

Quality Enhancement and Standards Review

University of Glasgow

Review Report

April 2023



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Introduction

This is a report of a review under the [Quality Enhancement and Standards Review](#) (QESR) method conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) as part of Phase 1 of the Scottish Quality Enhancement arrangements at University of Glasgow (the University). The review took place on 20 April 2023 and was conducted by a review team, as follows:

- Professor Hilary Grainger (Academic Reviewer)
- Mr Rory Harkness (Student Reviewer)
- Ms Rhiannon Tinsley (Coordinating Reviewer).

QESR is Phase 1 of a two-phase approach that enables the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) to meet its duties for academic quality and enhancement between 2022-24. The second phase starts from 2024-25 to coincide with the implementation of the new Tertiary Quality Enhancement Framework.

The main purpose of the review was to:

- provide assurance about the provider's management of its responsibilities for academic standards to inform an enhancement-led full institutional review in Phase 2
- provide assurance of the provider's management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities for students to inform an enhancement-led full review in Phase 2
- report on any features of good practice
- make recommendations for action.

About University of Glasgow

The University of Glasgow was founded in 1451 and is one of Scotland's four ancient universities. The University describes itself as a research-intensive, broad-based, civic university with global reach and local roots.

The current academic structure comprises four colleges (Arts; Science & Engineering; Medical, Veterinary & Life Sciences; and Social Sciences); within and across those colleges there are 23 schools, including a graduate school in each college.

In 2022-23, the University had a total student population (headcount) of 40,193, of whom: 21,517 were undergraduate; 10,992 postgraduate taught (PGT); and 2,969 postgraduate research (PGR). The remainder were undertaking Lifelong Learning programmes which typically do not lead to the award of a degree. Of the 2022-23 student population, 6,130 were studying part-time. In addition, a further 9,350 were studying with the University's collaborative partners.

Findings

From the evidence presented, the review team is confident that the University of Glasgow is making effective progress in continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision to enable effective arrangements to be in place for managing academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience.

Good practice

The QESR team found the following **feature of good practice**:

- **Learning and Teaching Strategy and its implementation:** The clarity of the Learning and Teaching Strategy supported by the close integration and collaboration across workstreams to enable effective delivery of the Strategy (paragraph 6).

Recommendations for action

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

- **Student Support Officer role:** The University should ensure that the role is understood and clearly signposted as being available to support all students, including postgraduate students (paragraph 14).
- **Parity of experience of online and blended delivery:** The University should review its current approach to online and blended delivery to ensure greater equivalence across all provision (paragraph 28).

Institutional approach to quality enhancement

Strategic approach to enhancement

1 The QESR team is confident that the University has effective arrangements in place to monitor, review and enhance its strategic approach to enhancement. The team met with staff and students from across the University and considered a wide range of documentation including: the University Strategy, Learning and Teaching Strategy, Summary of Progress with Learning and Teaching Strategy, the Digital Learning Statement, Disability Action Plan, and minutes from key institutional committees.

2 The Learning and Teaching Committee and Academic Standards Committee both report to the Education Policy & Strategy Committee. Cross-membership between committees, including both staff and student representation, enhances continuity and communication between the delivery of the Learning and Teaching Strategy and other university strategies, including research, equality and diversity. Collaboration between members of the Senior Management Group (SMG) with overlapping roles and responsibilities further enhances the effective integration of actions between strategies and delivery.

3 In March 2021, the University launched its Learning and Teaching Strategy together with the University Strategy - 'World Changing Glasgow' 2025. Both strategies were developed during the pandemic with the pandemic acting as a catalyst for change and accelerated implementation of planned developments in learning and teaching across the University. The Learning and Teaching Strategy makes a commitment to ongoing support for blended and online teaching. The Learning and Teaching Strategy is clearly articulated and presented (with a one-page summary) and now fully incorporates the Digital Learning Strategy. This clarity enables different groups to engage effectively with the implementation of the Strategy. The Strategy comprises three core pillars: an evolving approach to teaching and learning towards student-centered active learning; the transformation of curriculum and assessment; and professional and skills development for students.

4 In addition, the Learning and Teaching Strategy (the Strategy) details seven internal and five external drivers which map closely with the imperatives of the University's overall strategy, by placing emphasis on an inclusive learning and teaching environment, including: support for student and staff wellbeing and inclusion; and collaboration between staff and student communities, campuses and international partnerships. The Strategy acknowledges the importance of collaboration across the University and its partners by bringing together academic and professional services colleagues, technicians, graduate teaching assistants, tutors, technical demonstrators, associate lecturers and students. Staff reported on the provision of open staff meetings, information and updates circulated to all staff. Senior managers cascade information to staff, many of whom were involved in working groups during the development phase.

5 The Strategy is being delivered by means of four workstreams, which the QESR team established are all now operational and have identified their three top priorities for the year. There is interdependency and collaborative working across the workstreams, supported by a fortnightly meeting of the workstream leads. The aim is to create synergy rather than duplication of effort to support the effective delivery of the Strategy. The staff reported that each workstream has set up subgroups, with remits and leads who are sharing practice and collaborating with external partners. The QESR team heard in meeting with staff that the work is cascading effectively from Deans of Learning and Teaching into colleges and schools. Valuable project management support is provided by the Transformation Team. Three focused Learning and Teaching Committee meetings have

been added to the normal meeting cycle of five meetings a year to ensure both governance and a focus on strategy implementation with full ownership of the Strategy by the Learning and Teaching Committee.

6 The Learning and Teaching Strategy sits alongside and aligns closely with the Student Experience Strategy. The two strategies are interdependent and codependent and cross-membership of committees ensures visibility of actions between those committees. The Student Experience Committee is the main forum for the discussion of the Student Experience Strategy and includes the Chair of the Learning and Teaching Committee. The Chair of Education Policy & Strategy Committee (EdPSC) is a member of the Student Experience Strategy Oversight Board as are members of the Education Policy & Strategy Group. The QESR team heard that discussion and progress on the two strategies is well aligned at committee level. The QESR team considered the clarity of the Learning and Teaching Strategy supported by the close integration and collaboration across workstreams to enable effective delivery of the Strategy to be a **feature of good practice**.

7 The Review of the Accessible and Inclusive Learning Policy was completed in February 2023 and the Chair has now joined the Disability Review Implementation Group to ensure discussions progress on governance arrangements and to support with the implementation of the policy. The QESR team considered and evaluated the Disability Action Plan which outlines a programme of work between 2021 and 2023, and maps onto the Learning and Teaching Strategy - for example, in respect to the design of assessments now underway. The QESR team noted good progress on the action plan during the review visit. In the context of rising demand, more Disability Support Advisers have been appointed and there is now more systematic processing of data, assisted by an electronic case management system, which will begin operating in July 2023 to support transfer of information between Admissions and the Disability Service during the application process. The Estates department has also benefited from further investment in staff and resources and is continuing to retrofit and install purpose-designed spaces around campus. There is a new Accessibility Officer post in the Estates team, who is working closely with staff on Learning and Teaching Strategy implementation.

8 There has been significant investment in the physical and digital infrastructure with further investment planned and additional funding is in place for learning and teaching projects and has been agreed in principle for enhanced support for enterprise and student-led activities. With regard to online provision, the University aims to make its online community more resilient with the roll-out of new technologies and the rapid development of communities of practice. These include the 'Sustainability in the Curriculum' community launched in February 2023 and the 'Developing the Curriculum' community set up in December 2022.

9 With regard to physical space, staff acknowledge there are pressures on space on campus, especially post-Covid, but the University aims to provide sufficient teaching and study spaces, through optimising use of spaces by timetabling, and building new accommodation - such as the James McCune Smith Learning Hub. Students reported difficulty in finding workspaces and in booking rooms for group study, even when this is a course requirement. The QESR team heard from students that they are keener to be on campus post-Covid, which has exacerbated the demand for space. The University has identified the suitability and quality of teaching spaces/timetabling as a recurring theme that requires attention. The QESR team would encourage the University to continue in its efforts to ensure that suitable facilities and learning spaces are made available for all students.

Student partnership

10 The QESR team is confident that the University has effective arrangements in place to monitor, review and enhance its approach to student partnership. The team met with staff and students from across the University and considered a wide range of documentation including the Student Partnership at the University of Glasgow, which incorporates the Code of Practice on Student Representation; Complaints Handling Procedure Annual report; ELIR Follow-up report; SFC report; and minutes from key institutional committees.

11 The QESR team found the University has in place policies and procedures to support engagement and representation with students. The overarching framework for student engagement is set out in the Code of Practice on Student Representation. This document states that each school should have at least one Staff-Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) and hold at least one meeting of the SSLC per semester. The QESR team saw evidence of good student satisfaction and effective operation of the student voice through SSLCs.

12 The Students' Representative Council (SRC) is the recognised representative body for students at the University. The SRC is led by a council of elected students and support officers and facilitates a direct means of communication between staff and students. In meeting with the QESR team, students and members of the SRC confirmed that any grievances or complaints raised by fellow students through the SSLC mechanism could be taken to the Council for advice. Student representatives met by the QESR team confirmed the effectiveness of these SSLC meetings, which they viewed as an effective mechanism for hearing and responding to the student voice.

13 The Adviser of Studies' (AoS) role is primarily to provide advice on academic issues while remaining the first point of contact to signpost students to other sources of support. The Annual Report on Student Complaints (2021-22) identified concerns raised by students about the adviser role including inaccessibility to students, low-quality information and lack of contact with their adviser, poor or inaccurate information, and incomplete advice about academic progression. To address these concerns, the University has implemented a new support and wellbeing service model and invested in a team of Student Support Officers to work alongside Academic Advisers. In their meeting with students, the QESR team heard how contact was made by AoS at least twice per semester with an emphasis on contact with Year 1 and 2 students. The view of the students met by the team was that advisers were generally viewed as proactive, supportive and accessible (see paragraph 21).

14 The role of Student Support Officer (SSO) is to signpost students to university welfare support networks, and resolve or refer on any pastoral issues they may be facing. However, in meetings with students the QESR team heard from some participants about a lack of clarity about the responsibilities and definition of the SSO role, and a lack of understanding about the SSO role particularly at the postgraduate level and in some colleges. In the meeting with academic and professional staff, the team heard that SSOs have had variable impact across the University, with different models in different schools leading to some confusion and some overlap of responsibilities, with, for example, the Disabilities Coordinator role. Staff commented that they would like to see SSOs being more proactive in reaching out to students. In some areas there was work in progress to define the role, and students are now reaching out to SSOs. The team learnt that the impact of the SSO role is being reviewed as part of the University's 'Student Wellbeing Framework'. The review includes student focus groups and student representatives, with the outcome due at the end of July with any actions from the review being reported to the Student Experience Committee (SEC). In light of what was heard from staff and students, the QESR team

recommends that the University should ensure that the SSO role is understood and clearly signposted as being available to support all students, including postgraduate students.

15 The QESR team understands that there is an ongoing postgraduate research (PGR) student transformation project to improve data gathering and the interpretation of data to improve consistency and reduce repetitions in operations. This process is supported by a new PGR Policy and Enhancement Adviser role to provide additional support on the ongoing PGR transformation project. In meeting with university staff, the QESR team noted that the project was active but not fully operational, with some staff unaware of the project.

16 Other internal university review processes, such as the Periodic Subject Review (PSR) and the Graduate School Review, are viewed by students as positive, particularly around use of externality and the discussions with student groups as part of the process. The QESR team learnt that the Student Representatives' Council provides a panel member for all PSRs, further strengthening student partnership.

Action taken since ELIR 4

17 The QESR team is confident that the University has effective arrangements in place to monitor and review actions taken in response to ELIR 4. Despite some delays due to the pandemic, the team saw progress being made in addressing the six recommendations made by ELIR 4 (2019) with two fully completed. The team considered the University's Annual Report to the SFC for academic year 2021-22 and the Follow-Up Report from 2020 with updates from September 2022 and January 2023, minutes from key institutional committees and met with staff and students.

18 The QESR team found two recommendations completed. The first of these related to making external examiner reports accessible to students. To address this recommendation, the University has made information about accessing external examiner reports a standard part of the Student Representation Toolkit. In addition, students can access the external examiner reports through the course management system. In meetings with students the QESR team heard that students were aware of the external examiner reports and some of the students met had accessed reports. The other completed recommendation was about the use of discretion at examination boards where discretion has been discontinued and a standard grade profile algorithm is to be applied in borderline cases. Staff confirmed to the QESR team in meetings that the algorithm is in place and consistently applied, and that there is greater clarity around degree outcomes. This has resulted in decision outcomes which are clearer and more defensible to students and external examiners.

19 The team considered that good progress had been made on some of the other recommendations from ELIR 4. The recommendation that consistent communication on Feedback and Assessment should be provided for students when there is deviation from standard turnaround times is being addressed through phases of the Learning and Teaching Assessment and Feedback Transformations Project (AFTP). Phase 1, 2021-22, involved development of a student assessment dashboard which provides assessment information including submission date, turnaround time, grade and feedback for staff and students. Phase 2 in 2022-23 involves improving student awareness of marking dates and any live changes. The QESR team learnt that a template has been agreed to encourage a more standardised approach to communicating delays in marking turnaround times and circulated to Deans of Learning and Teaching for wider distribution. In addition, the National Student Survey (NSS) Action Plans within schools have a focus on timeliness of feedback. In their meeting with the QESR team, students reported that feedback return dates are provided on the virtual learning environment and most feedback is provided within the three-week

guidelines with some provided earlier. Although recent industrial action has impacted on some courses, students did not suggest assessment turnaround times are a widespread problem.

20 The QESR team also found evidence that the recommendation to ensure that clear communication of advising arrangements for postgraduate taught (PGT) students was being addressed, particularly through the work of Student Support Officers, which has helped to standardise practice and disseminate information to students; although, based on meetings with the team, there is still some work to do to make the role fully understood and effective (see paragraph 14).

21 The Learning and Teaching Committee Postgraduate Advisory subgroup has taken forward developments in reviewing postgraduate taught activity to better understand the approaches taken across the University. Postgraduate Taught Advisers have joined the University Chief Advisers' Sub-Committee (CASC), a move intended to allow CASC oversight of advising at both UG and PGT levels. The Internal Student Survey (2022) showed evidence of increased student satisfaction in *Academic Advising and Supporting Your Interactions* compared with the previous year. Furthermore, responses to the Student Experience Survey suggest that postgraduate taught students have higher levels of satisfaction than undergraduate students.

22 Annual monitoring on the postgraduate research (PGR) student experience has been introduced at university level, with the submission of an annual report to the Student Experience Committee (which, in turn, reports to the Senate and Court). This work is ongoing through a wide-ranging PGR project to improve data gathering and the interpretation of data. A PGR Policy and Enhancement Adviser was appointed in January 2023, taking responsibility for the PGR transformation project to improve data gathering and the interpretation of data. Work on providing a new learning management system is proceeding and specific requirements and compatibility with existing systems is being explored with IT Services. Work on the recording of study end dates for PGR students is being undertaken by the team responsible for maintaining the student records system (MSDI). This work is anticipated to have a positive effect on the PGR experience through streamlining the administration, and reporting and better supporting their submission planning.

23 The QESR team noted that the use of the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) had been discontinued. Staff reported that it did not provide the data they needed, as the questions were generic and rarely changed, so they developed their own survey. Following a pause, this new survey is due to be launched in May 2023, pending confirmation of questions. The University employs other means of external benchmarking, including comparisons with other Scottish universities, Russell Group benchmarking, and through UK Council for Graduate Education, to inform annual monitoring.

24 In response to another ELIR 4 recommendation, the University has developed a set of design principles to underpin the review framework for student-facing services (SFPSR), informed in part by the QAA Focus On report on Professional Services Review. The proposal was approved by the Professional Services Group (PSG) in January 2023. The process involves a holistic perspective rather than an individual service-by-service review allowing targeted/themed and evidence-based reviews. Reviews can be service/college/school-based or 'thematic or functional'. The format is intended to be flexible, and data and guidance will be provided (see paragraph 35).

25 The QESR team learnt that a small group is now confirming the scope of professional services covered within the review framework and the areas of priority over the next three years. It is anticipated that reviews will be thematic, thereby encompassing

service provision across multiple areas of professional services and a mapping exercise will be introduced to review the full range of professional services included within the Framework. Resources are in place to support this activity through investment from the Student Experience Strategy which will be supported by the University's Transformation Team. The University is also looking to place student engagement at the heart of the review activity. Based on the evidence available, the team is supportive of the University's approach and its commitment to student engagement.

Sector-wide enhancement topic¹

26 The QESR team is confident that the University has effective arrangements in place to monitor and review its approach to defining and delivering an effective and inclusive digital/blended offering. The team consulted the Digital and Contextual documents, minutes of key institutional committees, and met with staff and students.

27 Staff who met with the QESR team described how the enhancement topic was being embedded in their practice across the University through the work of Deans of Learning and Teaching in colleges and support from the Academic & Digital Development team. In its digital learning statement, the University outlines that an overarching aim is to strike a balance in terms of blended and face-to-face learning. Based on information collected during the pandemic the University has accelerated the institution's engagement with blended learning approaches. The approach taken to learning and teaching developments has typically been to create a strategic imperative and opportunities such as the Blended and Online Learning Development Showcase, the development of MOOCs and the use of microcredentials. In turn, this stimulates activity with each initiative attracting an increase in academic resources, and expertise and growth in learning support to consolidate support for blended and online learning as outlined in the 2021-25 Learning and Teaching Strategy.

28 The Digital Statement and Contextual documents are clear and self-evaluative. The visual presentation of the staging of the work and the progress achieved indicates sound engagement with the enhancement topic. However, students who met with the QESR team reported that digital learning and resources issues have highlighted variable provision between courses and departments. This has led to some concerns over unequal access to technical resources and/or learning spaces, provision of lecture recordings and adoption of online feedback on exam outcomes. Students noted differences between courses, due to the decentralised structure of colleges which led to differences around online and face-to-face teaching. They also indicated that recorded lectures were welcome, but not always available and this was something that had also been raised by staff in the Learning and Teaching Committee. Some examples of good practice were cited by students, such as lecture recording, but differences may lead to potential disadvantage to some students if resources and systems are available in some schools but not in others. The review team also heard that connectivity is sometimes limited, depending on number of users, even in libraries. ASC minutes suggest that there have been issues over the Recording of Teaching policy with regard to terminology and the consequences for what teaching sessions are recorded. In the light of reported variability, the QESR team **recommends** that the University reviews its current approach to online and blended delivery to ensure greater equivalence across all provision.

¹ [SFC Guidance on Quality 2022-23 and 2023-24](#)

Academic standards and quality processes

Key features of the institution's approach to managing quality and setting, maintaining, reviewing and assessing academic standards

29 The QESR team is confident that the University has effective arrangements for the monitoring and review of its approach to managing quality, and to setting, maintaining, reviewing and assessing academic standards. The team considered the University's Academic Quality Framework (AQF); Institution-Led Review reports; annual programme monitoring reports including school and college-level reports; student feedback; papers and minutes from institutional committees; and met with staff and students.

30 The QESR team found that the University's arrangements for managing quality and setting standards meet the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) and align with the guidance issued by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). Institutional policies relating to programme and course (module) development and approval are aligned to sector expectations in the Quality Code, take account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, the *Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)* and relevant qualification frameworks. The University's Academic Quality Framework sets out the principles and institutional approach to managing quality. It is managed and maintained by the Academic Policy & Governance (APG) team, and is reviewed on an ongoing basis. The Academic Quality Framework was updated on the university website in February 2023, and the University indicates that further reviews are planned during 2022-23 to enhance its effectiveness, particularly in relation to enhancing approaches to student feedback and reviewing procedures for course and programme approval.

31 The QESR team considered that the Academic Quality Framework provides detailed and comprehensive guidance on quality processes and is accessible to staff and students. In discussions with the QESR team, staff demonstrated an understanding of the key processes within the AQF, and confirmed they were able to access information on the APG website. They indicated that they were informed of changes and updates through School Learning and Teaching Convenors, and found this an effective means of dissemination.

32 Academic Standards Committee (ASC), reporting to the Education Policy & Strategy Committee (EdPSC), is responsible for the assurance and enhancement of the quality of educational provision and maintenance of academic standards, and for approval of proposals for undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes. From the minutes available, it was evident that the Committee has appropriate oversight, and operates as its remit. This includes consideration of reports on Periodic Subject Review (PSR), course and programme approvals, annual monitoring and external examiner activity, as well as reports from sub-committees and working groups.

33 The University's Periodic Subject Review (PSR), which acts as the institution-led review process, is effective in identifying good practice and areas for enhancement, as demonstrated through school self-evaluations and subsequent enhancement plans. Reports are submitted to ASC, and the QESR team saw evidence of effective oversight, and actions being followed-up. The University has undertaken those PSRs which were postponed due to Covid, with scheduled reviews now back in line with its six-year cycle. PSRs were conducted online during Covid, but the University has now reverted to face-to-face events, finding that this format generates better dialogue and rapport, and enables external panel members to view facilities.

34 A separate Graduate School Review (GSR) process considers PGR student experience and operates at college level. The GSR process was reviewed in 2019, but the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic delayed implementation, and the new process ran for the first time in 2022. The revisions include: a more focused reflective report; a four-year cycle instead of five-yearly; the inclusion of a Professional Services member on the panel; and provision of a centrally-produced data pack to support teams' self-evaluation. Reports are submitted to the Research Planning and Strategy Committee (RPSC). Staff indicated that RPSC will remain the key committee receiving GSR reports, but parallel reporting to Academic Standards Committee (ASC) will be introduced to allow ASC to maintain a holistic overview of quality management activity. The QESR team considered these revisions to the process to be beneficial, particularly in ensuring that Academic Standards Committee received all reports.

35 The University has developed design principles, which are aligned with QAA guidance, for the review of student-facing professional services (SFPS), responding to an ELIR 4 recommendation (see paragraph 24). While review and enhancement activity has taken place since then, such as a review of provision for disabled students, these reviews have been in response to emerging issues, rather than a systematic approach. The SFPS review framework has a holistic perspective, intended to allow themed reviews, rather than a review of a single service, with a data resource to be provided by the Planning team to support review activity. Themed reviews across multiple services are expected in 2023 onwards, to align with large-scale transformation projects, such as student on-boarding. Currently, the scope and focus of SFPS reviews are determined by the senior responsible officers, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer and Vice-Principal (Learning & Teaching). The University aims, in time, to have a comprehensive review schedule but currently it is responding to immediate needs identified by staff and students. As the University continues to develop this area, the QESR team would encourage the University to ensure that all services are included in an appropriate SFPS review in accordance with sector guidance.

36 Annual monitoring of courses and programmes is carried out at school and college level, with the latter reporting to ASC. Areas of good practice and issues for action are collated and reported at each level. The QESR team saw evidence of effective analysis and discussion in reports and ASC minutes, with issues referred for response and action by the appropriate person/group. Adjustments to annual monitoring were implemented during Covid, with streamlined reporting continued in 2020-21 and 2021-22 cycles. Building on this approach, further enhancements will be implemented for the 2022-23 cycle, to improve links to learning and teaching development, and strengthen the enhancement focus through 'closing the loop' and sharing learning through an annual meeting. The process will be retitled Annual Quality & Enhancement Review, and led locally by college and school Quality Enhancement Officers in schools.

37 Based on the evidence available, the QESR team is confident that the institution is managing its arrangements for assessment and feedback effectively. The University is currently reviewing its assessment policies and practices through the Assessment and Feedback workstream of the Learning and Teaching Strategy (see paragraph 5). The University maintains central oversight of external examiner reports, which are received and scrutinised by the Academic Policy & Governance (APG) team, which provides institutional summary reports to ASC, and starts follow-up action where necessary from the relevant school. The University noted a decline in the number of external examiner reports submitted during the pandemic but is confident that there is overall sufficiency to assure standards. The team noted that the University is monitoring closely the downward trend in reports received and would encourage appropriate action to be taken to return this to pre-pandemic levels. External examiners were positive overall about the University's

management of assessment and academic standards but raised a number of issues around use of online exams, grade inflation and diversity of assessment instruments. The QESR team saw evidence of the University's effective engagement with the issues raised in the work of the Assessment and Feedback workstream, and the Learning through Assessment Framework.

38 The University reported a significant increase in caseload for the Senate Assessors for Student Conduct during the 2021- 22 session, particularly relating to plagiarism in coursework and misconduct in online exams. This group identified a potential threat to academic standards and recommended additional resources and/or resumption of on-campus exams. Staff confirmed that the University has allocated more staffing to deal with the student conduct caseload and has returned to on-campus exams (now approximately 50% of exams).

39 The University has addressed the ELIR 4 recommendation on use of discretion by exam boards (see paragraph 18), with a standard grade profile algorithm applied in borderline zones. The algorithm was modelled before implementation, to ensure any negative impact was minimised, and, in discussion with the QESR team, staff indicated the grade profile works well, and exam board decision-making is now clearer and more defensible to students and external examiners, who are satisfied with the change.

40 Collaborative and transnational education (TNE) provision is subject to the same quality processes as other provision at the University. Academic programmes are subject to the relevant programme approval process, annual monitoring and are included within PSR. Expectations around externality in assessment processes are also embedded within all collaborative provision, as are student engagement and representation processes and structures. The APG team provides support and guidance to staff on matters relating to collaborative provision, and there remains separation of committee consideration of academic and business cases for collaborative provision. The remit of the Vice-Principal External Relations includes TNE and international activities, and attendance at EdPSC twice per year, to ensure this committee is able to maintain an appropriate overview of activities. Transnational education (TNE) provision is also monitored by the main TNE Board, which reports to SMG.

41 The University devolves responsibility for monitoring and review of validated programmes (Glasgow School of Art, Scotland's Rural College, and Edinburgh Theological Seminary) and for joint programmes delivered with partner institutions in Singapore and China to relevant Joint Boards or Joint Liaison Committees. The joint Boards for validated provision report into ASC, which reports to EdPSC, ensuring that the University can maintain appropriate institutional oversight, and take actions, as necessary.

Use of external reference points in quality processes

42 The QESR team is confident that the University has effective arrangements in place to monitor and review its approach to the use of external reference points in quality processes. Evidence that the team considered included Institution-Led Review reports, annual monitoring reports, minutes from key institutional committees, annual SFC reporting, and meetings with staff and students.

43 The QESR team found that the University makes effective use of external reference points in the development of its policies and procedures to meet and maintain academic standards. The University undertook a detailed mapping of its policies and procedures to the Quality Code at the time of ELIR 4 in 2019 and is confident that it continues to meet the Expectations of the Core and Common practices for both Standards and Quality through its

Academic Quality Framework, academic governance structure, and a range of procedures and codes. However, the University has not remapped its overall framework since, the rationale being that there is close relationship between the previous and current versions of the Quality Code, and has not fixed a date for this at the time of the review. The QESR team encourages the University to maintain an ongoing reflection on how the Quality Code can be used in the development of new processes and consider the benefits of revisiting their mapping when the current sector-level review of the Quality Code is complete.

44 Processes for course and programme development, approval and review incorporate external reference points including the Quality Code, Subject Benchmark Statements and SCQF. Programmes are also expected to align with PSRB requirements where appropriate, as evidenced by successful accreditations. The QESR team saw evidence of appropriate use of externality, both through external examiners and use of external subject expertise, in ILR and annual monitoring. The team also saw evidence that the University draws on external reference points, such as drawing on QAA Focus On resources for the development of the framework for SFPS review (see paragraphs 24 and 35).

45 External examiners comment on the academic standards, and alignment with SCQF and Subject Benchmark Statements, in addition to drawing comparisons with provision at other institutions and providing ongoing assurance on the use of external reference points. When meeting with students, the team found that external examiner reports are made available and have been accessed by some of the students met by the team (see also paragraph 18).

Use of data and evidence to inform self-evaluation and decision-making

46 The QESR team is confident that the University has effective arrangements in place to monitor and review its approach to the use of external reference points in quality processes. The team reviewed the results from the School Annual Monitoring Summaries; Academic Governance Committee data and student outcomes; Complaints and Appeals data; Annual Student Experience Survey; Action Plan relating to the external National Student Survey; and feedback on the use of data from university staff members.

47 A range of data contributes to the annual monitoring process, including School Annual Monitoring Summaries which, in turn, feeds into the College Annual Monitoring Summaries. These summaries include a variety of internal evidence assessing both the student experience for the individual programme and academic performance of the school. The review team was confident that the University takes appropriate consideration of institution-wide student feedback, in particular the National Student Survey (NSS) and the Annual Student Experience Survey. These surveys are sent to all undergraduate and postgraduate students, and cover key areas of experience and performance factors affecting students.

48 Following on from the Student Survey Working Group, a 'Student Voice in the Quality Framework' Working Group has been established during this academic session (2022-23) to provide an integrated approach to gathering student feedback. The data collected will be used to evaluate mechanisms for improvement in student responses by providing recommendations which align with the existing university Quality Framework. The QESR team noted the discontinuation of the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), and its replacement by an internal survey designed to align with the Graduate School Review (GSR). Pending approval from senior staff on the final questions to be included, this new survey is due to be launched in May 2023 (see paragraph 23).

49 The QESR team noted a recent innovation by the Planning Insight and Analysis (PIA) team which has developed a data pack containing key insights on how progression rates and assessment outcomes vary across the student population. This data is available to all staff with the Academic Standards Committee (ASC) providing institutional oversight. The review team understood from meetings that the roll-out of this initiative was still in its early stages and, as a consequence, some staff were not yet aware of the data packs or had not accessed them. The QESR team recognised, however, that this was a positive development and had the potential to enhance the University's use of data in self-evaluation and decision-making following full implementation.

50 The Senate Appeals Committee is responsible for oversight of academic appeals and complaints, and allows appellants who are dissatisfied with the appeals and complaints procedure the opportunity to seek a review. It is evident to the QESR team from the committee minutes that such overview reports are used to identify and action areas to enhance the student experience. The University's Complaints Procedure follows the SPSO's Model Complaints Handling Procedure; this includes an annual report to Senate, and a summary of themes reported to the Student Experience Committee.

51 The University has developed processes to enable oversight of academic misconduct, particularly in plagiarism in coursework and misconduct in online exams (see paragraph 38). As the number of cases have increased significantly due to remote delivery of assessment, this has been identified by the University as presenting a potential threat to academic standards. The Annual Report to Senate Assessors for Student Conduct states that additional resources are needed for the increased caseload and emergence of technologies such as generative artificial intelligence (AI). The QESR team met with senior staff who described the changes brought to the delivery of assessments. The changes to assessment practices include a return from hybrid to on-campus exams, more staff allocated to work on the student conduct caseload, and development of guidance on the use of generative AI tools in assessments.

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