



QAA  
Scotland

# 20 years of an enhancement-led approach to quality assurance

Swedish Rector's Conference

24 March 2023

# What we will cover:

- Context: the enhancement-led approach of the Scottish higher education sector
- Practice: illustration from Heriot-Watt University of how this approach translates into practice within a provider
- The future: how the enhancement-led approach continues to evolve

# Higher education in the UK, and Scotland specifically

- Education is a devolved responsibility
- 2003: a new approach for external quality assurance in Scotland was agreed by:
  - ❖ the funding council
  - ❖ the representative body for universities in Scotland
  - ❖ the quality assurance agency
  - ❖ the students' national representative body



# Quality Enhancement Framework

Five complementary “pillars” founded on trust and common values



## **ENHANCEMENT-LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW**

The process we use to review and report on all Scottish higher education institutions, which is enhancement-led in its approach.

[View more >](#)



## **ENHANCEMENT THEMES**

We manage this national programme of work that encourages the sharing of good practice. It helps generate ideas for innovation in learning and teaching.

[View more >](#)



## **INSTITUTION-LED REVIEWS**

Institutions in Scotland carry out internal subject reviews. Outcome reports are sent to the Scottish Funding Council with analyses carried out by QAA...

[View more >](#)



## **STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**

We aim to give students a greater voice in higher education quality activities. Students are encouraged to work in partnership with staff.

[View more >](#)



## **PUBLIC INFORMATION**

We ensure information given to the public about quality is accurate and accessible, based on the differing needs of stakeholders.

[View more >](#)

# Quality Enhancement Framework

## Core values:

- 1) Critical, evidence-based self-evaluation
- 2) Peer review (including student reviewers)
- 3) Collaboration and partnership
- 4) Transparency (including ethos of “no surprises”)
- 5) Fundamental commitment to continuous improvement





**2003-04** Responding to Student Needs;  
Assessment

**2004-06** Flexible Delivery; Employability

**2005-06** Integrative Assessment

**2006-08** Research-Teaching Linkages;  
The First Year



**2008-11** Graduates for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

**2011-14** Developing and Supporting  
the Curriculum

**2014-17** Student Transitions

**2017-20** Evidence for Enhancement

**2020-23** Resilient Learning  
Communities

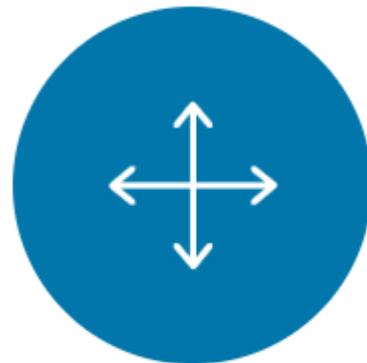
# Enhancement Themes: 2020-23



## RESILIENT LEARNING COMMUNITIES



**EQUALITY,  
DIVERSITY AND  
INCLUSION**



**FLEXIBLE AND  
ACCESSIBLE  
LEARNING**



### EXPLORING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE FUTURE OF FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION

Our student-led project for 2022-23 will explore partnership working between further and higher education institutions and their local communities: what do successful community partnerships look like and how can everyone benefit from the relationship?

[Find out more](#)



### PROMOTING THE EQUITY OF THE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Our student-led project in session 2021-22 explored equity and inclusiveness in an increasingly diverse student population and how we can ensure that all students get the support they need to succeed in their studies.

[Find out more](#)



### DIGITAL STUDENT COMMUNITIES

Our student-led project in session 2020-21 explored issues and themes relevant to how higher education institutions and students' associations/unions have recreated student communities in an online environment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Find out more](#)



### ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK 2014-15

Considered the use of technology, consistency of policy and practice, and working in partnership with students' associations.

[View more](#)



### COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITY 2015-16

Considered how to build learning communities at a distance, manage quality and risk, and share examples of practice.

[View more](#)



### INSTITUTION-LED REVIEW (ILR) 2016-17

Considered student engagement, alignment with annual monitoring and PSRB requirements, use of data, and postgraduate provision.

[View more](#)



### POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH (PGR) STUDENT EXPERIENCE 2016-17

Considered support for PGRS who teach, support for supervisors, building a research community, and student representation.

[View more](#)



### FEEDBACK FROM ASSESSMENT 2017-18

Explored what students value in the feedback they receive, and looked at recent developments in providing feedback on assessment including the use of technology.

[View more](#)



### GRADUATE SKILLS 2018-19

Considered the skills students develop in higher education, including digital skills, to ensure they are ready to contribute in a global society.

[View more](#)



### TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED LEARNING 2019-20

Exploring the different ways institutions approach Technology Enhanced Learning with emphasis on the connections between strategy and practice.

[View more](#)



### PROFESSIONAL SERVICES PARTNERSHIPS 2021-22

Exploring methodologies and approaches to professional services review and looking at facilitating and communicating professional services partnerships.

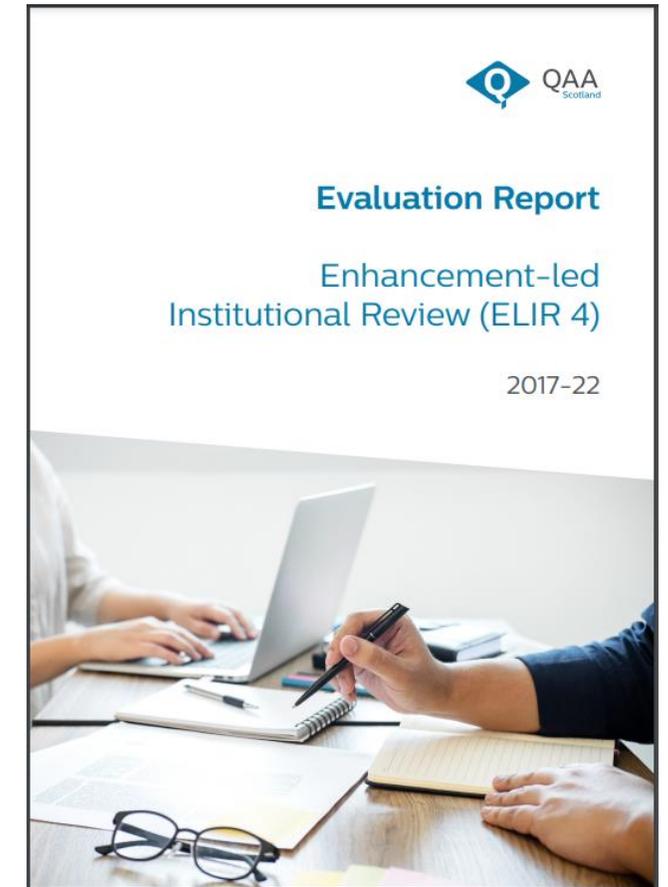
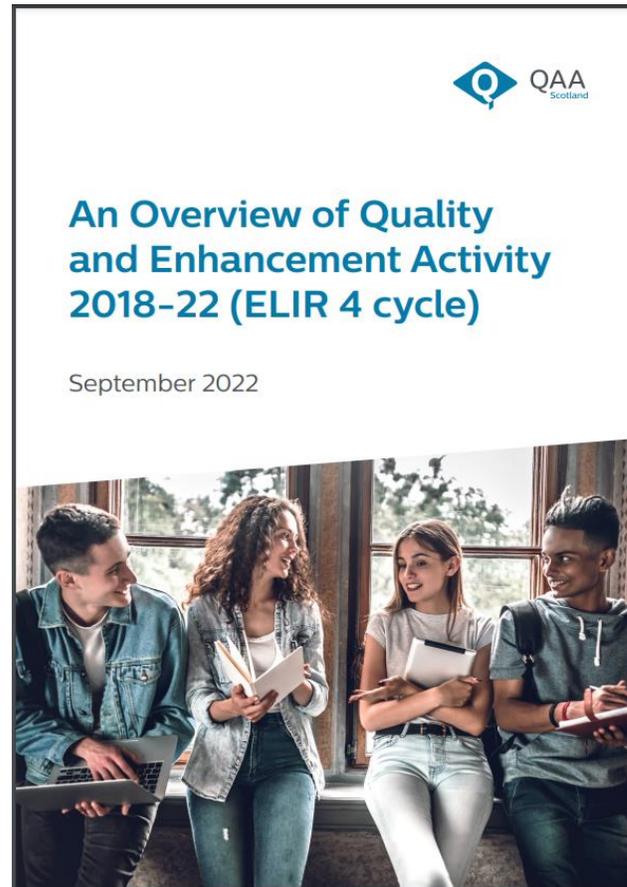
[View more](#)

# Learning from external quality review

## ELIR 4 intended to:

- benefit the individual HEIs through self-evaluation and the opportunity for discussion with a peer review team;
- enable whole-sector enhancement and developmental activity

→ contextualisation



## ACADEMIC QUALITY



QUALITY  
ASSURANCE



ACADEMIC  
ENHANCEMENT



ACCREDITATION  
AND ACADEMIC  
PARTNERSHIPS



# Heriot-Watt University's Evolving Approach to Quality

Swedish Rectors' Conference, 24 March 2023

# A Global Institution: 2021/22 Student Population



26,395 registered students:

- 11,050 UK-based; 15,345 non-UK-based
- 16,080 on **5 campuses** (3 in Scotland, Dubai, Malaysia)
- 10,315 studying with an **academic partner** or **online as an independent distance learner**
- Over **200 academic partners**
- All within 5 Academic Schools

# A Single Institution: not Branch Campuses

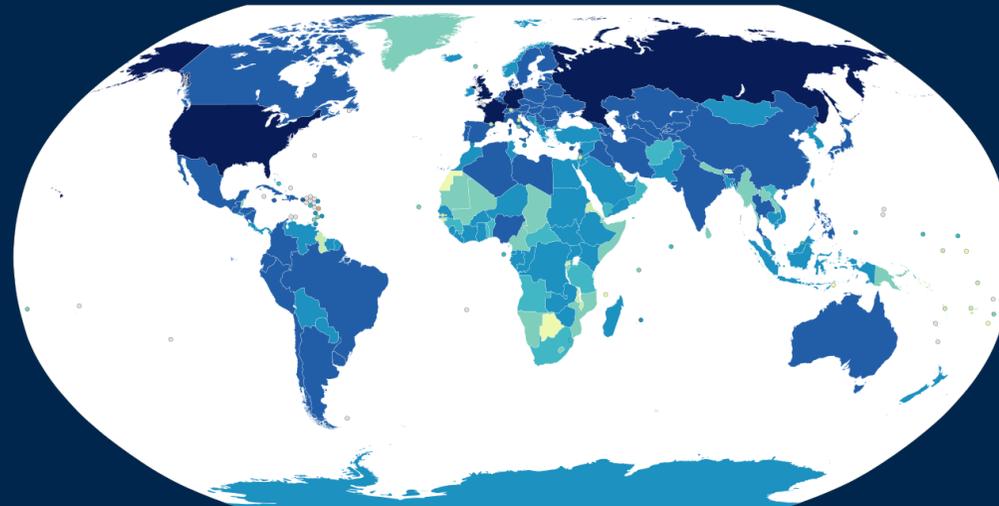
**“One Heriot  
Watt” Ethos**



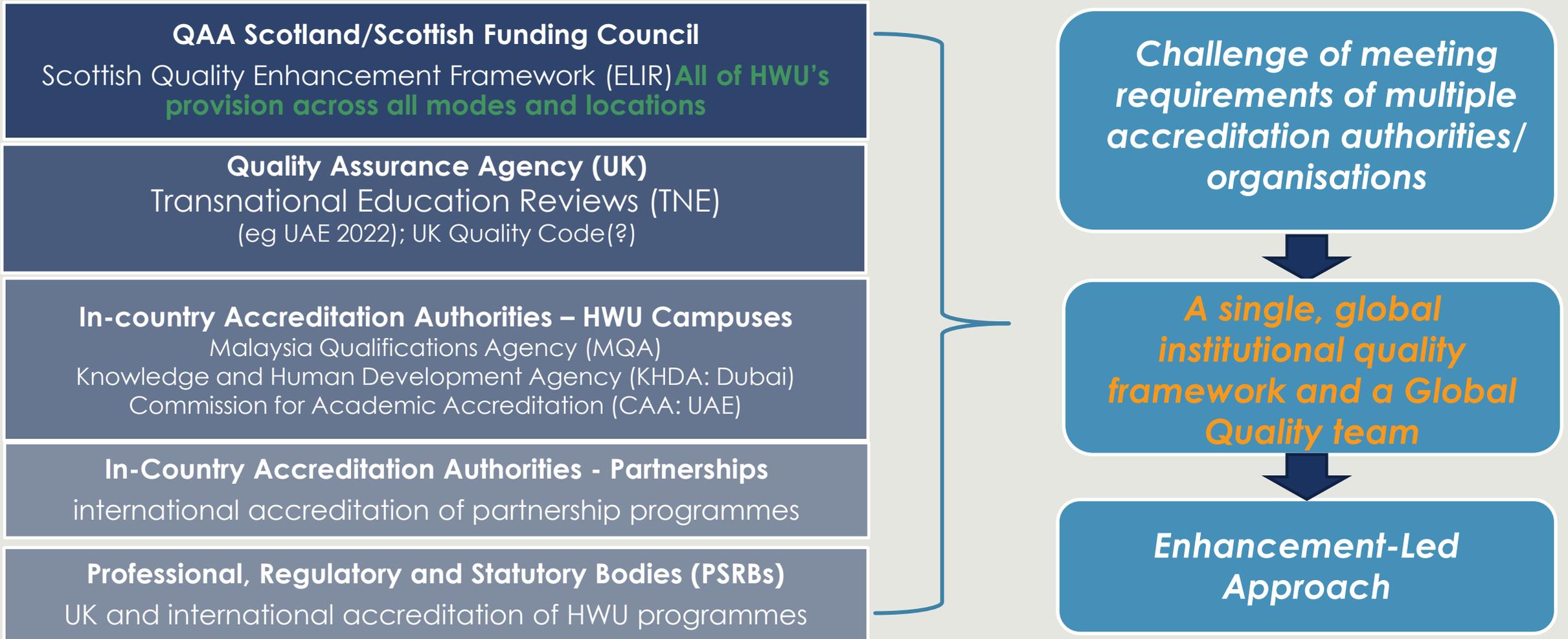
**One Heriot-  
Watt Degree  
Worldwide**



**Global  
approach  
to quality**



# HWU's External Context for Quality



*“Identical academic standards; diversity of learning experiences”*

# Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement: the Scottish Approach



## Scottish Sector Definitions:

### Assurance

- “guaranteeing the quality and academic standards of educational provision”

### Enhancement

- “taking deliberate steps to improve the effectiveness of the student learning experience”

## An ENHANCEMENT-Led Approach to Quality

### The Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework:

- Innovative approach
- Emphasis on enhancement, not only quality assurance
- Focus on the whole student learning experience
- Collaboration and partnership

## Assurance is embedded in Enhancement

# The Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework, 2003-2022



A global leading approach to quality, adopted by a wide range of other countries



**ENHANCEMENT-LED INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW**



**ENHANCEMENT THEMES**



**INSTITUTION-LED REVIEWS**



**STUDENT ENGAGEMENT**



**PUBLIC INFORMATION**

**FOCUS ON PROJECTS**



Heriot-Watt University  
Annual Institutional Report on Quality  
to the Scottish Funding Council

2021/22



HERIOT-WATT UNIVERSITY Annual Institutional Report on Quality 2021/22 Final Version, 18 September 2022

**Annual QAAS Institutional Visits**

**Institutional (and sector) review of effectiveness of quality processes is an inherent part of the QEF**

**QAA UK: Transnational Education Reviews (Enhancement-Led); UK Quality Code**

# Beyond 2022: Enhancement is Critical

## The HE Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework, 2003-2022



Enhancement-Led Approach

## A Tertiary Quality Framework for Scotland

### Phase 1 Scottish Quality Arrangements 2022-24

Institutional Liaison Meeting

Quality Enhancement + Standards Review

Enhancement remains paramount

HEIs continue to adapt their quality processes

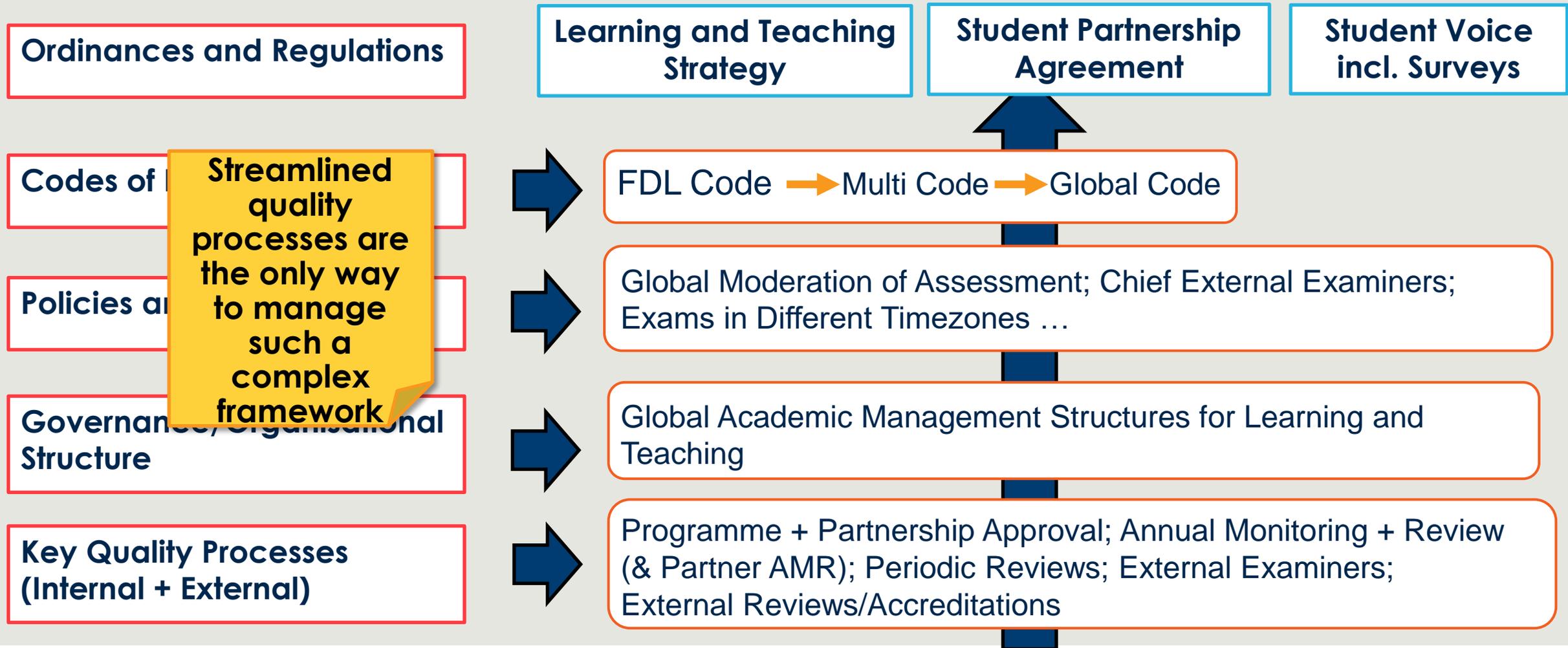
### Phase 2 Scottish Quality Arrangements from 2024/25

Under Development

Tertiary Sector Commitment to Enhancement

Streamlining processes

# Heriot-Watt: A Single, Global Quality Framework: Assurance and Enhancement



# Adapting Quality Processes

## The Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework

- Ongoing process evaluation
- Sector collaboration in enhancing processes

} **Core requirements since 2003**

## Heriot-Watt as a Global Institution

- Multi-mode, multi-location
- Diversity of external accreditation bodies

## COVID

- Emergency response
- Learning from the pandemic



- 1) **Approval of Programmes and Partnerships**
- 2) **Annual Monitoring and Review**
- 3) **Periodic Review/Institution-Led Review**

# Programme Approvals: Automated, Integrated

Heriot-Watt University

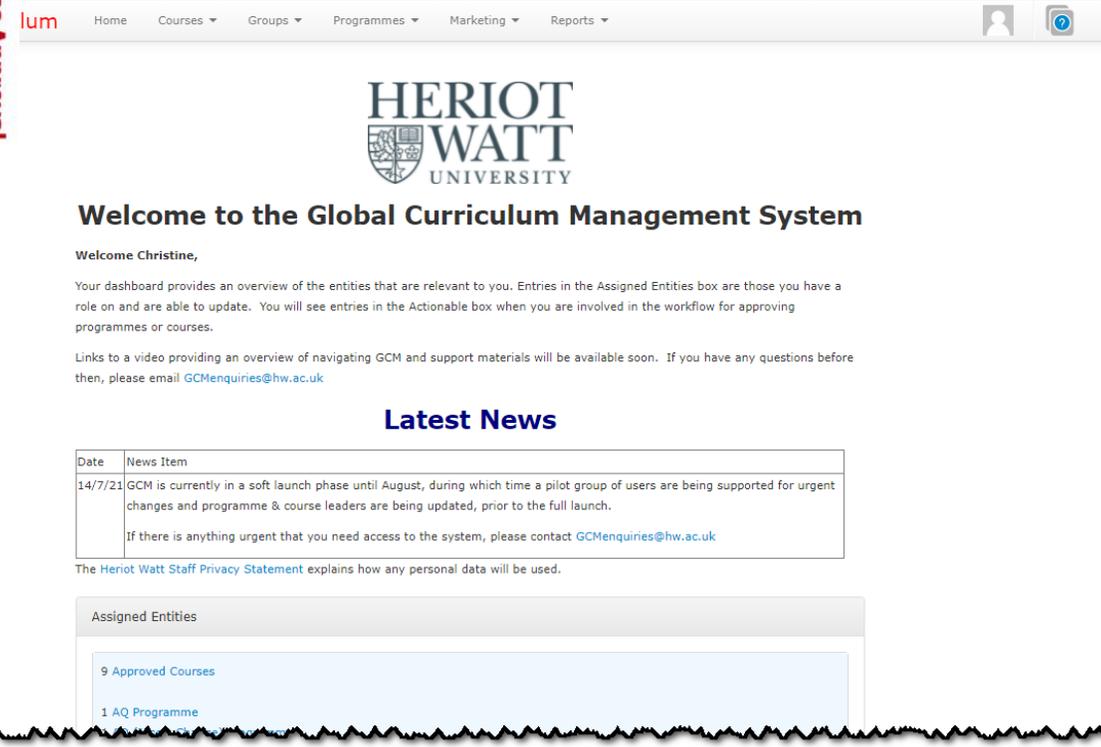
## Business and Academic Programme Approval Processes: Key Milestones\*



Business Approval

Academic Approval

Integrates business and academic approval; fully automated (no paper) for consideration and approval at School and University levels



lum Home Courses Groups Programmes Marketing Reports

HERIOT WATT UNIVERSITY

### Welcome to the Global Curriculum Management System

Welcome Christine,

Your dashboard provides an overview of the entities that are relevant to you. Entries in the Assigned Entities box are those you have a role on and are able to update. You will see entries in the Actionable box when you are involved in the workflow for approving programmes or courses.

Links to a video providing an overview of navigating GCM and support materials will be available soon. If you have any questions before then, please email [GCMenquiries@hw.ac.uk](mailto:GCMenquiries@hw.ac.uk)

#### Latest News

Date	News Item
14/7/21	GCM is currently in a soft launch phase until August, during which time a pilot group of users are being supported for urgent changes and programme & course leaders are being updated, prior to the full launch. If there is anything urgent that you need access to the system, please contact <a href="mailto:GCMenquiries@hw.ac.uk">GCMenquiries@hw.ac.uk</a>

The Heriot Watt Staff Privacy Statement explains how any personal data will be used.

Assigned Entities

- 9 Approved Courses
- 1 AQ Programme

# Periodic, Institution-Led Review: Global, Online



hw.ac.uk/uk/services/academic-registry/quality/qa/academic-reviews.htm

UK DUBAI MALAYSIA ONLINE EDINBURGH BUSINESS SCHOOL / STUDENTS / STAFF / ALUMNI / 中文网

HERIOT WATT UNIVERSITY 200 Years

STUDY CAMPUSES VISIT RESEARCH BUSINESS ABOUT NEWS

**Professional services**

- Campus Services
- Finance
- Governance and Legal Services
- Human Resource Development
- Information Services
- Marketing, Recruitment and Communications
- Registry Services
  - Academic Registry
    - Student Records and Awards
  - Academic Quality
    - Academic Enhancement
    - Student Academic Experience
  - Quality Assurance

About > Professional services > Registry Services > Academic Registry > Academic Quality > Quality Assurance > Monitoring and Review > Periodic reviews >

## Academic Reviews

### Review schedule and guidance

Academic Review is one of the University's processes for assuring and enhancing the quality and standard of its academic programmes.

The Academic Review process follows guidelines set by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), and outcomes of the reviews are reported to these bodies on an annual basis.

Full details of the Academic Review process are noted below:

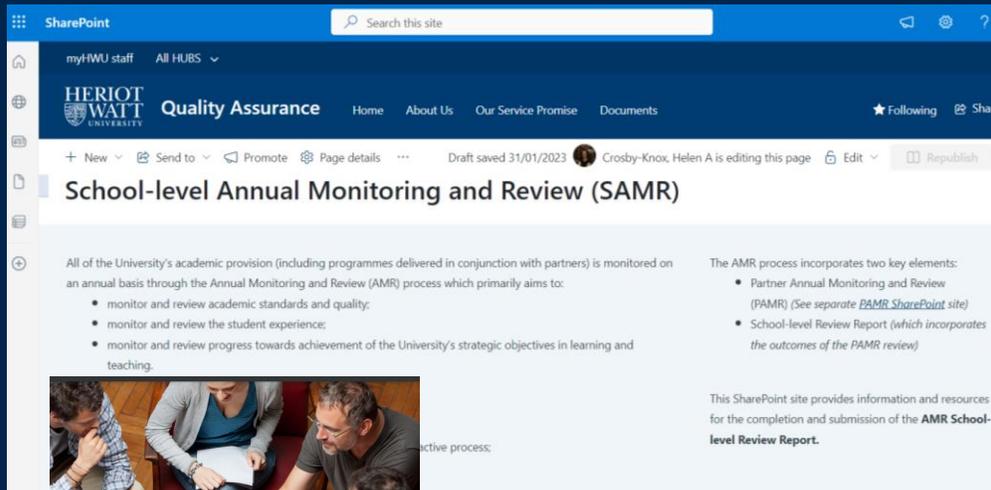
- Important note:** [recent changes to the Academic Review process and schedule \(July](#)

COVID emergency measures; now standard practice:

- A single, global review rather than separate, campus-specific reviews
- Fully online, facilitating equity of participation

Discipline-based reviews, held every 5 or 6 years

# Annual Monitoring and Review: Enhancement



**UK Quality Code**  
for Higher Education  
Advice and Guidance  
Monitoring and Evaluation



HWU's revised approaches are aligned with the UK Quality Code and were endorsed by QAA Scotland

- **Pre-2012:** 80+FTE hours spent by Academic Quality on reviewing programme/discipline/School AMR reports; "putting paper through the system"
- **2012:** focus at School level, on enhancement-led and on key institutional themes. Annual AMR Summary - institutional
- **2015:** integrating other assurance and enhancement processes (eg implementation of L+T Strategy; Partner Monitoring); School discussions
- **2017:** timelines to enhance currency and usefulness; key institutional themes
- **2019:** institutional AMR-L+T discussion event (eg 2019 Feedback on Assessment; 2020 student voice; cross-campus collaboration)
- **2020+:** streamlined School report, focusing on key pandemic themes; encourages discussion in School committees.
- **2023:** approved as standard approach. Underpinned by ongoing School monitoring via L+T Academic Operations Committee

# Work in progress ....the future?



## Internal

- Continued automation
- Access to Data and Data Dashboards

## External

- In-country Accreditation
- Scottish sector: integrated Tertiary Quality Framework
- The UK Quality Code

*Enhancement of quality processes as a journey rather than a destination*

# External validation of HWU's robust, effective global quality framework

The University has a **mature and effective institutional quality framework** which is well-understood by staff across all campuses and is supported by the use of clear and accessible documentation.

This has enabled an **agile and effective response** to the global coronavirus pandemic across all campuses, which was effectively led and coordinated at senior level, working across different national contexts.

Commendation in HWU's ELIR4, Nov 2020

- **Academic quality and standards, applied globally across five campuses, are to be commended**
- **The governance and management of quality assurance, based on Scottish (and wider UK) standards, are to be commended**
- **The structures in place for the engagement of students and staff are commendable, particularly with students as co-creators of their environment**

Commendations in CAA Report, Dubai, April 2022

## ACADEMIC QUALITY



QUALITY  
ASSURANCE



ACADEMIC  
ENHANCEMENT



ACCREDITATION  
AND ACADEMIC  
PARTNERSHIPS



# Further Information

# Global Academic Quality Team



- Global team (Scotland, Dubai and Malaysia)

- 3 key areas:

- *Quality Assurance;*
- *Academic Enhancement;*
- *Accreditation and Academic Partnerships*

[Academic Quality Summary of Functions](#)

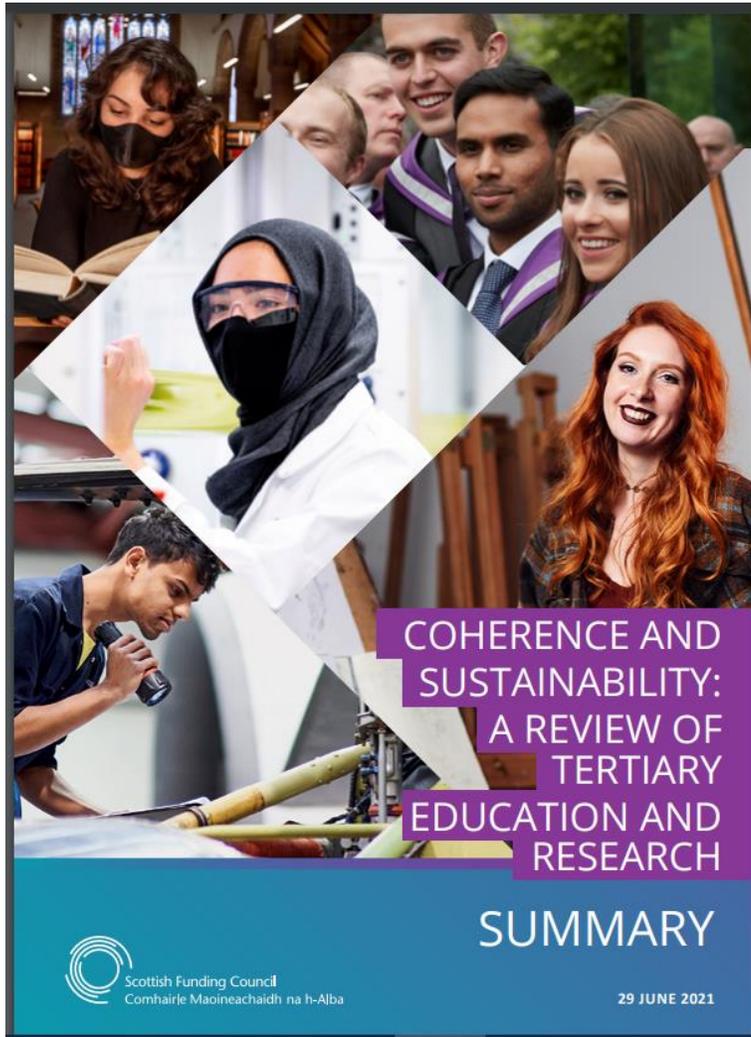
# Academic Quality Links and Contacts



## General Information

- [Academic Quality Website](#)
  - [Who's who in AQ and what do they do?](#)
- 
- [Dr Maggie King, Head of Academic Quality, \*\*m.king@hw.ac.uk\*\*](#)
  - [Helen Crosby-Knox, Quality Assurance Manager, \*\*h.a.crosby-knox@hw.ac.uk\*\*](#)
  - [Laura Johnstone, Quality and Academic Partnerships Manager, \*\*l.johnstone@hw.ac.uk\*\*](#)

What is next in the evolution of  
Scotland's enhancement-led quality  
framework?



# What is next?

## Tertiary Quality Framework

- Still built on principles of enhancement
- Increasing emphasis on use of data
- Implementation: academic year 2024/25
- Two-phase approach to developing external review method:
  - Phase 1: 2022/3 and 2023/4 – Quality Enhancement and Standards Review
  - Phase 2: 2024/5 forwards – in development



ACADEMIC  
INTEGRITY



APPRENTICESHIPS



ASSESSMENT



EDUCATIONAL  
GAIN/CLASSIFYING  
STUDENT  
ACHIEVEMENT



EDUCATION FOR  
SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT



EMPLOYABILITY  
AND ENTERPRISE



EVALUATION AND  
EVIDENCE-BASED  
DECISION-MAKING



EQUALITY,  
DIVERSITY AND  
INCLUSIVITY



INNOVATIVE AND  
EVOLVING QUALITY  
PROCESSES



LEARNING AND  
TEACHING



MICRO-  
CREDENTIALS



POSTGRADUATE  
RESEARCH



STUDENT  
EXPERIENCE

# Enhancement beyond Scotland

## Wales

Quality Enhancement Review (QER)

Case studies from QER, including programme  
and portfolio management

## Collaborative Enhancement Projects

Open to all QAA members across the UK  
Applications invited on a range of topics

# Thank you

 qaa.ac.uk

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