



Scotland's Tertiary
Quality Enhancement
Framework

Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER)

University of the West
of Scotland

This review method
is ESG-compliant

October 2025

Contents

About the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review method	1
About this review.....	1
Review judgement and findings	3
Features of good practice	3
Recommendations for action	3
Contextual information about University of the West of Scotland....	5
Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment.....	6
Academic standards and awarding.....	6
Collaborative provision.....	8
Strategic leadership	9
Curriculum planning and design	11
Work-based learning.....	12
Learning environments	13
Staff development	14
Innovation in learning, teaching and assessment	17
Supporting student success.....	19
Enabling student success	19
Student transitions	20
Supporting diverse learners	21
Employability, skills development and lifelong learning	23
Complaints and concerns	24
Student engagement and partnership	26
Student voice	26
A culture of student partnership	28
Student representation.....	30
Student engagement in quality processes	31
Enhancement and quality culture.....	33
Embedded quality culture and leadership.....	33
Institutional learning from quality assurance activities	35
Data driven processes	36
External engagement in quality assurance and enhancement	36

About the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review method

The QAA website explains the method for Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER) and has links to the TQER handbook and other informative documents.¹ You can also find more information about the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA).²

About this review

This is a report of a TQER conducted by QAA at the University of the West of Scotland conducted by a team of five peer reviewers:

- Mr Mark Charters (Reviewer)
- Dr Pauline Hanesworth (Reviewer)
- Mr Rob McDermott (Reviewer)
- Ms Jasmine Millington (Student reviewer)
- Dr Paul Norris (Reviewer)

TQER is an evidence-based process. Review judgements result from the documents TQER teams see, the meetings they hold, and are informed by their experience.

In TQER, the 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, 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 allows 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).

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 (IRV) which took place on campus on 8-9 September 2025; and a Main Review Visit (MRV) which took place on campus on 20-23 October 2025.

The judgements 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.

1 About TQER: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/en/reviewing-quality-in-scotland/scottish-quality-enhancement-arrangements/tertiary-quality-enhancement-review>

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

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

Review judgement and findings

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

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

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

Features of good practice

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

- The University's response to the 2023 cyber-attack that demonstrated a highly student-led and strategically coordinated approach to crisis management. **(Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment)**
- The strategic and data-informed approach to portfolio sustainability and responsiveness that delivers curriculum that is relevant, aligned with industry, and meets students' and societal needs. **(Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment)**
- The consistent and embedded approach to work-related learning as a defining characteristic of learning, teaching and assessment that results in satisfied students who recognise its relevance, applicability, and central role in developing essential employability skills. **(Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment)**
- The strategically embedded and impactful culture of professional development for teaching and student-facing staff that enhances practice service delivery and evidences a commitment to continuous enhancement of the student experience. **(Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment)**
- The systematic and collaborative approach to supporting student success that delivers early intervention for students at risk and informing curriculum development to improve retention. **(Supporting Student Success)**
- The strategic and effective approach to the use of data for enhancement that impactfully informs assurance and enhancements of learning, teaching, assessment, and the wider student experience. **(Enhancement and Quality Culture)**

Recommendations for action

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

- The University should review its approach to student communication ensuring that there is a consistent and coordinated approach across academic programmes, professional services and the institution as a whole to ensure clear, effective, and consistent messaging to students. **(Supporting Student Success)**
- The University, in partnership with the Students' Union, should continue to work to enhance the engagement and support for student representatives, including improved uptake of student representative training, and enhancing representation at

Divisional level. (**Student Engagement and Partnership**)

- The University, in partnership with the Students' Union should, building upon a clearly effective and strong foundation of student voice, continue to champion a culture of partnership working with students at all levels of the University. (**Student Engagement and Partnership**)

Contextual information about University of the West of Scotland

1. The University of the West of Scotland (the University) is a multi-campus institution delivering programmes from five campuses, four located across the west of Scotland (Paisley, Lanarkshire, Ayr and Dumfries) and one in London. The University has full degree-awarding powers and offers programmes from SCQF levels 7-11.
2. The student population for 2024-25 was around 16,000 FTE with the largest number enrolled at the Paisley campus. There are just over 5,000 postgraduate students (taught and research) with the largest number based at the University's London campus. The remainder of students study on undergraduate or foundation programmes. Around 90% of students study full-time. The University also offers distance learning provision on several, mainly postgraduate, programmes.
3. The University serves a diverse student body: over 75% of students are over the age of 21, 45% are first in family to study at university, and around 30% of new entrants are from SIMD20 communities. There was a decline in student numbers from 2021-22 and 2023-24, particularly among Scottish domiciled students. Student numbers in 2024-25 show an increase on previous years for all student groups, with the most growth among international students. In 2024-25, 51% of new entrants were Scottish students, 6% were from rest of UK and 43% were international students.
4. The University has a focus on widening access with the largest number of articulating students in Scotland (64% of entrants are from Scottish colleges with Advanced Standing). The University also has validation and franchise agreements with seven colleges in Scotland to offer undergraduate degrees, including delivering six degree programmes with New College Lanarkshire as part the UWS and New College Lanarkshire (NCL) Undergraduate School. The University has a strong relationship with local industry and employers, and offers accredited programmes, Graduate Apprenticeships, and curriculum developed in partnership with employers to meet local and regional skills needs.
5. A new institutional strategy, Strategy 2030, was launched in spring 2025. This articulates the University's strategic vision for the next five years and is centred around three goals: maximising student success, creating and applying new knowledge, and growing global impact.
6. The University experienced a major criminal cyber-attack in 2023 which significantly impacted the University's systems and processes, including admissions, student records, and the virtual learning environment (VLE) and required an immediate, extensive cross-university effort to recover and rebuild.

Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment

7. The TQER team found that the University of the West of Scotland (UWS, the University) is **effective** in achieving excellence in learning, teaching and assessment. The institution has appropriate and systematically applied practices in line with sector expectations for achieving excellence in learning, teaching and assessment, including assuring and maintaining academic standards. The institution's practices make effective and accurate use of data, evidence and externality to demonstrate impact.

8. The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence including strategies and associated documents, governance and regulatory frameworks, committee and advisory and working group minutes and papers, institutional reports and information, policies, procedures, handbooks and guidance, external examiner reports, monitoring and review reports and related documentation, programme approval documentation. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including executive and senior leadership, key quality staff, a range of teaching staff, Programme Leaders, student support staff, Students' Union staff, professional and academic development staff, student representatives, and a range of undergraduate and postgraduate students, including those with significant work-based learning components.

Academic standards and awarding

9. The TQER team found that the University secures the academic standards of its awards through comprehensive governance and regulatory frameworks, including the Senate Committee Framework, the UWS Regulatory Framework for Academic Programmes and Awards, and the new Academic Quality Framework (AQF) which sets out clear processes for programme approval, monitoring, review, and amendment, and reflects an institutional commitment to continuous enhancement.

10. The TQER team noted that effectiveness of the governance structure is assured through annual and specific effectiveness reviews of Senate Committees, with external reviews scheduled on a five-year cycle. Annual and specific effectiveness reviews feed into the overarching Senate Effectiveness Review considered each June. The TQER team saw evidence of the impact of this process through targeted training, adjustments to committee membership and remits, and the introduction of the Senate Regulatory Framework Style Guide, which has influenced subsequent policy work, including the Learning Teaching and Student Success Policy Statement, and is expected to be used to inform and translate all student and staff regulations, policies and processes.

11. The establishment of a Policy Review Group (PRG) in 2024 to provide additional assurance and oversight provided further assurance to the TQER team that the University is actively maintaining and safeguarding the standards of its awards. A review of research degree regulations in 2024-25, resulting in updates to the UWS Regulatory Framework, confirmed to the panel that this maintenance and safeguarding applies equally across the levels.

12. The TQER team heard from senior management that governance processes also help ensure equity of experience across the University's multi-campus structure. Cross-campus

membership of institutional and School committees supports consistency of standards and the sharing of good practice. The rotation of strategic committee meetings across campuses was noted to reinforce inclusivity and visibility.

13. The TQER team found that externality is central to securing standards, particularly through the external examiner system. Examiners' reports are considered through the relevant committees and follow-up actions are identified. The TQER team noted the use of external examiner review to ensure consistency of academic standards and the student experience within programmes taught across multiple campuses and regarded this as evidence of how external engagement is used to highlight and address institution-specific issues. The TQER team noted that the University has implemented enhancements to induction, communication and guidance for external examiners. A recent review of the exam board system (completed and reported to Academic Quality Committee in May 2025) confirmed the robustness of the two-tier structure and recommended measures to strengthen and streamline examiner engagement. The TQER team considered this review to be explicitly evidence-based, informed by internal consultation and sector benchmarking, and reflective of the University's commitment to the evidence-informed enhancement of its quality processes.

14. The TQER team found that quality assurance processes are underpinned by reference to relevant external standards and expectations, for example QAA Characteristics Statement on Qualifications involving more than one degree-awarding body, and the UK Quality Code. Notably, in developing the AQF, and associated quality assurance processes, the University has made extensive reference to the TQEF. The introduction of the TQEF has provided a driver for institutional discussions around quality and enhancement. The University has used the TQEF as a foundation for developing Division, School and programme-level quality assurance activities, which has helped to encourage discussion of enhancement opportunities and to raise awareness of external expectations across the University. Staff provided the TQER team with the introduction of divisional reporting templates and NSS action plans as examples of institutional quality assurance and enhancement activities driven by TQEF. The importance of TQEF alignment as a driving force for change, and a reflective tool, throughout recent quality assurance developments was noted by senior management.

15. The TQER team found that the University makes consistent and effective use of relevant external frameworks, particularly the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), to provide clarity around the level and type of qualification. Programme outcomes and assessments are explicitly required to align with SCQF descriptors through the Regulatory and Curriculum Framework and the Assessment Handbook. The AQF further embeds SCQF alignment within programme approval, monitoring and review processes, which the TQER team considered to be a clear mechanism for maintaining coherence across the portfolio. Programme approval documentation seen by the TQER team demonstrated consistent reference to SCQF with recommendations from approval events indicating a focus on ensuring the appropriate credit rating and levelling of modules. The TQER team noted that other frameworks, such as Subject Benchmark Statements, National Occupational Standards, and industry standards are also drawn on, with their use varying appropriately according to discipline and programme type.

16. The governance framework has also been used to effectively respond to sector developments in academic integrity and Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI). The TQER team noted the introduction of the new Academic Integrity Procedure, informed by the QAA Academic Integrity Charter and supported by staff training and external expertise. The procedure is complemented by clear institutional guidance on AI, including principles embedded in the Assessment Handbook and an updated student assessment declaration requiring disclosure of AI use.

17. The TQER team noted a shift in language in policies, staff development activities, and quality assurance activities (particularly Annual Monitoring and Institution-Led Reviews (ILRs)), with an increasing focus on supporting and implementing an ethical and responsible use of GenAI in learning, teaching and assessment, and a recognition of its professional use. The impact of this work was confirmed in the student and staff meetings, where the team heard that staff development (from the Learning Transformation team) and student upskilling are supporting a cultural shift in the use of GenAI, with examples of AI being used as a reflective and/or creative tool rather than solely for text generation. Student feedback during the review visit suggested that understanding of appropriate AI use is improving, though further guidance for students would be welcome. The TQER team observed that staff attitudes are evolving, with some modules encouraging AI use as part of learning and assessment design, and some programmes embedding it as an explicit content topic in every year of delivery. Overall, the TQER team concluded that the University's approach is transitioning from a primary focus on maintaining academic integrity to one that also embraces the pedagogical and employability potential of AI.

18. The TQER team was satisfied that the University operates a structured and transparent approach to credit rating through its programme approval procedures, which includes due diligence and dialogue with external members. Annual reviews of credit rating activity are undertaken with any significant changes triggering re-approval. While no such re-approval has yet been required, the TQER team noted that summaries of annual reviews demonstrate continued scrutiny of credit values, for example, around the implications of changes in learning hours. The TQER team noted, however, that the SCQF logo was not used on all certificates for credit rated provision offered outside of the University's degree-awarding powers and would encourage consistency in this area.

Collaborative provision

19. The TQER team judged that quality assurance processes are working effectively with regards to collaborative provision. Much collaborative provision builds on existing relationships with shared understandings of quality assurance (for example, the introduction of the UWS and New College Lanarkshire Undergraduate School). The University has identified the deepening of collaboration with partners as a strategic objective as opposed to growing the number of partners and this is seen as assisting in the development of a coherent quality assurance culture across partners. The University is working to embed TQEF principles across its quality processes and will use this area of work to increase consistency and strengthen institutional oversight of collaborative provision going forward.

20. The importance of ensuring quality across collaborative provision is identifiable within recent management changes around learning and teaching; notably the revised remit for

Academic Quality Committee which makes explicit reference to overseeing collaborative provision, and the introduction of the AQF which defines responsibilities for the approval and management of collaborative provision. A commitment to continual improvement with regards to these processes is seen in how the TQEF Implementation Steering Group workstream on Partnership is continuing to review these arrangements, with a view to identifying further enhancements. Approval processes, for new collaborative provision, and reviews of existing provision, formally incorporate mechanisms, such as site visits to ensure partners are involved in processes (see also paragraph 50).

21. Established academic roles, notably the role of Link Tutors and expectation of a single Module Coordinator for courses taught across multiple campuses, form the basis for developing a collaborative culture around quality assurance and enhancement. The TQER team heard about ongoing work to strengthen these mechanisms, notably in terms of increased support for those in the role of Recognised Teachers of the University (RTUs) to more fully involve them within the practice of the University, such as by inclusion in training and staff development opportunities. Staff made clear reference to how the use of existing quality assurance mechanisms, such as markers' meetings, programme-wide moderation and external examiner review, helped ensure consistent academic standards across collaborative provision. Conversely, the TQER team were made aware of how teaching staff involved in health-related teaching engaged with external professionals to review the quality of their activities and enhance their skills.

Strategic leadership

22. The TQER team found that strategic leadership for learning, teaching and assessment is clearly defined and effectively led by Senate, supported by the Senate Committee Framework. The University operates within a distinct context, serving a diverse and changing student body. The TQER team heard how maintaining provision across five campuses reflects a deliberate commitment to regional equity.

23. These contextual factors were recognised to shape the University's educational priorities, which centre on student articulation, meaningful impact, and student satisfaction. The TQER team noted that these priorities are underpinned by institutional Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which are monitored through annual risk reporting both publicly and to University Court. The University's previous strategy, Strategy 2025, set ambitious performance targets. While many KPIs were disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent sector difficulties, the TQER team saw evidence of recovery in retention, sustained high National Student Survey (NSS) performance, continued sector leadership in widening participation, and strong international recruitment. Learning from Strategy 2025 has informed the design of Strategy 2030, which the TQER team considered a more focused and pragmatic framework with fewer KPIs and quarterly monitoring at School and Divisional level to enable early intervention.

24. The TQER team heard that the Strategy 2030 development process was highly participative, engaging staff, students and external partners. Students who contributed were able to identify how their feedback had influenced the final document. The TQER team heard that the Strategy's enabling plans have been cascaded to Schools and Directorates to inform local plans. This structured approach, supported by the My Contribution process (UWS'

annual staff performance appraisal framework), was viewed by the TQER team as establishing a clear line of sight between institutional priorities and individual objectives, reinforcing a culture of shared ownership. Staff in the meetings provided multiple examples of communicating and embedding the Strategy through School and Directorate meetings, Division Boards, newsletters, and partner engagement.

25. Strategic performance monitoring is underpinned by the use of data for continual enhancement. The Student Success Directorate (comprising Student Experience and Engagement, and Registry) and the Supporting Student Success Model (SSSM) (a model underpinning the way students interact with and are supported by the university in their studies (see also paragraph 63)) were viewed by the TQER team as mechanisms that enable leadership to respond proactively to performance trends. This was particularly seen in the Retention Task Force work (see also paragraph 66). Associate Deans of Learning and Teaching (ADLTs) monitor KPIs and coordinate targeted interventions at School level through School Boards.

26. The TQER team identified the Curriculum Framework (CF) as a key driver of educational enhancement. Introduced through Strategy 2025's Learning and Teaching thematic plan, the CF ensures a coherent approach to curriculum design and review via programme approval and annual and periodic monitoring. Staff described the Framework as empowering and flexible, enabling creativity and innovation while supporting consistency of approach. The TQER team heard multiple examples of its impact, including authentic and student-centred assessment design, embedding of work-based learning and inclusivity principles, and alignment of teaching and assessment with industry practice. Lecturers and Programme Leaders confirmed its value as a reference point and support mechanism for curriculum development and cited its influence during ILRs as instrumental in driving practice. The accompanying online resource was noted to support programme benchmarking and staff development (see also paragraph 54).

27. The TQER team found that leadership structures have evolved to strengthen collaboration and focus. A 2023 restructure introduced a PVC for Learning, Teaching and Student Success, ADLTs in each School, and new Directorates for Learning and Teaching Enhancement, and Student Success. Staff viewed this new structure as an evolution that brought greater clarity and mutual trust between central and School leadership. The TQER team recognised that the ADLT role has been particularly impactful in embedding a consistent, collegiate approach to learning and teaching enhancement, providing a vital link between institutional priorities and local implementation. The TQER team heard that the replacement of the Education Advisory Committee (EAC) with separate Learning and Teaching (LTC), and Student Experience Committees (SEC) was intended to provide a sharper focus on the student experience. This is reflected in committee minutes provided to the TQER Team, with more in-depth focus on student experience elements (e.g., student voice, start of the year, peer learning, ASPIRE, professional services activity, student experience and engagement policies and procedures etc.) within SEC than could be covered in the dual-focused EAC (see also paragraph 111).

28. Newly introduced School Learning and Teaching Forums (SLTFs) provide spaces for pedagogic discussion, feeding through Divisional and School Boards to Senate. Examples, such as the VLE Implementation Project demonstrated that feedback from these forums

informs institutional decision making. The TQER team was satisfied that these new arrangements are fostering a more collaborative and collegial culture, reflected in staff reports of improved retention, early intervention for disengaged students, and enhanced consistency of practice (see also paragraphs 54, and 62 and 124).

29. The TQER team acknowledged that the 2023 cyber-attack had a significant operational impact on the University and found that the institution's response demonstrated a highly people-led and strategically coordinated approach to crisis management. Staff and students described how swift and decisive leadership actions prioritised the protection of the student experience, ensured the continuity of key academic processes, such as graduation and enrolment, and maintained staff access to essential data. The post-incident strategy was observed to be multi-faceted and adaptive with institutional and system resilience and security monitored through formal governance structures, and with targeted initiatives – such as the reset of the Start of the Academic Year Project – supporting recovery and future preparedness. While some frustrations remain, such as with Multi Factor Authentication (MFA) requirements and legacy systems, most students and staff recognised the necessity of these measures and commended the University's leadership response. The TQER team identified the University's response to the 2023 cyber-attack that demonstrated a highly student-led and strategically coordinated approach to crisis management as a **feature of good practice**.

Curriculum planning and design

30. Oversight for curriculum planning is provided through the Portfolio Strategy Group, reporting to Senate. In 2023-24, a comprehensive portfolio review, supported by data and external expertise, led to the strategic withdrawal of several programmes and the development of a smaller number of new targeted offerings designed in response to specific workforce, demographic and regional skills needs.

31. Programme design and review are guided by the AQF and Curriculum Framework, which require explicit reference to external and industry engagement. Programme approval documentation demonstrates consistent reference to industry consultation, professional body expectations, and service user input into curriculum development, confirming that external engagement is central to curriculum relevance. The TQER team saw evidence of impact in the breadth of professionally accredited programmes, the expansion of Graduate Apprenticeships and the establishment of the UWS and New College Lanarkshire Undergraduate School. Programme Leaders described close collaboration with employers during recent revalidation exercises to ensure workplace-relevant content and delivery approaches. ILR reports further illustrate that employer engagement informs programme design, particularly around assessment practices, while Industry Advisory Boards provide direct input on curriculum content, graduate attributes, and assessment methods (see also paragraphs 37 and 79). Other demand-led initiatives, such as the Town Planning work-based learning programme, developed in partnership with local authorities, further illustrate the University's flexible and responsive approach to local workforce needs.

32. The TQER team were made aware of multiple examples of engagement with industry directly enhancing teaching and the student experience. Industry professionals and alumni contribute to teaching across a range of disciplines, notably within healthcare, arts and

media and computer game development. In addition, programme design and review documentation make explicit reference to the need for engagement with relevant industries. Reference to the requirements of external accreditation were mentioned by staff with regards to their curriculum design, even when this was not an explicit requirement for approval. Taken together, the TQER team saw strong evidence of engagement with external stakeholders which directly contributed to the authenticity of the learning experience and the employability of students.

33. Subsequent portfolio analysis has focused on enhancement rather than expansion, aligning with the University's retention priorities and the work of the Retention Task Force (see also paragraph 66). The TQER team identified the strategic and data-informed approach to portfolio sustainability and responsiveness that delivers a curriculum that is relevant, aligned with industry, and meets students' and societal needs as a **feature of good practice**. The TQER team found that the University adopts a robust and reflective approach to portfolio health, with clear alignment between its educational priorities, external drivers and regional responsibilities.

Work-based learning

34. The TQER team found that work-based and work-related learning (WBL and WRL) are strategic priorities within the University's portfolio, reflecting its commitment to employability, professional practice and regional impact. The TQER team noted that the expectation for all learners to engage in either WBL or WRL as part of their qualification is clearly articulated through the Work-Based Learning Procedure. Oversight is provided through this and through the AQF, Regulatory Framework, and Assessment Handbook. Taken together, these documents set clear expectations for the design, delivery and review of WBL. Monitoring is embedded within the University's established review processes, with positive practice identified through thematic reporting, and individual ILR reports.

35. The TQER team recognised that institutional leadership and coordination for WBL have been strengthened through the establishment of a Workplace Learning Team and the appointment of Workplace Learning Specialists. The TQER team also noted the positive contribution of practice-sharing mechanisms such as the Graduate Apprenticeship Pedagogy Group, the Learning and Teaching Management Group, and the annual Learning and Teaching Conference, which collectively support the exchange and enhancement of both WBL and WRL approaches.

36. The TQER team found that across the portfolio, WBL and WRL are implemented through diverse and discipline-specific approaches. Professionally orientated programmes such as nursing, midwifery, education and social work have long-established placement models, underpinned by mandatory training for practice educators and close collaboration with employers and the relevant professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). The TQER team noted that structured work-based learning opportunities are continuing to develop in other areas of provision, supported by the University's strategic plans to expand WBL capacity.

37. Students who engaged in both WBL and WRL spoke positively about their learning experiences and the impact on confidence, professional identity and employability. The

TQER team noted that these views are reflected in above-sector average satisfaction scores on related NSS questions. Students undertaking WBL particularly valued the flexibility shown by staff in accommodating work commitments and the quality of tripartite support from tutors and mentors. Students also expressed a desire for further access to placements and structured work-based opportunities where not already present, reinforcing the University's plans for expansion in this area. Students undertaking WRL emphasised that authentic learning and assessment, coupled with industry engagement, made their studies feel relevant, applied and valued.

38. The TQER team found that the University demonstrates a sector-responsive and consistently embedded approach to WRL across its academic provision. This is evidenced through the integration of live briefs, employer-informed modules, industry-led teaching and assessment, and the widespread use of authentic assessments. These features are underpinned by sustained and meaningful industry engagement in programme approval, monitoring and review processes (see also paragraph 30). The TQER team identified the consistent and embedded approach to work-related learning as a defining characteristic of learning, teaching and assessment that results in satisfied students who recognise its relevance, applicability and its central role in developing essential employability skills as a **feature of good practice**.

Learning environments

39. The TQER team found that the University's approach to learning environments, resources and technologies is informed by clear strategic intent. Consideration of learning resources at programme level is underpinned by the Curriculum Framework and reviewed through annual monitoring, ILRs and programme approvals. The TQER team agreed that these arrangements ensure that resource and infrastructure planning remain closely aligned to pedagogical intent and programme design.

40. The TQER team recognised that the University's approach to enhancing its learning environments and digital infrastructures has been significantly influenced by the 2023 cyber-attack. In response, the Digital Transformation Project was refocused in 2024 into a two-year VLE Implementation Project. This was also in response to survey evidence and ILR findings that highlighted inconsistent VLE use and variable impact on student experience. The TQER Team observed that the project is underpinned by a co-created VLE Framework, which aims to promote consistent design and pedagogical alignment, supported by guidance, templates, and training for staff. Governance of the project was found to be robust with oversight provided by a dedicated project board, clear baseline measures, mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating impact, and regular reporting through the Learning and Teaching Committee. The TQER team agreed that this reflected a well-structured change management process in line with the University's response to a recommendation concerning the implementation of change from their last external review (Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) in 2023).

41. Staff described how their digital capability is being developed across Schools through targeted training, peer support and direct assistance from Digital Learning Technologists and Learning Designers. These roles were described as instrumental in supporting programme teams to redesign modules and assessments to make effective use of the VLE and other

digital tools. This aligns to an intentional focus on enhancing digital learning, teaching and assessment. Students and staff recognised improvements in structure and ease of navigation in the VLE, but also highlighted variable practice, continuing limitations in accessibility, occasional enrolment issues, reliance on other platforms for assessment, and instances of outdated material. The TQER Team heard that the Framework has been released prior to the new VLE being introduced to support staff to begin adopting a more consistent and accessible approach. The TQER team endorses this direction of travel and would encourage the University to facilitate institution-wide implementation of the VLE Framework, supported by continued staff upskilling, to ensure a consistent and accessible digital learning experience for all students.

42. The TQER team found that the University is progressing well with related projects to strengthen library and learning resources, using analytics to inform enhancement decisions. Following a 2024 Cabinet Office audit that identified accessibility issues in online guides, the Library Guides Accessibility Project was launched. The University used this as an opportunity to review and rationalise its Libguides, reducing the total number, improving design and accessibility, and achieving over 60,000 student views in the two months following relaunch. In parallel, a Module Reading Lists project targeted modules with lower learning resources satisfaction scores in the NSS, improving integration of reading lists within the VLE and increasing staff use of analytics as well as student interaction with digital resources. Both initiatives were recognised by the TQER team as examples of effective, data-informed enhancement (see also paragraphs 89 and 131).

43. The TQER team observed that physical learning environments continue to evolve in alignment with the Curriculum Framework and Strategy 2030 priorities. Investment in facilities such as simulation and immersive suites, digital laboratories, and flexible learning spaces supports active, practice-based and collaborative learning. Staff confirmed that the Learning Spaces Toolkit provides structured guidance to staff on designing inclusive and interactive learning environments. The 'Talk Your Timetable' initiative, which was introduced in 2024-25, was described by staff as transformative, enabling constructive dialogue with timetabling teams to match pedagogic requirements with available space, reducing administrative burden and improving alignment between teaching methods and physical spaces.

Staff development

44. Oversight for teaching-focused professional development is provided through Learning and Teaching Committee, via the Learning and Teaching Management Group, where ongoing evaluation is submitted and discussed to inform continuous improvement. Oversight of broader staff professional development is provided by the Directorate of People and Wellbeing. Each Directorate and School also has responsibility for ensuring professional development of their staff and teams at the local level (for example, through School Leadership Teams).

45. The TQER team heard of a strategic and joined-up approach to academic development underpinned by three key drivers: supporting institutional priorities such as Strategy 2030, the Curriculum Framework and the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF); influenced by career roles and stages; and informed by lessons learned from

institutional quality assurance processes. The TQER team confirmed that the University has prioritised the professional development of staff and students who teach and support learning in response to a 2023 QESR recommendation. The TQER team heard that broader staff development is influenced by colleague surveys, employee forums and working groups, as well as data via the My Contribution process.

46. The TQER team found that there is a coordinated breadth of teaching professional development provision offered to staff by the Learning Transformation Team. The Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PgCAP), which was revalidated in 2023, enrolled 113 participants between 2023 and 2025, with strong completion rates and a reported impact on teaching. The PgCAP has now been opened to relevant professional services staff (for example, technicians) to support pedagogy in all student-facing roles, and to Students' Union sabbatical officers. The sALTiRE (Academic Learning and Teaching Routes for Excellence) experiential route to HEA Fellowship moved to a cohort model which was reported to be a contributing factor to an increase in success from 75% to 94%. Overall, HEA Fellowship rates have remained above sector average since 2021 with participation across both academic and professional service colleagues. UPLIfT (UWS Professional Learning and Innovation for Teaching) continuing professional development (CPD) is a programme of cross-institutional staff development events ranging from short online drop-in sessions to practice-sharing events, through to targeted training delivered through a series of sessions. The TQER team heard that the University had pivoted away from offering a broad range of opportunities to streamed strands (for example, GenAI, inclusive practice, reasonable adjustments) in order to respond to staff capacity pressures and sector developments, and to ensure alignment to strategic priorities, leading to increased engagement (see also paragraph 135). The TQER team noted that centralised provision of professional development opportunities was complemented by a wide range of localised CPD offered at the School-level, including development workshops, opportunities for sharing best practice, peer observation, role-induction for module coordinators, equipment training for simulation/immersive suites, and support for external partners such as NHS staff, as well as School-level forums routinely sharing and scaling practice.

47. Professional services staff described their staff development as active, broad and impactful. The development opportunities available to professional services staff include structured management and leadership programmes, such as wellbeing leadership and the University's own version of Aurora, internal secondments, communities of practice, membership and recognition via sector bodies (for example, ALDinHE, CILIP, NAMA), certified practitioner routes, and HEA Fellowship for relevant roles, as well as informal shadowing, research reading groups, and the learning derived from engagement in institution-wide and role-relevant projects (see also paragraph 135).

48. The TQER team also confirmed a strong focus on role-based support. For programme leadership, a Programme Leader Network was launched to support Programme Leaders to take a strategic approach to their roles. This network was consistently referenced by staff as a useful mechanism for sharing best practice, upskilling, and engaging Programme Leaders in institution-wide projects. A Senior and Principal Fellows Network has been established, aiming to provide a community to lead and support learning enhancement activity, sharing of best practice, and the provision of mentors and coaches. The TQER team heard that the Senior and Principal Fellows Network had been instrumental in leading learning exchanges

across the University's campuses. For PGR students who teach, the Doctoral College – in addition to sALTiRE – coordinates support including opportunities for shadowing staff, provision of marking guidance, and targeted seminars on assessment and feedback. While the 2025 PGR Student Experience Survey identified a perceived lack of development in relation to teaching skills, staff outlined that plans are in place to embed "New to Teaching at UWS" content (an online programme, developed by Learning Transformation which forms part of the onboarding process for all staff with learning and teaching responsibilities) in PGR development.

49. For research supervision, the TQER team saw and heard that the University relaunched supervisor development in 2024-25 with on- and offline provision, a bi-monthly forum, and access to the UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE) recognition scheme (Associate and Full awards) as part of a Scottish network. Participation in the range of activities on offer was described as strong with feedback loops through the Doctoral College Board. While training is not mandatory, supervisors reported active engagement, team-based support, and strengthened understanding of the expectations of effective supervision. The TQER Team considered the impact of these activities to be reflected in a trend of increasing satisfaction with supervision in the PGR Student Experience Survey.

50. For collaborative provision and transnational partners, developmental support is aimed at Recognised Teachers of the University (RTUs). The TQER team noted the key role of the Link Tutor, who provides regular induction, opportunities for RTUs to shadow teaching, first-run assessment workshops, and ongoing contact, with annual reports and Collaboration Manuals framing expectations. The TQER team heard that plans are in place for policy and practice for RTU development to be systematised (see also paragraph 21).

51. The TQER team heard that academic career development and recognition are supported through the Academic Career Development Framework and aligned promotions process, which expects staff engagement with professional development activities. The University monitors outcomes across different academic pathways and identifies actions where disparities emerge, which the TQER team agreed reflected a commitment to parity across career routes.

52. The TQER team noted that these activities appear to be contributing positively to students' experience, aligning with a longer-term trend of increasing satisfaction with teaching, assessment and feedback, and learning opportunities in the local Student Experience Survey, above sector average and improving scores in teaching, learning opportunities, and assessment and feedback in the NSS, and the previously mentioned trend of increasing satisfaction with supervision in the PGR Student Experience Survey. The TQER team heard that these activities were also contributing to positive internal trends from colleague-survey data. Team leaders, senior management and staff described tangible changes in practice and confidence from PgCAP, sALTiRE, UPLIfT and conference participation, such as data-informed enhancement, redesigned tutorials, small group facilitation, and authentic assessment. Professional services colleagues reported direct student impact from specialist training, such as benefits advice leading to correct entitlements, mental health first aid and Charlie Waller training leading to enhanced frontline triage, and digital upskilling leading to improved digital and resource navigation.

53. The TQER team agreed that, collectively, this breadth and depth of offering demonstrate a strategically embedded and impactful culture of professional development for teaching and student-facing staff which enhances practice service delivery and evidences a commitment to continuous enhancement of the student experience and have identified it as a **feature of good practice**.

Innovation in learning, teaching and assessment

54. The TQER team found that the University demonstrates a mature and reflective culture that actively enables innovation in learning, teaching and assessment. Innovation is not confined to isolated projects but is sustained through strong frameworks, for example, the Curriculum Framework and Academic Quality Framework (see paragraph 26), strategic leadership (see paragraph 27), structured support (see paragraphs 44-52), and a strong sense of community across Schools, campuses, and professional areas. The TQER team recognised that innovation is fostered through a deliberate balance of top-down direction and bottom-up creativity. Senior leaders described an approach that encourages staff to experiment within clear strategic frameworks, identifying where practice should be mainstreamed and where local initiatives should be allowed to evolve organically. This was confirmed to the TQER team through meetings with lecturers, Programme Leaders and professional services staff.

55. This culture is sustained by an active community of practice that brings together academic and professional services. The TQER team heard that the Learning and Teaching Enhancement team (including Digital Learning Technologists and Learning Designers) acts as an enabler, supporting staff to pilot and scale new approaches. The TQER team also heard that cross-school collaboration is facilitated through ADLTs and through the wide-range of School-based and central development activities available (see also paragraph 46), especially the annual Learning and Teaching Conference.

56. Institution-wide initiatives are used to steer strategic priorities while creating scope for contextual adaptation. The TQER team identified the University's ASPIRE curriculum as exemplifying this approach. Initially conceived as single structured modules for academic and professional development, ASPIRE was paused and reframed following recognition that this approach was not working, something the TQER team agreed demonstrated a commitment to continual reflection and enhancement. The redesigned approach introduced School working groups, supported by Learning Transformation, enabling programmes to tailor content to their disciplines and student profiles. Staff described this approach as empowering and evaluation is planned for April 2026. The TQER team heard evidence from programmes such as nursing, dentistry and biosciences that ASPIRE is influencing wider curriculum design and integration of professional and research skills within their subject areas. Students valued ASPIRE's contribution to their development of confidence, self-reflection and career-readiness (see also paragraph 65).

57. The TQER team noted that assessment feedback has been identified as an institutional priority for enhancement through both external examiner reports and internal analysis of survey comments. Staff described a wide range of approaches designed to strengthen the quality, consistency and developmental value of feedback including personalised discussions, feedforward conversations, and the use of peer feedback to

promote reflection and dialogue. Standardisation and calibration activities occur across Schools, supported by shared rubrics, pre- and post-assessment moderation forms, and team marking meetings. The TQER team also heard about initiatives to enhance students' feedback literacy, supported through ASPIRE and academic skills development activities, that help students interpret and act on feedback more effectively. The TQER team noted that this work is having a measurable positive impact, with continued improvement in NSS results and performance consistently above the Scottish sector average on the helpfulness of feedback question. While students acknowledged some continued variation in feedback practice across modules, the TQER team recognised the progress achieved and would encourage the University to continue to embed and consolidate this work, particularly in developing feedback literacy and ensuring consistency of approach.

58. The TQER team saw evidence of several bottom-up initiatives, enabling context-specific innovation such as projects on placement design, student-parent support and digital pedagogy. A noted example is the peer review of teaching (ProTiP) scheme, a developmental peer-observation scheme that was launched in the School of Education and Social Sciences in 2024-25. The TQER team heard that, following a successful pilot, PRoTiP has been introduced at the London campus and has since been shared with other Schools who are considering if and how it might be implemented for their teams. Staff praised its non-judgemental ethos and reciprocal design, which encourages reflection and confidence in teaching practice (see also paragraph 123).

59. Overall, the evidence reviewed and the review visits confirmed to the TQER team that the University of the West of Scotland is effective in achieving excellence in learning, teaching and assessment. The TQER team agreed that institutional approaches are data-informed and evidence led, with strategic and operational decisions routinely guided by performance metrics, survey intelligence, thematic analysis and outcomes from quality assurance and enhancement processes. The TQER team also found that externality is embedded across programme approval, monitoring and enhancement activity, with the University actively drawing on the expertise of external examiners, industry and professional partners, and sector benchmarking to inform policy development, practice enhancement and innovation.

Supporting student success

60. The TQER team found that the University of the West of Scotland'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. The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence including institutional strategies, policies and procedures, annual and project reports, student survey results, and case studies of good practice. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including student representatives, students, senior leaders, academic and professional support staff

Enabling student success

61. The University expresses a strong strategic and leadership commitment to addressing wellbeing, inclusion and equality in enabling student support with the University's Strategy 2030 placing student success at the heart of institutional priorities. This strategic commitment is further evidenced through the new leadership role of the Vice-Principal for People and Student Wellbeing, introduced in 2024, who is responsible for delivering a whole-university approach to wellbeing and inclusion that encompasses both staff and students.

62. Student support is delivered through two institutional directorates, the Directorate of Student Success and the Directorate of People and Wellbeing, along with the Students' Union, and through local activities at School- and programme-level. The Directorate of People and Wellbeing is a new Directorate that integrates staff and student wellbeing services with occupational health, sport, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). The institutional Student Experience Committee (SEC) is responsible for the governance and oversight of student support with the Learning and Teaching Committee also considering student-facing policies. Student Partnership Forum as a sub-committee of SEC ensures the inclusion of the student voice on matters of student support (see also paragraph 102). As noted earlier in this report, the TQER team heard that changes to leadership structures have provided a sharper focus on the student experience and strengthened collaboration across professional services and academic teams to deliver a more effective approach to student support (see paragraph 27).

63. The Supporting Student Success Model (SSSM) articulates, at institutional level, that student support will be delivered through a combination of professional services, academic support and peer support through personalised, proactive engagement with the University's diverse student body. This research-informed model developed from an institutional focus on student retention with a multi-year and multi-strand approach employed to understand and address the causes of student attrition and was approved by the University's Senate in June 2022. The TQER team found that the model was well understood by staff, particularly at senior level and within the Directorate of Student Success, and has led to a consistent approach to identifying and responding to issues which may affect student success through shared data sets and university-wide initiatives.

Student transitions

64. The TQER team heard of a co-ordinated institutional approach to support effective transition into the University through the Start of Year model. The model is made up of several elements, including the pre-arrival questionnaire (PAQ), induction, and enrolment, and is supported by the use of data with the impact of these activities tracked using metrics such as student engagement. The PAQ gathers data from students about their support requirements prior to enrolment which is made available to staff through dashboards and reports to enable them to make appropriate preparations and adjustments for individual students or whole student cohorts as required. The University delivers summer sessions for college students to support their transition into the University, giving students time and space to meet staff, other students, and become familiar with support services. School welcome session briefings are a key component of the induction of new students to the University. The briefings use a consistent format across the institution to ensure all students receive the same key information. A programme induction checklist is also provided to programme teams to ensure a consistent induction experience at programme level. A University reinduction is provided after first year to support transition to the next level of study. Student engagement with these start of year activities is high and student feedback on welcome, induction and transition activities at the University is positive.

65. Beyond the induction period, ASPIRE and Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) are key initiatives which aim to further support student transition and retention. The ASPIRE initiative embeds academic, professional and personal development within the curriculum to support student success. The ASPIRE modules were implemented in a selection of Level 7 modules in 2022-23 and in one disciplinary area from 2023-24 at Level 8. Student and staff feedback and engagement have informed a new ASPIRE Blueprint for a refreshed cross-institutional implementation from academic session 2025-26. The number of students who have participated in ASPIRE is currently quite low, and an evaluation of its impact is yet to take place, although the TQER team heard from students who had experienced the initiative that it has contributed to their career readiness and supported their academic, personal and professional development. PASS is a peer mentoring scheme and involves PASS Leaders delivering weekly, one-hour study sessions with students from lower years to create a sense of belonging and support engagement with their studies. These sessions were developed during 2023-24 and piloted by in six programmes in 2024-25, involving 26 PASS Leaders. Although the TQER team heard about the positive impact of PASS on the peer mentors, the team were unable to meet any recipients of PASS and understand that the scheme is in the early stages of its development. The TQER team understand that PASS is part of a wider programme of work around peer education at the University which is overseen by the Peer Learning and Support Steering Group. The objectives for the next phase of this activity include consultation on peer education models at UWS beyond PASS, and an evaluation of the pilot PASS schemes, although the outcomes of these were not available at the time of review (see also paragraph 111).

66. The TQER team saw clear evidence of the effectiveness of School Retention Task Forces (RTFs) as a mechanism to provide early intervention and transitional support for students. The TQER team considered these to be an exemplar of data-informed cross-institutional working. Through the work of the RTFs, Early Intervention Specialists (dedicated

roles with the Directorate of Student Success) deliver pro-active support to students identified as at risk of attrition. Data is used to identify and address retention hotspots, such as 'killer modules' with high failure rates, and patterns in student withdrawal, which is reported to School Learning and Teaching Fora and School Boards for further action. The TQER team noted the impact of RTFs on the practice of academic staff in using data to deliver support for students who have started to disengage, and on the University's retention figures which have improved across all student groups.

67. The Careers Team offers a range of support for students transitioning out of their studies at the University. The support available includes career and post-study options, and student-facing opportunities including the Employability Award, Volunteer Recognition Award and Employer Mentoring Programme, with high student engagement across these. The TQER team found that students were aware and appreciative of the range of careers support available to them, and that it had a demonstrable impact on their preparedness for work or further study.

68. Students were generally aware of the range of transition-focused support initiatives offered to them by the University. Students who had benefitted from these initiatives noted the positive impact on their personal and academic development. International students were aware of some of the support offered by the University to assist with their transition into the UK, but there was some lack of awareness and understanding of the broader suite of resources and services available (see also paragraph 72).

69. The TQER team found evidence of systematic reflection on transition activities through the monitoring of attendance at summer sessions, School welcome sessions, induction and other events, and evaluation of specific initiatives. The evaluative feedback was used to make improvements to transition activities in subsequent years. The TQER team considered that the University provides comprehensive and effective transition support through a range of mechanisms and engagement activity that is research-informed, continually reviewed and enhanced.

Supporting diverse learners

70. The TQER team saw a range of evidence that demonstrated a robust understanding of the diverse and widening access student population, with a high percentage of students from SIMD20 communities, a large percentage of students who are first in family, as well as a growing number of international students. The TQER team found that the University provides an effective individualised learning experience promoting student success.

71. The TQER team confirmed that the University has put in place a comprehensive student support system which is available to all students, including online, international and remote and rural students. Support comprises a range of student-facing services that students can access on demand in a variety of formats, along with proactive initiatives where university services reach out to students. The TQER team observed that effective dedicated support operates through each campus' Student Hub including academic skills, careers, counselling and wellbeing, and funding and money advice. Evidence of consistency of standards and the sharing of good practice across all campuses was confirmed by teaching and professional services staff. The TQER team also saw evidence of strong, supportive and

consistent partnership working between Schools and professional student support services within a range of collaborative activities, for example in early intervention with students identified as at risk of disengaging.

72. The University provides support for specific student groups and feedback shared with the TQER team indicated that students were generally satisfied and appreciative of the support provided for learners with specific needs; for example, learners with caring responsibilities, remote learners, and disabled learners. Students indicated that services provided by the University genuinely addressed the issues they were facing; for example, the School of Health and Life Sciences adjusting assessments and timetabling to support students with caring responsibilities. Professional services staff also noted that they are provided with specific training to assist students from diverse backgrounds, including the management of benefits or applying for financial assistance.

73. The University's Supporting Student Success Model (SSSM) incorporates an integrated approach to academic advising delivered through the ASPIRE modules. While the University works to embed ASPIRE across all programmes, there is currently no single model of academic advising. However, the TQER team heard that each student has a named member of staff for academic support who may be a personal tutor, an academic advisor, year lead, or Programme Leader depending upon the nature of the programme and size of cohort. The TQER team heard that students are informed of academic advising arrangements at induction, and through the student handbook. Students were aware of who to approach should they needed academic support and satisfied with the support they receive. The effectiveness of academic support arrangements is further evidenced in positive results in a range of student surveys, and the University proactively monitors student feedback, including complaints, to respond to any issues regarding academic support.

74. Student support teams indicated that there were resources available for international students regarding adjusting to living in the UK along with general academic skills support that is available to all students, in addition to dedicated international student support through the Student Hub at each campus. Academic staff were able to provide further examples of how they addressed the specific needs of international students, such as through offering a bilingual alternative to a Staff Student Liaison Group (SSLG) space in the Health and Life Sciences School (HLSS) and proactively changing the content of the MEd programme at the London campus to be less Scotland-centric based on valuable student contributions and reflections (see also paragraph 122). The TQER team heard from some international students that they were either not aware of or did not participate in support and development opportunities, sometimes due to the differences in communications about these opportunities. The TQER team would therefore encourage the University to improve awareness and understanding of the range of support resources and opportunities available to international students.

75. The TQER team noted that student support activities are data informed. The University has created a suite of dashboards which collate various data sets (recruitment, forecasting, satisfaction, attainment) to provide a high-level wellbeing level indicator for all students and to highlight those students who may be at risk of disengaging from their studies. The TQER team also saw evidence of the effective use of student engagement tracking across Schools and services, including early interventions based on student engagement analytics as well

as Quick Polls. Staff are effectively supported to use and access these dashboards through the “New to Teaching at UWS” programme. The Programme Leader Network also supported more advanced dashboard use through the sharing of practice and inviting members of the data team to deliver bespoke sessions. The TQER team found systematic evaluation of student support through the monitoring of service usage and survey data analysis that directly informed the development of action plans, evidencing a culture of continual improvement and enhancement.

76. The TQER team noted that students generally recognised the range of student support services that are available to them and expressed confidence that they would be successfully signposted to the correct support services by staff. High levels of satisfaction across all subjects and campuses in the University’s support services are also recorded in internal student surveys. Students had particular recognition of the role of the Student Hub noting this would be the primary contact point to access student support, and this was further confirmed in the Professional Service Review (PSR) of the Student Hub. Students were aware, and appreciative of the fact that the Hub could be accessed in a variety of ways, such as through a dedicated WhatsApp channel, a website, phone line, or in-person contact.

77. The TQER team found strong and consistent evidence of a partnership approach between student services and academic schools that incorporates anticipatory and targeted support for all students. There was clear evidence that there was policy alignment between specific and timely wellbeing support to students and staff, effective onboarding, development and specialist support of staff, and wider campaigns, activities and services. This approach also included the systematic use of data to inform interventions and close partnership working between professional student support services and schools. The TQER team considered the University’s systematic and collaborative approach to supporting student success delivering early intervention for students at risk and informing curriculum development to improve retention as a **feature of good practice**.

78. The TQER team found that while students’ perception and usage of support services was generally positive, the communications regarding these could be overwhelming, both in terms of the variety of support available, and in the variety of methods of communication. The University acknowledges that the coordination of student communications is an area prioritised for future development with the PVC Learning, Teaching and Student Success as the lead on this area of work. The TQER team also noted that communication practices at programme level vary, with students describing multiple and sometimes overlapping communication channels, leading to missed or duplicated messages, particularly – though not limited to – information about online class locations. The TQER team considered that the new VLE and associated Framework might offer an opportunity to bring greater coherence to digital communication and information sharing. The TQER team **recommends** that the University reviews its approach to student communication ensuring that there is a consistent and coordinated approach across academic programmes, professional services and the University as a whole to provide clear, effective, and consistent messaging to students.

Employability, skills development and lifelong learning

79. The TQER team saw evidence that the University effectively supports employability, skills development and lifelong learning through curriculum innovation, working closely with

industrial partners in a range of ways, and providing targeted careers advice. Institution-Led Review (ILR) reports further illustrate that employer engagement informs programme design, particularly around assessment practices. Industry Advisory Boards provide direct input on curriculum content, graduate attributes and assessment methods. Examples included embedding AI, data science, enterprise and entrepreneurship, and authentic assessment of reflective practice (see also paragraph 31).

80. The TQER team noted that the University has recently undertaken a review of assessment practices, leading to enhancements such as standardised coversheets, improved assessment mapping, revised scheduling, and the new Assessment Handbook. Meetings with staff and students confirmed that assessment practice has moved toward more authentic, applied and inclusive approaches. Guided by the Curriculum Framework, programme teams described assessments that mirror professional and real-world contexts. In nursing and health, theory-led practical assessments were noted to strengthen links between academic and professional competence. For example, negotiated work-based assessments enabled students to co-design tasks relevant to the workplace. The TQER team heard how the Learning Transformation team plays a central role in supporting innovative assessment design and the use of digital tools, helping to ensure that assessments remain current, engaging and aligned with employability outcomes.

81. The TQER team saw evidence that the Workplace Learning (WPL) Team (within Business Innovation) has worked with academic teams to create curricula that focus on labour market needs and have been particularly active in the development of GA programmes. They established a standard consultation process using Industry Advisory Boards and Groups across the University to develop curriculum through engagement with employers, industry and professional bodies, as well as systematic market research, to ensure programmes are delivering on employability and the skills agenda (see also paragraphs 31 and 35).

82. The University's effective approach to embedding work-related learning within all programmes has been noted earlier in this report (see paragraphs 36-38) The TQER team found that the MProf in Professional Practice exemplifies this responsive and sector-leading approach to programme development with employability at its heart. The programme enables students to design flexible pathways based on their professional context and explicitly incorporates recognition of prior and experiential learning. Students who met the TQER team reported valuing the programme's flexibility in accommodating work and caring commitments, its contextual relevance, and the accessibility of the experiential claims process.

Complaints and concerns

83. The TQER team found that the University has a robust and responsive complaints handling process which aligns to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) Model Complaints Handling Process with an emphasis on resolution and learning from complaints. Most complaints are handled at a local level (83% of complaints were resolved at Stage 1 in 2023-24) and responded to quickly. The Student Partnership Forum (SPF) and School-based SSLGs provide further formal opportunity for issues to be raised. Minutes from both of these fora provided to the TQER team demonstrated a thorough approach to consideration

and discussion of issues raised, and that follow-up action was identified, tracked and monitored through later meetings.

84. Despite hearing from staff that signposting to the complaints process was included in the content of induction materials, students generally had a limited perception and understanding of the formal institutional complaints processes. However, of the students who met with TQER team, none had needed to engage with these processes and students repeatedly expressed to the TQER team their willingness to share feedback and concerns with staff directly and informally. The students also praised the approachability of university staff regarding raising concerns and complaints. This was mirrored by staff who emphasised that they sought to provide an approachable and supportive presence in which students can raise any concerns.

85. The TQER team found that the University analyses, reflects on and responds to complaints data at an institutional level. Annual reports on student complaints are submitted to Senate and actions are identified to address any themes arising. For example, the Start of Year project emerged from a theme identified through analysis of ILRs and complaints reporting in 2022-23. The TQER team found that the university had enhanced its practice in relation to the analysis of complaints. During 2024-25, the Quality Enhancement and Standards Team and ADLT commenced a new approach to responsibility for cross-institutional discussions regarding complaints and taking forward actions in response to these alongside the embedding of learning from complaints into annual monitoring and annual planning. Prior to this, lessons learned were collated in the complaints annual report and disseminated through that route. In 2024-25 complaints were considered at the Institutional Enhancement and Annual Monitoring event (the annual event at which the outcomes of School Enhancement and Annual Monitoring are considered at an institutional level) involving colleagues from across the university.

86. Overall, the evidence reviewed and the review visits confirmed to the TQER team that the University of the West of Scotland is effective in supporting student success. The TQER team agreed that there is a strategic and institution-wide approach to student success that considers the whole student journey and provides timely and anticipatory support to meet the needs of individual students. The University's approach is data-informed, and evidence led with strategic and operational decisions guided by student engagement, attendance, retention and attainment data.

Student engagement and partnership

87. The TQER team found that the University of the West of Scotland 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.

88. The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence including the University and Students' Unions' Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) and evaluation reporting, evaluation reports for student representation and Staff Student Liaison Groups (SSLGs), guidance, resources and support for staff and students on student representation, including the Student Rep Handbook, and a range of case studies of practice. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including student representatives, students, senior leaders, academic and professional support staff.

Student voice

89. The University utilises a range of student surveys to ensure all students have the opportunity to provide feedback on their learning experience. This includes Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs), the Being Belonging Becoming (BBB) survey, National Student Survey (NSS), and PGR Student Experience Survey. Institutional surveys are key performance indicators used within the University's strategies to monitor progress and measure impact. Results are also considered at School, Division and programme level with analysis by campus location and level of study. This approach enables the University to consider how equity across campuses is achieved and informs institutional, School, Division and programme-level enhancements. Professional services also identified that they utilise student surveys to support service evaluation and development (see paragraph 42).

90. Survey results show that undergraduate and postgraduate taught students had good levels of satisfaction. Questions relating to student voice showed improvement over several years in internal and external surveys, and results are above the Scottish sector average in the NSS. Postgraduate research (PGR) student satisfaction with student voice was relatively low (45% in 2024) and the lowest scoring group in the survey. However, in meetings with PGR students and staff from the Doctoral College, the TQER team heard that this may have been the result of poor response rates and that feedback mechanisms for PGR students have been improved through School Research Groups and developments in PGR representation. Students who met with the TQER team generally aware of and satisfied with the range of feedback mechanisms available to them and were of the view that their feedback was considered and responded to appropriately.

91. The University has reported challenges in achieving good response rates in some student surveys and are working with the Students' Union to address this issue. For example, the development of the new BBB survey has shown some positive results increasing response rates by around 10 percentage points compared to previous approaches to institutional surveys. The BBB was developed to create and maintain an inclusive culture of belonging and community for the University's unique demographics. Staff

and students recognised the impact of the new BBB survey in surfacing the needs and experiences of students with different cultural backgrounds. These developments indicate a positive movement towards enabling the wider student voice across the University, a goal identified by the University in recognising that cultural challenges may be a partial factor in motivating students to engage. Other examples of initiatives to improve response rates include use of a bilingual survey, Programme Leader drop-ins, and the use of pulse surveys.

92. The TQER team heard that staff valued survey outcomes as a key vehicle for gaining students' views on learning, teaching, assessment, and support services. The TQER team found evidence of a systematic approach to survey responses through action planning linked to Enhancement and Annual Monitoring (see paragraph 116). Use and response to PGR survey results was also clearly demonstrated. For example, enhancements to the Doctoral Training programme, annual review process, and onboarding experience had all been directly informed by survey responses and student feedback.

93. Students reflected in multiple meetings that they perceived the University to be proactively seeking feedback on the quality of their learning experiences at different times and with different methods during the academic year, such as Pre Arrival Questionnaire (PAQs), wellbeing check-ins, student representation and module evaluation surveys, allowing students to feel supported in sharing their experiences at different stages of term, year, and student lifecycle. Outside of formal mechanisms, students reported to the TQER team that they felt comfortable in sharing their feedback and experiences with University staff in informal and local-level settings and were able to give specific examples of their feedback leading to tangible changes.

94. A key mechanism for ensuring students have a meaningful voice within the review and enhancement of learning, teaching and assessment, is the SSLG. SSLGs operate at the School level providing students the opportunity to give feedback on their learning experience. A proposal to revise the names of SSLGs was developed by the Students' Union in 2024-25 to enhance staff and student understanding of the role and function of the groups is progressing for consultation in session 2025-26. The University has continued to focus on improving the consistency of responses to student feedback from SSLGs for session 2025-26 and has introduced options for co-chairing of SSLG between staff and students. The TQER team found a range of evidence that feedback through SSLGs was considered and responded to, including for programmes delivered in collaboration with other institutions. In recognition that some students struggle to engage in formal representational structures due to personal commitments or other barriers, staff provided strong examples of alternate approaches to ensure student voices were captured and responded to. For example, offering bilingual SSLGs for students for whom English is a second language, or offering students alternate opportunities to feedback on their experience through pulse surveys. The TQER team viewed these approaches as particularly effective and inclusive in acknowledging and meeting the diverse needs of students (see also paragraphs 108 and 132).

95. Students were generally satisfied with communications regarding local level changes resulting from feedback however, both students and staff recognised a continuing need to improve upon "closing the feedback loop" for larger programme-wide or institution-wide changes. The TQER team heard of a range of mechanisms to show how student feedback is

being utilised and responded to including start of module briefings, 'you said we did' campaigns and communications, sharing of minutes and action trackers from SSLGs through the VLE, and use of mid-module pulse surveys and feedback discussions in class. In discussions with the University the TQER team learned that there is not a consistent expectation for closing the feedback loop from surveys although this is being considered. The TQER team also found that students were not always aware how to access the results of these surveys with different practices described. The University advised the TQER team that through a recently formed Student Surveys Action Group the issues of consistency in closing the feedback loop will be examined and progressed. The TQER team were encouraged by examples of effective practice in closing the feedback loop and would therefore support the University's plans to consider future developments of a consistent expectation and practice in this area.

A culture of student partnership

96. The University's commitment to working in partnership with students was clearly articulated within Strategy 2025, the associated Learning and Teaching Thematic Plan, and Curriculum Framework. While Strategy 2030 and associated enabling plans do not specifically address ambitions for partnership working with students it was confirmed in meetings with senior staff and the Students' Union that student partnership remains a key focus for the University with each of the enabling plans ensuring that students have a strong and active role.

97. To strengthen its approach to student engagement and partnership, and to set out its strategic ambition and approach, the University, in partnership with the Students' Union, has created the In Partnership Framework. This framework, developed utilising external expertise and reference points (including the sparqs Student Learning Experience Model), articulates a shared ethos and approach to student engagement, representation, belonging and community. The framework aims to shape and enhance students' engagements with, and support for their learning, as well as to support the continual enhancement of student representation. At the time of the review, the framework was being finalised for approval with plans for an institution-wide launch and the development of a supporting toolkit. A suite of key performance indicators will be developed to measure success and identify impacts. In reviewing the framework, the TQER team considered it to articulate clear plans for student engagement and representation, but to lack clarity as to how partnership approaches such as co-creation would be supported and championed between staff and students.

98. The University and Students' Union work together to maintain a strong and effective culture of student engagement and partnership, articulated in the Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) and operationalised through well-embedded arrangements for student voice at University, School and professional service levels. In meetings with the TQER team, senior management described student partnership as working in a culture of mutual trust and respect in a common endeavour for enhancement. In discussions with wider staff groups, the TQER team heard that partnership working with students is viewed as ensuring students have an active voice in decisions about their experience, either directly, or via their student representatives. Through these discussions the TQER team found less evidence of student partnership manifesting as student-led active involvement, for example, co-creation

of materials or co-leading of projects particularly where this involved students beyond those in Students' Union sabbatical roles.

99. The current SPA operates on an annual basis and is co-created by the sabbatical officers, senior management, and academic and professional services staff. The SPA is monitored and reported on through the Student Experience Committee (SEC) and Senate. An annual impact report showcases activities and details impact on the student experience. At the time of the review, the University and Students' Union were in the process of developing the new SPA having reflected upon the previous annualised agreement. The new SPA, which is due to be submitted for final approval at the end of academic session 2025-26, will operate on a five-year cycle and aims to promote a more strategic approach to partnership working with students, and allow for annualised priorities and workstreams to align with, and reflect the priorities of, the Students' Union and sabbatical officer team. Outcomes achieved under the most recent SPA include streamlining student outreach activities to reach wider audiences, enhancing leadership support for Students' Union sabbatical officers through mentoring, supporting Class Representatives to chair/co-chair Student Staff Liaison Groups, and delivering a range of events and activities to promote wellbeing and inclusion.

100. Together, the University described that the SPA and In Partnership Framework will articulate the University's strategic ambitions, approach and priorities for partnership, delivering these through an enabling plan and annual impact report to the SEC and Senate. In meetings with senior leaders, there was recognition that working in effective partnership with students is a journey. The University is continuing to enhance its culture of partnership working with students at all levels, recognising that for some areas of the University there has been significant progress, whilst in other areas, partnership working is still emergent. The University was confident that the new approach to the SPA and implementation of the In Partnership Framework will support this ambition. Student representatives, sabbatical officers, and Students' Union-affiliated staff also acknowledged that student partnership will be an area of continuous development for the University as new frameworks like the SPA and the In Partnership Framework are rolled out.

101. The TQER team found that The University's approach to partnership working with the Students' Union is effective, with a close and collaborative partnership with the sabbatical officers who have a clearly valued and vital role within the University's governance and enhancement work. However, partnership working at institutional level outwith the sabbatical officers, and at a School and local level, operates primarily through effective mechanisms for supporting students to have an active and impactful voice in decisions through feedback mechanisms, and student membership of committees and groups. There is less evidence of more collaborative and co-created approaches to partnership working with students beyond the sabbatical officers, or beyond effective student voice mechanisms. The TQER team therefore **recommends** that the University in partnership with the Students' Union should, building upon a clearly effective and strong foundation of student voice, continue to champion a culture of partnership working with students at all levels.

102. To support partnership working at institutional level and enhance student involvement in institutional decisions and initiatives, the University has introduced the Student Partnership Forum (SPF) providing opportunity for students to engage with senior leaders

about areas of mutual interest and priority (see also paragraph 62). In addition, the Students' Union has recently introduced a new Student Partnership Conference launched in 2025 to support the sharing of partnership practices and inform future ambitions and approaches. The conference was a key vehicle for the University's engagement with the Scottish Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP) (see also paragraph 133) and raised awareness with staff and students of sector-wide enhancement. The University's annual Learning and Teaching Conference also supports sharing of effective practices in student engagement and partnership through themes such as 'Students and Staff at the Heart of UWS', and by encouraging student-led and student-staff partnered sessions. In meetings with the TQER team, these fora were identified as effective mechanisms for sharing practices in student engagement, participation and partnership.

Student representation

103. Election of student representatives is coordinated by the Students' Union with clear expectations, roles and responsibilities for staff and students set out within the Student Partnership Road Map. To ensure institutional oversight of student representation, the Students' Union provide an annual report and regular updates to SEC. The University and Students' Union reported to the TQER team good engagement with representational roles overall, however they identified a persistent challenge with engagement at Divisional level. The TQER team also heard that not all students had local representation, indicating some gaps in the uptake of student representative roles.

104. The TQER team noted that students appeared satisfied with the student representation model and demonstrated awareness of the role of Student Representatives, sabbatical officers, and the Student Union in maintaining active dialogue between the student body and the University. There was widespread recognition from staff of the involvement of the Vice President (Education) with many different initiatives including the development of the In Partnership Framework and ASPIRE, and the VLE Implementation Project.

105. To enhance student engagement, the Students' Union have recently completed a review of democratic roles and structures and implemented a new sabbatical officer structure with two full-time officers and four part-time officers to better represent students interests in each of the academic Schools and campuses. This review was evidence-informed, drawing upon external data and benchmarking including the National Union of Students (NUS), and extensive consultation with key stakeholders. The review proposals saw a 94% vote in favour of changes and the new structure will be introduced in the next round of Students' Union elections in Spring 2026 with officers starting in these new roles in academic session 2026-27.

106. The TQER team heard that in response to the challenges in recruitment of Divisional representatives, the Students' Union made changes in session 2025-26 to allow students to hold both Class and Division Representative roles. They also established a scheme of work through the Student Representation Working Group to enhance student engagement and representation. At the time of the review, however, it was too early to identify the impacts of these changes (see also paragraph 109).

107. Support and development for student representatives was identified as a key area for enhancement within QESR. The Students' Union in partnership with the Director of Student Success worked to review training and inform developments. The TQER team are confident that training and support for student representatives is now well structured and supportive, with clear and detailed guidance offered through the Student Rep Handbook and Class and Divisional Representative training which utilises the sparsqs associate Course Representative training model. To further support student representatives there are a range of follow-up support and development pathways offered including a self-directed online learning module, live sessions to support reps to share experiences, and a new programme of development workshops focusing on research skills, communication and negotiation, leadership, and chairing meetings (see also paragraph 132). The TQER team found evidence that the training is effective in supporting student representatives to understand and perform their role, and in providing effective skills and knowledge to best represent their peers.

108. The TQER team found that the University experiences challenges in engagement with representative training with a decreased uptake of training opportunities in 2024-25 compared to previous years. In response to this, Students' Union has developed a communications strategy to increase visibility of student voice roles, structures and support, and implemented a new Representative Engagement and Accountability Policy. The policy aims to support student engagement in representative roles and allow tracking of engagement in training and meetings such as the Student Staff Liaison Groups in order to identify disengagement, and provide supportive interventions to student representatives (see also paragraph 94). Guidance and support for staff have also been developed to enable and empower staff in Schools and Divisions to work with and support student representatives at the local level, although there was acknowledgement that staff engagement with these has been limited to date.

109. Given persistent challenges with student engagement in representative roles, and with associated training and support, the TQER team **recommends** that the University, in partnership with the Students' Union, continue to work to enhance the engagement and support for student representatives, including improved uptake of student representative training and enhancing representation at Divisional level.

Student engagement in quality processes

110. Student engagement is a key feature of the University's Academic Quality Framework (AQF) (see also paragraph 120) with student feedback and contributions a key aspect of programme changes, Enhancement and Annual Monitoring, Institution-Led Review, and Professional Service Review. Evidence seen by the TQER team identified that students are key contributors to quality arrangements and that the University proactively examines how effective student engagements in these arrangements has been. For example, several review reports recommended enhancements to student engagement in programme developments and review, or noted effectiveness of existing approaches. In meetings with staff and students there was clear acknowledgement that students have a key role in quality processes, and students feel heard and responded to through this participation.

111. The TQER team found that there is clear and effective engagement with students at School and subject level with a range of examples offered including student involvement in

curriculum development, partnership activities between staff and students within clubs and societies, and student leadership in the advising process through Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) (see also paragraph 65). In meetings with staff and students these approaches were further evidenced through proactive student feedback in enhancement projects including the VLE Implementation Project (see paragraph 27), student engagement in curriculum review and development and the introduction of co-chairing the University's Student Experience Committee by the Students' Union Vice President of Education and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning, Teaching and Student Success).

112. The University's approach to student engagement and partnership draws upon external expertise through engagement with sparqs as the national body supporting student partnership in Scotland (see also paragraph 107), as well as utilising key external reference points to support practice and developments such as the sparqs Student Learning Experience Model. The University has also engaged proactively with the new TQEF reference point Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership as part of its preparations for TQER and in the production of its Self-Evaluation and Action Plan.

113. In examining a range of evidence, and through discussions with staff and students it is the TQER team's view that the University's approach to student engagement and student voice are effective, impactful and systematic. The approach utilises a range of data and evidence to understand the student experience through student representation (see paragraph 104), student surveys (see paragraphs 89-91), and arrangements to involve students in, and respond to student feedback through, quality assurance and enhancement processes (see also paragraph 94). The University's approach to partnership working with the Students' Union is effective, however, there is less evidence of more collaborative and co-created approaches to partnership working with students beyond the sabbatical officers, or beyond effective student voice.

Enhancement and quality culture

114. The TQER team found that the University of West of Scotland 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'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 progress in formulating, implementing and reviewing actions in response to the findings of its last external review (Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) 2023).

115. The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence including strategies, governance and regulatory frameworks, documentation associated with previous external review, and examples of academic quality processes. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including students, professional services staff, academic staff, and leadership from across the institution.

Embedded quality culture and leadership

116. The TQER team saw clear evidence of quality assurance and enhancement activity embedded across all levels of the University: There was a strong sense of quality assurance and enhancement being undertaken within day-to-day activities, and clear mechanisms for reporting of this activity between different levels of the University.

117. The introduction of a new Academic Quality Framework (AQF) in May 2025 provides a consistent presentation of quality assurance requirements across the University. Alongside the Curriculum Framework (CF), this document was regularly referenced by staff as a basis for their quality assurance work. At an institutional level, leadership saw the introduction of the AQF as providing an opportunity to reset and enhance the University's focus on quality assurance and enhancement. In discussions with staff members the TQER team heard from the leadership of Schools and Divisions how the AQF has provided impetus to enhancement activities at a local level and helped to support bottom-up enhancement activities.

118. The requirements of the AQF are reflected in quality assurance processes throughout the University. These include the Enhancement and Annual Monitoring (EAM) process, Institution-Led Review (ILR), Professional Services Review (PSR) and Programme Approval. The review team heard how the introduction of the AQF was perceived to have enhanced the consistency of quality assurance reporting and activities across the University, and assist in ensuring that local processes, such as programme design, address external expectations (such as sector reference points, employer expectations and PSRB requirements) and the context of teaching provided by the University.

119. Beyond the formalised mechanisms of the EAM process the TQER team heard evidence of a focus on continual improvement across teaching, with both staff and students identifying examples where changes had been made in response to student concerns, or

mid-module feedback, and that these changes had contributed to improved student experience. This sense of embedded enhancement is also supported by how experience, and best practice, is shared across the University, for example, the development of an institutional approach to assessment coversheets with regards to the use of GenAI, and the bottom-up introduction, and diffusion, of peer observation of teaching.

120. Student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement is clearly identified in the AQF with reference to student inclusion in processes including Institutional-Led Review (ILR) and Enhancement and Annual Monitoring. The value and importance of students' inclusion within a range of assurance and enhancement activities, including University Senate and School Boards was referenced by both senior staff and the Students' Union sabbatical officers, although the distinction between student voice, and student partnership, in such activities was not always clearly articulated (see also paragraph 110).

121. Recent changes to leadership and governance structures (notably the appointment of a new Pro Vice-Chancellor Learning, Teaching and Student Success, the introduction of the AQF, the introduction of School-level Associate Deans for Learning and Teaching, and the agreement of a new remit for Academic Quality Committee) are intended to have reinforced an institution-wide focus on quality assurance and enhancement. This view was supported by the experience of staff in School leadership roles who noted that the increasingly explicit focus on enhancement higher up the University afforded them greater leverage when introducing change at a local level.

122. Leadership is cognisant of the need to ensure equity of experience across the University's multi-campus structure, and this is seen throughout the design, delivery and evaluation of activities. Staff and students described the use of student feedback and performance data to identify and respond to variations in experience. Examples included adjustments to Master's programmes in London, informed by international student feedback (resulting in improved attainment and reduced complaints), and issues around building access, catering and addressing faulty equipment on the Lanarkshire Campus. Staff at all levels described how shared assessment boards, cross-campus moderation, assessment and feedback calibration and standardisation activities, module coordinators and teams, and common programme and module documentation are used to secure parity in academic standards, while local contextualisation allows programmes to meet the needs of specific student cohorts. Both staff and students articulated a shared understanding that equity does not imply identical experiences, but rather parity in quality, outcomes and support, reflecting each campus's distinct student body and local context. Students also highlighted instances where disparities had been identified (such as the lack of activities and local Student Union presence at the Dumfries campus) and reported that these had been acknowledged and addressed through what they saw as effective student feedback mechanisms (see also paragraph 72).

123. The TQER team saw evidence of leadership adopting a responsive approach when implementing enhancement programmes; for instance, the phased introduction of the ASPIRE curriculum. Similarly, the use of pilots to implement teaching improvements, for example the peer review of teaching (ProTiP) peer observation scheme, was seen by staff as supporting local adaptation of institutional enhancement objectives. This approach was seen to support staff to develop initiatives relevant to their local context and aid in the

sharing of best practice. The institution's responsive approach to implementing enhancement programmes ensures that developments complement the University's strategic objectives (see also paragraphs 56-58). When local initiatives are successful, the TQER team found that the University gives careful consideration to whether the initiative should be mainstreamed or allowed to evolve organically. With peer observation, the TQER team heard that the University determined that its effectiveness relied on School-level ownership and contextualisation rather than central control. Conversely, when the School of Computing, Engineering and Physical Sciences developed a standardised assessment coversheet that improved clarity around acceptable levels of GenAI use, the University recognised the wider benefit and used it as the basis for the development of a university-wide version. The TQER team agreed that this measured and reflective approach nurtures innovation, while ensuring good practice is both scalable and sustainable.

124. A consistent theme across both written evidence and meetings with staff was a clearly understood and encouraged bottom-up approach to many enhancement activities. This approach was seen as providing staff with an ability to shape activities to their needs. It also provides a useful basis for the University to learn from local projects with a view to improving the student experience across the wider institution, for example the development of the AI coversheet. This approach is supported through leadership structures notably the Programme Leader Network, which was seen by the University to be empowering Programme Leaders to drive forward quality assurance work and innovation. The introduction of Associate Deans of Learning and Teaching (ADLTs) was seen as helping co-ordinate work and share best practice across the University (see also paragraphs 27 and 54-55).

125. The annual Learning and Teaching Conference was identified by the TQER team as a central mechanism for sharing practice and fostering community. Planning papers were seen by the TQER team that reflect a culture of reflective evaluation and a valuing of student-partnered sessions.

Institutional learning from quality assurance activities

126. The TQER team saw evidence of the University learning from quality assurance to the benefit of student learning. This occurred through both formal reporting mechanisms (for example thematic reporting of Institution-Led Reviews (ILRs), annual reports of student appeals and complaints to senior leadership and Senate), and through informal mechanisms (for example, sharing of innovations and best practice within the Programme Leader Network and conversations between ADLTs). The TQER team heard that these mechanisms support tailoring of innovations to specific contexts and are a further example of how the University is effectively engaging with a bottom-up approach for many initiatives. The development of PRoTiP was noted by the TQER team as a good example of this approach (see also paragraphs 58 and 123).

127. The TQER team noted that the University continues to adapt its quality assurance processes to facilitate maximum opportunities for learning and sharing of practice. Notable examples of this included work to improve annual monitoring of the PGR experience, including through the introduction of an Institutional Enhancement and Annual Monitoring meeting for research degrees, and the intention to move to a thematic, rather than service-

based, approach to Professional Services Review, which was seen by staff as more relevant to how students interacted with professional services staff.

Data driven processes

128. The TQER team found that quality assurance and enhancement activity at the University is underpinned by a strong focus on data and evidence-based decision making. (see also paragraph 75). The University has developed a strategic and effective approach to the use of data through the introduction of and support for data dashboards. This approach includes the development of institution-wide key performance indicators and critical success factors to measure the impact of the University's strategies, and use of data dashboards to inform improvements to progression and retention through School Retention Task Forces, curriculum developments, assessment design, and experience. The provision of data is supported by extensive training and support adapted to the needs of different user groups. The TQER team conclude that this strategic and effective approach to the use of data for enhancement that impactfully informs assurance and enhancements of learning, teaching, assessment, and the wider student experience is a **feature of good practice**. The TQER further note that progress in this area is to be particularly commended given that strengthening the use of data in quality processes was identified as a recommendation in the University's 2023 Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR).

129. Crucial to the successful embedding of data within quality assurance and enhancement at the University has been the ease with which staff feel able to access data relevant to the tasks they need to complete. The provision of data is often tightly integrated with specific quality assurance processes, for example Enhancement and Annual Monitoring. Where staff wish to access data on an ongoing basis, the provision of data dashboards was indicated as providing a user-friendly mechanism for doing so.

130. The TQER team heard from teaching staff, support staff, and those responsible for data provision about ongoing collaborative work to ensure that the provision of data was responsive to the needs of colleagues in identifying and addressing the challenges they face. In addition to the responsiveness of data provision, staff noted the high level of training and support they received to allow them to access and interpret the data provided to them. Staff highlighted how the training was offered in multiple formats and was often tailored to specific use cases. The combination of data that meets staff needs, and the support to use this data have helped to further develop a culture in which staff are willing, not only, to engage with data but also understand why it should be central to quality assurance and enhancement decisions.

131. Beyond internal data provision, the TQER team were made aware that detailed analysis of externally collected data has also been used to inform strategy. Staff also cited specific examples of where analysis of NSS data had directly informed their practice. For example, analysis of the data at the module level was used to drive wider and more consistent adoption of library resource lists (see also paragraph 42).

External engagement in quality assurance and enhancement

132. The TQER team saw evidence that the University is using a range of external

engagements to help improve the student experience across the University. The TQER team noted that the University has made strong progress addressing the recommendations from the last QESR. The TQER team have identified two areas of good practice, as part of this review exercise, that have developed from previous QESR recommendations, specifically 'training for staff and students who teach' and 'strengthening the use of data in quality processes. The TQER team also noted that the University has developed a more strategic approach to implementing change, notably through the adoption of ProSci methodology (a structured approach to managing organisational change). The effectiveness of this approach to change management is demonstrated through the governance of the VLE Implementation Project. With regards to the need to provide more effective support and development for student representatives, the TQER team observed that progress on this had been made in partnership between the University and the Students' Union (see also paragraph 107).

133. The University has engaged in sector enhancement activity relevant to the University's context. The TQER team saw evidence that the University's engagement in national enhancement activity has directly influenced the enhancement of practice within the University. For example, the University's involvement in the QAA Resilient Learning Communities Enhancement Theme was shown to have directly influenced the Curriculum Framework and underpinned the development of the ASPIRE curriculum. Engagement with the Enhancement Themes was noted by the TQER team as helping support the development Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) and engagement with the Scottish Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP) as supporting the running of the 2025 Student Partnership Conference (see also paragraph 102).

134. The TQER team heard about systematic engagement of staff in relevant sector-wide communities of practice. For instance, the advisors in the University's Funding and Advice team have gained more detailed insights into the relationship between student funding and benefit eligibility, and Digital Learning Technologists gained knowledge of new teaching technologies through their engagement in communities of practice. The University's Vice Chancellor's involvement in Universities Scotland's work to develop a framework for the use of GenAI in higher education has informed the approaches that Schools are developing to respond to AI.

135. The TQER team identified a culture of using external accreditation, notably HEA Fellowships and UK Council for Graduate Education (UKCGE) Supervisor Recognition Programme, to recognise knowledge and encourage further professional development. This culture was integrated with staff review processes, notably, the My Contribution annual appraisal framework, and the TQER team was particularly encouraged to hear how professional services staff were supported to take advantage of these opportunities (see also paragraphs 46 and 47).

136. Overall, the TQER team saw across both students and staff a clear sense that quality assurance activities contribute to improvements across the University. Clear mechanisms exist to ensure that findings from quality assurance are fed into future planning. The University has a strong understanding of how data, and student feedback, can help identify issues for improvement, and staff at all levels showed a willingness to engage with such issues.

QAA3029 - R14904 - Jan 26

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2026
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland