



Quality Enhancement Review of Grŵp Llandrillo Menai

Technical Report

May 2022

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This report is published in both English and Welsh.

About the Quality Enhancement Review method

The QAA website explains the method for [Quality Enhancement Review \(QER\)](#) and has links to the QER handbook and other informative documents.¹ For 2021-22, the scope of QERs focused on quality assurance in line with HEFCW's changes to external quality assurance requirements in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, QAA published an addendum to accompany the QER handbook which explains the adaptations to the method delivery. For 2021-22, providers have the opportunity to engage with QAA separately on quality enhancement. You can also find more information about the [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education \(QAA\)](#).²

About this review

This is the Technical Report of the QER conducted by QAA at Grŵp Llandrillo Menai. The Review Visit took place online on 9-10 May 2022. The review was conducted by a team of three reviewers:

- Ms Lesley Davis (Reviewer)
- Dr Christine Jones (Reviewer)
- Dr Harry Williams (Student Reviewer).

In advance of the review visit, the provider submitted a Change Report, a higher education self-assessment report, GLIM Mapping of the Quality Code to the Self-Assessment document, a mapping of the European Standards and Guidelines (ESG) to GLIM Policies and Procedures, and a Student Submission.

About this report

In this report, the QER team makes judgements on:

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

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

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

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

¹ About QER: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/types-of-review/quality-enhancement-review

² About QAA: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us

³ Outcome Report: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/quality-assurance-reports/Gr-p-Llandrillo-Menai

Overarching judgement about Grŵp Llandrillo Menai

Grŵp Llandrillo Menai **meets** the requirements of the ESG Part 1 for internal quality assurance.

Grŵp Llandrillo Menai **meets** the relevant baseline requirements of the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales.

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

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

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

1 Grŵp Llandrillo Menai (the Grŵp; GLIM) was founded in April 2012 following the merger of three successful colleges spread over a wide area of North Wales. The original colleges were Coleg Llandrillo (CLI), Coleg Menai (CM) and Coleg Meirion-Dwyfor (CMD). These are preserved as member colleges, with the addition of Busnes@ (GLIM). The Grŵp is one of the largest further education (FE) providers of higher education (HE) programmes in Wales and one of only three colleges in Wales with Direct Funding status, which enables direct access to student fee income. The provision is validated by Bangor University (BU) as part of a well-developed strategic partnership. Pearson Edexcel validates an HNC/D in General Engineering and an HNC in Performing Arts.

2 GLIM's HE provision aligns with the current strategic plan of the organisation 'with a particular focus on Strategic Aim 2 – 'To create a highly skilled workforce to support employers'. The plan considers Welsh Government strategic priorities captured in: The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act; and Working Together to Reach Net-Zero Alignment - with regional skills priorities as essential for any future development of HE. The priorities are identified as: Energy & Environment; Construction; Advanced Manufacturing; Creative & Digital; Tourism & Hospitality; Health & Care; Food & Farming; and Financial & Professional.

3 Strategically, the GLIM Board has considered the priorities for the Grŵp's HE provision and has identified several key areas for development including supporting regional economic recovery and growth, widening participation, embedded sustainability and digitalisation, further development of Level 4 and 5 vocational HE pathways, enhanced strategic HE partnerships, an increase in the amount of Welsh language provision, and an efficient delivery mode.

4 Bangor University recognised GLIM as a trusted partner and introduced a new validation process in 2018-19. There has been an increase in bilingual provision across the Grŵp overall, with specific developments in Health and Social Care. The most significant change since the last QAA Review has been the Grŵp response to COVID-19 in order to continue effective provision for learners. Hybrid teaching was developed rapidly and has been welcomed by both staff and students. Teaching observations were also changed to recognise the development of hybrid teaching and a new 'Professional Discussion' was introduced as part of teaching observations.

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

5 At the time of the visit, there were 340 full-time, 399 part-time and 184 standalone student enrolments. Student numbers have decreased for both full-time (28%) and part-time (9%) provision since 2019-20 with a 52% decrease in standalone enrolments in 2021-22. There are 1533 unique employees. 581 have lecturing as their main role - of these, 488 are permanent with 292 working as full-time lecturers and 196 on non-full-time permanent contracts. There are 93 staff on temporary contracts, with five of those on full-time hours.

6 The number of students staying on full-time HE programmes has remained stable throughout the pandemic: 90.3% in 2018-19; 89.9% in 2019-20; and 89.8% in 2020-21. However, a clear decrease in retention is noted in part-time annual retention in 2020-21. From a retention figure of 92.9% in 2018-19, there was a 5% decrease in 2020-21 to 87.7%. The impact of COVID-19 caused restrictions to placements on the PGCE and Health Care Practice programmes and as there are small numbers in Deaf Studies and the MA Fine Art, the overall percentage figure is adversely affected.

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

7 GLIM includes a range of staff at all levels when preparing for any self-assessment activity. The annual self-evaluation document (SED) is produced by a range of strategic and operational managers who formed the core preparation team, including the HE Student Union President (HESUP), who has been appointed as the Lead Student Representative (LSR), and the Quality Assurance Co-ordinator (QAC) who is the academic lead for HE Quality.

8 Programme tutors were updated on the activities in preparation for the review and advised of the review process in an information-giving session in January. The SED 2019-20 and the QAA Self-Assessment Report (SAR) have been shared with the executive, senior and middle management team, and with the student body through the HESUP.

9 The student submission was compiled following extensive focus groups, use of learner panels and the National Student Survey (NSS) where students contributed to the review process. The aim of the student written submission is '...to present a holistic view of the student learning experience at Grŵp Llandrillo Menai and to represent the views of students about the institution.'

10 Throughout the review, managers have been tasked to respond to learner feedback. Actions following learner engagement activities have been monitored within the Grŵp's committee structure of which the HESUP is an active member. The full review has been shared with students through HE Class Reps, on eDrac and as an agenda item during the HE Learner conference.

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

11 The Grŵp has previously had two QAA reviews. In 2013, it underwent a Foundation Degree Review which resulted in recommendations around employer engagement, workplace learning, study skills and assessment turnaround. Good practice was also identified regarding the development of the HE Academic Leader role. In 2016, the Grŵp underwent a Quality Enhancement Review: Wales and received four recommendations relating to: the student representative system; mechanisms to inform students of the outcomes of institutional and module-level surveys; timing and scheduling of assessments; and a procedure for periodic review of Pearson provision with appropriate training for staff on

panels and in programme teams. Good practice was also identified regarding: support for students; the use of external examiner reports; effective partnerships with employers; the effectiveness of the HE Quality and Academic Standards Group; and the online tracking system. Both reviews had positive outcomes overall. The action plans from both reviews have been addressed successfully.

12 GLIM carried out a periodic review of Pearson programmes in December 2017 and identified five areas of good practice including: the excellent relationship between staff and students; good links with industry; meeting local needs through the provision of General Engineering programmes; support provided to students; and responses to external verifiers.

13 There were a number of Areas for Development (Recommendations) around recruitment, marketing, promotion of information for students, planning of assessments, feedback, resources, curriculum planning and delivery, use of GLIM policies and procedures, assessment methods, CPD and HND approval. Overall, this was a positive outcome, and the action plan has been addressed successfully.

1.5 (Where relevant) details of the provider's responsibilities for the higher education it provides on behalf of the degree-awarding body/ies it works with

14 In 2011, Bangor University (BU) became the Grŵp's key strategic partner for the development and provision of higher education, including foundation degrees. There are clear guidelines for the responsibilities of GLIM and BU. For BU-validated provision the Grŵp has responsibility for several areas including setting, first marking and moderation of assessments, feedback to students, recruitment and admissions, student engagement, and managing relationships with other partner organisations. Shared responsibility is undertaken for: programme development, approval, and modifications; approval of teaching staff; learning resources; periodic review and annual monitoring; responding to external examiner reports; student complaints and appeals; the production of definitive programme information and enhancement.

15 The Grŵp also works with Pearson as an awarding partner and is responsible for the equivalent areas listed in paragraph 14 for BU. Pearson takes responsibility for the allocation of external examiners and approval of providers' response to their reports, gaining recognition of HN qualifications by Ofqual, providing the overall qualification specification with learning outcomes and assessment criteria, review of teaching staff, and the periodic review of HNs.

2 Academic standards and quality processes

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

16 The HE Quality and Academic Standards Group (HEQASG), chaired by the Executive Director of Academic Services (EDAS), is responsible for monitoring, reviewing, and reporting on the arrangements for teaching, learning and assessment of all HE programmes. HEQASG reports to the Curriculum, Students and Standards Committee (CSSC), which is a sub-committee of the Corporation Board. Reports from the Grŵp's academic management and deliberative committee structures enable the Corporation Board to complete the annual assurance returns to HEFCW. Although the Grŵp's HE provision is delivered across several different campuses, each is led by a Principal who is responsible for managing the day-to-day operations. At Grŵp-level, the EDAS is responsible for overseeing the implementation and development of quality and planning systems, as well as staff development opportunities.

17 GLIM has established quality processes to manage the quality of teaching and learning which are outlined in the Grŵp Quality Framework. The process starts at programme-level where Programme Leaders complete an Annual Programme Report (APR) for the BU validated provision or an Annual Programme Monitoring Report (APMR) for Pearson provision. APR/APMRs are developed in consultation with teaching staff and cover a broad range of areas including recruitment, outcomes and feedback from students. Complete reports are moderated at the relevant Board of Students (BoS), normally in September or October, and then sent to the programme External Examiner, External Moderator, and the validating partner.

18 Following the APR/APMR process, Programme Area Managers produce a Programme Area Self-Assessment Report (PASAR) to address key themes and areas for development identified in the APR/APMRs. Each PASAR is moderated by a College Principal, College Assistant Principal, and the Grŵp Director of Quality, with the implementation of actions identified in each PASAR tracked by the Grŵp Director of Quality and College Assistant Principal. These feed into the development of the HE Self-evaluation Document (HE SED), which is reviewed at HEQASG and moderated by the Grŵp's Policy Team (Tim Polisi). The HE SED is also submitted to the Corporation Board which is responsible for overseeing the implementation of any subsequent actions.

19 The Grŵp takes several steps to engage its higher education student body in quality assurance which includes a close and meaningful working relationship with the Students' Union. The HESUP is a member of several key groups, including the Corporation Board, the CSSC, HEQASG, and the HE Management meeting. At course-level, students are invited to nominate and elect representatives who then attend Course Team meetings (CTM) and Board of Studies (BoS) meetings. The student voice is also captured through module surveys, learner focus groups and panels, and the completion of the NSS. However, during the review visit, the team noted that student engagement with internal module surveys, was poor. The Grŵp readily acknowledges this as an area for development and the team noted that they had already identified time for students to complete module surveys as part of their timetabled day. The impact of this intervention is not yet clear; however, the team **affirms** the steps taken to further engage the diverse student body that enables the Grŵp to work in partnership with students and to enhance the student learning experience.

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

20 GLIM's Director of HE, supported by the HE Manager (HEM), ensures academic standards are set, reviewed and assessed effectively within the Grŵp. Provision validated by BU also benefits from the support of an External Moderator from the University, that acts as a 'critical friend'. In addition to overseeing the programme for BU post-validation, the moderator also supports teams through course redevelopment and review, and provides an additional layer of standards scrutiny. Following approval of a new programme proposal by the Director of HE, the HEM, working with the quality team, supports staff in their validation preparation. They ensure the appropriate use of Subject Benchmark Statements, relevant Characteristics Statements and other external references. Where applicable, staff work with professional bodies to ensure that the requirements for accreditation can be met. BU validates the Grŵp's HE provision and appoints both external examiners, and, as noted, experienced staff from the University as moderators. Such externality is fundamental in ensuring standards are comparable with other institutions.

21 Learner Services work closely with the recently-appointed Higher Education Admissions and Careers Officer (HEACO), programme teams and the Marketing team in the Admissions process. Recent initiatives, such as the HEACO taking responsibility for the admissions process across the Grŵp, and the inclusion of details about study and enrolment days in offer letters, has further enabled consistency and encouraged progression. The review team **affirms** the developments being undertaken to ensure a linear, streamlined higher education admissions process through the role of the Higher Education Admissions and Careers Officer.

22 The Grŵp employs a wide range of assessment methods so that all learners can demonstrate their abilities to the full. Forms of assessment are discussed in detail as part of the validation process. Ongoing external examiner engagement provides additional assurance that standards meet threshold expectations. All dissertations are second-marked along with a percentage of all other assessments depending on the group size and the level of risk. Where provision is available on more than one site, second markers can be drawn from different campuses, which helps ensure comparability and consistency across sites.

23 There is an HE Assessment Policy and a comprehensive HE Assessment Guide to support staff, while the Procedures and Regulations for Examination Boards clearly explain the roles and responsibilities of the different award boards. Appropriate adjustments were made to the procedures and regulations in 2020, in response to the pandemic.

24 An internally-developed system, known as Awards Manager, is used for tracking student grades and presenting assessment outcomes to examination boards. The system also extracts module data including standard deviation and average grades, and a staff guide to grade entry is available. The review of student achievements using this system is clear and transparent, and open to scrutiny by all examination board members.

25 The Grŵp has an established policy on academic misconduct entitled the Unfair Practice Policy. This is reviewed biannually and is made available to all students on the Grŵp's HE Policies website. A summary of Unfair Practice cases per programme is provided for external examiners and moderators annually. Turnitin was introduced in 2015 and all work, apart from a small number of assessments, is submitted through this portal. Guidance on the use and purpose of Turnitin is provided for both students and staff.

2.3 Use of external reference points in quality processes

26 The key mission of the Grŵp is to widen access and reduce barriers to HE, including an increase in the amount of Welsh language provision. The College is a member of the Reaching Wider North and Mid Wales Partnership (RWNMWP). A detailed annual equality report is produced, which displays a comprehensive deep dive into relevant datasets. The 2021-22 Fee and Access Plan (FAP) further indicates how the Grŵp is responding proactively to its widening access priorities. The review team **affirms** the actions being taken with the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol (CCC) to increase HE Welsh medium vocational opportunities across the region.

27 GLIM has a strong and well-established strategic relationship with BU which validates its HE programmes. This relationship is important in ensuring the requirements of the Quality Code and the ESG Part 1 are met. External Subject Advisors play a central role in the validation process through the production of detailed academic scrutiny advisor reports for BU, prior to programme approval. As noted in paragraph 20, moderators from the University support lecturers from the Grŵp, and help ensure that standards and consistency are maintained across sites. External examiners and moderators have access to all work, attend the examination boards and produce written reports. The review team noted that moderators also offer academic training opportunities to lecturers within the Grŵp, and these have been well received.

28 The Grŵp is particularly keen that its HE provision meets the needs of local employers and that its students develop the necessary professional skills to be successful in the workplace. Both alumni and employer feedback are effectively embedded in many quality processes, including validation and programme design. The L4 Certificate in Healthcare Practice is a good example of partnership working. All students are seconded from their NHS Trust, and admissions are jointly chaired by the Grŵp and the Trust. The programme is overseen by a partnership board that meets two to three times a year and includes representation from both parties.

29 Several employers commented positively on their relationship with the Grŵp and its commitment to supporting a bilingual workforce. The review team **commends** the inclusion of employers and other external subject experts within the design and delivery of programmes that effectively enhances students' vocational experience and progression.

30 The Grŵp maintains a professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRB) register and detailed action plans are produced following accreditation visits. A procedure for the periodic review of Pearson provision was put in place in 2017, following the 2016 QAA review.

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

31 The 2016 QAA Institutional Review reached three separate judgements of 'meets UK expectations' in the setting and maintenance of academic standards, the quality of learning opportunities, and the quality of the information produced about its provision. In relation to the fourth judgement area - enhancement of student learning opportunities - the Grŵp received a commendation.

32 Five areas of good practice were identified by the review team in 2016, and there were four recommendations. The first recommendation focused on the development of arrangements to maximise the use made and impact of the student representative system

(paragraph 11). The second recommended the strengthening of mechanisms for ensuring that all students are informed of the outcomes of institutional and module-level surveys.

33 Several actions have been undertaken by the Grŵp in response to these two recommendations, including the creation of the role of the HESUP. The HESUP meets regularly with the HE student body and, as indicated in paragraph 19, sits on all key management and governance committees. This helps ensure that the HE learner voice is part of the decision-making process at all levels.

34 Paragraph 19 outlines additional actions undertaken by the Grŵp to strengthen the learner voice, and staff and students commented positively on the recently-adopted decentralised module evaluation process. In general, students who met the review team, felt fully informed and aware of what changes were being made to their programmes as a result of their feedback.

35 The third recommendation from the previous review was to improve planning and communication between delivery staff to avoid overload in the timing and scheduling of assessments. Student representatives through their BoS are now asked to give feedback on submission dates prior to their distribution. PGCE staff responded promptly to comments regarding bunching in the 2020-21 NSS, and now include an additional action in the APR which is monitored throughout the year. Some students who met the review team stated that bunching of assessments can occasionally occur, but they were satisfied that the present process helps ensure any issues are quickly resolved.

36 The final recommendation in the 2016 QAA Review was to put in place a procedure for the periodic review of Pearson provision. This was actioned in 2017 as noted under Section 2.3.

37 The Grŵp felt that good progress had been made since 2016 and that quality processes had matured and been embedded successfully. The review team concluded that the Grŵp has responded proactively to the 2016 recommendations and is clearly focused on developing and enhancing the HE provision in partnership with key stakeholders.

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

38 The use of data is a key part of the Grŵp's quality processes, and the APR/APMR process ultimately leads to the production of a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for each programme. The APR template requires staff to reflect on key higher education metrics, including recruitment, attendance, retention, attainment, and completion data. The team reviewed several complete APRs and found some variation in the quality of the final reports. The team heard that while specific training on the Grŵp's quality processes was a requirement for new appointees, there was limited ongoing staff development and training for established academic staff.

39 Furthermore, the team found that informal processes are used when departing programme managers hand over important information to their replacements. This lack of formal training has the potential to undermine certain elements of the Grŵp's quality processes and could lead to inconsistencies. The team **recommends** that the Grŵp formalise and implement appropriate training, for established academic staff, in the Grŵp's quality processes to ensure they are applied in a consistent manner. As outlined in paragraph 18, programme-level APR/APMRs are used to produce PASARs and these inform the Grŵp's HE SED which provides a breakdown of all relevant higher education data.

40 GLIM makes extensive use of external expertise, including External Examiners and External Moderators. On receipt of a full complement of External Examiner and External Moderator reports for each of its programmes, key themes are detailed into a red, amber, green (RAG) report which outlines, for each HE programme, any areas for development and good practice. At the start of this report, a summary outlines how many actions, by their severity, have been addressed or are outstanding. This allows HEQASG to easily monitor the implementation of any actions to address any outstanding areas for development. Programme-level responses to External Examiner and Moderator comments feed into the APR/APMR process.

41 There is ongoing in-year monitoring of key performance indicators, student feedback and progress on areas for development at several committees, including HEQASG and CSSC. Monitoring is enabled, in part, by GLIM's online dashboard which provides in-year retention, projected and actual completion rates, as well as attainment and attendance data at student, programme, programme area, and Grŵp HE-level. The dashboard is available for staff at all levels and all aspects of provision.

42 The team was given several examples of how the data contained on the dashboard was used in practice. For example, to quickly identify underperforming HE programmes which are then monitored and supported by Tim Strategol (Senior Management Team), HEQASG and CSSC. The data also allows staff to better monitor progress against key enhancement themes, such as the expectation that HE attendance should be at or above 85%. To track this, the Grŵp has developed a monitoring report which allows Programme Area Managers and Programme Leaders to quickly identify students who may be at risk of non-compliance and therefore non-completion. The outcomes of module evaluations are also reported on the dashboard enabling staff to identify problems in-year, rather than waiting until the end of the academic year. The team considered the Grŵp's approach to using data to inform decision-making and evaluation as robust.

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

43 The enhancement of learning and teaching is at the forefront of the Grŵp's policies and procedures, allowing them to actively work towards realising several elements of the Strategic Plan, 2019-2024. The Fee and Access Plan aims to ensure that learners who might not normally enter higher education feel that they can do so and achieve good outcomes. Programmes are largely designed in close collaboration with industry partners, ensuring that the HE curriculum offered meets local, regional and national employer needs. The team heard several examples of the Grŵp working in partnership with employers to design high-quality courses, including a Cert HE in Healthcare Practice which was developed by the Grŵp, BU, and the North Wales Health Board. The Grŵp has invested significantly in both physical and virtual learning resources in response to student feedback from module reviews, the APR process, and the NSS. The team **commends** the comprehensive teaching and learning facilities available to students including the extensive use of technology to support delivery.

44 The Grŵp is committed to ensuring its teaching staff are appropriately qualified and all teaching staff are expected to acquire a PGCE. They are also encouraged to apply for HEA fellowship, and this is supported in part by BU's Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (CELT) team. Other CPD opportunities available to staff include the development of online delivery skills. The team heard the sum of these activities has led to significant improvements on several programmes and, separately, that students are very happy with the educational experience that they receive. The Grŵp's strategic approach to the online and distance-learning provision that ensures an inclusive learning experience, is

commended. The team concludes that GLIM's policies and quality processes allows them to improve and enhance learning and teaching for all students.

2.7 Effectiveness of the arrangements for securing academic standards

45 Effective mechanisms for securing academic standards include second-marking and external examiners. The 2016 QAA review identified as good practice, the use of external examiner reports to inform quality development. This review confirms that a similar focus has continued in recent years. Actions required or recommended by external examiners and moderators are, as described in paragraph 40, captured in a RAG Report, with the local relevant BoS responsible for actioning changes on the ground. Oversight is provided by HEQASG and an update on recommendations together with other regular updates, is sent to externals ensuring standards are appropriately set and monitored throughout the academic year.

46 Externality is an equally important feature of the validation and revalidation process. Likewise, engagement with specific PSRB requirements, demonstrates that the Grŵp effectively ensures the maintenance of professional standards. Internally, the role of the HEM in supporting curriculum planning helps ensure consistency and an equitable learning experience for all students, regardless of campus.

47 There is a high level of academic and pastoral support available to students throughout their studies. All students attend formal tutorials and meet informally with staff so that issues are quickly resolved. Students are clear about where to find relevant documents and how to access support if it is needed. This helps to maintain academic standards across the Grŵp. The team **commends** the breadth and depth of student support services available at every campus and for all students, which enables their academic, personal and professional development.

48 Historically, there has been a low number of reported cases of unfair practice. However, there has been a steady increase in the number of minor offences from 2017-18 to 2020-21, although the Grŵp reported that staff engagement with the use of Turnitin over this period, together with the increase in reported cases, shows a rigorous checking process is now in place.

49 Based on evidence seen and heard, the review team concluded that the management of academic standards for student attainment, set and maintained by the Grŵp is robust.

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

50 GLIM has a comprehensive approach to self-evaluation. This starts at programme level with the APR process that covers all aspects of the student academic experience - from recruitment to feedback and student outcomes. Additionally, several longer-term quality enhancement themes are identified for programme teams to reflect upon in their APRs. These are identified at HEQASG - looking at feedback from External Examiners and Moderators, the HE KPI dataset, and the last round of APRs/PASARs. Previous examples include the improvement of attendance and retention. In 2018-19, an 85+ attendance report was produced through the dashboard system to support the enhancement theme. This led to an improvement in attendance with the 85% attendance target exceeded by 1.5% in 2020-21.

51 Regular monitoring of HE programmes by HEQASG identifies how programmes are performing against the Grŵp's identified HE KPIs. Programmes at risk are placed on a

monitoring list and supported to improve. In 2020-21, 12 programmes with low completion rates were placed on the list. Following interventions by HEQASG, one-third improved and were removed from the monitoring list. Such examples led the review team to conclude that the Grŵp has a robust approach to self-evaluation, including the effective use of data to inform decision-making.

3 Collaborative provision

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

52 The Grŵp has three strategic aims: the first is to inspire all students to achieve their potential; the second is to create a highly-skilled workforce to support employers; and the third is to advance their position as a leading education and training organisation. The HE provision at GLIM aligns with the current strategic plan of the organisation Gwella Dyfodol Pobl, which runs up to 2024. The plan supports the achievement of all three strategic aims with a particular focus on the second strategic aim - to create a highly-skilled workforce to support employers.

53 GLIM works effectively with BU to ensure the development and implementation of quality processes is clearly aligned with the three strategic aims. The partnership is underpinned by an ethos of collaboration and not competition, whereby the vocational expertise of the Grŵp's staff complement the academic expertise in the university. An effective example is the development of the new Degree Apprenticeship provision that meets the needs of employers in the local area. The partnership monitoring arrangements ensure quality developments are discussed with BU and good practice can be shared between institutions. This is further evidenced in the collaborative delivery on BU 'owned' programmes - such as Policing, Degree Apprenticeships in Engineering and Digital, and Foundation Year Zero Science pathways, which utilise GLIM staff expertise to ensure that university students gain the highest possible experience.

54 A full institutional reapproval of GLIM was undertaken by BU in 2021. The outcomes highlighted the comprehensive and robust internal quality assurance and monitoring processes within the Grŵp, the use of the personal tutoring system to scaffold the transition to independent learning, the extensive investment and high-level engagement in building relationships with employers, and the development of a robust enhancement approach to teaching and learning.

55 All foundation degrees include employability-based modules of 20 credits per year, which include a wide range of work experience options. Students confirmed that these modules were useful, although ensuring sufficient volunteering hours was sometimes difficult from a practical perspective. The Grŵp has implemented a best practice framework for apprenticeships, including higher apprenticeships. This includes meetings per sector area to review course performance. Informative employer guides are produced for foundation degrees and degree apprenticeships.

56 A further partnership with CCC supports effective collaborative practices with the GLIM HE provision. Two CCC Branch Officers have been recruited to work with staff and students across all campuses, providing support, sharing information, and promoting opportunities to study through the medium of Welsh. A CCC HE ambassador has also been appointed for the first time this year with the aim to enhance this relationship further. The purpose of the role is to encourage more students to pursue their studies through the medium of Welsh at GLIM and highlight the benefits of doing so.

57 Some of the Grŵp's HE programmes also qualify for the CCC Incentive Scholarship, with the aim to increase the number of programmes available for the incentive. Initially GLIM had one HE programme approved, and in 2020-21 this increased to five. The CCC Branch Officers are currently working with the Grŵp's HEM and course coordinators to

further develop the HE Welsh offer with the aim of adding a further four programmes to the incentive scholarship list by 2022-23.

58 GLIM has well-developed strategic partnerships across its HE provision and the review team **commends** the strategic approach to the online and distance-learning provision that ensures an inclusive student learning experience.

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

59 The GLIM HE provision is inclusive of classroom-based, online, distance and blended learning, and work-based learning programmes. The majority of the provision is validated through BU, inclusive of foundation degrees, Level 6 top-up programmes and three-year undergraduate degrees. In addition, there is one HE programme delivered at Level 7, a small number of Degree Apprenticeships, and a smaller offer of Pearson HNC/D programmes.

60 Strategically, the GLIM Board has considered the priorities for the Grŵp's HE provision and identified seven key areas for development, inclusive of supporting regional economic recovery and growth, further development of Level 4 and 5 vocational HE pathways, efficient classroom-based and blended learning modes and an increased Welsh language provision.

61 There is a strong collaboration with BU that widens opportunities and choices for potential applicants in the region. GLIM HE programmes are carefully developed in response to current and future employer needs, and graduates are well-placed to gain higher level skilled employment within the region.

62 The partnership between the Grŵp and BU enhances the commitment to the widening access agenda, in particular through part-time and flexible learning. The partnership also supports and facilitates the engagement of staff with professional development through the HEA Fellowship scheme, regularly monitored at the partnership meetings. This provides opportunities for both partners to share good practice in driving improvement.

63 The review team heard details of a wide range of systems and processes that demonstrates the positive arrangements in place with partner institutions. Meetings with staff and employers confirm these are effective in monitoring and implementing changes to the collaborative provision.

3.3 Effectiveness of the approach to managing collaborative provision including arrangements for securing academic standards and improvement and enhancement of student learning experience

64 The Grŵp has an effective approach to managing collaborative provision to ensure the provision purposefully contributes to the securing of academic standards and enhancing the student learning experience.

65 There are effective systems and processes in place for student engagement. Graduates, as well as current students, are asked to engage with feedback on programme design and development during the validation process. In addition to focus groups, information from students is gathered through direct correspondence by the programme leads at module level. This allows the programme teams to include reflective feedback from

current students and alumni who are in employment. Feedback is analysed and applied to developing modules with the appropriate practical, academic and employability skills needed in the industry. This provides a very programme-specific development, not only in the delivery and assessment of modules but also a reflection of the impact of modules and course content within industrial practice. The review team concludes from meetings with students, staff and employers that there is a range of positive approaches to ensure feedback is gathered regularly and is used effectively to identify strengths and improvements in programme content.

66 GLIM's HE offer has been developed to meet the needs of employers and provides flexible modes of delivery. The offer has a crucial role in upskilling existing and retraining workforces in north Wales. The vocational HE provision has been reviewed to align with the Regional Skills Plan priority areas both from a demand-led agenda and the skills agenda in North Wales. The proposed GLIM HE provision contributes towards upskilling the workforce through part-time provision and is supported by the strength of the employer and stakeholder partnerships between HE and FE institutions, sector-skills councils, external experts and employer representatives.

67 The Grŵp works effectively with partners to ensure there are appropriate links for growth in emerging priority areas. For example, the partnership with BU has enabled the extension of existing Engineering, Cyber and Computing programmes that are key priority areas for employability within the industry.

68 GLIM specialises in work-based learning, and FE and HE in an FE setting that often meets the needs of HE students working in a significant capacity. The review team observed a range of systems and processes to demonstrate these competencies. For example, GLIM has a long-standing and broad experience working successfully with industry, and BU has an established reputation of academic excellence recognised with the Teaching Excellence Framework Gold award for teaching. Collaboratively, they have developed a suite of qualifications covering the digital and engineering higher-level skills needed by organisations for them to develop and meet future technology challenges.

69 There is a well-planned, work-based learning provision embedded within HE programmes. Many aspects of delivery are combined for undergraduate students and undergraduate degree apprentices. This approach allows for all the Degree Apprenticeships to be delivered across three years, with apprentices attending one day and one evening each week at GLIM for the first two years and then at BU for Year 3 of the programme. In addition, all apprentices undertake additional work-based learning at their place of employment. This collaborative approach ensures that GLIM can draw on the many strengths offered by both partnerships.

70 The previous QAA report 2016 highlighted the sustained and cohesive partnerships with employers that support curriculum development and delivery. The meeting held with partners and employers confirms that this has continued to be effective.

71 Pearson HNC/D provision at Levels 4 and 5 across GLIM campuses has been extended to include Engineering at Coleg Menai and Coleg Meirion Dwyfor and Performing Arts at Coleg Llandrillo. A periodic review of the Pearson programmes was implemented in 2017 to ensure that appropriate training is provided for review panel members and programme teams. The review panel examined a range of documentation and met with programme teams and past and present students to form an evaluative account and action plan. 20 actions were identified on completion of the review - 19 of which were addressed by

2019-20. The remaining action regarding collaboration with The Institution of Mechanical Engineers is ongoing. The next review is scheduled to take place in 2022.

72 The review team concludes that GLIM has an effective approach to managing collaborative provision, including arrangements for securing academic standards and the improvement and enhancement of the student learning experience. The team **commends** the inclusion of employers and other external subject experts within the design and delivery of programmes that effectively enhances vocational experience and progression for students.

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