



Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review (TQER)

University of Strathclyde

This review method
is ESG-compliant

December 2025

Contents

About the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review method	1
About this review.....	1
Review judgement and findings	3
Features of good practice	3
Recommendations for action	3
Contextual information about University of Strathclyde.....	5
Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment.....	7
Academic standards and awarding.....	7
Generative AI and assessment.....	10
Use of frameworks	10
Strategic leadership	11
Curriculum planning and design, work-based learning and employability	12
Learning environments	14
Staff development.....	15
Innovation in learning, teaching and assessment.....	17
Supporting student success.....	19
Enabling student success	19
Postgraduate research student community	21
Student transitions	23
Employability, skills development and lifelong learning	23
Supporting diverse learners.....	24
Concerns, complaints, appeals and disciplinaries	25
Student engagement and partnership	26
A culture of student partnership.....	26
Student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement.....	27
Student representation.....	27
Student voice and the feedback loop.....	28

Enhancement and quality culture.....	30
Embedded quality culture and leadership.....	30
External institutional review and engagement	33
Engagement in sector enhancement activities	34
External outlook	35

About the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Review method

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

About this review

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

- Jonathan Buglass (Reviewer)
- Heriberto Busquier Cerdán (Student Reviewer)
- Professor Lynn Kilbride (Reviewer)
- Dr Maggie King (Reviewer)
- Professor Clare Peddie (Reviewer)

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

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

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

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

The review comprised two visits: an Initial Review Visit which, for the University of Strathclyde, took place on-campus, on 22 – 23 October 2025; and a Main Review Visit which took place on-campus, on 1 – 4 December 2025. Both visits included some online meetings.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Review judgement and findings

For information about the review judgement and findings refer to the Tertiary Quality Enhancement review: Guide for Institutions.⁵

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

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

Features of good practice

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

- The University's approach to engagement with employers, industry and public sector organisations through curriculum development, research collaborations, teaching, placements/internships and work-related learning experiences for students that leads to work ready graduates. **(Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment – paragraph 31)**
- The impactful, inclusive and entrepreneurial culture supported by the personal and professional development of academic and professional services staff, which supports a strong sense of community. **(Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment – paragraph 52)**
- The student and staff centred culture of care, which supports wellbeing, inclusivity and individual success. **(Supporting student success – paragraph 77)**
- The student voice is heard and valued throughout the University, and across diverse student groups, which leads to timely action and meaningful change **(Student engagement and partnership – paragraph 90)**

Recommendations for action

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

- The University should put in place, as a matter of priority during academic year 2025-26, a process for the periodic review of professional services that is fully aligned with SFC's guidance for ILQR to prevent any risks to the management of standards and to the quality of the student experience. **(Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment – paragraph 13)**
- The University should ensure and monitor institution-wide compliance with its assessment and feedback policy, as it relates to the timeliness of assessment feedback. **(Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment – paragraph 20)**
- The University should review its institutional oversight of the PGR student experience, including the role of the Strathclyde Doctoral School (SDS), to realise the ambition of achieving consistency of student experience and community for PGR

⁵ TQER Guide for Institutions: https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaas/reviewing-he-in-scotland/tqer-guide-for-institutions.pdf?sfvrsn=ea49bc81_7

students. **(Supporting student success – paragraph 70)**

- The University should establish a clear and consistent institutional approach to pastoral, personal development and academic advising for students. **(Supporting student success – paragraph 78)**
- The University should consider the appropriateness of the 'managed difference' approach in implementation of policy and approaches across faculties and take action where discrepancies may lead to inconsistency in, or pose a risk to, academic standards and the quality of the student experience. **(Enhancement and quality culture – paragraph 96)**

Contextual information about University of Strathclyde

1 The University of Strathclyde (the University) was founded in 1796 as 'A Place of Useful Learning', with its main campus, the John Anderson Campus, based in central Glasgow in the Glasgow Innovation District. The University has full degree-awarding powers and offers programmes from Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels 7 to 12.

2 The University's strategy, *Strathclyde 2030*, was launched in 2024 during the University's Diamond Jubilee year. The strategy articulates the institution's purpose, goals and priorities for the next five years. Through its institutional strategy, the University aims to deliver Outstanding Education and Student Experience, World Leading Research, and Transformative Innovation and Impact, with two cross-cutting goals of Global Engagement and Operational Excellence. The University's mission continues to be for the institution to be 'socially progressive' and a 'Leading International Technological University'. The high-level strategy for education and student experience is overseen by the University Senate and Education Strategy Committee, supported by several groups and committees including the Quality Assurance Committee (overseeing the institutional quality framework) and the Learning Enhancement Committee (focusing on enhancement of learning and teaching).

3 In academic year 2023-24, the University had approximately 22,489 students, comprised of 14,758 undergraduate students, 5,369 postgraduate taught students and 2,362 postgraduate research students, representing 66%, 24% and 10% of the student population respectively. Students at the University represent more than 100 countries. The majority of students enrolled at the University are Scottish-domiciled students, and student entry is also facilitated by articulation. Approximately 82% of students study on campus, with the remaining 18% studying at a distance, online or with attendance elsewhere. Of the leavers from academic year 2021-22, 78% went into highly skilled employment or further study.

4 As part of its collaborative provision, the University has several types of agreements across 30 different countries.⁶ The largest number of agreements are articulation arrangements. The University also operates validation arrangements with a series of partners, with the majority based in the UK (Scotland).⁷

5 The University is structured into four faculties: Engineering, Humanities and Social Sciences, Science, and Strathclyde Business School with departments within each faculty. All faculties offer an extensive range of programmes accredited by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). The University also offers Graduate and Degree Apprenticeships and works with a wide range of employers.

6 In September 2024, the University opened a branch campus in Bahrain, known as the University of Strathclyde, Bahrain (UoSB), with approximately 50 students starting a programme of study in academic year 2024-25. The University has been operating in

6 Types of agreements include: articulation, combined (validation and articulation), Doctoral Supervision, Dual Degree, Joint Award, Joint Delivery, Joint Supervision (Joint Award), Partnership, Service Support, Sponsor Agreement, Study Abroad, Validation.

7 Validation partners include: Arab Mediation Centre (Egypt), Adoption and Fostering Alliance Scotland (UK), Association for Fostering, Kinship and Adoption Scotland (UK), City of Glasgow College (UK), Family Therapy Training Network (UK), Glasgow Clyde College (UK), Glasgow Kelvin College (UK), Human Development Scotland (UK), Primary Engineer Ltd (UK), and South Lanarkshire College (UK).

Bahrain since 1995. At the time of the TQER in academic year 2025-26, there were eight active undergraduate programmes delivered through the faculties of Engineering, Science, and Strathclyde Business School at UoSB. All the programmes launched in academic year 2024-25 were at SCQF Level 7 and, as students progress, the University intends that the level of awards will extend, and the student population will grow. As a result, in academic year 2025-26, students are studying at UoSB at SCQF levels 7 and 8.

7 Outside of the University's degree-awarding powers, the University runs two 20-credit 'Breaking Barriers' programmes at SCQF Level 6. The two programmes are Certificates in Applied Business Skills and in Applied Science Skills, which are part of Strathclyde Business School and the Faculty of Science respectively.

Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment

8 The TQER team found that the University of Strathclyde is **effective** in achieving excellence in learning, teaching and assessment. Across its educational provision, the institution has appropriate and systematically applied practices in line with sector expectations for achieving excellence in learning, teaching and assessment, including assuring and maintaining academic standards. The institution's practices make effective and accurate use of data, evidence and externality to demonstrate impact.

9 The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence, including the Strategic Impact Analysis (SIA), the 2023-24 Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP), the Annual Reports of the Education Strategy Committee (ESC) to the Senate, follow-up responses to previous external reviews, minutes from key institutional and local committees with responsibility for learning, teaching and assessment, and policies, procedures, reports and data associated with the design, development, annual monitoring and periodic review of modules and programmes, and aligned monitoring and review at departmental, faculty and institutional levels. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of staff, students and employers. The TQER Team was also provided with a demonstration of data dashboards used by programme-level staff.

Academic standards and awarding

10 The TQER team found that the University has a strategic and embedded approach to quality and enhancement at institutional and faculty levels with identified strengths in the institution's partnership working with students, industry and professional bodies. The University's Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) has responsibility for the development, implementation and monitoring of policies, processes and procedures related to quality and academic standards, including faculty annual reporting, annual module monitoring, Quinquennial Review of academic provision (QQR), application and recruitment, progression and award, student numbers, exams monitoring, external examining, UK and transnational partnerships, student appeals, student exchanges, external reviews and sector developments. QAC reports annually to ESC on matters relating to its remit, effectiveness of its operation and areas of focus for the next academic year; actions from preceding years are tracked through the annual reporting process. QAC has a joint annual meeting with the Learning Enhancement Committee (LEC) to consider Faculty Annual Reports (FARs) for assurance, enhancement and planning purposes as well as with the Collaborative Provision Agreement Sub-group to conduct a review of collaborative provision agreements, providing holistic consideration of shared areas.

11 The TQER team explored the University's programme and module approval process, which incorporates consideration of both business and academic matters, including risk assessment, and is informed by external influences including from external examiners, professional statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) and academic staff from other institutions. New programmes and major modifications are considered and endorsed by the Faculty Academic Committee (FAC) and approved by Senate following QAC's consideration of programme regulations in accordance with the Policy and Procedure for Programme and Module Approval. The Out of Cycle Programme Approval Sub-group provides a formalised, expedited approach to programme approval, enabling the University's Principal to approve new programmes on behalf of Senate outside of the Senate meeting cycle. Module approval is undertaken by QAC.

12 The University's processes for annual monitoring and periodic review, including management of academic risk, are encapsulated in its Internal Review Framework, which comprises Annual Module Monitoring, Student Module Evaluation, FAR (incorporating

Departmental Annual Review), QQR (incorporating the optional TESTA – Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment - process) and Professional Services Review (PSR). Outcomes from each process and actions for the year are summarised in annual thematic reports and in ESC's Annual Report, where key themes are outlined. The TQER team found evidence that the University keeps its core quality processes under regular review, as evidenced by the revision of the QQR process, which has led to improved consistency in QQR reports and a more structured approach to actioning and monitoring review recommendations.

13 In response to the Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR, 2023) recommendation that the University creates a forward timetable of professional services reviews, the TQER team found that the University has piloted a revised form of student-facing PSR, approved by ESC in October 2024. The approach has shifted from thematic review (operating from academic year 2020-21 – 2023-24) aligned to the QQR format to annual reporting by individual professional services units using an Annual Review template (operating from academic year 2024-25 onwards), which is submitted to an ESC Sub-group. Review documents for reported academic year 2023-24 (used for the operation of PSR in academic year 2024-25) demonstrated a focus on institutional priorities such as equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and student mental health and wellbeing. Professional services are invited to use the sparqs Student Learning Experience (SLE) Model in reflecting on student experience, engagement and support. At the time of the review, however, the TQER team learned that the University was in the early stages of the new process and as such there was no evidence available of the operation of the ESC Sub-group, which includes external and student involvement, nor of its outcomes, such as the PSR summary report. The first summary report, covering the first two years of submissions of the Annual Review template under the new PSR process, is due for completion in Spring 2026. The TQER team found, at the time of review and on the basis of the evidence provided, that the new PSR process does not meet the requirements of the Scottish Funding Council's (SFC) guidance for Institution-Led Quality Review (ILQR), including requirements for externality, student involvement and operating ILQR as a periodic process. The TQER team reached this conclusion on the basis of insufficient evidence of externality and student involvement, due to no available evidence of the operation of the ESC Sub-group, and confirmation that the current process is annual, rather than periodic. The TQER team concluded that the approach does not satisfactorily address the recommendation from the University's QESR (2023). Consequently, the TQER team **recommends** that the University should put in place, as a matter of priority during academic year 2025-26, a process for the periodic review of professional services that is fully aligned with SFC's guidance for ILQR to prevent any risks to the management of standards and to the quality of the student experience. The University's response to actions arising from external review is also addressed in the section **Enhancement and quality culture**.

14 Evidence considered by the TQER team demonstrated that the University operates a comprehensive, cohesive and enhancement-driven approach to annual monitoring, at the core of which is the FAR process. A standard programme-level template has been introduced to enhance consistency and support the intention to use annual monitoring to inform the institution's SEAP. The data-rich, programme-level Learner Experience Framework (LEF) is integrated into the FAR process and provides a mechanism for evaluating local implementation of strategic priority areas, such as industry/employer engagement. The LEF is currently under review with the aim of addressing variability in its use across faculties and enhancing its use in employability skills planning.

15 A comprehensive suite of data, data dashboards and visualisations on all stages of the student lifecycle underpin approvals, annual monitoring and periodic review processes at institutional, faculty and departmental levels, informing both analysis and decision-making.

Data and dashboards are used effectively by institutional committees, faculties and departments to inform strategic and local decision-making and to evaluate progress and the impact of initiatives. Staff who met with the TQER team reported being well supported in training and use of data dashboards. The University is committed to developing further access to and use of data, for assurance and enhancement purposes, with the Student Journeys Dashboard facilitating a more systematic approach to tracking retention, progression and outcomes and understanding of the student journey from application to graduation across the institution and partner institutions. Networks of early adopters further support this development, the University released the 'Pulse Check' student engagement dashboards to all departments in October 2024 following a successful pilot, and Faculty Learning and Teaching Improvement Plans (FLTIPs) signpost and emphasise the use of data and dashboards. The TQER team encourages the University to continue to advance its strategic use of data and consider the use of student engagement data, through further embedding collaboration between professional services and academic staff, to monitor the whole student journey, identify students at risk of non-engagement and support timely interventions. The University is also encouraged to explore how data could be used to further enhance opportunities for student partnership and engagement (see section **Student engagement and partnership**).

16 The TQER team found that externality is central to the University's approach to securing academic standards. External examiners, PSRBs, employers, Graduate Apprenticeship reviews and employer feedback, and the Ofsted Report on Degree Apprenticeships provide external, independent oversight of the University's approaches to academic standards and awarding practices. Departmental responses to issues raised by external examiners are detailed in the External Examiner Analysis Report and are summarised in ESC's Annual Report; outcomes inform decision-making and action at institutional and local levels. The proposal to adopt anonymity of student identity at exam boards was raised by all faculties to QAC via a thematic report, following feedback from external examiners, resulting in a pilot and then agreement to roll out across the institution. Further implementation of anonymity of student identity at exam boards will be progressed once systems modifications to accommodate degree algorithms are in place (see paragraph 105). The University's QQR process confirms alignment of programmes with external reference points such as QAA Subject Benchmark Statements and PSRB requirements. Strategies, policies and procedures are mapped against the Sector-Agreed Principles of the UK Quality Code (the Quality Code). The TQER team noted that areas for future development highlighted within the Quality Code have been taken forward, including extending dashboard functionality to include more detailed engagement indicators and extensions requests. The TQER team found that the University had identified, and has now addressed, the issue of several programmes within a department operating without external examiners for four academic years through enhanced oversight of appointment and reporting processes at faculty and institutional levels.

17 The TQER team noted that the University's planned, managed and robust approach to quality and academic standards is evidenced in its recent establishment of the University of Strathclyde, Bahrain (UoSB). The use of its existing partner (Study Group), the clear governance framework with its additional layers, the phased approach, whereby academic governance and responsibility for operations remain with the main John Anderson Campus, and oversight by both ESC and QAC demonstrate a deliberate focus on monitoring and integration with existing institutional quality assurance frameworks. Additionally, evidence considered by the TQER team provided assurance that the cultural and strategic embedding of an enhancement culture prevalent on the John Anderson Campus is aligned with UoSB. Throughout the University, there was a clear understanding that all the values associated with providing an excellent student experience, supported by a culture of enhancement, will permeate the campus in Bahrain. Students studying in Bahrain, who met with the TQER

team, confirmed that there are mechanisms in place for student representation, student feedback and extracurricular opportunities to the same level as students based on the John Anderson Campus, which contributes to the **feature of good practice** identified by the TQER team in paragraph 77.

18 The TQER team concluded that the University has effective arrangements for ensuring that the academic standards and awarding practices for the awards that it delivers meet external expectations and are secure, consistent and reliable over time so they can be trusted by students, employers and other stakeholders. The University's processes are aligned with sector expectations and make effective use of data and external expertise.

Generative AI and assessment

19 The University is taking positive steps to address the risk to academic standards posed by Generative Artificial Intelligence (Generative AI) and the resultant increase in misconduct cases, including the establishment of a working group (Generative AI Working Group – Learning, Teaching and Assessment), which reports to ESC. Generative AI initiatives have been funded through the Strathclyde Online Learning Innovation Fund and discussed at the June 2025 Learning and Teaching Day. Academic integrity resources and support (including an assessment audit toolkit) have been provided for staff and students, incorporating learnings from the Annual Senate Discipline Committee Report to QAC. Students who met with the TQER team highlighted variability in support and guidance for using Generative AI across different faculties, departments and subject disciplines; therefore, the TQER team encourages the University to continue to develop its resources, training and support for Generative AI to ensure that all students are aware of acceptable uses.

20 The TQER team observed that the University keeps its policies and procedures on assessment under regular review through the Assessment and Feedback Working Group; recent revisions include resources and guidance on feedback on assessment. Students who met with the TQER team reported variability in the timeliness of feedback on assessment. This was supported by evidence analysed by the TQER team, including comparative data that indicates that timeliness of feedback at the University is below the sector average. This was further supported by analysis of the University's surveys, including the National Student Survey (NSS), Strath Voice – Undergraduate, Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), and student module evaluation surveys. The TQER team found that the University is taking steps to address this matter. For example, staff who met with the TQER team noted that release of assessment feedback within the boundaries of the Assessment and Feedback Policy (15 working days) is a challenge. As a result, the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) has been amended to make compliance with the policy easier for staff and to provide data (to understand when feedback is released following an assessment submission) to measure policy compliance at a faculty and departmental level. While the TQER team recognised that there is a cross-institutional Assessment and Feedback Working Group, and that monitoring is taking place at ESC and Senate, the TQER team **recommends** that the University should ensure and monitor institution-wide compliance with its assessment and feedback policy, as it relates to the timeliness of assessment feedback.

Use of frameworks

21 The TQER team found that the University's programmes, modules and qualifications, including its collaborative provision, meet the requirements of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and QAA Subject Benchmark Statements through its regulations, PSRB accreditations, approval procedures and annual review processes. The

University has additionally mapped its Bahrain campus provision to the SCQF.

22 The University delivers two 20-credit programmes which are not within the *The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies*:⁸ 'Breaking Barriers' programmes in business and science, which are credit-rated at SCQF Level 6. The Business programme, which results in the award of a Certificate in Applied Business Skills, has been running for eight years and has won a range of awards for its inclusivity in that it supports access to university for young people with learning disabilities. The programme aligns with the University's aspiration to be a 'socially progressive' institution and is undertaken in collaboration with a range of partners including ENABLE Scotland. 90% of students have gone on to further employment, education or training. Students are paired with third year peer mentors who provide support and an eight-week work placement enables them to put their learning into practice. A review of the programme in academic year 2021-22 resulted in a regrading from SCQF Level 4 to Level 6 with the aim of providing a foundation year for the BA Business Management Graduate Apprenticeship. From academic year 2022-23, the Science programme was introduced, leading to the award of a Certificate in Applied Science Skills.

23 The TQER team considered a credit-rating review report from the SCQF Partnership, which highlighted that there was no clear evidence of the scrutiny and decision-making process of the allocation of SCQF level and credit, and no evidence of ongoing monitoring and review. The 'Breaking Barriers' information provided by the University following the Initial Review Visit highlighted that the Science programme had been developed with reference to the SCQF Level Descriptors and had been considered by QAC and approved by FAC in December 2021 and January 2022, the New Awards Recommendation Group on 1 March 2022, and Senate on 23 March 2022. Evidence demonstrates that a similar approval process had been followed for the Business programme in 2018 following a pilot, and therefore the University has addressed the findings of the SCQF Partnership report.

Strategic leadership

24 The TQER team found that the University's leadership enables and supports an impactful culture for excellence in learning, teaching and assessment through a collaborative, devolved approach, balancing strategic oversight through its education committee structure and through leadership roles at institutional, faculty and departmental levels with an adaptability to changing priorities and support for local innovations. Student partnership is integral to the institutional approach to leadership, which is considered by the TQER team in the section **Student engagement and partnership**.

25 The University's strategic and operational approaches to excellence in learning, teaching and assessment are led and managed through its education organisational and committee structures overseen by Senate with ESC, chaired by the Vice Principal, being the key overarching committee. ESC is supported by four key committees - Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), Student Experience Committee (SEC), Learning Enhancement Committee (LEC) and Strathclyde Online Learning Committee (SOL) and Graduate and

⁸ The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies: <https://www.qaa.ac.uk/the-quality-code/qualifications-frameworks>

Degree Apprenticeships (GADA)⁹, which are convened by three Deputy Associate Principals (with the Strath Union President acting as a co-convenor of SEC). ESC and its committees are in turn supported by ten working groups dedicated to institutional priority areas such as Surveys and Metrics and Assessment and Feedback, as well as the more informal e-FIRST (Education – Further Innovation and Reflection on Strathclyde Teaching) groups. Institutional committees and leadership roles are replicated at faculty level, including the Faculty Academic Committee (FAC), Faculty Learning Enhancement Committee (FLEC), and the Vice-Dean (Academic) role. The parallel structures facilitate two-way reporting, dissemination and development and implementation of strategy and policy with the e-FIRST groups at faculty level providing more frequent fora for prompt resolution of issues (the e-FIRST structure is further considered by the TQER team in the sections **Supporting student success** and **Enhancement and quality culture**). These committees, groups and leadership roles have responsibility for the delivery of the 'Outstanding Education and Student Experience' theme within *Strathclyde 2030* and the related Strathclyde Online Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and Careers and Employability Service Strategy.

26 The TQER team confirmed that while the University does not have a separate 'Outstanding Education and Student Experience' strategy and operational plan, progress on the theme and on associated KPIs is monitored at the faculty level through the Learner Experience Framework (LEF), faculty annual reporting and by the committees and groups reporting to ESC. ESC's Annual Report to Senate provides a holistic evaluation of progress on the 'Outstanding Education and Student Experience' theme and associated KPIs. The TQER team invites the University to consider whether ESC's Annual Report provides an efficient and effective approach to tracking strategic progress against the theme of 'Outstanding Education and Student Experience'.

27 The TQER team found that the leadership and management provided by ESC, its committees and groups, and the support for leadership development created an impactful culture across faculties and professional services through a shared sense of ownership and strategic direction and established clear opportunities for collaboration. The TQER team noted positively the external awards awarded to the University for its positive workplace culture. The TQER team's findings in this paragraph support the **feature of good practice** identified by the TQER team at paragraph 77.

Curriculum planning and design, work-based learning and employability

28 The TQER team identified that robust processes for the planning, design, approval, monitoring and delivery of the curriculum ensure that programmes are current, meet student needs and reflect changes in demand for workforce skills needs. The comprehensive evidence demonstrated that employer feedback and currency in the curriculum are core features in programme design and approval, faculty annual reporting and QQR. FLTIPs provide evidence at the faculty level of ongoing curriculum review and redevelopment and evaluation of impact of changes through student feedback, and of redesign of underpinning processes to enhance scrutiny and approval of modifications. Programme approval submissions demonstrate student consultation and student involvement in programme

⁹ The 'Strathclyde Online Learning Committee (SOL)' and 'Graduate and Degree Apprenticeship (GADA) Steering Group' were merged to become the 'Strathclyde Online Learning Committee (SOL) and Graduate and Degree Apprenticeships (GADA)' group in 2025-26. The most recent name is used within this report.

design and further examples of curricular co-creation were provided in meetings with staff and students.

29 The QQR process reviews currency and relevance of programmes, student career aspirations, and placement opportunities. QQR reports highlight that employability skills are included in the 'Curriculum Design' area for review and panels reach conclusions on the extent to which curriculum design provides students with knowledge and skills for future employment. The QQR process additionally facilitates proposals for portfolio innovation, which are considered at the annual faculty planning round, with proposals for new programmes and programme withdrawals being considered by Senate. Institutional oversight of the partnership portfolio is provided by the Collaborative Provision Agreement Sub-group.

30 The TQER team confirmed that employability, career preparation and links with industry, business and public/third sector organisations are defining features of the University of Strathclyde's educational experience, central to *Strathclyde 2030*, and reflect in the institution's consistently high rates of graduate employment (with 79% of leavers in highly skilled employment in 2023-24, continuing a consistent pattern over a five-year period). Evidence explored by the TQER team demonstrated that the University has a sector-leading approach to engagement with employers, industry and public sector organisations through curriculum development, research collaborations, teaching, placements/internships and work-related learning experiences for students. The interconnected approach between faculties, departments and the centralised Careers and Employability Service facilitates employer engagement and employability at multiple levels. Employability and employer engagement are systematically evaluated through processes such as the LEF and QQR. Employers who met with the TQER team highlighted positively the quality and preparedness of the University's graduates.

31 Students who met with the TQER team shared a range of opportunities to develop their employability skills and experience throughout their programme through placements, employer engagement initiatives, work-related learning opportunities and assessment, *Strathclyde Inspire* (focusing on entrepreneurial skills) and cross-institutional electives. Evidence was provided on placement provision, mandatory and non-mandatory, across all faculties, and students who had been on placements and internships spoke positively with the TQER team about their experiences, corroborating the higher than sector average scores for placement experience detailed in student feedback. Student feedback and meetings with the TQER team demonstrated how much students value the integration of employability into the curriculum, and support provided by the University's Careers and Employability Service. The TQER team concluded that the University's approach to engagement with employers, industry and public sector organisations through curriculum development, research collaborations, teaching, placements/internships and work-related learning experiences for students that leads to work ready graduates to be a **feature of good practice**. The findings in paragraphs 30 - 31 also contribute to the **feature of good practice** recognised by the TQER team in paragraph 77.

32 The University has a strategic focus on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through its Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) work, with an ambition to embed SDG competencies into all programme-level outcomes by 2027. Sustainability was additionally one of the key themes for academic year 2024-25 partnership working between the University and Strath Union, as outlined in the Strategic Alliance Framework (SAF). Annual progress is monitored by ESC through faculty reporting via the ESD Mapping Tool, and change has been facilitated through integrating review mechanisms into existing approaches to avoid duplication and expediting approval through designating ESD modifications as 'minor programme changes'. Students have the option to undertake a

foundational online module on the SDGs.

33 In meetings with students, the TQER team learned that students highly valued and benefited from real-world curricula and external connections through learning and assessment activities, corroborating the findings from the documentary evidence of extensive engagement with employers, industry and partner organisations and positive feedback from students (see paragraphs 30 - 31). Comprehensive evidence was provided across all faculties of specific examples of collaboration in new programme development, curriculum design and changes, including through the formal Employer Fora/Industrial Advisory Boards at local levels and of industry links being used to develop new programmes with employability at the core.

34 The University continues to be 'sector-leading' in its apprenticeship provision through its Graduate Apprenticeship and Degree Apprenticeship provision, as the first institution in Europe to be part of the University Alliance for Apprenticeships. An Employability Showcase event provides staff with opportunities to share best practice and connect with potential employers and parallels faculty specific 'Meet the Employer' networking events. Employers who met with the TQER team also highlighted opportunities to join events such as poster sessions, networking dinners and careers fairs to connect with staff and students.

35 Student mobility has been impacted by the end of Erasmus funding and, while the University was able to establish new partnerships through the award of Scottish Education Exchange Programme (SEEP) funding and has in place a comprehensive Policy on Student Mobility, reduced funding has limited the number of exchanges available for students. Individual faculties have made efforts to increase student mobility and shorter study visits provide students with opportunities for international experiences.

36 The University assures the quality of learning, teaching, assessment and student learning experience in work-based learning through direct engagement with employers in Employer Fora/Industrial Advisory Boards, PSRBs and through its robust processes for annual monitoring and periodic review. FARs provide examples of detailed reflection on employability and work-related learning, which are in turn summarised in the FAR Thematic Report. Graduate Apprenticeships and Degree Apprenticeships are also reviewed through the FAR process as well as through feedback from employers and students.

37 The TQER team evaluated extensive evidence of work-based learning being reviewed in the LEF, which is appended to FARs. The LEFs provide a data-driven focus on employability at programme level, including graduate destinations, industry involvement, internships and graduate skills. The TQER team noted variability in use of LEFs as a tool for impactful change, and the Annual Report to ESC from the Careers and Employability Working Group (CEWG) and the Entrepreneurship for All Working Group highlight the institutional intention to encourage faculties to use their LEFs to inform future employability skills planning.

38 The QQR Policy indicates that work-related learning, employability skills development, internships and placements are reviewed periodically as well as annually, as in QQR reports. External assurance of the quality of work-based learning in Degree Apprenticeship provision is provided by Ofsted; the 2024 Ofsted Inspection Report confirmed ratings of 'good' across all categories, highlighting employer collaboration in curriculum design as a strength.

Learning environments

39 The TQER team found that ESC provides institutional leadership and oversight of the learning environment, resources and technologies. Digital Education is one of ESC's priority areas. There are annual reviews of infrastructure, technologies, the library and the campus

environment. Developments in learning technologies and related infrastructure are delegated to LEC and the Strathclyde Online Learning Committee (SOL), sub-committees of ESC, and its Strathclyde Online Strategy. The SOL Innovation Fund provides resourcing and support for technology. Learning resources are rated positively by students, including the pre-arrival modules and access to support services on the University's VLE. The University's VLE and StrathApp, which supports students throughout their journey, are the key digital resources for students. The VLE is kept under regular review in response to student and staff feedback with recent enhancements including a more co-ordinated approach to releasing marks and assessment feedback, discussed further by the TQER team in paragraph 20.

40 The Learning and Teaching Building provides a co-located space for educational innovation, student support services and Strath Union. The library supports the student learning experience through skills support, guides and subject specialists, with key information on the University's VLE. The TQER team also heard from staff that the library provides a location for the promotion of wellbeing services.

41 The Strathclyde Doctoral School (SDS) provides postgraduate research students (PGRs) with dedicated space, which includes a suite of bookable desks exclusively for PGR students as well as a PGR training room. These facilities were recently moved to the Technology and Innovation Centre (TIC). Students who met with the TQER team were critical of the relocation process and the reduction in space. Staff who met with the TQER team acknowledged challenges associated with the relocation, which had been undertaken as part of an estates review, and were now committed to co-creation of space in partnership with students. The TQER team further considered the PGR student experience in the section **Supporting student success**.

42 The Strategic Timetabling Group (STG) informs and oversees the implementation of academic timetabling, and has a focus on strategic items, including reviewing the academic year key dates. The remit of the STG highlights that the move towards flexible programmes (programmes with a greater number of entry and exit points and non-standard teaching delivery), created a need for better timetable support and an associated communications strategy. The e-FIRST Planning, Enhancement & Student Experience (PESEG) Group, which focuses on rapid resolution of operational matters, has considered room booking issues and updates colleagues on improvements to timetabling as required.

43 At the subject level, education resources and environment are reviewed through the Learning Support theme within the QQR process. Staff who met with the TQER team were positive about the collaborative role of professional services in developing the learning environment, resources and technologies, but highlighted a range of challenges including the shortage of space for whole cohort events; the variety of polling systems in use; and the University's interim position on recording of teaching. In meetings with students, the TQER team learned of examples of engagement with different learning environments, including the use of technology on placements, such as data analysis and programming tools, with industry partners. For example, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and RStudio.

Staff development

44 The TQER team observed that the University provides a range of formal and informal processes and opportunities for academic and professional services staff in support of their professional development. For example, mandatory training through the Organisational and Staff Development Unit (OSDU). Mandatory training is required in areas such as EDI, Data Protection and Cyber Security. Professional development opportunities are aligned with the institutional strategic theme of 'Outstanding Education and Student Experience' and tailored

to key strategic areas such as Generative AI, online learning and diversifying the curriculum.

45 Staff are allocated time for professional development as part of the Accountability and Development Review (ADR) process. Staff who met with the TQER team reflected positively that the ADR facilitated not only individual personal and professional development, but also alignment of individual and strategic priorities. The TQER team observed a clear, vertical link between the institutional strategy and each member of staff through the ADR with personal objectives and developments aligned with the institutional strategy.

46 Peer support is a key feature of the institutional approach to professional development, with staff networks recently combined into the Learning and Teaching Innovation Network (LaTIN) to support experiential applications for AdvanceHE Fellowship (see paragraph 50) and to support leadership development. The LaTIN Networks provide peer support for those new to or aspiring to leadership roles. Thematic networks and groups provide focused fora for development in key areas such as diversifying the curriculum, offering a framework for a range of initiatives including in collaboration with students. Additionally, staff make use of their own external networks to enhance programme development.

47 The TQER team learned that staff also benefited in their professional development from engagement in events and fora where enhancement and innovations were shared, such as the Learning and Teaching Day, FLECs and the cross-institutional Learning and Teaching Improvement Framework (LTIF). Additionally, staff valued focused networks and communities of practice related to pedagogy. The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Programme (SoTL) provides a thematically structured supportive environment for scholarship based around workshops, writing retreats and peer review.

48 In addition to peer networks, formal programmes include the Strathclyde Teaching Excellence Programme (STEP¹⁰), Micro CPD (Continuing Professional Development) and the Teaching and Learning Online (TALON) programme. Flexibility in approach enables participants to engage at their own time and pace, and the TQER team learned of how initiatives such as the weekly, bite-sized Micro CPD (known as '5-minute CPDs') benefited staff in their practice in areas related to inclusive and accessible teaching, feedback methods and Generative AI. Staff who met with the TQER team noted that the '5-minute CPDs' relate to the academic calendar including, for example, providing information on transitions when students are beginning their studies. OSDU additionally provides a large repository of CPD resources.

49 The Postgraduate Certificate (PG Certificate) in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, accredited by AdvanceHE, provides a formal qualification and associated Fellowship for those new to teaching, but is open to all staff involved in teaching or supporting learning. PGRs involved in teaching activity are required to complete the asynchronous online course on the University's VLE prior to teaching or demonstrating, with further training, support and development provided at departmental levels (the University's response to a previous external review recommendation relating to PGRs involved in teaching and teaching-related activity is considered in the section **Enhancement and quality culture**). A new Learning and Teaching Career Framework for new staff on teaching contracts was developed by OSDU and Human Resources with support from LEC to support early career training and development.

50 Staff are supported through taught and experiential pathways to AdvanceHE

10 The acronym 'STEP' is used in the section **Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment** to refer to the 'Strathclyde Teaching Excellence Programme'.

Fellowship, with 48.7% of academic staff holding one of the Fellowship categories. The TQER team noted some challenges around support for, and achievement of, Fellowship through experiential routes (particularly Senior Fellowship level and for PGRs) relating to staff resource within OSDU and the Directorate of Education Enhancement. While achievement rates through taught pathways are in line with sector averages (due primarily to completion of the PG Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education), Fellowship awards through CPD routes are below sector and benchmark averages. The TQER team noted actions being taken in response, including the pilot in two departments to provide staff mentors to support PGRs through experiential routes. At Senior Fellowship level, a mapping has been undertaken to promotion indicators for teaching contract staff and mentors assigned to applicants, resulting in increased participation, and the support framework enhanced to boost success rates at first submission.

51 Professional development is recognised in the University's promotions procedures. Staff promotions data highlights that there are fewer female than male promotions on academic routes and to director/professor positions, however there is an equivalent number of female and male teaching-related promotions. Staff who met with the TQER team commented positively on support for promotion and on opportunities for tailoring career pathways, including a focus on teaching and scholarship.

52 The TQER team concluded that the University has effective arrangements for supporting academic and professional services staff in their professional development. Data on participation and completion rates, participants' feedback and the recommendations from institutional and faculty reports are used to inform areas for action. The TQER team noted positively the external awards awarded to the University for its commitment to staff development and its positive workplace environment. The TQER team highlighted, as a **feature of good practice**, the impactful, inclusive and entrepreneurial culture supported by the personal and professional development of academic and professional services staff, which supports a strong sense of community. This is enabled through leadership opportunities, mentoring practices, networking opportunities, internal and external development programmes and the Accountability and Development Review (ADR) process. The findings in paragraph 44 - 52 contribute to the **feature of good practice** recognised by the TQER team in paragraph 77.

53 Peer observation is a formal part of the PG Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education with the practice of each participant observed twice and, in turn, observing the practice of others in at least two sessions. Aligned with General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) requirements, student teachers on placements are evaluated in their practice by staff with GTCS registration. For PGR students with a teaching role, observation of their teaching practice is provided by module leaders.

54 Peer review is embedded in certificated and experiential pathways for AdvanceHE Fellowship (see paragraph 50) and into the SoTL Programme (see paragraph 47). The QQR process is based on peer review and evaluation as evidenced by the composition of the panel, and half the review is devoted to departmental learning and teaching activities.

Innovation in learning, teaching and assessment

55 The University uses its committee structure to lead, support and disseminate innovation in learning, teaching and assessment, particularly through LEC and the Strathclyde Online Learning (SOL) Committee and Graduate and Degree Apprenticeships (GADA). The SOL Strategy provides a framework for driving innovation in online learning as a mode of programme delivery and the Blended and Online Learning Design (BOLD) toolkit provides a structured framework for designing online learning into curricula. Support for

innovation is provided through professional and personal development (see paragraphs 44 - 52). Additionally, time for scholarship is incorporated into workload allocation models for individual academics.

56 Funding is made available at institutional level, for example, the SOL Innovation Fund supports teaching technology developments, and faculty levels through teaching and learning innovation funding to support initiatives, particularly in priority areas such as digital education and in Generative AI. FLTIPs provide comprehensive summaries of innovations introduced in the last year with assessment being a key transformative area, including a shift from exams and coursework to more authentic, real-world assessment.

57 TESTA (Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment), an optional area for review in QQR, provides a framework for innovating and enhancing the student experience through assessment, in a way that is explicitly supportive, evidence based, and non-judgmental. TESTA is informed by an initial stage of data collection from different sources and is led by the Directorate of Education Enhancement.

58 The University recognises and rewards innovation in learning, teaching and assessment through its Teaching Excellence Awards: 'innovation' is an award category at faculty level, and excellent practice in 'sustainability' is recognised in both student-led and faculty awards. The University has also won a wide range of external awards for innovation.

Supporting student success

59 The TQER team found that the University of Strathclyde's arrangements for supporting student success are **effective**. The institution has appropriate and systematically applied practices in line with sector expectations for supporting student success that use data, evidence and externality, demonstrate impact and are effective in supporting student success. The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence, including the Strategic Impact Analysis (SIA), the 2023-24 Self-Evaluation and Action Plan (SEAP), the Annual Reports of the Education Strategy Committee (ESC) to the Senate, information about student support arrangements, and formal structures for supporting student success. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of staff, students and employers. The TQER team was also provided with a demonstration of data dashboards used by programme-level staff.

Enabling student success

60 The TQER team found that the design and availability of support arrangements are effective in supporting student success. Student support is strategically led via *Strathclyde 2030* and priorities within the annual Strategic Alliance Framework (SAF).

61 The University has formal structures for supporting student success, including cross-institutional committees and groups. Examples of cross-institutional committees and groups include the Disability Inclusion Steering Group, Equally Safe at Strathclyde Group, Safeguarding Committee, the Suicide Safer Project Board, and the Student Mental Health & Wellbeing Steering Group, which all oversee different areas of student and staff wellbeing at the University. These cross-institutional groups and committees have academic and professional services membership and report to the Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) committee, chaired by the Associate Principal (Social Inclusion), with a formal reporting route to Senate. The Safeguarding Committee reports directly to Senate. At a local level, EDI is led within the faculties by Associate Deans for EDI, who are represented on the institution-wide EDI Committee. The TQER team learned that academic year 2025-26 is the fourth year of operation of this institutional EDI structure, set up in response to a previous lack of institutional structure in this area and with roots in the University's Athena Swan working groups. Additionally, the University has identified EDI as an area of strength and shared their upcoming strategic priorities with the TQER team, including aiming for Athena Swan Gold in 2028 and the Race Equality Charter (Bronze) in academic year 2025-26.

62 Students who met with the TQER team reported awareness of how to access the University's wide range of student support services, enabled through a wide range of information or support provided to them. Support and signposting available ranged from pastoral, personal development and academic advising including 'Personal Development Advisors (PDAs)', PGR supervisors, induction information, signposting from student representatives, and other digital communication portals such as the StrathApp and Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). In terms of faculty-specific approaches, the Strathclyde Business School (SBS) supports students through information sessions, dedicated VLE pages, one-to-one meetings and careers support. The TQER team observed examples of student-led support, including a Wellbeing Toolkit for study abroad (similar to an existing one for placements), that was developed by a student and includes solutions to possible challenges and wellbeing tips. Additionally, the TQER team learned of the Strathclyde Cares Group. This group is led by care experienced students and places an emphasis on the lived experience of care experienced students at the University, including how they access student support services, to inform the University's approach.

63 The TQER team found an overall positive institution-wide, strategic approach to supporting student mental health using a 'Public Health' model of promoting positive

wellbeing initiatives and wider education. The impact of this approach is demonstrated in a reduction in student referrals to the Wellbeing Team and a reduction in the waiting time for student referrals of eight weeks in academic year 2023-24 to five and a half weeks in academic year 2024-25. The TQER team learned that achieving this reduction involved partnership working between Strath Union and the University's professional services. The University has an effective range of support mechanisms and strategies tackling mental health challenges, including suicide prevention, with a comprehensive range of support offered. There is mandatory training for staff on wellbeing and inclusivity initiatives, and, for students, pre-registration includes mandatory Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and EDI short courses, as well as the 'We Are Strathclyde' induction programme (see paragraph 73). Staff who met with the TQER team reported high levels of engagement with the pre-enrolment modules, with few students opting out of this opportunity. Additionally, the University has passed the EmilyTest GBV Charter (a gender-based violence charter for colleges and universities). The University's 'Safe360°' safeguarding framework aims to create an environment free of harassment, victimisation and bullying and encourages people to raise concerns. The Safeguarding Policy has been updated to reflect the 'Safe360°' safeguarding framework and reflects the legal obligations the University has, to safeguard the wellbeing of both staff and students. The Student Mental Health Agreement has continued to support communication between the University and Strath Union to promote opportunities for wellbeing, recognising changes to student demographics which have contributed to changes in the type of support needed by students.

64 The TQER team noted links between the University's central support services and individual faculties. Faculty-facing advisors from the Disability and Inclusion team are members of faculty-level committees such as Faculty Learning Enhancement Committee (FLEC), Faculty Academic Committee (FAC) and Faculty EDI committees. Additionally, there are Disability Coordinators in every department. For example, in the Faculty of Engineering, Disability Coordinators assess students' disabilities to inform assessment design or adjustments. Similarly, IT and library staff attend committees within the faculties, further emphasising links between central support, student services and the four faculties. Additional examples of links between the University's central support services and individual faculties are provided at paragraph 76. The TQER team concluded that the University has a range of mechanisms and services in place to support the wellbeing of students.

65 The TQER team observed the University's emphasis on sport in supporting student success in meetings with students and within the University's wider strategic approach. Initiatives such as StrathACTIVE and opportunities via Strathclyde Sport provide health and social opportunities for students. The University's focus on sport is included in *Strathclyde 2030* under the theme of 'Outstanding Education and Student Experience'. The Strathclyde Sport Engagement Group (SSEG) is convened at a strategic level by a Deputy Associate Principal and reports to EDI committee and Senate as appropriate. The SSEG was established to provide a forum for Strathclyde Sport to better engage with the wider University community, including the faculties and professional services. Students who met with the TQER team valued the University's emphasis on sport and its role in social inclusion and wellbeing and provided examples of a range of shared opportunities such as travel for competitions, taster sessions and private sports sessions for diverse groups. The TQER team met with students studying away from the John Anderson Campus, including graduate and degree apprentices not resident in Glasgow and students at the University of Strathclyde, Bahrain (UoSB), who confirmed that the University provides opportunities to be involved in sport, including local discounted gym memberships, indicating equitable access to sporting activities regardless of location of study. The findings in paragraphs 60 - 65 contribute to the **feature of good practice** recognised by the TQER team in paragraph 77.

66 The TQER team found evidence of institutional awareness of initiatives to address the

local needs of students specific to context and community. For example, e-FIRST (Education – Further Innovation and Reflection on Strathclyde Teaching), originally established during the pandemic to respond to a transition to online delivery, is an effective framework to support ongoing oversight of the delivery of learning, teaching and assessment and matters related to the wider student experience. Operating at faculty and institutional level, the e-FIRST framework manages faculty and cross-institutional matters with an agile approach outside of formal committee structures. The institution-wide e-FIRST Planning Enhancement and Student Experience Group (PESEG), supported by the faculty e-FIRST groups, coordinates preparations and readiness for learning, teaching and assessment, and acts as a forum for safe and effective student experience; reporting to ESC. Faculty staff who met with the TQER team valued the informal nature, timeliness and responsiveness of the e-FIRST structure in responding to the needs of the student community and noted its effectiveness in resolving small issues impacting the student experience in a timely manner.

67 Evidence considered by the TQER team demonstrated that reasonable adjustment and disability support recommendations are implemented and managed by departments with support from the Disability and Wellbeing Service. The TQER team noted that the University is responsive to change to reasonable adjustments and disability support at an institutional level by, for example, providing extra time for exams in a centralised way. The TQER team learned that the University is considering a systemised method of supporting and monitoring the implementation of reasonable adjustments of departmental level class tests, in addition to the current oversight of exams. Furthermore, the TQER team found that, because of the 2024-25 Annual Complaints report, the University learned that enhancements were required to allow more involvement of student support services in the adjustments made for students. The University's Disability and Wellbeing Service has therefore developed clearer protocols to ensure that when a student discloses a disability, but does not complete the necessary referral process, a more proactive approach is taken, including contact with students to ensure they complete all the relevant information. Additionally, the TQER team heard that employers make reasonable adjustments for students beyond the work-based activity itself. Some employers who met with the TQER team also reported supporting students with CV preparation to further support their employability skills. The findings in paragraph 67 contribute to the **feature of good practice** recognised by the TQER team in paragraph 77.

Postgraduate research student community

68 The University has also taken action to address the needs, and enable student success, of the postgraduate research (PGR) student community. The Strathclyde Doctoral School Management Board (SDSMB), reporting to ESC and convened by the Associate Principal (Entrepreneurship and Enterprise), has institutional strategic oversight for all areas of the PGR student experience, including community building, representation, student voice, lifecycle experience, policy development, supervisor engagement, professional and personal development, and employability. The SDSMB agrees the strategic direction of Strathclyde Doctoral School (SDS). The TQER team found that the SDS has oversight of the PGR student experience outside of faculty and departmental engagements. The aims of the draft SDS Strategy 2030, reviewed by the TQER team, noted that the SDS aims to complement activities within departments, faculties, Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs) and research centres, and has four key pillars: Community, Collaboration, Careers and Care. The draft strategy aims for a consistent student experience, a holistic approach, and to provide a set of minimum standards for the level of support for PGRs to ensure consistency of experience across departments and faculties. The SDS is currently developing its strategic approach and providing students with opportunities to share experience and ideas, coffee mornings, and opportunities to mix with postgraduate staff. The TQER team learned that the SDS provides induction activities for cross-faculty PGR communities to complement induction activities within a student's individual faculty. The TQER team encourages the University to

continue its implementation of the aims of the Strathclyde Doctoral School Strategy 2030.

69 The TQER team met with students and staff about the PGR student experience and the role of the SDS during the visits. Students who met with the TQER team reported a mixed and inconsistent understanding of the role of the SDS in the PGR student experience. The TQER team learned that there was little consultation with the PGR student community in relation to the changes to the provision of bookable desks provided by the SDS on the John Anderson Campus (see paragraph 41), and that the SDS had little dedicated staff support. PGR students who met with the TQER team shared further challenges in the PGR student experience, including PGR student representation, and mixed experiences across different faculties of the University. Furthermore, PGR students reported variable experiences of the compulsory credit-bearing PG Certificate in Researcher Development (a course that recognises training and development undertaken by PGRs) and of access to AdvanceHE fellowships.

70 The TQER team recognised that Strath Union have taken action to address challenges of student representation in the PGR student community, including training for PGR representatives and the development of a PGR representative handbook, published in June 2025. The TQER team heard that the approach of developing a handbook to support PGR student representatives will be extended to undergraduate and postgraduate taught student representatives in due course. Following review of evidence and meetings during the visits, the TQER team **recommends** that the University should review its institutional oversight of the PGR student experience, including the role of the Strathclyde Doctoral School (SDS), to realise the ambition of achieving consistency of student experience and community for PGR students.

71 The TQER team also reviewed evidence of how enhancements to the PGR student experience are overseen by ESC. For example, the PGR Monitoring Framework, approved by Senate in 2024, was developed in response to student and staff feedback to ensure greater parity in the PGR experience across the University, through a set of core expectations for PGR monitoring and review. Additionally, the PGR Supervisory Agreement was developed in recognition of the dynamic of the supervisory relationship, to provide a complementary and supportive framework, and links to other PGR-related work being undertaken. The TQER team found that the PGR Leave Support Policy provides a framework and fund for PGR students to undertake periods of leave for several reasons, consistent with employees of the institution. Additionally, action has been taken to achieve equal financial support for PGR students on maternity leave. A formal review to support progression monitoring begins on the PGR student's start date with a focus on career expectations during pre-meetings with supervisors, clear ongoing feedback and a formal one-year review. PGR students can meet with supervisors at any time (for example, monthly and quarterly meetings) to support the progress of their studies. Given the University's industry focus, students based at National Manufacturing Institute Scotland (NMIS)¹¹ are jointly supervised across the University and industry with the University supervisor taking a lead role if the industry supervisor is unavailable. The findings in paragraph 71 contribute to the **feature of good practice** recognised by the TQER team in paragraph 77.

72 The TQER team learned from PGR students that there are opportunities for industry engagement and support for career ambitions, involving visiting different companies, learning different and relevant software and technologies, undertaking industry

11 The National Manufacturing Institute Scotland (NMIS) is hosted by the University of Strathclyde. It has a separate management structure to the University and is based close to Glasgow International Airport. NMIS is funded by Scottish Government.

projects, and engaging with *Strathclyde Inspire* for entrepreneurship skills. Support for careers and employability was highly commended by PGR students who met with the TQER team, including opportunities through industry support (mostly with an academic focus). PGR students who met with the TQER team also valued the dedicated Careers Advisor for PGRs, where longer appointments are provided as required, and noted faculty employability opportunities, including involvement in workshops and public speaking at conferences. The TQER team met with a small sample of distance-learning PGR students who noted that some innovations for PGR students (for example, QUANTAS – a group for quantitative studies) had not embraced the needs of distance-learning students and did not provide opportunities for hybrid engagement. The TQER team considers that the University may learn from the success of the careers and employability model for delivering consistent student experience across faculties at the institution in considering the recommendation in paragraph 70.

Student transitions

73 The University's strategy articulates its commitment to widening access and participation. The University provides articulation ('direct entry') routes, from partner colleges into years two and three of undergraduate programmes in the faculties of Humanities and Social Sciences (HaSS), SBS and Engineering. The TQER team recognised that the partnership to pilot the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)¹² NextGen: HN Engineering articulation with City of Glasgow College demonstrated a positive example of future solutions to provide additional support for academic writing skills, assessment and smoother transitions for students. The University's 'We Are Strathclyde' module, developed by the University as an initiative to support students' success prior to starting their studies, alongside other pre-registration modules, supports effective transition into the University. A student who met with the TQER team spoke highly of the 'We Are Strathclyde' introductory course, observing that students on an articulation route who had not completed the course found joining the University more challenging. Students who met with the TQER team reported a wide range of opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds, enabling them to feel welcomed before and during course onboarding, as well as ongoing social opportunities to connect, including those provided by Strath Union and through sport (see paragraph 65), the Strathclyde Cares Group (see paragraph 62), the Strathclyde Muslim Association, and the Mature Students' Association.

Employability, skills development and lifelong learning

74 Employability is central to the University's mission of being 'A Place of Useful Learning'. The University operates a Careers and Employability Working Group (CEWG) convened by a Deputy Associate Principal, as a forum to inform the development of the University's employability strategy. The University provides project-based learning wherever possible, notably in departments within the Faculties of Engineering and SBS and aligns this to personal career aspirations wherever possible. Employers provide a distinct role in supporting student placements and, for example, as guest lecturers, which ensure that students in different areas of study have opportunities to engage with employers. All programmes report annually on how they support employability through the LEF, ensuring regular reflection on opportunities for developing employability skills for students. The TQER team noted that careers advice and experience relevant to future employability is embedded

¹² The Initial and Main Review Visits for the University of Strathclyde took place in October and December 2025 respectively. Qualifications Scotland replaced the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) on 1 February 2026.

within each stage of study from induction to graduation for students at all levels of study and is further considered by the TQER team in the section **Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment**.

75 Outside of subject areas, the Careers and Employability Service run three non-credit-bearing modules, including modules for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students. The module for undergraduate students registered 1,455 students in academic year 2024-25 and included information on career choice, labour market information and the graduate recruitment process. A similar module, designed to support career development, is available for postgraduate taught students, with 824 students enrolled in academic year 2024-25. Additionally, SBS enrolls all postgraduate taught students on a module titled 'Mastering Your Career'.

76 A broad range of employers engage with the University's Careers and Employability Service. This operates as a channel from employers to academic departments, including use of Employer Fora/Industry Advisory Boards in some faculties. The Careers and Employability Service use Career Consultants; faculty-facing staff who attend industry advisory boards, supporting a link between the central Careers and Employability Service and the faculties. Career Consultants are also integrated into faculty quality assurance and enhancement activity through attendance at FAC and FLEC, which receive reports from employer forums. Staff who met with TQER team highlighted the recent acquisition of a customer relationship management system for managing employer engagement. The University intends to encourage academic staff across the faculties to record their engagement with employers using the new system. The University's engagement with employers is considered further in the section **Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment**.

Supporting diverse learners

77 The TQER team learned that the University provides an individualised learning experience for students and found evidence of a caring, supportive environment created by all staff to provide a positive student experience, in line with *Strathclyde 2030*. Students who met with the TQER team valued support from the University's Recruitment and International Office (RIO) and International Student Support Team in Student Experience, referring to support gained whilst on international placements, for navigating challenges with visas, and for finding accommodation. The TQER team also heard that the RIO had recently increased its offering for students, including involving students in welcoming international students and drop-in sessions. The University has a clear student and staff centred approach, which supports wellbeing, inclusivity and individual success and supports a sense of community. This approach is exemplified across different areas of the staff and student experience. Examples range from the integration of access to sport in an inclusive way (see paragraph 65); tailored work placements, employability opportunities, employer engagement and the Careers and Employability Service (see paragraphs 30 - 31); EDI initiatives such as the Strathclyde Cares Group (see paragraphs 61 - 62); staff professional development opportunities (see paragraphs 44 - 52); approaches to student mental health and wellbeing (see paragraph 63); disability support including adaptations to support reasonable adjustments for students (see paragraphs 64 and 67); accommodations for personal circumstances (such as those described for PGRs in paragraph 71) and a commitment to equity of the student experience for students based outside of the John Anderson Campus (see paragraphs 17 and 65). The TQER team found the student and staff centred culture of care, which supports wellbeing, inclusivity and individual success, to be a **feature of good practice**.

78 The TQER team found inconsistencies in how pastoral, personal development and academic advising is implemented and described in different faculties of the University. This

includes the staff role of 'Personal Development Advisors (PDAs)' present in some departments within the faculties. The TQER team found that faculties, and in some instances departments within faculties, operate different approaches to pastoral, personal development and academic advising, often with variations for students at different levels of study. The TQER team learned, in meetings with staff and students, that the student experience of pastoral, personal development and academic advising varies by faculty and department. Examples of different approaches were shared in meetings with the TQER team, further corroborating the variety of approaches reviewed in the documentary evidence. The TQER team heard that, in the Department of Law (Faculty of HaSS), there are 20-30 students allocated to each staff member (known as a PDA), and students will have the same staff point of contact for four years. Students will meet with their PDA up to two times per semester, but it is generally 'reactive' (for example, for students to receive support following an exam board). The Department of Law also operates a 'Super PDA team' who have enhanced training to support students who present in crisis. Furthermore, the TQER team heard that in the Department of Architecture (Faculty of Engineering), there are 'personal tutors' (academic), and pastoral and year advisors, with an advisor surgery taking place once a week. Within the surgery, students can book an appointment with an advisor or course director. The TQER team **recommends** that the University should establish a clear and consistent institutional approach to pastoral, personal development and academic advising for students. This approach should define, and ensure, a level of support that ensures an equitable baseline student experience regardless of mode of study, location or subject area. The findings in this paragraph also contribute to the recommendation identified by the TQER team in paragraph 96.

Concerns, complaints, appeals and disciplinarys

79 The University has established clear policies to support students in addressing concerns through separate procedures for appeals, disciplinary matters, and complaints. Mandatory training is provided to staff to support frontline complaints handling and the complaints handling procedure produces annual reports in line with Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) requirements, reporting on learnings from complaints and actions taken. An annual complaints report is presented at the first meeting of the University's Court each year, and quarterly complaints reports are provided to the University's Executive Team. The University experienced a 21% decrease in complaints between academic years 2022-23 and 2023-24, however the report for 2024-25 noted an increase of 28% since 2023-24. The University's responsiveness to complaints was demonstrated within the documentary evidence considered by the TQER team. For example, the University recorded an increase in complaints and appeals in the Faculty of Engineering in relation to peer marking in group projects. As a result, in academic year 2024-25, a project was initiated to address this, noted in the annual Faculty Learning and Teaching Improvement Plan (FLTIP) and ESC report to Senate. The University noted examples of where disciplinarys had increased in academic misconduct cases, attributing this rise to plagiarism and Generative AI misconduct. To approach this challenge, the University has increased Senate disciplinary hearings (Stage 2), which are now convened once a month. The TQER team further discussed the University's approach to Generative AI and assessment in the section **Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment**, and additional examples of the University's responsiveness to disciplinarys is explored in paragraph 19 and to complaints in paragraph 67.

Student engagement and partnership

80 The TQER team found that the University of Strathclyde is **effective** in student engagement and partnership. The institution's approach to student engagement and partnership is systematic and strategic. The institution ensures the quality of the student learning experience is continuously improved based on the voice of students in line with sector expectations. The institution works in partnership with students to use data, evidence and externality to develop, implement and evaluate the student learning experience. The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence including the Strathclyde Strategic Alliance Framework (SAF), Student Academic Representation Policy, and Student Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) Minutes. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including staff and students. Of key importance were the meetings with the Senior Leadership Team, student representatives, and students.

A culture of student partnership

81 The TQER team found that the University is effective in embedding a culture of student partnership across the institution with student partnership working being integral to the institution at all levels. Representation on institutional committees ensures that students are involved at the highest levels of the University, including 10 students in the membership of Senate, and co-convenorship of the Student Experience Committee (SEC). Student voice is a standing item on agendas for Senate and Education Strategy Committee (ESC), and students are also involved in faculty and departmental level meetings, which include dedicated items for student voice. Partnership working between the University and Strath Union is articulated through the Strategic Alliance Framework (SAF), the student representative structures, and forms part of the University's strategy. Additionally, sessions during staff Learning and Teaching Days have been devoted to student partnership, engagement, and student voice.

82 The SEC, reporting to the ESC, is co-convened by the Strath Union President and Deputy Associate Principal (Learning, Teaching and Assessment). The SEC is responsible for identifying areas of action to enhance the student experience, overseeing and monitoring the implementation of the SAF, and promoting student voice across all areas of the University, including student-facing professional services. The SAF formalises the priority areas for partnership working between the University and Strath Union on an annual basis, including areas related to community and academic and student experience. Progress is monitored, and revisions are made, through monthly meetings between the University Executive and Strath Union Executive. At the time of the TQER, the SAF was in its fourth iteration; and was described by Strath Union student officers who met with the TQER team as a 'unity point' for work on the student experience between the University and student body. The TQER team found evidence that regular activity updates on the SAF are shared with Senate. Additionally, the TQER team heard that the University Executive and Strath Union Executive meet regularly (formally and informally). The TQER team was of the view that the regular meetings are characterised by open and honest communication, with examples provided of engagement on strategic developments such as *Strathclyde 2030* and the recent development of University of Strathclyde, Bahrain (UoSB).

83 Students who met with the TQER team reported positive feedback on investment in the student experience, including a dedicated budget for student experience initiatives via the co-convened SEC. Senior student officers confirmed to the TQER team the link between this budget, the SEC and the SAF, noted that students are empowered to decide how the funding is used, and reported that these initiatives have led to enhancements to the student experience. Enhancements include the development of a 'Buddy System', a scheme that provides the opportunity for first-year students to be paired with a student from another year,

and the 'Strath Pantry', an initiative to promote student wellbeing whilst tackling challenges of cost of living for students. Both initiatives are strategically aligned with the themes of student community and wellbeing in the SAF.

Student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement

84 The TQER team found that there are formal and informal opportunities for student engagement, for example, between the Directorate of Education Enhancement and Strath Union Officers. In addition to initiatives such as the Student Mental Health Agreement, the TQER team found evidence that students are involved in the development of policies and procedures. Co-creation of strategy and policy was observed in several areas, including *Strathclyde 2030*, the review of induction activities, and the review of the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). Students who met with the TQER team were positive about their involvement in wide-ranging activities at the University, including involvement in the creation of the SAF.

85 A range of evidence was provided that demonstrated that students are involved in quality processes, such as the University's Quinquennial Review of Academic Provision (QQR) (explored further by the TQER team in the section **Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment**), which includes specific guidance for students taking part in the reviews. The TQER team also considered evidence from SSLCs where enhancements were made to the curriculum in response to student feedback at department level. Additionally, Faculty Learning and Teaching Improvement Plans (FLTIPs) evidenced that students were consulted to identify annual curriculum improvements. Examples of curricular co-creation were provided in meetings with staff and students, including summer internships, which allowed students to review and make recommendations to the design of an undergraduate Mechanical Engineering programme (see paragraph 90). The TQER team also found evidence of regular evaluation of modules through student questionnaires. Although a small number of students are currently studying at UoSB (approximately 150 over two academic years), steps have been effectively undertaken to ensure the student voice is captured, including through module surveys and student representatives. For example, the Deputy Associate Principal (Education, Systems and Enhancement) had recently run sessions on student voice and engagement with student groups at UoSB at the time of the Initial Review Visit.

Student representation

86 The University has more than 600 student representatives in a clearly structured representation system, from the student body to programme representatives, department representatives, faculty representatives and Strath Union representatives, to ensure students are represented at all levels of the University. Programme and department representatives attend SSLCs, with faculty representatives attending Faculty Academic Committees (FAC), Faculty Learning Enhancement Committees (FLEC) and Senate. Strath Union provide student representative training, which is informed by sparqs training, and students who met with the TQER team noted that the training provides practical advice, including where to direct different areas of student feedback, signposting and closing the feedback loop. Training also includes simulation activities to support student representative development. Student representatives valued the emphasis on self-care within the representative role and spoke positively of the support available to them in their role. Students who met with the TQER team highlighted that, in all faculties, there is a structure that ensures that the views of students are present at SSLC meetings and action taken is shared with students. This is further supported by a sample of SSLC minutes reviewed by the TQER team, which documented that issues raised are explored and, where possible, resolved. The TQER team met with a range of student representatives, some of which were from departments involved in the 'Student Representatives (Rep) Pilot Project' (see

paragraphs 87 - 88). The TQER team met with a range of students, across different levels of study, who were aware of the student representative structures at the University.

87 The TQER team found that challenges identified within the current student representation system informed a pilot, led by Strath Union, of an enhanced student representation model in academic year 2024-25: the 'Student Representatives (Rep) Pilot Project'. Over the course of several years, the following challenges, forming the basis of the pilot, were identified: the isolated nature of the student representative role, a lack of coordinated support from departments and Strath Union, a lack of continuity when student representatives change, and a general view of ineffective feedback mechanisms, which focused on immediate problem-solving, thus lacking wider enhancement opportunities. These factors resulted in a disempowered feeling among student representatives. The pilot project was aligned with sector reference points, including the Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF) and UK Quality Code, and demonstrated use of the sparqs Student Learning Experience (SLE) Model. The overall aim of the project was for students to have a greater impact in the decision-making in their learning experience, whilst focusing on student representative community and action, and creating a stronger partnership between student representatives and staff on different courses and across different years. To test the new system across a range of structures, the pilot was trialled with undergraduate student representatives across four departments (one from each faculty). As part of the project, student representatives worked in action groups, identified as the 'principal piece' of the project, to support with community building across student representatives and departmental staff, and diverting feedback to other areas of the University (for example, where feedback raised was not relevant to SSLCs nor at course-level). The trialling of action groups, informed by the sparqs SLE Model, supported collaboration with staff outside of SSLCs as an alternative route to providing feedback to departments through the student representation system.

88 Strath Union's evaluation of the project, shared with the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) in June 2025, found that the project did not meet all of its original aims in full. Nevertheless, the opportunities to strengthen relationships with departmental staff and student representatives, as well as gaining a deeper understanding of the current student representation system and potential ways forward, proved valuable to Strath Union. The TQER team heard that learnings from the evaluation are informing further work on consistency in the student representation system, have informed recent developments such as the student representation handbook (noted in paragraph 70), and will inform further developments to the Student Academic Representation Policy. The TQER team learned that discussions and learnings from the pilot are ongoing and encourages the University to continue its partnership working with Strath Union to enhance the student representation system for all students.

Student voice and the feedback loop

89 The TQER team confirmed that the University collects feedback from students through a variety of mechanisms, including module evaluations (conducted once or twice per semester for a standard-sized module) and a range of surveys. Surveys include Welcome to Strathclyde (conducted twice per year), Strath Voice Undergraduate Survey, National Student Survey (NSS), Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (conducted every second year). The University has made enhancements to module evaluations, including the use of QR codes to promote student engagement. The University demonstrates a high staff-response to student feedback in module evaluation surveys, with 'standardised' responses sent when a tailored response from staff is not submitted, to ensure that students' feedback is responded to. The data from surveys is collated and made available to all staff, some via data dashboards - one of which

was demonstrated to the TQER team during the visits. Currently, the 'Pulse Check' data is primarily used at both module and programme level to identify students who may need additional support and to understand how students are engaging with class material. The TQER team learned that the University is taking steps to support faculties to use data more widely, including NSS analysis and 'Pulse Check' dashboards, and it is intended that its use will increase in breadth and depth over time. Data considered by the TQER team demonstrated that the overall satisfaction rate for the University in the NSS is consistently above the Scottish sector benchmark across the period from 2020 – 2024. The TQER team further considered the University's use of data in paragraph 15.

90 The TQER team found that feedback leads to timely action and meaningful change that enhances the student experience. Students who met with the TQER team confirmed that student feedback is addressed and taken seriously, and that student feedback mechanisms are highly effective. Examples of changes that have been made in light of student feedback were provided in meetings with the TQER team. For example, student representatives who investigated improving access for disabled students noted that the University acted on the recommendations; students on summer internships reviewed and made recommendations to the design of an undergraduate Mechanical Engineering programme; and student feedback led to changes in assessment dates. Students who met with the TQER team, across different student groups and modes of study, noted that they see changes made within course delivery via module feedback. The TQER team also found that the University introduced Spring graduation dates for January intake students to accommodate visa timeframes and that credit-bearing and paid internships are used to provide opportunities for students to work on projects that influence change. These examples are also supported by the TQER team's consideration of SSLC minutes, demonstrating that issues raised by students are actioned and resolved wherever possible (see paragraph 86). These examples exemplified the strong partnership between students and the University and demonstrated a commitment to closing the feedback loop and the effectiveness of the student representative structures (see paragraphs 86 - 88). Students consistently noted that their voices were heard and that the University 'was willing to listen'. The TQER team identified that the student voice is heard and valued throughout the University, and across diverse student groups, which leads to timely action and meaningful change, to be a **feature of good practice**.

Enhancement and quality culture

91 The TQER team found that the University of Strathclyde is **effective** in embedding an enhancement and quality culture across the institution. The University has clearly identified strategic leadership and governance of the approach to quality assurance and enhancement with the capacity and commitment to identify and address situations that have the potential to pose risk to academic standards, the quality of the learning experience and enabling student success. The institution accurately manages data. The institution's strategic approach uses data, evidence and externality in line with sector expectations and promotes an embedded enhancement quality culture for developing, implementing and evaluating strategies. The University has made some progress in formulating, implementing and reviewing actions in response to the findings of its last external review. The TQER team's evaluation was informed by a range of evidence including the University's strategy, minutes of institutional and faculty level meetings, records of interactions with employers, records of student feedback and responses to previous external review. In addition, the TQER team met with a range of key stakeholders, including institutional leaders, professional staff, academic staff, students, and employers.

Embedded quality culture and leadership

92 The TQER team found that the University is effective at embedding an enhancement-led quality culture across the institution that delivers a high-quality education while enhancing engagement with industry. The strategy for 'Outstanding Education and Student Experience' is embedded within *Strathclyde 2030* as one of five main themes. The achievement of the University's strategic goals is balanced against the ongoing challenge of allocating the resources needed to deliver against the strategy. The overarching strategic leadership and governance of quality rests with the Vice Principal, who is supported by a team of Associate Principals and Deputy Associate Principals with different remits related to components of the student experience. Strategic leadership is delivered through faculty pillars with a dependence upon collaboration as one of the five values of the institution.

93 The TQER team found that the University is effective in embedding, at the point of delivery, an enhancement and quality culture across the institution aligned to the strategic mission of being 'A Place of Useful Learning'. The TQER team was of the view that a culture of enhancement is embedded at a local level where staff are encouraged and supported to innovate and develop new approaches to teaching and learning to improve the student experience. For example, in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences (HaSS), the Faculty Learning Enhancement Committee (FLEC) commissions projects such as Supporting Independent Learning/Study; Inclusive reading list/accessibility; Assessment & Feedback (in relation to students' expectations and understanding); Innovative assessment sharing; Groupwork and PebblePad. The TQER team learned that funding and support for such innovative activity varies across the faculties of the University. Staff who met with the TQER team reported that a significant percentage of their work is focused on enhancing the student experience or student support, because the University actively encourages an entrepreneurial mindset with respect to innovation in learning and teaching, including dedicated time to the scholarship of learning and teaching (see the **feature of good practice** highlighted by the TQER team at paragraph 52). The University is supported in the delivery and recording of this enhancement activity through the work of the Directorate of Education Enhancement comprising the Quality Enhancement and Assurance Team (QEAT), the Researcher Development Team, the Graduate and Degree Apprenticeships Team, the Education Insights Team, the Education Technology Team and the Online Learning Team. In addition, enhancement activity is informed by data through the provision of accessible and comprehensive institutional dashboards, which provide information on student journeys, engagement and student feedback and was considered by the TQER team

in the section **Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment**.

94 The TQER team heard that progress against strategic objectives and examples of good practice are reported from the delivery level upwards where faculty plans and reports are an aggregation of departmental reports and plans, which feed into the University's reporting structures and are subsequently submitted to Court and Senate. The TQER team observed that this approach retrospectively gathers examples of how enhancement is delivered at departmental level. The institutional Learning Enhancement Committee (LEC) captures themes and examples of good practice across the faculty-level LECs, described as the 'conduit' for enhancement focused activities. The University's annual learning and teaching conference and Senate were reported to the TQER team as principal forums for good practice sharing. For example, the most recent learning and teaching conference included a presentation from Strath Union on a thematic analysis of features of success within the student teaching awards.

95 However, the TQER team found insufficient evidence of how institutional-led enhancements are consistently and reliably implemented by the University's Executive across faculties and departments. Examples of significant differences in the implementation of policies and practices exist between faculties, impacting the equality of experience of students and staff who are required to navigate this variation. An example of this variation of implementation includes the practices for pastoral, personal development and academic advising across the University, and the subsequent inconsistencies experienced by students across different faculties and departments (reflected in the recommendation made by the TQER team at paragraph 78). The University is encouraged to develop mechanisms by which strategically aligned enhancement initiatives, initiated by the Executive, are delivered consistently across the faculties with central oversight. The findings shared in this paragraph support the recommendation made by the TQER team at paragraph 96.

96 Undergraduate students who met with the TQER team reported a high quality student experience supported by a culture where staff genuinely care about their students, which is explored in paragraph 77. However, the TQER team noted that functions that are devolved to faculty and departmental interpretation, such as approaches to the use of Generative AI (see paragraph 19), were easier to navigate when students were studying within one department only. Staff also acknowledged that faculty differences, often referred to as 'managed difference', in approaches to regulation and policy, such as degree classification and compensation arrangements, can cause difficulties for students studying across different faculties and departments. The TQER team found evidence that the University recognises the inconsistency of approach and is making progress towards greater harmonisation of approaches to policies and regulations between faculties. For example, the University's enhanced central oversight of appointment and reporting processes for external examiners (see paragraph 16). Nevertheless, the TQER team learned of continued inconsistencies in the student experience; with an example noted above and reflected in the recommendation in paragraph 78. Building on this recommendation and other evidence considered throughout the review, the TQER team **recommends** that the University should consider the appropriateness of the 'managed difference' approach in implementation of policy and approaches across faculties and take action where discrepancies may lead to inconsistency in, or pose a risk to, academic standards and the quality of the student experience.

97 At postgraduate research (PGR) level, the TQER team found that enhancement is more devolved to departments and is resourced to differing degrees in each faculty. The TQER team learned from PGR students that their student experience varies significantly across the different faculties. For example, the TQER team heard that, depending on the faculty, a PGR student can benefit from localised innovative enhancements such as symposia opportunities (HaSS), student-led workshops (Science) and a PGR forum

(Engineering). Two faculties (Science and Strathclyde Business School) have adopted the practice of establishing Learner Agreements, which set out expectations at the beginning of PGR study. Staff reported that this practice has received positive feedback from students and has led to improvement in the student experience locally. The findings in this section contribute to the recommendation made by the TQER team in paragraph 70, and further areas associated with the PGR student experience are explored in the section **Supporting student success**.

98 The University employs a people-based approach to the leadership and governance of enhancement with a strategically aligned University-level Learning Enhancement Committee (LEC) reporting to the Education Strategy Committee (ESC) annually. A faculty-based governance structure comprising Faculty Learning Enhancement Committees (FLEC) is in place underlying the LEC, which enables the institution to report on enhancement within the faculty structure.

99 Alongside the formal committee structures, the e-FIRST (Education – Further Innovation and Reflection on Strathclyde Teaching) framework, explored by the TQER team at paragraph 66, is an agile and responsive multi-level communication mechanism with frequent meetings at faculty level, either weekly or fortnightly, and facilitates quick resolution and supports academic colleagues. Normally chaired by the Vice Dean (Academic), with no set agenda, these faculty e-FIRST meetings enable issues to escalate to the e-FIRST Planning, Enhancement and Student Experience Group (PESEG), and the senior level e-FIRST groups quickly. This agile framework enables communication both horizontally and vertically across academic and professional services enabling colleagues to 'troubleshoot'. Staff who met with the TQER team also noted that e-FIRST supports staff who are new in role, and flags issues in advance of formal committees. Student representatives are not present at faculty e-FIRST meetings but are present at the university-wide e-FIRST PESEG meetings.

100 The TQER team was of the view that mechanisms are in place to enable learning from subject-based institution-led reviews (via the University's Quinquennial Review of academic Provision – QQR) and that this learning is used to effectively drive enhancement of the student learning experience (see section **Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment** for the TQER team's consideration of the QQR process). The ESC receives a synopsis of the QQR Outcomes for information on an annual basis. The Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) has responsibility for QQR and receives the individual reports with a focus on departmental outcomes as well as a QQR overview report prepared by the Directorate of Education Enhancement, which presents the institutional themes from the academic session for discussion. As a result of a recent thematic overview, themes concerning the quality and consistency of the PGR student experience and challenges with insufficient student engagement were surfaced, and it was noted that these themes are already being addressed in existing working groups and activities.

101 The process for the review of professional services (Professional Services Review – PSR) is the subject of a current institutional action plan, and the TQER team encourage the University, in implementing the recommendation at paragraph 13, to ensure that the University's approach to PSR includes a mechanism by which institutional learning can be utilised to drive the enhancement of the student learning experience. The TQER team further considered the University's PSR in the section **Excellence in learning, teaching and assessment**.

External institutional review and engagement

102 Since 2019, the University has received two recommendations with respect to its Institution-led Quality Review (ILQR) of professional services (Enhancement-led Institutional Review – ELIR, 2019 and Quality Enhancement and Standards Review – QESR, 2023). In ELIR (2019), the ELIR team recommended that the University pursue their intention to implement a process for reviewing the professional services that contribute to the student experience and were strongly encouraged to make demonstrable progress within the next academic year (2019-20). In QESR (2023), the QESR team recommended that a timetable of reviews of professional services was produced as the University's new process for ILQR of professional services was embedded, to ensure that all student-facing professional services were reviewed within an appropriate timeframe.

103 In 2021, the University conducted a thematic review of professional services covering the support for students experiencing mental health challenges, followed by a further thematic review on online support for the learning journey in 2023. Since completing this second thematic review, the University has reflected on the practicalities and value of the thematic approach, noting that it did not reach all student-facing services equally, and in October 2024 approved a pilot of a new approach to the review of professional services (PSR). Central to the revised approach is the submission of annual reports by each student-facing service (see paragraph 13). Evidence reviewed by the TQER team noted that, in January 2025, it was reported to ESC that the main PSR activity will be delayed until after the TQER when the submitted reports will be evaluated by a sub-group of ESC involving external membership, staff and students. The University's approach to PSR is further considered by the review team in paragraph 13. The findings in paragraphs 102 - 103 contribute to the recommendation made by the TQER team in paragraph 13.

104 The QESR team (2023) also made a recommendation for the University to ensure that its 'Guidance for Postgraduate Research Students Who Support Teaching and Teaching-related Activities' is fully and consistently implemented across the University. The TQER team met with PGR students who teach, or are involved in teaching-related activities, from all faculties and multiple departments who confirmed that they had received the University's guidance. Furthermore, PGR students who met with the TQER team reported completing the University's asynchronous online module preparing them for teaching, and that a variety of mechanisms were in place across the departments to ensure that the module had been completed prior to commencement of teaching. The University is currently considering whether they may develop a more standardised validation approach in future years. PGR students who met with the TQER team reported that discipline-specific training is provided within departments for practical demonstration, tutorials and other forms of delivery and that some students had access to peer observation and other opportunities to develop their teaching. The extent to which teaching experience and additional support with teaching was available varied between departments and faculties. The TQER team concluded that the recommendation (QESR, 2023) in respect to the 'Guidance for Postgraduate Research Students Who Support Teaching and Teaching-related Activities' has been fully addressed.

105 The TQER team found that external examiner reports are reviewed annually and reports are a standing item for the Faculty Academic Committee (FAC) to identify common themes. Any recommendations arising from this analysis are reported to FLEC for further action, which may include the formation of short-life working groups or escalation of the recommendation to the institutional QAC. The TQER team learned of an ongoing example of this institutional escalation during the review. Several of the University's external examiners raised a concern that the final examination boards, which allocate degree classifications, are not anonymous. The issue was subsequently highlighted in a thematic report at QAC and the need for further discussion is noted in QAC minutes. Programme leaders who met with

the TQER team reported that an institutional system, which facilitates anonymisation of exam boards, is needed and the University has made progress towards having this in place. The TQER team concluded that this demonstrates an effective use of learning from external expertise and further considered this matter in paragraph 16.

106 The University engages extensively with professional statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) across all faculties to ensure that many of its awards are accredited, thus enhancing the employability of its graduates. PSRB reports are shared with the Heads of Department in each faculty, who highlight areas of good practice and areas for development, and are received by FAC for information. The reports from PSRBs are often a rich source of feedback, and the TQER team invites the University to consider activity to utilise common themes at an institutional level to inform cross-institutional developments.

Engagement in sector enhancement activities

107 Sector-led enhancement activity in Scotland takes the form of Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP¹³), which is part of the new Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework (TQEF). At the time of the Main Review Visit, the first STEP topic, 'Supporting Diverse Learner Journeys', was six months into the second year of a four-year cycle. The University is the lead institution for the 'Regional Enhancement and Collaboration in Tertiary Scotland (REACTS)' project in collaboration with Glasgow Caledonian University, UHI Moray, University of Aberdeen, Aberdeen University Students' Association, Strath Union, Highlands and Islands Students' Association and consulting with South Lanarkshire College, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and sparqs. The project's goals are ambitious, leading towards the design of a framework within which regional collaboration between higher education and further education institutions can develop.

108 The TQER team learned that the University has set up a STEP Steering Group: 'STEP @ Strathclyde'. Evidence considered by the TQER team demonstrated that the University is developing ways to embed the new approach to sector enhancement throughout the University and, at the time of the review, were in the process of appointing colleagues as consultative partners onto other STEP projects. Staff who met with the TQER team reported challenges in implementing STEP internally. Furthermore, the University reported reduced enthusiasm and engagement from departments in the first year of STEP, which the institution attributes to the reduced ability to shape the direction of the projects. The University also noted challenges with communication and dissemination of information about projects, and that not all institutions across the tertiary education sector have had the capacity to engage with the enhancement programme, thus slowing progress across the programme. Under the previous Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF), the University hosted a range of Enhancement Theme topics across the faculties, with Enhancement Theme activity regularly discussed at the LEC and joint meetings of LEC and QAC. Staff who met with the TQER team noted that the University found the transition from the previous 'bottom up' approach of the Enhancement Themes to the more centrally led approach of STEP challenging to navigate. The University were confident that STEP, as a formal pillar of the TQEF, will bring improvements to the tertiary education sector, but raised some reservations about the effectiveness of the approach. The TQER team was of the view that it is too early to evaluate the University's current engagement in STEP.

¹³ The acronym 'STEP' is used in the section **Enhancement and quality culture** to refer to 'Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme'.

External outlook

109 The TQER team recognised, as a **feature of good practice**, the University's sector-leading engagement with industrial partners and employers, informing curriculum development and providing students with experiential learning opportunities (see paragraph 31). This engagement is embedded within the University's mission of being 'A Place of Useful Learning' and the TQER team heard from senior leaders and employers that the high-quality culture of industry liaison was transparently led from the Principal and Senior Leadership Team. The University is capitalising on the location of the University within the Glasgow Innovation District as well as the links between academic research and the needs of industry across the UK and globally.

110 The University provides opportunities for experiential learning, authentic teaching and assessment directly related to the needs of employers, and opportunities for placements and work-based learning. Across the different faculties, the TQER team heard examples of engagement with industry and employers leading to curriculum development and improved module outcomes across disciplines. Examples from the Department of Architecture (Faculty of Engineering) included changes to regulations following the Grenfell Tower tragedy, and examples from Strathclyde Business School (SBS) included ethical practice, modules that have embedded experiential learning using real world examples, and reflective case studies provided by 'global practitioners'. Employers who met with the TQER team noted the improved quality of posters in the Department of Chemistry (Faculty of Science) throughout their time engaging with the department, and commended the design of a new postgraduate taught programme, taking place within six months, to meet their industry needs. One employer valued the physical presence of academics from the University in their industry and the benefits derived from this engagement for the employer, students and academic staff.

111 Employers and industry liaison representatives who met with the TQER team reported a strong, proactive relationship with the University; through industry liaison/advisory boards, surveys and employer fora where any challenges are addressed promptly. Furthermore, employers comprehensively valued their relationship with the University, though noted that a holistic approach, through a centralised co-ordinated mechanism to handle the relationship, would be valued. As noted in paragraph 76, the TQER team heard that the University has recently acquired a customer relationship management system to support with cross-institutional employer engagement that seeks to address this feedback. Additionally, SBS has recognised this issue and created a unit, Strathclyde Executive Education & Development (SEED), to coalesce industrial engagement activities and develop programmes within the faculty. This unit now works with other faculties to develop programmes across the University.

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