



Scotland's Tertiary
Quality Enhancement
Framework

Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER)

West Lothian College

April 2026

This review method
is ESG compliant

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 West Lothian College	5
Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment	7
Strategic leadership	7
Academic standards	8
Curriculum planning, design and delivery.....	10
Employer engagement and work-based learning	11
Learning environments.....	13
Staff development.....	14
Supporting student success.....	17
Enabling student success	17
Transitions	19
Employability, skills development and lifelong learning	20
Concerns and complaints.....	21
Student engagement and partnership.....	22
Strategic approach.....	22
Student representation and partnership	22
Student voice and student engagement	23
Enhancement and quality culture.....	26
Strategic approach.....	26
Self-evaluation and institution-led quality activity.....	27
External outlook	29

About the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review method

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

About this review

This is a report of a TQER conducted by QAA at West Lothian College carried out by a team of four peer reviewers:

- Mr Peter Brown (Reviewer)
- Miss Amy McLoughlan (Student Reviewer)
- Mrs Catherine MacNab (Reviewer)
- Professor Gillian Thomson (Reviewer)

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

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

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

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

The review comprised two visits: an Initial Review Visit which, for West Lothian College, took place on-campus on 17-18 March 2026, and a Main Review Visit which took place on-campus on 28-30 April 2026.

The judgement for this review can be found on page 3, followed by features of good practice

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

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

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

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

identified by the TQER team and recommendations for action. This is followed by the detailed findings of the review.

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

Review judgement and findings

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

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

Features of good practice

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

- The embedding of employability skills across the curriculum through effective work-based learning, placements, apprenticeships and meaningful employer engagement, ensuring that learning is directly relevant to workplace practice and effectively supports students' progression into employment or further study. **(Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment - paragraph 41)**
- The College's well-embedded, systematic and impactful approach to supporting innovation in learning and teaching through the peer-led Learning Champion role which supports professional dialogue, observation of practice, coaching, mentoring and the wider sharing of practice. **(Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment - paragraph 52)**
- The College's whole organisation approach to supporting student success, which is consistently applied across curriculum and professional services and supports students across the full learner lifecycle, including transitions into College, between levels of study and into employment or further learning. **(Supporting Student Success - paragraph 78)**
- The partnership approach to capturing the student voice through the bespoke College survey that has resulted in high levels of student awareness and engagement. The survey is fully embedded within quality processes and is consistently and systematically used to improve the student experience. **(Student Engagement and Partnership - paragraph 103)**
- The development of roadmaps for translating strategic priorities into operational practice provides a clear mechanism that supports broad staff engagement, shared understanding, a sense of ownership and involvement in the implementation of institutional strategies. **(Enhancement and Quality Culture - paragraph 116)**
- The College's approach to quality assurance and quality enhancement that is strengthened by Quality Champions, who mentor and support curriculum staff to build and develop knowledge and confidence in quality assurance practices. This supports continuous quality improvement and professional development. **(Enhancement and Quality Culture - paragraph 119)**

Recommendations for action

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

- The College should continue to implement its meta-skills plan and approach to deliver a consistent experience for students to recognise, articulate and evidence the skills they develop through their studies. **(Supporting Student Success - paragraph 84)**

- The College, in collaboration with the Student Association, should consider ways to involve students more directly in College quality and decision-making processes, going beyond established student voice mechanisms to foster a strategic approach to working with students as partners. **(Student Engagement and Partnership - paragraph 106)**
- The College should roll out its planned approach to Institution-Led Quality Review in this academic year and continue to reflect on and refine the process in line with SFC expectations. **(Enhancement and Quality Culture - paragraph 120)**

Contextual information about West Lothian College

1. West Lothian College (the College) is based in Livingston and moved to its current location in 2001. The College was originally established in 1965 as Bathgate Technical College. The College offers programmes at Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) Levels 2 – 9, spanning both further education (FE) and higher education (HE). The College works with a range of awarding bodies with Qualifications Scotland⁵ being the largest, accounting for the majority of provision.
2. An extensive range of work-based qualifications are delivered by the College, including modern apprenticeships, foundation apprenticeships and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs). The College works with several different organisations in relation to these qualifications including Skills Development Scotland, industry training bodies and several different employers from across Scotland. The College's purpose-built Skills Centre for Sustainable Living (ECOHOUSE) provides a specialist training environment to support the development of skills in sustainable construction and renewable energy.
3. The College has a range of partnerships with local stakeholders, including School-College partnerships with 13 secondary schools, the local authority and key regional employers including the National Health Service (NHS). The College is also involved with the Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Regional Deal and the Regional Economic Partnership. A range of formal articulation agreements are in place with eight universities. Since 2018, the College has delivered year three of the Edinburgh Napier University Bachelor of Arts (BA) Business Management on campus. This delivery agreement has been extended to include Edinburgh Napier University's BA Accounting from September 2026.
4. In academic year 2024-25, the College had approximately 6,299 students of which 76% (4,799) were studying FE (of which 69% study part-time and 31% full-time) and 24% (1,500) studying HE (of which 59% study part-time and 41% full-time). As part of the delivery, 594 learners were Senior Phase pupils.
5. The most recent data from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) (academic year 2023-24) demonstrates completion rates above the sector average: 73% for FE full-time (67% sector average), 93% for FE part-time (80% sector average), 72% for HE full-time (67% sector average) and 89% for HE part-time (82% sector average). The College has been above the Scottish sector average for completion rates across all modes of study since academic year 2022-23. For the period 2019-20 to 2023-24, the four largest subject areas in terms of full-time enrolments were care; business, management and administration; engineering; and hairdressing, beauty and complementary therapies.
6. West Lothian College is a trauma informed college, and its Trauma Responsive Unique Support Tailor-Made (TRUST) programme has won a number of awards. TRUST is a wraparound support service for students affected by trauma that provides personalised plans, one-to-one support and multiagency engagement to support progression into education or employment. The programme, as described by the College, was created to enable those furthest from education to make concrete steps towards study with the right support in place.
7. The College's ten-year vision is 'to develop a highly skilled, enterprising and resilient workforce'; 2025 was the mid-point of the period covering the vision. Four strategic goals are in place to achieve the vision: inspire and enable success for all; support economic recovery

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

and growth; strengthen our communities; and lead with vision and empathy. A set of three values underpin the vision and the strategic goals, these are 'welcoming to all', 'students at the centre of everything we do' and 'always striving for better'. In 2024-25 the five strategies (Finance, People, Learning and Teaching, Digital, and Estates) that underpin the strategic goals were refreshed. The vision, goals and values are prominently displayed around the College and embedded across the work of the College.

Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment

8. The TQER team found that West Lothian College is effective in achieving excellence in learning, teaching and assessment. The institution has appropriate and systematically applied practices in line with sector expectations for achieving excellence in learning, teaching and assessment, including assuring and maintaining academic standards. The institution's practices make effective and accurate use of data, evidence and externality to demonstrate impact. The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence including the Strategic Impact Analysis (SIA), the Learning and Teaching Strategy, Digital Strategy, minutes from key committees, external review and accreditation reports, policy and guidance documents associated with course and programme development and oversight, data and reporting to inform action planning, annual monitoring, and curriculum course team meeting minutes. In addition to reviewing evidence submitted by the College, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including staff, students and employers.

Strategic leadership

9. The TQER team concluded that the College has a clear and demonstrable culture of excellence in learning, teaching and assessment with strategic direction articulated through the College Vision, and underpinned by five enabling strategies (Finance, People, Learning and Teaching, Digital, and Estates). The enabling strategies all contain strategic aims which are aligned to the College's goals. These are operationalised through Strategic Roadmaps which articulate annual strategic priorities for each of the five areas, and detail the specific projects, activities and initiatives that will take place during each year of the strategies' lifespans to realise the College's strategic aims. Oversight of institutional strategies sits with the Principal and Executive Leadership Team (ELT) comprised of three Vice Principals (VPs) reporting to the Board of Governors. Members of ELT have specific strategic responsibilities for quality assurance and enhancement activities within their named areas, with further delegation to Directors of Faculty and Heads of Service, who, together with ELT members, comprise the College Leadership Team (CLT). The College's Learning and Teaching Strategy was refreshed in 2025 and is the responsibility of the VP Learning and Attainment.

10. ELT and CLT support an environment which is guided by the College values. The TQER team heard that these values are clearly embedded in the practice of staff across the institution. The TQER team was informed of clear and close working between members of the CLT and ELT, providing a coordinated approach to the delivery of the institutional strategies. The TQER team also heard examples of partnership working with the Student Association Presidents which supports a positive and collegial approach. One example of this is the joint working between the College and the Student Association to develop the Student Mental Health Agreement which sets out the College's commitment to improve student mental health and wellbeing (also see paragraph 66).

11. The CLT meets fortnightly and provides a critical link between strategic leadership and operational management to ensure that strategic priorities are translated into coherent, effective operational plans and that feedback, risks, insights, and innovation inform strategic decision making. Oversight of delivery on institutional strategies is delegated to Directors of Faculty and Heads of Service and day-to-day operationalisation is through the Learning and Skills Managers (LSMs) who oversee curriculum areas. The Management Forum brings together ELT, CLT, LSMs and managers of key student support services to enable them to work together on operational priorities. LSMs also meet with staff in their curriculum area and report to Directors regularly, with both feeding into the Management Forum which, in turn, reports to the CLT.

12. Through a distributed leadership structure, Directors of Faculty and LSMs are given

autonomy to lead on curriculum development and quality enhancement in their areas, which is aligned to student support structures through working with the Heads of Service. Staff from both learning and teaching, and support functions spoke very positively of this culture and the College's strong focus on supporting the student learning experience, which is a key aim within the Learning and Teaching Strategy. This was also evident from meetings with the Student Presidents. The TQER team found that there is a clear vision of continuous improvement across the College, which is supported by the ELT, whom the TQER team heard are visible to all students and staff across the institution.

13. The TQER team found that academic and support staff considered the College values and themes from institutional strategies within annual self-evaluation processes, clearly linking aspects such as curriculum development, teaching enhancement and digital transformation to practice within their subject and service areas. The TQER team also found that staff across the different functions (teaching and support) are intrinsically linked within the College structure with a clear collegiate environment of partnership and collaboration between them.

Academic standards

14. The TQER team found that the College demonstrates a sustained and embedded approach to ensuring that academic standards and awarding practices meet external expectations and remain secure, consistent and reliable over time. This approach is supported by consistent, cross-institutional adoption and application of academic policy and guidance evidenced through self-evaluation processes (at curriculum area, faculty and professional service level) and external accreditation documentation.

15. Overall strategic responsibility for academic standards sits with the VP Learning and Attainment, who has strategic responsibility for learning and teaching. The VP Learning and Attainment attends the College's Learning and Teaching Committee, a sub-committee of the College Board of Governors. Membership of the Learning and Teaching Committee includes non-executive board members and representation from across the College. The Learning and Teaching Committee supports the Board in their responsibilities relating to quality, including monitoring the effectiveness of learning and teaching quality processes and procedures, student support and engagement, performance monitoring and equalities. It also oversees new developments in learning and teaching, monitors the effectiveness of quality assurance arrangements across curriculum activities, and oversees collaborative partnerships (in conjunction with the VP People, Performance and Improvement). Staff responsible for leading on specific work packages are in attendance and present papers at some of the Board committees.

16. The College maintains academic standards through a series of policies and procedures, including the internal and external assessment policy and procedure and the internal verification policy and procedure, supported by its Learning and Teaching Strategy. The TQER team learned College staff utilise a variety of assessment methods in accordance with the learning outcomes and awarding body requirements. Students advised assessment timelines and expectations were clearly defined and available on the College's virtual learning environment (VLE) and Microsoft Teams. Students who met with the TQER team spoke of the opportunity to remediate following feedback and that support was provided to do so. While some variation in the timeliness of feedback across different areas was noted, students generally found feedback to be constructive and supportive of their learning. No significant concerns were identified in relation to feedback overall.

17. The TQER team heard from students that they appreciated the flexibility provided by staff in relation to the scheduling and completion of assessments. Students indicated they were able to discuss extensions to support their submissions, allowing them to work

submissions around other commitments. Staff also informed the TQER team of this flexible approach to support student attainment. However, some students voiced concern that there was sometimes disparity in the way that this flexibility was implemented and that they considered this to be unfair when some students appeared to receive no penalty for consistent lateness, while others always submitted on time.

18. Information provided to the TQER team demonstrated high levels of compliance with the assessment and internal verification policy and procedure resulting in consistently positive outcomes from external scrutiny, such as high confidence judgements from Qualifications Scotland external verification. The TQER team heard of a strong culture of internal quality assurance and enhancement, supported by a suite of policies and guidelines and staff training materials. Staff that met with the TQER team demonstrated a clear understanding of how quality assurance processes such as internal verification support the College's academic standards and confirmed that these processes are well embedded and consistently applied across the College. Many staff are external verifiers for awarding bodies and the TQER team observed that the expertise gained through such processes was used to inform institutional practice and interactions with professional accreditation panels, external verifiers and awarding bodies, and ensures the consistency and security of the qualifications. The College uses its interactions with external validation and professional accreditation to support its own internal review and evaluation of learning, teaching and assessment across the institution.

19. The ELT spoke clearly about the importance of staff maintaining standards and industrial relevance. Teaching staff are supported to maintain standards by the LSMs and a team of Learning Champions and Quality Champions, who are active teaching staff given remitted time each week to undertake these roles. The Learning Champion role supports all colleagues involved in teaching to drive enhancement in learning and teaching through developing, mentoring and supporting staff across the College. The Quality Champions support compliance with quality assurance practices and promote continuous quality improvement across faculties and services. Staff are encouraged to participate in professional development and sector activities. A Learning Champion and a Quality Champion sit within each faculty and are overseen by the Head of Student Experience and Improvement, who reports to the VP Learning and Attainment. Champions are also involved in mentoring staff, as well as contributing to the College's peer observation process contacting new staff to offer support (see also paragraph 119).

20. Through scrutiny of the evidence base, the TQER team conclude that the College operates a comprehensive approach to the analysis and reporting of student attainment, progression and award. Evaluation of widening participation and attainment at faculty and programme levels is evident through data analysis via the recently introduced data dashboard which is available to all staffs. The data dashboard is used across all levels of the institution from informing strategy to supporting Quality Improvement Action Plans (QIAPs) at course level (see paragraph 118) and informing decisions on course continuation/cessation during curriculum planning. College-wide key performance indicators (KPIs) are also considered at the Learning and Teaching Committee

21. The introduction of the Staff Learning Academy in August 2025 has provided a single-site repository to support staff to develop their practice and gain knowledge about quality policies and processes, such as internal and external verification, and self-evaluation. The Academy can be accessed on the College's VLE and the material is organised around learning and attainment sessions. Staff spoke very positively of this introduction, and it was evident to the TQER team that the use of this provision was becoming clearly embedded to support the assurance of academic standards. The College's vision is to expand the content of the Academy to curate best practice training materials alongside statutory training.

22. The TQER team reviewed the College's procedures for curriculum design, approval and review and found appropriate use of external frameworks such as the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2024), and alignment to awarding body requirements such as Qualifications Scotland. Meetings with College staff established that they understand and consistently apply these policies and procedures, supported by opportunities to upskill and expand their knowledge where required, complemented by the Learning and Quality Champions and guidance materials available via the Staff Learning Academy.

23. The TQER team found that the College makes effective use of sector frameworks, including the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) to provide clarity, consistency and assurance around the level and type of qualifications delivered. The College aligns all qualification types and levels across its provision to the SCQF and ensures that the application requirements, qualification details and progression criteria are clear to all students providing clarity of admission, articulation routes and progression pathways. The TQER team heard that all programmes are aligned with SCQF levels and that the framework is considered in curriculum design, approval and review, providing a comprehensive and transparent system which can be clearly understood by students and employers. Students spoke positively about this clarity and the TQER team heard that staff advise students about the most appropriate pathways for them during admission, their progression and for employment opportunities. Students shared that they felt supported by academic staff throughout their learning and that they were well-advised about the alignment of their qualifications to future pathways.

Curriculum planning, design and delivery

24. The TQER team found that the College has effective processes to ensure that the institution's programmes of study are current, meet student needs and reflect changes in demand for workforce skills needs. The College's curriculum operates on a three-year cycle and is supported by a structured multi-stage Curriculum Planning (CP) process which begins in the academic year prior to each new cycle. Curriculum is reviewed, with involvement from course teams, LSMs and Directors. The process includes self-evaluation, review of KPIs and labour market information, input from partners such as local councils, employers and third sector organisations who provide feedback and recommendations to ensure that the curriculum meets their needs.

25. The TQER team found that some areas of the College curriculum have been adapted to respond to the needs of the changing learner. Feedback and outcomes data via the self-evaluation process have led to the redesign of courses to support completion. For example, the College now runs two 18-week courses instead of one 36-week course in Automotive at SCQF level 4 to better meet student needs and support progression to the next level. This approach has proved successful and has enabled students, who withdraw or choose not to continue to the second part of the course, to complete their studies with a successful outcome.

26. The College's curriculum design, employer engagement and flexible provision are aligned to regional sector needs. There is a clear focus on educating and upskilling the local community, for example, the delivery of workshops on cyber resilience training to 300 vulnerable people and upskilling secondary teachers. Partnerships with local schools are strong and the College works closely with school contacts to develop College provision.

27. The College demonstrates a coherent and strategically aligned approach to progression, supported by a number of established articulation routes with universities in Scotland, and its partnership with Edinburgh Napier University (ENU). Articulation agreements provide advanced standing into year two and year three across multiple disciplines, aligning with SCQF progression expectations and supporting clear learner

pathways.

28. The partnership agreement with ENU enables on-campus delivery of degree-level provision, including the BA Business Management, with progression from Higher National Diploma (HND) into year three supported through a shared delivery model involving both University and College staff. This approach enables local access to HE while maintaining continuity in learning and support across the FE to HE transition, with evidence confirming that curriculum design and stakeholder engagement are informed through cross-College strategic themes and collaborative activity. Students who met with the TQER team spoke positively of their experience studying through the shared delivery model.

29. Institutional evidence indicates that progression outcomes are strong, with a significant proportion of FE qualifiers continuing onto further study, and that overall attainment and student outcomes have consistently exceeded sector averages across multiple years. Feedback shared by students and partners with the TQER team highlighted clear progression routes, effective preparation for employment and further study, and alignment between curriculum and workforce needs.

30. Student involvement in curriculum planning is via the College's three main feedback processes: the College Induction Survey, SPARKLE (the Student Association (SA) owned survey) and the Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES). There is also input through end-of-block and course feedback surveys, and one-to-one discussions between students and course tutors. Feedback from students contributes to the College's overall curriculum planning and also supports agile decision-making to implement in-year changes to curriculum delivery.

31. The ELT, Directors of Faculty and LSMs monitor course performance through dashboards and surveys such as SPARKLE, the College's Induction Survey, and the cross-sector SSES. Data from these processes and evaluation of KPIs informs evidence-based decision-making about the current portfolio, including the consideration of withdrawing or supporting programmes. This use of student feedback has contributed to the College being able to maintain an industry-relevant curriculum, reacting to employer and partner needs.

Employer engagement and work-based learning

32. The TQER team heard that an extensive number of partners work with the College firstly to support the delivery of work-based programmes, such as apprenticeships and work placements, experience and, secondly, to support the development of a current and appropriate curriculum portfolio. The College's collaborative approach to the design of its curriculum portfolio is intended to enhance its provision and result in positive outcomes for students through offering appropriate progression pathways.

33. The TQER team learned that some faculty areas have an Employer Advisory Group (EAG) with whom the College would regularly meet to provide a forum for two-way dialogue on areas such as the sector relevance of curriculum, emerging workplace practice and employers' workforce needs. The presence of an EAG is dependent on the size of the sector feeding into the programme. For example, where the sector is predominantly comprised of small businesses, such as in the beauty industry, it is often difficult for small companies to provide members to sit on an advisory group. Where an EAG is not convened, employer input is sought directly from industry partners. The TQER team heard that this flexible approach has worked well for different faculty areas. Examples of this include within hair and beauty where the College uses visits to observe students on placement as an opportunity to engage with the employer, and in creative and digital where meetings with local employers are used to broker placement opportunities.

34. The TQER team heard that the College's responsiveness to employer feedback has led to industry needs being met through a relevant curriculum which can respond to sector changes and provide work-ready graduates. For example, the Childhood Practice team worked with the local authority to tailor courses to ensure that students were meeting the needs of the sector through the inclusion of practical activity weeks at the start of the course. During a meeting with a range of partner representatives (employers, schools, third sector), the TQER team heard of the relevance and high quality of the College's provision. Partner representatives spoke of the breadth and depth of the curriculum provided and the College's responsiveness to changing skills and employer needs. Some partners that met with the TQER team spoke of difficulties regarding the number of students that the College could accommodate on some programmes but were understanding of the capacity issues and drivers therein which were also commented upon by staff in terms of courses being full.

35. Effective employer engagement is demonstrated through the provision of work placements in many curriculum areas. These directly benefit the student and employers, as the placements address real business challenges (for example, HND Business, Sports Science). Students that met with the TQER team shared their positive placement experiences, and employers reported successful placement experiences leading to more permanent employment. These placements enhance student performance and support progression outcomes and employability. The TQER team heard about opportunities for students to gain work experience and practice-based learning through facilitating groups during events such as the Sustainable Development Goals Teach-in Week, which is a national student initiative, to College events such as the Welcome Market, both linking curriculum to experiential learning of practical skills. Where external placements proved difficult to set up, the TQER team heard examples of work-based projects being provided within the College.

36. Industry-experienced staff input into the curriculum to provide an experiential viewpoint and contribute to keeping it relevant and up to date. Departments are individually well-connected to regional agencies and employers. The impact of this collaborative working is evident in the student experience through a wide variety of industry interactions. The TQER team heard that every course in the College has a link with industry. This could take multiple forms: placements, talks, and guest lectures. LSMs are responsible for overseeing and monitoring partnership engagement within their area, with overall responsibility sitting with the VP Learning and Attainment. Mechanisms for gathering partner feedback are in place and this is also used to innovate practice.

37. The TQER team found that work-based learning (WBL) is a key feature across much of the College's provision and regard WBL, placements and apprenticeships as a strength of the College. The TQER team met with students from across all areas of the College who provided a variety of examples of how their learning was clearly linked to the workplace and supported their employability.

38. The TQER team found the College's quality assurance of WBL across its provision to be robust. New Work-Based Assessors are appointed a buddy to shadow and are inducted through a '30:60:90' process, alongside the use of the Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) Induction Checklist, which provides a structured welcome into the role of a Work-Based Assessor. The checklist is completed by the Work-Based Assessor and reviewed with the LSM at one-to-one meetings, conducted at 30 days, 60 days and concluding at the Work-Based Assessor's three-month review meeting at 90 days. Curriculum teams work closely with employers to monitor teaching and learning and have processes for monitoring WBL through the self-evaluation process. Feedback from employers is gathered through partnership meetings and the evaluation of placements is overseen by LSMs.

39. The TQER team found that WBL students are well supported by the College and

expectations are clear. The TQER team met with WBL students who reported their positive experiences, with supportive and responsive mentoring and close partnership working. Work-Based Assessors provide support alongside employers and any issues raised are dealt with in a timely and proactive manner through regular review meetings.

40. Several third sector agencies are co-located on the campus to support student employability, for example, Skills Development Scotland (SDS). SDS advisors work with curriculum teams to identify learners who need additional support, offering bespoke CV sessions and a group session as follow up. As well as supporting student success, their presence is also used as a vehicle to monitor current sector practice. Further work with employers comes from the Employer Engagement Officer who delivers a suite of programmes to all students (such as employer workshops and visits to employers), and assists students in finding work placements

41. The TQER team concluded that the College has a strong commitment to supporting regional development and engaging with employers to support skills priorities and employability. The embedding of employability skills across the curriculum through effective work-based learning, placements, apprenticeships and meaningful employer engagement, ensuring that learning is directly relevant to workplace practice and effectively supports students' progression into employment or further study is regarded as a **feature of good practice**.

Learning environments

42. The TQER team found that the College provides high-quality, inclusive and accessible physical and digital learning environments to support an effective student learning experience. Students who met with the TQER team were positive about the resources supplied to support their learning, which included specialist equipment and materials. It was noted that the College supplies additional equipment in response to sector needs and changing trends in some curriculum areas. For example, joinery students spoke of access to up-to-date, industry standard equipment in their courses. However, the TQER team also heard that some hairdressing students felt equipment was somewhat outdated.

43. Evidence of the College's proactive and innovative approaches to learning environments is demonstrated by the ECOHOUSE. The ECOHOUSE provides on-site practice-based activities for students on construction and energy-related courses linking directly to leading industry practices in terms of sustainability and net zero. The TQER team were informed of plans to extend the use of this provision to care and health sector teaching to support real-world scenarios and prepare students for the workplace. Evidence was provided to demonstrate the College's ambition to use the ECOHOUSE to expand its international plans by establishing reciprocal learning exchanges with construction institutions in Morocco, where there are critical skills gaps in sustainable construction. If successful, there are plans to extend this initiative to other countries facing similar skills gaps.

44. The TQER team heard that student and staff feedback helps to shape and inform investment in both the digital and physical estate of the College. Student feedback via faculties and the Student Association is used to input into decision-making regarding the development of learning environments. An example of this led to the refurbishment of the original college library to create the Learning Centre (LC), based on student feedback on the need for study areas and access to computing facilities and learning materials outside the classroom that enabled students to come on campus to work and support a hybrid approach. Students spoke positively of the resources within the LC, and training to use them, provided by dedicated LC staff who effectively aid students' learning, and cited it as a supportive environment in which to engage with e-resources. Students also spoke of the laptop loans

that are available for those experiencing digital poverty.

45. The provision of online materials and learning support through the VLE and online applications was praised by students, who appreciated the ability to engage with a broad range of learning resources in a flexible manner. Developments in digital provision are linked to curriculum planning and the timetabling process with asset registers reviewed regularly and feedback from annual meetings with faculty, regarding capital investment and digital estate, feeding into the self-evaluation process.

46. Overall, the TQER team found the College provides a positive, inclusive and supportive learning environment that effectively supports students in their studies. The environment promotes engagement and enables students to feel confident in participating, progressing, and achieving.

Staff development

47. The TQER team found that the College demonstrates a strong commitment to supporting the professional development of both its teaching and student-facing support staff, linking clearly to the College values and the College's Career Long Professional Learning and Development Policy. Coordination of professional development support for staff takes place through the annual Professional Learning Plans (PLPs) which are linked directly to College strategy with structured discussion on how the employee has contributed to the achievement of College goals, values and vision.

48. The Staff Learning Academy (SLA) brings together several areas of professional development which includes Learning Champions, Quality Champions, General Teaching Council for Scotland registrations and standards, induction, management training, core training and West Lothian Wednesdays (WLW).

49. The TQER team heard that a new management competency framework has recently been developed with managers to strengthen staff succession. This framework was designed with managers, following a recommendation from the Investors in People Gold accreditation review, to identify key skills and knowledge required and to signpost the PLP at annual appraisals. The College advised the TQER team that the framework is also used during the recruitment and selection of managers.

50. For all staff involved in the delivery of learning and teaching provision (including lecturers, Work-Based Assessors, instructors and skills coaches), there is a three-weekly WLW session, led by a senior manager, which covers different priority topics related to learning, teaching and attainment. Current themes include learning and teaching, support and wellbeing, digital, employer engagement and sustainability. Staff spoke positively, not only of the learning experience and knowledge enhancement provided by this initiative, but of the opportunity to share practice and be part of the College community of learning and teaching. Attendance at WLW is mandatory with sessions taking place during non-teaching time and recorded for staff who are unable to participate in real-time. The success of this community of practice has led to the inception of West Lothian Tuesdays to support professional services staff development.

51. The College operates a long-established process of peer review. Lesson observation is conducted by Learning Champions (see paragraph 19), or sometimes another trusted peer, taking place for each member of staff on a three-year rotation. Lecturers are asked to complete a lesson reflection following peer observation, which is discussed with the Learning Champions and uploaded to the VLE. Learning Champions collate examples of good practice from across the lesson reflections, and these are additionally uploaded to the VLE. Good practice from lesson observations is also shared at WLW. The Learning Champions

have also encouraged voluntary peer-to-peer observations, beyond that of the formal activity, to contribute to continuing professional development. The peer review process is welcomed by staff and supports professional development, encouraging and supporting self-reflection. Learning Champions also support new staff during induction and offer continuing one-to-one support for staff who need it. Teaching staff highlighted changes to their practice based on feedback from the Learning Champion; these included using different delivery methods and changing the approach to gathering feedback from learners. Sharing of good practice is additionally facilitated through the cross-College committees, such as the College's Learning and Teaching Committee. Staff spoke of a culture of using the self-evaluation process to support enhancement and innovation during the review visit.

52. The TQER team agreed that the College's well-embedded, systematic and impactful approach to supporting innovation in learning and teaching through the peer-led Learning Champion role which supports professional dialogue, observation of practice, coaching, mentoring and the wider sharing of practice is a **feature of good practice**.

53. The TQER team found that 83% of lecturing staff at the College hold the Teaching Qualification in Further Education (TQFE), or an equivalent qualification, and staff who do not hold a recognised teaching qualification are supported to undertake a recognised professional qualification. The Personal Learning Plan Process and Guidance Notes supports the professional development of staff within the College.

54. The TQER team considered that the College has a robust set of onboarding and induction processes in place that supports new staff to become familiar with policies, processes and the teaching environment, and that encourage staff to develop their role and progress in their career. New staff are initially supported by the Human Resource Management and Professional Development team which is followed up with support from managers. Support is additionally available through the Learning and Quality Champions team. Additionally, a buddy system provides further support for new Work-Based Assessors.

55. The TQER team noted a strong outward facing approach to staff development. This includes engaging external agencies, such as College Development Network (CDN), to support training as well as encouraging staff to actively participate in formal peer review networks run by Colleges Scotland, Qualifications Scotland and CDN, and annual industry visits to ensure currency of practice. All these activities help to drive quality improvement across the College.

56. The self-evaluation process carried out at curriculum and faculty level is one of the College's primary mechanisms for enhancement and the sharing of good practice to support innovation. This process involves all staff who support teaching, coordinated by the LSMs in each area, and overseen by the Directors of Faculty. The process supports in-year actions to address emerging concerns with progress monitored as part of the cyclical process. The TQER team heard that this process is strongly embedded throughout the College and is valued at all levels.

57. The self-evaluation process provides an effective way for curriculum teams to innovate in development and delivery of their learning, teaching and assessment. The additional use of the data dashboard enables monitoring and evaluation of student outcomes to indicate successful initiatives which can then be shared across the institution. Consistent templates include current data from the dashboard and student feedback, and staff add commentary and devise actions which are revisited at six-monthly intervals. The self-evaluation documents are submitted to the Director of Faculty at a set deadline. It is the Directors of Faculty's responsibility to pull all self-evaluation documents together and produce a Faculty self-evaluation which is submitted to ELT. Staff spoke of feeling clear ownership of the self-evaluation documents and their use to inform in-year improvements.

58. There was clear evidence that College staff across the whole institution are supported to adopt an evidence-based approach to evaluation and enhancement. This approach draws on dashboard data and surveys, to evaluate all stages of the student journey, from admissions through to outcomes, using performance indicators throughout. Within departments, the process is overseen by the LSMs and Directors of Faculty and has a strong grounding in the annual self-evaluation process. This approach has been supported through investment in effective data dashboards which are available to all staff supporting learning, teaching and assessment. All staff, involved across the student life-cycle in both teaching and support, spoke positively about the accessibility of the dashboard. They highlighted its use to inform College decision-making processes during faculty and subject area meetings to provide robust, evidence-based decision making and support innovation in the curriculum.

59. The College's work on trauma-informed and inclusive practice can be seen across the whole institution. In particular, innovation in trauma-informed and inclusive practice can be seen in the College's approach to training all staff to provide a fully embedded approach. Within the Learning and Teaching Strategy Roadmap, the College's clearly sets out a planned approach to continued staff development and training in relation to trauma informed practice. The TQER team heard, throughout the review, from staff in all areas that the training that they received directly influenced their provision of learning and teaching (see also paragraph 62).

Supporting student success

60. The TQER team found that West Lothian College's arrangements for supporting student success are effective. The institution has appropriate and systematically applied practices in line with sector expectations for supporting student success that uses data, evidence and externality, demonstrates impact and are effective in supporting student success.

61. The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence including the Strategic Impact Analysis, the Self Evaluation Action Plan (SEAP) 2024–25, the SEAP update November 2025, and key policy frameworks including the College's Admissions Policy, Safeguarding Policy and On Course Support Policy. Sector benchmarking and performance evidence, including the SFC WLC Data Analysis and findings from the Education Scotland Annual Engagement Visit Report 2023–24, were also considered. The evaluation drew on governance and self-evaluation processes, including committee papers and institutional reporting, Induction Survey Reports 2023-2025, alongside evidence from employer and partner engagement, including articulation arrangements and wider third sector partnership activity supporting student wellbeing, inclusion and engagement. In addition, the TQER team met with a representative range of stakeholders, including senior leaders, staff and students, as well as employers and third sector partners, and received a demonstration of the College's Data Dashboard.

Enabling student success

62. The TQER team found that the design and availability of student support arrangements are effective in enabling student success and addressing challenges relating to wellbeing, inclusion, equality and student support. A strategic, trauma-informed and equity-focused approach is embedded across the student journey underpinned by a coherent policy framework including the College's Student Support Policy, On Course Support Policy and Fitness to Study arrangements.

63. College performance data demonstrate a consistent and sustained positive impact. Overall attainment has remained consistently high over three years, with outcomes above sector averages across most modes of study, alongside improving early withdrawal rates, particularly for FE full-time and HE part-time learners. These outcomes were strongly corroborated by students, with whom the TQER team met, who consistently reported timely access to support, early intervention when difficulties arose, and feeling supported in their whole college experience. Students reported that all staff are approachable and helpful, and that they can access services as required. Students expressed satisfaction with learning support, access to resources and assessment approaches, and have good relationships with teaching and support staff.

64. The TQER team found that targeted provisions for students facing the greatest barriers are a clear strength of the College. One example of targeted provision is the Trauma Responsive Unique Support Tailor-made (TRUST) trauma-informed model, which is a wraparound support service for students affected by trauma that provides personalised plans, one-to-one support and multiagency engagement to support progression into education or employment. Other examples include counselling provision, and the College's Compass Point facility, which coordinates third sector and community partners to deliver on-campus wellbeing, financial inclusion and practical support to enable flexible and proportionate intervention for care-experienced students, neurodiverse learners and those experiencing complex personal or financial challenges. Staff and students described how these arrangements reduce repetition of disclosure, build trusted relationships and enable students to remain engaged in learning, including through temporary or partial engagement where mainstream provision was not initially appropriate.

65. The TQER team agreed that wellbeing and poverty mitigation measures, including free meals, quiet spaces, quiet induction, laptop loan scheme and accessible counselling, further strengthen student engagement and attendance. Students consistently referenced these measures as enabling them to attend, concentrate and continue with their studies. High levels of student satisfaction reported through the Student Satisfaction and Engagement Survey (SSES) and the bespoke College survey (SPARKLE) were mirrored in students' accounts of feeling respected, supported and confident in seeking help.

66. The TQER team found the College is effective in addressing the specific support needs of its students within the context of its community. Strategic documentation demonstrates a strong understanding of local deprivation, barriers to participation and mental health challenges, which is translated into targeted action rather than remaining at policy level. An example of this is the development of the Student Mental Health Agreement which sets out the College's commitment to improve student mental health and wellbeing. It embeds good practice through a set of objectives and a Student Mental Health Action Plan Tracker which records activities and their impact against these objectives.

67. The TQER team met with senior leaders and staff, who consistently articulated how insight from performance data, student feedback and partnerships with local authorities and third sector organisations informs the prioritisation and design of support. Students from Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) communities, care-experienced learners and those on school-college partnership courses described tailored and responsive support aligned to individual circumstances, including flexible induction, staged transitions and on course intervention. Performance data and staff analysis indicate strong outcomes for SIMD10/20 learners, care experienced students, disabled students and students from minority ethnic backgrounds. These findings were reinforced by students' accounts of feeling understood, supported and able to progress despite barriers.

68. The TQER team found that actions taken by the College Empowering Differences Steering Group and Mainstreaming Equalities Committee positively impact on support available to students, with survey questions adapted to be more inclusive for neurodiverse students, and simple drop-down option questions added to support self-diagnosis of needs for earlier intervention. Student outcomes for a diverse range of learners are consistently improving and while difficult to directly correlate these changes to improvement actions, there is a shared feeling among senior management that the supportive, open to all culture across the College, directly impacts on positive outcomes.

69. The College places a focus on physical wellbeing, with initiatives such as the Active Campus provision offering both universal activities (for example, fitness sessions and wellbeing activities) and targeted interventions by staff and the Active Campus Coordinator to support students at risk of disengagement or poor wellbeing. Students also referenced access to facilities and activities that support wider wellbeing, including gym use and structured in-class engagement with support services.

70. The TQER team found that the College makes effective use of data to support student success. Arrangements for collecting, analysing and using data are clearly defined, systematically applied and aligned to institutional priorities, enabling informed decision making and enhancement activity across curriculum and services. This is evidenced through the College's live performance dashboards, which provide staff with real-time access to key metrics on attendance, retention and attainment; Faculty self-evaluation reports, which demonstrate structured analysis of performance data and identification of enhancement actions at programme level; and the formal Mitigation for Attainment Gaps process, which uses disaggregated student data to identify and address differential outcomes across cohorts.

71. The College routinely uses a wide range of quantitative and qualitative data to monitor student engagement, retention, attainment and progression, including Scottish Funding Council data, internal audited performance indicator data and equality data. These data are embedded within operational and strategic processes and are reviewed at course, faculty and senior leadership levels to inform early intervention, curriculum planning and resource prioritisation. Senior leaders and quality staff demonstrated a clear understanding of how dashboards and performance data support timely identification of risk and evidence-based decision making.

72. The College evaluates effectiveness by analysing outcomes for key learner groups. Disaggregated analysis for SIMD learners, care experienced students, disabled students and students from minority ethnic backgrounds demonstrates consistently strong outcomes relative to sector benchmarks, providing assurance that targeted support arrangements are working as intended. The TQER team met with staff and students who validated this through examples of how data informs early intervention and personalised support planning, supporting sustained engagement and attainment.

73. Student feedback forms a complementary and integral strand of effectiveness evaluation. Student Satisfaction and Engagement survey (SSES) data, SPARKLE survey results and induction feedback are systematically analysed to identify themes, monitor trends and inform improvement actions at course and institutional level. Students across meetings provided clear examples of changes made in response to feedback, demonstrating that student generated evidence is actively used to enhance the learning experience.

Transitions

74. The TQER team found that the College supports students effectively across the full learner lifecycle from pre-entry through to progression and positive destinations. Clear policy frameworks for admissions, student support and on course intervention underpin a coherent and joined-up approach. The TQER team also heard from students that their prior learning and work experience were considered, informing the level and choice of course offered.

75. The TQER team found that pre-entry and induction arrangements enable early identification of need through application disclosures, school liaison and needs assessments. Most students described clear information at entry and supportive induction experiences; however, some school-college partnership learners and returning students identified opportunities to improve the consistency of communication. Returning and articulating students suggested that a shorter, focused induction would be more meaningful.

76. At course level, named course tutors and dedicated student support staff provide continuity and early intervention, with course tutors undertaking structured oversight of each learner through induction, individual learning planning, progress reviews, attendance monitoring and liaison with delivery staff to identify and respond to emerging concerns. Dedicated support staff further enhance this provision through weekly timetabled drop-in sessions with classes, providing accessible in-situ support and strengthening early intervention and referral pathways, supported by real-time data dashboards and progress planning. Students consistently identified course tutors and support staff as their first point of contact and described proactive support when academic or personal difficulties arose.

77. The TQER team agreed that progression outcomes provide strong evidence of impact. The College consistently achieves very high positive destination rates, with most students progressing to employment, further study, higher education or apprenticeships. Students described confidence in next steps, supported by Universities and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS) guidance, employer engagement and articulation routes.

78. The TQER team consider the College's whole organisation approach to supporting student success, which is consistently applied across curriculum and professional services and supports students across the full learner lifecycle, including transitions into College, between levels of study and into employment or further learning to be a **feature of good practice**. This approach includes structured pre-entry engagement, coherent induction, proactive on course support and clear progression planning and targeted provision for those who face the greatest barriers, and is informed by data and strengthened through partnership working. As a result, students demonstrate high levels of confidence in determining and articulating their next steps, which is reflected in consistently strong positive destination outcomes.

Employability, skills development and lifelong learning

79. The TQER team found the College is effective in supporting employability, skills development and lifelong learning. Strategic intent is clearly articulated and operationalised through curriculum design, employer engagement and flexible provision aligned to regional labour market needs.

80. The TQER team consider work-based learning, placements and apprenticeships to be institutional strengths that are supported by strong employer relationships and positive external assurance. Students across FE, HE, part-time, work-based and placement routes provided concrete examples of how learning is connected directly to workplace practice and supported progression. Employers confirmed positive experiences of partnership working, while also highlighting areas where skills gaps or curriculum coverage required ongoing dialogue and review. The College cited a variety of employer engagement mechanisms, including Employer Advisory Groups, which operate with varying degrees of formality across curriculum areas, with feedback often gathered at curriculum/faculty level through direct liaison and partnership working.

81. The TQER team agreed that careers information, advice and guidance are embedded across the learner journey, including at admissions, on course and at exit. Students described effective support with applications, employer engagement and understanding progression options. Lifelong learning provision, including flexible part-time and employer-responsive courses, supports adult learners and those seeking to upskill or reskill.

82. The TQER team were informed of innovative approaches to embedding meta-skills to develop in an authentic context, and of using software to develop engaging digital packages of learning material that could be accessed on mobile devices, Generative Artificial Intelligence to create podcasts to aid revision, and sector leading innovative practice that has been recognised by College Development Network (CDN) awards. Students spoke positively about their experience of teaching practice and felt supported and confident to apply their learning in the workplace.

83. While the TQER team found strong evidence of skills development within the curriculum, students were not always able to articulate or evidence the skills that they were developing to support progression into employment or further learning. The TQER team noted the College's three-year meta-skills project plan which had been developed in response to an action regarding tracking and monitoring of meta-skills from the last Education Scotland external review. This plan was also evidenced within the College's Learning and Teaching Strategy Roadmap.

84. The plan aims to incorporate meta-skills within all courses by 2027-28 and to increase awareness of meta-skills amongst students. At the time of the review, the halfway point of the plan, materials to raise awareness for student groups and to showcase meta-skills have been developed such as screen savers, banners and class materials/resources. A series of

six “Metapreneur” workshops are planned to help students develop and record their own development, so increasing the perception of meta-skills. To increase staff development in this area Skills Development Scotland (SDS) has been engaged to deliver training materials to staff at the start of next session. The TQER team therefore **recommends** that the College should continue to implement its meta-skills plan and approach to deliver a consistent experience for students to recognise, articulate and evidence the skills they develop through their studies.

85. The TQER team found that the College provides an effective individualised learning experience underpinned by structured support systems, trauma responsive practice and flexible curriculum design. Individualisation begins pre-entry through tailored interviews, needs assessments and transition support. On course, personalised support is enabled through named tutors, dedicated support staff, progress plans, flexible assessment arrangements and Personal Learning and Support Plans (PLSPs), which capture identified support needs and agreed adjustments, supporting targeted intervention and ongoing monitoring of student progress.

86. Students that the TQER team met with consistently described practical adjustments that helped them attain their award/qualification including assessment date extensions, adapted assessment, flexible timetabling and staged returns to study. Some variability in consistency across curriculum areas was noted by a few students, particularly regarding feedback turnaround and the sequencing of units. These issues are picked up systematically through the student voice feedback mechanisms and align with curriculum and faculty self-evaluation action plans.

Concerns and complaints

87. The TQER team found that the College demonstrates a consistent, structured and effective response to concerns. Clear policies and procedures enable early identification and resolution of academic, wellbeing and behavioural issues, supported by defined escalation routes and safeguarding arrangements.

88. Assessment appeals and complaints processes are well defined, fair and aligned with Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) requirements. Students expressed confidence in both informal resolution routes, through trusted relationships with staff, and in the availability of formal escalation where required.

89. Examples provided by students demonstrated timely resolution of issues relating to assessment workload, learning environments and support needs, reinforcing a culture of responsiveness and continuous improvement. The TQER team concluded that the College’s arrangements for responding to concerns are effective, transparent and trusted by students, contributing to a culture of responsiveness, early intervention and continuous improvement.

90. Overall, the TQER team concluded that the College provides a coherent, well-integrated and highly effective approach to supporting student success, across the full student lifecycle, which is responsive to the needs of its diverse learner groups. This is supported by the effective use of data and external reference points to evaluate impact and inform enhancement and has resulted in high attainment, strong progression outcomes and high levels of learner confidence in their next steps.

Student engagement and partnership

91. The TQER team found that West Lothian College is effective in student engagement and partnership. The institution's approach to student engagement and partnership is systematic and strategic. The institution ensures the quality of the student learning experience is continuously improved based on the voice of students in line with sector expectations. The institution works in partnership with students to use data, evidence and externality to develop, implement and evaluate the student learning experience. The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence including the Strategic Impact Analysis, minutes from key committees, the College's Vision, the Scottish Funding Council data analysis report, the college governance structure, college committee remits, the agendas of meetings between the SA and the College Principal, faculty self-evaluations, the Strategic Roadmap and the college response to SPARKLE. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including staff, Student Association staff and sabbatical officers, and students.

Strategic approach

92. The TQER team found that the College has a systematic, well communicated and collegial approach to student engagement that has a positive impact on the quality of the learning experience. Strategic responsibility for student engagement and partnership is well defined through College organisational structures and committees. In strategic leadership roles, the VP People, Performance and Improvement and VP Learning and Attainment work collaboratively to design, develop and promote policy frameworks that encourage student engagement and partnership working.

93. One of the College values is 'students at the centre of everything we do', which is underpinned by a commitment to staff and students working together as part of a team and to act on student feedback to make changes. Examples of this in action include collaborative work between College staff and the Student Association (SA) on key initiatives that benefit students, such as the joint development of a Student Mental Health Agreement, Trauma-Informed Practice training for the SA Executive, and the provision of free food in the canteen to support students to attend and engage with their learning. The Executive Leadership Team (ELT) operates an open-door policy for the SA Presidents, Executive Officers and Student Ambassadors (see paragraph 96) and regular meetings are held between the SA Presidents, the Principal, and VPs. As a result, the two SA Presidents report that their relationship with the College's ELT is positive, collegial, supportive and respectful.

94. The SA Presidents are members of the Board of Governors and attend the Finance and General Purposes Committee, as well as the Learning and Teaching Committee. At the latter, they provide a regular SA report, ensuring that the student voice informs action planning for improvement. They are also members of other cross-College committees including the Widening Access and Equalities Committee and the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) Committee, all of which are chaired by senior college staff. The SA Executive (see paragraph 95) is actively engaged in decision-making and is consulted on changes to processes which impact on students, for example, on recent updates to College strategies.

Student representation and partnership

95. The College's SA Executive comprises two SA Presidents supported by three elected Executive Officers with whom they work closely, providing an opportunity for those in Executive Officer roles to develop skills and expertise across a range of areas. This structure enables students to progress through different representative roles. The TQER team heard that the Executive Officer roles provide opportunities to learn about the College's SA and

build individuals' confidence before consideration of more senior student representative roles, including that of SA President. The SA Presidents are offered a wide range of training by the College, including leadership training, Board training and Board member support in the form of a dedicated, named mentor. In addition, they attend National Union of Students residential training events, College Development Network (CDN) and sparqs events and workshops. The Executive Officers receive in-house training provided by the College to effectively undertake their role. Student officers reflected positively on the quality of the training and the level of support available to them. The SA promotes and runs elections for SA President and Executive Officer roles, encouraging uptake by students through marketing the opportunities available, using a range of communication media including social media, teams channel and a monthly newsletter, all of which are developed by the SA. Students standing for election are supported in preparing a manifesto and in wider engagement with the student body.

96. A further voluntary role of Student Ambassador is recruited to annually. Student Ambassadors support various aspects of the SA's work such as the SPARKLE survey, learning and teaching evaluation, representation and student voice activities, and events and campaigns. The extent to which an individual Student Ambassador is involved in these activities depends on the number of hours that they can offer to the role. The delegation and allocation of tasks to Student Ambassadors is overseen by the SA Presidents and Executive Officers. The role presents an opportunity for the wider student body to engage with the work of the SA and is promoted by the sabbatical officers as part of formal student induction activities. The SA also raises awareness of the Student Ambassador role when presenting at the annual Principal's Welcome Back to staff. In 2025-26 a total of 58 Student Ambassadors were recruited and involved in promoting and increasing awareness of SA-led campaigns, such as the introduction of free food at lunchtime, clubs and societies. The Student Ambassadors are provided with training by the SA Presidents to effectively undertake their role. The SA Presidents and Executive Officers meet with the Student Ambassadors monthly to discuss current and upcoming projects. The TQER team heard that there is a decline in the number of Student Ambassadors remaining active in the role throughout the academic year due to the voluntary nature of the role and competing demands on time, in terms of course workload and paid part-time work opportunities.

97. The TQER team found that the College supports the SA through a range of measures including paid sabbatical posts for the two SA Presidents, dedicated campus space, appropriate signposting and through funding an assigned staff member as Student Association Development Officer. The SA is an independent body and has a budget allocated annually by the College. The SA and ELT meet regularly to discuss the work of the SA. While the TQER team found no evidence of a formal partnership agreement between the College and the SA, it was noted that work is ongoing to develop a formal College-SA Partnership Framework informed by sparqs' Scotland's Ambition for Student Partnership.

98. Students with whom the TQER team met were aware of the SA, where they are based and that they can drop in at any time for help and assistance. They highlighted regular communication from the SA via online channels, social media and newsletters. Student awareness of the Student Ambassador role was also high, although students were less sure of the activities they engage in.

99. The TQER team noted that, following an internal evaluation of the effectiveness of the model for class representation, the College removed the formal process for course or class representation system (see also paragraphs 106).

Student voice and student engagement

100. The College has three annual formal surveys which capture the student voice: the post

induction survey (September), SPARKLE survey (November) and the SFC Student Satisfaction and Engagement survey (SSES) (April). The SA lead the delivery of the College's annual SPARKLE survey and collate and disseminate the results. Surveys are open to all students across the College on all modes of learning. The College monitors survey response rates for all courses, which are shared with course teams using dashboards. Real-time results and departmental trend data are open to all, enabling sharing of practices that enable high completion rates. Response rates across all surveys are consistently high (above 50%). For the SSES, the College's response rates are consistently higher than sector averages.

101. Student survey responses are shared with the Learning and Teaching Committee and inform Faculty self-evaluation reporting, providing assurance at senior level that actions based on student feedback are being managed at curriculum level. Learning and Skills Managers (LSMs) are responsible for monitoring survey response rates and emerging actions within their curriculum areas with compliance monitored through Director meetings and self-evaluation processes. The TQER team found evidence of course team self-evaluation action planning based on student feedback, including changes to timetables, assessment scheduling, changes to course content and clear influence of students in shaping their academic learning experience. Feeding back to the student body about actions taken in response to the SPARKLE survey is owned by the SA and shared with the wider student body through 'You Said, We Did' posters and via the SA newsletter. In addition, any comments left via the survey are shared with the SA and teaching staff allowing staff to act quickly to address any emerging concerns. The TQER team found that staff across the College used and relied on the SPARKLE survey as one of the main sources of student feedback to inform self-evaluation and improvement action planning. The TQER team also noted high levels of student awareness of, and active engagement with, the College SPARKLE survey, resulting in good response rates that provide reliable data for self-evaluation purposes. Students who met with the TQER team were confident that their feedback was acted on.

102. During meetings with the TQER team, both curriculum and support staff cited examples of student feedback and self-evaluation which had led to enhancement. For example, in the Care, Health and Sport Faculty, students were involved in event planning (for the Intergenerational Carnival) allowing them to experience aspects of health and safety, undertake the organisation of fundraising activities, and gain experience of project management and planning. In Automotive courses, a range of improvements were made to the garages based on feedback from students on their teaching environment, which culminated in the building of a new workshop space.

103. All staff and students with whom the TQER team met referenced the use of the SPARKLE survey as the primary student voice mechanism within the College. The TQER team also found the SA engagement with and ownership of the survey to be an example of genuine partnership working between the SA and the College. The TQER team regard as a **feature of good practice** the partnership approach to capturing the student voice through the bespoke College survey that has resulted in high levels of student awareness and engagement. The survey is fully embedded within quality processes and is consistently and systematically used to improve the student experience.

104. The TQER team noted that, beyond the three formal surveys, there were other mechanisms through which student views are used to inform improvement and enhancement. These include end-of-unit evaluations and the opportunity for students to feed into course team meetings. The TQER team reviewed a range of course team meeting minutes that demonstrated that student feedback was routinely considered, but noted different approaches to how this feedback was generated. Examples of different approaches included that class representatives attended some course team meetings to provide

feedback, whereas for other courses, students reported that class time was used prior to the meeting to gather student feedback. The TQER team note that the College chooses not to have a formal class representative structure, as previous experience resulted in low levels of sustained student participation. While the College feels that the lack of a formal structure allows for flexible approaches to gathering student feedback across curriculum areas, the TQER team did find that the class or course representative role was occurring informally and ad hoc across curriculum teams. As there is no single approach to class representative, there is no training provided to support students who undertake the informal role. The TQER team would therefore encourage the College to consider how best to support learners who take on a class representative role, ensuring that there is consistent and appropriate support for these students to undertake these roles.

105. The TQER team found that the SA Presidents have an active role in representing students within College groups and committees. The SA was consulted in the recent reshaping of College strategies including the Learning and Teaching Strategy. While the TQER team found that the student voice and curriculum feedback was influential in shaping the refreshed strategic approach, they did not find evidence of broader student engagement in the development of institutional strategies.

106. The TQER team noted that beyond the established student voice mechanisms and SA engagement in committees there was limited opportunity to involve students more directly in College quality and decision-making processes. Regular opportunities for student engagement during course team meetings are not provided consistently, given the College's decision to remove the formal course representative structure. The TQER team therefore **recommends** that the College, in collaboration with the Student Association, should consider ways to involve students more directly in College quality and decision-making processes, going beyond established student voice mechanisms to foster a strategic approach to working with students as partners.

Enhancement and quality culture

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

108. The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence including the Strategic Impact Analysis (SIA), minutes from key College committees, the College Vision, the Scottish Funding Council data analysis report, the Staff Quality Handbook and supporting policies and procedures, faculty and professional service self-evaluations, Institution Led Quality Review plans, Quality Improvement Action Plans, the Strategic Roadmap and a range of committee Terms of References. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including staff and students.

Strategic approach

109. The College's strategic direction is articulated through the College Vision and strategic goals, and underpinned by five enabling strategies (Finance, People, Learning and Teaching, Digital, and Estates). The TQER team heard that enhancement is embedded across the vision and strategic goals and the supporting strategies. College leaders engaged with the Student Association (SA) and staff working groups through regular meetings to discuss any changes, for improvement to existing practices, enhancing communication and avoiding additional workload for staff by assigning enhancement tasks within teams already involved in those areas of work. In addition to the College's vision and strategic goals, a set of three values underpin the approach to everything the College does, these are 'welcoming to all', 'students at the centre of everything we do' and 'always striving for better'. The TQER team heard that these values are clearly embedded in the practice of staff across the institution.

110. Overall, the TQER team found that staff teams strongly associate with the College's vision, goals and values. The College value 'always striving for better' reflects a clear commitment to quality assurance and continuous improvement, contributing to a strong quality culture. These values are clearly practiced, consistently visualised, well embedded and naturally occurring through activities and staff behaviours at all levels. This commitment has driven a sustained focus on improving student outcomes, which remain above sector average, alongside consistently high student satisfaction rates. Together, these outcomes provide strong evidence of the positive impact this approach has on the student learning experience.

111. The TQER team found that internal processes support effective senior level reporting and monitoring of performance against actions and priority areas for future enhancement, as identified in the annual institutional Self-Evaluation and Action Plans (SEAP). The TQER team observed that the Executive Leadership Team (ELT) has created a professional and respectful culture across the College and demonstrates maximising capacity and commitment through investment in resources and staff posts that are impactful and make a positive difference to staff and student development. The ELT operate an open-door policy with staff and students, encouraging a climate of openness and transparency. The Principal holds an annual Welcome Back all staff meeting at the start of each session, clearly setting

out the College vision and updating all staff on strategic priorities and sector updates. SA Presidents have a presence at this event to promote their activities and encourage staff to support student engagement with the SA.

112. The TQER team found that the College has effective measures for centrally monitoring improvement actions. There is a planned and scheduled formal quarterly Management Forum which includes Directors of Faculty, who are responsible for discrete areas of curriculum provision, and Senior Support Service Managers who have responsibility for professional services. A range of College committees report into the Management Forum providing a mechanism for sharing issues, successful practice, and monitoring progress and planning for improvement. Cross-College committees support strategic themes, and SA Presidents and Executive Officers are represented on these committees. One example of this is the Mainstreaming Equality Committee which consistently monitors and proactively promotes equality across the College. The TQER team saw evidence of committee meetings, emerging actions and resulting changes.

113. The TQER team was provided with a range of documentation which confirmed that all committees had clear terms of reference and remits, and meetings are scheduled in advance to facilitate participation. Risk management is in place and a risk register shared during committee meetings which includes review of actions and forward planning. The risk register is shared with the Board of Governors for good governance and monitoring.

Self-evaluation and institution-led quality activity

114. The TQER team found that the College uses well-defined self-evaluation processes and action plans across curriculum and support areas in a systematic and planned way. The TQER team found a positive approach and commitment to self-evaluation for identifying and progressing actions for improvement. Templates and evaluation prompts are centrally available in shared folders for curriculum and support areas and the TQER team found that the process is systematically and consistently embedded across all departments. Data dashboards support self-evaluation and are consistently used to inform actions.

115. Directors of Faculty are supported by Learning and Skills Managers (LSMs) who are responsible for an area of academic provision and have ownership of course self-evaluation action plans within that area. LSMs are also responsible for monitoring and sharing progress on these action plans with course teams. Minutes and actions from fortnightly course team meetings are systematically recorded and shared with Directors of Faculty. Directors of Faculty meet with course teams twice per year for formal self-evaluation activities which are collated and summarised into a faculty level report. Faculty reports are submitted to the College Leadership Team (CLT), thereby ensuring senior level oversight of improvement actions that align to the College strategies.

116. The TQER team found that College leaders effectively linked strategies to operational management through the creation of a series of Strategic Roadmaps, which subdivide strategic aims and assign these to operational departments. The TQER team heard that all Directors of Faculty, Heads of Service and LSMs had contributed to the development of the Roadmaps through the Management Forum. The TQER team found that staff across the College were very aware of their role in strategy. Staff teams had engaged in a series of roadmap workshops to discuss and agree project areas. High participation rates in these workshops have ensured widespread ownership of the College's strategic goals. Staff reported that they found this process helpful in linking departmental action plans to strategy. The TQER team found College staff were able to clearly articulate the ways that institutional strategy and its implementation impacted on their individual practices. The TQER team found that the development of roadmaps for translating strategic priorities into operational practice provides a clear mechanism that supports broad staff engagement, shared

understanding, a sense of ownership and involvement in the implementation of institutional strategies, and regarded this as a **feature of good practice**.

117. The TQER team heard of a strong culture of quality assurance for delivering and assessing qualifications in curriculum areas and work-based learning. Quality policies and procedures are periodically scheduled for review and updates shared centrally and through the relevant College committee.

118. To drive improvement at both course and unit level, the College uses Quality Improvement Action Plans (QIAPs). Directors of Faculty decide which courses are subject to QIAP, with lower than average student key performance indicators (KPIs) over a three-year period or poor feedback noted as key triggers. The QIAP is developed to identify, address and monitor actions designed to improve student performance with the Quality Champion (see paragraph 119) for the faculty area involved in supporting the team as it works through the actions. Examples of actions taken to improve course outcomes through QIAPs were highlighted by staff and included changes made to the timing of work placements on one course, so that learners felt better prepared which resulted in fewer withdrawals and better attainment across the course. The TQER team reviewed existing QIAPs and noted a range of approaches between curriculum areas, with some courses drawing on extensive data sets to inform their QIAPs, developing detailed action plans, which are updated and revisited throughout the year, and others being less well developed. The TQER team also noted there was no formal policy or procedure to support the QIAP process at the time of the review although noted that in its development of an ILQR process (see paragraph 120), the College intends to adopt a standardised approach to QIAPs. The TQER team endorses this direction and encourages the College to ensure oversight and monitoring of impact of QIAPs.

119. Faculty teaching staff are supported by Quality Champions with one assigned to each faculty. Experienced members of staff take up the role and are supported through timetable remission. Quality Champions provide one-to-one support for colleagues, including those new to the College or to teaching, and are involved in planning for curriculum change, for example the planned change to an assessment on an HND programme that had articulation links to a university programme. Teaching staff highlighted the impact of Quality Champions in maintaining and assuring standards, compliance with awarding body requirements and maintaining the integrity of awards across the curriculum. Quality Champions spoke positively of the upskilling opportunity provided by the role and their colleagues appreciated the valuable and accessible continuing professional development delivered by the Quality Champions as their peers. The TQER team identified as a **feature of good practice** the College's approach to quality assurance and quality enhancement that is strengthened by the Quality Champions, who mentor and support curriculum staff to build and develop knowledge and confidence in quality assurance practices. This supports continuous quality improvement and professional development.

120. Evidence provided to the TQER team demonstrated the College's intention to introduce Institution-Led Quality Review (ILQR) with a plan to launch its approach in June 2026. The College has created a new internal process to underpin the approach and identified a curriculum area and a professional services area on which to pilot this. Reviews will take place at Faculty or Professional Service level, supported by a self-evaluation document and drawing on a range of further evidence including course self-evaluations, QIAPs and findings from student focus groups. Each Faculty will be reviewed once over the ILQR period. Common template documentation will be available centrally and designed to capture evidence to support robust internal review. The TQER team **recommends** that the College roll out its planned approach to Institution-Led Quality Review in this academic year and continue to reflect on and refine the process in line with SFC expectations.

External outlook

121. The TQER team noted the outcomes of all awarding body external verification activity is shared with all faculty managers to ensure everyone can learn from good practice and development points. An overview of all awarding body verification activity and outcomes for each academic year is also provided to the Learning and Teaching Committee for oversight and discussion.

122. Externality is used effectively to assure quality and inform enhancement. The College engages purposefully with external partners, awarding bodies and employers to support curriculum relevance, work-based learning and progression pathways. Articulation and associate student agreements with universities provide external reference points for curriculum design and academic standards and support coherent progression routes. Students and staff the TQER team met with described the positive impact of these partnerships on employability and learner confidence.

123. The College also uses findings from external review and assurance activity to inform continuous improvement. Outcomes from external audits and sector engagement are reflected within self-evaluation and action planning processes, supporting reflective practice and enhancement. Senior leaders articulated clearly how external feedback informs institutional priorities and is monitored through established governance and management structures.

124. The TQER team found the College is committed to sector wide engagement and supports staff and students in wider collaboration which influence the design of College approaches to quality assurance and enhancement. Examples include an ELT member being involved in the creation of the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) and serving on key sector steering groups, and the current Student President's engagement in Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP) Discovery Phase events, and College Development Network groups. The College was initially involved in two of the national project streams through STEP. Due to various demands, the College is now a partner on one project: Supporting Access, Progression and Successful Outcomes in Disabled Student Communities (SAPSO). A LSM has been appointed as STEP lead within the College and has started to create resources to share with curriculum teams. The TQER team noted the College's intention to integrate STEP into the planning cycle by cascading STEP project information into staff team meetings ensuring it becomes a sustained and strategic part of enhancement culture.

125. The TQER team found that the College has a strong awareness of both local and regional economic needs and is involved with West Lothian Council, the Edinburgh and South-East Scotland City Regional Deal and the Regional Economic Partnership. The TQER team learned that the VP People, Performance and Improvement is the lead on this work at a strategic level, and the VP Learning and Attainment takes over work when discussions come down to curriculum level. The College has established strong and effective collaborations with organisations including NHS Lothian and West Lothian Council and Mitsubishi. There is also involvement in Net Zero projects which provides opportunities for students to engage directly with employers on live projects. Faculty engagement with stakeholders is broad and impactful, supporting students in developing employability skills and into work. Students benefit from, for example, NHS paid work placements on healthcare courses, placements with employers in hospitality and business curriculum, Mitsubishi heat pump contributions for engineering students and numerous other interactions where employers come on to campus as guest speakers. Other employers directly fund the College to deliver their training needs, for example, West Lothian Council, for health and social care provision.

126. The TQER team found many examples of College staff engaging with a wide range of local and regional stakeholders. Stakeholders report strong and positive relationships and that collaboration has positively influenced learners. Employers state that the College consistently goes 'above and beyond' to provide positive learning experiences. One employer spoke highly of the College supporting an international exchange visit to Germany for Childhood Practice learners, offering a chance to experience provision in early years settings and bringing good practice into the workforce within the local authority. The College works within current resources to meet demand for work-based learning in areas such as Health and Social Care. Stakeholders voiced some frustration that the College is restricted by available public funding resources.

127. Employer engagement is supported by a small professional services team within the College, which also undertakes self-evaluation. The Employer Engagement Officer primarily manages contracts for commercial activity and engages directly with stakeholders requesting services for College students such as placements, employer talks, workshops and site visits. Faculty staff are responsible for generating commercial income and for managing related stakeholder/employer relationships. The College maintains a register of employer related activity that records levels of engagement. However, the TQER team noted different approaches to employer liaison across the College. The TQER team heard that the College would like to consistently record employer and partner interaction and feedback to enable oversight across the college. The TQER team would encourage the College to draw together input from across its employers and partners in a holistic manner to facilitate cross-departmental sharing and further support enhancement.

128. Overall, the TQER team considered that the College's engagement with sector enhancement activity is wide ranging and constructive. It is well placed to continue drawing on this engagement to inform improvement and respond to the changing needs of students, employers and the wider community.

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