
Self-Evaluation and Action Plan

University of Edinburgh

Self-Evaluation 2023-24

1. Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Curriculum Transformation Programme

This is a major long-term initiative for the University, closely aligned with the University Strategy 2030, to review the shape, design and delivery of our curriculum to ensure it develops with the needs of our future students. Significant progress has been made during Academic Year (AY) 2023/24. A Full Business Case for the Taught Postgraduate element of Curriculum Transformation has been approved for the next four years. This covers a two-year transitional phase where work will be undertaken to prepare the necessary regulatory, process and system enablers ready for the roll out of a new Taught Postgraduate Curriculum Framework in AY 2026/27 and a secondary roll out in AY 2027/28. The framework has been designed to be adaptable and responsive, able to accommodate a diverse range of provision and the requirements of a different educational contexts and purposes, domestic and international demand for postgraduate study and lifelong learning, including stand-alone courses, collections of courses, Certificates, Diplomas and Masters programmes through multiple and flexible modes of study (on-campus, online; full time, part time, stackable). An Outline Business Case has been approved for the Undergraduate element of Curriculum Transformation. This will enable the completion of work on the design and approval of a new Undergraduate Curriculum Framework and in-depth analysis and testing of associated regulatory, process and system changes. The Outline Business Case includes funding for the development and piloting of new elective cross-University experiential learning and Challenge Courses linked to our institutional research priorities

and values. A Full Business Case for the Undergraduate Curriculum Framework is due to be submitted in the second half of AY 2024/25. Further information (including a selection of briefing papers and other resources) is available from the programme website.¹

Annual monitoring and Institution-Led Quality Review (ILQR) – 2023/24²

The following themes of positive practice for sharing at University level were identified in our annual quality reports 2023-24 and Internal Periodic Reviews (IPRs, our ILQR process) held in AY 2023-24:

- **Student Support** - the new student support model was fully implemented across the University in AY 2023-24 and reports indicate that it has been generally well received by staff and students across the University, with improvements noted in the consistency of support provided to students, particularly through the new Student Adviser roles.
- **Student Voice** – Schools continue to make significant efforts to create opportunities for students to share feedback on their experience through locally organised student voice mechanisms. Students recognise the opportunities available to provide feedback.
- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)** – there were a number of initiatives highlighted by Schools and Deaneries in support of promoting an inclusive learning environment.
- **Learning and Teaching Enhancements** – academic and professional services staff have made considerable efforts to do things in new and inventive ways in order to enhance the student experience.

At the same time, our annual quality reports and IPRs highlighted the following areas for further development at the University level:

- **Student Support** – reports suggested a need for greater clarity around academic support roles (particularly in relation to the Cohort Lead role) and support for students on joint programmes.

¹ <https://www.ed.ac.uk/staff/teaching-matters/curriculum-transformation-programme>

² <https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/quality/monitoringandreview/annual-monitoring-review-and-reporting>

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- **Assessment and Feedback** – recognising the increasing opportunities and challenges of generative Artificial Intelligence (AI), particularly in relation to academic integrity and the need for greater guidance on approaches to assessment.
 - **Student Voice** – the issue of low response rates was raised in a number of reports, with concerns regarding the utility of feedback derived from low levels of student engagement. Feedback from students suggests the need to address closing feedback loops as clear communication on what has been acted upon may increase confidence in participation and encourage more students to take part in subsequent surveys.
 - **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)** – our updated reporting template included a section on student outcomes which resulted in more detailed reflections on awarding gaps, with black and minority ethnic (BAME) and widening participation (WP) students experiencing the biggest awarding gaps.
 - **Postgraduate Research Student Experience** - a number of reports noted concerns over the increasing time taken to complete PhDs, with average timeframes stretching to 4 years and beyond, and suggested that the current standard model may need to be reviewed.

Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) has approved actions at University level in response to issues identified above and will consider progress updates later in the academic year before feeding back to reporting areas. The reports identifying themes of positive practice for sharing at University level are passed to the Institute for Academic Development (IAD) to identify content for Teaching Matters³ and the Learning and Teaching Conference. Examples of Teaching Matters blog posts that have been identified through quality processes are tagged⁴.

Student Retention, Progression and Outcomes

SQAC considers a report on degree classification outcomes annually. Any subject areas judged to have diverged substantially from either the University average or comparators in their discipline are then asked specifically to reflect on the issue, and any proposed remediation, in their School annual quality

³ <https://www.ed.ac.uk/staff/teaching-matters>

⁴ <https://www.teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk/tag/quality-enhancement-report-examples/>

report. This approach ensures systematic University oversight whilst also encouraging Schools to engage with the specific data on awards, reflect on the issues and context, and then seek appropriate local solutions.

In May 2024 SQAC considered the annual analysis of degrees awarded by the University in the AY 2022/23⁵, including data on awarding gaps for key student groups. In general, student outcomes appear to be returning to pre-pandemic levels with over 89% of students at the University being awarded a high classification degree (a first or upper second-class degree) in 2022/23 (a 1.8% decrease from the previous year and a 0.5% decrease across a five-year period). Within this, the number of first-class degrees awarded in 2022/23 has decreased (by 3.2% from the previous year), however there has been an overall increase of 5.3% across a five-year period.

In 2022/23, for the first time in a five-year period, a higher proportion of male students were awarded a first-class degree than female students (34.9% vs 33.5%). However, a higher proportion of female students were awarded a high classification than male students (90.6% vs 86.8%). Students with a disclosed disability continue to be less likely to be awarded a first-class or high classification degree than students with no disclosed disability. The awarding gap for first-class degrees increased from 1.7% in 2021/22 to 1.9% in 2022/23, while the gap for high classification degrees decreased from 2.4% to 1.7% over the same period.

The most significant awarding gap is between black and minority ethnic (BAME) students and white students. While the awarding gap for first-class degrees reduced from 13.1% in 2021/22 to 11.6% in 2022/23, the gap for high classification degrees increased from 4.7% to 7.3% during the same period. A similar trend is seen across widening participation students, with a narrowing of the gap for first-class awards from 10.3% in 2021/22 to 7.5% in 2022/23, against an increasing gap for high classification degrees from 6.7% to 8.9% over the same period.

Retention and progression data is embedded in our ILQR processes and our Insights Hub provides a searchable directory of analysis and insights to support these ILQR activities. In order to enhance these processes SQAC established a Data Task Group in February 2020 to examine data set and methodological

⁵ <https://registryservices.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-07/16%20May%202024%20-%20Agenda%20and%20Papers.pdf> (Paper D)

options for a new approach to monitoring retention, progression, and awarding data. However, the pandemic delayed progress, with the maintenance of core requirements the primary focus of activities across the University.

As we emerged from the pandemic, SQAC sought to align with work already being undertaken by the University's Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) and the Governance and Strategic Planning (GaSP) area to develop improved data capture and analytical tools. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Data Report 2023 was published by the EDIC in May 2023⁶. This coincided with the completion of the first phase of work to develop internal data dashboards, making more detailed EDI data readily available across our institution. The key focus for this first phase has been to ensure the integrity, accuracy and confidence of the data, as well as to ensure that data definitions used are suitable for the required range of purposes.

SQAC has established a new Student Data Monitoring Task Group⁷ now that more detailed EDI data has been made available. In the short term the Group is exploring ways to use this data to develop a more systematic oversight of retention, progression and awards at University level. In the longer term the Group will seek to work with the EDIC and GaSP to generate and use robust quantitative and qualitative data in support of the University's QA processes (see 'Awarding Gaps' below).

Assessment and feedback

From the start of AY 2022/23, we implemented a set of Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities in response to persistent student dissatisfaction with areas of assessment and feedback from regular student feedback and student survey results over a number of year, and the recommendation from [Enhancement-led Institutional Review \(ELIR\) 4](#) (see section 3 below) to develop an institution-wide approach to assessment and feedback. The Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities include an agreed expected standard for feedback turnaround times of three weeks in response to National Student Survey (NSS) scores, our comparative position in the sector, and analysis of what seems to be effective in those Schools that perform well in the NSS. Ensuring that we consistently meet this standard and can demonstrate that we do, alongside the quality of feedback, continues to be a priority for the

⁶ <https://equality-diversity.ed.ac.uk/governance-and-compliance/edi-strategy-and-equality-outcomes/equality-outcomes-2021-2025-and>

⁷ <https://registryservices.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-07/16%20May%202024%20-%20Agenda%20and%20Papers.pdf> (Paper D)

University. The Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities also set an expectation of a shared understanding of marking criteria between teaching staff, markers and students. The Students' Association will be supporting this through the School reps who will work with Schools on this.

Throughout AY 2023/24, significant action has been taken to address this priority led by the Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group and the Student Experience Delivery and Monitoring Oversight Board. We have reviewed College actions for the implementation of the Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities (initially focused on the timely return of feedback to students) and developed a framework for gathering and monitoring feedback turnaround times (including the development of data dashboards) as a means of understanding current and ongoing performance. We are using the data to identify and celebrate good practice, understand challenges and support areas struggling to meet turnaround times. We will continue to monitor turnaround times in AY 2024/25 via a standardised template and publish data via the dashboards.

We are also in the process of developing a framework for an ongoing programme of feedback quality audits (building on a successful model developed in one of our Schools) with the aim of identifying exemplars of good practice and improving information given to students on assessments such as rubrics and marking criteria.

The National Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2024 results show an improvement in assessment and feedback: a 8.6% increase in returning prompt feedback to 66.8% and a 5.1% increase in supervisors providing feedback on the dissertation/project to 83.5%.

External Examiners

An analysis of data from the External Examiner Reporting System (EERS) is considered by SQAC annually, with any University-level actions agreed and assigned to specific areas as appropriate. At the meeting held on 25 April 2024 SQAC considered the analysis of AY 2022/23 undergraduate and taught postgraduate⁸ external examiners' reports showing that there continues to be a high number of commendations and a low number of issues across the University. The main theme commended in undergraduate reports across all three Colleges was the assessment process, with the sub-theme of good practice and innovation (in the programme development theme) most commented on. The main theme commended in taught postgraduate reports was

⁸ <https://registryservices.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-07/25%20April%202024%20-%20Agenda%20and%20Papers.pdf> (Paper E)

also the assessment process, with the sub-theme of student feedback most commented on. A small number of issues raised by external examiners related to the (often timely) provision of information to examiners. No University-level action was required.

The positive comments from external examiners on our assessment process and feedback may seem at odds with the NSS feedback, where we are scored lower on assessment and feedback. The difference may be explained in that External Examiner's comments speak to academic standards and quality and provide assurance that our assessment processes are robust. The NSS reflects the student experience and, in particular, dissatisfaction with the timeliness of feedback and the clarity of assessment expectations. Our NSS scores are not where we want them to be which is why both timeliness of feedback and clarity of assessment criteria are key priorities within our assessment and feedback principles and priorities.

2. Supporting Student Success

Student Support

The start of AY 2023/24 marked the full implementation of a new approach to taught student support across the University, following a phased introduction that began in AY 2022/23, mainly for new incoming students. The introduction of the new student support approach was our response to the need to improve student support across the University (responding to student and staff feedback that the existing model wasn't working) whilst also recognising the need for holistic support for academic and pastoral needs whilst creating a sense of belonging. This was a shift from the model which had existed before in the form of a single point of contact in the Personal Tutor.

The new approach is based on an ecosystem of student support comprising Student Advisers, Wellbeing Advisers, Cohort Leads, academic teaching teams, wider University services, and Peer Support. It is an ambitious and sector-leading approach to student support that has attracted much interest from other universities. Each student is assigned a Student Adviser who is their main point of contact, providing administrative and academic support. In addition, Wellbeing Advisers in each School provide advice on wellbeing-related matters and act as a key connection point to other specialist services, such as the Student Counselling Service or Disability and Learning Support Service. Academic support and building a sense of belonging is provided via Cohort Leads who have academic leadership responsibility for cohorts of students with the purpose of creating a sense of community within programmes and providing relevant academic-related support that fits the needs of the programmes and learners. Academic advice remains core to student support, with teaching teams providing academic support at the subject/course level as previously. Peer Support activities are student-led and staff-supported and provide an opportunity for students to support other students. A Director of Students role has been introduced in each School supported by the College Dean of Students to have oversight of the academic roles within the model.

An example of the evidenced success of the new model is that the IPR of the Deanery of Biomedical Sciences (UG and PGT) commended the Student Advisers for the positive impact they have had on the student experience, and their overall commitment to making the transition to the new student support model as smooth as possible. Furthermore, the national annual Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2024 results reveal increased awareness of

and satisfaction with student support - 4% increase on 2023 on the question – “My School/Deanery has provided advice and guidance on how to access support where needed”.

To coincide with the introduction of the new student support approach we also launched a new Student Wellbeing Service in September 2022 (note the reference to Wellbeing Advisers as part of the ecosystem). The Service is located in the University Student Experience Services directorate. Wellbeing Advisers work with all Schools and Colleges providing a layer of support between the School-based Student Advisers and the central specialist counselling and disability services. This service supports all students: UG, PGT and PGR. This is a transformational investment in mental health services for our students, involving recruitment of new staff and providing proactive and reactive wellbeing support. The recent NSS survey (2024) showed a 4.4% increase in student satisfaction with wellbeing support.

The implementation of the new Student Support model has been a partnership approach with a central project team supporting College implementation groups, overseen by the Project Board, including representation from the Students’ Association. Throughout we undertook assessment and monitoring through surveys and focus groups with students and staff to allow us to evaluate the impact of the new model, and make improvements, as required. With the conclusion of the implementation phase of the project in July 2024 our focus is now on monitoring and evaluating provision on a continuous basis to ensure envisaged benefits of the model are being realised. Senior Academic colleagues within the university who have expertise in the longitudinal evaluation of societal models have supported and advised on the approach to the longer-term evaluation.

To ensure consistency and fidelity of the new model is maintained, a Student Support Framework has been approved by Senate Education Committee⁹ (with a review due in one year) and a new University level oversight group established, the Student Support Continuous Improvement Group (SSCIG), which will work with new College level groups in a coordinating role. The Students’ Association Vice President Education has been appointed as the Deputy Chair to ensure the student voice is heard when planning improvement work. An additional quality assurance process will be introduced to ensure cyclical

⁹ <https://registryservices.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-07/7%20March%202024%20-%20Agenda%20and%20Papers.pdf> (Paper D)

reporting and oversight of the new model of student support at institutional level. This reporting will be governed by the Student Lifecycle Management Group (SLMG), with cyclical reporting to SQAC and SEC, and will focus on outcomes across key indicators and supplementary contextual data sources.

Once fully embedded, evaluation of student support provision will align with existing quality assurance processes (such as annual monitoring and ILQR) overseen by SQAC. Colleges, Schools and Professional Services will be asked to provide updates on the effectiveness of their student support provision via the annual QA monitoring processes. Each area will be required to use data to evidence the effectiveness of their provision, aligned to the Student Support Framework, and to reflect on their partnership working across the institutional ecosystem of student support. In AY 2024/25 SSCIG will continue to work with SQAC to develop these monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in order to ensure consistency of experience for all students across the University.

Widening Access

In January 2024 we unveiled our ambitious University wide [Widening Participation Strategy 2030](#), building on our commitment to support students who encounter barriers to higher education. Our refreshed priorities aim to create a nurturing and inclusive academic environment that appreciates the varied backgrounds and needs of our students. Following the launch of the Strategy we have established new governance arrangements to enable us to more effectively coordinate our activity and build on our evidence base. This includes a strategic committee that reports directly to our University Executive, an implementation group and a research and evidence forum to support all groups. We are focussing on actions across the whole student lifecycle and have institutional leads to drive this activity.

In AY 2023/24 we welcomed 241 new SIMD20 entrants to the University of Edinburgh. We continue to see over 10% of our undergraduate students coming from SIMD20 backgrounds and all of our ongoing outreach projects maintain a strong focus on prospective applicants from SIMD20 backgrounds. In 2024, the majority of young people on our [YourEd+ programme](#) were from SIMD20 postcodes and they successfully completed an SCQF level 7 assignment for the YourEd+ programme. This meant they were awarded the equivalent of B at Higher, developing their confidence, skills and supporting their application to the University.

We continue to build our community of care-experienced students, and in AY 2023/24 we had a total of 159 verified care-experienced students on programme at the University. 50 of our students were supported by 50 staff mentors in our innovative mentoring programme offering mentors to care-experienced and estranged students throughout their studies at the University. We also provided 50 start out kits for our Edinburgh Cares students to help support them setting up in new accommodation. We were also very proud to celebrate our care-experienced and estranged students successfully graduating from the University in 2024; we ensure they can experience this fully by offering fully-funded photo and gown packages for the students.

We continued our commitment to staff development and inclusive learning by providing training for staff to support students from widening participation backgrounds. In the AY 2023/24 we delivered over 25 hours of staff training. We have also contributed to the newly developed SCAPP (Scotland's

Community of Access & Participation Practitioners) online training module – An Introduction to WP in Scotland – and are currently developing guidance regarding accent discrimination.

In terms of our growing college partnerships, we have two new articulation routes currently in place with three new routes in the pipeline. The new routes offer advanced standing with entry to year two of our MA (Hons) Learning in Communities from HNC Social Services at Edinburgh College and from HNC Social Sciences at West Lothian College and Edinburgh College. Overall, we have built our portfolio of HNC/HND progression routes with over 100 of our degree programmes accepting progression or advanced progression into year 1 or 2.

New for 2024, we are working in partnership with IntoUniversity and the University of Glasgow on designing and delivering a pilot Adult and Family Learning Project. This aims to increase outcomes for children in IntoUniversity Centres in Glasgow and Edinburgh through closer engagement and support for their parents, carers and wider families.

Awarding Gaps

We have taken several actions to support ongoing work to address the awarding gaps identified by our Thematic Review¹⁰, annual monitoring and ILQR¹¹ processes.

Throughout AY 2023/24, the University appointed an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Officer (a secondee to the Curriculum Transformation Project) to coordinate work underway across the University to address awarding gaps. The initial focus has been on identifying a range of good practice exemplars and resources to be shared at events.

¹⁰ <https://registryservices.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/quality/monitoringandreview/student-support-thematic>

¹¹ <https://registryservices.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2024-07/16%20May%202024%20-%20Agenda%20and%20Papers.pdf> (Paper H)

As noted above, SQAC has established a new Student Data Monitoring Group to explore and recommend a systematic approach to monitoring student data at University level, taking a student lifecycle perspective including: recruitment and admissions; retention and progression; and awarding. This builds on the work of the Progression and Attainment (ProAttain) Working Group in the College of Science and Engineering and is being implemented during AY 2024/25.

The Institute for Academic Development (IAD) has created an online toolkit¹². This includes guidance on universal design to help our staff anticipate our students' needs and improve the overall learning experience in an inclusive and accessible way that benefits all our students, and guidance on decolonisation in the curriculum, which includes nine recommendations for positive change to narrow the awarding gap and also to foster a diverse and inclusive environment for every student.

3. Enhancement and Quality Culture

Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR)

In 2021, the University received ten recommendations from [Enhancement-led Institutional Review \(ELIR\) 4](#) . The ELIR Action Plan, setting out the University's response to the review recommendations, was approved by Senate in October 2021 and an ELIR Oversight Group established to provide direction and oversight of the actions.

The ELIR Action Plan took a themed approach to the implementation of the recommendations in order to ensure alignment with existing learning and teaching priorities and senior leadership responsibility. Actions were grouped as follows:

- **Assessment and Feedback** (improving feedback turnaround times and feedback quality);
- **Student Support** (the personal tutor system);

¹² <https://institute-academic-development.ed.ac.uk/learning-teaching/staff/accessible>

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- **Strategy, Growth and Planning** (encompassing the oversight and planning for growth of student numbers, and the strategic approach to the enhancement of learning and teaching);
 - **Change Management** (and the pace of change);
 - **Monitoring consistency of implementation of strategy, policy and practice** (encompassing oversight and implementation of policy and practice, and specifically training for postgraduate research (PGR) students who teach);
 - **Developing and promoting teaching excellence** (encompassing the recognition and support for academic staff development, and promotion of academic staff based on teaching);
 - **Attainment gap monitoring** (including sharing good practice in addressing awarding gaps).

Two of the recommendations, relating to assessment and feedback and student support, were prioritised for action over the course of the academic year following the ELIR. We have made significant progress in relation to these two recommendations which included developing University-wide agreed principles and priorities for assessment and feedback and rolling out a completely new student support approach.

Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR)

Our QESR took place on 16 November 2023 and the review team was confident that the University is making effective progress in continuing to monitor, review and enhance its provision to enable effective arrangements to be in place for managing academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience. The QESR team commended the University's Institute for Academic Development in establishing a network of secondees and associates embedded within the schools to support developments in learning and teaching.

The QESR team considered four of the ELIR recommendations to be fully addressed, recognised the action taken to date towards the remaining six recommendations, and helpfully made the following further recommendations for action based on, and in addition to, the ELIR 4 recommendations:

- **Pace of change** - the University should make progress on and accelerate its actions in response to the recommendations from the previous ELIR, ensuring effective and consistent implementation by all Schools, and monitor the outcomes, in order to evidence significant progress within the next academic year.
- **Learning and Teaching Strategy** - the University should expedite the final drafting, approval and implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy to help staff and students understand how major strategic projects work together and provide clarity on the strategic approach to enhancing learning and teaching.

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- **Assessment and Feedback** - the University should take immediate action, within the current academic year, to ensure that the new Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities (developed in response to ELIR 4) are fully implemented in all Schools, that feedback turn-round times and quality are monitored effectively, and that prompt action is taken to address any shortcomings.
 - **Training for postgraduate research (PGR) students who teach** - the University should take prompt action, within the current academic year, to consistently implement its updated policy and to ensure that training for PGRs who teach is required at the University and School level, and that this action is monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure that all PGRs are fully supported in undertaking their teaching duties.
 - **Promotion of academic staff based on teaching** - the University should clearly and accurately record data on promotion routes based on teaching excellence so it can effectively evidence the implementation of its goal to achieve parity between teaching and research and take action to ensure this aim is met.
 - **Attainment gap monitoring** – the University should pay particular attention to sharing good practice and supporting staff in understanding the causes of attainments gaps and taking effective action.

The [final report](#) of the QESR was received on 18 January 2024 and an External Quality Review Oversight Group was established to take the recommendations forward. The University's external quality review [Action Plan](#) in response to the recommendations of the QESR was submitted to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in July 2024. Feedback from the QAA was positive with just one additional request to confirm that training for all postgraduate research students who teach will be in place (and uptake monitored) for the start of AY 2024/25. Data on training was gathered during the summer (as part of the annual monitoring process) and Colleges are working with Schools to ensure that this training is in place and monitored on an ongoing basis.

UK Quality Code Mapping

We last reviewed the mappings of our policies and practices to the Quality Code in September/October 2022: [Quality Code Mapping](#). Since 2022 we have been actively engaged in the UK sector-wide conversation about the future scope and structure of the Quality Code. There are minor updates required to the mapping, for example, to reflect the full move to the new student support model. We are considering the approach we will take to the new Quality Code and the relevant mappings will be reviewed by the Quality team in due course.

Enhancement Themes

Throughout the last Enhancement Theme, Resilient Learning Communities, the University has focussed on community building, responding to student feedback. Enhancement work continued through AY 2023/24 to pilot 'community champions' in five schools as part of the Sense of Belonging Continuous Improvement Group.

Enhancement of Academic Practice

The QESR team (as noted above) commended our Institute for Academic Development (IAD) on the provision of staff development activities in support of learning and teaching. These include the annual Learning and Teaching Conference (with over 100 staff and students presenting and between 500-900 in attendance), a newly accredited Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice, and the Edinburgh Teaching Award with recognition of fellowships at all four categories of the Professional Standards Framework. The IAD also provides programme and course design support for staff through a PgCAP course, through a range of workshops, and advice and through new programme and course design webpages that draw together all the programme and course design information from across the University to make this information easier for colleagues to access.

Tutors and demonstrators play a really important part in our teaching. In 2023/24 IAD made changes to the modality of our basic introduction to teaching for tutors and demonstrators, in recognition that workshops had been over-subscribed, and created a new self-paced, online 'Fundamentals of Teaching Course' open to all tutors and demonstrators. Since September 2024, more people have completed the course than would have been able to attend workshops over the year. IAD continue to run a range of workshops for tutors and demonstrators alongside the online course. Feedback on the new course has been extremely positive from tutors and from staff in Schools.

4. Student Engagement and Partnership

Student Voice

The University and Students' Association continue to work in partnership to deliver and enhance systems and processes which amplify the student voice.

In AY 2023/24, over 1300 part-time, volunteer student representatives were recruited, inducted, and supported by the Students' Association's Student Voice team, as well as staff across and at all levels of the University. All Programme and Elected Representatives continue to receive a two-part induction and training package, consisting of an asynchronous and introductory self-study module, followed by a live and interactive role-specific session.

Training completion remains high - with 95% of Elected Representatives and 85.5% of Programme Representatives completing both elements. 89.1% of student representatives described their experience as a student representative as excellent or good, with representatives reporting positively on the support they had received from the Students' Association and relevant University staff, their ability to create positive change for the students they represent, and their ability to develop personally and professionally in their role.

All student representatives have access to on-going development opportunities, through the workshop calendar for volunteer student leaders, as well as access to multiple reward and recognition schemes, from Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) recognition to the Edinburgh Award for Student Leadership, and the nationally-recognised Saltire Award for volunteering. At the end of their term, all student representatives are invited to complete a handover form, reflecting on their experience and sharing insights with their successors.

Student voice has been identified as a strategic priority by the University's Senior Leadership Team, driven in large part by continued disappointing performance in the student voice section of the National Student Survey, particularly the questions regarding students' confidence that their feedback is valued and acted upon by staff. In AY 2023/24, the existing Student Voice Task and Finish Group, which had coordinated a series of focus groups with students and staff to identify areas of key concern, was replaced by the Student Voice Continuous Improvement User Group, under the Student Lifecycle Management Group. The Students' Association partnered with Graduate Offices across the University and the Doctoral College to enhance the integration of Postgraduate Research students into existing student voice structures, work which is continuing in AY 2024/25.

In AY 2024/25, the University and Students' Association will work in partnership to:

- Baseline School approaches to student voice, through analysis of data available from existing Quality processes, such as Internal Period Reviews, and consultation with Schools.
- Address inconsistencies in the implementation of existing student voice policies, such as the Student-Staff Liaison Committee Policy, across Schools and Colleges.
- Explore alternative methods of collecting feedback, addressing student feedback regarding survey-fatigue, and create resources highlighting best practice for use by staff.

Student Feedback

In AY 2023/24, we introduced a new institutional survey, the Student Life Survey, to replace the Pulse Surveys which were introduced during the pandemic. The survey was informed by the student voice focus groups highlighted above, and developed in partnership with the Students' Association, with academic expertise, and in listening and responding to how students want to participate in surveys (i.e. short surveys that take less than a minute to complete). It was designed to understand more about student experiences across different aspects of their journey, as well as to align with strategic priorities for student experience, ensuring the collection of data to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of on-going and future enhancements in relation to student experience. The survey ran as a pilot in AY 2023/24 to taught students who were not participating in sector surveys, such as the National Students Survey (NSS) and the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES).

Across the year, work was undertaken to improve communication to student about feedback opportunities. This included an introductory communication to all students outlining how they can feedback, and then a follow up email at the end of each semester outlining feedback which had been gathered, and actions in response to it. Further work has been identified for AY 2024/25 to ensure communications are landing more effectively, including greater collaboration with Schools to tailor communications, and a focus on developing more engaging communications.

Student Partnership

We have a University Student Partnership Agreement with 19 funded projects last year (and 18 projects in 2024-25), focused on building community, enhancing teaching, learning and curriculum and EDI. We continue to run the Edinburgh Network: Growing Approaches to Genuine Engagement (engage network) for staff and students, with regular monthly events showcasing student engagement and partnership work from the University and beyond; the two most recent events attracted approx. 85 staff and students. The PgCAP programme for staff starts with a course entitled 'Becoming an Engaging Teacher', where we encourage colleagues to adopt evidence-based approaches to more relational teaching, active learning, student engagement and co-creation.

Action Plan 2024 -2025

The plan should link directly to the institutional evaluation of the Principles and should prioritise strategic actions arising from the narrative. In addition, the actions arising from commendations or recommendations identified through external review, should also be embedded into this action plan to ensure alignment with overall institutional priorities and to streamline reporting processes. This action plan should be a live document utilised by the institution to focus on strategic quality assurance and enhancement activities on an ongoing basis. The timeline for the completion of actions should be suited to the nature of the activity and the context of the institution.

Principle and Area for enhancement or development	Action(s) and planned impact/ outcomes	Milestone (s/ target date(s), continuing/ carried forward (c/f)	Responsible/ Lead
Enhancement and Quality Culture: Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) & Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR)	Continue to progress with the ELIR and QESR recommendations, in particular prioritising actions over the course of the year in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • assessment and feedback • the training of postgraduate research students who teach. • Learning and Teaching Strategy 	Detailed actions and target dates in the University’s external quality review Action Plan	External Quality Review Oversight Group
Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment:	Prepare for introduction of new PGT Curriculum Framework from AY2026/27	A 2-year Transitional Phase followed by the main roll out in AY2026/27.	Curriculum Transformation Board/ Senate Education Committee

Curriculum Transformation		Work on regulatory and policy changes is being taken forward through Senate Academic Policy & Regulations Committee during AY2024/25 & AY2025/26.	
Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment: Curriculum Transformation	Complete UG Curriculum Framework design work (including development and piloting of elective University Challenge Courses and cross-University Experiential Learning Courses in AY 2024/25 & 2025/26)	UG Curriculum Framework Design work and undertake in-depth analysis and design of the associated System, Process & Regulatory changes during AY24/25. Development and piloting of elective University Challenge Courses and cross-University Experiential Learning Courses in AY 2024/25 & 25/26.	Curriculum Transformation Board/ Senate Education Committee
Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment: Assessment and Feedback	Continue to embed the Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities	Ongoing, with a focus on feedback return times and feedback quality (including assessment rubrics) as priority areas in AY 2024/25	Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group, reporting to Senate Education Committee
Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment: Learning and Teaching Strategy	Implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030.	Strategy approved in Semester 1 AY 2024/25 with roll-out and implementation from Semester 2	Senate Education Committee

Enhancement and Quality Culture: Sector enhancement activity	Engage with the new national enhancement programme: Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP)	ongoing	Senate Quality Assurance Committee
Student Engagement and Partnership: Student voice	Continue work of the Student Voice Continuous Improvement Group, review the implementation of various student voice policies and develop a shared vision for student voice.	ongoing	Deputy Secretary Students/Senate Quality Assurance Committee/Students' Association
Supporting Student Success Student Support	Continue to monitor and evaluate the impact of the new student support approach	ongoing	Deputy Secretary Students
Supporting Student Success: Awarding Gaps	Continue work to understand the causes of and how to narrow awarding gaps, supporting Schools by sharing good practice.	ongoing	Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC)

Statement of Assurance

Statement of Assurance: *As the Accountable Officer for the University of Edinburgh, I confirm that I have considered the institution's arrangements for the management of academic standards and the quality of the learning experience for AY 2023-24, including the scope and impact of these. I further confirm that I am satisfied that the institution has adequate and effective arrangements to maintain standards and to assure and enhance the quality of its provision. I can therefore provide assurance to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) that the academic standards and the quality of the learning provision at this institution continue to meet the requirements set by SFC.*

Signature: 

Accountable Officer (Name): Professor Sir Peter Mathieson, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, University of Edinburgh

Date: 29 November 2024

Statement of Partnership: *As the Vice President Education of Edinburgh University Students' Association, I confirm that this report and action plan have been produced in partnership with the Students' Association and reflect the interests and priorities of students. I further confirm that the University and the Students' Association will work together in partnership to implement the actions outlined.*

Signature: 

Students' Association representative (Name): Dylan Walch, Vice President Education, Edinburgh University Students' Association

Date: 29 November 2024