Self-Evaluation and Action Plan
University of Edinburgh

Self-Evaluation 2024-25

1. Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Learning and Teaching Strategy

Our new Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030 was launched this year with the aim of stimulating developments to our educational offer and ensuring it remains fit to equip our students for the futures they will be entering, to promote and support inspiring teaching, and engage and empower our learners. These three core purposes of our Learning and Teaching Strategy are shaped by our institutional values set out in Strategy 2030 and underpinned by a set of enablers that support our learning and teaching processes, our students' wellbeing and academic development, and the development of our teaching staff.

The Strategy builds on the Curriculum Transformation Programme (CTP) and is supported by the Edinburgh Student Vision and the Skills for Success Framework (developed as part of CTP) that together set out the qualities, skills and capabilities required to thrive in a changing world. We have refined our approach to curriculum transformation (as set out in our previous SEAP), with prioritised components of the programme now being taken forward via a Curriculum Development and Innovation Group aligned to the Learning and Teaching Strategy Implementation Plan and reporting to Senate Education Committee. This approach will ensure that we continue to benefit from the design work undertaken through CTP and other achievements of the programme.

The Strategy was approved by Senate Education Committee at its meeting in February 2025 and ongoing implementation activities will be overseen by a working group of Senate Education Committee and also report to the University's Learning and Teaching Workstream to align with ongoing adaptation (see below).

Adapting to the current context

We are currently working to secure the long-term future of the University with a programme of five workstreams which focus on learning and teaching; research and innovation; staff; our physical and digital estate; and our other operating expenditure. Reimagining our ways of working in all of these areas has significant potential to grow income, reduce expenditure and ensure the long-term academic and financial success of the University.

The Learning and Teaching Workstream is focused on improving and enhancing our teaching and learning to make sure we can provide an excellent student experience for all, through three key themes:

- **We are shaping a future-ready curriculum.** We are transforming how and what we teach to prepare students for a rapidly changing world, with a focus on innovation, personal growth and societal impact.
- **We are improving our students' experience.** We will continue to improve assessment and feedback, acting on student voice, and student support to give our students the best University experience we can.
- **We are refining our teaching support processes.** We are working to avoid duplication and inconsistency by improving things like our timetabling and curriculum management.

This new approach will ensure that we create the capacity to address learning and teaching initiatives that will allow the University to adapt to the current context.

Annual monitoring and Institution-Led Quality Review (ILQR) – 2024/25[1]

The following themes of positive practice for sharing at University level were identified in our annual quality reports and Internal Periodic Reviews (IPRs, our ILQR process) held in AY 2024-25:

- **Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment** – our Schools have made considerable efforts and significant improvements to comply with the University three-week turnaround time for feedback (as evidenced by data that has been collected, and the positive increase in the NSS and PTES

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[1] https://www.ed.ac.uk/academic-services/quality/monitoringandreview/annual-monitoring-review-and-reporting

from students) and the provision of rubrics or marking criteria for each assessment. School reports detailed the wide range of activities they have undertaken to meet the opportunities and challenges posed by Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI), particularly in relation to assessment (for example, the integration of GenAI tools for critical evaluation and use of artificial datasets in assessment to prevent misuse of GenAI).

- **Supporting Student Success** – internal review teams identified many successes in the development and implementation of our Student Support model with Schools enhancing support activities through the creation of pastoral committees, proactive engagement by professional services staff, and the development of cohort events to enrich the student experience. The ongoing success of the Student Advisor role was noted across School reports and IPRs commended initiatives focussing on postgraduate research (PGR) community building (for example, our University Womxn of Colour Network has brought together PhD students and staff to share experiences and build a community of support).
- **Student Engagement and Partnership** – our Schools continue to make significant efforts to bring students' voices into the classroom in various ways and create opportunities for students to share feedback on their experience (for example, some programmes have successfully designed and implemented new elective courses, largely driven by student feedback to develop professional skills).

At the same time, our annual quality reports and IPRs highlighted the following areas for ongoing enhancement:

- **Staff and Student Experience** – annual monitoring reports reflected on the increasingly challenging financial context at the University (and across the sector as a whole) and the impact this was having on staff morale, resources and workload, and the student experience.
- **Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI)** - there was much reflection on the topic of GenAI in the reports with requests for further guidance and support, and reports of in-person exams being considered/reintroduced amid concerns for academic integrity.
- **Assessment and Feedback** – reports noted the impact of the volume of assessments and extensions and special circumstance adjustments on their ability to return timely feedback and sought further guidance on improving feedback quality.
- **Student Support** – Schools continue to make significant efforts to deliver Cohort Lead events and opportunities for engagement with academic staff, but noted low student engagement.
- **Student Attendance and Engagement** - Schools reported continued post-Covid reduced attendance levels for lectures and community building events.
- **Postgraduate Research (PGR) Student Experience** – reports noted concerns regarding the decline in funding and scholarship availability for PGR students (both externally and internally funded) affecting the intake and sustainability of some PGR programmes, and an increase in PhD completion times.
- **Careers and Employability Skills** – a number of IPRs noted the opportunity for integration of skills and career development within the curriculum, in line with the University's new Skills for Success framework.

Senate Quality Assurance Committee (SQAC) approved actions at University level in response to these issues 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 Matters[2] (examples of Teaching Matters blog posts that have been identified through quality processes are tagged[3]) and the annual University Learning and Teaching Conference. A good practice sharing event will also be held early in semester two with School Directors of Quality and professional services staff focusing on learning from annual monitoring and ILQRs in relation to GenAI and awarding gaps.

Student Retention, Progression and Outcomes

Retention and progression data is embedded in our annual monitoring and ILQR processes and our Insights Hub provides a searchable directory of analysis and insights to support these activities. In addition, outcome data is considered annually by SQAC with any subject areas judged to have diverged substantially from either the University average or comparators in their discipline then asked specifically to reflect on the issue, and their proposed remediation, in their School annual quality 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 2025 SQAC considered the annual analysis of degrees awarded by the University in AY 2023/24[4], including data on awarding gaps. In AY 2023/24, approximately one-third (33.8%) of our undergraduate students achieved a First-Class degree. This represents a slight decrease of 0.3 percentage points compared to AY 2022/23, but an overall decline of 6.6 percentage points over the past five years. However, it remains 5 percentage points higher than the pre-pandemic outcome recorded in 2018/19. Over 90% of students at the University obtained a degree with a high classification (a first or upper second-class degree) which reflects an increase of 1.1 percentage points compared to AY 2022/23 and a 1 percentage point increase from 2018/19. Consistent with sector-wide data, students with a disclosed disability, those from a Scottish domicile, students from Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds,

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[2] https://www.ed.ac.uk/staff/teaching-matters

[3] https://www.teaching-matters-blog.ed.ac.uk/tag/quality-enhancement-report-examples/

[4] https://registryservices.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2025-05/May%202025%20SQAC%20Agenda%20and%20Papers.pdf (Paper B)

and those from widening participation backgrounds are less likely to be awarded a high classification degree. Despite attention to awarding gaps, it is concerning that these gaps are widening.

We have taken several actions to support ongoing work to address these awarding gaps with a range of programmes and initiatives that help students to access more opportunities and support them during key phases of their learning journey. For example, the Principal's Teaching Award Scheme (PTAS) aims to encourage and support activities that will make a significant contribution to the enhancement of learning and teaching and there are currently more than 20 PTAS-funded projects that have a widening participation theme. Another initiative is Edinburgh Cares, a student-lifecycle approach to supporting students who are care-experienced, estranged from their families and/or students with caring roles and responsibilities. It involves student community building, informal peer support networks, support to access services within and outside the University.

Our Student Data Monitoring Task Group[5] (established by SQAC in May 2024) is focused on how to narrow and eliminate awarding gaps across the University. The task group undertook sector benchmarking and data analysis activity throughout AY 2024-25 and an end of year progress report was submitted to SQAC in May 2025 with further actions agreed for AY 2025-26. One strand of ongoing work is establishing the agreed definitions and characteristics of different student groups used to monitor awarding gaps. Meetings have been held with colleagues from the Disability and Learning Support Service (DLSS) and the Widening Participation (WP) team to better understand our student population and the definitions, markers and characteristics which relate to our students. The agreed definitions will be applied to data collection and analysis and to facilitate greater understanding of awarding gaps within the University.

Another strand has been working to identify good practice across the sector and initiatives that have been tested and/or adopted elsewhere. SQAC has considered a number of initial interventions which have been reported to be effective mechanisms for addressing awarding gaps, such as initiatives which seek to develop a sense of belonging (including mentoring) and which raise the visibility of minority groups (for staff as well as students). Our next step is to trial and evaluate some of the interventions identified by the task group and continue to review other promising interventions in the coming year. These

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

good practice initiatives will build on the work already undertaken by our IAD to create an online toolkit[6] which 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. The toolkit also has 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.

Data and evidence will be essential to understanding the impact of any interventions. The task group has focussed on understanding the data we have, the improvements needed, and how to undertake meaningful analysis of our student population. We expect that long-term structural steps will be needed to facilitate and realise this data analysis. However, an enhanced analysis of degree outcomes for AY 2023-24 has been produced and considered at SQAC this year at the meeting held in May 2025. At the request of the task group, the Student Analytics, Insights and Modelling team (that produces the annual degree outcomes report) was able to include data for the first time on low classification degrees and key groups of students who have been more likely to experience an awarding gap. Work is ongoing to improve data quality and collection and guidance will be issued to Schools around using available data to identify and address awarding gaps.

Assessment and feedback

Our Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities were introduced in September 2022 in response to recommendations from the ELIR and QESR reviews (see below, Section 3 Enhancement and Quality Culture) to develop a holistic and strategic approach to the design and management of assessment and feedback and subsequently to monitor feedback turnaround times and quality. Since the initial development, there has been considerable work through Student Experience Services and Colleges and Schools to implement the Principles and Priorities, in particular gathering data and developing dashboards to monitor feedback turnaround times, and work to ensure that marking rubrics are provided for all assessments. We are also reviewing our moderation practice to include a focus on the moderation of feedback quality.

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[6] https://institute-academic-development.ed.ac.uk/learning-teaching/staff/accessible

The Principles and Priorities were updated for AY 2024/25 to improve clarity and also to offer further guidance on the application of some of the principles. This year our annual monitoring processes (see above, Section 1 Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment) evidenced a significant improvement in turnaround times across the majority of Schools and pinpointed particular issues that contributed to delayed release of marks and feedback (such as moderation practices, late submissions and delays due to staff leave or illness). When we began monitoring the data systematically in Semester 1, AY 2023/24, on average 55% of assessed work was meeting our three-week standard. By the end of AY 2024/25 this had increased to almost 80% on average, with around half of our Schools giving feedback within three weeks on 80% of assessed work. For AY 2025/26, we have set a target for all Schools to achieve a minimum of 80% of assessments returning feedback within three weeks.

The Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities are due for a scheduled review by the end of AY 2025/26. Given the substantial activity that has taken place since the Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities were first developed, this will provide an opportunity to conduct a more comprehensive review, and be clearer about the current and future institutional expectations for assessment and feedback building on the considerable developments that have taken place. The Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group, a sub-Group of Senate Education Committee, will oversee the development of the Policy during AY 2025/26 and a focus on feedback quality being take forward through increased expectations of the development and provision of rubrics. This will extend to reviews in many Schools considering how assessment can be considered programmatically – and the overall student academic experience – to ensure a holistic approach and respond to potential areas of overassessment.

External Examiners

An analysis of data from our 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 3 April 2025 SQAC considered the analysis of AY 2023/24 undergraduate and taught postgraduate[7] 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

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[7] https://registryservices.ed.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2025-03/3%20April%202025%20-%20SQAC%20Agenda%20and%20Papers%20OPEN.pdf (Paper E)

practice and innovation (in the programme development theme) most commented on. The main theme commended in taught postgraduate reports was also the assessment process, with the sub-theme of student feedback most commented on.

This year SQAC considered an issue consistently raised by external examiners – concerns about the timeliness and amount of information given to external examiners in order to perform their role well. The University has guidance in place to ensure external examiners are provided with the correct information in a timely manner. However, there is seemingly an issue with either the way this guidance is implemented by Schools or with the provision of training setting out the role and expectations of those acting as external examiners. We will take this issue forward as part of our Board of Examiners Project.

2. Supporting Student Success

Student Support

We have continued to embed our new Student Support model during AY 2024-25. The introduction of the new approach was our response to the need to improve student support across the University whilst also recognising the need for holistic support for academic and pastoral needs and fostering a sense of belonging. This marked a significant change from the Personal Tutor model as the single point of contact which had existed before to an ecosystem of support comprising Student Advisers, Wellbeing Advisers, Cohort Leads, academic teaching teams, wider University services, and Peer Support. It has been an ambitious and sector-leading approach that has attracted much interest from other universities, now modelling similar approaches. Each student is assigned a Student Adviser who is their main point of contact, providing appropriate guidance and support, to students navigating the University support systems. 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 is provided via Cohort Leads who have academic leadership responsibility for cohorts of students with the purpose of creating a sense of community and belonging 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. Peer Support activities are student-led and staff-supported and provide an opportunity for students to support other students.

This year our annual monitoring processes (see above, Section 1 Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment) indicate that the new approach to student support has been generally well received by staff and students across the University, with improvements noted to the consistency of support provided to students. Student Advisors in particular have been broadly commended in School reports for their positive impact in enabling more consistent, professional support for students across the University.

Our Student Support Framework sets out the University's expectations for student support in order to ensure a consistent level of provision for all our taught students. The Student Support Continuous Improvement Group (SSCIG) is responsible for institutional oversight, coordination, and assurance for the effective delivery and continuous improvement of student support across the University. In AY 2024-25 SSCIG prioritised work reviewing how the model

was embedding and to understand good practice and/or variations that had emerged. SSCIG also prioritised reviewing the Cohort Lead role and opportunities for engagement with academic staff. The aim is to understand what the variations are, why they are happening, and whether the variations are of benefit and could be scaled to enhance the model. In April 2025, we held a good practice sharing and community building event for Cohort Leads from across the University focusing on case studies and variation exemplars. The event was well attended (with approximately 70 staff participating) and well received by the Cohort Leads; SSCIG will continue to take this work forward in AY 2025-26 with the aim of identifying, sharing and inculcating good practice.

SSCIG is also working with the Communications and Marketing team to address a concern noted in some School reports that students do not know where to go for the appropriate support. The aim is to create a more consistent and structured approach to messaging in regard to Student Advisers as first point of contact for support, and in particular how this messaging is embedded in communications so that students know how to access support within the system as a whole.

Once fully embedded, evaluation of student support provision will align with existing quality assurance processes (such as annual monitoring and ILQR) overseen by SQAC. Each area will be required to use data to evidence and evaluate the impact and effectiveness of their provision and to reflect on their partnership working across the institutional ecosystem of student support. SSCIG will continue to work with SQAC in AY 2025-26 to develop monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for student support.

Widening Access and Participation

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. Over the past year we have been working to deliver on these priorities as well as communicating about progress regularly with staff and students.

In AY 2024/25 we welcomed 261 new SIMD20 entrants to the University and we continue to see over 11% of our undergraduate students coming from SIMD20 backgrounds. All our ongoing outreach projects maintain a strong focus on prospective applicants from SIMD20 backgrounds. This year over 35% of young people enrolled on our Accessing the High Demand Professions programmes were from SIMD20 backgrounds and 71 school students on the [Reach programme](#) (66%) had an Unconditional Firm (UF) offer to study either law, medicine or vet medicine at a Scottish university in 2024 entry.

We are proud of our institutional progress in ensuring we are a destination of choice for care experienced students. Our numbers of care experienced students have increased significantly; between 2018 and 2023 we saw our numbers of care experienced entrants more than triple[8]. Although we saw a small dip in entrants in 2024 entry, we have seen those numbers stabilise in 2025 and return to the highs we saw in 2022 and 2023 entry.

Our approach to Corporate Parenting ensures that estranged students at the University are provided with the same level of support recognising the barriers they may have faced in accessing and staying on in higher education. In AY 2022-23 we developed and launched our Corporate Parenting Plan (2022-2027). This plan represents long term and sustainable, but also ambitious objectives for how we will keep the promise.

Every care experienced and estranged student pre-application and during the transition to the University has the support of a named member of staff then, once they start with us, they have a Student Advisor in their academic School as well as the option of an additional named staff mentor. We also provide significant financial support to care experienced and estranged students via our Access Edinburgh Scholarship (£5,000 per year), further enhanced for those who need it through our participation grant (up to £300 to support with sports and societies), and the Darlington Scholarship (for Postgraduate Taught Scottish students who were previously recipients of our Access Edinburgh Scholarship). This award of £16,000 in addition to 40% fee discount is prioritised for those who are care experienced and estranged from their families as well as those from low-income backgrounds.

3. Enhancement and Quality Culture

External Quality Review

In 2021, the University received ten recommendations from Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) 4. An ELIR Action Plan was approved by Senate in October 2021 and an ELIR Oversight Group established to provide direction and oversight of the actions.

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[8] From 15 care experienced entrants in 2018/19 to 53 care experienced entrants in 2022/23.

Our Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) took place on 16 November 2023. The review team was confident that we were making effective progress. It considered four of the ELIR recommendations to be fully addressed and recognised the action taken towards the remaining six recommendations. In addition to the ELIR 4 recommendations, the QESR added the following 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.
- **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.

We received the final report of the QESR on 18 January 2024 and established an External Quality Review Oversight Group to oversee actions to address the recommendations. Our Action Plan in response to the recommendations was submitted to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in July 2024. In June 2025, our External Quality Review Oversight Group considered an end of year progress report and noted the completion of all actions except for those related to **assessment and feedback** (which is nearly completed with ongoing action in relation to feedback quality and the proposed Assessment and Feedback Policy, as noted above in section 1), action to minimise and eradicate **awarding gaps** (as noted above in section 1, Student Retention, Progression and Outcomes), and **training for PGR students who teach** (ongoing in relation to the implementation of new governance arrangements to ensure effective implementation and monitoring of policy). We discussed progress at our annual Institutional Liaison Meeting (ILM) with the QAA in August 2025 and there were no actions from this meeting and no concerns raised about the timeliness or effectiveness of actions being undertaken in response to the external review outcomes.

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 were 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 undertaken the Quality team in Academic Quality and Standards during the AY 2025-26 and consider at SQAC.

Enhancement Themes

We have been active participants in the first year of Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP) and a co-lead institution, in partnership with Edinburgh College, in the Supporting Access, Progression and Successful Outcomes (SAPSO) enhancement project. The project aligns with the work of our Student Data Monitoring Task Group focusing on the use of data to improve student support and outcomes (see above, section 2). We have sought to disseminate and communicate STEP updates throughout the year when and where appropriate via SQAC, Students' Association meetings, College and School reps and meetings, the Senate committees' newsletter and a section of our website dedicated to STEP. In the coming year SQAC will continue to monitor the progress of both the STEP project and our own Student Data Monitoring task group to ensure that each is informed by the work of the other.

We used the bulk of our STEP funding this year to support institutional work relating to the STEP theme: Supporting Diverse Learner Journeys. Specifically, extending our Community Champions pilots that we started under the previous QAA Enhancement Theme. Community and a sense of belonging are key drivers of student engagement and ultimately student success. A lack of community and belonging contributes to awarding gaps, which is one way on in which this work connects with the Student Data Monitoring Task Group outlined above. A previous successful pilot demonstrated the value of student Community Champion roles in fostering connections with and among students and staff and developing a supportive, engaging and inclusive community.

Building on this successful pilot, our aim is to encourage and support all our Schools to develop such roles. The Community Champion roles are being funded through a combination of QAA STEP funding and a Student Experience Grant from the University of Edinburgh. This has enabled us to scale-up the programme to eight Schools and a total of 18 student Community Champions across these Schools, covering UG, PGT and PhD students, with some projects focusing specifically on WP, online or international communities. The additional funding from the Student Experience Grant has enabled us to fund projects through to the end of December 2025.

Enhancement of Academic Practice

The QESR team commended our IAD on the provision of staff development activities in support of learning and teaching. These include a range of strategic provision to support enhancement of teaching and teachers, as well as the sharing of good practice – including: the annual Learning and Teaching Conference (in 2025 the theme of the conference was "Transformative Assessment and Feedback" and comprised 70 presentations delivered over 6 parallel streams and 340 in-person delegates and 170 online delegates), an enhanced Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (approx. 60 staff join

the programme each year), and the Edinburgh Teaching Award (EdTA) with recognition of fellowships at all four categories of the Professional Standards Framework (in 24-25, 190 colleagues received different categories of fellowship recognition). We have also been piloting group mentorship to augment our existing individual mentorship available on the EdTA programme.

The IAD provides programme and course design support for staff through a PgCAP course, through a range of workshops, advice and [online support](). IAD colleagues have also created new resources and guidance on [assessment rubrics]() and continue to support Principal's Teaching Award Scheme projects through funded from the University's Development Trust which enable evaluation and innovation in learning, teaching and assessment. In AY 2024-25, the 13 projects focus on, for example, interdisciplinary learning, fostering community and wellbeing, supporting PGRs undertaking emotionally demanding research, decolonisation, fostering dialogue, and GenAI.

Our online 'Fundamentals of Teaching' course open to all tutors and demonstrators that was introduced in AY 2023-24 is proving popular, with 344 completing the course in 2024-25. The Introduction to Academic Practice course also offers tutors and demonstrators an opportunity to go deeper in thinking about their teaching and gain Associate Fellowship of the HEA – 102 completed the course in 2025-25 – the largest number we have had completing in a year.

4. Student Engagement and Partnership

Student Voice

Student voice remains a strategic priority for the University. Despite seeing the greatest improvement across all themes in NSS from 2024 to 2025, this continues to be one of the lowest areas of satisfaction for students, notably lack of clarity on how their feedback is acted on. During AY 2024–25 we undertook a baselining exercise across all schools to understand current student voice practice, including Student Staff Liaison Committees (SSLCs), course evaluations, town halls, and other mechanisms. The review examined mechanisms, roles, frequency, processes, and communications, and highlighted the following significant gaps: a lack of consistency and visibility across approaches; unclear expectations; and gaps in skills and confidence to deliver effective student voice activity.

In response, we are developing a new framework setting minimum expectations to ensure consistency, transparency, and accountability across student voice activity. Work is underway to strengthen SSLCs, with Schools expected to begin adopting changes this academic year. A new Student Voice Policy will be developed by the end of AY 2025–26, with full implementation planned for AY 2026–27, including monitoring and evaluation of adoption. The framework and policy will be supported by training and guidance which is being developed to support consistency and ensure skills gaps are met.

This work is being taken forward in partnership with the Students' Association, with a joint Student Voice Charter currently in development. Co-signed by EUSA and the University, the Charter will set out a shared vision, clear expectations, and accountability for 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 2024/25, 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 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 students 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 was undertaken in 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. We have also established a Student Survey Management Group (replacing our Survey Ethics Group) to review surveys shared with students across more than one School in order to identify duplicate or similar questions, understand the time pressure of too many surveys and ensure there are appropriate feedback loops.

Student Partnership

We have a University Student Partnership Agreement with 18 funded projects in AY 2024-25 focused on building community, enhancing teaching, learning and curriculum and EDI. Overviews of outcomes from projects are reported on our University Teaching Matters blog with the AY 2024-25 projects being the focus of blog posts in November 2025. We continue to run the successful 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. This year 216 students and staff attending events across the year and with excellent feedback on the usefulness of sessions. 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.

This SEAP has been produced in partnership with the Students' Association and reflects the interests and priorities of students at the University of Edinburgh. We are currently working with the Students' Association on a series of events for semester two to raise student awareness of and engagement with the SEAP.

Action Plan 2025 -2026

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)	**Actions in response to ELIR and QESR recommendations**, in particular prioritising actions over the course of the year in relation to: • assessment and feedback • the training of postgraduate research students who teach • awarding gaps	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:	**Introduce a new PGT Curriculum Framework from AY2026/27** Work on the PGT and UG Curriculum Frameworks has paused while the University undertakes a Portfolio Review as part of our wider work to	Complete a Portfolio Review AY 2025/26.	**Senate Education Committee**

Curriculum Transformation	reimage our size and shape and ways of working in response to the current financial context.		
Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment: Curriculum Transformation	**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). As above, work on the UG Curriculum Framework has paused while the University undertakes a Portfolio Review. Challenge Courses are being piloted as part of the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy.	Develop a Suite of Challenge Courses (12-15 maximum by 2030): 5 Challenge Courses ran in AY 2024/25; 8 Courses are running in AY 2025/26; and we plan to run 10 Courses in 2026/27.	**Senate Education Committee**
Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment: Assessment and Feedback	**Embed the Assessment and Feedback Principles and Priorities.**	AY 2025/26 – set target for all Schools to achieve 80% of feedback on assessed work to be returned within three weeks. All assessment to be accompanied by clear assessment criteria and a marking rubric. Develop a new Assessment and Feedback policy for implementation at the start of AY 2026/27.	**Assessment and Feedback Strategy Group,** reporting to **Senate Education Committee**
Excellence in Learning, Teaching and Assessment:	**Implement the Learning and Teaching Strategy 2030.** The Learning and Teaching Strategy builds on the work of the Curriculum Transformation Programme and is embedding the key outcomes from CTP (e.g. Edinburgh Student Vision, Skills for Success Framework and	Develop implementation plan with actions and KPIs in AY 2025/26 to support the implementation of the Learning	**Senate Education Committee**

Learning and Teaching Strategy	Challenge Courses). The PGT and UG Curriculum Frameworks are currently paused pending Portfolio Review (see above).	and Teaching Strategy and monitor its impact.	
Enhancement and Quality Culture: Sector enhancement activity	**Engage with the Scotland's Tertiary Enhancement Programme (STEP)** via participation as co-lead institution (with Edinburgh College) in the Student Access, Progression, and Success Outcomes (SAPSO) project.	November 2025 – submit detailed project plan to QAA. February 2026 – host project team conducting qualitative student interviews. March 2026 – submit mid-year project report to QAA. June 2026 – submit end of year project report to QAA.	**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.**	New Student Voice Policy will be developed by the end of AY 2025–26, with full implementation planned for AY 2026–27, including monitoring and evaluation of adoption. The framework and policy will be supported by training and guidance which is being developed to support consistency and ensure skills gaps are met.	**Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary Students/Senate Quality Assurance Committee/Students' Association**

Supporting Student Success Student Support	**Monitor and evaluate the impact of the new student support approach.** - **Student Support Community of Practice** – to be established as a forum for staff to share practice and discuss issues. - **Cohort Lead** – session to be held in semester two to share good practice and discuss the enhancement of the academic elements of the student support model. Deans of Students will also lead discussions in their Colleges with areas needing additional support implementing the Cohort Lead role. - **Monitoring and Evaluation** – SSCIG and SQAC to continue to develop the monitoring and evaluation processes for student support.	Student Support Community of Practice – to be establish in semester two, AY 2025-26 Cohort Lead good practice session - semester two, AY 2025-26 Deans of Students to lead discussion with areas needing support implementing Cohort Lead role - semester two, AY 2025-26 Monitoring and Evaluation - process development continuing AY 2025-26	**Associate Principal and Deputy Secretary Students/Student Support Continuous Improvement Group (SSCIG)**
Supporting Student Success: Awarding Gaps	Continue work to understand the causes of and how to narrow **awarding gaps**, supporting Schools by sharing good practice: - **Definitions** – task group to work with WP team to agree definitions and characteristics of different student groups to be used to monitor University awarding gaps - **Monitor** – SQAC to continue to use enhanced analysis of degree outcome data to monitor University awarding gaps - **Benchmarking** – task group to identify interventions that have been effective across the sector - **Pilot** - trial and evaluate interventions identified by the task group	Task group to report on definitions and benchmarking at the April 2026 meeting of SQAC Trial and evaluate of awarding gap interventions in AY 2026-27, overseen by SQAC and EDIC	**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 2024-25, 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: 26 November 2025