Quality Enhancement Review of Cardiff University

Technical Report

March 2020

Contents

This report is published in both English and Welsh.

About the Quality Enhancement Review method

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

About this review

This is the Technical Report of the QER conducted by QAA at Cardiff University. The review took place as follows: First Team Visit on 4 February 2020 and Review Visit on 2-5 March 2020. The review was conducted by a team of five reviewers:

- Professor John Baldock
- Mrs Claire Blanchard
- Ms Hayley Burns
- Mrs Sala Khulumula (student reviewer)
- Dr Neil Lucas.

In advance of the review visits, the provider submitted a self-evaluative document (the Self-evaluative Analysis), a change report, and a Prior Information Pack, comprising a range of materials about the provider's arrangements for managing quality and academic standards.

About this report

In this report, the QER team makes judgements on:

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

The judgements can be found on page 2, followed by the detailed findings of the review given in numbered paragraphs.

Technical Reports set out the QER team's view under each of the report headings. A shorter Outcome Report sets out the main findings of the QER for a wider audience. The [Outcome Report](#) for this review is on the QAA website.[3]

QER Technical Reports are intended primarily for the provider reviewed, and to provide an information base for the production of thematic reports that identify findings across several providers.

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[1] About QER: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/types-of-review/quality-enhancement-review
[2] About QAA: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us
[3] Outcome Report: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/quality-assurance-reports/Cardiff-University

Overarching judgement about Cardiff University

Cardiff University **meets** the requirements of the ESG Part 1 for internal quality assurance.

Cardiff University **meets** the relevant baseline requirements of the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales.

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

1 Contextual information about the provider, student population and the review

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

1   The University was established in 1883 and was one of the founding institutions of the University of Wales in 1893. With the merger of the University of Wales, Cardiff and the University of Wales, College of Medicine in 2004, a Supplemental Charter granted university status and the title of 'Cardiff University'. This formally established the University as a university in its own right, fully independent of the University of Wales. The University has been a member of the Russell Group of universities since 1998.

2   The University's vision is to be a world-leading, research-excellent, educationally outstanding university, driven by creativity and curiosity, which fulfils its social, cultural and economic obligations to Cardiff, Wales, the UK and the world. In fulfilling this vision, the University expects to improve its standing as one of the top 20 universities in the UK and the top 100 universities in the world. The University has set out its strategic direction in its strategy document - *The Way Forward 2018-2023* - focusing on five areas: education and students, research, innovation, international, and civic mission. For each area there is a sub-strategy.

3   The University has 24 schools organised into three colleges. The college structure has been in place since 2012. Each college is led by a Pro Vice-Chancellor. The University offers a wide range of academic subjects extending across the humanities; natural, physical, health, life and social sciences; and engineering and technology. A large number of programmes are accredited by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies.

4   University Council is responsible for strategic direction and oversight. The University Executive Board (UEB), chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, leads on institutional management. UEB members include: the Chief Operating Officer; Deputy Vice-Chancellor; Pro Vice-Chancellor for Student Experience and Academic Standards; Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research, Innovation and Enterprise; and the College Pro Vice-Chancellors. Key aspects of academic standards, quality management and the student learning experience are delegated from the Senate to the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC). Each college has an advisory body to the College Pro Vice-Chancellor, known as the College Board. Heads of School are responsible for the delivery of academic quality, development of learning and teaching, and quality enhancement. Heads of School are accountable to the College Pro Vice-Chancellors. The School Committee structure comprises a School Board, Boards of Studies and Student-Staff Panels.

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

5   In 2018-19, 33,190 students were enrolled at the University, comprising 23,961 undergraduates and 9,229 postgraduates (7,348 postgraduate taught, 1,881 postgraduate research). Between 2014-15 and 2017-18, student numbers grew by almost 5%.

6   The University has a diverse student body, with around 10% of students identifying as black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME), and 10% declaring a disability. In 2018-19, 18.8% of Welsh-domiciled students were from Communities First/Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD) areas and 24% of UK-domiciled students were from low participation areas. The University has a strong commitment to widening participation and is one of the most successful Russell Group universities in attracting traditionally underrepresented students from UK-wide, low participation neighbourhoods.

7   The non-continuation rate following year of entry in 2016-17 is 4.2% and within the benchmark of 4.7%. Retention and module completion rates are high with the University outperforming its Fee and Access Plan strategic outcome target. The proportion of students gaining first-class and upper second-class honours has remained below the sector median in the last three years up to 2018. The proportion of students gaining a good degree has increased from 77% in 2016 to 83% in 2019.

1.3 Commentary on how the provider supports national priorities

8   In its Self-evaluative Analysis, the University details its work to increase widening access and inclusion through its outreach work with schools. Some of the specific initiatives undertaken by the University to support access to higher education and the development of students' academic skills to prepare them for university study are referred to in Section 2 of this report. In addition, the University is increasing opportunities for students to undertake part of their studies through the medium of Welsh. The University has developed a new strategic plan to enhance Welsh medium provision across the institution.

9   The University is active in responding to the national and international skills agenda and equipping students with skills and experience for graduate employment. As well as developing new programmes in response to industry needs, the University has started to deliver its first degree apprenticeship in Applied Software Engineering - one of the three national priority areas for Wales.

10   The University has adopted the sustainability principles expressed in the *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015* and has committed to becoming a 'sustainable university' in its strategic plan - *The Way Forward 2018-2023* - with the aim of becoming carbon neutral by 2030. The University works with other Welsh universities through a Higher Education Wales Wellbeing of Future Generations Group to share best practice. The University is supporting its strategic aim by appointing a Dean for Environmental Sustainability.

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

11   The University's preparations for the review were overseen by a QER Steering Group, chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Student Experience and Academic Standards. Membership included the Academic Registrar, Head of Registry and the President of the Students' Union.

12   As well as briefing the key committees and governing bodies of the University (UEB, Academic Standards and Quality Committee, Senate, and Council), meetings were

held with a wide range of stakeholders across the University. Draft documentation was also shared with a range of academic and professional service staff for advice and consultation who also contributed to the drafting of materials.

13   The University involved students in its preparation for the review through the Students' Union President's membership of the QER Steering Group as well as the Students' Union Head of Student Voice. The University shared draft documentation with the Students' Union for information and comment as well as holding information meetings on the content of the Self-evaluative Analysis and to assist the preparation of the student submission. The University provided resources to support the Students' Union undertake its own review process and prepare its submission. As both ASQC and Senate were consulted on the process for review and sign-off of the review documents, student members will have contributed to this process.

1.5   Brief summary of the nature and rationale for the particular areas of focus of the review and in the self-evaluation

14   The University asked the review to consider four areas of focus: placements and employability; international student experience and mobility; student partnership and support; and student voice. These were selected to reflect areas of enhancement at different levels of maturity.

15   The University has an ambition to provide placement and employment-rich opportunities for all students as a means of enhancing their experience and supporting their development of skills for employment. Currently, 43% of students have undertaken a placement and the University has an ambition of at least 50% of undergraduate students undertaking a placement during their time at the University.

16   International experience and student mobility is an area of focus that reflects a developed area of the institutional strategy. A commitment to grow international student mobility and the launch of the Global Opportunities Centre were key features of the previous university strategy. International experience remains a lead indicator of the current strategy - *The Way Forward 2018-2023*. The University is making good progress in relation to a target of at least 30% of undergraduate students spending at least three weeks working, studying or volunteering overseas.

17   The University regards its partnership working with the Students' Union as well-established and an area of strength. The University selected student partnership and support as an area of focus in order to reflect on aspects that make this a successful relationship and how it could be further strengthened to support enhancement of learning and teaching, and provide further opportunities for partnership working with staff.

18   For the fourth area of focus - the student voice - the University notes that, while there is a well-established academic representative system, in the past few years the University has been disappointed by the National Student Survey (NSS) scores although they have remained within benchmark. The University has recently taken a number of steps to enhance its approach - for example, the new Survey Management Framework and the appointment of a Student Campaign Officer - and wants to focus further on this area.

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

19   In the previous QAA review in 2014, there were three recommendations and one affirmation.

20   The first recommendation concerned plans in one programme to use modules at Level 5, 6 and 7 in years of study that normally correspond to academic Level 4, 5 and 6.

This was monitored through the annual review process and no unintended consequences were found. The second recommendation concerned errors that had occurred in the production of final-year results for medical students. The University was asked to monitor the introduction of a new system for recording and reporting results to ensure errors did not recur. This was achieved. The third recommendation required the comprehensive implementation of the Assessment Matters Framework across all provision from the commencement of the academic year 2015-16. The Assessment Matters Framework, which involved the introduction of a limited number of consistent methods for the classification of degrees, was successfully implemented and a report presented to ASQC and reported to Senate.

21   The affirmation supported the University's decision to produce an annual review of enhancement from 2014-15. This was done and a report on enhancement has subsequently been subsumed into the Annual Quality Report.

2 Enhancing the student learning experience

2.1 Strategic approach to enhancing the student experience

22   The Education and Students Sub-strategy is the key strategic document that covers the strategic approach to enhancing the student experience. This is underpinned by the institutional strategy - *The Way Forward 2018-2023*. The sub-strategy is organised into six key areas: providing an inspirational education; supporting student life; valuing our students; planning for global futures; enhancing the learning environment; and promoting teaching excellence. The sub-strategy states action plans will be developed to ensure the delivery of its commitments with evidence provided in the Education and Students Sub-strategy delivery plan. The strategic approach to enhancement of learning, teaching and the student experience is further supported by the Centre for Education Support and Innovation (CESI) which has strategic oversight of student-facing university surveys and module evaluation processes.

23   The University Executive Board (UEB) is responsible for the implementation of the University's strategy and reports to the Senate and Council who have student members as full participants; with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Student Experience and Academic Standards (SEAS) as the accountable member for matters concerning student experience. The University notes that its strategic approach is embedded through the Annual Review and Enhancement (ARE) process and Periodic Review; these reports are designed to inform strategic planning for enhancement at school and programme levels through the development of targeted and timely Student Experience Enhancement Plans (SEEPs). The review team was informed that students from each college are selected to sit on the ARE panels by the Students' Union Executive.

24   The Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) has delegated authority from Senate for key aspects of the student learning experience and monitors the processes and makes decisions that are then reported to Senate. The review team confirmed that the SEEPs were effective at school level and the role of the Student Experience Strategy Group (SESG) is then to focus on broader student experiences. All actions undertaken via the SEEPs are tracked and mapped against the KPIs within the strategy. Since the SESG sits as an advisory body within the overall university committee structure, the team considered that to benefit more fully from the actions taken at school level via the SEEPs, the University may want to reflect on a more structured and deliberative approach in the consideration of the enhancement of the student experience.

25   The review team explored how students had been involved in the development of the sub-strategy. Students within the Students' Union are aware of how the student submission contributes to the University's strategies to enhance the student experience, and the Students' Union President is a member of SESG where the Education and Students sub-strategy is discussed. While students in the meetings with the team were largely unaware of how the sub-strategy had been developed, the team found evidence that the sub-strategy had been created with the involvement of staff and students, and the University's Council.

2.2 Approach to working in partnership with students

26   The University's approach to working in partnership with students is set out in the University's sub-strategy. The Student Charter, the annual Student Written Submission (SWS) and the Student Union Relationship Agreement underpin the joint commitment to partnership working between the students and University. The SWS is the key driver for the Students' Union and University's partnership projects, and this is considered by Council on an annual basis.

27   The University has a mature and embedded student representation system with about 1,000 student representative posts each year that includes Welsh medium student representatives. They are managed and run in partnership with the Students' Union with an annual cycle of training led by the Students' Union in partnership with the University, and an annual student representative training conference. Student representatives sit on formal structures at strategic levels, the Council and Senate, and are represented on committees at all levels within the University including advisory groups and working groups. There are also student members on committees related to professional services and estates. Students are represented on complaints and academic appeals panels, and disciplinary and fitness to practice panels. Students the team met noted the diversity within the student representative system and understood their role as student representatives although some postgraduate research students were less clear.

28   Student voice data is gathered from various sources such as 'Speak Week', Student-Staff Panels (SSP), college forums which are chaired by the College Deans for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Studies, and module evaluations. This data is gathered via the Survey Management Framework which is managed by CESI who assist in the design of action plans. Students commented that SSPs are useful for dealing with issues at a school level but felt they did not adequately address wider college and university issues. Both students and staff considered mid-module feedback as more beneficial than end-of-module feedback as they were able to see the changes within their academic year.

29   The team noted that the University has a good partnership with the Students' Union and students valued how active the Students' Union was in providing them with feedback on the University's responses. Students that the review team met felt that they were being effectively represented on committees and that at college level, the student voice is being effectively managed. However, because of the number of levels involved in the process (school, college and university), students considered that communication and feedback were not always particularly effective, including the positive impact being made by the University on their experience, and the University could be more active in seeking feedback and closing the feedback loop. The University is aware of these challenges and recommendations raised by the QER student submission and has in place an action plan to raise the profile of the student voice and to strengthen communications and messaging at all levels within the University.

2.3   Recognising and responding to diversity of the student population, including approaches to widening access, the needs of specific groups of students and by mode, level and location of study

30   The annual Fee and Access Plans set out the University's approach to widening access which is in line with the overall strategic plan and the Strategic Equality Plan. The University is currently in the process of refreshing its widening participation (WP) strategy that will be used from the academic year 2020-21; it further details the establishment of a WP network that will include academics, professional staff and students. The WP network, established in 2019, has members drawn from academic schools and professional departments and takes a holistic strategic approach to supporting WP students in their learning journey. The University also has had in place for some time, a contextual admissions policy and has introduced a new Admissions Policy in the 2019-20 cycle.

31   The University recruits a significant number of WP students and the reduction of the UCAS entry tariff from 172 in 2011 to 139 in 2019 has encouraged the University to put in place differentiated resources to support WP students in their learning journey. This includes schemes such as: a care leavers' support scheme for care leavers and students estranged from their parents; 'Step Up' - a two-year academic programme for college and sixth form

students; Confident Futures Programme and Discovery Project aimed at care leavers and young people on the autistic spectrum; 'Live Local Learn Local' aimed at adult learners; Scholars Programme with 'Brilliant Club' aimed at doctoral and postdoctoral researchers working with pupils in WIMD40 region priority schools; Pathway to Degree programmes for adults to re-engage in education. Student support services and wellbeing services are key to responding to the needs of the diverse student population.

32   Evidence provided, such as the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) metrics, shows graduate destinations for students from disadvantaged backgrounds are as good as those from advantaged backgrounds; however, students from disadvantaged backgrounds valued their academic experience less in comparison. The University has responded by undertaking a year-on-year review of student experience with a focus on students from WP backgrounds and by introducing key initiatives such as the Residence Life programme and other intervention policies. In 2018-19, the University introduced a Graduate Steering Group to articulate skills and capabilities where attributes are demonstrated through extra-curricular activities as well as academic programmes.

33   Student Support and Wellbeing services run classes, such as writing skills, for students to improve their study skills. The increased support in English for international students has seen the broadening of the Year 1 curriculum which is benefiting all students. Other online platforms that are WP-focused include 'Ally' which is an integrated package that assists in identifying issues student are having with their modules.

34   The University has a 10% BAME attainment gap in 2018 which is in line with the sector average. The SWS, in 2019-20, raised concerns with the BAME student population in relation to making complaints, diversity of staffing base, and curriculum and mental health. This was echoed by students the team met who stated that while they feel there is diversity within the student body, this is not reflected in the staff profile. To address this the University established the BAME Attainment Gap Task and Finish Group in 2018. This group is a collaboration between the Students' Union and senior staff, and reports to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Board, ASQC and the Race Equality Steering Group. The group identified differences in areas of attainment between BAMEs across schools, low levels of BAME staffing and differences in the attainment of local and international students. The Group aims to put actions in place to address these issues with the input of BAME students at the centre of their plans.

35   Students the review team met felt that the University is proactive in recognising and responding to the needs of specific groups of learners and that support is immediate and prompt. Staff commented that WP students also have access to all the student support services in place and how peer mentoring has had the greatest impact for WP students. Overall, the University has in place a wide range of support initiatives to enhance the overall learning experience of a diverse student population.

2.4   Postgraduate taught and research student experience

36   The institutional strategy - *The Way Forward 2018-2023* - underpins the approach to postgraduate taught (PGT) and postgraduate research (PTR) student experience. Postgraduate provision is included in the ARE annual and periodic processes for reviewing programme portfolios, student experience and enhancement activities.

37   The three colleges each have a Dean of Postgraduate Studies whose role involves overseeing annual and periodic review cycles; membership of the ASQC and SESG; provision of leadership in relation to postgraduate student enhancement activities; and working closely with the Students' Union's Vice-President (VP) Postgraduate Students, a sabbatical officer. The VP Postgraduate is a full member of the ASQC and Senate, and is

supported by the Postgraduate Executive. The Deans work together to raise the profile of postgraduate research by liaising with services across the University.

38   In 2018, the University put together a PGR scoping group to undertake a holistic review of PGR across the University with action plans implemented across four areas: recruitment and admissions; funding; culture and experience; and academic quality and standards. The scoping group is also tasked with looking at enhancing career and employability support for PGR students. Postgraduate students also have access to global opportunities with Erasmus+, including traineeships and international credit mobility, and through the University's international strategic partnerships.

39   Postgraduate students participate in the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey or the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey, and their experiences are included in the ARE process allowing for changes to be made in a timely manner with results visible within the academic year. Student voice is collated via 'Speak Week' by the Students' Union who then give feedback through a PGR specific report with actions from the University. Students commented that there is a general lack of student representatives at postgraduate level with students volunteering for the role rather than being elected. There is a postgraduate student representative on SSPs and PGR forums. Students were very complimentary of the proactive nature of the Deans for Postgraduate Studies at school-level but felt less well informed at university level. While there is no official peer mentor scheme in place, PGR students stated that they have a mentor from another speciality area. Students felt they can raise issues with staff who they found to be very helpful and, although their supervisor is their key contact, students are able to seek assistance from the Dean for Postgraduate Studies if their issues need further input.

40   In 2016, the University launched the Doctoral Academy with a focus on skills training and building a student community. It works closely with the employability and wellbeing teams. While the University is waiting on the results of a scoping group before deciding whether to appoint a Director, oversight of academic leadership is provided by the operation group, reporting to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research, and oversight of professional services is via the Registry. The Doctoral Academy is a one-stop shop for all aspects postgraduate, providing bespoke training and development for PGRs. Both staff and students commented on how it has helped build a postgraduate community and provided opportunities for collaborations across disciplines for funding and events. Support staff have helped to design blended learning experience and teaching programmes.

41   Supervisory teams are in place to support PGR students with regular training provided for new and experienced supervisors. PhD students the team met stated they are given 10 days training across the year; they are content with contact hours with supervisors, every week, or monthly for agreements signed with supervisors on international collaborations.

42   PGR students are provided with the opportunity to gain teaching experience with teaching courses run by the Doctoral Academy. Students are also provided with coaching support and advice on Advance HE recognition. The University will implement, from the next academic year, a new policy on the Induction and Training of Research Students. PGR students teach first-year undergraduate students and can lecture for four hours a year in their area of research, as well as demonstrating, tutoring and marking.

43   The team found that the Doctoral Academy brings together all the PGR students and has created a community that is working effectively across disciplines. The Academy also provides PGR specific support to enhance the student learning experience.

2.5   Supporting students in their development as learners

44   The team learnt that the University provides a range of initiatives to support students in their development as learners. The University is focused on delivering an inspirational education along with preparing students for global futures. This was clearly articulated in the meeting with the Vice-Chancellor.

45   All students are given a personal tutor at the commencement of their studies. The personal tutor usually stays with the student throughout the duration of their studies. Personal tutors provide taught students with advice and feedback on a range of academic and pastoral issues and are able to signpost students to other sources of help if required. All personal tutors are trained in their role and are supported through a range of resources including best practice examples on the learning hub, a handbook and an online module.

46   Students are able to request a Welsh-speaking personal tutor provided there are Welsh-speaking members of the teaching staff in their subject area. If there are no Welsh-speaking members in the teaching staff, an appropriate member of staff from another school will be asked to tutor the student. In the School of Welsh and Learn Welsh Cardiff/Dysgu Cymraeg Caerdydd, all students have Welsh-speaking tutors.

47   The University integrates provision of generic study skills with other support and wellbeing services to enhance the accessibility of services for students. Resources include English language support for non-first language English speakers, maths support and a range of support for postgraduate students. The Academic Study Skills Centre supports all students who face barriers to learning and works in collaboration with schools, the Library and disability service, and other study skills providers within the University to ensure a cohesive and shared approach. The Disability and Dyslexia Service provides a range of support and advice to disabled applicants and to staff working with students with disabilities. Mental health advice and mentoring is also provided.

48   The University delivers a comprehensive range of study support to assist students with their studies. Student support centres are provided which offer confidential advice on a wide range of matters. The University provides careers and employability support throughout the student's programme and after graduation. The University provides self-help resources, peer-to-peer support from student volunteers, workshops, courses, wellbeing drop-in sessions, counselling appointments and referrals for further specialist support. The occupational health team provide support to healthcare students in preparation for their course and placements.

49   The Students' Union has a diverse and inclusive range of activities and services that enrich student life. The Students' Union also supports students through their Skills Development Service. The University works closely with student representatives to make sure student views are heard. Annually, the University asks for student feedback through a variety of surveys, using the data gathered to improve and enhance the student experience.

50   The University operates a Student Mentor Scheme which helps new students with their transition and all first-year students have access to a student mentor from their school. Mentors can help with both academic and non-academic queries or concerns which include: helping settle into student life; provide opportunities to meet other students from their course; referencing; note-taking; and what to expect from their course, and academic school and Students' Union activities. At the meeting with students, students were very complimentary and appreciative of the scheme.

51   The University has an established Languages for All programme, which provides all students the chance to learn a language alongside their studies. The scheme is highly valued by the students.

52   The University organises both placements and internships for current students and recent graduates. The University works across a wide range of industries and sectors to source work experience opportunities. These opportunities include short-term unpaid insights, paid internships and classroom experience. The University has an ambition to have 50% of undergraduate students undertake a placement as part of their studies. The review team met with a group of employers and placement providers who spoke very positively about Cardiff University placement students. The employers were very pleased with the way in which the University engages with them and how the placements are set up. All employers were clear about their responsibilities and what was required of them. Some placement opportunities lead to full-time job opportunities.

53   Students have the opportunity to work on the Cardiff University Research Opportunities Programme (CUROP). Students can apply to the University to undertake a paid research opportunity with an academic. Feedback for the programme demonstrated that a high proportion of students agreed that the placement had increased their desire to continue to postgraduate study. Undergraduates have the opportunity of working alongside their tutors. Students are given a flavour of the research activities going on within each subject and will have the opportunity to take part in learning activities influenced by staff research interests. At the meeting with students, the students were very complimentary of the scheme. The review team **commends** the opportunities provided by CUROP to students to engage with research activities to enhance their learning and future career prospects.

54   All current students have the opportunity to study, work or volunteer abroad through the Global Opportunities scheme. The University's educational and extra-curricular provision supports the development of students as global learners. The Global Opportunities Centre coordinates international student mobility and students have the opportunity to study abroad either through international mobility activities, international exchanges, Erasmus projects, international summer programmes, international summer placements and academic-led mobility opportunities. These opportunities were highly-valued by the students.

2.6   Learning environment provided, including the use of technology

55   The review team learnt that the University has invested in the learning environment both in terms of physical learning spaces and the digital environment. The University is currently consulting on a new Digital Strategy. *The Way Forward 2018-2023* strategy document sets out how students will 'have a superb study and life experience'.

56   The University is in the process of a major £17m network infrastructure refresh programme. The University is currently undertaking a significant campus upgrade and has invested over £7m since 2013. The University is currently undergoing a £600m campus upgrade which will transform the campus for the 21st century. The University is creating a £50m Centre for Student Life, due to open in 2021, to provide a central hub for student support services as well as offering modern, flexible social learning spaces. This will lead to support services being integrated on one site.

57   At the visit, the team had a demonstration of the virtual learning environment (VLE) which is part of the Digital Education Strategy. All staff receive training on the use of the VLE and students receive an online induction. Students have the opportunity to submit their assessments via the VLE and receive electronic feedback on assessments. The University has invested heavily in its VLE which makes teaching event capture technology available across the University. The VLE supports innovative learning and teaching as well as providing a valuable and inclusive tool for supporting students with additional learning support needs. The VLE can also be used to create interactive learning material and a university-wide supported audience response system as well as a supported ePortfolio system.

58   At the meetings with students there was a mixed response to the VLE with students reporting that lecturers use it in a variety of ways - with some tutors actively using it to communicate with students while others less so. In the 2019 annual Student Written Submission, students also noted that there remained some inconsistency in engagement with the VLE across the University. Consequently, the University's focus for 2019-20 is providing training and support to staff in schools and raising confidence in the effective use of the VLE.

59   Overall, students stated that they were pleased with the library and IT resources and this was confirmed in the NSS scores.

2.7   Supporting the Welsh medium student learning experience

60   *The Way Forward 2018-2023* commits the University to grow Welsh language provision. Oversight of the Welsh language is overseen by the University Dean for Welsh Language with the Pro Vice-Chancellor of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences acting as Executive Sponsor. The Welsh Language Strategy Group has responsibility for providing guidance and scrutiny for the University Dean for Welsh Language.

61   There is a Welsh Language Advisory Board which oversees the University's approach with respect to Welsh Language Standards. Ultimate responsibility for ensuring the University's overall compliance with the Welsh language, along with all other policy implementation and monitoring matters, lies with the University Executive Board. Specific responsibility for guidance and advice on the Welsh Language Standards lies with the Assurance Services within the Department of Strategic Planning and Governance. Assurance Services provide regular reports to the Welsh Language Steering Group, chaired by the Chief Operating Officer. This group is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of activities that ensure the University complies with the Welsh Language Standards and Policies. The Welsh Language Advisory Board acts as a critical friend and adviser in relation to the University's plans to promote the Welsh language. The University offers a significant number of modules which can be studied through the medium of Welsh across a wide range of subjects from law to medicine.

62   The Cardiff branch of Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol also has responsibility for developing the Welsh medium education in the University. The Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol's Staffing Scheme sponsor some university academic staff.

63   All staff have the opportunity to learn Welsh by registering for courses run by the University's 'Dysgu Cymraeg Caerdydd'. Students have access to an interactive online Welsh language awareness module and through free access to Cymraeg i Bawb/Welsh for All programme.

64   A Welsh Language Champion Network has been set up and acts as a forum to share best practice. The Welsh Language Champions Network has at least one member of staff from each school, college and department. They are the initial point of contact for Assurance Services and the school/department in which they work. Assurance Services communicate regularly with the champions to disseminate information and guidance that helps the University comply with the Standards and there are quarterly meetings where the group meet to share good practice and discuss ideas.

65   The Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol offers a number of opportunities for students who wish to study through the medium of Welsh. All students have the opportunity to learn Welsh through Cymraeg i Bawb. Some issues were raised by students who met with the review team regarding the translation of assessments through the medium of Welsh. In response, the University stated that they were not aware of these issues as no formal complaints had

been lodged with the University. The University stated that they have a new Welsh Strategy which is seeking to enhance current provision and aligns with QAA guidance.

66   Students are offered the opportunity to sit exams through the medium of Welsh, irrespective of whether they have received tutoring in Welsh. If students want to sit their exams in Welsh, the University will ensure that assessed coursework, examination papers and scripts are translated where Welsh-speaking markers are not available. These arrangements are subject to any national or professional body guidance, regulations or QAA guidance.

67   The School of Medicine has done much to promote the curriculum through the medium of Welsh to encourage more Welsh speakers into the School. Students who are pursuing medical and pharmacy degrees have the opportunity to undertake a Welsh medium placement opportunity and the programme teams do a great deal to match students to relevant Welsh-speaking placement opportunities.

2.8   Effectiveness of the approach to enhancing the student learning experience

68   The team learnt that the University's approach to quality assurance has been developed with a strong emphasis on enhancement, to provide for a process of continuous improvement of learning and teaching, informed by the student voice. This is demonstrated by the Annual Review and Enhancement (ARE) process and the Annual Review of the academic quality system, as evidenced in the Annual Quality Report (AQR).

69   The team found that the ARE process is a key source of evidence for enhancement. The process is evidence-based and is designed to encourage and facilitate improvements to the student experience. ARE provides schools with the opportunity for self-reflection in response to a range of evidence including survey and module evaluation data, and to identify appropriate responses. These actions are recorded in the school's Student Experience Enhancement Plan, which provides the opportunity in the subsequent review cycle to review the effectiveness of actions which have been taken.

70   The ARE process is also designed to identify and provide the opportunity to share good practice - to ensure that where actions taken have been effective, they can be considered and, where appropriate, be used by others. At meetings with staff, staff were able to clearly articulate the benefits of the Student Experience Enhancement Plans.

71   The team found that the annual review of quality processes, including the contribution it makes to the enhancement of learning and teaching, is used to report to Senate on the effectiveness of the approach to quality. The outcome of the review is detailed in the AQR.

72   The University's approach to enhancement is framed by the institution's strategy - *The Way Forward 2018-2023* - and, in particular, the sub-strategy on Education and Students. The delivery of enhancement for learning and teaching sits with the Student Experience Strategy Group (SESG), led by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience and Academic Standards, which receives data on student experience to enable prioritisation. In addition, there are a small number of delivery groups that plan and manage work around key enhancement areas such as placement activity, graduate attributes, survey management and on business and enterprise.

73   These groups provide regular updates to SESG. There is also a TEF Steering Group which reviews the data and utilises the TEF framework to prioritise plans for improvement together with a commitment to engage constructively with TEF to improve

performance with respect to learning, teaching and the student experience. Both the Fee and Access Plan, and the ARE process are used to forward plan enhancement in learning and teaching.

74   The team learnt that, as a result of the review of student experience in 2017, a number of recommendations were suggested with regard to the University's use of data to support education enhancement. The enhancement which has developed as a result of this, includes the Data Service project. The aim of this project is to establish an agreed service model that makes the best use of available data analyst resources across the University to deliver timely, informative and trusted management information and business intelligence to stakeholders, in order to develop knowledge and foresight to support decision-making.

75   The University has also adopted a new approach to survey management which is characterised by timely release of data and a focus on sector/benchmark performance, structured discussions with schools to focus on areas for development, and a consistent university-wide approach to action-planning and monitoring. The framework uses student voice and NSS data to hold discussions with each college and each school. Each school produces a Student Experience Enhancement Plan which reflects on the results and ensuing actions. This determines the priorities for the colleges, and for the CESI. Standard module evaluations are now operationalised in each school and have been aligned to the ARE process. The team heard that this has enabled and facilitated a more systematic monitoring of action being taken in response to module feedback from students.

76   Overall, the review team found that several changes had been both instigated and implemented and that it was too early to fully evaluate the impact of these changes and where oversight took place.

3   Supporting the enhancement of learning and teaching

3.1   Strategic approach to forward planning, including the use of information to identify priorities designed to enhance learning and teaching, and approaches to implementation and evaluation

77   The University's strategic approach to enhancement focuses on the student experience and this is articulated clearly within a hierarchy of strategic plans. The documents outline the University's vision, values, strategic themes and targets for success. To monitor progress, the University Executive Board routinely reviews key performance indicators to understand progress against the targets outlined in its sub-strategies. This informs an executive-level annual operation plan that maps staff accountability to specific objectives. The metrics are also reviewed by Council members and this supports their understanding of institutional performance and enhancement initiatives. Learning and teaching and its enhancement is further monitored within enhancement-driven forums that, at institutional level, support the work of the University SESG. College and professional service meetings have also been established to test and challenge performance within predefined themes at all academic and service department levels across the University.

78   The University Annual Review and Enhancement (ARE) process underpins learning and teaching and planning for enhancement at a college and school level. The University has recently revised the ARE process to allow for continuous and timely review of programmes. School-level ARE reports consider a wide range of qualitative and quantitative data including student performance metrics, feedback from a range of student surveys, external examiner and professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) reports. School-specific reports are reviewed at college ARE Committee meetings, and this informs college-level ARE reports used to disseminate good practice and highlight issues that require action for improvement and enhancement in the planning cycle. Colleges are

required to provide a verbal and written report for review at the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) and disseminate action plans for improvement at school level. The review team considers that the process will enhance student outcomes through the ongoing review of relevant metrics. Improvements to the process have been well-received by staff who confirmed that it will provide systematic and more timely input to enhancement initiatives across all subjects.

79   A review on student experience was commissioned in 2017 and this led to a number of recommendations on the application of student data to enhance learning and teaching. The Data Service transformation project has improved stakeholder access and application of learning and teaching metrics at the programme, school, college and university level. NSS data is provided centrally in a timely manner to support schools to prepare and publish Student Experience Enhancement Plans (SEEPs) that are used alongside ARE to develop actions for improvement of the student experience. Additionally, the Survey Management Framework has been designed to improve the management and application of survey outcomes and follow-up actions. At a module level, the survey evaluation process and policy has been aligned with the ARE process to ensure action is being taken in response to the student voice. The student submission confirms the shift in partnership working since the last review and students are actively involved in defining the University enhancement priorities through consideration of their annual reports, the student representative system and feedback from various student surveys. The review team considers that the timely and consistent provision of data, the implementation of the Survey Management Framework, together with improvements in ARE process, provides a platform for enhancement of learning and teaching across the University.

3.2 Approaches to managing change in approaches to learning and teaching

80   University and College Deans support the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Student Experience and Academic Standards and professional service directors to enhance learning and teaching in accordance with its sub-strategy for Education and Students. Enhancement of learning and teaching is driven through the SESG which is supported by a number of sub-groups such as the Student Experience Operations Group and Survey Management Group.

81   At college level, change is managed through College Boards of which membership includes the Head of College (Pro Vice-Chancellor), College Deans and the Heads of each academic school located within the college. In delivering change that supports learning and teaching, the Head of each college is supported by School Directors of Learning and Teaching and Directors of Postgraduate Research Studies. The review team noted that, while Directors of Learning and Teaching are not included in College Board meetings, they report to their respective Heads of School, with networks of Directors of Learning and Teaching established to share best practice at a college level.

82   The University has strategically reviewed the role of Deans with increased focus on facilitating the institutional change to enhance learning and teaching. College-appointed Deans for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Studies lead on the student journey and are responsible for recruitment and admissions, the quality of the student experience, the student voice and future employability. The University has also invested in Dean portfolios to cover a range of learning and teaching thematic areas, such as employability and the Welsh language. The review team believes that the investment in the Dean structure assists the University with its enhancement agenda.

83   The University has invested in an academic Director to lead the Centre for Education Support and Innovation (CESI) which provides additional institutional resource for

developing learning and teaching through programme design, the use of technology to support learning and the provision of professional development opportunities to enhance pedagogy. Oversight of change processes is provided by the Programme Management Office to ensure strategic change is evidence-based and project managed within a consistent framework for delivery. The Data Service and Survey Management Framework provides stakeholder access to a consistent source of information that supports programme-level change and enhancement through evaluation of information sources such as module surveys and NSS outcomes. The review team concluded that the University's distributed leadership model provides a framework with sufficient resource to manage strategic change and to enhance learning and teaching.

3.3 Approaches to supporting innovation, identifying and sharing good practice

84   The University is committed to supporting education innovation through the sharing of best practice at programme, school, college and institution levels. The Centre for Education Support and Innovation (CESI) provides resource to maintain, enhance and embed pedagogical innovation into both existing and new academic provision. This includes the management of the Learning Hub, which is a virtual space that shares resources around five enhancement initiatives: design for learning; assessment for learning; supporting teaching; supporting students; and professional development. The Hub is interactive, easy to navigate and allows stakeholders to share innovation in pedagogy and education practice. Much of the work published through the hub is supported through the Education Innovation Fund which provides targeted funds to pump prime learning and teaching initiatives that align with the University's overarching strategic plan. Best practice arising from the projects are shared via the CESI hosted annual Learning and Teaching Conference, which also provides an opportunity for internationally-recognised scholars to inform education innovation within the University.

85   To extend its impact and reach, the CESI is supporting curriculum design at the programme development stage through the promotion of the ABC framework that seeks to encourage conversation between staff and students on learning and teaching to ensure all stakeholders are active participants in future programme design. CESI has held 15 workshops that have utilised this approach to programme development. The review team finds the CESI proactively and positively supports the enhancement of learning and teaching. The full impact of this approach to enhancement is yet to be fully evidenced at an institutional level.

86   The University also promotes the enhancement of learning and teaching through its reward and recognition processes such as the annual staff awards and a celebratory lunch for programme directors with high levels of overall satisfaction in the NSS. At a strategic level, the University has established a Senior Fellows Network to foster collaboration between those academics that are proven leaders in learning and teaching and there are plans to develop the network into a Cardiff University Academy of Fellows. Staff employed on academic pathways are provided with promotion opportunities, which is evidence-based requiring them to demonstrate their particular areas of effectiveness and impact in research and/or teaching and scholarship.

87   To share innovation and best practice initiatives the University relies on its hierarchical reporting structure supported by a series of enhancement focused and operational advisory groups. College Deans have oversight of the ARE process and regularly meet with School Directors of Learning and Teaching, providing opportunities to identify and share best practice between schools within the college. College Education Managers provide professional service support to assist the academic team and promote the sharing of best practice between colleges. The identification and sharing of best practice are

further underpinned by the ARE process and Survey Management Framework quality processes. The review team considers the University has management and quality structures that support innovation, and identify and share best practice across the institution.

3.4   Engaging, developing and supporting staff

88   The University operates effective processes to engage and support the professional development of all staff. These processes are underpinned by its People Strategy which sets out a framework to support staff to deliver excellence and to ensure the workforce can deliver against the institutional strategic plan. Its inclusive development ensures all staff can achieve their personal ambitions while acquiring the behaviours and skills to support career progression as outlined for the Cardiff Academic and Cardiff Professional.

89   The University has an established annual Personal Development Review (PDR) process that requires staff to reflect on both their performance and continuous professional development (CPD). The University recognises individual contribution through a clear academic promotion framework that caters for all career pathways. The Teaching and Scholarship pathway has enabled staff to be promoted from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer, to Reader and onwards to Personal Chair. Training and development opportunities include leadership programmes for colleagues at different stages in their career, many of which target leaders of learning and teaching.

90   The Centre for Education Support and Innovation (CESI) is facilitating change in university provision of programmes that support staff to develop their learning and teaching practice. For probationary academic staff, provision consists of programmes for academic orientation and ongoing development of academic practice - the latter facilitates achievement of the Advance HE Fellowship. For existing staff, provision is targeted at both those who teach and those who support learning and teaching, and focuses on the delivery of an accredited Advance HE scheme that leads to Associate and/or Senior Fellowship with the Higher Education Academy (HEA). Financial and structural support is provided to staff that wish to engage with the HEA to gain wider recognition in learning and teaching. Additional continuous professional development to support learning and teaching include fellowship workshops, a pilot 'Exploring Principal Fellowship' scheme, the Postgraduate Certificate in Medical Education, the Learn to Teach Module for postgraduate research students, and the Leading Learning and Teaching programme for academic leaders. The review team considers that the CESI approach to supporting staff will enhance their approach to learning and teaching, thereby promoting institutional gains in the student experience.

3.5   Effectiveness of the approach to implementing institutional strategies and enhancing learning and teaching

91   The University has a robust framework for implementing and monitoring strategies to facilitate the enhancement of learning and teaching. The University Executive Board and Council monitor the progress of its strategy against a series of key performance indicators and this ensures commitments made to the students are delivered.

92   The University has operational and management structures to facilitate the sharing of best practice in learning and teaching. Deans have been appointed to ensure enhancement of learning and teaching is monitored at university and college level with further oversight provided by the Student Experience Strategy Group (SESG), while the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) ensure academic standards are maintained.

93   The review team found that a number of change initiatives implemented by the University have impacted positively on the learning and teaching environment. These include the revised ARE process, enhanced data service, Survey Management Framework and the support provided to staff by the CESI to develop curriculum and individual approaches to learning and teaching. The review team is confident that these initiatives will lead to effective continuous enhancement of the learning and teaching environment.

4   Academic standards and quality processes

4.1   Key features of the provider's approach to managing quality and how students are involved in contributing to the management of the quality of learning

94   The University's approach to the management of quality and student learning is structured around its Academic Regulations - which specify the essential principles for academic governance - and its Senate Committees, primarily the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) which has delegated authority for the oversight of the quality and standards of the University's awards and educational provision and its own sub-committees. The academic regulations have been rewritten and launched in 2019-20. The University involved students in the revision process and while students that met the review team were not aware of the revision of the regulations per se, they were aware that certain sections had been amended. The University notes it reviews all regulations and policies over a five-year cycle as agreed by ASQC.

95   The review team found it difficult to establish the structures through which discussions around academic standards, learning and teaching, and student experience take place due to the plethora of committees, groups and networks, of which some are formal and others informal. From a deliberative perspective, there are established committees at university (Council, Senate and ASQC), college (College Board and College ARE Sub-Committee) and school (School Board, Board of Study) level, with the latter being the main unit of focus for management of academic standards and quality.

96   At university level, with effect from 2017-18, ASQC reduced the number of its sub-committees to two - College Annual Review and Enhancement (ARE) Sub-Committee and the Programme and Partner Standing Panel (PPSP). The review team queried the volume of business for which PPSP was responsible and sought assurance that decisions, made by a rolling panel of membership, had parity. The team was given assurance by university colleagues that it was appropriately robust and had been welcomed as a positive change towards greater consistency of decision-making.

97   While there is no learning and teaching committee in the deliberative university structure, the University advised that matters of this nature can be raised via ASQC and/or the Student Experience Strategy Group (SESG) - an advisory body to, and chaired by, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Student Experience and Academic Standards. The terms of reference for both ASQC and SESG make no reference to this, nor do the minutes provided by the University for ASQC. However, the SESG minutes include some references to areas of learning and teaching and the University confirmed that consideration of learning and teaching is carried out through networks, including the School Directors of Learning and Teaching who feed into SESG. The review team noted that SESG sits outside of the University's deliberative structure.

98   Committees at college and school level often take different names and have different terms of reference, and structures can vary between colleges. Each school has an Education Committee which is the forum through which learning and teaching matters are escalated to the College Board. At college level, each college has a College Board, which the University described in its Self-evaluative Analysis as a forum through which senior college staff can discuss matters relating to academic quality and standards, and educational priorities. The minutes received by the review team do not indicate that there is routine discussion of these matters and during the review visit, the University confirmed that the College Board considers strategic matters, school plans and performance, which have a connectivity with the University Executive Board. Matters relating to the educational agenda are submitted directly to ASQC.

99	Each college also has forums for Directors of Learning and Teaching and Directors of Postgraduate Research Studies, though the titles of these positions varies between colleges, which facilitate discussions relating to educational policy and quality and standards. College Annual Review and Enhancement (ARE) Committees are sub-committees of ASQC. Through ARE they consider school responses and actions as part of the ARE process, have oversight of Schools' Student Experience Enhancement Plans and submit an annual report to ASQC on quality and standards matters.

100	In every school there is an equivalent to a School Board which is an advisory body to the Head of School in relation to major issues of policy. All programmes are under the oversight of a Board of Studies, established by the Head of School, to ensure the coordination of all academic and administrative matters relating to the taught programmes provided by the school. Their core duties include: being responsible for the Annual Review and Enhancement (ARE) exercise to advise the School Board on matters including the continued suitability of programme-level aims and intended learning outcomes; revising assessment strategies, PSRB visits and reports; monitoring teach-out; and reviewing all external examiner reports. There is evidence that these matters are being discussed to varying degrees in the sources of information the review team were provided with, although a review of the minutes the team were provided with shows almost no reference to external examiners. The review team were advised that School Boards may also operate as Boards of Study where there is only one programme in the school although it was unclear which programmes and schools operated in this way.

101	The University's governance arrangements ensure that students are members of university-level committees and included as members of other academic groups that support the operation of the academic quality system. Notably, students are also actively involved in ARE and PPSP. The University notes that the student academic representative system is mature and embedded and ensures students can input at school level via Student-Staff Panels. Training is provided by the Students' Union and this was confirmed by students during the review.

## 4.2	Key features of the approach to setting, maintaining, reviewing and assessing academic standards

102	The University states it has clear and explicit processes to underpin the setting and monitoring of academic standards based on key principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. The principal mechanisms for setting and applying academic standards are the programme approval process, use of the external examining system - including as a means of confirming the application of external reference points - and the Annual Review and Enhancement (ARE) process. The most recent periodic review cycle, which incorporated revalidation of programmes, was completed in 2019 and a new process will commence from 2020-21. A particular feature of the University's approach to managing quality is the production of the Annual Quality Report (AQR) which has been received by Senate and Council since 2015. This is a systematic and risk-based evaluation of the management of quality assurance and enhancement activities, providing a risk status and narrative for each area of activity and identifying actions to be taken as a means of continuously enhancing their academic quality system.

103	Programme approval has three stages, commencing with the strategic level which is currently taken by the college, focusing on strategy, business viability, risks, student numbers and other matters. The second stage is academic approval which incorporates a report from a 'critical friend' who supports the school and the development team with the development of the proposal and an 'external adviser' report submitted with the final documentation to the Programme and Partner Standing Panel. The third stage is university approval, the consideration of the recommendation of the PPSP by ASQC or its Chair. As

noted in Section 4.1, the review team queried the volume of business for which PPSP was responsible and sought assurance that decisions, made by a rolling panel of membership, had parity. The team was given assurance by university colleagues that it was appropriately robust and had been welcomed as a positive change towards greater consistency of decision-making.

104   In the 2018-19 AQR, there was a reference to a Rapid Improvement Event in relation to programme approval to address the lack of strategic institutional oversight of programme approval. The University confirmed that, following a period of consultation, it will introduce the requirement that Stage 1 of the revised Programme Approval Policy will require approval from the Recruitment and Admissions Strategy Group. The review team believe that, when this is implemented, it has the potential to enhance the programme approval process.

105   Annual monitoring takes place via the recently revised ARE process. From a quality assurance perspective, there is a template for the production of reports where colleges are asked to confirm a relevant series of assurance statements. The outcomes of the ARE process are to ensure schools have a plan that addresses significant issues that need to be prioritised, to surface issues that may have a university-wide dimension and/or contribute to the strategic enhancement of the student experience. However, the team found it difficult to confirm that this is taking place at institutional level as neither the University ARE report or the AQRs provided to the team contain detail in relation to such issues or activities arising from the exercise requiring action or wider dissemination.

106   Periodic Review has been the process by which schools have undertaken a broad review of all of their programmes and provision, evaluate their strategic direction and reflect upon the experience of their students. In January 2019, the University completed its agreed five-year cycle and, as a consequence, decided to suspend the process for two years to evaluate and review the approach, particularly in light of the changes to the ARE process. In October 2019, the University agreed that Periodic Review would be replaced by a cycle of revalidation of programmes, commencing in 2020-21. The University confirmed that its major changes process would be the mechanism through which revalidation would occur in the intervening period.

107   The University describes the external examining system as a key mechanism in reviewing and maintaining academic standards. This is evident in the External Examiners Policy (Taught) and the External Examiner Handbook. The primary way in which external examiners provide assurance of the quality and standards of taught and research provision is via the submission of annual written reports. External examiners are asked to provide commentary in their reports on a variety of areas. Their reports and the institutional response to each, signed by the Academic Registrar, are made available on the University's website. Where there are no specific issues noted, the school is not asked by Registry to provide a response. There is evidence that where issues have been noted, the school has been asked to provide a response.

108   The University notes that schools are required to reflect on the external examiner reports through the ARE process, particularly where an immediate action could not be taken in response to an area raised by the external examiner. However, the evidence provided to the review team, which included school ARE reports, Board of Studies minutes, Student Experience Enhancement Plans (SEEPs), and School Boards and College Boards minutes, contained minimal, and in most cases, no references to the external examiner reports.

109   At institutional level, the Annual Quality Report contains a section on external examiner reports for taught and research provision, however, it does not contain detail on any matters arising that may require institutional level intervention or good practice that

could be disseminated for enhancement purposes. The ASQC minutes provided to the review team, to which the AQR is submitted, contain no other references to external examiner reports. During the review visit, the University confirmed that although the Registry review all of the external examiner reports, no summary is produced of matters arising other than that presented in the AQR. As such, the review team found it difficult to confirm that consideration of external examiner reports is occurring in the ways described by the University, at school, college or university level.

110   The Student Written Submission noted that although the Assessment Matters Framework, which sought to establish standardised and generic assessment criteria, was embedded following the 2014 QAA Review, assessment and feedback remains a recurring theme and the latest NSS information indicates that overall the University is below benchmark for the sector and Wales, although not for the Russell Group. Students the review team met with during the review visit also expressed this view and the University itself acknowledged that assessment continues to be an area where students remain dissatisfied with their experience. A student-led partnership project has been established between the University and the Students' Union for 2019-20 to create an Assessment Task Force/Assessment and Feedback Steering Group which is chaired by the Director of CESI. Membership includes assessment and feedback leads in each college and school representation. The group aims to reduce the number of summative assessments, the substantial variation in assessment loads for staff and students and to seek to establish an approved Policy for Assessment. A paper received by Senate in February 2020 noted that the total average number of summative assessments per undergraduate programme at the University varies from over 120 to less than 20. Sector data suggest that around 50 summative assessments per undergraduate programme is the norm. The review team viewed the presentation of this position paper to Senate as a positive step in seeking to establish institutional oversight and consistency of assessment loads and their appropriateness.

4.3   Use of external reference points in quality processes

111   The University's academic regulations, policies and procedures are mapped against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) and, in turn, European Standards and Guidelines, Part 1, as evidenced in the mapping exercise that was undertaken against both documents. The University's quality assurance policies also specifically reference the Quality Code. The University's Programme Approval Policy and Principles for Programme Structure, Design and Delivery specifically reference the Quality Code and associated relevant themes' advice and guidance. There are references to *The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies* (FHEQ) and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies in some of the minutes of the Programme and Partner Standing Panel. The critical friend report template specifically requests information about alignment with the FHEQ and the Subject Benchmark Statement as external reference points, although it is worth noting that the reports themselves are not detailed.

112   As noted in Section 4.2, there is externality in processes particularly around programme approval and external examiner reports.

4.4   Commentary on action taken since the previous review and identification of matters arising from the Prior Information Pack not otherwise explored

113   The University received confidence judgements in its previous QAA review in 2014. The review report made three recommendations and one affirmation. The first recommendation concerned plans in one programme to use modules at Level 5, 6 and 7 in years of study that normally correspond to academic Level 4, 5 and 6. This was monitored

through the annual review process and no unintended or harmful consequences were found. Consequently, no intervention has been necessary. The second recommendation concerned errors that had occurred in the production of final-year results for medical students. The University was asked to monitor the introduction of a new system for recording and reporting results to ensure errors did not recur. This was achieved. The third recommendation required the comprehensive implementation of the Assessment Matters Framework across all provision from the commencement of the academic year 2015-16. The Assessment Matters Framework, which involved the introduction of a limited number of consistent methods for the classification of degrees, was successfully implemented and a report presented to Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) and reported to Senate.

114   The affirmation supported the University's decision to produce an annual review of enhancement from 2014-15. This was completed and a report on enhancement has subsequently been subsumed into the Annual Quality Report.

4.5   Approach to using data to inform decision-making and evaluation

115   The use of qualitative and quantitative data to underpin and inform decision-making in quality assurance processes was an area of good practice in the University's 2014 Institutional Review by QAA. Since this review, the University has been progressively developing centrally-produced data to support quality processes. In 2017, the University commissioned a rapid review of the student experience, including data to support learning, teaching and the student experience. The review also presented a number of recommendations about the University's use of data to support education enhancement. The University has responded by introducing a Data Services project, establishing an agreed service model to make the best use of available data analyst resources across the University in order to deliver timely, informative and trusted management information and business intelligence to stakeholders. During the review visit, the review team met with representatives from the Department for Strategic Planning and Governance who referenced the Cardiff Data Professionals Network as a key enabler for the provision of a standardised, comprehensive data set to inform the University's decision-making at all levels. Representatives from other academic and professional services areas concurred with the view that the University was moving more positively towards the timely release of relevant data from programme through to university level.

116   The University has also introduced a new approach, the Survey Management Framework, which is integrated with the ARE process and is being introduced to provide improved assurance around the management of actions from survey results. It provides one clear action planning cycle for student experience improvement, which includes a Student Experience Enhancement Plan (SEEP) aligned to the ARE cycle. Features include: timely release of data and a focus on sector/benchmark performance; structured discussions with schools to focus on performance and areas that may need improvement; and a consistent approach across the University to action planning and monitoring. The University notes that the Framework uses student voice data, including NSS, which is published using the Business Intelligence system. University colleagues were positive about the introduction of the Framework and its integration with the ARE process.

117   The ARE process more broadly has been developed around a portfolio of internal and external data, described as areas of focus, relating to: student satisfaction (through survey results), admissions and marketing data in relation to portfolio development; programme outcomes; and module evaluation. Evidence provided to the review team related to 2018 as the revised process commenced in September 2019. It is therefore too early to be able to confirm this is the case and to evaluate the impact of the revisions. However, university colleagues were positive about the changes to the ARE process, noting that availability of data in a more timely and regular manner enabled reflection in real time rather

than an annual exercise. The review team **affirms** the steps being taken by the University to implement a revised annual monitoring process that enables a more responsive approach to the review and enhancement of the student experience.

118   In the programme approval process, schools must use internal and external data including business viability (costs and tuition fee income), market intelligence, sector analysis and risk analysis to make a strategic judgement about whether to proceed. When making changes to existing programmes, schools are asked to consider a range of survey data, including module evaluation and feedback from Student-Staff Panels in their decision-making process. Notwithstanding this, the University is considering amendments to programme approval and the current policy confirms this. The paperwork for the Programme and Partner Standing Panel also shows evidence of student consultation in various ways, but not in all cases.

4.6   Effectiveness of how approaches to quality are used to enhance learning and teaching

119   The University has systematic processes in place for monitoring how approaches to quality are used to enhance learning and teaching. The Annual Quality Report considers all elements of the academic quality system, including quality assurance, enhancement, assessment and admissions activities, and confirms that all processes and procedures are regularly reviewed. This report is also used to ensure enhancement activity is responsive to feedback and external requirements with actions implemented to address shortcomings in activity.

120   The ARE process provides a scalable structure for reviewing learning and teaching and to identify actions required to improve the student experience. The programme and school-level ARE reports are aggregated into a college submission which is reviewed by College Deans for Undergraduate and Postgraduate Studies, School Directors of Learning and Teaching, Student Representatives and the ASQC. The ARE process has been improved to provide systematic, ongoing and more timely input to enhancement initiatives. The review team considers that, when fully embedded, the revised ARE process will impact positively on the enhancement of learning and teaching across subjects.

121   Enhancement is also supported through the student representative system which provides input to all levels of the quality management system. Some students noted that when effective action for improvement to the student experience had been achieved, the University should work in closer partnership with the Students' Union to communicate the outcomes.

4.7   Effectiveness of the arrangements for securing academic standards

122   Section 4.2 summarises the regulations and procedures used by the University to set and maintain the standards of its awards. Core elements of the management of standards are alignment to external reference points, externality in key quality mechanisms and the annual review and enhancement process. The University routinely reviews the mapping of its own procedures against relevant external reference points and has a Policy Review Schedule overseen by ASQC to ensure that policies in relation to academic standards are up-to-date and maintained.

123   Although it was difficult to establish the structures through which discussions around academic standards, learning and teaching, and student experience take place, the review team found no evidence to suggest risks to academic standards as a result. The team welcomed the University's position paper around the development of a policy on assessment which was felt would increase oversight at an institutional level and consistency

of practice across the University. The team, therefore, concludes that management of academic standards, set and maintained by the University for student attainment, is robust.

4.8 Effectiveness of the provider's approach to self-evaluation, including the effective use of data to inform decision-making

124   Sections 4.1 and 4.5 summarise the methods that the University uses to monitor and review the quality of its provision and provides examples of the use of data at a strategic and operational level. The University has taken positive steps to respond to the findings of a review it commissioned in 2017 which included recommendations relating to data to support learning, teaching and the student experience. The Survey Management Framework has strengthened the approach to the use of survey data and its use is evident in the Student Experience Enhancement Plans and in the enhanced Annual Review and Enhancement (ARE) process. The Cardiff Data Professionals Network was identified by the University as a key enabler for the provision of a standardised data set. University staff welcomed the timeliness but noted that further enhancement was required in order to refine it.

125   A key feature of the University's approach to self-evaluation is the Annual Quality Report which compares the risk status of a number of key areas relating to standards, quality and the student experience. Decisions about the risk status are based on data and the evaluation of how the risk has changed year-to-year aids the University in determining the effectiveness of its approach to self-evaluation. The University also provided evidence of what they describe as Rapid Improvement Events, relating to ensuring strategic alignment and prioritisation of programme approvals; and for drafting and producing examination papers to address errors and to establish a more efficient and effective process. The use of such an approach to undertake a detailed review of an area deemed high risk was viewed positively by the review ream.

126   There was also evidence of external expertise being used as a result of self-evaluation, for example, through the engagement of a consultant when issues of high risk relating to examinations and appeals were identified and through internal audit where risks relating to appeals and student complaints were identified.

127   The review team concludes that the University is taking positive steps towards making good use of both quantitative and qualitative data to aid self-evaluation and inform decision-making. It is as yet too early to fully evaluate the impact that recent changes are having in this area.

5   Collaborative provision

5.1 Key features of the provider's strategic approach (to include collaborative activity, online and distance learning where delivered with others, and work-based learning)

128   At the time of the review visit, Cardiff University listed 10 collaborative arrangements on its Collaborative Provision Register delivering eight taught and two research programmes to some 270 students in partnership with educational institutions in the UK and overseas. Both in the Self-evaluative Analysis and in meetings with the review team, the University indicated that the development of partnerships using its degree awarding powers to franchise or validate programmes delivered by others had not been a strategic priority of the University since the last institutional review in 2014. Rather the University's institutional strategy - *The Way Forward 2018-2023* - including its international sub-strategy, prioritises developing research-based partnerships with world-leading academic institutions that expand opportunities for staff and students to build global connections through international exchanges and collaborations. In addition, the Education

and Students Sub-strategy drives the establishment of agreements with employers and other organisations that enable the University's students to engage in work and study placements in the UK and internationally. The University strategy has set goals that 50% of undergraduate students undertake a work placement during the course of their studies; and 30% spend time abroad amounting cumulatively to at least three weeks.

5.2 Information on the extent and nature of collaborative provision and plans for change

129 Since its last review in 2014, the University has developed five international collaborative partnerships: with KU Leuven, Xiamen University, Beijing Normal University, the University of Campinas and the University of Bremen. These partnerships primarily support collaborative research activities and provide international mobility opportunities for staff and doctoral students. The partnership with Beijing Normal University includes a growing BA programme in Modern Chinese that involves UK students spending two years at each institution leading to the award of a dual degree. The five UK-based teaching partnerships included well-established undergraduate and graduate programmes in theology and a graduate entry MBBCh medical training programme delivered jointly with Bangor University. Two international and two UK partnerships were in their final year of provision and 'teach-out' arrangements had been made to support the remaining cohorts of students.

130 The University's UK collaborative activity includes links with the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and a partnership with Welsh Government and industry leaders at the Newport based National Software Academy (NSA). The relationship with the ONS is designed to enhance data-driven research in south-east Wales and is anticipated to lead to the development of new master's and PhD programmes. The NSA is delivering the University's first degree apprenticeship. These partnerships are aligned with Welsh Government priorities. More recently, the University had entered into a partnership agreement with a private provider, Study Group, which will run an International Study Centre on the Cardiff campus providing foundation year and pre-master's programmes as pathways to entry into UK universities including Cardiff. The University will not be responsible for the standards and quality of the Study Group provision but will reach agreements on progression routes to its own degree programmes.

131 The University places particular emphasis on preparing its students for employment or further study. Destinations data provided to the team showed that the proportions of the University's students entering graduate and higher-paid employment are good relative to the sector, and these positive outcomes include students recruited from low participation neighbourhoods and those reporting a disability. The proportions of students taking up work placements and participating in work-based learning and credit-bearing study abroad have been rising. For example, in 2018-19, 43% of graduating undergraduates had undertaken qualifying work placements and 367 undergraduates had participated in international placements across 35 countries organised by the Global Opportunities Team responsible for implementing the University's Study Abroad Policy. The team's meetings with staff and students, as well as annual reports on placements and study abroad activities, indicated that work placements and visits abroad are well-organised and supported, and are found to be very beneficial. The review team also met a group of local and national employers engaged in partnerships with the University to supply work placements and internships and these employers spoke very positively of the quality of the students and the support provided by the University.

5.3 Effectiveness of the approach to managing collaborative provision including arrangements for securing academic standards and enhancing the student learning experience

132   The University has in place comprehensive policies and procedures to manage the standards and quality of programmes delivered with partners. Responsibility for collaborative provision lies with Senate which delegates this to ASQC. Detailed consideration and monitoring of partnerships is carried out by a sub-committee of ASQC - the Programme and Partner Standing Panel (PPSP) which was established in 2017 to ensure that proposals for collaborative partnerships and any associated programmes are considered together. The PPSP has oversight of all collaborative activity in order to ensure combined academic and strategic consideration of partnerships, including study abroad and placement learning, alongside academic approval of new, and major changes to, existing programmes. The Collaborative Provision Policy guides the design, approval and updating of programmes, including those provided by partners, and the ongoing quality management of programmes and activities involving collaborative provision. The Placement Learning Policy and the Study Abroad Policy provide detailed guidance for the development and management of placements and study abroad provision. They cover all taught and research degree programmes undertaken in collaboration with employers and/or other organisations in Wales, the rest of the UK or internationally. These policies are regularly updated and explicitly mapped against the Quality Code and other relevant guidance.

133   The review team met link tutors responsible for routine cooperation between academic schools and programmes delivered by partners, and also a selection of moderators who had provided annual reports to ASQC (via the PPSP) on the quality and standards of provision by partners. The team also reviewed recent reports on collaborative provision from external examiners. It was clear from these sources that the quality and standards of programmes delivered by partners were well managed.

134   The review team was initially concerned about the volume of matters and relevant paperwork considered by PPSP at its monthly meetings. The panel uses a system of rotating membership, chairs and administrative support, and considers a wide range of matters including all programme approvals, changes to approvals, annual moderator reports, relevant external examiner reports, periodic reviews of collaborations including those involving 'teach outs', and all placement and study abroad agreements and reports. It was observed that the agenda documents for the PPSP meetings could run to several hundreds of pages. These concerns were discussed in detail at a meeting with chairs and other members of PPSP who, while agreeing that the range and volume of matters concerning standards and quality considered by the panel were very substantial, and that the meetings could be long and detailed, were nonetheless able to assure the review team that oversight was thoroughly conducted. This was achieved in part by detailed preparatory work prior to the panel meetings carried out jointly by the relevant chairs and professional service staff. However, the team considers it important that ASQC continue to monitor and review the scale of PPSP's functions.