide specialist expert commentary on professional services. The team therefore considered that there would be merit in enhancing this approach to gather more targeted external reflections. Accordingly, the TQER team **recommends** building on established mechanisms, including consideration through Internal Teaching Review (ITR), the University should develop its arrangements for Professional Services Review to include greater externality from professional services to support the identification and sharing of good practice and highlight areas for further enhancement.

Work-based learning

31 The TQER team considers that the University's engagement with industry, employers and external partners has a positive and meaningful impact on the development of a current, relevant and future-focused curriculum portfolio, as well as on the progression pathways available to students. Employability related strategies and actions at the University are developed and taken forward through partnership working between the Careers and Employability Service and the Dean for Entrepreneurship and Employability, with the EEC providing oversight. The Aberdeen 2040 Strategy makes clear commitments particularly within its interdisciplinary and international themes to involve external stakeholders in course and programme design, building partnerships, and strengthening wider collaboration. These commitments are reflected further in the Education Strategy 2021-25 (see also paragraph 21). The TQER team was able to see examples of stakeholder engagement in the Education Strategy 2021-25, including external organisations' contributions to the Aberdeen 2040 Attributes and Skills Task and Finish Group. Plans to put in place a stakeholder group for the Aberdeen 2040 Curriculum were paused due to resourcing but have been carried forward into the 2025-30 iteration. The School Action Plans showed further evidence of the strategic commitments being enacted with examples from different Schools including the establishment of a new Industry Advisory Board (IAB), plans to implement an industry week, and dissemination of outcomes from an Employer-Led Industry Project.

32 The TQER team reviewed evidence of IAB minutes for some Schools, which provided evidence of industry feedback, examples of good practice and action plans arising from discussion. The TQER team heard from School management and teaching staff during the visit that the contribution of IAB members helps shape a high quality, relevant and impactful curriculum and that IAB Members support the identification of placements. During the visit, the TQER team explored the contribution of employers and other external stakeholders to

the curriculum and extra-curricular activities with staff and students. Examples were wide-ranging and included extensive engagement through placement provision, field trips, course webinars with industry experts, and guest speakers at a discipline specific networking event. Students and staff reported to the TQER team that these experiences enhanced the learning experience in support of employability.

33 The TQER team heard from staff that there are ongoing plans to further strengthen employability through Adapting for Continued Success and the Curriculum Transformation Project. This project will be undertaken collaboratively with students and employers and will include consideration of co- and extra-curricular skills that support employability, for example volunteering. Having heard from students and staff of the benefits arising from industry and other external input, the TQER team welcomes the University's plans to strengthen the current approach, including through deeper engagement with employers and the wider community.

34 The TQER team found robust evidence that employability is embedded consistently within the core quality processes of Programme and Course Approval, ACR and APR, and ITR. The TQER team was able to confirm, through scrutiny of completed Course Approval forms, that there is a requirement to align proposals with Aberdeen 2040 and the University's Graduate Attributes. Programme Approval paperwork viewed by the TQER team evidenced the requirement for explicit consideration of Work-Based Learning and Exchange (WBLE) opportunities, as well as future employment prospects, at an early stage in the curriculum design process. ACR and APR reports similarly provided evidence of consideration of employability, as well as QAC reflections on the embedding of employability within curricula. Within ITR, teams are required to complete a curriculum map showing how their curricula align with the Graduate Attributes. The TQER team viewed examples of ITR reports, each of which demonstrated extensive discussion around employability and an overall positive evaluation of the commitment to employability across the University. The University does not currently have an overarching policy on Work-Based Learning (WBL), but a draft policy is progressing through the UEC. The intention of the policy is to consider the wider definition of WBL in alignment with the University of Aberdeen's goal to upscale WBL opportunities. Work-Based Learning is integrated into core quality processes (as outlined in the Quality Handbook) and embedded in the templates and guidance for Programme and Course Approval processes, the ongoing monitoring and review of courses and programmes through the Annual Course and Programme Review (ACR and APR) processes and Internal Teaching Review (ITR).

35 From a review of a sample of completed Programme Approval documents, the TQER team saw evidence of explicit consideration of Work-Based Learning and Exchange (WBLE) opportunities at an early stage in the curriculum design process, including engagement with industry. In relation to the development of new courses, the TQER team saw, from a sample of Course Approval documentation, evidence of the requirement for courses to align with the University's Graduate Attributes and to map these to intended learning outcomes. QAC reviews and provides feedback on proposals for new and amended courses and programmes that includes, where relevant, commentary on WBLE and graduate attributes. From a review of a sample of ACR and APR reports, including those specifically focusing on courses with placement activity, the TQER team was able to confirm evidence of ongoing consideration of WBL, employability and graduate attributes, including oversight and reflections from QAC, and through engagement with PSRBs. Within ITR, the Quality Handbook outlines a requirement for review areas to complete a curriculum map showing how their programmes align with Aberdeen's Graduate Attributes.

From a review of samples of ITR reports, the TQER team was able to confirm that reviews demonstrated extensive discussion around employability and Graduate Attributes, and an overall positive evaluation of the commitment to employability.

36 Several Schools and disciplines make use of IABs that include employers or industrial links. From a review of a sample of IAB minutes, the TQER team was able to confirm that these IABs appear to foster productive collaboration between the School and key stakeholders. The IABs also provide an opportunity to discuss and develop WBL opportunities, specifically placement and project opportunities, as well as provide oversight of these activities and receive feedback from industrial stakeholders.

37 The TQER team heard from School management and academic staff that there are various opportunities for students to provide feedback on their WBL experiences, including through SSLCs and the Course Feedback and Reflections Forms (CFRF). A review of a sample of SSLC meeting minutes confirmed this was the case. Additionally, review of a sample of CFRF confirmed that students are asked to record the skills from the MySkills framework they feel they have developed during the course (see also paragraph 94). The SIA notes that the impact of career-focused initiatives is measured via the Career Readiness Survey which, in 2025, recorded that 95% of respondents noted they had either high confidence or some confidence in their overall career readiness.

38 Overall, the TQER team is satisfied that the current quality assurance processes including programme and course approval, ACR and APR allow for consideration and oversight of WBL activities and the impact of these on students' skill development and career-readiness. However, while these processes provide a consistent mechanism for WBL to be considered, the TQER team observed variation in how WBL is interpreted and the level of detail in which it is considered. The TQER team therefore considers that the planned development of an overarching policy for WBL will support a more consistent development, implementation and oversight of WBL initiatives, further enhancing opportunities for students to gain work-related experiences and skills.

Learning environments

39 The TQER team considers that the institution takes a systematic, strategically guided and evidence-based approach to ensuring that its learning environment, resources and technologies effectively support a high-quality student learning experience. Core quality processes such as ACR, APR and ITR embed systematic consideration of the learning environment from course development and approval to review through ITR. The TQER team saw clear evidence in ITR reports of active evaluation of learning resources, reflecting a wider institutional approach in which decisions about learning environments, resources and technologies are guided by clear strategic intent to ensure they remain fit for purpose and aligned with the University's educational priorities.

40 Students can provide feedback on the learning environment through various routes, evidence of which was seen through course feedback forms and SSLCs. Results from the NSS, Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) show that undergraduate and postgraduate students consistently rate the University's learning resources highly, with performance that compares favourably across the sector. The TQER team heard from School management that teaching facilities had been enhanced by the recent purchase of 100 new microscopes that integrate directly with the VLE.

41 The institutional VLE, 'MyAberdeen', is where students engage with their learning materials and assessments across online, campus-based and transnational education programmes. 'MyAberdeen' is used by all programmes except UG Medicine, Dentistry, and Physician Associate courses, which require highly customised VLE environments tailored to timetable and curriculum needs. These subject areas are supported by a dedicated learning technology team. Teaching staff assured the TQER team that students using customised VLEs receive the same or equivalent information as those using the institutional VLE template (e.g. course-specific materials, such as lecture slides and tutorial information, as well as links to generic information), and students using customised VLEs confirmed that the VLE supported their needs.

42 In response to student feedback emphasising the need for consistency and accessible course information, the University developed and piloted a standard VLE template in 2024/25 across six Schools/disciplines. Student feedback from the 200 participants was highly positive with 92% of respondents finding the layout clear, 89% agreeing that content was useful, and 92% confirming clarity of the Course Assessment folder. Following the pilot, the template was refined collaboratively across all Schools, ensuring consistent terminology, structure and presentation.

43 The UEC approved full rollout of the institutional template for all courses from 2025/26. UEC also agreed that course materials would not be copied over between years, thus prompting an annual review, and that course areas must be released to students one week before teaching begins. UG students welcomed the increased clarity and ease of navigation resulting from the new template. In the first year of implementation, students noted some inconsistency in staff uptake and occasional delays in uploading materials, and some missed having a downloadable full course manual. School management reported that the template greatly improved the accuracy, structure and consistency of course information, providing coherence across programmes and ensuring essential information is captured concisely.

44 The TQER team received a demonstration of core template features including course guides, induction materials, essentials, class representative lists, timetables and assessment information. Centrally maintained links support accuracy and reduce errors. The VLE integrates employability tools such as MySkills, includes access to External Examiner Reports, and provides a consistent mechanism for accessing feedback and closing the feedback loop including a section for 'You Said We Did' (see also paragraph 13, 147).

45 The University has provided extensive training and ongoing support through CAD, which staff described as highly valuable. For early career staff, the VLE template is embedded in training from the outset, while longer serving staff reported that the template has helped shift previous practices, for example, moving away from unstructured uploads of lecture notes. To support Schools in ensuring course areas are made available to students a week prior to the start of teaching, course readiness reports are generated using an analytics and reporting platform, an example of which the TQER team was able to review. The work undertaken to develop the VLE template, which extends beyond course content and information to include employability tools, closing the feedback loop with students, and a consistent structure that provides all students with comprehensive information and supports an equitable student experience, is considered to be a **feature of good practice**.

46 The default expectation is that all lectures are recorded unless an approved opt-out is in place. School management reported that students value lecture capture for revisiting material, and that changes implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have enhanced pedagogy, for example enabling online review of fieldtrip content and completion of health and safety briefings before lab work. However, the TQER team heard from some UG students that some courses do not record lectures. The University might usefully consider how to support more consistent implementation of the policy including providing clear communication to students about when and why recordings are not available and clarifying how students are otherwise supported in such cases (see also paragraph 137).

47 At the time of the TQER, the University does not currently use the JISC Digital Elevation Tool or JISC's Digital Maturity Model formally as a basis of an improvement plan, but indicates that it horizon scans new technologies, regularly gains user feedback and participates in relevant networks to ensure it is keeping pace with emerging digital developments and innovations. JISC's Digital Elevation Tool is being used on a very informal basis to self-assess where the University is in terms of digital tools and skills, and to self-assess themselves at the transform stage of the tool with aspirations to move to elevate stage.

Staff development

48 The TQER team agreed that the University provides a broad suite of formal and informal mechanisms to support the professional development of academic and professional services staff. The findings in this section on staff development contribute to the **feature of good practice** at paragraph 142 in the section on Enhancement and Quality Culture.

49 The UEC has a remit for developing, reviewing and promoting opportunities for staff development in relation to the delivery of education, including assessment and feedback. Support for the development of teaching and learning and assessment is primarily provided by the CAD with other staff development and training provided by IT and the Staff Development and Training Team within HR.

50 The Staff Development Policy sets out the University's commitments to staff development for all staff, including processes for Annual Review and Academic Promotion criteria. The Staff Development Policy identifies the short to medium-term strategic priorities for staff development and training, which include staff development and training for teaching and learning, and supports and enables members of staff to receive appropriate Continuous Professional Development (CPD) in their area of expertise.

51 Annual Review is the formal process whereby staff can discuss their individual training needs. Information from Annual Reviews is collated by Schools to understand more general training need requirements. The identified training requirements are shared with the CAD, to inform the design and provision of bespoke training (see also paragraph 62). The Annual Review process for academic staff has been revised to facilitate alignment with the Framework for Criteria for Academic promotion, ensuring that staff development supports academic career development plans. Consideration is also given to staff development needs through ITR. For example, in the School of Biological Sciences ITR report it is noted that PGR students who teach could benefit from more support, but this is not a consistent trend across Schools as there appears to be good support in another School.

52 The TQER team heard from School management that staff career progression is closely linked to development. The Academic Promotion Framework of Criteria was recently reviewed so that both 'Education' and 'Research' now form part of progression criteria. Staff must evidence high-quality teaching through each professional grade up to achieving a professorship. This approach reinforces the expectation that staff will continually develop their teaching practice. Probationary staff are expected to work towards, at least, Advance HE Fellowship. Progress against this expectation is reviewed as part of the annual staff review. The TQER team heard that Advance HE recognition is a tangible asset in the promotions process.

53 The TQER team heard from staff that the role of Reader (grade 8) has recently been introduced to the Teaching and Scholarship academic career track to support promotion from Senior Lecturer to Professor. The introduction of this post into the Teaching and Scholarship academic career track ensures parity with the Teaching and Research academic career track. The TQER team heard from staff with responsibilities for School management that the probation structures differ between Teaching and Research and Teaching and Scholarship academic career tracks which may have an impact on expectations for participating in staff development opportunities, including Advanced HE recognition.

54 CAD, in partnership with the School of Education, offers a six-week zero credit-bearing, Continuing Professional Development (CPD) course, Principles of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PLTHE). The course is aimed at new and early career staff, academic and professional services, and PGR students who teach and support learning. The course is externally accredited by Advance HE and provides a route to Associate Fellowship from Advance HE (AFHEA). Since the course received accreditation from Advance HE in 2024, the 24 places available have been filled by PGR students who teach or demonstrate and early career staff (see also paragraph 142).

55 In early 2024, as part of the accreditation with Advance HE and the launch of the Professional Standards Framework (PSF, 2023), the University increased its support for staff and PG students who teach to become recognised professionally by Advance HE. The new Scheme, named ABDN:PRS (Professional Recognition Scheme) is now the main path through which all applications for Advance HE Fellowship are routed. As part of this scheme, applicants are paired with a mentor who also receives initial and catch-up training to support them in this role. It is a requirement that mentors hold at least the category of Advance HE Fellowship that their mentee is working towards.

56 Overall, approximately 500 staff have Advance HE recognition which approximately equates to 13% of teaching staff. However, engagement with Advance HE varies across Schools with some Schools engaging more. Senior Leadership noted an ambition to increase staff participation in Advance HE Fellowship and spoke positively about the role of CAD in supporting and promoting these opportunities. However, the TQER team heard that the University has not set a target for this ambition. School management noted strong enthusiasm across the University for Advance HE recognition. The approach is to encourage meaningful engagement through highlighting the benefits of participation to staff, rather than take a mandatory approach.

57 The same staff development opportunities in learning and teaching are offered to professional services staff who support learning and teaching, who are also supported to engage with Advance HE fellowship. Staff in student support and professional services roles spoke positively about the opportunities to gain Advance HE fellowship recognition,

support other colleagues as mentors, and engage in other staff development opportunities both external (e.g. ILM courses) and internal to the University (e.g. training on supporting students who have been assaulted).

58 Staff at TNE partners have the same opportunity to engage in professional development opportunities as those at the Aberdeen campuses. Staff from the campus in Qatar take part in the same Introduction to Teaching at the University course as University of Aberdeen Staff, allowing them to meet with colleagues from other campuses. In contrast, SCNU staff have received a tailored version of the course. In August 2025, a delegation of six members of staff from the Aberdeen Institute at SCNU travelled to Aberdeen to participate in a Teacher Training programme, designed and delivered by CAD.

59 CAD provides a range of other staff development opportunities and support for staff engaged in teaching or supporting learning. For example, with the launch of the Five Principles of Education, CAD developed a series of micro-credentials for new staff to introduce the expectations of Strategy 2040 and its interaction with learning, teaching and assessment. CAD also supports staff through a range of networks, including the Pedagogy Inquiry Network, aimed primarily at staff on Teaching and Scholarship contracts, and the Learning and Teaching Network. Both networks provide supportive communities of practice for the development of learning and teaching practices within the University.

60 University of Aberdeen has created extensive resources to support staff and students that teach or demonstrate to effectively use GenAI. The University has provided a suite of resources to support staff in developing their assessment practice, including guidance for staff on the use of GenAI tools in Education, suggested text for permitted levels of GenAI use in assessments, and an approach to developing a course statement on acceptable use of GenAI with students. The University also runs regular events and discussion panels on GenAI in Education which are advertised through the University's course booking system and through the staff Learning and Teaching network. The University also provides additional resources and opportunities for staff to share ideas and practice through the staff intranet pages on GenAI.

61 Teaching staff, School management and senior leadership all spoke positively about valued the support provided by CAD and outlined several examples where CAD had responded to local development needs and provided bespoke training. Examples that were shared with the TQER team included, CAD's support for the School of Biological Science to help address the use of GenAI, the provision of bespoke PGT training on teaching, the design and provision of training on understanding neurodiversity for collaborative partners in Qatar, and support for SCNU students on understanding academic integrity and academic writing (see also paragraph 142).

62 The University of Aberdeen does not have an institutional policy on the peer review of teaching. While there is not an institutional policy, the TQER team heard from academic staff and managers about a wide range of peer review activity in practice, operating through a combination of formal quality assurance processes, staff development practices and informal arrangements. Formal opportunities for peer review are embedded within existing staff development structures. The CAD confirmed that PGR students who teach and early career staff on the PLTHE undertake a peer review of a 5-minute video presentation. PGR tutors and demonstrators are also encouraged to do peer observation in their first year of teaching. Peer review is also embedded within Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment (TESTA). Staff at the University of Aberdeen and collaborative partners outlined the range of formal peer review practices available for TNE and

partnership provision. These practices include key quality assurance roles and peer buddying arrangements. A central feature of peer review within TNE and partnership provision is the Link Tutor, who ensures contextual alignment and teaching consistency across sites. Although responsibilities vary by partnership, Link Tutors typically review assessments, check marking accuracy, consider borderline cases, participate in ACMs, and contribute to assessment design. The TQER team heard from academic staff that, within the SCNU partnership, University of Aberdeen staff formally observe partner teaching and conduct peer review as part of probation processes. For the Qatar partnership, academic development staff reported extensive use of the University-wide mentoring scheme by Doha staff.

63 Beyond these arrangements, the TQER team learned about a range of informal peer review practices, including course-readiness checks, team talks, carrying out peer review of assessment and discussions on feedback, benchmarking of course feedback, online course and accessibility reviews, learning and teaching networks, pedagogic enquiry network, and ad hoc peer observation and feedback. While some staff expressed reservations about mandatory peer review, often associating it with summative observation of teaching, the TQER team considered that the informal arrangements provided evidence of a positive culture of collegial peer review.

64 Within formal quality assurance arrangements, QAC operates a peer review model (see also paragraph 10). These arrangements were found to provide valuable cross-disciplinary insight, creating space for sharing ideas and identifying improvements. Preparations for external review created institution-wide opportunity for peer reflection and review, which used inclusive and structured focus groups, School forums, and committee discussions, to enable staff to evaluate practice collectively, share effective approaches, and consider wider implementation.

65 Overall, the TQER team consider there to be a range of peer review activity that appears to be well received, particularly where it is developmental, cross-disciplinary, and embedded within quality assurance and enhancement processes. However, the absence of an overarching institutional policy means that, outside the formal quality assurance arrangements, practice is uneven and relies heavily on local initiative. The TQER team encourages the University to consider whether more formal encouragement of peer review activity could help consolidate and extend this strong but currently fragmented peer review culture.

Innovation in teaching and learning

66 The Aberdeen 2040 strategy includes a commitment to ensuring all students can experience innovative, challenge led education involving external stakeholders. The University of Aberdeen's Dean for Educational Innovation is responsible for the direction of innovation within learning and teaching. The Dean for Educational Innovation works with the Director of Online and the Manager of the Centre for Academic Development, Schools and Aberdeen University Students' Union (AUSU) to foster innovation and sharing of best practice with particular emphasis on the use of technology to enhance learning and the student experience. The TQER team noted that, at the time of the review, the Dean for Educational Innovation role was vacant.

67 The Dean for Educational Innovation provides regular updates to UEC on their areas of responsibility. Key innovation projects and activities reported at UEC in academic years 2023/24 and 2024/25 include the development of the VLE course template, various

resources to support staff working with and in the context of GenAI, a review of educational delivery tools that resulted in the identification of a tool to support peer evaluation in group work, the initiation of TESTA pilots, and the development of a Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) teaching room. The COIL teaching room provides a means of offering global education and intercultural experiences to staff and students in different countries through online collaboration. The room provides a flexible teaching space with soundproofed booths for up to 25 students working in groups to collaborate with students from another location through an interactive monitor. Following the initial TESTA pilot, there has been widespread engagement with TESTA supported by CAD. CAD colleagues spoke of the enthusiastic engagement from staff and the impact that it was having on developments to teaching and assessment. Staff provided the example of the School of Divinity where TESTA participation led to the complete rewrite of the UG curriculum, making it more coherent and reducing duplication of assessment. A Northeast Scotland group has been established with University of Dundee and University of St Andrews to work closely on TESTA and benchmark against each other.

68 The University's Strategic Impact Analysis identifies the continued development of approaches to assessment and feedback as a key area for attention. The 2025-26 NSS Action Plan provides further detail on the priorities, which relate to improved communication of marking criteria, the usefulness and timeliness of feedback, and staff development for assessment and feedback practices. Evidence of innovative practice is identified through annual monitoring of courses and programmes and through Internal ITR. External Examiner Reports also highlight various examples of innovative practice which are discussed at QAC.

69 The University's Quality Enhancement Steering Group (QESG) is central to the strategic direction and delivery of institutional enhancement activity. The Group is led by the Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement and includes the Vice President for Education from the Students' Union, colleagues from the CAD, as well as other Education Deans. QESG was established to oversee internal and external enhancement-related activities, including engagement with Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP). QESG supports local internal enhancement activity through the distribution of funding via the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Programme (LTEP). The LTEP is a competitive opportunity for staff and students to contribute to enhancement activity. In academic year 2024/25 there were 20 applications for LTEP funding. QESG also supports the organisation of the Annual Academic Development Symposium, which is an established part of the University of Aberdeen academic calendar. Now in its fifteenth year, the Annual Academic Development Symposium provides an opportunity for staff to present and share good practice, including good practice from LTEP projects. The event typically includes an invited, thought-provoking keynote speaker with a focus on encouraging enhancement within the institution. The themes of the Symposium typically align with the STEP topic and the University's strategic priorities. The theme of the 2025 Symposium was 'Future-Ready Education: Enhancing Student Employability and Institutional Reputation'. Previous themes were 'Embracing Diversity: Supporting Inclusive Learner Communities' in 2024, and 'From Surviving to Thriving: Building Resilient Learners Through Assessment and Feedback' in 2023. Academic development staff spoke very positively about engagement in the Symposium and the supportive feedback from staff.

70 The TQER team concludes that there are various ways in which the University is supporting and enabling innovation and dissemination of innovative practices across the University. The specific projects such as TESTA and COIL, the focus on innovating with

GenAI, and support for the LTEP projects exemplifies a commitment to supporting innovation to enhance teaching and assessment. The TQER team invites the University to consider how it will continue to support and enable educational innovation to maintain momentum and cohesion of effort in innovation in learning, teaching and assessment.

Assessment and feedback

71 During the visits, the TQER team heard from students that they had experienced considerable variability in the turnaround time for feedback, as well as the quality. Whilst some students found their feedback timely and helpful, others reported waiting longer than the standard three weeks for feedback as set out in the University's policy. Further, some students noted that feedback was not personalised, did not support their learning for future assessments, and that feedback was not always available for exams. ITR reports noted similar concerns to those raised by the students, as well as steps being taken to improve feedback consistency. The TQER team heard from the Vice Principal for Education that the University had instigated a GenAI feedback and marking pilot with the aim of exploring the extent to which GenAI might assist colleagues in providing more detailed and quicker feedback, augmenting rather than replacing this core academic activity. Having heard from students about the variability in practice and considered evidence of this in the ITR reports, the TQER team determined that the actions agreed in the NSS Action Plan to address the continued decline in ranking for assessment feedback are appropriate. Building on the NSS Action Plan, the TQER team **recommends** that the University should strengthen its approach to assessment feedback to ensure greater consistency, equity, and transparency.

72 Regarding communication around assessment expectations, the TQER team noted that the newly developed course template on the VLE includes, as standard, a repository where students can find information on assessment formats and weightings, grading criteria, the arrangements for provision of grades and feedback, assessment due dates and submission procedures (see also paragraph 44). The TQER team considered this to be a positive development, having heard that not all students were confident that they understood the aggregation of marks across courses or how marks are allocated within an individual assessment, and that there did not appear to be a consistent use of rubrics. To help address the issues raised, the TQER team therefore **recommends** that the University should continue to ensure clear and consistent communication of assessment expectations, so that all students understand the criteria against which their work will be assessed, how marks are allocated and how grades contribute to awards to support students to succeed.

Supporting student success

Enabling student success

73 The TQER team found that the University of Aberdeen'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.

74 The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence including the Aberdeen 2040 Strategic Plan, The Education Strategy 2021-2025 and its evaluation, Minutes from the Education and Quality Assurance committees, Staff and student guidance and policies and procedures including for example pastoral support and guidance, Student Absence Policy, Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy, Guide to inclusion Adjustments, Safeguarding Policy, Disabled Student Pathway poster. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including staff, students, student representatives, senior leaders, academic and professional support staff.

75 The TQER team found that the University has established a coherent and robust strategic framework of support that reflects its institutional context and demonstrates clear awareness of its diverse and evolving student population. The Aberdeen 2040 Strategy articulates a strong institutional commitment to an inclusive learning environment with "Inclusive" identified as a theme within the strategy. The Inclusive theme has five commitments which address wellbeing, widening access, equality, diversity and inclusion. There is clear evidence of strong leadership and staff engagement with these strategic priorities, providing an effective foundation for supporting all students to achieve their potential.

76 Strategic oversight of student support and experience is provided by the Dean for Student Support & Experience, who works in partnership with the Director of People, Head of Student Support, Head of Experience, Engagement & Wellbeing, Schools and the AUSU. The University's student support webpages host an extensive suite of policies, including those on assessment, feedback, absence, attendance monitoring, extensions and appeals. These policies and procedures are transparent and accessible, and evidence indicates that both staff and students are engaging with them appropriately. For example, staff and students who met with the TQER team were aware of the Attendance and Engagement Policy and associated procedures. Strategic monitoring of supporting student success is undertaken by the Student Support and Experience Committee.

77 The University has several staff teams dedicated to supporting students' success including Student Advice and Support, Careers and Employability, Disability Support and Counselling. Extensive information on additional support is provided through the website, the on-campus InfoHub at Kings College, the Student Helpline and signposting through the MyAberdeen VLE contribute to a comprehensive support ecosystem. The TQER team heard from students and staff that there is a productive working relationship between Schools and support services, enabling effective and timely signposting.

78 The Education Strategy and the Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) reflect alignment with the Aberdeen 2040 strategy demonstrating a joined-up approach to supporting student success between the University and the University of Aberdeen Student

Union (AUSU). The SPA for 2024-25 focussed on Community, Mental Health and Employability, informed by student feedback is evaluated annually to ensure responsiveness to the changing needs of students. Building on the evaluation and achievement of the SPA in 2024-25, the University and AUSU plan to focus the SPA for 2025-26 on Academic Representation, Mental Health and Student Community. The TQER team heard that discussions on future themes are underway for 2026-27 (see also paragraph 120).

79 Progress under the Education Strategy 2021–2025 demonstrates the effective use of data and evidence to develop flexible and proactive support arrangements across Schools, programmes, courses, disciplines and geography, including partner provision (see also paragraph 22). Staff use data and evidence to adapt support mechanisms to reflect students' changing commitments, including part-time work, neurodiversity and the growing number of TNE students.

80 A network of pastoral support and guidance is in place. The University provides all undergraduate (UG) students (and taught postgraduate students in the Schools of Psychology and Law) with a named Personal Tutor (or 'Regent' on healthcare programmes). The named Personal Tutor is responsible for providing support and guidance on personal and academic matters. PGT pastoral support is provided via a network of support staff and services including a Pastoral Support Lead on PGT programmes who ensures that effective signposting and communication is provided on programmes coordinated with central support services. The TQER team heard from some students that they were unsure whether they should have an allocated Personal Tutor. Students reported that some Schools formally allocate Personal Tutors, while in others supportive relationships develop more informally. Where Personal Tutors were allocated, levels of engagement varied. However, students consistently reported having at least one accessible staff contact for support, and this approach was viewed as effective. Following the work undertaken to address the recommendation around personal tutoring from the QESR 2023 (see also paragraph 147) the TQER team encourages the University to ensure the agreed arrangements for personal tutors and pastoral support are clearly understood by all students and to continue to monitor the effectiveness of the variances in approach between UGT, PGT and across Schools to ensure equivalency for all groups of students (see also paragraph 137).

81 The TQER team learned that the University has undertaken positive initial work to strengthen support for postgraduate research (PGR) students through the establishment of the Postgraduate Research College (PGRC) in 2024. The PGRC was created to foster an inclusive and collaborative community in which all PGR students are supported, represented, and able to engage with opportunities across the institution. The TQER team heard that the PRC operates across academic units with the intention of reducing siloed working practices and promoting interdisciplinarity. The TQER team learned that the PGRC maintains constructive relationships with college-level support services and plays an active role in signposting students to relevant sources of assistance. In addition, the PGRC provides beneficial training, development opportunities, and career-focused support, reflecting the positive evolution of the service since its establishment. The TQER team heard from PGR students that they were well supported, and they spoke positively about their supervision. The University should continue its proactive and coordinated approach to supporting PGR students, whether through further development of the PGRC, sustained support from supervisors and professional services staff, or other institutional mechanisms. This ongoing commitment extends to early career teaching support offered through the

Centre for Academic Development, as well as broader career development provision.

82 The University provides a broad range of wellbeing support and associated resources. The TQER team found evidence of effective initiatives to encourage disclosure, including recognising the need to rename the process for disclosures from “disability provisions” to “inclusion adjustments” to reduce stigma. The University has also developed programmes to support neurodiverse and disabled students, alongside emerging work to enhance support for care experienced students. The TQER team learned that, overall, staff and students valued the work of the Student Support team. This is reinforced by the Aberdeen Student Experience Survey 2022 results, which show that the quality of student support is one of the top four influential factors in students’ decisions to study at the University. Some students indicated they were required to seek out support independently and suggested that increasing the availability of drop-in sessions across a wider range of times would be beneficial. Students also highlighted opportunities to strengthen tailored provision such as support for student parents. Through engagement monitoring processes and the pastoral support system, the review team found that staff take a proactive approach to identifying and responding to student needs and provide strong support. Once a need is identified, the TQER team heard that Student Support contacts students promptly and offers meetings online or in person. The TQER team were informed by staff and students that staff from academic and professional services listen carefully to the needs of students in different contexts and design services and support which are fit for purpose. Examples include additional induction for students with Autism and personalised support for a student with an assistance dog. The University’s provision of effective student support and wellbeing services, underpinned by partnership between professional services and Schools, that creates a proactive and caring environment for students is considered as a **feature of good practice**.

Supporting diverse learners

83 The University, in common with the wider sector, is facing considerable external pressures and is undergoing a period of significant change (see also paragraph 7). Whilst at the same time the composition of the student body is changing, in terms of diversity and complexity. The TQER team considers that the institution is effective in identifying and addressing the specific support needs of its diverse student community, with well-established processes, strong use of feedback, and evidence of recent improvement. The specific support needs of students are considered systematically through governance structures, core quality processes and responsive mechanisms informed by student feedback.

84 The University’s expanding global footprint through transnational education (TNE) partnerships has required careful attention to the needs of international and distributed student communities. Evidence indicates that this expansion is supported by effective partnership working, and that both the opportunities and challenges arising from increased diversity are being managed constructively (see also paragraph 17). The TQER team heard from students of instances of support for non-traditional students being less effective in some areas. For example, students entering through alternative pathways such as the International Study School, and student parents, may experience gaps in tailored support provision. National enhancement work, through Scotland’s Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP), indicates that growing numbers of students are time and cash poor and need to take on paid employment alongside their university studies (see also paragraph 150).

85 With respect to student achievement, current data and evidence indicate awarding gaps by race, gender and age, though not for disability. These patterns are consistent with national trends and have remained largely unchanged at the University, despite the introduction of initiatives such as Decolonising the Curriculum. The university has recently taken proactive steps to address a rise in non-continuation across all student groups. Workshops were held and each School produced a plan. Some plans included changes to teaching and assessment approaches. Early evidence suggests improvement. The University Education Committee also maintains oversight of awarding gaps.

86 The University has access to extensive datasets and recognises the potential of these to inform improvement. The School Engagement Leads Group (SELG) regularly reviews data, including expanded analysis of gender, ethnicity and disability. The TQER team welcomes the University's efforts to continue strengthening its use of data to proactively identify students at higher risk of non-continuation, and identify pinch points where students are likely to need additional support. This would usefully be applied to analysis of awarding gaps, aligning with action identified by the University Education Committee (UEC) (see also paragraph 146).

87 The TQER team heard from students that wellbeing support is provided during exams and assessment periods, but they would prefer if this intervention could be made available earlier to be more effective. In contrast, initiatives such as paid student internships, Therapets sessions and measures to support students who identify as neurodiverse, such as quieter, more personalised induction visits were positively received.

88 Survey evidence suggests that students generally have a positive experience at the University, which ranks third in the UK for student satisfaction in the 2025 National Student Survey (NSS). The University draws on a wide range of feedback sources including the Aberdeen Student Experience Survey (ASES), Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), Course Feedback and Reflection Forms (CFRF) and Staff-Student Liaison Committees (SSLCs) to inform enhancement. The drop-in non-continuation rates recorded in recent internal data suggests efforts to support students are working well.

89 The University operates an automated attendance and engagement tool, managed at School level. Students may report non-attendance in advance through the Report and Request tool. Automated emails are triggered when students fall below agreed engagement thresholds, with Personal Tutors and Pastoral Support Leads copied into communications. Students' feedback about the utility of these emails is mixed, with concerns raised about engagement calculations particularly on shorter programmes where missing one class may trigger the email. Students who met with the TQER team told them it requires significant effort to address this. Other examples of student dissatisfaction with this system include the submission of requests for approved absences, only to find this was rejected, for example where the reason given was for flu or Covid-19. By this time, the students had missed the class and been penalised. Some students also reported that the wording of the automated emails should be reviewed as the tone was inappropriate. The TQER team heard from staff that a lot of work has been undertaken on student monitoring in recent years including reviewing the automated emails and that steps are being taken to move away from a punitive approach. In 2024-25, the University Education Committee reported a recent improvement in undergraduate non-continuation rates. Following a pandemic related rise in non-continuation, recent data indicate improvement, including an approximate 1% reduction in undergraduate non-continuation in 2023-24 and further

progress in 2024–25. This suggests the support system is having a positive impact.

Student transitions

90 The TQER team considers that the institution supports students effectively throughout the full student lifecycle, with practices that align well with sector expectations and are underpinned by strong governance, clear strategy and a commitment to widening access. These practices flow from the Aberdeen 2040 Strategy, supported by academic policies, academic advising through Personal Tutors (or equivalent), centralised student and wellbeing support, and centralised attendance monitoring and follow up. Student retention, achievement, withdrawals, graduate outcomes, postgraduate attainment and non-continuation are monitored by the University Education Committee.

91 The TQER team learned from the students they met with that the University provides a welcoming and supportive induction experience for new students and this is outlined on a dedicated set of webpages. The university makes good use of a range of communication methods including videos to explain the support available to students and demonstrate that this is well used. Students who had progressed from college as well as those coming direct from School and employment, reported positive transition experiences.

92 The University maintains effective partnerships with local colleges including Forth Valley College, North East Scotland College, Dundee and Angus College, New College Lanarkshire and Fife College to promote widening access routes. These arrangements are clearly described on the website and supported by the work of the Access and Articulation Team.

93 Admissions practices align with sector expectations for fair and transparent access. The University operates flexible entry requirements and an annually refreshed Contextualised Admissions Policy. The Admissions Policy outlines commitments to diversity and fair access, and details constraints for programmes with controlled entry, often reflecting Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements, such as Medicine and Dentistry. A Widening Access Vision articulates institutional aspirations to broaden participation, while recognising regional challenges such as the limited SIMD20 population in Northeast Scotland. Admissions data are reported regularly to the Student Recruitment Committee and Senior Management Team to support monitoring of recruitment and widening access targets. Specific groups, such as undergraduate applicants, are periodically selected for deeper analysis to identify good practice and areas for improvement.

Employability, skills development and lifelong learning

94 The TQER team considers that the institution is effective in supporting employability, skills development and lifelong learning, with a strategic and coherent approach that aligns with sector expectations. Following on from previous work on Graduate Attributes, the University has developed the MySkills framework. MySkills allows students to assess, record, reflect on, and build their skills during their time at university. The framework is intended to promote awareness and development of employability skills. There is a MySkills section on the VLE template where lecturers can highlight skills which will be developed (see also paragraph 44). Students can complete the MySkills audit to receive personalised feedback on their skills. Students reported awareness of the framework, and the University is now progressing work to develop MySkills into a more effective reflective tool that supports students in identifying their skills development and articulating this to

employers. The University's Strategic Impact Analysis recognised good practice in the School of Biological Sciences where overt mapping to highlight key graduate attributes and skills is provided. As a result, this mapping is now encouraged in all Schools through the development of the MySkills framework. Student views on the current effectiveness of MySkills indicate that, although the framework is visible through sections embedded in the MyAberdeen VLE template, some students are unclear how to apply the outcomes of the MySkills audit in practice. While high quality resources are available to support skills development, greater early-stage engagement may be beneficial to maximise the tool's usefulness, particularly in enabling students to articulate their skills in employment contexts. Graduate Outcomes data indicate that the university performs broadly in line with sector norms with recent results suggesting success in supporting students into employment or further study. The University is recognised for progress in this area and should continue to drive student engagement with the framework.

95 The University reports that these approaches to employability and skills contribute to consistent performance in annual career readiness surveys, which are completed at registration by undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students. The survey invites students to self-assess their career confidence against four statements and identify areas for further support. In 2025, 95% of respondents reported high or some confidence in their career readiness. Survey findings inform the development of employability initiatives, including further work-based learning, internships and placement opportunities, and the Careers and Employability Service reports annually on progress. The strategic and effective approach to employability and skills development, which enables students to recognise, develop and articulate their employability skills, is identified as a **feature of good practice**.

96 The University offers a wide range of initiatives that enable students to shape an individualised learning experience, supported by flexibility and choice embedded in course design, alongside appropriate academic and pastoral support. These arrangements align with the ambitions of the Aberdeen 2040 Strategy and are reflected in Graduate Outcomes. Opportunities include elective courses in first and second year, personalised timetable selection, employability initiatives and international mobility options.

97 A comprehensive suite of tools is available to facilitate personalised academic pathways. The Course Catalogue, course choice system (MyCurriculum) and personalised timetabling system (MyTimetable) enable students to choose and register for courses and adjust their schedules to suit their individual circumstances. MyTimetable also enables students to view attendance records for relevant classes.

98 The TQER team heard from staff and students that students have positive experiences with elective units and value the opportunity to broaden and personalise their studies. Survey data including feedback from the Aberdeen Student Experience Survey indicates experience of electives can be mixed. Some students noted that electives in the School of Education and School of Law carry substantially higher workloads and assessment volume than their core degree course.

99 Work experience and study abroad opportunities, supported by the Careers and Employability Service and the Go Abroad team, further contribute to personalised learning pathways. Staff and students generally viewed these opportunities positively, though some students reported needing to initiate arrangements themselves or that their overseas experiences were not uniformly positive.

Complaints and concerns

100 The TQER team found that the University's Complaints Handling Procedure has been developed using the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman (SPSO) model. Formal policies and procedures are in place for Academic Appeals and the Complaints Handling Procedure, supported by staff training for managing misconduct, appeals and complaints.

101 Monitoring arrangements for complaints, disciplinarys and appeals are clearly established, and joint annual reports on appeals and complaints are publicly available via the University website. Although complaint numbers remain low relative to the student population, the University notes that the recent increase over the past two reporting cycles (2022–23 and 2023–24) aligns with sector norms. The draft 2024–25 report indicates a subsequent reduction, with very few frontline complaints (5) and a decrease in investigated complaints from 56 (2023–24) to 46 (2024–25). The TQER team also noted a decline in the number of appeals in 2024–25 following the introduction of the revised Policy and Procedure on Appeals in 2024 and implementation of the new 'test for competency'

102 The University shared with the TQER team the most recent draft of its Academic Appeals and Complaints Handling Update 2024/25. The report included examples of submissions relating to course delivery and assessment, such as feedback on assessment, tuition fee payment, issues concerning student accommodation or staff housing, the admissions process, and the support provided by student services. The TQER team welcomed this positive development in the reporting of complaints and encourages the University to build on this approach by systematically identifying and analysing themes and trends across complaints where possible, and by clearly articulating any institution-level actions taken or planned in response to these themes to demonstrate how learning from complaints is informing enhancement.

103 The University operates separate processes to maintain a safe and respectful environment for students and staff. These include a Code of Practice on Student Discipline (Academic) and procedures for cases of alleged Academic Misconduct, both for staff and students. There is also a Code of Practice on Student Discipline (non-Academic) and a policy on Fitness to Practice. These are published on the university website so are accessible to all.

104 Annual statistical reporting is in place for non-academic disciplinary matters, although equivalent reporting for academic disciplinary cases is not published. These matters are reported to the QAC for discussion; however, only digest summaries are publicly available. Themes within disciplinary cases are analysed internally, and associated support is described accordingly.

105 A notable recent trend is the increase in academic misconduct cases involving Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools. The TQER team learned that staff across the University, including in the School of Computing and Natural Science, have collaborated with the Centre for Academic Development and the TESTA initiative to promote positive and ethical use of GenAI, while also redesigning assessments to be less susceptible to misconduct.

106 Overall, the University is responding effectively to complaints and concerns, supported by clear policies, structured monitoring, and proactive work to address emerging issues such as the use of GenAI.

Student engagement and partnership

107 The TQER team found that the University of Aberdeen 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. The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence including minutes from Staff-Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) meetings, strategic documents such as the Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) and Students' Union strategy, and data on student feedback. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including staff and students including student representatives at all levels.

Culture of student partnership

108 The University has demonstrated an effective culture of student partnership with embedded representation structures at all levels of the university, active dialogue and collaboration with students and the Students' Union, and a responsive approach to student feedback. Senior staff reflected positively on the culture of student partnership and the regular dialogue with student representatives which they considered to be open, honest and built on trust. Students reflected positively that their voices were heard at the institution, although they may not identify with the phrase 'student partnership'. The University's recent National Student Survey (NSS) results in 2025 have a score of 90.4% relating to students feeling they have an opportunity to feedback on their course, which ranks University of Aberdeen 3rd in the UK on this question and they ranked 1st in UK on this metric in 2024.

109 The University's Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) identified the University's inclusive approach to student partnership as a feature of good practice. The TQER team heard multiple examples from staff and students of ways the partnership culture continues to be evidenced, including student involvement in the strategic Adapting for Continued Success (ACS) project through having a representative on the ACS project board and being invited to workshops; student involvement in interview panels for senior appointments such as Principal and Vice Principals; and University Vice Principal attendance at a recent Students' Union Annual General Meeting (see also paragraph 128).

Student voice

110 Students are represented through formal structures at each level of the University including Court, Senate, University Education Committee (UEC), Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), and School Education and Research Committees. Minutes from the meetings show students attend for key discussions and have input to and lead on enhancements such as the institutional extensions policy considered by QAC and the development of the assessment taxonomy. Students' Union staff members have also been invited to committees as members or observers, which the TQER team considered as valuable support for student representatives and that this promoted consistency, for example during periods of Sabbatical Officer handover.

111 SSLCs are normally held twice a year, including across international collaborative provision. Staff reflected that these forums were important for gathering the student voice

and updating students on the changes being made because of student feedback. There is no consistent template or approach to SSLCs across the University, but the TQER team heard from staff that subject areas reflect on the effectiveness of these forums and implement improvements. For example, staff in the School of Engineering noted they originally had discipline wide forums with over 50 potential attendees at SSLCs, but these have now been split out to smaller groups including one specifically for first year students allowing for more meaningful discussions and clearer student voices. Staff highlighted multiple examples of changes that had been made as a result of SSLC forums including revising the system settings responsible for student e-mail communications to reduce the volume of e-mails, and a redesign of the School of Engineering final year project which changed from a 50-page thesis, to a report, interview and poster presentation as a result of feedback from students.

112 Students considered SSLCs to be largely beneficial and viewed the forum as responsive to student feedback. However, minutes from meetings and feedback from staff highlighted that student attendance and engagement in these sessions was challenging. The University might consider, through its ongoing review of representation, identifying strategies to maximise student representative attendance at the SSLCs (see also paragraph 130). The University may also consider whether a standard monitoring approach could help track progress in response to SSLC decisions, as seen in some (but not all) of the examples considered by the TQER team.

113 The University has demonstrated a thorough approach to using a range of student feedback data from surveys including the NSS, the Undergraduate Experience Survey (UES), the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) and the Aberdeen Student Experience Survey (ASES). The TQER team reviewed detailed reports demonstrating the use of data and how this was segmented by characteristic and discipline and examples of 'Quick Wins' and action plans created from the analysis. The 'Survey Season' has been introduced as a dedicated timeframe for feedback sharing to minimise the impact on studies.

114 NSS data has been a key focus for the University. The TQER team considers that the University's approach to using NSS data is robust. Each School has a NSS action plan that is informed by data drawn from the most recent NSS and is closely monitored by the UEC. Staff shared that the University held NSS Good Practice workshops which were well attended and offered an opportunity to share ideas.

115 Outside of formal student voice opportunities, staff and students reflected positively on the culture of feedback across the University, noting that many informal channels for feedback exist. These informal opportunities for feedback include e-mails, office hours, online discussions and conversations. Staff identified many informal engagements including a 'Meet the Dean' session for postgraduate research (PGR) students both on-campus and online, or Head of Programme drop in-sessions and informal meetings or feedback discussion posts on the virtual learning environment (VLE). Professional Services staff engage with student representatives on a regular basis. For example, Student Support staff noted that they met with sabbatical officers from the Students' Union monthly to work in partnership on welfare issues. These informal mechanisms for student voice are variable across Schools and services and depend on the initiative of staff involved. Some students noted that some staff members were more willing to listen and respond to feedback than others. The TQER team recognised a good culture of listening to students and would encourage the University to consider ways to support best practice sharing around

methods used for informal student partnership activity across the institution.

Student engagement in quality processes

116 The TQER team considers that the institution is effective in involving students in review and enhancement activity, with well-established structures, meaningful opportunities for engagement, and clear evidence that student involvement has a positive impact on enhancement processes and outcomes. The University undertakes a process of annual course and programme review with templates specifically guiding reflection on student feedback and input from SSLC meetings (see also paragraph 30). Schools have a student School Convener who attends School-level committees where these reports are reviewed. School management noted that there is strong, active student engagement in School-level governance structures. The University engages students actively as part of Internal Teaching Reviews (ITR) (see also paragraph 30). A recent review in the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences & Nutrition was described as having made effective use of Pedagogy Partnership Sessions, where students and staff come together to share their experiences. Staff reported that this approach was a very positive development, creating space for open and meaningful discussion. The review panel itself also includes a student representative, typically the Students' Union Vice President for Education or a School Convenor. These student members are full members of the review panel, lead on student meetings and undergo training. The TQER team found the institution's approach to embedding student voice within the ITR process to be effective.

117 The University took a proactive approach to engaging with students in preparation for the TQER including through inviting representatives to focus group workshops, hosting briefing sessions with students attending review meetings, circulating the Strategic Impact Analysis (SIA) document to students, and sharing papers at committees which included student representation. Student representatives were aware of the review and its purpose.

118 The University has demonstrated a varied methods for involving students in enhancement activities, including setting up ad-hoc Working Groups or Task and Finish Groups with student representation or initiatives such as student internships for Learning and Teaching Enhancement Programme (LTEP) projects. Reports for the LTEP projects reflect on the value of using student interns for enhancement from ensuring lived experience learning, to having student input from multiple campuses. The University's approach appears impactful in delivering student-focused enhancement.

119 The University and Aberdeen University Students' Union (AUSU) have a Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) which is reviewed annually. The SPA outlines enhancement priorities for the University and AUSU which operate over a three-year cycle. Priorities are informed by student consultation with the Students' Union (SU), and analysis of student survey data, including from the Aberdeen Student Experience Survey (ASES) and NSS. Each project, sitting within the SPA is led by a student, a AUSU staff member and a University staff member in partnership. The SPA's implementation is overseen by a Steering Group that is chaired by the Dean for Student Support and Experience. The SPA Steering Group meets three times a year to review progress and produce an annual report. Updates from the SPA Steering Group are reported to the Student Support and Experience Committee, Equality and Diversity Committee, Quality Assurance Committee and Student Council demonstrating the University's embedded and strategic approach to resourcing student partnership.

120 In 2024-25 the SPA priorities included wellbeing and mental health, inclusion and employability. Initiatives delivered through SPA projects included engaging over 100 students in a student activities conference to train on employability skills gained from clubs and societies, training 88 students through Zero Suicide Alliance Suicide Awareness online modules and the delivery of a Black History Month Campaign. From 2025-26 the next theme is focussed on enhancing student spaces on campus. Most of the students who met with the TQER team were unaware of the SPA. Some student representatives told the TQER team that the SPA was superficial, rather than strategic. Senior staff reported that the University's approach to student partnership as articulated in the SPA, was improving and that the Adapting for Continued Success project would continue to strengthen the approach. The University and AUSU acknowledge that operational challenges such as workload pressures and competing priorities have limited the robustness of delivery and reporting on SPA projects. The approach to project delivery to support the SPA and project reporting has been revised for 2025-26 to address identified challenges.

121 The University is undertaking a review of the student representative system, co-led by the Vice President for Education and the Dean for Student Support and Experience, in partnership with AUSU and engaging sparqs for external best practice sharing in enhancement. The review seeks to evaluate the institutional strategic approach to partnership to ensure that the representative system works for the whole University and to improve engagement from students in representation. This review demonstrates the University's work to evaluate and enhance partnership. The University may consider, as part of the ongoing review of the representative structure, interventions to increase the visibility of the SPA at all levels of the institution, to strengthen the delivery and reporting on the SPA, and to explore further opportunities for partnership projects and activities at School level.

122 The AUSU is a key strategic partner for the University of Aberdeen in the institution's approach to student partnership. AUSU, with a mission of 'improving students' lives', delivers representation, advice services, clubs and societies, events and campaigns for University of Aberdeen students, both on campus in Aberdeen and internationally. AUSU's strategic plan details activity through to 2040, closely aligning with the timeline for Aberdeen 2040. The 2025 NSS results highlighted a score of 73.5% which was a 51 position drop in UK ranking (to 86th compared to 35th in 2024) in students' satisfaction on whether the Students' Union represents of students' academic interests. Examples of enhancements to the representation of students in progress, taken forward by AUSU, were provided to the TQER team, including the improvement of representation for the University of Aberdeen campus in Qatar with a planned AUSU staff and sabbatical officers visit in 2026 to enhance delivery of the Union model in Qatar.

123 The TQER team considers that the institution has established a strategic framework for student partnership, centred on the Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) and supported by strong governance structures and collaboration with the Students' Union. While the approach is clearly planned and resourced, and there are examples of meaningful partnership activity, the TQER team notes that awareness and engagement among the wider student body are variable, and that operational challenges have limited the full effectiveness of the current model. Ongoing work to review and strengthen partnership structures is therefore timely and appropriate.

Student representation

124 It is the view of the TQER team that the institution has a comprehensive and sector-aligned model for student representation, with structures that ensure students are represented at all levels of governance. The University and AUSU operate a class representative system which is active in all stages and modes of delivery with 811 representatives registered in the 2024-25 academic session. School Conveners are elected as lead representatives from each of the Schools. They act as both members of Senate and of School-level committees. The AUSU has elected sabbatical officers with remits covering education, welfare, activities and communities who take part in University-wide committees. The University has evidenced that their academic representative system meets sector expectations through mapping to sparqs Student Learning Experience (SLE) model and Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership. The SLE model ensures that students are represented at all levels of University governance and that feedback can flow effectively through existing institutional the structures.

125 Students who met with the TQER team were aware of their class representative and how to find the dedicated section of the MyAberdeen virtual learning environment (VLE) template that provides information on their class representatives. Students noted that the system was working and shared examples of situations where they had seen their class representative advocate for student interests. Student representatives noted that they were able to have constructive dialogue with course staff about student feedback and that they attended SSLCs twice per year to provide feedback. The TQER team heard from students that they do not always see changes made in response to their feedback, as these are made in the next academic year and positively impact the next cohort of students. While most changes, in response to student feedback, do not go into effect for the students who raise the issue, there were some instances of in-course changes that have been adopted for the benefit of the current student cohort shared with the TQER team.

126 The AUSA has developed training for course representatives, drawing on sparqs resources which it delivers annually. In 2024–25, this approach supported the training of 356 course representatives, with several Schools also running additional training sessions. Some student representatives told the TQER team that the training came late into the semester. The option to complete training online was seen as valuable when the scheduling of in-person timing clashed with other commitments. Some student representatives reflected that the role comes with added burden and stress in having to advocate for students and manage issues, which should be accounted for in how student representatives are supported.

127 Students and sabbatical officers reflected that there was a limited framework for reward and recognition of student representative activities. Student representatives can be given certificates that recognise their completion of the role. There is an ambition from University leadership and AUSU to introduce digital badges to recognise employability skills developed by representatives volunteering. Staff and students shared with the TQER team that engagement from course representatives can be challenging, noting that some SSLC meetings have only one student attend, where there should be multiple course representatives. The TQER team considers the review of the student representative system to be fundamental to enhancement in this area (see also paragraph 121). As part of this work the University might also consider various ways to maximise engagement with student representative mechanisms, ensure that course representatives are sufficiently supported to undertake the role and are provided with greater recognition for their work as a student

representative.

128 The TQER team considers that the institution has an embedded, proactive and effective approach to acting on student feedback and communicating resulting actions. The University demonstrates a strong culture of responsiveness, supported by clear mechanisms at institutional and School level. Both centrally and within Schools, the University has demonstrated a commitment to acting on student feedback and sharing any resulting changes with students. The University has a 'You Said, We Did' model which is widely utilised and embedded. A public webpage exists highlighting a wide number of changes made in response to student feedback. While practice varies across Schools, some Schools share a summary of 'You Said, We Did' changes at the start of each year. SSLCs act as a forum for sharing decisions with operating action trackers to monitor progress on student feedback. As part of the roll out of the new VLE template, a new section for 'You Said, We Did' updates are included on all course pages (see also paragraph 51). Students and staff reflected positively on the inclusion of a 'You Said, We Did' section within the new VLE template to the TQER team. Students at all levels were aware of changes that had been made and indicated that they knew about the 'You Said, We Did' approach. Staff highlighted that the inclusion of a 'You Said, We Did' section of the VLE template created a constant reminder to act on feedback and embedded the culture of student partnership in regular practice. The University's embedded approach to listening to the student voice, and staff commitment to enhancing the student experience which has led to meaningful change for students is considered to be a **feature of good practice**.

129 While results from the National Student Survey in 2025 show the University ranking in the third quartile at 80th out of 122 institutions on students' views on how clear it is that feedback is acted on at 65.5%, the TQER team noted a responsive and open culture of responding to feedback through embedded formal systems and staff dialogue with students. The University evidenced to the TQER team how it has acted on feedback and communicated this through enhancements such as School of Psychology introducing rubrics and clearer assessment guidance in response to student feedback, or the introduction of a PGR ComuniTEA event in collaboration with the SU in response to PRES survey responses, or the School of Medicine, Medical Sciences and Nutrition introducing a Ward Welcome programme to help students entering clinical placements. The processes and enhancements highlight an effective method for communicating outcomes from student feedback.

130 The TQER team found that the institution has well-established mechanisms that enable diverse student voices to be heard and to influence change, including for postgraduate researchers and students studying at transnational education (TNE) partner institutions. The University and AUSU have developed representative structures for postgraduate research (PGR) students. Two PGR student representatives from each School participate in SSLCs and other University committees. Students shared examples of when their representatives had acted on their behalf and raised issues at committees. Staff reflected that there was clear value in consulting PGR student representatives and co-creating enhancements that directly related to the PGR student experience. Staff provided examples including the development of a bespoke parental leave policy tailored to PGR students. Students and the AUSU sabbatical officers both reflected that PGR student engagement with the Students Association was less than that of other cohorts of students. Increasing connections between AUSU and the PGR student community was identified through the AUSU's 2024-25 Representation and Democracy Review, which explored the visibility, accessibility and effectiveness of AUSU's democratic structures. While there are

some challenges around engagement with the AUSU, the University's normal student voice mechanisms, including the PRES, and AUSU's representative structures do enable issues unique to the PGR student community to be raised through appropriate channels. The TQER team are supportive of AUSU's plans to continue to strengthen the voice of PGR students within institutional representative structures.

131 Students studying in transnational education partnership (TNE) settings benefit from similar representative structures to UK-based students. Students studying in Qatar have student representatives who sit on academic and strategic committees and attend SSLCs twice a year. Students in Qatar complete course review forms. AUSU has a Qatar Campus Committee with Union staff planning to visit the campus in 2026 to improve the Union offering. At SCNU, there are two student representatives per year, per programme who are also able to attend SSLCs. Staff noted that provision with SCNU is jointly delivered, as part of a partnership agreement. SCNU also has its own mechanisms for student voice. The TQER team heard examples of enhancements from TNE student feedback including SCNU students identifying issues with MatLab software being blocked, resulting in the University changing to more accessible software. Furthermore, feedback from students studying as part of the University of Aberdeen-SCNU joint delivery informed changes to the teaching structure from an initial four weeks of block teaching with flying faculty from the UK to a twelve-week block after students fed back this was too demanding alongside other courses. Students were aware of existing representative structures through which they could provide feedback on their learning experience. Staff highlighted that there are sometimes cultural challenges to getting feedback and this can result in more limited engagement from students. Whilst acknowledging these difficulties, the TQER team found that through reviewing minutes of SSLC meetings and student feedback surveys, the voice of students in partner institutions is effectively being heard and acted on.

Enhancement and quality culture

132 The TQER team found that the University of Aberdeen 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).

133 The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence including Institutional strategy and plans, quality assurance policy and process, samples from Annual Programme Review (APM), Annual Course Review (ACR), Internal Teaching Review (ITR), minutes of meetings and data sets. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including executive and senior leaders, academic and professional service staff, students and student representatives from the University and its partner institutions.

Embedded quality culture and leadership

134 The TQER team considers that the institution has an effective, well-embedded and strategically aligned culture of quality assurance, improvement and enhancement, evident across Schools, services and transnational education (TNE) partners. This culture is underpinned by strong governance structures, clear strategic direction, active staff engagement and well-designed processes that drive continuous enhancement. Staff across all groups were able to clearly articulate their roles within quality assurance and enhancement, and the team saw consistent evidence of these practices being embedded at School level and across TNE collaborative partners. The University's 2023 QESR similarly recognised the strength of institutional arrangements for monitoring quality and the strategic approach to enhancement, and the TQER team found that these effective arrangements remain firmly in place.

135 The Aberdeen 2040 strategy sets out a commitment to achieving the highest quality student experience in Aberdeen and at partner sites. Staff who met with the TQER team had a clear understanding of the aims of the Aberdeen 2040 Strategy and its four strategic themes. Staff understood how the underpinning action plans at University and School level inform institutional priorities. The TQER team were provided with examples of how the Aberdeen 2040 themes are mapped to course design requirements and drive initiatives such as School collaborations with the Estates Team to involve students in projects to improve campus sustainability (see also paragraph 21).

136 To support the preparation and delivery of education the University has produced the Five principles of Education which include Active Learning, Community Building, Assessment, Feedback and Accessibility and Inclusivity. The principles relate to a variety of teaching and learning methods and have been developed as micro credential CPD opportunities for staff and are co-delivered by students. Staff confirmed the value of these CPD opportunities and the impact they have in supporting, for example, approaches to de-colonising the curriculum.

137 The Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) plays a central role in sustaining the University's quality culture and, through effective sharing of practice among its members, promotes continuous improvement and enhancement across Schools, partners, and services (see also paragraph 10). Documentary evidence demonstrates QAC's oversight of an institution-wide approach to quality assurance while supporting School-level autonomy, for example in the management of assessment deadlines. Staff who met with the TQER team confirmed their understanding of this approach to safeguarding academic standards and the student experience across the institution. The TQER team considered this a well-balanced model, while noting that some students reported inconsistencies in practice. The University is therefore encouraged to continue monitoring the consistency of implementation, for instance in areas such as lecture capture and personal tutoring (see also paragraph 46, 80).

138 The TQER team considers that University leadership clearly value, effectively embed and routinely review quality assurance activity across the institution. The QAC works in collaboration with the University Education Committee (UEC) and School Education Committees (SECs) (see also paragraph 10, 11). There is evidence of effective institutional communication between these committees, which supports enhancement and improvement (see also paragraph 10). The successful introduction of an institution-wide course template for the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is an example of effective committee working and communication with a shared understanding of the improvement reported by staff (see also paragraph 51). The Centre for Academic Development (CAD) supports an institutional quality culture through its offer of bespoke training in response to issues identified through quality processes such as ITR and Annual Course Review (ACR) for example GenAI training (see also paragraph 142).

139 The TQER team considers that the institution wide culture of quality assurance, improvement and enhancement is making a positive and tangible impact on the student learning experience, even during a period of significant organisational transformation. Despite financial pressures and restructuring, the University has maintained academic standards, protected the student experience, and ensured that quality processes remain- robust across all contexts, including transnational education (TNE) partnerships. The University's Adapting for Continued Success (ACS) programme represents an explicit and strategic response to the financial challenges currently facing the higher education sector, and staff and students demonstrated a clear understanding of its purpose and described active involvement in the wider transformation agenda. Documentary evidence reviewed by the TQER team referenced resource and staffing pressures noted at QAC, and some students reported concerns that staff were overworked and that contact time was limited. Senior staff acknowledged the potential impact of transformation on the student experience and quality processes; however, further evidence from staff, students and partners indicates that the University has been effective in maintaining academic standards and sustaining an institution-wide quality culture at the time of the TQER. This culture is particularly evident in the commitment to embedding quality assurance processes across both new and existing TNE partnerships. During the review visits, the TQER team heard from Aberdeen campus and TNE partner staff that the link tutor plays a pivotal role in fostering a shared quality culture with partners, influencing areas such as assessment design (see also paragraph 20).

140 The TQER team found that the culture of quality assurance, improvement and enhancement is enabled by the University's leadership and governance arrangements. The Vice-Principal for Education holds overall responsibility for teaching and learning and is

supported by five institutional deans, including a Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement. There is an agreed leadership structure within schools where well established roles and reporting lines facilitate effective communication between the University committees and School-level academic and professional services staff. The Quality Assurance Committee Members Guide sets clear expectations for representation from each School and professional service on QAC, and staff confirmed that this representative model effectively supports a culture in which quality assurance and enhancement are visible, accessible and embedded in day -to-day practice. The TQER team learned that both the School Director of Education and the School QAC representatives play pivotal roles in leading and embedding quality processes (see also paragraph 10). Student representation is also embedded across University and School -level committees, and in meetings with undergraduate, postgraduate and TNE students the TQER team heard consistent evidence of a willingness among staff to engage with and respond to the student experience at both strategic and operational levels. Meetings with staff and senior leaders further confirmed a strong institutional commitment to delivering the highest quality student experience, including prioritising reviews of academic Schools to mitigate any impact of organisational change on students and award outcomes.

Institutional learning from quality assurance activities

141 The TQER team found that the ITR process is generating meaningful learning that is being used effectively to enhance the student learning experience and maintain academic standards (see also paragraph 26 -29). The ITR is described as a collaborative process engaging School staff and TNE partners in a period of critical reflection supported by external peers and student representation. The TQER team heard evidence which reflects this practice and confirms the engagement of TNE staff and students as partners in quality assurance processes.

142 Learning from ITR is systematically captured and monitored at institutional level through QAC, ensuring that themes emerging across Schools inform wider enhancement activity. The Centre for Academic Development (CAD), represented on QAC, responds to staff development needs identified through ITR, and staff confirmed CAD's role in sharing good practice and supporting engagement with enhancement activities following review outcomes. Staff across the University, including those in TNE settings, reported effective engagement with CAD in both proactive enhancement work and in addressing areas for improvement identified through ITR. Examples include the widespread adoption of the TESTA project to improve assessment and feedback, and the development of policy and resources to support staff in maintaining academic standards in the context of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI). Postgraduate research students also reported being well prepared for teaching and assessment roles through CAD support (see also paragraphs 66, 69, 72, 73, 75). The University's proactive approach to staff development enhancement activities led by the Centre for Academic Development which aligns with both strategic priorities and locally identified needs is considered to be a **feature of good practice**.

Data driven processes

143 The TQER team found a clear institutional expectation that data should underpin quality processes. Institutional overview reports on data, including sector benchmarking where appropriate, are routinely considered by relevant committees. These reports cover areas such as recruitment and admissions, degree classifications, Graduate Outcomes,

non-continuation data, postgraduate attainment, student withdrawals, National Student Survey (NSS) and other survey results.

144 The TQER team viewed a demonstration of the University's data dashboard, which supports engagement with quality assurance and enhancement activities. The dashboard was found to be comprehensive and user friendly with functionality to analyse data across a wide range of demographics, including protected characteristics. Staff responsible for Annual Programme Review (APR) receive a static data report to inform their submissions, but access to the dashboard varies beyond senior teams within Schools. The TQER team encourages the University to consider widening access to data to support more consistent engagement with data.

145 The Strategic Impact Analysis (SIA) and Self Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP) outline the ways in which data and student feedback inform quality enhancement. However, documentary evidence did not clearly demonstrate consistent data capture and use at School level. During the Main Review Visit, senior staff provided further explanation of ways in which data informs discussion and communication from the University committees to Schools via Directors of Education and QAC representatives. Academic staff confirmed this flow of information and noted that communication is supported by a Governance SharePoint site. Staff also reported that data reports, such as those on degree classifications and awarding gaps, are discussed at the UEC and shared with Schools, resulting in appropriate action being taken at School level. The TQER team heard from staff that the Planning and Governance team is working to strengthen the use of these data reports to enhance the student experience.

146 The regulations governing Programme and Course Development, ITR, APR and Annual Course Review (ACR) clearly articulate expectations for drawing on a broad evidence base. The TQER team reviewed examples of ITR reports and completed ACRs and APRs. While the templates require explicit consideration of pass rates, they allow considerable flexibility in the choice of additional data and evidence. Annual Programme Review Summaries produced by QAC demonstrate a strong focus on enhancing the student experience but make limited reference to data beyond NSS scores. Reports typically showed thoughtful engagement with student feedback from Course Feedback Forms, the NSS, Staff-Student Liaison Committees (SSLCs), and External Examiner Reports. Some reports also commented on metrics such as retention, attendance and engagement. However, the absence of clear guidance on required datasets results in inconsistent use of data across reports. The TQER team **recommends** that the University should review the datasets which are considered within course and programme review and ensure that staff are supported in the consistent use of this data to better understand and enhance the student outcomes and experience.

External engagement in quality assurance and enhancement

147 The TQER team considers that the institution's external outlook anchored in its Aberdeen 2040 strategy and its active engagement with partners, employers and professional bodies has driven meaningful innovation and enabled sustained quality improvement across the University and its transnational education (TNE) partnerships. External engagement is clearly influencing staff development, programme enhancement and the maintenance of academic standards.

148 The TQER team considers that the institution's engagement with external institutional peer review has had a positive and demonstrable impact on quality assurance,

enhancement activity and the student experience. The University has responded effectively to external recommendations, strengthened its alignment with sector expectations, and used the review process as an opportunity to build institutional learning. The TQER team found evidence that the University is using a range of external engagements to improve the student experience. The University received two recommendations from the Quality Standards and Review (QESR) in 2023 which were to be completed by the end of academic year 2022-23. The first recommendation was to ensure that all students have access to External Examiner Reports for their programme of study. External Examiner Reports are now available to all students on the VLE (see also paragraph 13). The second QESR recommendation was for the University to continue work to finalise the institutional approach to personal tutoring arrangements to ensure it provides equity of experience for the University's changing student population, particularly postgraduate taught students, and that the support provided is clearly communicated to all students. The TQER team were told by staff that personal tutoring arrangements have been finalised, and that information and guidance on pastoral support arrangements have been communicated. Senior staff confirmed a range of professional development is in place for staff providing pastoral support and that line managers monitor personal tutor engagement with students. The TQER team agreed that both recommendations have been complete and noted that this was confirmed at the 2024-25 Institutional Liaison Meeting (see also paragraph 80).

149 The Self Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP) reiterated the University's commitment to quality and presents a link to comprehensive mapping of University policies to the revised UK Quality Code (2024). Response to the Advice and Guidance in the Quality Code is led by the Academic Policy and Regulations Group (APRG) who make recommendations to the QAC on an annual basis. The SEAP action plan references preparation for the TQER and the TQER team found that staff and students were well informed and had contributed to the preparation of the SEAP. The existing quality leadership structure was utilised to gather and disseminate information via School education committees, Directors of Education, Heads of School and QAC representatives alongside staff forum events. The TQER team heard that the institution had learned, through this experience, how effective staff fora can be for developing practice and continuous improvement and that this approach will continue. The TQER team heard from student representatives that student involvement in TQER had also been positive and had, for example, improved understanding of the governance structures that support their education.

150 The University provided evidence of engagement with Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP). The STEP report described the development of a Quality Enhancement Steering Group (QESG) to oversee internal and external enhancement activities. The core remit of QESG is to ensure that institutional enhancement activities align with broader strategic priorities and are disseminated effectively to staff and students. Discussions and actions from QESG feed into governance structures through the Dean for Quality Assurance and Enhancement, who reports on external enhancement activities to QAC (see also paragraphs 69).

151 The University has used STEP funding to support its Learning and Teaching Enhancement Programme (LTEP). There are currently eight internal projects in progress relating to the STEP theme of 'Supporting Diverse Learner Journeys'. The CAD manages the LTEP and organises an annual symposium to showcase the outputs and impacts of the enhancement projects. Previous LTEP projects are published on the University web pages, including a project evaluation and plans for any next steps. Staff and students confirmed

engagement with the LTEP and awareness of projects, for example, the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) in assessment.

152 Both STEP and LTEP are included on the agenda for QAC and UEC. Information relating to enhancement activity is disseminated via School education committees and staff fora. The annual academic symposium celebrates the breadth of the STEP and LTEP engagement at the University and includes presentations from academic and support staff as well as student representatives.

153 Aberdeen 2040 identifies four strategic themes which reflect an ambitious inclusive global outlook at a strategic level (see also paragraph 3). The SIA outlined that the University regular consults with its partners. The TQER team found evidence of regular engagement with employers and placement providers. The University identifies that external engagement plays a major role in upholding academic standards. The University's effective relationships with sector and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) were described and confirmed during meetings with staff.

154 A clear example of the effectiveness of institutional global outlook and collaborative activity is the reported benefit on staff development. Staff from both Aberdeen and partner sites described the way in which the partnerships enabled sharing of good practice in both directions. Staff from partners confirmed the effectiveness of support, induction and CPD provided via the link tutor, CAD and staff exchanges. TNE staff expressed confidence in the University's quality assurance processes, drawing not only on their membership of QAC and active involvement in its discussions, but also on a range of other experiences that reinforced their understanding of the systems in place. Also notable was the sharing of practice and cultural understanding between partner sites, including arrangements for staff to buddy and shadow each other providing peer feedback on teaching activities (see also paragraph 17).

155 Overall, the TQER team heard from students and staff that the University is committed to ensuring that quality assurance activities are effectively implemented and form a key part of the overall organisational strategy. The University has strategies in place to enhance the student experience and share learning between staff groups which is supported by a valued staff development offer and ensures a reflective approach to continuous improvement.

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