



Queen Margaret University
EDINBURGH

Outcome Agreement

2020 - 2023



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PRINCIPAL'S FOREWORD

In considering my foreword to this Outcome Agreement 2021-22, I reflect once again on progress in the delivery of our refreshed Strategic Plan, and consider the impact of the pandemic on our university and the wider community that we serve.

Responding to the challenges presented by the pandemic has served to reinforce our commitment to helping to create a better society through education, research and innovation and by providing a supportive and creative learning environment in which students and staff thrive. This remains our overriding purpose. In seeking to fulfil it, we are clear and realistic about our strengths, focussed on strategic goals, persistent in pursuing opportunities and overcoming barriers, and guided by our values.

Throughout 2020-21, we met our primary objective, which is to deliver high quality teaching and research, and to provide essential and effective support to our students, both on campus and online. We adapted to the uncertainties presented by the progress of the pandemic, and to the varying levels of restrictions placed upon us, and the rest of society. Despite the undoubted challenges this brought, the blended delivery model has worked well, combining face-to-face learning with synchronous online teaching and asynchronous online content.

Our approach has been founded on a creative and collegiate response to the challenges posed by Covid-19. We have been helped in this by the support and guidance of colleagues in the sector. Above all, the hard work and resilience of the student body, and our students' generosity of spirit under these testing circumstances has been especially appreciated.

While we have focussed on the immediate response to the pandemic, we have been focussed also on the longer-term challenges and opportunities. Even before the pandemic, we were focussed on the need to respond with agility and creativity to external factors, including accelerating technological developments and innovation, an increasing focus on sustainability, social and demographic change. None of these has changed because of the pandemic; indeed the pace of change has, if anything, accelerated.



The impact of Brexit has now begun to materialise, with a significant reduction in applications from the EU for AY 2021-22. We continue to plan for, and respond to, internal challenges and opportunities, investing in our people and infrastructure to secure our future sustainability and growth.

We recognise that the nature of learning itself is changing. We have discovered that we can embrace successfully rapid technological change, and we are committed to developing the way in which we teach and conduct our research, being flexible and responsive, both to the needs of our students and the communities we serve.

There is no going back to the situation pre-Covid; instead, we will take the best of what we have learned during the pandemic and apply that as we move forward.

In line with our history as an institution that provided education for working class women, at a time when society made that challenging, we will deliver on our stated commitments to widen access, to promote mental health and well-being, and enhance student progression, retention and attainment at a time of equal, if not greater challenge for society.

We will focus also on the generation of increased teaching and research income, strengthening external alliances, building on high quality, outcome driven partnerships, investing in infrastructure support, and maximising all available opportunities to collaborate. All with the underlying goal of contributing directly to wider economic recovery.

This Outcome Agreement is wide-ranging and ambitious in its scope, but the commitment, creativity and expertise of all with whom I engage within the University provides me with the confidence that the outcomes set out in this agreement will be achieved.

Sir Paul Grice FRSE FAcSS
Principal and Vice-Chancellor

1 INTRODUCTION

This Outcome Agreement sets out a number of objectives across the range of Scottish Funding Council (SFC) funded activity, namely, teaching, research and innovation. In line with previous versions of our Outcome Agreement, we have established outcomes that align with the SFC measures of progress where applicable.

We welcome the opportunity to publish an agreement for Session 2021-22 that captures, at a high level, the contributions, impact and outcomes to be delivered by the University, and provides reassurance on the use of allocated SFC funding for 2021-22. We welcome too the recognition by the SFC that institutions continue to operate under emergency conditions in 2021-22, delivering a blended approach to learning, ensuring the well-being of students and staff, and delivering on an education-led economic recovery for Scotland.

In setting outcomes for 2021-22, we continue to be ambitious – for our students, our staff and our wider stakeholders, including the SFC. We commit to continuing to deliver on key sector priorities and outcomes for students, for research, for economic recovery and social renewal, and for responsive and collaborative institutions.

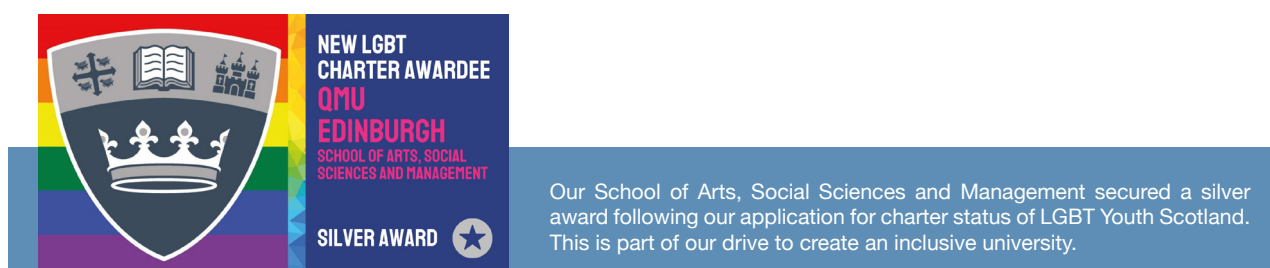
In all of this, we recognise the contribution to our ambitions represented by the funding allocations received from the Scottish Funding Council, including additional funding allocated in support of Covid recovery.

In the pages that follow, we set out our contributions to the priorities identified by the SFC in its guidance, namely how we are delivering on the following:

- Fair access and transitions.
- Quality learning and teaching.
- Learning with impact – students are equipped and ready to take up appropriate employment in the future.
- Student participation and engagement in their educational experience.
- Equalities and inclusion.
- High quality research and innovation.
- Meeting future skills needs, skills alignment, including upskilling and reskilling.
- Responding to the climate emergency.

We welcome the SFC's commitment in this OA Agreement round to streamlining the reporting requirements, including the required number of pages. As this Outcome Agreement is a refresh of our Agreement 2020-23, we have not restricted its contents to the reduced page length suggested in the OA Guidance.

An updated statement on our use of University Innovation Funding (UIF) supports this agreement for the period 2021-22.



2 INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The University launched a refreshed Strategy in summer 2020. We believe that, despite the impact of the pandemic, the core principles of our strategy remain relevant and achievable.

Our Strategic Plan, and this Outcome Agreement, reflect the University's established commitment to, amongst other things: delivering excellence in its core areas of expertise; promoting inclusiveness, equality, and a sense of community; working in partnership; encouraging and supporting innovation and entrepreneurship; maintaining the relevance of our academic portfolio, and equipping graduates with the skills and attributes necessary to succeed in an evolving economic and social context.



QMU is working in partnership with Carolyn Currie, Chief Executive of Women's Enterprise Scotland, to develop a Women's Business Centre in QMU's Innovation Hub.

We are confident that these reflect Scottish Government priorities, and the SFC's Framework for Outcome Agreements.

We welcome the recognition by the Scottish Government, in its response to the SFC Review of Coherence and Sustainability, that we are part of a world-leading tertiary education and research system, and that in progressing the review outcomes, the sector starts from a 'position of strength and a strong belief in the intrinsic value and transformative power of knowledge and education'.

The University Strategy 2020-25 sets out how we will respond to evolutionary change, building on our key strengths, adapting to overcome obstacles and creating new areas of strength. In so doing, we draw upon our heritage.

From its beginnings in 1875, Queen Margaret University has consistently addressed society's needs and enabled positive social change. Our Strategy holds true to the principles and values on which the University was founded.

We have reframed our Mission and Vision, and have reflected instead on our **Purpose**

We see our Purpose as helping to create a better society through education, research and innovation, and by providing a supportive and creative learning environment in which students and staff thrive.

In seeking to fulfil this purpose, we are clear and realistic about our strengths, focussed on strategic goals, persistent in pursuing opportunities and overcoming barriers and guided by our values.

Our purpose is underpinned by our **Values**.

We are a university that is modern in its outlook and facilities, but with a maturity built on a long history of serving the community, both locally and globally, and enhancing its wellbeing. We work in a transparent and inclusive manner and hold to core values in everything we do.

- We value **intellectual curiosity** and the journey of discovery: we design our teaching and research to facilitate this.
- We value **social justice**: in fact, it underpins our world view. We embrace equality, diversity, inclusion, respect, and supporting our communities. Opportunities and access are open to all and on a fair basis.
- We value **excellence**: this is embedded in our research, teaching and learning, knowledge exchange and the services we provide. It will be exemplified in the experience of our students, staff and partners.
- We value **ambition**: we inspire our students and staff to achieve the best that they can. We pursue opportunities, often in partnership and collaboration with others, to transform and influence society for the better and enhance our visibility within the higher education sector and the wider economy.
- We value **environmental sustainability**: we recognise the severe threats to our environment and will be a sector leader in response. Our modern campus is a great asset in this work.
- We value **the individual** and encourage **collective support**: each member of staff and each student has their own journey to make and their own contribution to give. Queen Margaret University provides the supportive environment to facilitate this.



Lauren Leisk, QMU Business Graduate, has won UK wide health food business of the year 2021 for her company Fodilicious. Lauren has been supported through our Business Innovation Zone to apply for many funding and award opportunities.

To fulfil our purpose, we have developed a set of strategic goals, with associated outputs, that are underpinned by our values and our alignment to the internal and external environment. These are to:

- provide distinctive, accessible, high quality education;
- deliver transformative research and innovation;
- seek out partnership and collaboration;
- invest in the long term future of the university;
- embed sustainability across our portfolio and practices

Each of these goals finds expression in this Outcome Agreement, with its focus on supporting students, serving the community, creating meaningful partnerships, promoting impactful knowledge exchange, all within the context of a deep-rooted commitment to social justice.

Queen Margaret University is part of a diverse sector, each part of which contributes to the drive for economic and social renewal and a green recovery. In fulfilling our purpose, and in pursuing our strategic goals, we align fully with Scottish Government priorities set out in the Outcome Agreement guidance. Throughout this Agreement, we set out how we are demonstrably:

- Working with stakeholders to ensure that our course provision remains responsive to shifting needs of employers and industry in the short and longer term (Sections 5.5, 6.1, 6.2 refer)
- Utilising additional funding for economic recovery to best effect through support for identified individuals and groups, upskilling, reskilling and retraining (Sections 5.5, 6.2 refer);
- preparing our students for the workplace (Section 5.5 refers);
- supporting student transition, well-being, achievement and progression (Section 3, 4 and 5 refer);
- working with students and their representative bodies to secure and enhance the quality of the student experience (Section 5.4 and Section 8 refer);
- supporting the sector’s achievement of the Blueprint for Fairness’s targets (Sections 3, 4 and 8 refer);
- evolving our strategy for knowledge exchange and innovation through collaboration within HE and in partnership with agencies (Section 6 and Use of the UIF submission refer);
- addressing net zero and the climate emergency (Section 7 refers).

3 COMMITTED TO NATIONAL MEASURES

We present below our targets for 2021-22 for the national measures set out in the Outcome Agreement Guidance, accompanied by baseline measures achieved in Session 2020-21. In so doing, we observe that 2021-22 is suggested as continuing to be a ‘transitional year’. As noted in the accompanying National Measures Table, figures for 2020-21 were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

National Measures

Measure		2020-21	2021-22 target
A	Number of Scottish-domiciled Undergraduate Entrants	947	1079
B	Total number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes	219	301
	Number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes with Advanced Standing	119	187
	Proportion of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes with Advanced Standing	54.3%	At least 62%
C	COWA measure: Total number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants	791	1079
	COWA measure: Number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived areas	121	172

	COWA measure: Proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived areas	13.1%	16%
D	Number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience	16	20
	Proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience	1.7%	2%
E	Number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first year entrants	791	913
	Number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first year entrants returning to study in year 2	735	849
	Proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first year entrants returning to study in year 2	92.9%	93%
F	The difference (+/-) from the individual institution benchmark figure for students satisfied with the overall quality of their course of study in the National Student Survey.	+6.44	+2
G1	The number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in a positive destination.	96.6%	In the top 50% in Scotland
G2	The proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in employment in professional employment.	61.3%	In the top 50% in Scotland
H	Number of Scottish-domiciled Undergraduate Qualifiers.	613	647

Under measure G2, we have applied SFC's methodology to the recently published graduate outcomes data, which is based on the status of 2018-19 graduates, 15 months after graduation. If the total graduating population of the university is measured, the percentage in professional employment is 73%, which is some 12% above the SFC measure. This demonstrates the extent to which a small change in absolute numbers impacts significantly on the percentage, due to the small size of the graduating population at QMU. This must be taken into account in any comparative analysis. Measure F will be reviewed in light of changes to the benchmarking of the NSS.

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4 FAIR ACCESS AND TRANSITIONS

Queen Margaret University promotes and supports fair access in a number of ways. The projects and programmes of delivery detailed below respond directly to a number of recommendations detailed in 'A Blueprint for Fairness: Final Report of the Commission on Widening Access' including recommendations 4,5,7,9,11,12,15 and 21. We continue to focus on ensuring that this work is embedded in our practice and contributes to a holistic institutional approach to widening access and participation.

This section of the Outcome Agreement, together with Section 5 below, addresses how we are contributing to the sector's achievement of the Blueprint for Fairness's targets, and how we are utilising our WARF funding allocation in support of that achievement. Importantly, along with the remainder of this document, it describes how we are delivering on our strategic objectives in terms of an excellent student experience, maintenance and enhancement of academic standards and quality of provision, and equality of opportunity.

Along with other bodies in Scotland and elsewhere, we are continuing to develop our understanding of the equality impact of COVID-19, and how that should inform our planning, the delivery of learning and teaching, and the support we provide to students, and to our staff.

Much has been reported concerning the impact of the pandemic on those identified traditionally as harder to reach, and who disengaged further as learning moved online.

As reported in our Self-Evaluation 2020-21, we have continued to deliver across the range of our outreach activities. The disruption to primary, secondary school and college education arising from the COVID-19 emergency has been significant however, and presented a number of operational challenges, not least in terms of our delivering face-to-face engagements. We reflect in this agreement on the impact of the pandemic on our activity and our targets going forward. This reflection will contribute to the current refresh of our Widening Access and Retention Strategy, due to be completed in Session 2021-22.

4.1 WARF allocation

We are committed to widening participation amongst those who have previously been inhibited from entering Higher Education for social, economic or cultural reasons, and to taking active steps to maximise their persistence and success.

Our published widening participation and retention strategy seeks to increase student numbers from non-traditional groups, including those that are: first generation to go to Higher Education; from low progression schools; reside in communities in the lowest 20% of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (MD20); articulating students from Scotland's Colleges, disabled students, BAME students, male students studying Nursing and Allied Health programmes, and those who are Care Experienced.

Our approach to widening access offers built-in tailored support throughout the learner journey, including at points of transition. To deliver on these commitments, we have invested carefully in people and structures, utilising fully our SFC Widening Access and Retention Funding (WARF) allocation of £623k (April 2021) for this purpose.

Specifically, we currently invest some 90% of our WARF funding on dedicated people who develop and implement our access and retention agenda through school, college and community engagement, and provide tailored support to applicant and student groups whom we have identified through our research and evaluation are at a higher risk of not persisting with their studies. The latter includes entrants from SIMD20 and SIMD40 quintiles, articulating students, those from a care-experienced background, student carers, those estranged from their families and most recently, male students.

Our Widening Participation and Outreach Team, consisting of three staff funded directly by WARF, works with a range of partners, including schools, colleges, community groups, third sector and voluntary agencies, and local authorities to maximise the opportunities of people in Edinburgh and the Lothians and beyond. Detailed explanation of many of the projects and initiatives on which the team lead, or in which they are involved, is provided within this Agreement.

Both of our Academic Schools also receive funding for a WISeR Coordinator, a role that supports the embedding of best practice within each School, and engages staff at the local level with the University's access and retention priorities. Priorities established for each School are evidence based, drawing on programme level data, including application, admission, retention and attainment.

4.2 Contextualised Admissions

We publish our standard and minimum entry requirements for undergraduate programmes, in our University prospectus and on our website. The prospectus includes information presented in simple, clear language and developed in accordance with the 'Common Language' guidelines produced by Universities Scotland: <https://viewer.joomag.com/qmu-2022-ug-prospectus/0643189001620143847?short>

We commit to making offers at the published minimum entry requirements to identified groups where we recognise that a range of factors has influenced attainment. These groups include:

- Care experienced.
- Eligible for the Lothian Equal Access Programme for Schools (LEAPS).
- Living in a target postcode area which identifies the applicant as living in an area of high deprivation (most deprived 20% in Scotland) as defined by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD).

We have extended these arrangements recently to those:

- With caring responsibilities;
- Estranged from their family;
- Armed forces/ex-military veteran.

Such applicants will be identifiable under revised arrangements for the UCAS application cycle in 2022.

4.3 Commitment to Priority Groups

4.3.1 SIMD 20 and 40

For entry in 2021-22, indicative internal data suggests that 14.1% of Scottish Domiciled Undergraduate Entrants (SDUEs) are drawn from the SIMD 20 demographic, and 33.6% from SIMD 40. This aligns with SFC's stated ambition that by 2021 entrants from the SIMD 20 demographic should represent at least 10% of full-time first degree entrants to every Scottish university, and 16% of full-time first degree entrants for the sector as a whole.

We remain committed to the original target of 16% and 28% of our Scottish Domiciled entrants being drawn from the SIMD 20 and SIMD 40 demographic respectively in 2023.



We have partnered with Fife College to deliver a BA (Hons) Childhood Studies and the BA (Hons) Childhood Practice.

We would want to signal at this stage that our experience during the 2021-22 cycle has been that the acceptance rate for offers made to SIMD20 applicants has reduced, which could make the achievement of our stated targets challenging. We are addressing this directly through our student number and offer targets for this application cycle.

4.3.2 HN entrants

Using QMU data to match the SFC national measure, we calculate that 61.1% of HN entrants admitted to the University did so with advanced standing in 2020-21, which was just short of our target of 62%.

Using equivalent data to match the SFC national measure for 2021-22, we calculate that, at the time of writing, 44.7% of HN entrants admitted to the University did so with advanced standing, which is significantly below the target of 62% set for this year in our three year OA Agreement.

We attribute some of the reduction to the introduction of additional undergraduate programmes, including Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Paramedic Science, which offer little or no opportunity for articulation due to placement requirements for professional registration. We have addressed this by accepting an increased number of HN students into Level 1, rather than into Level 2.

The restrictions arising from the Coronavirus emergency, including the move by colleges to teach HN students remotely, undoubtedly reduced our access to college students, and the promotion of articulation opportunities, for the second year in a row. We have been proactive in developing a range of online resources that have been widely shared with the college sector, but engagement in these materials has been very difficult to evaluate.

Over the summer of 2020, we offered a comprehensive programme of online sessions for college students. We delivered an adapted version of our induction programmes for college entrants in a longitudinal format to support the preparation of students starting with us in September 2021.

We are working collaboratively with Edinburgh Napier University and Heriot Watt University, both of which have had similar experiences, to produce and to promote widely a guide for college students thinking of applying to university. Our experience has been that, despite increased communication with offer holders, and redesigning our interventions to be more suited to online delivery, college students have had persistently low levels of engagement.

In our Outcome Agreement 2020-21, we advised of the need for a period of recovery for college applications to university, with levels of application and acceptance being influenced by, amongst other factors, rates of deferrals by College applicants, and by existing university students. We judge that still to be the case. Facilitating entry with advanced standing will be increasingly challenging over the next couple of admissions' cycles. Places for entry on over-subscribed programmes have been reduced to accommodate the exceptionally large first year intakes in 2020-21 and 2021-22. This will take some time to progress through the system, these intakes having been impacted by decisions around SQA Higher and A Level grades during the pandemic.

Our continued involvement in sector level meetings, such as the Joint US/CS Advisory Group on Articulation, and the SCAPP Articulation Network, provides us with the opportunity to highlight our concerns around potential non-completion and deferral rates of HN students. In line with recommendations made to the sector, we have been flexible at confirmation time in terms of credits and/or grades specified for entry in our original offer. The ongoing effect of this continues to be felt in terms of the demands on our learning support and student support services.

We are encouraged by the discussions around a widening of the definition of 'articulation', and that our expanding number of validated degrees delivered at a number of college campuses will be recognised in these numbers. We have been in discussion with Edinburgh College and City of Glasgow College on a potential new model of university and college partnership.

In terms of our continuing reach, we are confident that our articulation agreements offer full coverage of all available routes across the majority of Scottish colleges. Nevertheless, we have identified the delivery of college partnership degrees as an area for growth. We are making significant progress in this area, which we consider part of our commitment to responding to local student and employer demand for routes to degree level study provided at a convenient location for those with talent and commitment, regardless of their socio-economic background.

Our partnership with Fife College in the delivery of a BA (Hons) Childhood Studies and the BA (Hons) Childhood Practice has witnessed its first intakes, while the BA (Hons) Creative Enterprise is now in its second year of delivery. This expands on our well established partnerships with West College Scotland and New College Lanarkshire to deliver Drama undergraduate degree provision.

During 2021-22 we will conclude on the development of a new route with Edinburgh College and City of Glasgow College for a BSc (Hons) Sports Rehabilitation, offering progression from HND Sports Therapy.

Paragraph 5.1 below expands on our articulation activity.

4.3.3 LEAPS, SHEP and SWAP – access and transition

We continue to contribute fully to the Lothian Equal Access Partnership for Schools (LEAPS), the Schools for Higher Education Programme (SHEP) and Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP) East. We recognise that applicants from low progression schools face additional barriers in applying to University, and address these through our contextualised admissions arrangements.

In 2021-22, we will deliver the second iteration of our ‘Step Into Health @ QMU’ programme aimed at S5 and S6 LEAPS eligible students interested in applying to our Nursing, Paramedic Science and Allied Health programmes. ‘Step into Health’ sees academic staff and current students provide pupils with experience and insight into studying these subjects at University, and upon which such pupils can draw for their university application personal statement.



Our ‘Step Into Health @ QMU’ programme is aimed at S5 and S6 LEAPS eligible students interested in applying to our Nursing, Paramedic Science and Allied Health programmes.

4.3.4 Students from a Care Experienced Background, Student Carers and Estranged Students

We continue to be humbled by the increasing number of care-experienced students who have chosen to study with us, and we are committed to ensuring they receive the student experience they so richly deserve. Our commitment in this area is published at the following link: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/study-here/student-services/support-for-care-leavers/>
Despite the challenges of the pandemic, we have maintained recruitment in 2021-22 with the baseline of 18 (2.2%) recruited in 2019-20.

In line with sector best practice, we provide a named point of contact for all Care Experienced, Carers and Estranged Students, along with a dedicated corresponding webpage: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/study-here/student-services/>

For academic year 2021-22, we have recruited an additional staff member to our Widening Participation and Outreach Team to lead on our support for members of 'QMCares', our dedicated support group for students with care experience, those estranged from their families and student carers.

We work with a range of agencies and local authorities to support care-experienced applicants, and contribute directly to a number of projects aimed at supporting these young people into Higher Education. We continue to work in partnership with the Who Cares Scotland?, Care Experienced, Estranged & Carers East Forum (CEECEF), East Lothian Champions Board and the Hub for Success, to support care experienced young people and to promote the University as a positive destination. We are also active partners in East Lothian's Corporate Parenting Board.

In 2021-22, we will update and refresh our Corporate Parenting Plan to reflect and address the Care Review recommendations detailed in *The Promise*. We will engage with, and listen to, our care experienced community to inform and guide the new plan and associated policies. From the outset, we will adopt a key recommendation made by care experienced contributors to the Care Review, by re-naming our policy as QMU's 'Good Parenting Guide'.

We are partners with East Lothian Council and Rock Trust in the delivery of an innovative housing project for care experienced young people in East Lothian. 'My Place' offers two care experienced young people a room in a 3-bed property in Musselburgh as their first 'adult' tenancy. Each property has a Peer Flatmate, who acts as a role model for the care experienced young people. Peer Flatmates are recruited through the University, and through partner universities in the Lothians, and live rent-free for at least a year with the young people. Queen Margaret University students are supporting three properties currently. We hope to place further QMU students as new properties are added to the project in 2021-22 and 2022-23.



'My Place' partnership – a peer flatmate project – places care experienced young people with a student in their first 'adult' tenancy. QMU students act as role models and are supporting three properties currently.

We partnered with 'Carers Trust Scotland' in the development of our 'Student Carers Support' policy, and have established formal links with 'Edinburgh Young Carers' and the 'Edinburgh Young Carers Network Group'. This engagement supports delivery of presentations to our Initial Teacher Education students on the educational challenges often faced by young carers. Details of our commitment in this area are published here: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/study-here/student-services/support-for-student-carers/>

Our commitment to provide support for estranged students during the pandemic lockdown was recognised in November 2020 through the Stand Alone Pledge Award. That commitment will continue throughout 2021-22, and through the lifetime of our three year Outcome Agreement: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/study-here/student-services/support-for-estranged-students/>

4.3.5 Support for Ex-Service and Veterans

We are a signatory to the Armed Forces Covenant, and have supported a number of engagements aimed at supporting ex-military/armed forces students and their families. In the capacity of Armed Forces Champion, the Head of Widening Participation and Outreach attends related events and, together with staff from across the university, represents our interests on the City of Edinburgh Universities Joint Military Education Committee. A dedicated webpage sets out the support we have put in place, including a guaranteed offer of admission at the minimum level of entry requirement, advice about funding and financial support, priority places on transition and support activities, extended leases in accommodation, and priority access to opportunities for paid employment on campus. <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/study-here/student-services/support-for-armed-forces/>

4.3.6 Protected characteristics

On the basis that we have adopted a wider definition of 'under-represented groups' that has extended beyond that of the SIMD national indicator, we have included specific outcomes for protected characteristic groups in our Outcome Agreements since 2011. We have in place a range of initiatives to increase the participation and retention of those from a broad range of non-traditional groups. This includes disabled students, BAME students, mature students, and male students studying Allied Health programmes.



Our work in embedding BSL into our Initial Teacher Education programmes is highlighted as one of the key successes of the BSL National Plan

We publish specific outcomes for protected characteristic groups in our Mainstreaming Report and Equality Outcomes, the most recent version of which, published in April 2021, covers the period of this Outcome Agreement.

Under the arrangements set out in the memorandum of understanding between the Scottish Funding Council and the Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Commission in 2020, designed to ensure greater alignment between University Outcome Agreements and their Public Sector Equality Duty Reporting, a link to our Mainstreaming Report is included in this Outcome Agreement 2021-22. https://www.qmu.ac.uk/media/v3zlyk5k/mainstreaming-report-and-equality-outcomes_2021.pdf

We are committed to enhancing the student experience by creating and promoting an inclusive learning environment. This applies to recruitment and admission, to the curriculum, teaching and assessment, to welfare and support services, and to staff development and training. We continue to benchmark and evaluate our performance in this area, primarily through the Equality and Diversity Committee and through the Widening Participation and Student Retention (WISeR) Board.

Regarding the proportion of entrants with protected characteristics, using the SFC national measure, our internal data (November 2021) for Scottish Domiciled Undergraduate Entrants (SDUEs) in 2021-22 suggests that 19% have declared a disability, 6% are from BAME backgrounds, and 41% are mature.

We know from experience that the percentage of disabled students reported will increase during the year as additional students declare, or are assessed through referral to the disability services team. The percentage of disabled students remains high, reflecting our continuing efforts to identify students with disabilities, and students becoming more confident in self declaring. We have robust procedures in place to support disabled students in terms of the delivery of teaching and learning and assessment. We have utilised a proportion of our WARF funding to this area, recognising that disabled students are at higher risk of withdrawal if their support needs are not met. Our statistics on the retention of disabled students suggests that we are succeeding in this respect.

We are committed to our duties under the British Sign Language (Scotland) Act, and to contributing in a meaningful way to the first BSL National Plan. We published our BSL Action plan in October 2018: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/footer/bsl-action-plan/>

Our Plan 2018-2024 is framed around the same long-term goals as the national plan, where these are relevant to our work. In its BSL Progress Report, published in October 2021, our work in embedding BSL into our Initial Teacher Education programmes is highlighted as one of the key successes to date of the BSL National Plan: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/british-sign-language-progress-report/pages/4/>

We are progressing a programme of work in support of our Race Declaration, made in August 2020: <https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/we-stand-united-against-racism>

The programme of work will accelerate during 2021-22, but our commitment will extend beyond that period. The Race Equality Steering Group, under the leadership of the Principal, is progressing priority work-streams, including:

- Fostering an anti-racist culture of understanding.
- Decolonising the curriculum.
- Constructing systematic, anti-racist development practices.
- Investing in a diverse workforce.
- Recording and responding effectively to racist incidents.
- Monitoring and reviewing organisational race data.
- Consulting with Black community partners.

We continue to be supported in our work by the Advance HE Project Team in Scotland. We are working also with colleagues across the sector as part of the Quality Assurance Agency Scotland Enhancement Themes, and will focus during 2021-22 on work on Decolonising the Curriculum being progressed by our Student Experience Committee.

We recognise that, application and entry to some degree programmes is subject to wider societal influences. Audit Scotland's report on the Scottish NHS workforce records that 1 in 10 of the Nursing workforce is male, and that 2 in 10 of the Allied Health professions are male. A rebalancing of the student demographic requires partnership working with schools, Colleges, parents, and with the professions and wider community influencers.

QMU has a very similar percentage of males to females to the national picture (differences of 1%). The data on mature students shows that the gender split is far less pronounced, and the conversion rates are much higher, which may be evidence of the work QMU staff are doing with applicants entering QMU through alternative routes. We will continue to address this issue as part of outcomes set out in our Mainstreaming Report and Equality Outcomes and refreshed Gender action plan.

Sections 5, 6 and 8 of this Agreement describe progress and our continued commitment to advancing the position of women in Research and through our governance structures.

4.4 Closing the gap – work with Schools

The disruption to primary and high school education arising from the COVID-19 pandemic has been significant, and delivery of face-to-face engagements presented a number of operational challenges to the University initially. We moved the majority of our school engagement activity successfully to on-line delivery, and from September 2021, we have re-engaged, on a face-to-face basis, with a number of partner schools and agencies. The focus on on-line engagement promoted a review and refresh of our web pages and resources, and the production of enhanced content by our Recruitment and Widening Participation and Outreach teams. This work will continue over the remainder of academic year 2021-22 to ensure respective audiences can access with ease up-to-date and informative advice and resources.

The extent to which individual pupil learning has been affected has still to be fully understood, but it is clear that many pupils have missed out on learning, and that disadvantaged individuals are likely to have been disproportionately affected. A research brief from the Sutton Trust states that ‘the impact of the pandemic on learning continues to be unevenly felt, with over half (55%) of teachers at the least affluent state schools reporting a lower than normal standard of work returned by pupils since the shutdown, compared to 41% at the most affluent state schools and 30% at private schools’¹.

It was in recognition of this immediate crisis that the University and East Lothian Council joined forces with the STV Children’s Appeal and a local family charity to launch the East Lothian Tutoring Initiative: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/2021/2021-01-21-east-lothian-tutoring-initiative/>



The East Lothian Tutoring Initiative is helping to support school pupils who have fallen behind with learning during the pandemic.

1 Learning in Lockdown: Rebecca Montacute and Carl Cullinane, January 2021

Launched in January 2021, the programme delivered 10 weeks of online sessions to senior phase (S4-S6) pupils across East Lothian's six high schools who meet one or more of the following criteria:

- from a low income background (for instance where a student is entitled to EMA, free meals in school, or where the family is entitled to a benefit such as Universal Credit);
- has spent time in care or being looked after or who is estranged;
- is a young carer - by this we mean a young person who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support;
- lives in one of Scotland's 20% most disadvantaged communities as defined by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD20).

We were delighted to form a partnership with Edinburgh College, which guaranteed an unconditional offer to pupils who engaged in ELTI.

In the summer of 2021, with further financial support from the funders of ELTI, we provided a week long on campus summer school for secondary school pupils from East Lothian who had participated in the tutoring programme during the academic year.

We were delighted to have confirmation in May 2021 that increased funding would be provided to support a second year of ELTI and to widen the initiative to the six high schools in Midlothian. Launched in October 2021, the second year of the initiative targets 400 pupils across the twelve partner schools. We are working with Education Scotland on Year 2 evaluation, and have engaged with other HEIs who are developing similar projects, in order to share learning and explore the potential for future expansion of tutoring within Scotland's schools.

5 HIGH QUALITY, EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE LEARNING.

5.1 Articulation

We are committed to working with college partners to maximise progression from college to university and have a comprehensive set of articulation agreements with colleges across Scotland. We are committed also to retaining such entrants, and are pleased to report a retention rate of 94% for this category of student entrant.

As referenced in section 4.3.2 above, we are working to develop articulation opportunities beyond those afforded by articulation agreements. An example of this is the BSc (Hons) Degree in Sport Rehabilitation to be delivered with Edinburgh College and City of Glasgow College. The programme will provide an Associate student route to a professionally recognised award not available currently in Scotland that we are confident will provide an attractive option for students at the partner colleges. The development is part of our commitment to providing an integrated tertiary education model through collaboration with further education partners, and adds to the growing portfolio of QMU degrees delivered at college campuses across the country. We consider that this model of delivery has the potential to increase student articulation numbers, but it does require a flexible funding approach across all partners ie the university, colleges and the SFC.

The NQ Access to Paramedic Science course developed in partnership with Edinburgh College welcomed its first cohort of students in September 2021. This programme offers learners a qualification that will be accepted for L1 entry, or for a relevant HN if this is required. Developing this qualification in partnership with Edinburgh College secures a more coherent learning experience, and provides opportunity for university-to-college mentoring and volunteering.

We are delighted to continue to be the main HEI partner in the Pathways.ac.uk web based application (see www.pathways.ac.uk). We will work with Edinburgh and Fife Colleges on phase two of this exciting development, and are delighted that Skills Development Scotland (SDS) are to integrate the database into 'My World of Work', which will significantly increase its reach and usage. Through our College Partnership Manager we will continue to contribute to the development of articulation policy and practice membership of the SCAPP Articulation Network, the US/CS Joint Advisory Group on Articulation, and the SQA NextGen HN Project Articulation and Progression Working Group.

We continue to provide dedicated support at both pre and post entry for direct entrants to the University. As reported in paragraph 4.3.2 above, we enhanced our 'Coming from College' induction programme for its second year of delivery online in 2021. While we believe there is potential for these materials to be incorporated into a future blended model of induction, our experience suggests that on-campus delivery promotes high levels of engagement. We look forward to returning to an on-campus format as we emerge from the pandemic.

5.2 Retention

We have a number of strategies in place to enhance student engagement, persistence and retention. Our approach offers support to students throughout their student journey and beyond, recognising that promoting retention and success to all, benefits all. Initiatives are evaluated through student feedback and evidence of impact.

We have a robust system in place to record student withdrawals, meaning we can establish students' reasons for leaving and incorporate mitigating action within our approaches to improving retention rates. Withdrawal and deferral reports are reviewed on a weekly basis.

Importantly however, our 'Thinking of Leaving' resource, which is managed by our Student Retention and Surveys Team, is designed to engage students at the point at which they are considering whether to continue with their study at the University. Staff are available to offer support and advice, to signpost as appropriate, and to discuss options, other than withdrawal. We do recognise however that it can be a student's best interest to defer or to withdraw where circumstances warrant this.

<https://www.qmu.ac.uk/current-students/thinking-of-leaving/>

We recognise that a range of factors contribute to student persistence, including good mental health and wellbeing, engagement in academic study and participation in social groups. Student resilience and persistence is promoted also by access to dedicated support for additional learning needs, through peer mentoring, by providing access to financial advice and support and through targeted interventions at key transition points, from pre-entry through to post-graduation. The Coronavirus emergency has had an impact on many of these contributing factors, and will continue to do so for a further period. We set out in Section 5.3 below the specific steps we continue to take to mitigate against some of the specific harms arising from the coronavirus emergency.

Our self-evaluation for Session 2020-21 reports on progress against our retention targets.

Achievement of targets established for 2020-21 for full-time first year Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants (SDUEs) returning to study in year two and to progress are detailed below.

	Original Target 2020-21	Baseline Commitment 2020-21	Actual 2020-21
Overall SDUE	93%	87.3%	92%
SIMD20	92%	87.3%	87%
BAME	92%	87.3%	92%

Mature	92%	87.3%	92%
Male	92%	87.3%	88%

Source: internal data reported to HESA in November 2021.

Our overall retention rate in 2020-21 improved marginally on that reported in the equivalent period the previous year, and is almost at our original 2020-21 target. It is an improvement on the baseline percentage to which we committed in our OA for that year.

We recognise that, while we have achieved the baseline target for SIMD20 students and male students, the percentages reported represent a decline in the rate of retention for these priority groups. Work is underway to understand the reasons for this, but we consider that the Coronavirus emergency has impacted disproportionately on this demographic.

For Session 2021-22, we remain committed to an outcome that would see 93% of Scottish-domiciled full-time first year entrants returning to study in year 2. We believe this will be challenging however, especially for some key groups, such as SIMD20 entrants, that have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

At the time of writing, reports suggest that there is a notable increase in student deferrals ie students active in 2020-21, and also active at the start of 2021-22, who are seeking to defer study this academic session. This follows a similar trend seen across the course of the pandemic, with year on year increases in the number of students deferring their studies. At the time of writing, the most common reasons cited by students in their deferral requests have related to employment, health and personal circumstances. This reflects the pressures students have faced as a direct result of the pandemic, including the need to increase working hours post lockdown to boost income, and to provide caring support for family members.

Student withdrawals at this stage of the academic year remain comparable to previous years taking into account increases in the number of students who have matriculated across the institution year on year.

5.3 STUDENT ENGAGEMENT, SUPPORT AND WELLBEING

As stated in 5.2 above, we recognise that there are a number of factors that contribute to student retention, including student engagement in their studies,

Throughout the differing levels of restriction placed on the university due to the pandemic, we have provided a full range of support services to students, both on-line and face to face.

Student Services staff, including Wellbeing and Counselling staff, returned to campus in August 2020, after careful risk assessment, and under strict hygiene and other mitigation measures. Staff have continued to deliver face to face and online appointments, with students having the opportunity to choose either. Between 40-50% have chosen to access support face to face. From a therapeutic point of view, this has been very beneficial for the students.



Over the Festive period, we provided a phone line for students who were struggling, who were unable to go home during that period, and/or who felt isolated.

The number of students seeking support from Student Services has remained high over the last 18 months, with the service providing a large number of appointments to students each week. Facilitated by the move to blended delivery, there has also been significant uptake of appointments outside of term time.

We have observed that, during the pandemic, there has been a change in the issues with which students have presented with increased presentation for anxiety, self-harm, loneliness and isolation. Many students also found the move to on-line learning challenging, particularly students with dyslexia, anxiety or additional learning needs.

In the early stages of the pandemic, we wrote to health students who were deployed in the NHS and offered them counselling out of hours. We have continued to provide evening counselling from the beginning of term to students who, due to individual circumstances, struggle to access the service during business hours.

During lockdown we provided online “isolation cafes” in partnership with the Students’ Union (SU) for students who were socially isolating or felt isolated. We have also provided wellbeing walks in partnership with the SU to encourage students to get out and to break some of isolation felt.

Given the required changes to the delivery of teaching and learning, we have been unable to monitor student engagement through our on-campus Electronic Record of Attendance system since March 2020. We continue to evaluate the most effective alternatives to monitoring student engagement over our existing platforms, including access to the Student Hub.

Students identified as not engaging and considered to be at risk of not persisting with their studies are offered appropriate academic and pastoral support and guidance.

We continue to work to remove stigma around mental health. Our Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Steering Group, which is a joint partnership between the Students’ Union and University, developed our Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy, available at <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/media/8d890b7acf88821/student-mental-health-and-wellbeing-policy.pdf>

We deliver an integrated system that supports students with mental health issues across different levels. The key features of our model are:

- Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy: key principles of promotion, prevention and support.
- Investment in Wellbeing and Mental Health Support through our Wellbeing Service,
- Integrated approach: all services work together, including Personal Academic Tutors, the Students’ Union, Accommodation and Student Services.
- Pro-active approach: based on data analysis. Our Stay-on-Course process flags students who are not attending classes and offers Wellbeing Adviser support to get the student back on track.
- Preventative approach: investment in Wellbeing, Sports, Five Ways to wellbeing.
- Scotland’s Mental Health First Aid (SMHFA) training: 25% of all QMU staff have been trained over the last two years, as well as over 100 students.
- Collaborative work: Local GP, Practice, CHANGES charity; MELD (Mid and East Lothian Drugs service), Women’s Aid, Rape Crisis, CWIC mental health services, East Lothian Council to provide an all-round support service on and off campus.

We have developed a number of new partnerships during the pandemic and have established referral routes for students to alcohol and drugs services (MELDAP) to the Primary Mental Health Service (CWIC), as well as with local Women’s Aid and Rape Crisis groups.

We have used funding from the Lottery Young Start Fund to extend our training programme for students, and to invest in online 24/7 support through Togetherall, as well as training in Mental Health First aid, Working with Trauma and Mindfulness. We have also invested in a number of resources around Gender Based Violence (GBV) using this funding.

We welcomed the SFC funding for additional counselling posts. This supports the employment of two counsellors, each at 0.6 FTE, within the Counselling and Wellbeing Service. Specifically, the additional resource:

- Provides additional support for self-help and wellbeing support, and for preventing/tackling sexual harassment and violence.
- Delivers psycho-education workshops and staff training.
- Undertakes Counselling assessments.
- Delivers Counselling up to 6 sessions, and Single Session Therapy.
- Increases links with local stakeholders.

We have built into this additional resource specialist support to assist us in our commitment to addressing sexual harassment and violence. We are working collaboratively with Edinburgh universities and relevant partners to address GBV as part of a wider, regional approach to tackling violence, harassment and hate crime against university students. Further details on our work in this area can be found in section 8 below.



SFC funding has helped us create two new counselling posts to bolster our existing Counselling and Wellbeing Service.

Our Peer Assisted Learning Scheme (PALS) continues to expand and to offer our students the opportunity to engage in additional study sessions, facilitated by trained peer Leaders. After four years of operation, we have a solid evidence base of the impact of the scheme on student attainment and retention. Significantly, qualitative data from Session 2020-21 on the importance of PALS during the pandemic (when the scheme successfully transitioned to online delivery) suggests that it provided a sense of community for QMU learners at a time when many felt isolated and missed the social engagement of learning.

5.4 Quality Enhancement and Student Satisfaction

The University's framework for institution-led quality review is available on the University's Quality website at: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/quality/>.

Our Annual Statement on Institution-led Review of Quality 2020-21, submitted to the SFC in September 2021, provides an overview of our learning and teaching activity during the pandemic, including adjustments made in response to Covid-19.

During the reporting period, our response to the coronavirus emergency continued to be co-ordinated by our Business Continuity Group (BCG), chaired by the Principal. Adjustments to learning, teaching and assessment and to our Institution-Led Review processes were subject to detailed consideration through our senior committees, in particular the Senate and Student Experience Committee, taking into account student and wider stakeholder feedback. Our Student President and Vice-President are members of all key decision making groups, and we involve other student representatives, both as committee members and through other mechanisms, including survey opportunities.

Early in the first lockdown (April 2020), we developed a Framework for Adaptations to Taught Programmes, setting out the health and safety and equality principles underpinning learning, teaching and assessment adaptations in response to the pandemic, and the base academic planning for the 2020-21 academic year.

During 2020-21, we reviewed and made minor updates to the Framework, which offers a degree of flexibility, allowing staff to adapt their approach to suit the subject context. Where possible and safe to do so, we have prioritised in-person learning, in particular for practical learning experiences, whilst recognising the limitations of this approach under coronavirus restrictions. The baseline position for 2021-22, which was agreed towards the end of 2020-21, is that lectures will continue to be delivered online with other learning and teaching activities taking place on campus, subject to limitations on numbers.

The arrangements introduced in 2019-20 for internal subject review, Annual Monitoring and External Examining remained in force throughout 2020-21. We have continued to conduct subject review online, with the majority of events proceeding as planned. Some events for collaborative provision were postponed by a year, as a result of the impact of the pandemic on partner institutions. However, all programmes remain within the maximum six year period of approval required by the Quality Enhancement Framework in Scotland.

We introduced in April 2020 a number of adjustments to regulations, policy and practice concerning student assessment, progression and award, and the operation of Boards of Examiners. The revisions recognised the fundamental importance of maintaining the academic integrity of Queen Margaret University degree awards, while addressing the exceptional circumstances. Such recognition was considered to be in the interests of students achieving Queen Margaret University awards, and in the interests of prospective employers, including those requiring professional registration.

The interim provisions were subject to further review by the University Senate in September and December 2020, and in March and September 2021. Some of the provisions agreed were set aside, on the basis that the University has been better able to plan learning and teaching delivery for Semester 2021-22. Interim provisions remain in force in 2021-22 and retain much of the flexibility within the previous iterations, providing a safety net and offering reassurance to students, should adjustments to learning and teaching be required beyond the move to online lectures. We recognise that students continue to be anxious about the impact of the pandemic on their assessment, and we continue to communicate clearly our approach to assessment in Academic session 2021-22, emphasising that no student will be disadvantaged as a result of Covid-19.

Our National Student Survey (NSS) 2021 results remained strong in the face of the challenges of the pandemic. The baseline outcome established in our Interim Outcome Agreement for 2020-21 was that we should be no more than 1% below our benchmark figure for students satisfied with the overall quality of their course of study in the National Student Survey. Our results were significantly above the benchmark established for us in the survey.

While overall satisfaction, at 79%, was below the 83% reported in 2020, it was 6% above our stated benchmark of 73%. We significantly exceeded our benchmark across a range of categories, including 'Academic Support', 'Organisation and Management' and 'Learning Community', highlighting the breadth of support offered to our students who had by then experienced two academic years of disruption. Twenty-four of the 27 questions scored higher than our benchmark, with 14 significantly above.

The results confirm that our students were particularly satisfied with the support they received from academic staff. Students clearly valued feeling part of QMU's community of learners. We were pleased also to see an increase in students agreeing that the Students' Union effectively represents their academic interests, with a score of 4.5% above the UK average.

Results have been shared across the University, and form part of our Annual Monitoring Reports (AMR) process, with programme leaders asked to reflect on student response and highlight key areas for improvement in academic year 2021/22.

The NSS represents one of the avenues for student feedback but we continue to work hard to ensure direct feedback through our student representative systems. The role of student representatives was critical during 2020-21, given the necessary changes to the delivery of learning and teaching. The University and the Students' Union have worked in partnership to ensure its success, with some 268 Class Reps recruited in 2020-21. This ensures coverage of most undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes.

Training of class representatives moved online, and incorporated a module from Sparqs, as well as a live online session. Attendance at the Academic Council, the Students' Union (SU) representation forum for class reps, has been higher than in previous years, suggesting that the on-line format has made it more accessible to a wider group of reps.

5.5 Learning with Impact: Graduate Outcomes and Skills

Through our portfolio of socially and economically relevant educational programmes, we continue to develop graduates and postgraduates who are able to think independently, reflectively and creatively, who are ready for employment, and who have an enthusiasm for lifelong learning. We aim to provide an infrastructure and environment that actively supports graduate start-up.

The most recent HESA PI for employability for QMU is 97% (published as experimental statistics in July 2021 and based on the status of the 2018-19 graduating cohort 15 months after graduation). This places us top in Scotland for graduate employment and further study.

As mentioned under section 3 above, we have applied SFC's methodology to the recently published graduate outcomes data, which gives a figure of 56% for the proportion of our Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers in professional employment. Were the total graduating population of QMU considered, the percentage in professional employment would increase to 73%. This illustrates how a small change in absolute numbers can have a disproportionate impact on percentage change, due to the small size of the graduating population at QMU

We have launched our refreshed Employability Strategy 2020-2025, developed by a working group with representation from academic and professional services staff, students and from external stakeholders. A key feature of the strategy remains our Employer Mentoring Programme, which provides support to specific groups of students whom statistics suggest find it more difficult to secure graduate employment. The programme provides students with the opportunity to partner with a mentor from a relevant sector, who is willing to offer their time, advice and inside knowledge of the sector, and the wider world of work. Priority is given to undergraduate Scottish domiciled male, BAME, mature, direct entrant, care experienced or disabled students. Since it started, over 400 students have participated in the programme, and a network of employer contacts has been created. Feedback from students and mentors suggests that key outcomes are the development of self-awareness, assertiveness and entrepreneurial skills.

During the pandemic, mentoring sessions necessarily moved on-line, a format that did not suit all students and mentors. Uptake was reasonable however, and we are working hard to increase participation during Session 2021-22.

Enterprise and employability are core components of our academic provision at all levels, with a focus on increasing start up activity; developing and promoting enterprise skills; providing placements, internships; promoting participation in enterprise competitions; and presenting a single, coherent message about enterprise to all stakeholders. Further information on our approach to student entrepreneurship and enterprise is provided in section 6 below.

We have set out separately to the SFC how we are utilising our share of the allocated Upskilling Fund and National Transition Training Fund (NTTF), in line with SFC guidance and Scottish Government priorities. As reported in our Outcome Agreement evaluation 2020-21, we developed and delivered 8 Upskilling courses and 4 NTTF courses in AY 2020-21.

Programmes were developed in consultation with the sectors within which we work, and with full reference to the 2020 Regional Skills Assessments for the Edinburgh and South East City Deal. NTTF programmes reflected the sector focus identified for that funding. Where credit rated, programmes were delivered at SCQF level 11, and all were delivered either fully on-line or by blended delivery.

Programmes delivered included:

- Professional Practice in Film Education
- Digital Content Creation and Strategic Communications
- Sustainable and Safe Event Management
- Evaluating Arts and Cultural Projects
- Business Planning for Arts and Culture Non-Profits and Freelancers
- Evaluating Arts and Cultural Projects
- Applying for Funding (Cultural sector)
- Strategies for Effective Project Management (Cultural sector)
- Strategies for Effective Project Management
- Raising Finance for Your Business

A number of the upskilling courses initially planned and partially developed for delivery in 2020-21 are being reviewed for delivery in Session 2021-22.

6 RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

6.1 Responding to the immediate challenges of the current emergency – economic recovery and social renewal

We continue to work with the sector to address precarity in postdoctoral careers. A major focus of our allocation of SFC additional funds for economic recovery has been to protect and support the jobs of our researchers. This has primarily taken the form of maintaining and/or extending the



One of our COVID-19 research projects looked at the impacts of COVID restrictions on loneliness in refugees.

contracts of some of our contract research staff (CRS) and postdoctoral researchers. We have created posts for those researchers to support our COVID-19 related research, and provided bridging funding.

We have also enhanced the future employability of research staff through our ongoing commitment to the joint postdoctoral mentoring scheme with Edinburgh Napier University, and through the launch of a new strategic programme of Researcher Development Training, underpinned by a strong commitment to partnership and collaboration with other institutions.

A number of highly successful shared researcher training opportunities have been delivered, with more planned, including a programme targeted at the needs of researchers in the post-COVID context. Programmes delivered include: The Health Resilient Researcher (with the University of Dundee and University of Stirling); Regaining your Research Mojo (with Edinburgh Napier University); Planning and Designing Your Research Career and Stress Hardiness (with Edinburgh Napier University) and Being Strategic in Your Research Career (with the University of Stirling). A novel approach is being offered by our on-campus Business Gateway, through a programme focused on enterprise creation as a means of bridging, specifically targeted at contact research staff.

Case Study: Adapting data collection techniques in the treatment of Parkinson's disease.

COVID-19 had a significant impact on our research within speech sciences into the intonational and rhythmic patterns of adults with Parkinson's disease. Data collection would normally be undertaken face-to-face in a recording studio, but video-conferencing software was used instead. A paper on this non-traditional remote method for gathering speech data for acoustic and linguistic analysis was recently accepted for publication.

We submitted a portfolio of COVID-19 research proposals to the Chief Scientist Office (CSO) and had two within that portfolio funded: a project on the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on loneliness in refugees, a neglected population group from both a research and policy perspective, and a project on supporting recovery from illness experienced in isolation due to COVID-19, a survey and development of recommendations for practice.

6.2 Understanding the changing resilience of the economic sector

Scottish Funding Council funding to mitigate the effects of COVID-19 supported 11 projects across a range of societal challenges:

- Impacts of COVID-19 restrictions on isolation in Asylum Seekers and Refugees.
- Investigation into the social and cultural impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children from Black, Asian and other racialised minority ethnic communities in Scotland.
- Challenges and opportunities for voice therapy services in the context of COVID-19.
- Community, health and social care system stressors and COVID-19 coping mechanisms.
- Film festivals, audiences, and COVID-19: Crisis, community, and digital comeback.
- Leadership and trust: public communication of COVID-19 in Scotland.
- Parental complaints and teacher wellbeing in Scottish Schools during COVID-19.
- Support After COVID-19: health and social care delivery for COVID-19 and influences on access to support across Scotland.

Additional funding for COVID-19 related research was secured from the Royal Society of Edinburgh, the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and the Royal College of Nursing Foundation. The range of projects supported evidences that the University has, in its funding allocation, sought to deploy research to support and develop social, cultural and health policy and to assist in directly combatting the social and cultural consequences of the pandemic. Given the University's particular disciplinary mix, this does not constitute a significant change to our research strategy, although there is now a more explicit focus within our research and innovation activity on post COVID health rehabilitation, social inclusion and economic recovery. The list of projects also provides evidence of the steps the University has taken in its resource allocation internally to advance equality of opportunity and the diversity of our research focus, and to support marginalised and disadvantaged groups within the Scottish population who have been particularly



Speech researchers in QMU's Voice Distillery are working to create game changing technology to assist the voice over industry and content creators.

negatively impacted by the pandemic.

The total funding initially allocated to these projects was £192,143. Projects are now complete in terms of their substantive research activity and associated spend of SFC funding, while dissemination and impact generation and curation activities are ongoing.

Details of the projects advised above are available on the University's website

<https://www.qmu.ac.uk/research-and-knowledge-exchange/qmu-research/covid-19/>

We are considering how more effective support networks can be established to help researchers build professional networks, prevent isolation and support wellbeing by creating a spirit of community and belonging. To promote peer-to-peer interactions between researchers in different institutions, we are supporting our Contract Research Staff in formalising their identify as a group through the establishment of a more formal Research Staff Association (RSA), to align with the UK Research Staff Association (UKRSA). We particularly welcome sector developments to improve dialogue with RSAs at a policy level in Scotland.

We seek to play a pivotal role in supporting our economic sectors in a number of ways: through realising our land development and innovation ambitions, and driving entrepreneurial skills, to leveraging expertise and resources to support SMEs, and seeking to address gender disparity in innovation.

The approval of our Full Business Case for the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Regional Deal unlocks £40 million of funding for the Edinburgh Innovation Park, and presents an unparalleled opportunity to determine how we build resilience to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. The Innovation Hub, which will focus on food and drink related innovation within the context of health and wellbeing, will accommodate our Scottish Centre for Food Development and Innovation (SCFDI).

Recognising that female entrepreneurs have been impacted disproportionately by the COVID-19 pandemic, and in line with our institutional commitment to addressing gender disparity in research and innovation more broadly, we have appointed Carolyn Currie, Chief Executive of Women's Enterprise Scotland (WES) as our first Entrepreneur in Residence. We are also developing proposals for a Women's Business Centre as part of the Innovation Park. In support of this, pilot phase funding of £23k has been secured from Capital and City Partnerships.

We will continue to invest in collaborative and industry led entrepreneurship programmes that support enterprise creation and growth. In 2021, we led the hugely successful launch of THRIVE, our Food and Drink Entrepreneurship collaboration with Scotland's Rural University College (SRUC), and Abertay University. This high profile, industry-focused programme, included a keynote address from James Withers, CEO, Scotland Food and Drink, with contributions from industry leaders. Through the combined research expertise of the THRIVE partners, we aim to redefine boundaries of innovation, and challenge preconceptions that the Food and Drink sector has a low propensity for R&D. THRIVE aims to equip the next generation of start-ups with new skills, enabling them to build new businesses which are 'fit for the future', agile, focused on emerging markets, and committed to scale up and growth.

Case Study – Scottish Centre for Food Development and Innovation (SCFDI)

Funded via Innovate, UK's Sustainable Innovation Fund, the PALM-ALT project (£683k) aims to provide a game-changing solution to the environmental issues associated with the food industry's dependency on the over-cultivation of palm. The project is led by our Food Science researchers and carried out in collaboration with industry partners AAK, Nairn's and Greggs.



Our Scottish Centre for Food Development and Innovation's PALM-ALT project aims to provide a game-changing solution to the environmental issues associated with the food industry's dependency on the over-cultivation of palm.

Due to its unique lipid composition, allowing it to be solid at room temperature, and its low production costs, palm oil has become one of the main functional fat ingredient across the food industry. However, due to the devastating environmental impact of palm over-cultivation on deforestation and climate change, the industry is looking for sustainable alternatives. Alongside efforts to develop more sustainable palm cultivation practises, current palm fat replacement strategies have led to a number of commercial products. However, their impact and expansion are limited due to health-related concerns including high saturated fat content and the presence of trans fatty acids.

The PALM-ALT project aims to significantly contribute to a more environmentally-sustainable food industry. The outcomes of the project will allow it to reduce its dependency on the over-cultivation and importations of palm fat via the development of healthier palm-free products with potential to capture significant segments of the functional ingredient and bakery markets. Such development will contribute to climate change adaptation and mitigation (via the limitation of deforestation due to palm over-cultivation) and will help the UK government to deliver its Clean Growth Strategy and meet its net zero ambition. The project will also develop a linseed processing co-product, currently used as animal feed, into a high-value ingredient

The PALM-ALT project will contribute to the recovery of industry partners from the pandemic via the added market advantage of healthier new products, which will generate new job opportunities. The project will also provide novel high-value products/applications to linseed and rapeseed manufacturers/processors, generating additional opportunities for job creation.

Our entrepreneurial (5-day) programme 'SHIFT' with Glasgow School of Art and the Royal Conservatoire Scotland (RCS) is focused on the Creative Industries, with an increased emphasis on supporting economic recovery in creative and cultural sectors, including new opportunities arising from AI. SHIFT is now positioned as a critical part of the professional skills mix for creative enterprises emerging into a post COVID19 economy. It is also an excellent example of partnership and collaboration. It has been selected as a case study by OECD as an effective contribution to the entrepreneurial ecosystem and a model to share internationally.

Case Study – COVID-19 and Digitised Family Celebrations

COVID-19 has impacted the rituals that hold societies together. Our social norms of getting together and celebrating with family over a meal were made impossible during Lockdown. People came up with creative ways to bring people together through digitised celebrations, even though they were further apart than ever before. Research in our Business School, funded by the Royal Society of Edinburgh, looked at different life events that families celebrated during lockdown and the experiences they had through this new platform of communication.

6.3 Institutions produce excellent research outputs

In March 2021 we submitted to seven Units of Assessment (UoA) in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021, two of which were new ie UoAs in Sociology and in Business and Management.

Our submission returned 88 (76.8) FTE staff with Significant Responsibility for Research (SRR), compared to 49 staff (42.7FTE) for REF 2014. Of the staff submitted with SRR, 59 (67%) were female, and 29 (33%) were male. We selected 194 research outputs from a pool of 1300 outputs, following an extensive peer review process under the governance of our REF 2021 Code of Practice, approved by the Joint UK Funding Bodies. Fourteen Impact Case Studies have been underpinned by 140 items of corroborating evidence that have been subject to extensive impact husbandry and curation.

Case Study – Staff Appointments to REF 2021 Sub Panels

QMU was delighted to receive confirmation of the appointment of Professor Brendan McCormack to UoA 3 Allied Health Professions, Dentistry, Nursing and Pharmacy, and Professor Jim Scobbie to UoA 26 Modern Languages and Linguistics. These appointments are testimony to the outstanding reputation of our leading researchers within their fields, illustrating the strength and world leading recognition of our research.

Beyond REF 2021, our strategy is to focus increasingly on our strengths in mission orientated research. Informed by the results of REF 2021, we will review our Research Centres, invest in existing areas of excellence, and identify and support nascent areas of opportunity. We welcome SFC discussions around the review and potential extension of Research Pools.

Case Study – Scottish Government Research Funding – Responding to the COVID crisis

Researchers in our Institute for Global Health and Development (IGHD) and in Psychology received £64,098 of Scottish Government research funding towards research into the impacts of COVID-19 restrictions on loneliness amongst asylum seekers and refugees. An interdisciplinary team led by researchers in Physiotherapy has been granted £28,326 for work on supporting recovery from illness experienced in isolation due to a pandemic.

We continue to use our Research Excellence Grant (REG) to deliver the institutional strategy for world-class research, and to leverage additional external funding by continuing to invest in strategic research centres:

- Centre for Applied Social Sciences (CASS)
- Centre for Person-centred Practice Research (CPcPR)
- Clinical Audiology, Speech and Language Research Centre (CASL)
- Centre for Communication, Cultural and Media Studies (CCMS)
- Institute for Global Health and Development (IGHD)

The University Innovation Fund (UIF) has been used to invest in our KE Centre, the Scottish Centre for Food Development and Innovation (SCFDI).

Full details of our use of UIF is provided to the SFC separately, as requested under the Outcome Agreement Guidance.

Case Study - £7.68m award helps rebuild health systems in fragile and shock-prone areas

A consortium involving researchers from the Institute for Global Health and Development (IGHD) has been awarded £7.68 million by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). **ReBUILD for Resilience** will look at health systems in fragile contexts experiencing violence, conflict, pandemics and other shocks. The aim is to produce high-quality, practical, multidisciplinary and scalable health system research that can be used to improve the health and lives of many millions of people.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates the fragility of the global health system, and the need for evidence-based action to address the growing risk of shocks of various kinds. ReBUILD was the first DFID research consortium to address specifically the effects of conflict on health systems. In ReBUILD for Resilience, we will build on that base, but extend our work to a wider range of shocks, including disasters, epidemics and complex emergencies. We will work with partners in new regions, such as the Middle East, which are highly shock-prone. Our work will aim to help districts, countries and the global health system to better prepare and respond in future.

Sustaining the cultural and intellectual links that have been shaped through European integration is key to our strategy post-Brexit. We will work with the sector on continuing to support a post-Brexit environment, developing approaches to researcher and doctoral student mobility and recruitment, research partnerships, funding and grants that ensure QMU continues to thrive. We remain committed to supporting our EU partners and researchers and the global values that define QMU.

We have worked with Edinburgh Napier University to initiate a strategic collaboration on research and innovation. The agreement is underpinned by three key principles:

- a) the shared aspects of our institutions' vision and mission;
- b) a joint desire to support the Scottish recovery effectively and efficiently, and to align the key priorities of the region and the Government, and
- c) an in-depth understanding of the complementary academic strengths and areas of focus of the two institutions.

The collaboration is being developed across three key areas.

Firstly, we are designing a joint programme of training and support for our early career academics to provide a more effective approach to attracting and developing academic talent. Secondly, we are utilising our UIF to fund four jointly supervised PhDs in the broad area of health and wellbeing, this discipline being a joint area of research and education focus for both institutions that aligns well with key national priorities. Academics from both institutions have enthusiastically engaged with this opportunity, and both institutions view this funding as seed corn for a fuller and longer term collaboration that will strengthen the research environment and deliver R&D partnerships with external organisations. Thirdly, we are planning to collaborate on the development of the QMU Innovation Park, with ENU's significant expertise in AI and Data Science complementing QMU's focus on food and drink and other sectors.

Collectively, the three areas of collaboration form a coherent and well-articulated framework for a strategic peer-to-peer partnership developed through effective and equal dialogue, without requiring additional centralised resource or structures. We suggest that this provides the foundation for a viable collaboration model that can be employed across Scotland to enhance the sustainability of research and innovation.

We seek to maximise excellence in our outputs and to ensure that the narrative behind our impact is more compelling, recognising that we are an agile but small institution. We acknowledge that the future funding context commands a collaborative approach, and inter and trans-disciplinary focus. To increase the reach and significance of our work, we will seek to increase internal research collaboration, as we look for sharper definition in the articulation of our distinctive identity. We will increase the volume, quality and impact of our outputs, secure greater diversity of income streams, and enhance the doctoral research experience.

Case Study – Cultural Sector – Learning from Failure

FailSpace - also known as *Cultural Participation: Stories of Success, Histories of Failure* – is an AHRC-funded research project exploring how the cultural sector can better recognise, acknowledge and learn from failure, particularly when undertaking work intended to diversify and grow the people taking part in subsidised cultural activities. The project is a collaboration between QMU, University of Leeds and practitioners from the cultural sector.

6.4 Institutions implement the researcher development concordat

In December 2020, we were one of the first five UK HEIs, and the first UK post-92 institution, to secure 10 Year Retention of the [HR Excellence in Research award](#). This recognised our sustained commitment to the implementation of the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers, European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers.

Our 2020-22 Action Plan supports the renewed vigour of the principles in the revised Concordat. We are proud to uphold our obligations and responsibilities as a signatory, reaffirming these in our strategy, and embedding them within a research culture that is supportive and inspiring.

Endorsement by the European Commission of our commitment to researcher development, international research and researcher mobility could not have come at a more important time post Brexit.

Early Career Researchers in post-doctoral or early academic roles will be supported in developing research independence through our commitment to the 2019 Concordat. We will pro-actively support mid-career and high performing researchers to be at the forefront of their discipline or area of professional practice. Ongoing investment in our new strategic programme of Researcher Development Training, mentoring and the allocation of budgets to Research Centres for research and impact, will support these activities.

In 2020, we were delighted to become a collaborative partner in the inter-institutional Teaching, Research and Academic Mentoring Scheme (TRAMS), led by the University of St Andrews and the University of Dundee, and in partnership with Abertay University, Glasgow School of Art, the James Hutton Institute and Trinity College Dublin (School of Medicine).

TRAMS pairs experienced Teaching and Research Academics (mentors) with colleagues at an earlier career stage (mentees), providing guidance and structured support, in addition to peer to peer mentoring. Participation to date has led to wider benefits beyond mentoring, including a range of inter-institutional development and training opportunities.

We will align with UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) research culture developments relating to the Researcher Resume, and embed the principles of narrative CVs, supporting the full range of contributions researchers make, including skills and experiences.

We will continue to grow our Graduate School to develop the teaching and research nexus through an enhanced doctoral experience. We continue to attract high quality doctoral candidates from across the globe by offering a competitive, high quality doctoral and research experience that prepares students and early career researchers for careers within or beyond academia. This is supported by the development of curricula underpinned by our critical and applied research and practitioner expertise.

We have prioritised the development of our skills capacity to attract and develop the next generation of researchers, focusing on ensuring our core academic team remains competitive and entrepreneurial, while up-skilling and promoting the enhanced employability of our doctoral and contract research staff. Increased institutional investment in a central studentship budget will have a refreshed emphasis on collaboration and leverage of external funding. A priority will be strengthening external alliances with the Scottish Graduate School for School for Social Sciences and the Scottish Arts and Humanities Graduate School.

6.5 The research environment supports excellence and impact

Following a successful pilot exercise in 2020, we participated in July 2021 in the UK Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS), with a response rate of 30%.

A detailed analysis of the CEDARS data has been undertaken in consultation with research staff and Trade Union representatives. We are fully committed to undertaking ongoing scrutiny with a view to setting targets and a transparent and action based approach to improvement in future years. We are developing an increasingly rich and robust CEDARS dataset that can be compared to UK aggregate data, and used to evaluate excellence in our research culture. We have been commended in our commitment to commissioning external, independent review of our CEDARS data, and have been selected as a case study in good practice in the use of CEDARS.

As Open Research Data and Open Access publishing become firmly integrated into the research environment, we will provide support to our researchers from our library and information services, and provide training and infrastructure to ensure that we fully embrace the Open Access agenda.

We have continued to invest in institutional membership of the UK Office for Research Integrity (UKRIO), and are active members of the Scottish Research Integrity Network (SRIN), and the University Innovation Fund (UIF) Collaborative Group for Responsible Innovation and Trusted Research. We are prioritising new measures to enhance our position in responding to the Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research and the Concordat on Open Research Data, and are working pro-actively with the sector to develop new governance structures and public facing narratives to support this commitment. Our institutional Research Data Management (RDM) Working Group acts as an advisory body for the Concordat for Open Data. Through investment in our institutional repository and our Research Support Librarian, we continue to monitor OA publishing and citation and altmetric data for all our researchers.

We will embed further our Institutional Statement on the Use of Metrics in Research Assessment, outlining the key role of peer review, support for an inclusive and transparent process for research assessment, respectful of researchers and of the plurality of research. A key priority will be the ongoing implementation of the University's commitment to:

- Becoming a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) to underpin our commitment to the responsible use of research metrics.
- Adopting the principles of the Leiden Manifesto.
- Implementing the recommendations of the Forum for Responsible Research Metrics.

We were one of only three Scottish universities who self-selected to submit to the national KE Concordat (Development Year). In collaboration with the Royal Conservatoire Scotland and the University of Strathclyde, we are reflecting on peer-to-peer learnings from the exercise and wide feedback themes within the Scottish context. This includes discussion with the SFC on how our work on the KE Concordat might inform the evolving KE Innovation Fund (KEIF). The Action Plan that underpinned our submission is being progressed through an institutional KE Concordat Working Group, chaired by the Principal, and through the development of our new Research and KE Strategy 2022-2027, with new strategic priorities relating to Social Innovation, Female Entrepreneurship and Public Sector Tendering.

6.6 Research impact reaches beyond academia

We continue to invest in enhancing research infrastructure for impact husbandry and curation, to assist us in capturing, managing and making accessible our research outcomes and impacts. Over the next three years, we will look to invest in and embed a new research management system in line with sector norms.

Academic citizenship will increasingly define the QMU researcher journey. We will build on existing links with the Scotland's Futures Forum, Scottish Parliament, and Scottish Institute for Police Research. Membership of the Scottish Policy and Research Exchange (SPRE) will support our researchers in working with policymakers in training and mentoring opportunities delivered in conjunction with partners, digital platforms providing tools for researchers and policy professionals, and bespoke tools addressing particular policy challenges.

We will grow the number of high quality, outcome driven partnerships with the public, private and third sectors, increasing investment in QMU Innovation Fellowships and the number of external Fellowships awarded, such as Royal Society of Edinburgh, Scottish Parliament and UK Parliament Fellowships. We will continue to be an active member of the new Scottish Parliament Academic Network (SPAN).

The appointment of our first Entrepreneur in Residence, Carolyn Currie, will help strengthen our commitment to addressing gender disparity in innovation, as will our proposals to establish a national Women's Business Centre as part of the planned Innovation Hub.

Recognising that the movement of people is one of the most impactful forms of KE, we will work with the sector to improve the tracking of researcher career destinations. We will also enhance internal support for researcher careers to support movement between sectors and outwith academia.

After over 10 years of collaboration, the signing by the four University partners of a new Manifesto for the Edinburgh Beltane Public Engagement Partnership will secure future growth. We continue to deliver well established, collaborative researcher events, including Explorathon, Bright Club, Cabaret of Dangerous Ideas and the Beltane Creative Sparks. Building on the increasing imperative of “place-based “research, we welcome a new emphasis on place and co-production. A collaborative “Rethinking our Space” Beltane Sandpit is planned for February 2022, focused on UKRI Strength and Places Funding.

7 SUSTAINABILITY

We continue to define sustainability according to its three pillars – environmental, economic and social.

We lost some momentum during Session 2020-21 in terms of the planned review of our Sustainability Committee, but the work delayed by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic is being taken forward in Session 2021-22. The Committee has responsibility for monitoring the achievement of the key objectives within our Climate Change Action Plan and for oversight of the collation and reporting of other external statutory and benchmarking reporting.

Reducing our carbon emissions is a major objective of our revised Climate Change Action Plan 2018-2023 (CCAP): <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/2021/2021-01-13-10-year-european-hr-excellence-in-research-award-for-qmu/>

The plan builds on and improves on previous accomplishments, with a target to reduce annual carbon emissions by 12%, to 16% per annum by 2022 (from a 2015-16 baseline). The net-zero plan will build on our ambition to become a truly leading sustainable institution, and to set a challenging but realisable target for net-zero within the Scottish Government target of 2045. The net-zero plan will capture the expenditure required to deliver on our ambitions.

We remain a signatory to the Universities and Colleges Climate Commitment for Scotland (UCCCfS) which supports delivery of the Public Bodies Duties under the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. We are also a signatory to the Education Race to Zero, and our net-zero plan will support our commitment to this.

By July 2021, we achieved a reduction of 45% in our carbon emissions, principally as a result of grid electricity decarbonisation. This is significantly ahead of our Climate Change Action Plan objectives. While this is a positive and welcome outcome, the implementation of the systemic adaptation of our heat network for long-term decarbonisation will erode those interim achievements in the short term. We have expanded the collation and collection of Scope 3 emissions, and emissions related to student travel have been included in our 2020-21 report.

We continue to work with the Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education. We engaged the Alliance as consultants to advise on our CCAP, and representatives from the Alliance are co-opted members of our Sustainability Committee. Academic staff both participate in, and in some cases, lead Alliance groups and events.

We continue to work with the EAUC. We engaged the EAUC as consultants to advise on our draft CCAP, and representatives of the EAUC are co-opted members of our Sustainability Committee. Academic staff both participate in, and in some cases, lead EAUC groups and events.

We recognise the need to take action beyond simply fulfilling mandatory reporting duties however. For climate change action to work most effectively, all of the university's occupants and stakeholders need to be invested in the cause. While there may be growing recognition for action on climate change, it is important to maintain and build momentum over the long-term. To move beyond compliance and into a position of leadership, we will continue to take the necessary steps in educating and engaging with staff and students.

The 'social' pillar of sustainability is embedded throughout the University's mission and vision, values and actions. It is in evidence from our academic curricula to our approach to learning and teaching. Previous sections of this agreement provide examples of this commitment in action.

8 EQUALITY AND INCLUSION

Our Mainstreaming Report and Equality Outcomes, published in April 2021, sets out progress made in embedding equality within the University. The report may be found at the follow link: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/about-the-university/equality-and-diversity/mainstreaming-report-equality-outcomes-and-employee-information/>

We are committed to the principle of equal pay for work of equal value, free from bias and based on objective criteria. Our most recent Equal Pay Review and Action Plan, published in April 2021, can be found at the following link: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/media/dsajrcya/equal-pay-review-april-2021.pdf>

We continue in membership of Fearless Edinburgh, a multiagency partnership tackling and preventing sexual violence through joint strategic and operational actions. Primarily focusing on further and higher education settings, the partnership is committed to ending sexual violence by challenging harmful behaviours and attitudes, supporting those impacted and building confidence. We are contributing to the regional, joint objectives identified in the joint action plan, whilst also developing specific on-campus projects and interventions.

Our 'Tackling Sexual Harassment and Violence' Working Group, established in 2019, continues to progress our approach to the prevention and reporting of GBV. Reporting to the University's Equality and Diversity Committee, the Group's membership is drawn from key departments across the University, and is co-convened by the Student Union President and the Assistant Secretary for External Liaison and Student Services. Externally, we have members from Police Scotland and Edinburgh Rape Crisis.

The remit of the Working Group includes implementation of the Scottish Government's Equally Safe in Higher Education Toolkit, and coordination of University level activities. The Group has reviewed policies, provided guidance for staff and students, and secured senior level support in line with best practice guidance set out in the UUK 'Changing the Culture' publication. Support and advice for students and staff is set out on a dedicated page on the University website which links to the Report and Support website established to improve reporting and take up of support by survivors: <https://reportandsupport.qmu.ac.uk/>

Our Students' Union continues to lead the delivery of Bystander Training for students and staff, in cooperation with Police Scotland. We will extend the learning from this into our anti-racist work in 2021-22.

9 EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

The University Court has overall responsibility for the strategic direction of the University, the approval of overall institutional budgets and major developments. In discharging its obligations, Court receives strategic advice and regular reports from executive officers on the day-to-day operation of its business and its subsidiary companies. The University Senate has delegated authority from the University Court for oversight of all academic matters.

In response to the Coronavirus Emergency, meetings of the University Court and the University Senate have been held remotely since early 2020. The discussion and decisions of the University Court and the Senate have been recorded in the form of confirmed minutes approved by members. Meetings have considered key matters relating to the University's response to the Coronavirus Emergency, including matters concerned with the maintenance of academic delivery, protection of academic standards, and wellbeing and other support for students and staff. A face to face Strategy Day was held on campus in September 2021, and a second such day is planned for March 2022.



Pamela Woodburn took up the role of Chair of the University Court in April 2021.

Importantly, during the period of the coronavirus emergency, the University Court concluded on its recruitment to the vacancy in the Chair. After a detailed and lengthy recruitment process, two persons were identified as having met the necessary criteria to stand as candidates in an election. The election was conducted in January 2021, using a secure online voting system administered by the election management experts, Civica, and under 'Regulations for Election' approved by the University Court, and aligned fully with the provisions of the Higher Education Governance (Scotland) Act 2016.

The successful candidate, Pamela Woodburn, took up the role of Chair of the University Court on 1 April 2021.

The University's Gender Action Plan restates the University's commitment to ensuring that the University Court, and all committees and decision-making bodies of the University are representative of its community. During Session 2020-21, the gender balance of membership of Court was maintained at 50% female and 50% male. The lay member gender balance was 53% female and 47% male. Equality Monitoring is in place for all Court members. During 2021-22, we will continue to reflect on the balance of diversity on the Court, while maintaining the gender balance required under the Gender Representation on Boards legislation.

In compliance with the Scottish Code of Good HE Governance 2017, we have engaged the services of Advance HE to facilitate a review of the effectiveness of the University Court. The review will be overseen by a Steering Group, comprised of members drawn from each of the categories of Court membership, and Convened by the Vice-Chair. The review will consider and evaluate a range of enablers of good governance and their application within the University Court's existing governance framework. A particular focus will be the extent to which current governance structures support the University's future needs, and the delivery of its Strategic Plan.

A commitment to equality shapes our institutional Strategic Plan. This Agreement embodies our commitment to attract and retain students from a wide range of backgrounds, and to support them to achieve successful outcomes. Equally, we will attract and retain good staff by valuing them through transparent promotion opportunities, appropriate staff development, inclusivity and equality, and through instilling in our staff a strong sense of social responsibility.

We are a Disability Confident employer, and an accredited Living Wage employer. The Living Wage commitment sees everyone working at QMU, regardless of whether they are permanent employees or third party contractors, receive a real Living Wage. The University's third party contractors adopt the Living Wage as and when existing contractual arrangements are renewed.



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UNIVERSITY INNOVATION FUND (UIF) PLAN - PRIORITIES AY 2021/22 - UPDATED NOVEMBER 2021

Statement re the Platform Grant Allocation

QMU welcomes the allocation of the Platform Grant. The Grant will be used to underpin the development of our new Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy 2022-27 and the Outcome Agreement 2020-2023, aligned to the priorities identified in this plan. As these form a core part of our activity we are committed to matching this funding through leverage of external funding and existing staff costs incurred across the wider research and KE agenda.

Commitment to All Outcomes

Through the Universities Scotland Research and Commercialisation Directors' Group (RCDG), Researcher Development and Training Sub Committee (RDTC) and the UIF Clusters, QMU recognises the importance of partnerships in the delivery of national outcomes and is committed to collaboration. We welcome the UIF as a focal point for Scottish Universities to develop and co-ordinate resources to address innovation challenges and opportunities. We will work consultatively and collaboratively with the other Scottish HEIs to benefit from new perspectives, and will continuously improve our innovation profile, as measured by key national/international benchmarks, and strive to deliver maximum benefit to society from our activities.

Knowledge Exchange (KE) Concordat 2021 Action Plan

QMU was one of only three Scottish universities who self-selected to submit to the national KE Concordat (Development Year). Our KE Action Plan maps to our UIF activity and we will be using UIF in 2021/2022 to respond to KE Concordat Evaluation Panel Feedback.

**Queen Margaret University
November 2021**

University Innovation Fund (UIF) Plan Priorities AY 2021/22 - Updated November 2021

Key UIF Activities for 2021/2022

- Enhance our culture for KE and identify and improve KE process enablers via the KE Concordat Working Group, chaired by our Principal, looking at KE career pathways, improving equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in KE and exploring the use of narrative CVs to address reward and recognition in KE.
- Increase engagement with the Edinburgh Beltane Public Engagement Network via a 10 Year relaunch and new emphasis on place and co-production, linked to the City and Region Deal.
- Investment in the Scottish Centre for Development and Innovation (SCFDI) and activities aligned with approval of our Full Business Case for City and Region Deal funding (£40 million) for Edinburgh Innovation Park and our Food and Drink Innovation Hub.
- Elevate our commitment to Public and Third Sector Tendering as an area for future strategic growth.
- Increase the strategic profile in Female Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation.
- Invest in our strategic collaboration with Women's Enterprise Scotland (WES) to progress proposals for a QMU/WES Women's Business Centre to form part of our new Innovation Park.
- Further develop our Entrepreneur in Residence (Carolyn Currie, CEO, WES) activity.
- Continue to invest in and grow our two collaborative and industry focused Entrepreneurship programmes:
 - THRIVE - focused on the Food and Drink Sector with SRUC and Abertay University.
 - SHIFT - focused on the Creative Industries with The Glasgow School of Art (GSA) and The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS).
- Continue to support QMU's strengths in Food and Drink, Health and Creative Industries.
- Continue to invest in QMU Innovation Fellowships.
- Explore ways to make our campus more open and accessible and increase the flow of people between QMU and government/industry/third sector and vice versa to promote action learning.
- Review our strategy for entrepreneurship and relaunch our Business Innovation Zone (BIZ).
- Raise awareness of our institutional values, including our commitment to EDI, to existing and future partners.

Success Measure

- Launch new Research and KE Strategy 2022-27.
- Delivery of key actions identified in our KE Concordat Action Plan 2021.
- Responded to actions from the KE Concordat 2021 Evaluation Panel Feedback.
- Evidence of an enhanced culture for KE as measured by the UK Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey (CEDARS).

- Launched a new pump-priming fund to support responses to interdisciplinary challenge-led funding calls.
- Improved support mechanisms for impact capture and curation.
- Completed our WBC pilot phase work funded by Capital and City Partnerships.
- Delivery and participation in the Edinburgh Beltane for Public Engagement “Rethinking our Place” Sandpit.
- Rolled out the Concordat to Support Research Integrity Self-Assessment Toolkit.
- Increased use of Equality Impact Assessments in KE activity.
- Relaunch of our Business Innovation Zone as the Innovation Quarter (IQ).
- Increased external mentoring partnerships for KE.
- Developed methods for monitoring KE EDI characteristics.

National Outcome one (demand stimulation): (QMU part of the sector collaborative partnership) (Ref PA5) (Ref PA6) (Ref PA10) UIF Outcome 1, 2 and 3 and Innovation Cluster

Informed by the outcomes of REF 2021 we will review our research and innovation footprint. Specifically how we establish the position of QMU Research Centres and KE Centres and their points of distinction within the current external focus of interdisciplinarity and challenge-led research. We will work more closely with Innovate UK and the KT Network to identify calls that align with our research strengths. UIF will support QMU in smoothing the pathway from translational research to commercially and socially valuable benefit.

By strengthening links with Scottish Enterprise (SE), Interface, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), the Business Gateway service and Industry Bodies we will progress our ongoing commitment to move from transactional to strategic, well-embedded relationships that are firmly aligned to our research and values. We will continue to engage with the innovation landscape in Scotland including new proposals for Research Pools, Innovation Centres (where possible) and Interface. We will monitor our performance to drive cultural change in support of key Scottish Government initiatives – Inward Investment Strategy, (Muscatelli Report 2019 and Cumberford Little Report 2020) while supporting the shared UK vision for innovation (BEIS Innovation Strategy (2021) and People and Culture Strategy (2021)). We will re-invigorate Innovation Voucher activity in new and emerging areas including social care, creative industries and education.

We will prioritise shifting our business engagement from a transactional portfolio to a model based on strategic partnership. This will allow an expansion of our portfolio of clients and add value to relationships through formal key account management. In the SCFDI, this approach supports ongoing contracts for sensory work on behalf of large UK retailers and with a number of national companies. Our purpose-built sensory analysis suite assesses both new products before they are launched, as well as existing products already on the market. We will increase our client base of New Product Development contracts from UK Research Institutes and Industry Bodies. By embodying place-based dimensions through the new Edinburgh Innovation Park, we will translate our research in academic expertise in SCFDI to support Scotland’s Food and Drink industry in an unprecedented post Brexit landscape. Collaboration with other Scottish HEIs will be accelerated to shape the future of sustainable food across the agri-food chain.

We will continue to grow our partnership with GSA and RCS to explore the development and advancement of Practice as Research (PaR) in Scotland, framed around innovation in creative practice. We will support growth in our Professional Doctorates to include Professional Doctorates in Cultural Leadership and Cultural Practice, supporting the development of industry-instigated research, conducted by those who have the greatest affinity and insight into the problems faced by the sector and as such intended to have meaningful impact and affect positive change. Through investment to support collaborative proposals to develop a Rural Arts Network (RANS) with the University of the Highlands and Islands and the creative industries, we will support and strengthen the sustainability of the rural cultural sector in Scotland, recognising the need for more infrastructural mechanisms to support exchange between rural arts organisations and the creative industries within their SIMD communities.

Outcome two (simplification/commercialisation) (Ref PA8) (Ref PA7)

Increased emphasis will be placed on Open Innovation to maximise support to researchers through the use of our institutional e-repositories, recognising these represent an alternative gateway to knowledge. We welcome opportunities to promote access to cutting-edge facilities and equipment, proprietary data and industry resources.

We will continue to build a governance framework to enable responsible KE and innovation by mapping all activity to the sector Concordats– Concordat to Support Research Integrity, Concordat on Open Research Data, and Concordat for Engaging the Public with Research. Through our institutional membership of the UK Office for Research Integrity (UKRIO) we will roll out the UK Research Integrity Self-Assessment Toolkit to cover KE.

The development of our researchers in the areas of innovation and enterprise will be further enhanced in 2021 via our collaborative mentoring schemes: Rapid response mentoring (Phase 2) in response to COVID-19 with Edinburgh Napier University; and QMU's participation in the Teaching, Research & Academic Mentoring Scheme (TRAMS) led by the University of St Andrews and the University of Dundee.

QMU was one of only three Scottish universities who self-selected to submit to the national KE Concordat (Development Year). In collaboration with the RCS and the University of Strathclyde, we are reflecting on peer-to-peer learnings from the exercise and wider understanding of feedback themes within the Scottish context. This includes discussion with SFC on how our work on the KE Concordat might inform the evolving KE Innovation Fund (KEIF). The Action Plan that underpinned our submission is being progressed through an institutional KE Concordat Working Group, chaired by the Principal and via the development of our new Research and KE Strategy 2022-2027. This activity will support strategic commitments to improve our KE culture in ways aligned to sector developments for more positive and healthy research cultures, including equality and diversity.

We will continue to invest in our collaboration with the University of St Andrews in commercialisation support and will continue to roll out our Intellectual Property (IP) Policy based on the principle of "Easy IP".

Outcome three (simplification/greater innovation): (QMU part of the sector collaborative partnership) (Ref PA3) (Ref PA4) (Ref PA7) (Ref PA5) (Ref PA10) Outcome five (international): (Ref PA11)

Approval of our Full Business Case for the City and Region Deal unlocks £40 million for the Edinburgh Innovation Park and presents an unparalleled opportunity to determine how we will continue to build resilience to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. The Food and Drink Innovation Hub will focus on food and drink related innovation within the context of health and wellbeing. It will accommodate facilities of our SCFDI.

In recognition that female entrepreneurs have been impacted disproportionately by the COVID-19 pandemic and in response to our institutional commitment to gender disparity in research and innovation more broadly, we have appointed Carolyn Currie, Chief Executive of WES as our first Entrepreneur in Residence and are developing proposals for a Women's Business Centre as part of our Innovation Park. Pilot phase funding of £23k has been secured from Capital and City Partnerships.

The QMU partnership with the on-campus Business Gateway, will continue to exemplify QMU's ongoing commitment to supporting sustainable enterprise creation in the region and to assisting students, staff and graduates considering setting up their own businesses as well as providing an important and accessible resource for members of the public in East Lothian.

Through the external UIF Collaborative Groups we are working with the sector to maximise all opportunities to leverage UKRI funding. We will use UIF to support emerging areas that challenge convention to support research at the interfaces between disciplines that exploit synergies to address grand challenges. In particular, we recognise that leveraging such funding to Scotland requires more concerted actions to develop external partnerships and collaborative research activities that build on our key research strengths.

We will continue to invest in the QMU Innovation Fellowship Scheme to explore and develop a range of projects with the potential to have significant health, cultural, economic and environmental impact.

Outcome four (entrepreneurialism): (QMU part of the sector collaborative partnership)
(Ref PA1) (Ref PA5)

Our underpinning strategy is to grow KE with external stakeholders that enhance the student experience by fostering collaboration in economic sectors of prime relevance to teaching and future graduate careers. Through alignment of priorities, we will ensure that enterprise and employability are a core component of academic provision by : increasing start-up activity; supporting opportunities for developing and understanding enterprise skills both within QMU and externally, including placements, internships and participation in enterprise competitions; presenting a single, coherent message about enterprise to all stakeholders; and nurturing relationships developed with employers through other interactions to maximise graduate employment opportunities. Long term we will embed KE and entrepreneurial skills within the curricula and develop channels for student input into these activities by creating curricula that showcase and reflect our critical and applied research and practitioner expertise.

We will build and grow our two high profile, industry-focused, collaborative Entrepreneurial Programmes:

- THRIVE, our Food and Drink collaboration with SRUC and Abertay University. Launched in 2021, this (2-day) programme included a keynote address from James Withers, CEO, Scotland Food and Drink with contributions from other industry leaders. Through the combined research expertise of the THRIVE partners we hope to redefine boundaries of innovation and challenge preconceptions that the Food and Drink sector has a low propensity for R&D. THRIVE aims to equip the next generation of start-ups with new skills, enabling them to build new businesses which are 'fit for the future', agile, focused on emerging markets, and committed to growth.
- SHIFT, focused on the Creative Industries with GSA and the RCS and with increased emphasis on supporting economic recovery in the Creative and Cultural sectors, including new opportunities arising from AI. SHIFT is now positioned as a critical part of the professional skills mix for creative enterprises emerging into a post COVID -19 economy. It is also an excellent example of partnership and collaboration, and has been selected as a case study by OECD as an effective contribution to the entrepreneurial ecosystem and a model to share internationally.

Discussions continue with GSA and RCS to establish a number of initiatives to explore and stimulate collaborative activity in Creative Entrepreneurship; these include the collation of persuasive case studies of creative industries' students engaging with enterprise; devising and designing training to illuminate the actual professional ecology of creative industries; and developing initiatives to support enterprise in sectors with high growth rates but where the business model is sole trader/owner practitioner. Collaboratively we are keen to develop interventions and rhetoric aligned to these in non-STEM sectors.

We have rebalanced our emphasis towards academic capacity building to respond to external demand and capture high value KE. Through the Researcher Development Concordat, we are committed to working in partnership to develop people exchange between academia and industry. We are also keen to explore the tracking of researcher career destinations as the

training and movement of skilled researchers is one of the most impactful routes of KE but is one of the most challenging to capture. Our Business Gateway has developed a novel programme to support enterprise creation as a form of bridging for contract researchers.

Through their on-campus location, the Business Gateway provides ongoing mentoring and support—bringing an invaluable and real time perspective on company creation and entrepreneurial skills. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the importance of this work and the team have actively engaged and presented virtually into a wide range of modules. By 2023, we will have doubled the direct delivery of entrepreneurial education into the curriculum, including doctoral education by the Business Gateway.

Outcome six (inclusive growth and social impact): (QMU part of the sector collaborative partnership) (Ref PA10)

Female Entrepreneurship is an area of increasing strategic priority for QMU. We will continue to champion alignment between the focus of innovation and the pressing enterprise and societal issue of gender inclusion. We are committed to addressing gender disparity in entrepreneurship and are proud that nearly two thirds of QMU start-up companies are created by females. Providing a dynamic, supportive and connected environment in which female entrepreneurs can grow and sustain resilient businesses is an area of growth and where we want to lead the sector. We will actively promote sector wide accelerator programmes specifically catered towards female entrepreneurs and will work with WES, our Entrepreneur in Residence, the Royal Bank of Scotland and Santander in an effort to create an environment where more women can start up in business and enable businesses to thrive and grow.

After over 10 years of ongoing collaboration, the four Edinburgh Universities signed a new Manifesto to continue to grow and develop the Beltane Public Engagement Partnership. This will enable us to raise the profile of the collaboration, building on the increasing policy priority of regional cohesion through our Edinburgh and South East Region City Deal. Building on the increasing imperative of “place-based” research we welcome a new emphasis on place and co-production. A collaborative “Rethinking our Space” Beltane Sandpit is planned for February 2022, focused on UKRI Strength and Places Funding.

Inter-university Social Enterprise partnerships are an area we are keen to explore. Specifically, we would like to collaborate with a wide range of cross-sector organisations to enhance and develop ecosystems of support for social entrepreneurs. Collaboratively we would like to: explore novel forms of enterprise incubation – incubators in ideas and innovation in culture and society; improve systems for national data sets for impact capture around social and cultural impact and KE; and develop new mechanisms for collating data on researcher mobility and career destination.

University Outcome Agreement Impact Framework: Supporting Data

Measure	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
A Number of Scottish-domiciled Undergraduate Entrants	757	756	760	679	783	812	947
B Total number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes		193	242	265	335	227	219
Number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes with Advanced Standing		113	156	167	211	144	119
Proportion of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes with Advanced Standing		58.5%	64.5%	63.0%	63.0%	63.4%	54.3%
C COWA measure: Number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived postcodes	80	63	67	65	88	109	121
COWA measure: Proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived postcodes	11.0%	9.1%	9.1%	9.9%	11.7%	13.8%	13.1%
D Number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience	5	7	5	7	9	12	16
Proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience	0.7%	0.9%	0.7%	1.0%	1.1%	1.5%	1.7%
E Total number of full-time first year SDUE	679	716	687	729	661	764	791
Number of full-time first year SDUE retained	594	615	615	656	577	680	735
Proportion of full-time first year SDUE retained	87.5%	85.9%	89.5%	90.0%	87.3%	89.0%	92.9%
F The difference (+/-) from the individual institution benchmark figure for students satisfied with the overall quality of their course of study in the National Student Survey	0	2	-6	-1	-1	1.58	6.44
G1 The number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey				318	362	355	
The proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in a positive destination				303	346	343	
The number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in a positive destination				95.3%	95.6%	96.6%	
G2 The number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey in employment				231	252	269	
The number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey employed at 'Professional' level or above				147	147	165	
The proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey employed at 'Professional' level or above				63.6%	58.3%	61.3%	
H Number of Scottish-domiciled Undergraduate Qualifiers	604	662	546	587	608	639	613

Please note that 2018-19 and 2019-20 figures for measures G1 and G2, 2019-20 figures for measures F and H and all 2020-21 figures were impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and may not be directly comparable to other years.

Outcome Agreement between Queen Margaret University and the Scottish Funding Council for AY 2021-22

On behalf of Queen Margaret University:

Signed:

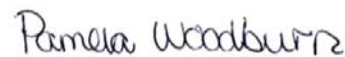


Print name: Sir Paul Grice FRSE FAcSS

Position: Principal and Vice-Chancellor

Date: 31 May 2022

Signed:



Print name: Pamela Woodburn

Position: Chair of University Court

Date: 31 May 2022

On behalf of the Scottish Funding Council:

Signed:



Print name: Karen Watt

Position: Chief Executive

Date: 28 July 2022