



Quality Enhancement and Standards Review

Robert Gordon University

Review Report
February 2024

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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 Robert Gordon University.

The review took place on 21 February 2024 and was conducted by a review team, as follows:

- Jeremy Bradshaw (Academic Reviewer)
- Susan Docherty (Student Reviewer)
- Nichola Kett (Coordinating Reviewer).

QESR is Phase 1 of a two-phase approach that enables the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) to fulfil its statutory obligation under Section 13 of the *Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 2005* to ensure that provision is made for assessing and enhancing the quality of fundable higher education provided by fundable bodies for academic quality and enhancement between 2022-24. The second phase of QAA's external quality review arrangements starts in 2024-25 to coincide with the implementation of new tertiary quality arrangements.

The main purpose of this 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 about 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 Robert Gordon University

Robert Gordon University (RGU) can trace its roots back over 275 years and was established as a university in 1992 when the Robert Gordon Institute of Technology was awarded university status.

The University's Strategy was refreshed in 2022 to reflect the significant changes in the internal and external environment while recognising and building on the strengths that make RGU distinctive. Its strategic aims are:

- to provide students with an excellent experience that will enable them to raise their aspirations and thrive in their professional careers as global citizens
- to grow the quality and impact of its globally recognised, innovative and interdisciplinary research
- to ensure that it contributes significantly towards Scotland's economic and social regeneration.

This will be achieved within a culture that recognises and celebrates the values of curiosity, authenticity, approachability, collaboration, enterprise, ambition, respectfulness and equality.

To provide an excellent student experience, the University commits to:

- creating a vibrant and inclusive environment that provides an equitable and future focused student experience
- providing excellent academic and personal support, including opportunities to participate in 'beyond the classroom' activities
- designing a broad, relevant and engaging curriculum with an international perspective that enhances personal development and employability
- widening access and growing enrolments on our courses while further developing the range of work-based and upskilling courses.

The University, as of March 2024, has a total of 18,737 students (headcount) of whom 13,094 are full-time students and 5,643 are studying part-time. Of these students, 10,549 are undergraduate students, 7,856 are postgraduate taught students and 332 are postgraduate research students. 13,350 students are predominantly on-campus students and 5,387 are studying online only.

Findings

From the evidence presented, the review team is confident that Robert Gordon University 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 **features of good practice**.

- **Student partnership and collaborative working:** The University is committed to a culture of partnership which empowers and engages students collaboratively in designing solutions and enhancements to facilitate student voice opportunities across the Student Union and the University to enhance the student experience. Evidence includes work on the Staff Student Charter, on the collaboratively written Student Experience Sub-Strategy, and the engagement of students in a wide range of project groups and committees (paragraph 17).
- **Development of the use of data:** The University has demonstrated a commitment to making improvements in the use of data for the benefit of staff and students by working proactively on both policy and practical projects. Evidence includes the work on the RGU Assessment and Feedback Standard and the introduction of the attendance and engagement app which enables early interventions to help support students (paragraph 48).

Recommendations for action

The QESR team makes the following recommendations for action.

- **Personal tutor system:** The University's progress to improve the personal tutor system has been slow and in meetings with the QESR team students reported widely varying understanding and experience of the system. Staff acknowledged delays due to the recent review and the perceived need to nuance the way different Schools addressed the use of personal tutors. **The University should ensure consistency in the provision of personal tutor support to students across the institution for the start of the next academic year. The University should also be able to demonstrate how the changes made have been designed to enhance consistency** (paragraph 21).

Institutional approach to quality enhancement

Strategic approach to enhancement

1 The QESR team is confident that Robert Gordon University (RGU) has effective arrangements in place to monitor, review and enhance its strategic approach to enhancement. The team considered a range of documents including the university strategies, institutional standards for teaching, learning and assessment, and appraisal and review action plans. The team also met with staff and students.

2 The University, through its strategy, aspires to be an innovative, inclusive, professionally focused university that has a positive impact on those it serves. The RGU Strategy 2022 defines the University's purpose, mission and culture, and sets out strategic aims for: teaching, learning and the student experience; research and knowledge exchange; and economic, social and cultural development. In terms of teaching, learning and the student experience, the strategic aim is: 'To provide students with an excellent experience that will enable them to raise their aspirations and thrive in their professional careers as global citizens'. This is further defined in explicit intentions to create a vibrant and inclusive environment; design a broad, relevant and engaging curriculum; provide excellent academic and personal support; and widen access and grow enrolments. The Strategy defines 15 key performance indicators, the main teaching and learning related ones being: student success rates, student satisfaction rates, student employability rates and student access rates.

3 The QESR team found that the University has effective and established systems in place to promote the strategic enhancement of learning and teaching, including a Student Experience Sub-Strategy developed by a steering group of students and staff, and supported by extensive consultation inside the University and with external stakeholders. This sub-strategy will set the direction and key priorities for the Strategic Aim for teaching, learning and the student experience, and maps the strategic aims to the three pillars of student development: academic, social and personal. The Student Experience Sub-Strategy has detailed enabling objectives and a monitoring and evaluation scheme with targets and timelines. The sub-strategy and its associated investment plan have been approved by the Board of Governors and launched in February 2024. It will be evaluated in the 2025-26 academic session.

4 Other initiatives include a group of projects collectively forming the Future of Teaching, Learning and Assessment. The projects are intended to deliver outcomes in improved student and staff satisfaction, student recruitment, retention and progression, and employability. The projects delivered their objectives for 2022-23 which focused on post-pandemic delivery and the mode of blended learning, the review of all modules and reduction of assessment components, and development of digital, numeracy and literacy skills training packages. A new Attendance and Engagement Policy has been published along with the roll-out of a monitoring app to identify students who may need support.

5 In 2022-23, the former Learning Infrastructure Sub-Committee and Teaching, Learning and Assessment Sub-Committee, which had some similarities in remit, were merged to form a new Student Experience Sub-Committee with a refreshed remit and enhanced student representation that reports to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC).

6 Following wide consultation, a set of new Standards have been defined to guide and enhance the teaching, learning and assessment activity of the University. They link explicitly to

the University's strategic aim - 'to provide students with an excellent experience that will enable them to raise their aspirations and thrive in their professional careers as global citizens'. The Standards were introduced in the 2022-23 academic year. They comprise:

- RGU Assessment and Feedback Standard
- RGU Blended Learning Standard
- RGU Academic Calendar Guidance
- RGU Digital Learning Standard.

7 An example of the impact of this work is the development through the Assessment and Feedback Standard of the Assessment Brief and Feedback Grid templates. Students confirmed the consistency of implementation of the templates across the Schools.

8 Schools are expected to align their activities with the University Strategy although the Business School is required to have its own Strategic Plan for external accreditation. All the Schools produce annual Planning Statements that align to University strategy and provide detail on the objectives and key performance indicators, contextualised to the current situation of the school.

9 Noting a need to link the Annual Appraisal Processes of taught provision with the Student-Facing Support Services Appraisal to enable appropriate enhancements to the student experience, the QAEC oversaw the collation of an Enhancement of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Action Plan. This plan gathered actions from Action and Enhancement Plans across the institution and the Annual Appraisal Process, and incorporated material from a variety of relevant projects including the Future of Teaching, Learning and Assessment projects; the Teaching Excellence Fellow projects; the Student School Officers' projects; and projects coordinated by the Department for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Assessment (DELTA). This Enhancement of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Action Plan enables QAEC to take a holistic view of good practice and innovation across the University, alongside the School Academic Board Appraisal Reports. It is maintained as a live working document to keep track of progress with all enhancement activity.

10 The QESR team considers the University has a systemic approach to enhancement underpinned by established quality processes. The review team considers that the Student Experience Sub-Strategy that is due to be launched soon after the QESR visit will further strengthen the institutional approach to enhancement.

Student partnership

11 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 considered the Student Partnership Agreement; SFC Annual Outcome Agreement Self-Evaluation Report; SFC Annual Report on Quality; the Enhancement Topic Report; the Student Experience Sub-Strategy; the Annual Appraisal Report; minutes from key institutional committees and met with staff and students.

12 The QESR team found the University to have an ongoing commitment to student partnership and a systematic approach to student engagement, underpinned by established policies and procedures. The Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) outlines the overarching framework for student engagement and sets out the aims and approaches to partnership with

clear priorities and key areas of focus as agreed in collaboration with the student body for the next two academic years. Implementation of the SPA is coordinated by staff and students in collaboration, and partnership is embedded in existing university committee structures to ensure effective oversight, support and dissemination of information between both the University and the Students' Union - RGU:Union (the Union). The SPA will be updated by August 2025 and subsequently every two years with input from the Union, students and staff. In a meeting with the QESR team, student representatives highlighted the strength of institutional partnership arrangements and confirmed that RGU staff are very receptive to student input on new initiatives such as the Student Experience Sub-Strategy which was developed by students and staff in partnership.

13 The University's institution-wide approach to listening to the student voice and acting in a timely manner on what it learns, ensures that feedback from students gathered through a wide variety of mechanisms including forums, class discussions and feedback sessions is used to shape decisions and enhance the student learning experience. Academic staff demonstrate an openness to listening and responding to the student voice and students praised the quick response in actioning feedback from student/staff discussions and forums.

14 At school level, there are clear partnership roles and student representation is through elected representatives, appointed lead representatives for each academic school, equality champions and other student representatives with all attending a variety of forums, working groups, Head of Service meetings and committees. The QESR team identified as positive the commitment to promoting partnership working represented by the Union's Partnership Awards which recognise students who have actively sought to work in collaboration with their peers and university staff. The awards recognise outstanding commitment and achievements related to the student learning experience through collaboration with the University.

15 The QESR team considered the commitment to connecting staff and student representatives within the 'Rep Connect' forum to be particularly positive in bringing student representatives, Student School Officers (SSOs) and key staff together for discussions on opportunities/challenges and best practice. Student engagement is embedded within Institution-led Subject Review (ILSR) and the Annual Appraisal Process, and an overview of data dashboards is provided to the SSOs ahead of School Academic Board meetings which consider the Annual Appraisal report.

16 Staff and students have been supported to engage in enhancement theme activities. The Robert Gordon University Enhancement Team Leadership Group (RGU: ETLG) has been constituted and comprises cross-institutional representation from academic schools, professional services and the Union. Project teams include staff and students, and two student internships have been created to support staff and student engagement. There is evidence of effective partnership working with the commitment to provide enhancement of the student experience within each school through various projects. For example, the Staff Student Charter within Gray's School of Art, which was updated and co-designed alongside the SSOs and is due to be integrated into the work of the student representatives. The team identified the Staff Student Charter as a positive development and encourages the University to implement its action noted in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee minutes to share this work across RGU.

17 The QESR team found that that the University is committed to a culture of partnership which empowers and engages students collaboratively in designing solutions and enhancement to facilitate student voice opportunities across the Union and the University to

enhance the student experience. Evidence includes work on the Staff Student Charter, on the collaboratively written Student Experience Sub-Strategy, and the engagement of students in a wide range of project groups and committees. The team identified this approach as a **feature of good practice**.

Action taken since ELIR 4

18 The QESR team is confident that the University has effective arrangements in place to monitor and review its actions taken in response to the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR 4). The team considered a range of evidence including strategy documents, committee papers, an ELIR Follow-Up Report and action plans, and met with staff and students.

19 ELIR 4 identified four areas for development and the QESR team found that the University has made substantial progress in most areas with further work to do in one area. The implementation of policy and practice in the personal tutor system was identified for further development to ensure parity of student experience across the institution and to ensure that all taught students have access to and receive comparable student support. The University has responded to this recommendation with extensive work on the consistency of the student experience. This has focused on the Future of Teaching, Learning and Assessment projects, including the development and consistent implementation of the new standards for assessment and feedback, blended learning, academic calendar guidance and digital learning. The Assessment Brief and Feedback Grading templates ensure consistency in assignment briefs, assessment loads and the provision of feedback and a grade calculation tool within the virtual learning environment is being tested in some Schools. In meetings with the QESR team, both students and staff confirmed the consistency of implementation across the Schools. The introduction of Associate Dean for Academic Development and Student Experience (AD ADSE) roles in the Schools has also helped with the dissemination of policy changes to standardise the implementation. The presence of student representatives on all standing committees and sub-committees that report to Academic Council, has further assisted the dissemination and has engaged students in the setting of policies and practices.

20 In the specific case of the personal tutor system, a short-life working group has been established, which is reporting to the Student Experience Sub-Committee (SESC) and QAEC. Recommendations, yet to be approved, have been developed for implementation in 2024-25 which will bring in compulsory training for the role of personal tutor, require the establishment of a lead personal tutor in each School, and provide clear guidance on escalation procedures. However, the most recent minutes of the Working Group state that 'any new system would not be a one size fits all but would be tailored for different School needs with clear institutional requirements established', implying there is still work to be done in defining exactly what the new system will look like, and exactly what are the institutional requirements.

21 The University's progress to improve the personal tutor system has been slow and, in meetings with the QESR team, staff acknowledged delays due to the recent review and the perceived need to nuance the way different Schools addressed the use of personal tutors. In a meeting with the QESR team, students from different schools reported some confusion and widely varying experiences of the personal tutor system and some students reported that they had not met with their personal tutor at all. The QESR team **recommends** that the University ensures consistency in the provision of personal tutor support to students across the institution for the start of the next academic year. The University should also be clear about how they will evidence this improvement in consistency.

22 The ELIR 4 team identified a need for further development to embed equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) strategy, actions and practices and monitor their impact. This has been addressed through a number of actions, overseen by the Equality and Diversity Sub-Committee (EDSC) which considers EDI as part of annual appraisal and receives reports on actions such as the inclusive curriculum tool. Since ELIR 4, an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Adviser has been appointed, the Staff Equality Champion role has been refreshed and Student Equality Champions have been introduced. Student-led networks, parent and disability networks and inclusion networks are now running, though some positions are still vacant. The Dignity at RGU Policy has been revised and revision of the Equality and Diversity Policy is underway. Equality, diversity and inclusion data are monitored by the School Academic Boards and the EDSC, and reported to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee, as part of the Annual Appraisal Process. Students spoke enthusiastically about the University's positive action to promote inclusivity, inclusion and diversity across the campus. They confirmed that Student Equality Champions have been established to represent minority or under-represented groups.

23 The ELIR 4 Report noted variable practice in operation of the criterion-referenced grading scheme across the institution. The University was asked to resolve its approach to the grading system to ensure consistency and understanding for students by the start of the academic year 2022. Actions have included the review and updating of documentation and briefing sessions on the grading scheme. The Future of Teaching, Learning and Assessment project has introduced further standardisation of approach to teaching, learning and assessment including the launch of the RGU Assessment and Feedback Standard, which has been communicated to all staff and is available online. Students confirmed a consistent approach across the Schools to assignment briefs, marking criteria and feedback.

24 The ELIR 4 Report recommended that the University develops effective training for postgraduate students who teach and ensures that all postgraduate students receive formal training before commencing teaching and assessment. The University has established a formal process coordinated by the Graduate School and supported by DELTA and the School Operations Managers. The Introduction to Teaching and Demonstrating training requires participants to attend the training, submit the requirements within four weeks of attendance, complete one peer observation of teaching, complete a log of five hours of relevant and recent teaching or support activities, including shadowing activity, and complete one reflection. Implementation of the new mandatory training was confirmed by staff and postgraduate students.

25 In summary, following changes made to quality processes in response to ELIR 4, the QESR team is confident that the University has brought in measures to improve the dissemination of policy and practice, including new standards that ensure consistency in key aspects of learning and teaching. Substantial progress has been made in embedding equality, diversity and inclusion across the University and its academic programmes, in training and support for postgraduate students that teach, and in implementing the criterion-referenced grading scheme.

Sector-wide enhancement topic

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 QESR team considered the institution's Enhancement Topic Report and minutes from key institutional committees and met with staff and students.

27 In response to the new SFC tertiary enhancement topic - 'The future of learning and teaching: defining and delivering an effective and inclusive digital/blended offering' - the University has developed its work on online and blended learning done in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. There has been significant impact of RGU's engagement with the sector-wide enhancement topic with the development, in partnership with student representatives, of a multi-year initiative to develop institutional approaches to online learning with the University's Digital Learning Programme project. This encompasses Digital Learning Practice (a supported rollout of the updated RGU Online Learning to support academic staff meet minimum expectations), Digital Learning Environment (proposals for internal funding to support development), Digital Assessment (more sustainable mechanisms of supporting alternative assessments), and Learning Analytics (for a better understanding of students' digital learning experience and the interventions that can be made to further enhance quality). Students highlighted a positive experience of online learning, specifically during COVID-19, and staff highlighted the introduction of an online and digital learning network to ensure coverage of all parts of the student experience.

28 In addition, the University has actively gathered feedback, via in-depth consultation with students and staff, to understand the impact of different modes of learning including fully online, blended and hybrid. The impact of changes introduced by the Future of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (FTLA) project are having a significant impact on the overall student satisfaction levels at the University as well as satisfaction with assessment and feedback. Satisfaction scores within the SVCF Questionnaire saw a percentage rise of nearly 10% with the same rise for assessment and feedback. The FTLA project - Curriculum Content RGU Standards - was launched in April 2022 and developed in partnership with staff and students. This series of RGU Standards are designed to guide and enhance the teaching, learning and assessment activities with further enhancements planned for 2023-24, including work in the staff development programme and promotion of retention, progression and student success. Changes were implemented to achieve the Standards by the end of June 2023 with a final evaluation undertaken to understand the impact in terms of progress towards the intended outcomes of the FTLA project. Staff and students within the team meeting also highlighted the work on consistency of the student experience with focus on the FTLA project. The project tracked extensive consultation with staff - resulting in the introduction of Associate Deans for research, academic, development and student experience - which the team found to be very positive and learned that the implementation of these new roles had an impact in enhancing the dissemination of the FTLA project.

29 The University's engagement with the enhancement topic has impacted on strategy, policy and practice at various levels, and the commitment to the FTLA strand - which is evolving to become the key focus of enhancement activity finalising at the end of Enhancement Theme Year 3 - was noted as positive by the QESR team. Following implementation of the FTLA project, the University expects to be in a position to influence external practice and share insights in the future. The immediate changes expected include consistency of the RGU student experience which draws on the best of existing practice from across each of the academic schools.

Academic standards and quality processes

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

30 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 Handbook; Institution-led Review reports and responses; Annual Appraisal Process reports and resulting action plans; papers and minutes from institutional committees; and met with staff and students. There was a high level of consistency between the sources of evidence, demonstrating that processes were well understood, applied consistently, and had clear outcomes which were actioned and monitored.

31 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). Comprehensive procedures for quality assurance, applicable to all forms of provision across the institution, are detailed within the Academic Quality Handbook (AQH). The AQH is managed and maintained by the Governance and Academic Quality team and is regularly reviewed. Institutional procedures for Module, Course and Programme Developments are aligned to sector expectations in the Quality Code, take account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and the relevant qualifications frameworks.

32 The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) considers policy matters and practice relating to teaching, learning and assessment and the enhancement of the student experience, and develops and appraises the University's quality assurance processes for maintaining academic standards. The Research Degrees Committee oversees the development of and compliance with the University's regulations and policies for research degrees. It also monitors research student performance indicators and experience and includes consideration of the Annual Appraisal Process for research provision. From the documentation available to the QESR team, it was evident that QAEC and Research Degrees Committee (RDC) have appropriate oversight of quality assurance processes and operate within their remits.

33 Assessment and feedback practices have been an area of focus for the University following the 2021 ELIR. QAEC considers and recommends revisions to the Academic Regulations to Academic Council, as proposed by the Academic Regulations Sub-Committee. Both taught and research external examiners commented positively on assessment practices, and student satisfaction with assessment and feedback - as evidenced by National Student Survey 2022 results - has increased which the University attribute to the significant enhancement work undertaken.

34 The University's quality assurance procedures include the Annual Appraisal Process for academic provision and student-facing professional services, Institution-led Subject Review (ILSR) and Course Reapproval. The Annual Appraisal Process for taught provision requires course leaders to reflect on comprehensive quantitative and qualitative data, largely provided through the University's data dashboard system - RGU: Insight, resulting in the identification of key themes, good practice and areas of enhancement which are shared and tracked by School

Academic Boards and QAEC. An overview report is used by QAEC to develop the Enhancement of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Action Plan which details and tracks the actions identified in response to university-wide enhancement activities highlighted through the Annual Appraisal Process. The QESR team considered the Annual Appraisal process to be an effective way for the University to use evidence-based self-reflection from across Schools to develop the Enhancement of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Action Plans. The Annual Appraisal Process for postgraduate research provision is similar to that for taught provision, with the outcomes being reported to the Research Degrees Committee.

35 The Annual Appraisal Process for student-facing professional services involves all relevant Heads of Service and results in a Student-Facing Professional Services Appraisal Report, detailing areas for development and key actions arising from data informed self-review. The outcomes are considered and tracked by the Student Experience Sub-Committee and QAEC. The QESR team heard from staff that the process has been enhanced over the past two years to become more structured and valuable.

36 The QESR team considers the University's Institution-led Subject Review (ILSR), which acts as the Institution-led Review process for taught provision, to be an effective process for identifying good practice and areas for enhancement, as demonstrated through reports and responses from Schools. School Deans are responsible for leading preparation for reviews, and they are supported by the Governance and Academic Quality team and DELTA. Review panels have internal and external members and include one or more students. Student views are captured in an evaluation stage which involves stakeholder engagement and reviews consider professional and statutory regulatory body (PSRB) requirements as appropriate. There are detailed follow-up stages to ensure actions are undertaken and ILSR outcomes are a data source considered through the Annual Appraisal Process. The Research Degrees Internal Review (RDIR) acts as the University's process for Institution-led Review for postgraduate research provision. Through RDIR, the University formally reviews and plans future enhancement of its research degree provision, as overseen by the Graduate School. The process has many similarities with ILSR, evidence-based self-reflection, a panel with internal, external and student members, a review event, a review report and required follow-up on actions.

37 The University's approach to the management of collaborative arrangements is outlined in the Academic Quality Handbook. Collaborative arrangements, including student exchanges, are considered through the standard ILSR process, and the University reserves the right to conduct a discreet review at a partner institution at any time. Course reapproval activity incorporates collaborative courses, corporate provision and credit-rated short courses. Collaborative provision is also included in the Annual Appraisal Process and Link Coordinators produce Annual Reports each year which are a data source for course leaders carrying out appraisal. The University currently has two existing transnational education (TNE) partnerships which have grown in terms of enrolments. Potential new TNE partnerships are an area of focus for 2023-24.

Use of external reference points in quality processes

38 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 considered the mapping of the quality processes against the Quality Code, minutes from key institutional committees, and met with staff and students.

39 The QESR team found that the University makes effective use of external reference points in the management of academic standards through its implementation of its regulations, policies and procedures. The University's strategy, policies and frameworks are aligned to the Advice and Guidance Themes of the Quality Code. A document mapping the University's quality processes against the Quality Code was updated in the 2023-24 academic session to accommodate changes resulting from the Future of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (FTLA) project and the University Strategy (2022). A more extended review of the mappings is planned to take place following publication of the revised Quality Code in 2024.

40 Both internal guidance and external reference points are used in course design, development and approval. Internal guidance and external reference points are documented in the Academic Quality Handbook Section 1; the Quality Code is referenced in Section 2; and the Quality Code mapping references all internal and external reference points for course approval.

41 The Academic Quality Handbook clearly states that all of the University's course provision is designed using the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. Further detail is provided in Chapter A1: Courses - of the Academic Regulations. Similar attention is taken of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements in the Quality Handbook and the Quality Code mapping. The QESR team considered example course specifications and found evidence of the use of the appropriate QAA Subject Benchmark Statement in the course design process.

42 The Academic Quality Handbook states that a significant proportion of the University's courses are subject to PSRB accreditation or reaccreditation by the relevant bodies. The organisation and management of accreditation visits and document-only submissions are included within the University's quality assurance procedures to ensure appropriate oversight and monitoring.

43 The coversheet for the Quality Code mapping document states: 'The Quality Code continues to be a source of reference for developments'. An example of this was provided by staff who described the use of the Quality Code in the establishment and monitoring of academic partnerships. Governance and Academic Quality Office staff reported that the advisory section of the Quality Code was particularly useful, and it is currently being used to guide the revision of Section 5 of the Quality Handbook.

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

44 The QESR team is confident that the University has effective arrangements in place to monitor and review its approach to the use of data and evidence to inform self-evaluation and decision-making. The team considered the Institution-led Review report to SFC; institutional analysis of data on retention and progression; Annual Appraisal Process Report; degree outcomes; complaints and appeals; student disciplinary cases; institutional analysis of annual monitoring; student feedback; and met with staff and students.

45 The QESR team considers that the University effectively manages and analyses the data it gathers and uses it to support its reflective and evaluative approaches across all areas of provision. It has achieved this by pulling together a range of outcomes of quality processes to form the QAEC Enhancement of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Action Plan. The QAEC Enhancement of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Action Plan was developed, capturing the enhancement activities prioritised from all the Action and Enhancement Plans across the

University, the future of Teaching, Learning and Assessment projects and the Student School Officers' projects. This working document is monitored by QAEC throughout the year to ensure continuous improvement. RGU: Insights - the University's data dashboard system - is used for Annual Appraisal, for the overview of Achievement Gaps, Good Honours, and School Planning Statements. All reflect on KPIs, and the School Action and Enhancement Plans are monitored by the School Academic Boards. The University has reviewed student feedback mechanisms and has implemented changes for academic year 2023-24.

46 Annual appraisal of teaching and the broader student experience is key to the University's quality assurance processes. Delivery of all courses, programmes and output standards are monitored. Examples of monitoring include feedback from students and performance indicator data. This feedback and data are analysed using the RGU: Insight Appraisal Dashboards and key priorities within the University Business Plan, and the analysis is presented to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee as a focus for activities and used for reflection through the Annual Appraisal Process.

47 The QESR team found the University's effective work on the use of data to be very positive and the University is further developing tools within academic and professional service departments to enhance this work for the benefit of staff and all students. Examples include work on the development of the Assessment Policy and the RGU Assessment and Feedback Standard - which has been updated in response to feedback and is incorporated as an appendix to the Policy. An external evaluation of the FTLA project and feedback from students and staff informed further collaboratively designed enhancements, including the Attendance and Engagement Policy. Students and staff highlighted positive ways the University is using data and the attendance and engagement app to put in place early interventions and offer extra layers of support where needed. Staff further highlighted a significant improvement in attendance with the new attendance app and the development of a new enquiry management system which will utilise the quantitative data to signpost services to where they will have the biggest impact.

48 The QESR team found that the University has demonstrated a commitment to making improvements in the use of data for the benefit of staff and students by working proactively on both policy and practical projects. Evidence includes the work on the RGU Assessment and Feedback Standard and the introduction of the attendance and engagement app which enables early interventions to help support students. The QESR team found this to be a **feature of good practice**.

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