University of Glasgow

Academic Quality Framework

The University of Glasgow is committed to maintaining its academic standards and enhancing the quality of its learning and teaching provision.

The professionalism and creativity of staff, individually and collectively, makes a vital contribution to the enhancement of provision, through their attention to their students' experience as learners, to the development of their disciplines, and their engagement with their teaching practice.

The Academic Quality Framework provides an overview of our quality processes and their inter-relationships, brief summary information about the processes and further links to full statements of the processes and procedures.

For students: the University is committed to providing a high quality learning experience. The direct contribution that students make to this, through providing feedback, advice and suggestions, is critical. Input from students is a key feature of all our quality enhancement and assurance processes: we need students to give us the students' perspective.

For staff: The quality and commitment of staff are critical to maintaining and enhancing the high quality of learning & teaching. The University fully recognises that all staff, both academic and support, are continuously reflecting upon and seeking to improve practice in all areas of our work to advance learning and teaching and research in their disciplines and the quality of the student learning experience. The Academic Quality Framework and the processes it encompasses are intended to be appropriate and meaningful vehicles to support reflection and to capture, recognise and disseminate the excellent practice that is characteristic of our provision.

Comments on this document, suggestions for improvement or additional material are welcomed. Contact Jack Aitken (Jack.Aitken@glasgow.ac.uk) or Helen Butcher (Helen.Butcher@glasgow.ac.uk) in the Senate Office.

Updated: November 2021

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Terminology

We use the definitions of the following key terms based on those used across the UK and set out by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA):

- **Academic standards** are a way of describing the level of achievement that a student has to reach to gain an academic award (for example, a degree). It should be at a similar level across the UK.

  Note that standards are considered to be absolute – they do not change. This means that a 2:1 at Glasgow should be comparable with a 2:1 at St Andrews; a 2:1 in 2010 should be comparable with a 2:1 in 2018 in the terms of the level of difficulty. For this reason it is normally said that standards are 'maintained' or 'secured'.

- **Academic quality** is a way of describing how well the learning opportunities available to students help them to achieve their award. It is about making sure that appropriate and effective teaching, support, assessment and learning opportunities are provided for them.

  Quality can be assured and it can also be enhanced.

- **Quality enhancement** is taking deliberate steps to bring about improvement in the effectiveness of the learning experience of students.

  It means that we are committed to reviewing our activities systematically to see whether we can identify features of current practice that can be improved. It also means that we systematically look ahead, considering 'where we want to be' and taking the necessary steps to ensure we get there. It does not mean that our quality is not presently at a high level, or that what we provide for students must be subject to constant change.

Other key terms to note are:

- **Academic session (or academic year)** - the 12-month period, beginning in September, during which courses are taught and assessed

- **Course** - a self-contained unit of study on a particular topic with defined level, credit value, aims, intended learning outcomes, mode(s) of delivery, scheme of assessment, and possibly also pre- and co-requisites

- **Programme** - a set of compulsory and elective courses leading to a defined award, with defined aims, intended learning outcomes, mode(s) of delivery, and scheme of assessment

- **Award** - the degree, certificate or diploma which is conferred following the successful completion of a defined programme of study

Responsibility

As a university, we are responsible for the quality and academic standards of all awards of the University of Glasgow.

We are also answerable to a number of external bodies for the quality of the learning experience we provide for our students. Our Academic Quality Framework is informed by:

- Expectations set out in the SFC's Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework

- Sector good practice articulated in the QAA's UK Quality Code

- Expectations of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory bodies (PSRBs) (e.g. the General Medical Council and Institution of Engineering & Technology)

- European expectations derived through the Bologna Process and the development of the European Higher Education Area

In addition to addressing these requirements, the University's approach to maintaining academic standards and enhancing quality of its provision is based on the view that it is good practice for any organisation to reflect on its own performance (quality assurance) and consider ways of doing things better (quality enhancement).

Guiding Principles

The University's approach to Quality Enhancement and Assurance is guided by the following principles:-

Completeness

Quality processes apply to all University provision in learning and teaching that is credit-rated including collaborative programmes with other institutions where partners are expected to operate equivalent, if not the same, processes. The learning experience of all students is systematically considered and reflected upon regularly and periodically.

Coherence

The components of the Quality Framework are inter-related and act to draw together diverse individuals and information in a coherent and holistic review of quality.

Objectivity

Institution-led quality processes are informed by the views and input of external experts and bodies. The University undergoes Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) conducted by a team of external academics and students and organised by the QAA.

Efficiency and enhancement

The components of the Academic Quality Framework are designed to ensure rigorous interrogation of academic standards and enhancement of academic quality while meeting the needs of academic staff and minimising the impact on workload. Accordingly, the processes themselves are subject to frequent – mostly annual – review.

Devolved Responsibility

The University's staff are collectively responsible for maintaining academic standards. The components of our Academic Quality Framework are designed to support devolved

responsibility and everyone involved in academic activity; and to demonstrate that we are committed to providing a high quality learning experience.

The Quality Enhancement Framework in Scotland

The Scottish Further and Higher Education Funding Council (SFC) requires the University, as a publicly funded body, to demonstrate the academic standards of its provision and quality of the learning opportunities it provides for its students. Its expectations are described in the Quality Enhancement Framework in Scotland. The framework was devised by the SFC working with Universities Scotland, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) and representatives of the student body. It has been in operation since 2003. The SFC employs the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) (Scotland) to carry out much of its work in operating and maintaining the framework. More information on the Funding Council's requirements can be found at:

www.sfc.ac.uk/publications-statistics/guidance/guidance-2017/SFCGD112017.aspx
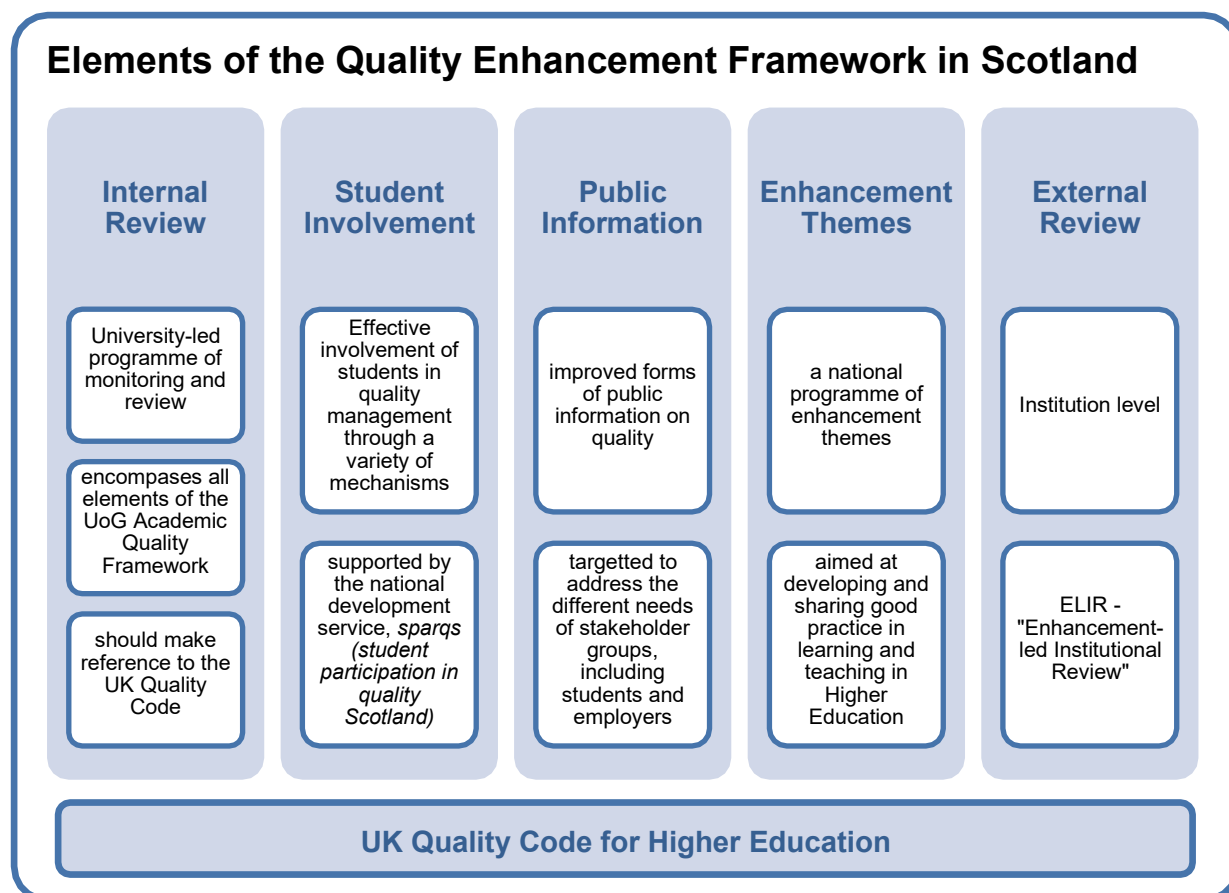
The Quality Enhancement Framework in Scotland emphasises the quality of the student learning experience and the role and responsibility of institutions in enhancing that experience. It operates on the principles set out below.

Principles of the National Quality Enhancement Framework in Scotland

Responsibility	• institutions in Scotland manifestly take a responsible approach to the maintenance of quality and standards;
Ownership	• Ownership of quality and standards issues rests with the **institutions** and not with SFC or the Quality Assurance Agency;
Committment to Enhancement	• institutions are committed to the principle of continuous quality enhancement;
Student Involvement	• students have a major involvement in internal and external quality processes;
Public Information	• students and other stakeholders have access to relevant public information about the nature and quality of provision.

The Quality Enhancement Framework in Scotland differs from those in operation in other parts of the UK in that the Scottish framework has a broader and more established emphasis on enhancement than the frameworks in England & Northern Ireland and in Wales.
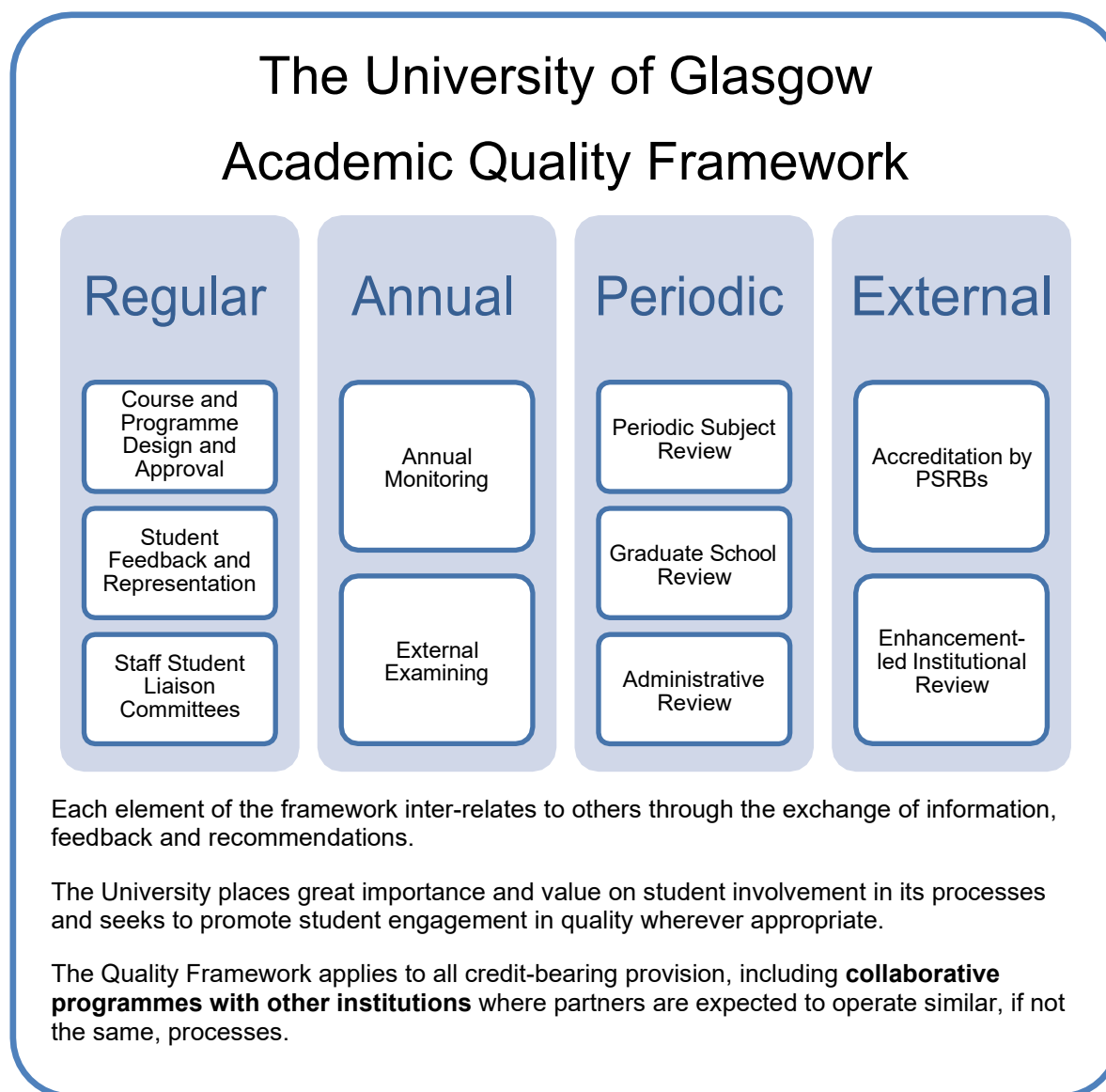
The Quality Enhancement Framework in Scotland has five inter-related elements: Internal review; student involvement; public information; enhancement themes; and external review.

Elements of the Quality Enhancement Framework in Scotland

Internal Review	Student Involvement	Public Information	Enhancement Themes	External Review
University-led programme of monitoring and review	Effective involvement of students in quality management through a variety of mechanisms	improved forms of public information on quality	a national programme of enhancement themes	Institution level
encompasses all elements of the UoG Academic Quality Framework	supported by the national development service, *sparqs (student participation in quality Scotland)*	targetted to address the different needs of stakeholder groups, including students and employers	aimed at developing and sharing good practice in learning and teaching in Higher Education	ELIR - "Enhancement-led Institutional Review"
should make reference to the UK Quality Code				

UK Quality Code for Higher Education

The national Framework places reliance and emphasis on institutions' own review processes to safeguard quality and standards, and to promote enhancement. The University must, therefore, engage with all elements of the Framework and with the Quality Code for Higher Education. It is judged on the effectiveness of this engagement periodically through Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR). The University of Glasgow's quality management processes are well matched to the national framework and are described in the following sections.

The University of Glasgow Academic Quality Framework

This diagram presents a summary of the University's framework of quality assurance and enhancement processes. The processes themselves are described briefly below with links provided to the full process guidance.

The University of Glasgow
Academic Quality Framework

Regular

- Course and Programme Design and Approval
- Student Feedback and Representation
- Staff Student Liaison Committees

Annual

- Annual Monitoring
- External Examining

Periodic

- Periodic Subject Review
- Graduate School Review
- Administrative Review

External

- Accreditation by PSRBs
- Enhancement-led Institutional Review

Each element of the framework inter-relates to others through the exchange of information, feedback and recommendations.

The University places great importance and value on student involvement in its processes and seeks to promote student engagement in quality wherever appropriate.

The Quality Framework applies to all credit-bearing provision, including **collaborative programmes with other institutions** where partners are expected to operate similar, if not the same, processes.

It is important to note that each process is informed by the output of others to create a *coherent* framework.

The principle of *completeness* is expressed in the application of the framework of activities to **all** credit-bearing provision. Importantly, this includes all collaborative provision, such as validation, accreditation and transnational education partnerships. We review the partner's quality management arrangements at the outset and periodically throughout the partnership to ensure that they operate equivalent, robust processes as a condition of the agreement.

Regular Activity

The activities of Course and Programme Design and Approval, Student Feedback and Student Representation happen on a continuous basis throughout the year.

Course and Programme Design and Approval

The University's procedures for the design and approval of new courses and programmes exist to ensure academic standards are set at the appropriate level. The University's excellent reputation relies on this and, therefore, it is essential that these procedures are both robust and effective. They ensure that consideration is given to:

- availability of resources

- coherence and academic standard of constituent courses

- standard and appropriateness of awards offered on completion of proposed programmes

- relevance and appeal of programmes and courses for potential students

- compatibility with other programmes and courses offered and the strategic objectives of the leading School as well as the University as a whole

- the external context including Subject Benchmark Statements

Consideration of proposals is informed by consultation of key stakeholders to provide externality and *objectivity*: Students, External Examiners and Employers, Professional/Statutory/Regulatory Bodies and industrial /professional partners where appropriate. The Marketing Intelligence team within External Relations advise on the marketability and marketing of new programmes. The College then confirms that the proposal fits with existing provision and can be resourced.

Responsibility for the approval of programmes and courses is delegated by Senate to Colleges and Schools.

a)   Schools have *devolved responsibility* for the approval of:

- proposals relating to courses (new/ change/ withdrawal/ suspension)

These proposals are considered and approved by the School Learning and Teaching Committee and are then reported to the College Board of Studies. A summary of this activity is reported to Academic Standards Committee. Course designers/proposers should check with their College for deadlines and local processes.

b)   Colleges have *devolved responsibility* for the approval of:

- proposals relating to programmes (new/ change/ withdrawal/ suspension).

Colleges, via their Boards of Studies, must consider these proposals in detail prior to approving them on Senate's behalf. A summary of all approvals is reported Academic Standards Committee.

c)   A sub-group of Academic Standards Committee (ASC) considers and approves programme proposals that span Colleges and/ or where there is concern at the College Board of Studies as to whether the proposal complies with University policy.

Course and Programme Approval activity at College Boards of Studies is monitored by Academic Standards Committee (ASC) via an annual report prepared by the Senate Office.

The Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Service provides guidance on course and programme design and review for academic staff on the key steps to take in the design and review of new or existing programmes or courses at undergraduate and taught postgraduate levels. The guidance includes a range of resources that encourage course and programme designers towards the current understanding of good educational practice.

www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/leads/staff/designanddelivery/

Information on academic regulations and Course and Programme Approval procedures is provided by the Senate Office.

www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qea/progdesignapproval/

Student Feedback

The University of Glasgow is committed to the principle of student engagement in quality matters at all levels. We rely on the feedback from our students to guide us and to confirm that the enhancements we make to our provision translate to enhancement of the student learning experience. The University and the Students' Representative Council (SRC) work to maintain an effective and *coheren*t system of student representation that facilitates the participation of students at all levels.

Effective student feedback relies on engagement of both staff and student and, as such, the University places a number of expectations on the two groups.

Staff are expected to:

- explain the purpose of collecting feedback, the methods that will be utilised, how the feedback will be analysed, how and when the findings will be considered and how actions taken as a result of the findings will be communicated back

- encourage students to reflect on their learning experience

- communicate responses to students and staff

- communicate matters of interest and import arising from feedback from students onwards to School, College and the University

Students are expected to:

- reflect on their learning experience

- provide feedback on their learning experience and other relevant/associated matters

- engage with Student Representatives

- check MyClassReps, Moodle (VLE), notice boards, relevant websites, and their University e-mail account for communications from staff and Student Representatives

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Course Evaluation

The University encourages staff to use a variety of mechanisms to obtain student feedback to promote ongoing dialogue between students and staff and to minimise over-reliance on one particular mechanism. However, the most commonly used method of gathering student feedback is the course evaluation questionnaire. To ensure practice is consistent, the University sets out its requirements for gathering course evaluation data from students via questionnaires in its Course Evaluation Policy. This policy covers the means of collecting, presenting, and responding to questionnaire data.

The key elements of the University's policy on course evaluation are:

- **All** courses must use a course questionnaire as one of the methods to solicit feedback from students.

- The minimum requirement for the questionnaire is the verbatim inclusion of five core questions. If desired, the questionnaire may be extended by adding further questions. Various question sets tailored to suit different purposes are provided, as are principles for the design of extended questionnaires.

- Students should be given clear instructions on how to complete the questionnaire and advised when it will be circulated.

- For each course, the data from the completed questionnaires should be summarised in a 'Summary and Response' document which is made readily available to students.

- Access to all data associated with individual courses is restricted; aggregated data will be more widely distributed and used for institutional purposes.

To demonstrate to students that their feedback is valued, "closing the feedback loop" is an essential part of the process. In completing Summary and Response documents, staff are encouraged to reflect on the feedback provided and to follow up on issues identified in more detail and greater depth, if necessary, to ensure their responses are targeted and result in a real improvement to the learning experience. Summary and Response documents should feed into Staff Student Liaison Committees but staff and student representatives also have a responsibility to communicate the responses to matters raised more widely to all students and other relevant members of staff

www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/senateoffice/qea/courseevaluation/

The University considers that communication is key to effective student feedback and to facilitate this, the University developed "MyClassReps", an online service aimed at facilitating communications between students and their representatives. It puts the wider student community in direct contact with the representatives that have been elected to represent them on SSLCs, and at School, College and University-level. The information displayed to students is personalised to their curriculum and the School or Institute in which they are studying. There is a facility for student representatives to log "issues", gauge support or agreement of the class or group, and report back on progress as they discuss matters with staff.

Student Representation

The University's arrangements for the involvement of students in University quality processes are inclusive at all levels and are thoroughly embedded. Student representatives are members of Court and Senate; of all relevant University-wide policy or strategic committees and working groups (e.g. Student Experience, Education Policy & Strategy); and on College, School/RI and Subject committees.

Election of University and College level Student Representatives is organised by the Students' Representative Council (SRC). At local level, classes or other groupings of students are invited to elect representatives, with the process being prompted and facilitated by staff at the beginning of each semester or year.

It is important that elections should be completed as early as possible to allow those elected to attend training sessions. The University and the SRC agree that training of student representatives is key to the successful operation of SSLCs. The SRC takes responsibility for organising the training to maintain the autonomy of the representative system. The training is delivered by senior representatives who can pass on their own experience. The University provides input annually.

To recognise the value and importance of the role of the student representative to the University community, we record confirmed terms of office as a representative on the student's Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR).

Further information on student representation including staff and student toolkits is online at:
www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/senateoffice/qea/studentengagement/studentrepresentationmyclassreps/

Staff Student Liaison Committees

Staff Student Liaison Committees (SSLCs) provide a regular, formal route for student representatives to feedback directly to staff on the operation of courses or programmes they are taking.

The function of the SSLC is important because:

- It allows staff and students to discuss ideas and to solve problems together

- It is a formal, qualitative means of consulting students and gauging their opinion on academic matters and soliciting suggestions for improvements/enhancements

- It allows students' views within the Subject, School or Graduate School to be communicated and concerns which require consideration beyond the Subject, School or Graduate School to be identified

- It provides a mechanism for obtaining student feedback and communicating action taken in response to feedback

Schools/RIs and Subject areas are responsible for operating SSLCs according to the structure that works best for them and their students, with a minimum requirement of a school level SSLC. Some have a separate SSLC for each course, some for each level, others have a combined SSLC for all levels of study within a particular programme. The

frequency of meetings can also vary depending on the duration of the course/programme, but a minimum of at least one meeting in each semester is expected.

SSLC membership should include all student representatives in the relevant group and members of staff with specific remits for Learning and Teaching and Student Support. There should be a majority of student members and they should be invited to assume responsibility for convening the SSLC. If so, an identified member of staff should support them and act as Vice-Convener, if necessary.

The School/RI or Subject area supports the SSLC by producing agendas in consultation with all members (allowing time for student members to consult with the groups they represent e.g. via MyClassReps and Moodle), and taking a minute of each meeting. The minutes should include actions agreed by the SSLC in response to issues raised, who will take it and by when. Approved minutes should be made available to all members of the relevant student group, usually via Student Voice, and to all members of staff. Minutes of Subject SSLCs should be considered at the overarching School SSLC which should in turn be reported to the nominated body at College level.

Closing the feedback loop is an important part of the SSLC function and, as such, the SSLC should receive update reports on actions at the next meeting. It is also important to report back where it has not been possible to progress an issue along with the reasons why. In doing so, Schools and Graduate Schools can demonstrate that they are committed to the process and take students' issues seriously. Representatives also take responsibility for reporting back to the wider student body via MyClassReps or other fora, possibly highlighting or drawing the attention of the wider student group to particular discussions.

If a concern cannot be resolved at the SSLC, it should be referred onwards to the School/RI and/or College Learning and Teaching Committee or Graduate Studies Committee. If no progress is made, unresolved issues which require the attention of the College or the wider University should be highlighted in the Annual Monitoring process. Student representatives can access additional support from the appropriate SRC College Convenor or SRC Postgraduate Convenor if they feel that an issue is not being dealt with appropriately or quickly enough or with issues that cannot be resolved at the SSLC.

Guidance on the Operation of Staff Student Liaison Committees is available from the Senate Office as part of the *Code of Practice on Student Representation*.

www.gla.ac.uk/myglasgow/senateoffice/qea/studentengagement/studentrepresentationmyclassreps/ (Additional information section)

Annual Activity

These activities take place annually and reflect on the operation of courses and programmes, student feedback, student performance and other measures of the quality of the student learning experience throughout the preceding year.

These activities are informed by the regular activities of course and programme design and approval, student feedback, student representation and SSLCs. The outcomes in turn inform the periodic review processes, particularly Periodic Subject Review and Graduate School Review.

Annual Monitoring

Annual Monitoring is the building block of the University's Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement processes and the process whereby Schools/RIs, Colleges and the University check that courses and programmes meet the expectations of staff and students.

Annual monitoring has a key role in:

- maintaining academic standards

- monitoring and enhancing the management of assessment and feedback

- monitoring student performance and progression

- evaluating the quality of the student experience and identifying enhancements

- evaluating the effectiveness of learning and teaching resources and identifying matters requiring attention

- identifying, promoting and disseminating good practice

- gathering evidence of local initiatives and progress in relation to College Plans and the University Learning and Teaching Strategy

- monitoring developments from PSR and PSRB reports (where appropriate)

- informing the School/RI, College and University of matters requiring their attention

Responsibility for the Annual Monitoring process is a *devolved responsibility* to Colleges and is managed locally by School and College Quality & Enhancement Officers. Course or Programme leaders conduct a review of the 'Unit of Learning' following the completion of teaching and assessment. The 'Unit of Learning' allows provision to be reviewed by cognate groups of courses, year group or by programme, whichever is most appropriate and suited to the nature of the provision.

There are four main elements that are monitored and reported. Firstly, various forms of **data** are considered: student numbers; student performance; feedback from students, staff and internal and external agencies; and any other performance indicators that have been identified. Next, **good and innovative practices** are highlighted for sharing and enhancing our practice. There must then be **reflection** on the information gathered and plans proposed for **improvement** to respond to any issues or aspects of the provision that can be developed.

The outcomes of this review are reported to the School Quality & Enhancement Officer at an Annual Monitoring Meeting or in an Annual Monitoring Report (AMR). The School Quality & Enhancement Officer prepares a School Annual Monitoring Summary (SAMS). In turn, the College Quality & Enhancement Officer reviews the SAMS and prepares a College Annual Monitoring Summary (CAMS). The reports at each stage are important for documenting that quality and standards are being assured and enhanced and that good practice is promoted.

The reporting procedure is designed to ensure that issues arising from monitoring are properly considered, reflected on and acted upon at each stage and at the relevant committees (see table). Responses are also provided at each stage - closing the feedback loop and ensuring that actions and outcomes are reported back to staff and students is a crucial element of Annual Monitoring as well as other processes.

Committee	Role in Annual Monitoring
Staff-Student Liaison Committees	To gather input from Students and confirm that the AMR reflects their experience
School Learning &Teaching Committee	To review and direct action at School level from the SAMS – School Annual Monitoring Summary
College Learning &Teaching Committee	To review and direct action at College level from the CAMS – College Annual Monitoring Summary - of all SAMSs produced by the College
Academic Standards Committee	To review and direct action at University level arising from the four CAMS

The final stage of annual monitoring is formal consideration of the College summaries (CAMS) by the University's Academic Standards Committee (ASC). ASC reviews the CAMS to: identify trends and common themes across the Colleges; identify good practice with potential application across the wider university; and ensure a timely response and action, where appropriate, to issues raised for resolution at University level. The Quality & Enhancement Officers Forum provides additional monitoring of progress with these issues and receives updates from ASC that the School and College Officers disseminate to colleagues and students. The Quality & Enhancement Officers Forum also monitors the effectiveness of Annual Monitoring on behalf of the University and recommends potential enhancements.

The Annual Monitoring Process is supported by the Senate Office who can provide guidance and advice.

www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qea/annualmonitoring/

External Examining

External Examiners provide a crucial element of *objectivity* and externality in helping us to maintain academic standards at the appropriate level and to ensure that student performance is properly and fairly judged. As such, the role of external examiner plays a vital part in quality assurance and contributes greatly to quality enhancement.

External examiners are appointed for all taught programmes (undergraduate and postgraduate) and for research degree candidates. They are formally appointed for a four-year term of office by the University Court on the recommendation of Senate based on advice from the relevant School/RI. We only appoint examiners who have the appropriate seniority and experience and have no conflicts of interest (the criteria for appointment can be found at the link below).

External examiners are full members of the relevant Board of Examiners and are invited to all meetings of the Board for the courses which they examine. They should attend, at least, the main meeting of the relevant Board of Examiners. Where attendance is prevented by exceptional circumstances, the external examiner must provide a written report on the examination prior to the meeting of the Board.

In carrying out their full role, External Examiners are expected to:

- comment on the syllabus, learning objectives and assessment scheme of the course and its delivery mechanism in the light of experiences of candidates' learning outcomes, comparable courses and awards elsewhere and developments within the discipline or field

- comment on, in advance, all summative assessment instruments (or, in cases involving a high volume of continuous assessment, a sample may be provided for advance comment)

- report on the overall standards achieved by candidates and in particular on the comparability of these standards with those of candidates on similar courses or programmes in other UK Higher Education institutions

- report on the relationship between these overall standards, programme specifications (where available) and published national subject benchmark statements

- assess the soundness and fairness of the implementation of the assessment process

- adjudicate where necessary, subject to the authority of Senate, over the grade or class to be awarded to any particular candidate

- certify contentment with the assessment outcomes prior to their publication

- provide an annual written report to the Principal as required by the University

To enable the external examiners to carry out their duties, Senate Office provides them with induction information pertinent to their role and Schools/RIs supplement this with information[1] on the particular courses or programmes being examined. Schools/RIs are also responsible for ensuring that new external examiners are invited to attend an induction session with the School/RI or subject area on the day of, but prior to, the Board of Examiners meeting to discuss information/issues related to the subject.

The External Examiners' annual written reports are received, reviewed by the Senate Office and categorised according to the type of response an Examiner's comments require. Where concerns have been raised that require attention, the School/RI or Subject area is asked to discuss the issue and to report to the Senate Office within three months on any action taken, or with the reasons for not taking action. Provided the response is satisfactory, the response is recorded and forwarded to the External Examiner.

External examiners' reports and the follow up correspondence are used by the University in Annual Monitoring and Periodic Subject Review as well as in the external process of institutional review (ELIR). External Examiners should be informed of the outcomes of these processes for general information.

In addition to their role in assessment, External Examiners can expect to be consulted formally on proposals for the introduction or modification of a course or programme in their area of expertise as part of the Course and Programme Design and Approval Process.

Information on the criteria for appointment of external examiners is available from the Senate Office website alongside other guidance on the process. The Senate Office will provide advice on any aspect of this.

www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qea/externalexaminers/

The Code of Assessment is an essential related resource for all examiners at the University and is available along with supplementary guidance from the Senate Office.

www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/policies/assessment/

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[1] That is: benchmark statements; course information documentation; copies of examination papers and other assessment instruments of previous years; details of the way in which the results of individual papers or other units of assessment are aggregated, averaged or profiled to produce an overall result; details of any exemption schemes; the dates of meetings of the Board(s) of Examiners; a statement of school assessment procedures; and the external examiner report(s) for the previous session together with any relevant correspondence and the retiring external examiner's general report (where provided).

Periodic Activity

The University operates three periodic internal review processes: **Periodic Subject Review** looking at undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision; **Graduate School Review** looking at the learning experience of postgraduate research students; and **University Services Review** looking at the quality of University services.

While the nature of internal review is determined by the University, the Scottish Funding Council requires that it must incorporate certain features that are aimed at ensuring "internal reviews provide robust, comprehensive and credible evidence that standards and quality of provision in Scottish HEIs are being maintained".

The features of Internal Review required by SFC are:

- coverage of all provision on a cycle of not more than 6 years

- review of the learning experience of all University students, including postgraduate research students

- the use of trained reviewers and external specialists on review teams

- taking account of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), subject benchmark statements, etc

- reviewing the effectiveness of annual monitoring arrangements

- taking full account of student feedback, and including procedures to obtain student views of the provision being reviewed

Periodic Subject Review

The periodic review of Schools/RIs and Subject areas is one of the main ways by which the University assures itself of the quality of the student learning experience and of the provision we deliver. Periodic Subject Review (PSR) considers undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision either by School/Research Institute or by Subject Area and operates on a six-year cycle.

The PSR provides a formal opportunity for a School/RI/Subject area to reflect on and critically evaluate its provision and to benefit from a constructive dialogue with senior academics outwith that School/RI/Subject Area. It is intended to be positive and constructive, supporting staff in the enhancement of their activities.

PSR covers the following aspects of provision:

- teaching, learning and assessment

- the student experience

- quality assurance and enhancement procedures

- academic management, research and resources as they relate to teaching, learning and assessment

Each review is carried out by a Panel that includes a student representative and at least one academic external member, who is a subject specialist. Other panel members are the Convener, selected from one of the Vice-Principals[2], the Assistant Vice-Principal (Learning & Teaching), the Clerk of Senate, and the Convener or Academic Standards Committee; a member of staff from a Cognate subject area; a Senate Assessor on Court; and a member of staff from the Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Service. The Panel also includes a member of staff from the Senate Office, who has expertise in the process and is responsible for preparing the report.

The format of the review can be summarised as:

- the preparation and submission of a Self Evaluation Report and supporting documentation[3] by the School/RI/Subject Area

- review of the documentation by the Panel

- a visit to meet and discuss provision with staff and students

- production of a report which is submitted to Academic Standards Committee

- action on the recommendations by the School/RI/Subject Area and others named within the report

- a report on progress with the recommendations to Academic Standards Committee at six months from the receipt of the finalised report and further follow-on progress reports as deemed necessary

Engagement with, and the participation of students are vital components of the PSR process. Student engagement takes place prior to the review through briefings on the process and consultation on the Self Evaluation Report; during the review through meetings and discussion with the Panel; and following the review through receipt of summary reports and discussion of the recommendations at SSLCs. There is also indirect engagement with students' views and feedback gathered in previous years and supplied as part of the documentation for the review.

The outcome of the PSR is a detailed report that highlights strengths and achievements and includes recommendations for change that are aimed at strengthening provision and further enhancing learning and teaching provision and the student experience. The report is submitted to Academic Standards Committee (ASC) which endorses or amends the report and the recommendations and forwards them to the School/RI/Subject area and others named in the recommendations for action. ASC reports any issues that impact beyond the School/RI/Subject Area or have more serious academic or resource implications to Education Policy and Strategy Committee, Senate, the Senior Management Group or the University Court as appropriate.

ASC monitors progress in addressing the recommendations from PSRs through update reports requested[4] six months from the date that ASC confirms the Report. The School/RI/Subject area is also expected to provide feedback to students on the outcomes of the review and on the actions taken. ASC may request further follow-up reports in certain circumstances, e.g. where progress has been limited or delayed. Full and summary PSR

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[2] Other than the Vice-Principal/Heads of College
[3] Supporting documentation is drawn from existing sources such as annual monitoring reports, external examiner reports, SSLC minutes.
[4] Those responsible for taking action will be contacted by the Senate Office and advised of the relevant timescales.

reports and updates on progress with the recommendations are published online by the Senate Office.

As well as using Annual Monitoring and External Examiner reports and SSLC minutes as part of the core set of documentation, PSR feeds back into the annual monitoring process via the expectation that School/RI/Subject area will comment on the impact of the PSR on provision in the next round of annual monitoring. PSR reports, recommendation responses and overview reports inform external review through their contribution to annual engagement meetings with the Quality Assurance Agency and Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR). In addition, an annual report is made to the Scottish Funding Council on the progress with the schedule for and the outcomes of PSRs, together with details of other internal reviews and any engagements with Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies.

The Senate Office and Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Service provide support, briefings and guidance for School/RI/Subject area at all stages of the process and co-ordinate training for Panel members, including student members.

More information and guidance on Periodic Subject Review is available from the Senate Office.

www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qea/periodicsubjectreview/

Graduate School Review

Graduate School Review is similar to Periodic Subject Review but focuses on the postgraduate research student experience and Graduate School matters. These Reviews were established as part of the University's commitment to institutional self-evaluation and *completeness*; providing a quality experience for **all** students. These reviews take place on a five-year cycle – four years of reviewing one graduate school per year followed by one year of reflection.

The purpose and benefit of Graduate School Review is threefold:

- to provide an opportunity for the University to evaluate its provision, the processes it uses to support its students and the resources available to ensure that provision is of a consistently high quality across the institution

- to enable the University to provide evidence of the high quality of its postgraduate research provision

- to build the case for investment and institutional change to support postgraduate research

The Graduate School Review provides a formal opportunity for a Graduate School to reflect on and critically evaluate its PGR provision and the processes relating to its management, and to benefit from a constructive dialogue with senior academics from outwith the College. It is intended to be positive and constructive, supporting Graduate Schools in the enhancement of their provision; it is not punitive or confrontational.

Graduate School Review covers the following aspects of postgraduate research provision within each Graduate School:

- academic assessment standards for postgraduate research

- structure and processes to support PGR provision both academic and administrative (e.g. staff structure, procedures and policies specific to the Graduate School)

- how the Graduate School ensures and enhances the quality of PGR provision

The review may also make reference to and highlight issues relating to postgraduate taught aspects of graduate school provision where appropriate.

Each review is carried out by a Panel that includes a postgraduate student representative and at least one external academic member. Other panel members are the Convener, normally the Vice-Principal (Research); a Dean of Graduate Studies, or similar, from a cognate discipline; and a Senate Assessor. The Panel also includes a member of staff from the Postgraduate Research Service, who has expertise in the process and is responsible for preparing the report.

The format of the review can be summarised as:

- provision to the graduate school by the University's central services of statistical information on postgraduate research students and postgraduate research degrees to be included in the review

- the preparation and submission of a Self-Evaluation Questionnaire (SEQ) and supporting documentation by the graduate school, including review and validation of the relevant statistical and other information supplied as above

- a Panel visit to the graduate school to meet with staff and students

- production of a report which is submitted to the Research Planning and Strategy Committee (RPSC)

- action on the recommendations by the graduate school and others named within the report

- a report on progress with the recommendations to RPSC at one year (or less) from the receipt of the finalised report and further progress reports as deemed necessary by RPSC

Engagement with and the participation of students are vital components of the Graduate School Review process. Student engagement takes place prior to the review through briefings on the process and consultation on the Self Evaluation Questionnaire; during the review through meetings and discussion with the Panel; and following the review through receipt of summary reports and discussion of the recommendations at SSLCs. There is also indirect engagement with students' views and feedback through the documentation submitted for the review.

The outcome of the Graduate School Review is a detailed report that highlights strengths and achievements and includes recommendations for change that are aimed at strengthening provision and further enhancing provision and the student experience. The report is submitted to Research Planning and Strategy Committee (RPSC) along with a formal response from the College. RPSC endorses or amends the report and the recommendations and forwards them to the graduate school and others named in the recommendations for action. Any issues arising from the review which impact beyond the Graduate School or have more serious academic or resource implications will be discussed by RPSC, Senate, the Senior Management Group and University Court, as necessary.

RPSC monitors progress in addressing the recommendations through update reports requested a year from the date that RPSC receives the report. RPSC may request further follow-up reports in certain circumstances, e.g. where progress has been limited or delayed.

Graduate School Review reports and progress reports on recommendations are published online by Postgraduate Research Service.

Graduate School Review reports and progress reports on recommendations responses and overview reports inform annual engagement meetings with the Quality Assurance Agency and the external Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR). An annual report is also made to the Scottish Funding Council on the progress with the schedule for, and the outcomes of, Graduate School Reviews, together with details of other internal reviews and any engagements with Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies.

The Postgraduate Research Service provides support to graduate schools throughout the process.

The University Code of Practice for PGR Degrees is an essential related resource and is also available from the Postgraduate Research Service.

www.gla.ac.uk/services/postgraduateresearch/pgrcodeofpractice/

Student-Facing Service Review

The aim of Student-Facing Service Review is to ensure that services reflect on the range and appropriateness of the services they deliver; continuously endeavour to improve their performance and contribution to an excellent student experience at Glasgow, and provide value-for-money. Following a major organisational review of University Services in 2018 and more recent senior staff changes, including the appointment of a new Deputy Secretary and Director of Planning late in 2020, work has been ongoing to re-develop the University's framework to support review of student-facing professional services. In the interim period there have been reviews of Student Services which led to significant re-organisation and creation of a Student Inclusion and Wellbeing team, and a Review of Provision for Disabled Students which ran from summer of 2020 to February 2021.

Accreditation by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies

The University's degree programmes in a large number of subject areas are endorsed or accredited by relevant Professional, Statutory or Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) that provide an additional layer of externality and *objectivity* to the monitoring of our provision.

PSRBs are concerned to ensure that graduates entering the professions they oversee have the skills and knowledge that enable them to practise their profession safely and appropriately. Accordingly, PSRBs are particularly interested in the content of degree programmes, the staff and physical resources available to support students' learning, and assessment standards and thresholds for professional entry.

Accreditation provides potential benefits for students, e.g. recognised fast-track route for graduates seeking professional status, exemption from certain professional examinations. It also provides benefits to the University being a further way of assuring and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning provision in Subjects and providing a further source of information for Annual Monitoring and Periodic Subject Review by means of accreditation reports.

Typically, a PSRB will carry out periodic reviews of degree programmes to ensure that they continue to meet the requirements for accreditation and reflect current thinking about the profession and its development. Such reviews normally take the form of visits by a panel of members of the relevant body, who prepare a report on their findings. The format and organisation of these reviews and what is required of subject areas in preparation are defined by the PSRB concerned.

Further details on accreditation by PSRBs are available at:

www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qea/professionalstatutoryandregulatorybodyaccreditation/

Enhancement-led Institutional Review

Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) is the way in which the Scottish Funding Council ensures that the University is fulfilling the conditions and guidelines with respect to the standards and quality of its academic provision.

The main features of ELIR are as follows:

- ELIR takes the form of a peer review process. The review team comprises four academic or academic-related staff (three from the UK; one from outwith the UK), a student reviewer and a coordinating reviewer

- The focus is on the effectiveness of the University in maintaining academic standards and to assure and enhance the quality of students' learning experience

- ELIR covers all credit-bearing provision – i.e. UG, PGT and research awards. It also covers validated provision (UoG awards taught by other institutions) and other awards offered in collaboration with other universities

- The review team makes extensive reference to the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education

- Prior to the ELIR visit, the University submits its 'Reflective Analysis' (RA)

- The review team makes two visits to the University: a one day planning visit followed by a main review visit which will last up to five days. The team meets with different groups of staff and students during its visits

- It happens on a five year cycle

- It is carried out on behalf of the SFC by the Quality Assurance Agency (Scotland)

The University underwent its most recent (fourth) ELIR in 2019 and achieved the highest possible outcome. The ELIR Team concluded that the University has **effective** arrangements for managing academic standards and the student learning experience and that these arrangements are likely to continue to be effective in the future.

The full report of the review recognises many positive developments the University has pursued and the robust nature of its quality management arrangements. The report and further information on the 2019 ELIR may be found at:

www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qea/enhancement-ledinstitutionalreview/

The procedures for ELIR are detailed in QAA Handbook for enhancement-led institutional review which can be found at:

www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/en/reviewing-higher-education-in-scotland/enhancement-led-institutional-review

The next ELIR visit to the University will take place during session 2023-24.

UK Quality Code for Higher Education

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) sets out the "Expectations" all providers of UK higher education are required to meet.

The Quality Code is intended to give all higher education providers a shared starting point for setting, describing and assuring the academic standards of their higher education awards and programmes and the quality of the learning opportunities they provide. Individual education providers are expected to use the Quality Code when designing and reviewing their policies for maintaining academic standards and quality.

A revised UK Quality Code was developed in 2018, restructuring the material around three elements.

- **Expectations** - express the outcomes providers should achieve in setting and maintaining the standards of their awards, and for managing the quality of their provision.

- **Practices** - represent effective ways of working that underpin the delivery of the Expectations, and will deliver positive outcomes for students. These include:

  Core practices that must be demonstrated by all UK higher education providers as part of assuring their standards and quality

  Common practices that will be applied by providers in line with their missions, their regulatory context and the needs of their students. These are practices common to the underpinning of quality in all UK providers but are not regulatory requirements for providers in England.

- **Advice and guidance** - help established and new providers to develop and maintain effective quality assurance practices

During ELIR, the Review Team will consider whether our policies and procedures comply with the Quality Code and, if they do not comply, judge whether there are clear and legitimate reasons for this.

www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code

Notes on aspects of the National Quality Enhancement Framework

The following sections refer to some key aspects of Scotland's Quality Enhancement Framework and other quality and standards related resources, providing brief summaries and links.

Involvement of student representatives in University quality systems

The most distinguishing feature of the national Quality Enhancement Framework in Scotland is that students have a major and effective involvement in both internal and external quality processes through a variety of mechanisms. These include:

- systematic representation of students at all levels within institutions;

- effective training and support for student representatives;

- inclusion of student members on review teams within review processes;

- improved consultation on the student experience through national surveys of the student experience within institutions and longitudinal surveys of student and graduate cohorts

QAA Quality Code Chapter B5: Student Engagement expands on the SFC's requirements with guidance to institutions on student representation in quality processes. In broad terms, the expectation is that:

> "Higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience."

Like other Scottish HE institutions, the University of Glasgow has well-established systems for student representation. The University also supports and promotes comprehensive involvement of students in all aspects of quality management processes.

The SFC's guidance on the involvement of students in quality systems is available at:

www.sfc.ac.uk/publications-statistics/guidance/guidance-2017/SFCGD112017.aspx

Public Information on Quality

Public information is one of the five key elements of the Quality Enhancement Framework in Scotland. It focuses on ensuring information the University publishes about its academic provision, through whatever media, is accurate, honest and complete; is not misleading to

members of the public, prospective students, employers etc. as well as current students (for example in relation to student handbooks); and is accessible to the intended users.

The University can determine for itself how to go about this in the light of its own institution-led processes and the needs of its students and other stakeholders. Our approach is to openly share online, as far as possible, our reports, guidance and other documentation concerning our provision and our quality processes, their outcomes and follow-up. The effectiveness of the University's information arrangements for ensuring that public information about the quality of its provision is complete, accurate and fair is considered by the Review Team during Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR).

Quality Enhancement Themes

As part of the quality enhancement framework in Scotland, the QAA supports a programme of national Enhancement Themes that aim to enhance the student learning experience by identifying specific areas for development. They were introduced in 2003 to create a focus around which academic staff, support staff and students could share current good practice and collectively generate ideas and models for innovation in learning and teaching.

University staff are encouraged to interact with the themes through membership of the themes steering committees and contribution of project work, and to make use of the outcome resources and events. Information and resources around current and past themes are available on the enhancement themes website.

www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk

The Bologna Process

The Bologna Process is an intergovernmental initiative which aims to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and to promote the European system of higher education worldwide. It has 48 signatory countries and is conducted outside the formal decision-making framework of the European Union.

The University engaged with the Bologna Process and put in place arrangements for all graduating students to receive the equivalent of a European Diploma Supplement (EDS) with their official transcript. The University provides students with a Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) which records all aspects of their achievement in Higher Education. It includes all the information required in an EDS plus additional information on extracurricular achievements.

Further information about the Bologna Process is available from the Universities UK International Unit that supports the sector's engagement in European Union and Bologna Process policy debates.

www.international.ac.uk/

Subject Benchmark Statements

Subject Benchmark Statements set out expectations about standards of degrees at a given level in a range of subject areas. They describe what gives a discipline its identity and coherence, and define what can be expected of an Honours graduate in terms of the techniques and skills needed to develop understanding in the subject.

Relevant Benchmark Statements should be used in course and programme design to establish that the design of the curricula facilitates:

- acquisition of knowledge and understanding

- acquisition of cognitive skills

- acquisition of subject-specific skills including practical and professional skills

- acquisition of transferable skills

- progression to employment and/or further study

Academic staff should be familiar with the Subject Benchmark Statement(s) relevant to the programmes and courses offered by their Subject/School/RI and they should be used as a reference point for the drafting of Intended Learning Outcomes, curriculum design and review and when developing programme specifications. Subjects/Schools/RIs will also be asked at PSR reviews to demonstrate how they have engaged with the relevant Statement(s).

Subject Benchmark Statements are managed by the QAA and can be found online at

www.qaa.ac.uk/en/quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements

Programme Specifications

The main purpose of programme specifications is to describe the programme aims and intended learning outcomes (ILOs) of each award. They contain core information on the intended knowledge, understanding, skills and other attributes that will have been developed by students on successfully completing a specific programme of study. They provide detailed, programme specific, statements building on the general statements set out in the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) and the subject specific statements in the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement. They also provide details of the teaching, learning and assessment methods.

Programme Specifications are required for all University provision and are required to be updated annually. The University publishes programme specifications online.

Programme specifications are key documents in programme approval at the University and should be developed as an integral part of the programme design. They are approved by the College Board of Studies as part of the Programme Approval process. They also form part of the evidence base for Periodic Subject Review and are used as reference points in annual monitoring and external examining.

University policy on programme specifications is supported by the Senate Office. Further information and guidance can be found at:

www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qea/progdesignapproval/programmespecifications/

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)

The SCQF provides a national vocabulary for describing learning opportunities, thereby making the relationships between qualifications clearer. It identifies entry and exit points, and routes for progression within and across education and training sectors and the opportunities for credit transfer. It is intended to assist learners to plan their progress and minimise duplication of learning.

Two measures are used to place qualifications and programmes in the SCQF. These are the **levels** of the outcomes of learning and the volume of these outcomes, described in terms of SCQF **credit points**.

The SCQF has 12 levels; Levels 7–12 are the most relevant to the University, Level 7 equates to first-year University study, through to Level 10 (Honours); Level 11 is matched to Masters level; and Level 12 to Doctoral studies.

Academic staff should refer to the SCQF when planning new courses/programmes and drafting programme specifications so that there can be confidence that University of Glasgow courses/programmes are delivered at the appropriate level within the Framework.

Further information on the SCQF is available at

www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/qea/progdesignapproval/scqf/