



**Queen Margaret  
University**  
EDINBURGH

# Outcome Agreement

2023 - 2026

Registered No. SC007335  
Scottish Charity No. SC002750

**ACADEMIC SESSION  
2023-24**

## PRINCIPAL'S FOREWORD

Welcome to our Outcome Agreement 2023-24.

I make no apology for rehearsing in my introduction the themes that I identified in our 2022-23 Outcome Agreement, published in June 2023. That the themes still resonate strongly reflects not only the short time between these two documents, but that the issues with which we are grappling are likely to continue during the timeline for this agreement - global instability, economic and fiscal pressures, the legacy of COVID, and climate change.

Our starting point is to provide students at all levels with a high-quality, safe and supportive learning experience that enables them to succeed. Our recent Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) confirms our commitment to student participation and engagement in their educational experience, and provides evidence of our enhancement of the student experience.

This agreement sets out how we will work over the forthcoming academic year to deliver on our stated commitments to widen access, to promote mental health and well-being, and to enhance student progression, retention and attainment.

In line with previous Outcome Agreements, we will focus on generating our teaching, research and commercial income by 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.

Our expanding suite of partnerships with colleges provide students with the means to progress to a degree from Queen Margaret University, without having to transfer from their college to the University campus. This important work responds to local demand, addresses skills gaps, and helps to close the educational attainment gap by providing greater equality of opportunity to access higher education.

Through these partnerships, we are harnessing the potential of more talented young people from different socio-economic backgrounds across Scotland.

We continue to build on our work enhancing the employability of our students, and to strengthen resources in our Student Services area, particularly in the areas of disability and mental health support, to reflect increasing demand from students.

Central to our Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy is a focus on consolidating and developing areas of research excellence with the greatest potential, using our institutional REF 2021 results and external UoA benchmark data to determine those areas. Within those areas, we will support the initiation and development of mission-led and challenge-based ideas that contribute to social, cultural and economic prosperity and wellbeing, and that are aligned with applicable Scottish Government National Performance Framework Outcomes and the UN Sustainable Development goals.

We do all of this against a background of fiscal challenge, and during a period of wide-ranging review and reflection on the place of Universities within a complex education and skills landscape.

I welcome the recognition in the OA guidance that colleges and universities are operating in a challenging financial environment but continue to deliver a responsive learning approach, ensuring the well-being of students and staff, and delivering an education-led economic transformation for Scotland.

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.

Given the proximity of the 2022-23 and 2023-24 OA development processes, the SFC has sought to focus the scope and scale of OAs in a proportionate way. In line with the specific guidance published by the SFC for this OA cycle, this Outcome Agreement is shorter than those produced previously. Fuller details of a number of the activities reported in this Outcome Agreement can be found in our OA 2022-23, published in June 2023: <https://www.sfc.ac.uk/funding/outcome-agreements/2022-23/queen-margaret-university-outcome-agreement-2022-23.aspx>

We welcome the opportunity to publish an agreement for Session 2023-24 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 2023-24. We welcome confirmation that, in continuing the transition year approach of Academic Year 2023-34, the SFC is seeking one year of projections within the revised list of measures for AY 2023-24.

In setting outcomes for 2023-24, 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.

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 (section 4)
- Quality learning and teaching (section 5)
- Coherent Learning Provision - meeting the needs of business, industry and stakeholders (section 6)
- Work-based learning and skills (section 7)
- Net zero and environmental sustainability response (Section 8)
- High-quality research and innovation (section 10)
- University Innovation Fund (UIF) (section 11)

To this, we have added our commitment to Effective Governance (section 9).

An updated statement on our use of University Innovation Funding (UIF), and the added value we will deliver, supports this agreement for the period 2023-24. We note that this will be the final transitional year before the Knowledge Exchange and Innovation Fund for AY 2024-25 is implemented.

## 2 INSTITUTIONAL STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Our Strategic Plan 2020-25, and this Outcome Agreement, reflect our established commitment to, amongst other things: delivering excellence in our 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.

We remain confident that these reflect Scottish Government priorities, and the SFC's Framework for Outcome Agreements. Over the period of this agreement, we will engage fully in sector discussion and contribute actively to actions arising from the suite of Scottish Government commissioned reports published in 2023<sup>1</sup>. Each has the potential to effect major structural and cultural changes to Scotland's landscape for skills, research and innovation, and the broader tertiary education framework.

Against that background, we welcome the recognition by the Scottish Funding Council in its published Strategy that Scotland's universities and colleges are fundamental to social, economic and environmental wellbeing and prosperity, and that they are 'multiform and varied - major national, international and local assets, creating a pipeline of skilled and educated people across all levels and its investment in education, skills and research matters to the economy, employers and people seeking good jobs and career progression'.

We support fully SFC's commitment to place universities and colleges at the heart of a knowledge-based and innovation-led economy and nation, supporting a connected, creative, sustainable and agile tertiary education, skills and research system that develops the full range of people, skills and talent; enables the exploration of new ideas and thinking through discovery research; diffuses knowledge and makes research useful; and improves Scotland's economic prosperity and wellbeing.

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.

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.

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

- 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.

---

<sup>1</sup> [Withers report](#) (*Review of the Skills Delivery Landscape*): *Fit for the Future: developing a post-school learning system to fuel economic transformation*.  
*Hayward Report: [Independent Review of Qualifications and Assessment](#)*  
*Scottish Government [National Innovation Strategy 2023 to 2033](#)*

- 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.

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. In fulfilling our purpose, and in pursuing our strategic goals, we align fully with Scottish Government priorities set out in the Outcome Agreement guidance.

### 3 COMMITTED TO NATIONAL MEASURES

We present below our targets for 2023-24 for the national measures set out in the Outcome Agreement Guidance, accompanied by baseline measures achieved in Session 2022-23, where such measures were in place.

Measure		2022-23 Outcomes <sup>2</sup>	2023-24 targets
<b>A</b>	Total Number of Scottish-domiciled Undergraduate Entrants.	826	950
<b>B</b>	Total number of Scottish-domiciled HN entrants from Scottish colleges to undergraduate programmes	245	176
	Number of Scotland-domiciled learners articulating from college to degree level courses with Advanced Standing	119	88
	Proportion of Scotland-domiciled learners articulating from college to degree level courses with advanced standing.	48.6%	50%
<b>C1</b>	COWA Measure: Number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived areas	105	150
	COWA measure: Proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first degree entrants from the 20% most deprived areas	12.9%	16%
<b>C2</b>	The number of Scotland-domiciled undergraduate entrants from the 20% and 40% most deprived postcodes.	New measure	300
	The proportion of Scotland-domiciled undergraduate entrants from the 20% and 40% most deprived postcodes.	New measure	32%
<b>D</b>	Number of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience	15	19

<sup>2</sup> Data provided is institutionally-reported, and may be subject to revision.

	Proportion of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants with care experience	1.7%	2%
<b>E1</b>	Number of Scottish-domiciled full-time first year entrants returning to study in year 2	717	850
	Proportion of Scottish-domiciled full-time first year entrants returning to study in year 2	88.1%	90%
<b>E2</b>	The number of full-time first year Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants from the 20% most deprived postcodes returning to study in year 2	New measure	132
	The proportion of full-time first year Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants from the 20% most deprived postcodes returning to study in year 2	New measure	90%
<b>E3</b>	The number of full-time first year Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants that are care-experienced returning to study in year 2	New measure	16
	The proportion of full-time first year Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants that are care-experienced returning to study in year 2	New measure	85%
<b>F</b>	The percentage of respondents to the National Student Survey satisfied with the overall quality of their course.	74%	77% (benchmark)
<b>G1</b>	The number and proportion of Scotland-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers entering positive destinations.	97.3%	97%
<b>G2</b>	The number of Scotland-domiciled full-time first degree graduates entering professional occupations	289	385
	The proportion of Scotland-domiciled full-time first degree graduates entering professional occupations	61.2%	68%
<b>H</b>	Number of Scotland-domiciled Undergraduate Qualifiers.	613	666
<b>I</b>	Greenhouse Gas emissions	New Measure	2,792 tCO <sub>2</sub> e

#### 4 FAIR ACCESS AND TRANSITIONS

We will continue to promote fair access and transitions that contribute to the sector's achievement of the targets set out in the Commission on Widening Access (CoWA) [Blueprint for Fairness](#). The Commission recommended that, by 2030, students from the 20% most deprived backgrounds (ie living in a Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 20 area, SIMD20) should represent 20% of entrants to higher education. To drive progress against this goal, the report stated that, by 2021, students from SIMD20 areas should represent at least 16% of full-time first-degree entrants, and at least 10% of full-time first degree entrants to every Scottish university. By 2026, students from the 20% most deprived backgrounds should represent at least 18% of full-time first degree entrants to Scottish universities as a whole.

We set out here how we are utilising our WARF funding allocation to fulfill our contribution to those goals. Importantly, along with the remainder of this document, we set out how we are delivering on our commitment to an excellent student experience, the maintenance and enhancement of academic standards and quality of provision, and equality of opportunity. We continue to focus embedding this work in our practice, contributing to a holistic institutional approach to widening access and participation.

The SFC ['Report on Widening Access 2021-22'](#) published on 25 July 2023, presents data on Scottish-domiciled entrants to higher and further education in Scotland by socio-economic deprivation, sex, ethnicity, disability, care experience and age. In establishing our

targets for 2023-24, we have reviewed our performance against sector benchmarks, and against our internal targets. In so doing, we recognise that our trajectory has been impacted by 'unique and significant external shock to the further and higher education system in Scotland' represented by the Covid pandemic (report above refers).

For entry in 2022-23, our data suggests that 12.9% of Scottish Domiciled Undergraduate Entrants (SDUEs) were drawn from the SIMD 20 demographic, and 33.5 % from SIMD 20-40. We have retained a baseline target of 16% for SIMD20 SDUEs entering in 2023-24 with a view to reaching a baseline of 18% at the next CoWA milestone date (2026). We have set a baseline target of 32% for SIMD 20/40 SDUEs entering in 2023-24. We explain below the actions to which we have committed to reach these targets, and to move us to the 2026 milestone.

### **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 refreshed Widening Participation Strategy focuses on increasing participation 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% and 40% of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD20/40); articulating students from Scotland's Colleges; disabled students; BAME students; male students studying Nursing and Allied Health programmes; ex-service/armed forces; estranged students; student carers 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. We work to raise awareness of higher education within target communities, including those local to the University. Our contextualised admissions process provides the basis for fair offers to study at the University.

We support the successful transition of those entering the university through QM Advance, College Entrant Induction Week, Peer Assisted Learning Scheme (PALs), Academic Skills support through the Effective Learning Service (ELS), and QMCares (support for student carers, care experienced and estranged students). Student services provides support from pre-entry to post-graduation through funding advice, careers and employability support, disability support, counselling, and wellbeing support. Students are supported through employer mentoring, work experience opportunities and support with developing CVs and job applications.

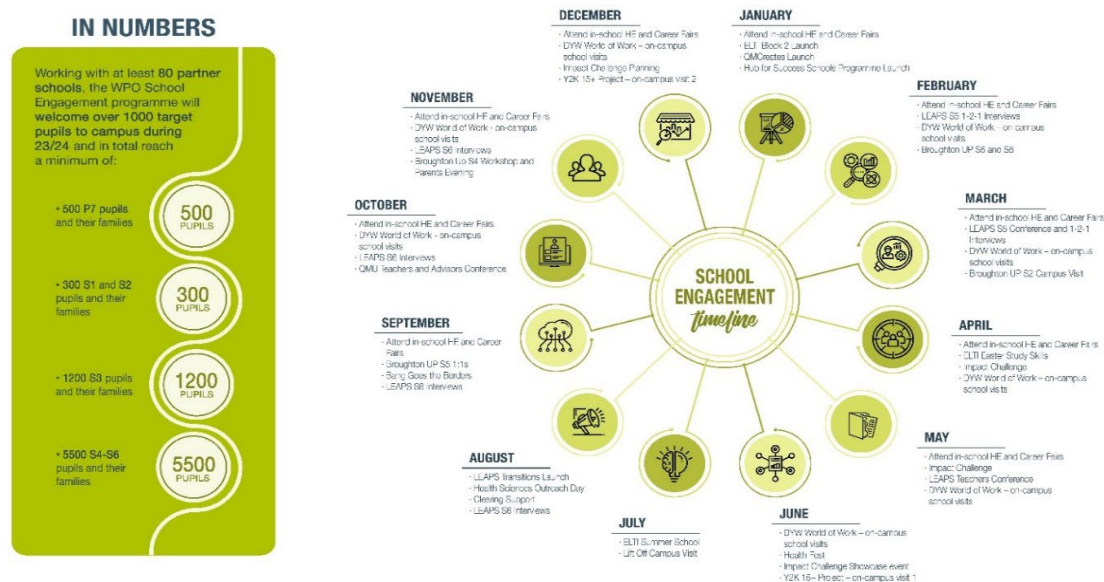
Our Widening Participation and Outreach (WPO) Team works with a range of partners, including schools, colleges, community groups, third sector and voluntary agencies, and local authorities to maximise the opportunities of people in Edinburgh and the Lothians and beyond. Both Academic Schools receive funding for a WISeR Coordinator to support 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.

To deliver on these commitments, we continue to invest carefully in people and structures, utilising fully our SFC Widening Access and Retention Funding (WARF) allocation of £623k (April 2023) for this purpose. During 2023-24, we will invest some 96% of our WARF funding on dedicated people who develop and implement our access and retention agenda through school, college and community engagement, and provide the 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. Salary and other inflationary pressures over the last year in particular

have increased the proportion of our WARF funding spent on staff costs. Given that WARF funding has remained at previous levels, this has reduced the range of project activities that we will be able to support through WARF in 2023-24. The impact of that on the achievement of our targets will be discussed under the new reporting arrangements.

## WIDENING PARTICIPATION AND OUTREACH OPERATIONAL PLAN 2023 TO 2024

SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT
COLLEGE ENGAGEMENT
INDUCTION AND TRANSITION



### SIMD 20 and 40

We are committed to a baseline target of recruiting 16% of our Scottish-domiciled undergraduate entrants (SDUE) from SIMD20 and 32% from SIMD 40. For entry in 2022-23, our internal data suggests that 12.9% of Scottish Domiciled Undergraduate Entrants (SDUEs) were drawn from the SIMD 20 demographic, and 33.1% from SIMD 40.

We would signal at this stage that our experience during the 2023-24 recruitment cycle was that applications from SIMD20 and 40 quintiles were much reduced. In part, this will have reflected the general reduction in Scottish applicants, but we consider that potential applicants from these quintiles have been disproportionately affected by the cost of living crisis and legacy issues from the Covid pandemic. We have addressed this directly through adjustments to our contextualised admissions process and through targeted applicant conversion activities. This has resulted in a higher proportion of offers and acceptances for entry in 2023-24.

### 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. Offers and acceptances for entry in 2023-24 are up on 2022-23, reflecting active steps taken through the admissions cycle.

In 2023-24, we will support the introduction of the refreshed National Schools Programme, and will develop and contribute to new and existing projects providing a bridge between Senior Phase school and tertiary education.

We will deliver the fourth iteration of our ‘Step Into Health @ QMU’ programme for S5 and S6 LEAPS eligible students interested in our Nursing, Paramedic Science and



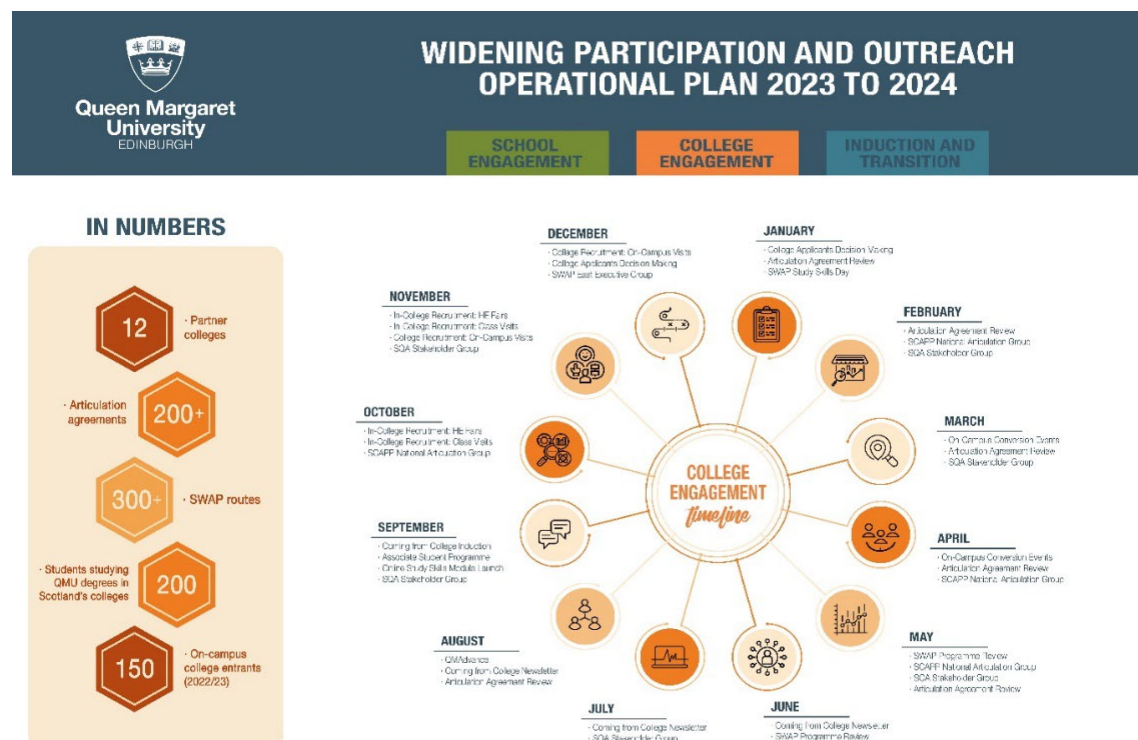
Allied Health programmes. 'Step into Health' provides pupils with first experience of these subjects at university, and is a source for such pupils to draw upon in their university application personal statement. We will repeat our 'Step into Health @ QMU' programme in 2024, building on the 200 senior phase pupils from 15 school who took part in 2023.

We will also deliver 'QMU Creates' (piloted 2022-23), which offers 25 LEAPS eligible S2 and S3 pupils in East Lothian the opportunity work with QMU students studying across our creative industries programmes, including Film and Media, Costume Design and Construction and Drama.

## 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.

Our recent focus has been to work in partnership with our college partners to develop new routes offering progression to a QMU degree in the partner college campus. Offering this type of articulation provides full academic credit to progress directly to the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of a degree, whilst providing the student with the ability to stay at home, reducing disruption to family and employment commitments. This reduces student concerns about the cost of living and the need to limit the expense of studying. We consider that this is an effective contribution to widening participation in HE, that also responds to local student and employer demand. Our partnership with Edinburgh and City of Glasgow Colleges resulted in the successful launch in September 2023 of a full cohort on the BSc (Hons) Sports Rehabilitation degree. We will develop over this next year an additional route for HND students in Hospitality Management, Travel and Tourism and Events Management students that will provide access to the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of a QMU degree at the City of Glasgow College campus in September 2024.



We would restate here comments in our recent Outcome Agreements concerning the need for a period of recovery for college applications to university. We judge that our September 2023 intake will continue to be influenced by the lower levels of recruitment to HNs experienced by Colleges during 2021/22 and 2022/23, as well as the industrial action in the

college sector over the summer of 2023. We recognise a number of factors contributing to uncertainty in the college sector, and the impact on the pool of potential candidates in 2023-24 of reductions in college course provision. We look forward to the return of most of the college HE Fairs this year, which have been absent since autumn 2019.

We will continue our involvement in sector level meetings, including the Joint US/CS Advisory Group on Articulation, Pathways, and the SCAPP Articulation Network, which provide the opportunity to refocus efforts to meet the recommendations of the National Articulation Forum 2020. We will represent the HE Sector on the SQA Next Gen Articulation and Grading Stakeholder Group, and engage fully in conversations around the emerging impact of the SQA's development of the Next Gen HN qualifications on articulation.

### **Students from Care Experienced Background, Student Carers and Estranged Students**

Our commitment in this area is published at the following link: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/study-here/student-services/support-for-care-leavers/>

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/qm-cares/>

We will continue to 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. This includes partnership with Who Cares? Scotland, Care Experienced, Estranged & Carers East Forum (CEECEF), East Lothian Champions Board and the Hub for Success, and East Lothian's Corporate Parenting Board.

In 2023-24, we will work with Hub for Success HE partners to introduce a new support initiative for care experienced students studying in Edinburgh. Hosted by Edinburgh Napier University's Student Union, 'Care Fest 2023' will bring together in November 2023 new and current care experienced students from across the Hub for Success partners to celebrate the growing community of care experienced students studying at degree level in Edinburgh and the Lothians, and to support their transition and on-going success in higher education.

Under our Corporate Parenting Plan 2022 to 2025, we will deliver in 2023-24 an all-staff Corporate Parenting training event in partnership with colleagues from Who Cares? Scotland. We will also continue to partner with East Lothian Council and Rock Trust in the delivery of the innovative housing project for care experienced young people in East Lothian, 'My Place', which offers two care experienced young people a room in a 3-bed property in Musselburgh as their first 'adult' tenancy. Peer Flat mates 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 2023-24.

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'.

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 will continue throughout 2023-24, and through the lifetime of our three year Outcome Agreement:

<https://www.qmu.ac.uk/study-here/student-services/support-for-estranged-students/>

Our on-going support will draw on the recommendations detailed in the ScotCen Social Research (ScotCen) report on the experiences of estranged students in Scotland (available here). Amongst other issues, the report highlights the financial pressures facing estranged students during the on-going cost of living crisis. In response, we have recently secured external funding to support the award of 5 x £500 bursaries for estranged students studying at QMU during 2023-24.

We are a signatory to the Armed Forces Covenant. 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/>

In 2023-24, our Head of Widening Participation and Outreach will play an active role in the newly established Advance Network and will work with current ex-service students to establish QMU Veterans and Families – a student-led support group for ex-service/armed forces students and their family members.

### **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 Agreement since 2011. Under the arrangements 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 and Equality Outcomes](#) update, published April 2023, is presented here.

### **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/06431\\_8900162](https://viewer.joomag.com/qmu-2022-ug-prospectus/06431_8900162)

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 those referenced throughout this Outcome Agreement.

### **Closing the gap: work with Schools**

The disruption to primary and high school education arising from the COVID-19 pandemic was significant. 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. 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 Enhanced Learning Tutoring Initiative (ELTI): <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/news-and-events/news/2022/20220901-tutoring-initiative-elti-the-award/>

We are working with academic researchers from QMU on project evaluation, and have engaged with other HEIs who are developing similar projects, to share learning and explore the potential for future expansion of tutoring within Scotland’s schools. We have

secured funding to support a fourth iteration of ELTI during 2023-24, enabling us to secure the contracts of the ELTI project team for a further 12 months and to deliver the programme to 400 target pupils during 2023-24. We will host 'Challenging the Attainment Gap: The Potential of Tutoring' on campus in November, during which we will share project impact to date and explore potential delivery and funding models to sustain the initiative beyond a fourth year of delivery.

## 5 QUALITY LEARNING AND TEACHING

We have a number of strategies in place to enhance student engagement, persistence and retention. Our approach offers support to students at all levels throughout their student journey and beyond, recognising that promoting retention and success to all, benefits all. Initiatives are evaluated through various mechanisms including student feedback. Evidence of outputs and impact are also detailed in end-of-year project reports. We also have a number of staff-facing initiatives to support optimisation of learning, teaching and assessment and the overall student experience.

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.

For Session 2023-24, we have committed to an outcome that would see 90% of Scottish-domiciled full-time first year entrants returning to study in year 2. This is a reduction on the 93% stated in previous agreements, and reflects our concern that particular groups of students, including groups covered by this agreement, will continue to be affected disproportionately by pandemic legacy issues, and by the cost-of-living crisis. The actions set out in this agreement are designed to support our students navigate those challenges.

### Early warning

We have a well-developed system to record student withdrawal, 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, and annually at the Widening Access and Retention (WISeR) Board and through Programme and School Annual Monitoring Reports.

Our '[Thinking-of-leaving](#)' resource, 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 tailored 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.

### Student engagement, support and wellbeing

We will deliver our Peer Assisted Learning Scheme (PALS), which continues to develop, offering our students the opportunity to engage in additional study sessions, facilitated by trained student peer Leaders. After six years of delivery, we have a solid evidence base of the impact of the scheme on student attainment and retention.

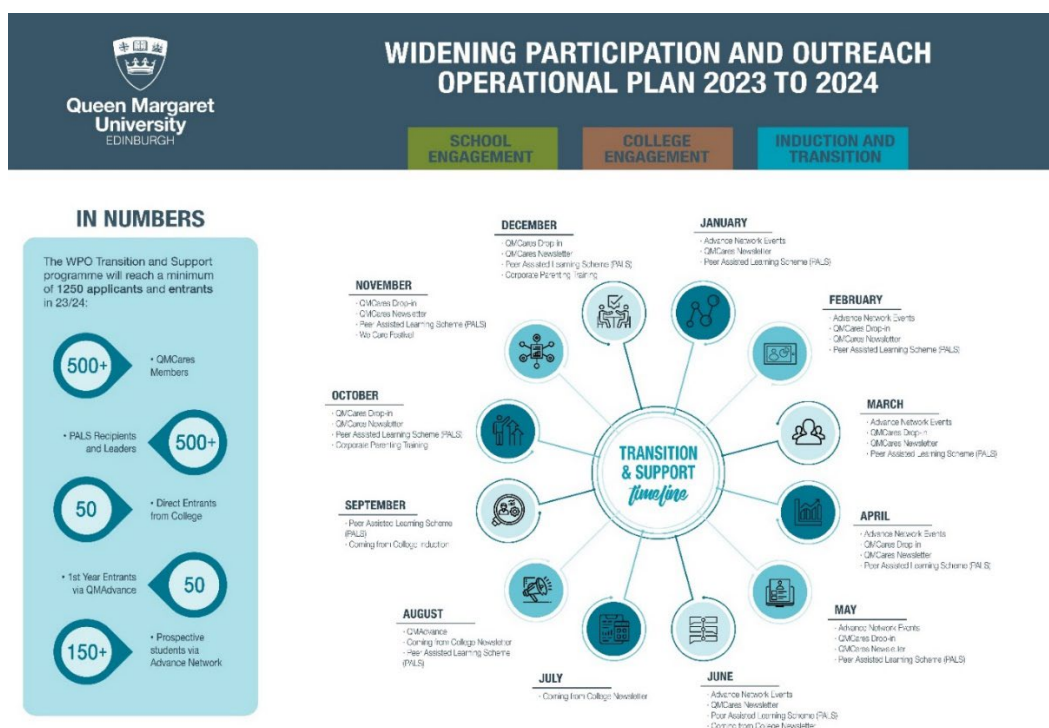
We will build on our efforts to address the severe cost of living challenges as they impact on our students. The working group established to oversee our response promotes the various aspects of our support through social media messaging and through a dedicated webpage: <https://www.qmu.ac.uk/study-here/student-services/cost-of-living-crisis-support-for-students/>

We will continue to deliver our [Thank-goodness-its-Thursday](#) (TGIT) initiative, which provides 300+ meals free of charge to students during the semester. As well as the opportunity for social interaction, the evening seeks to enhance students' sense of belonging, recognised as an important factor in student retention.

Our student services have seen a continuation of students struggling with loneliness and isolation and feeling "cut off" which is likely linked to some extent to the pandemic, and to students finding it difficult to get to know other students due to lack of opportunity to socialise.

The number of students receiving support from our Student Services remains high, with increased demand on disability, counselling and wellbeing services. All Student Services continue to provide the option of online and in person appointments, and have seen a shift in preferences to face-to-face appointments, particularly in counselling and wellbeing.

We reviewed our Counselling Service and Wellbeing Service in early 2022, and merged the two services with a simplified referral route. This has reduced waiting times and improved the capacity to respond to emergencies, with scheduled emergency appointments available each day for critical incidents. We have increased the availability of evening appointments also, as this has proved popular with students who are working or are on placements. We will continue to provide one-to-one support as the main form of support, but also provide group support, workshops and webinars for students on areas such as managing stress, coping with anxiety, building resilience etc.



We will continue to roll out our Placement Wellbeing Toolkit which has been very much welcomed by students and staff as a support tool for students on placements.

We will continue to provide support to a significant number of disabled students, providing support through individual learning plans, study supports, assistive technology etc. Through the disability service, we have seen an increase in students with mental health conditions, as well as a significant increase in students seeking diagnosis for neurodiversity, with related increased waiting times to be diagnosed. We will continue to work with partner organisations, such as alcohol and drugs services (MELDAP), local Eating Disorder Supports, Primary Mental Health Service (CWIC), and with local Women's Aid and Rape

Crisis groups.

We will deliver against our Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, refreshed during the academic session 2022-23. The SFC funding for additional counselling continues to support two counsellors, each at 0.6 FTE, within the Counselling and Wellbeing teams. The additional resource has:

- Provided additional drop-ins for self-help and wellbeing support, and for preventing/ tackling sexual harassment and violence.
- Delivered psycho-education workshops and staff training.
- Undertaken Counselling assessments.
- Delivered brief Counselling and One-at-a-time Therapy/Single Session Therapy.
- Increased links with local stakeholders

We welcome the confirmation of continued funding from the SFC for 2023-24 under the 1-year Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Transition Fund. We will continue to build into this additional resource specialist support to assist us in our commitment to addressing sexual harassment and violence.

[Report and Support](#) provides a platform for students to report various forms of harassment and violence. It also provides access to advice and support.

We continue to work collaboratively with Edinburgh universities through the GBV steering group, working with Rape Crisis in providing support to students. We are active members of the Fearless Partnership, working with a variety of stakeholders including the Universities, NHS, and the Police to improve responses to GBV in the Edinburgh Area, sharing good practice and linking supports. We also work collaboratively through the Thrive group to strategically improve mental health among students in the Edinburgh area.

### 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 2022-23, submitted to the SFC in September 2023, provides an overview of our learning and teaching activity during the period under review, and advises of our programme of review in 2023-24.

An important enhancement activity during 2022-23 was participation in Phase 1 of the Quality Enhancement and Standards Review (QESR) methodology. In June 2023 we published our QESR [Action-plan-june-2023](#) the outcomes of which will be delivered during the lifetime of this Agreement.

Our NSS survey drew a 76% response rate (5 % above the UK average). Overall satisfaction was 74%, a decrease of 2.4% compared to 2022 and 2.2% below QMU's benchmark. Due to the change in survey questions and response scales, it is not possible to make straightforward comparisons; core questions moved from the 5-point Likert scale to a 4-point question specific scale. However, the core question remained the same ie 'Overall, I am satisfied with the quality of the course'.

Initial analysis was considered by the University NSS working group in August 2023, which will continue to oversee the institutional response during session 2023-24, developing a data-driven response whilst being mindful of the specific context for each programme. The LEAD Centre will support programme teams in relation to assessment and feedback under the umbrella of CPD and promote practice opportunities linked to authentic assessment.

Our Student Partnership Agreement (SPA), refreshed and relaunched early in 2023, provides the basis for a number of projects being advanced in 2023-24 in partnership

between the Students' Union and the University. These include projects under the following thematic headings: Student Life; Academic Life; Communication with and by Students; Student Experience Strategy. The Student Experience Committee oversees the implementation of the SPA and receives annually the [SU Impact Report](#) which captures key SU initiatives, including some that are related to the identified partnership projects.

Our staff-facing initiatives around learning, teaching and assessment have been refreshed since the creation of the QMU Learning Enhancement and Academic Development (LEAD) Centre in Nov 2021. These initiatives have been strategically aligned with both the QMU Student Experience Strategy and the development of a pipeline of QMU Leaders of Learning and Teaching. They include new accredited routes for academic and professional services colleagues to achieve Advance HE Fellowship (professional recognition for learning, teaching and supporting students) via a taught route or an experiential route.

The accredited taught route is a micro-credentials based, 20 credit course called 'Teaching Learning and Assessment in Tertiary Education' which leads to Associate Fellow recognition. This has been embedded into academic contracts since June 2023, and we have launched an initial cohort in September 2023. The refreshed experiential route, the QMU CPD Fellowship Route, leads to Associate Fellow, Fellow or Senior Fellow recognition upon successful completion. More than 60 colleagues are currently enrolled on the CPD Fellowship Route and are actively working towards professional recognition for learning and teaching.

## **6 COHERENT LEARNING PROVISION - MEETING THE NEEDS OF BUSINESS, INDUSTRY AND STAKEHOLDERS**

The University offers a coherent, distinctive portfolio of programmes in healthcare, social sciences, creative arts, business, management and enterprise, and primary and secondary teaching - with a particular focus on meeting the employment needs of the public sector in Scotland. Consequently, over half of our undergraduate and postgraduate programmes provide students with the qualifications necessary to enter the health and education sectors. A significant proportion of those programmes (Nursing, Paramedic Science, and Initial Teaching Education) fall under the SFC's controlled funded places.

The University offers the widest range of allied health programmes in Scotland, and is one of only two providers in speech and language therapy, audiology, and in therapeutic radiography. Similarly, in addition to delivering the BA (Hons) Education Studies (Primary), our largest single cohort of students, we deliver postgraduate initial teaching education provision in Home Economics (PGDE Secondary), acknowledged by SFC as a 'hard to fill' PGDE Secondary subject. We have expanded our PGDE Secondary provision for 2023-24 to include another hard to fill subject, Religious, Moral and Philosophical Studies, as well as Business Education. These developments demonstrate the University's ongoing commitment to ensuring its provision directly addresses the workforce needs of the Scottish public sector.

More broadly we ensure we meet the needs of students, industry and stakeholders through: incorporating placements into well over half of our overall provision, with internships and work-based learning embedded in those areas of the portfolio that do need include placements; an increasing emphasis on authentic assessment in our assessment strategy; securing accreditation of programmes by professional bodies, wherever such accreditation is available, and employing industry advisory panels, where such accreditation is not. The development of our provision is informed by key data, including the Edinburgh and South East Scotland Labour Market Analysis and Evaluation reports produced by Skills Development Scotland (SDS) for the specific sectors in which we operate.

Evidence of our success in this regard is the consistently high rate of employability of our graduates. The most recent HESA PI for employability (published as experimental statistics in July 2023, and based on the status of the 2020/21 graduating cohort 15 months after

graduation) shows that 97.3% of Scottish-domiciled undergraduate qualifiers responding to the Graduate Outcomes survey were in a positive destination. As such, we are in the top 6 of Scottish universities for the number of graduates in full-time employment 15 months after they have graduated (Graduate Outcome Statistics 2020/1 published by HESA in 2023).

Furthermore, at 2%, the University has the lowest level of unemployment in Scotland for its graduates 15 months after they have graduated (the average figure for Scotland is 5%. (Graduate Outcome Statistics 2020/1, published by HESA in 2023). Regarding graduates in professional employment, our overall figure derived from the experimental statistics referred to above is 68.2%.

Our focus on graduate employability is being advanced through our Employability Strategy, which outlines the measures we take to create an environment in which students develop the skills and attributes needed to flourish in a rapidly changing labour market. It represents an agreement on the focus and priorities of the Careers and Employability team, programme teams and our external partners over the period 2021-2026. Developed against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, it includes projects which will support students to navigate uncertain labour markets and the economic downturn, and to maximise opportunities presented by changing working practices across all industries and sectors.

## **7 WORK-BASED LEARNING AND SKILLS**

### **Graduate Apprenticeships**

Graduate Apprenticeships make up a very small proportion of the University's overall provision, with an allocation of 40 FTE for 2022/3 for its BA/BA (Hons) Business Management (Graduate Apprenticeship). Despite best efforts to promote actively the Graduate Apprenticeship programme (detailed below) and build relationships with relevant employers, recruitment has been challenging from the outset.

In part, having multiple HEIs in Edinburgh offering the same GA Business Framework has resulted in duplication of effort, and the need for the University to differentiate its approach from the other providers. We have sought guidance on whether we might look to orientate our GA places towards a different sector (for example the hospitality sector or early years), but the guidance thus far has been that we must remain within the agreed SDS GA framework for which we have been given places.

As such, we have focussed our recruitment on smaller businesses, rather than continuing to pursue larger employers with whom others in Edinburgh work. The legacy of the Covid pandemic has made this challenging, with such businesses continuing to experience significant uncertainty, resulting in a reticence to commit to having a four-year GA on their staff. We are keen to continue to explore the possibility of how we could rework our GA places to orientate them better towards sectors not currently well served with GAs.

### **Upskilling and Micro-credentials**

We have worked to support key partners' current and prospective skills needs outside of our degree portfolio through the provision of micro-credentials, supported by the SFC's Upskilling funding. We continue to focus our attention on the following:

- sectors of the economy impacted seriously by the pandemic, and for which there appeared to be fewer opportunities offered through the Upskilling funds; namely, hospitality & tourism, the creative and cultural industries, education, and third sector charities;
- demand for professionals working in both the public and private sectors to develop a better understanding of communication and other issues that create barriers to inclusion and access for sign language users, and to respond to the duty that The British Sign



Language (Scotland) Act 2015 places on public bodies throughout Scotland both to promote the use of BSL and improve provision of services through BSL.

We will build in 2023-24 on our current upskilling and micro-credential provision short courses on: Leadership, Governance and Strategy (Not-for-Profit); Fundraising, Development and Finance in the Cultural and Third Sectors; Planning and Marketing Cultural Projects; Evaluating Arts and Cultural Projects; Using Research to Improve Organisational Performance in the Cultural Sector; Professional Certificate in Mediation and Mediation Skills (accredited) Making Places for Outdoor Learning; Introduction to Film Education; and Working with Sign Language Users and Interpreters;

### Online Programme Development

We will also support the current and prospective skills needs of individuals through all stages of life, as well as key sectors of the Scottish economy, through our recently launched (March 2023) suite of asynchronous, part time, online postgraduate programmes in public and global health and in education, including special and inclusive education (<https://online.qmu.ac.uk/>).

The structure and delivery of these programmes is designed to ensure that they offer a highly flexible learning experience to meet the needs of students with work and/or caring commitments.

## 8 SUSTAINABILITY

We continue to define sustainability according to its three pillars – environmental, economic and social. Our cross-institutional Sustainability Committee has been reinvigorated and has been significantly invested in developing our new climate change strategy.

We are 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 the net-zero plan will support our commitment to this. We continue to work with the Alliance for Sustainability Leadership in Education.

We have concluded on our work to establish a net-zero date, recognising the legislative drivers while assuming a pragmatic approach which recognises:

- alignment with the planned elemental asset lifecycle renewal of the estate with lower embodied energy and low carbon technologies introduced;
- that carbon reduction targets are not a linear regression but that the introduction of transformational technologies at key stages of the transition will achieve a paradigm shift.

A target for the University to be net-zero by 2044 was agreed by the University Court on 30 November 2022, with interim reduction targets of 42% by 2030, and 53% by 2038, based on the reductions required by aligning with Science Based Targets. Achievement of these targets is supported by the options appraisal undertaken.

Our baseline annual scope 1 and 2 emissions are mapped within this plan at 2,792 tCO<sub>2</sub>e. We report on travel emissions associated with business travel and staff and student commuting within our Public Bodies reporting and are reviewing the boundaries of Scope 3 emissions to ensure that these are appropriately set before adopting specific reduction targets associated with these. We have reported on actuals in the self-evaluation statement for 2022-23 that accompanies this Agreement.

We have concluded on our [‘Climate Change and Net Zero Strategy – A Shared Common Future’](#). Key themes emerging from review of internal and external sources were considered by the Sustainability Committee, and put out for consultation with relevant stakeholders, with a final version approved by the University Court in April 2023.

The strategy draws on the role of the University as an enabler in educating and inspiring future generations in influencing sustained and embedded change, rather than focusing purely on carbon metrics or the physical and operational boundaries on the University operations. The ability to adapt delivery to reflect the dynamic and changing nature of the challenges, including accounting for the growth of the University in on-campus, online and partnership activity is embedded in the approach adopted. The strategy builds on the work we have already undertaken to identify decarbonisation options in the physical campus and in policy and practice areas which support carbon reduction in operations.

We recognise the need to act beyond simply fulfilling mandatory reporting duties, however. For climate change action to work most effectively, all the university’s occupants and stakeholders need to be invested in the cause. While there might 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.

Our Learning Enhancement and Academic Development (LEAD) team has commenced a review on how best sustainability can be embedded within the curriculum, and this will be advanced in the period of this agreement.

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.

## **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 early 2022 we conducted our five yearly externally facilitated [Court-effectiveness-Review](#), the scope of which was to ‘provide an evaluation of the effectiveness of the current arrangements for Court and Senate’. The overarching judgement arising from the review was that the University Court continues to have in place effective arrangements to meet its key obligations, as set out in the University Court Statement of Primary Responsibilities. All actions arising from the review were completed by June 2023, including agreement to progress the GIVE Scheme.

We have made significant progress over recent years to enhance the diversity of our Court, but we recognise that more needs to be done. To address this, we are launching a scheme that will extend the pool of potential candidates for Court membership to those who possess relevant professional expertise and/or skills, but who do not possess the prior board experience normally required of such appointment.

Through a combination of informal and formal support and training, the scheme will equip individuals with potential with the necessary ‘information capital’ normally expected of and demonstrated by candidates for lay Court membership. The Governor Investment Scheme (GIVE) will address an identified need to create a pipeline of diverse and appointable candidates for Court vacancies that will contribute to Court effectiveness by securing input

from individuals with a range of diverse perspectives. It will also contribute to our succession planning arrangements and to the efficacy of established recruitment arrangements.

We will continue to maintain an appropriate gender balance on the Court as required under the Gender Representation on Boards legislation.

## 10 RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

### Research and KE Strategy

The University published its new Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy (2022-2027) in April 2022 (<https://www.qmu.ac.uk/research-and-knowledge-exchange/strategy-and-culture/research-strategy-and-culture/>).

The review of the previous strategy and development of the new strategy followed iterative consultation across the University, informed by our submission to REF 2021.

Central to our Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy is a focus on consolidating and developing areas of research excellence with the greatest potential, using our institutional REF 2021 results and external UoA benchmark data to determine those areas. Within those areas, we will support the initiation and development of mission-led and challenge-based ideas that contribute to social, cultural and economic prosperity and wellbeing, and that are aligned with applicable Scottish Government National Performance Framework Outcomes and the UN Sustainable Development goals.

Given the University's academic portfolio and demonstrable areas of research strength, we will focus on the following areas of the NPF: Children and Young People; Fair Work and Business; International; Education; Health; and Culture.

Similarly, of the Sustainable Development Goals, we will focus on producing research and engaging in knowledge exchange activity that has an impact on: Good Health and Well-being; Quality Education; Gender Equality; Decent Work and Economic Growth; Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure; and Reduced Inequalities.

Our refreshed research and knowledge exchange strategic objectives are to:

1. *Drive Excellence through Impact*, supporting high quality research and KE that is, or has the potential to be internationally excellent or world leading, focusing on the quality and impact of our outputs, and securing greater diversity and sustainability of income streams.
2. *Focus our Strengths*, focusing on existing areas of excellence with the greatest potential for growth, increasing interdisciplinary collaboration and being alert to emerging areas of opportunity.
3. *Develop and Value People*, enhancing the capacity and capability of our researchers and securing development time for their success across multiple career pathways through leadership, mentoring, and unlocking the potential of Early Career Researchers and Contract Research Staff.
4. *Promote Collaboration and Interdisciplinarity*, by continuing to pursue research and research development partnerships, embedding a challenge-led approach to our internal allocation of research funding through alignment with external priorities such as the National Performance Framework and UN Sustainable Development Goals.
5. *Embed a Healthy and Positive Culture*, by developing and sustaining a distinctive, positive, inclusive, and healthy research and KE culture that supports the capacity of our staff and students to be curious, creative and innovative in a variety of contexts.
6. *Embrace Open Innovation*, ensuring that open research and KE increasingly defines our outputs, culture, campus and practice.

## Research Excellence Grant (REG) case studies

One case study to illustrate how we have used our SFC Research Excellence Grant (REG) funding to underpin and support excellent research that aligns with priorities in the National Performance Framework and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

## Effective use of SFC core research grants in AY 2023-24

Our Research Excellence Grant (REG) allocation is distributed directly to the academic divisions in which the members of our Research and KE Centres are located. This enables complete financial transparency and helps support and drive research activity directly. This funding is primarily used by our Research and KE Centres to: support staff who are new to research/re-engaging with research to develop initial research projects and funding applications; employ research assistants to work on projects with staff; support staff to attend and present at international conferences; support research dissemination and impact development.

A proportion of that allocation is then allocated to the University's central infrastructure for research and KE support, specifically to our Research and Knowledge Exchange Development Unit (RKEDU), our Research Grants and Contract Unit (RGCU), and our Graduate School.

RKEDU supports the University's research policy and strategy development and implementation; REF preparation and research assessment; researcher development and training; research culture development and UKRI concordat engagement, implementation and associated staff development; public and civic engagement; innovation and enterprise; research governance, integrity and NHS ethics; research impact; research investments and statutory returns; and place based research initiatives. RGCU provides support for all aspects of applying for and managing research grants and other externally funded project income including project costing and pricing, funding applications, negotiating funder contracts and collaborative agreements, intellectual property protection, and post-award financial management and reporting.

## Supporting the postgraduate research capacity and strategy

Each year, the entirety of our Research Postgraduate Grant (RPG) allocation is used to fund our Postgraduate Research Student bursaries. We dedicate the entirety of our RPG funding to bursaries for two strategic reasons. Firstly, in order to ensure sufficient critical mass of postgraduate research (PGR) students, when combined with our fee-paying and jointly funded PGR students, to provide a high quality, sustainable, PGR experience and culture. Secondly, to ensure that ability to pay does not impact on our equality, diversity and inclusion commitments in terms of the recruitment and development of the next generation of early career researchers (we set our PGR bursary in line with UKRI's minimum stipend for their studentships). As noted above, REG funding is used to finance Graduate School administrative support for postgraduate research students, PGR supervisor training etc.

## Supporting sustainability and future research excellence

The University's [Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy \(2022-2027\)](#) strategic objectives include focusing on the quality and impact of our research outputs, and securing greater diversity and sustainability of our research and KE income streams. To this end, one of the early actions identified in the Strategy is the review of our Research and Knowledge Exchange Centres, informed by our institutional REF 2021 results and external UoA benchmark data. This review, which is now complete, and the refreshed Research and KE Centre KPIs, will ensure the Centres' activities are fully aligned with the University's research and KE objectives.

Central to the development of our research staff is our annual QMU Researcher Development Training Programme and our membership of the collaborative Teaching Research and Academic Mentoring Scheme (TRAMS) led by the University of St Andrews and University of Dundee. Our Postgraduate Research Students also benefit from the PGR development, training and placement opportunities presented by our membership of the two Scottish Graduate Schools.

As indicated above, RGCUs provide costing and pricing support for Research and Knowledge exchange activity. Ultimately however it is the Deans of School who have the ultimate sign off on R&KE applications as they are best placed to consider whether a particular activity which doesn't cover a proportion or all of its Full Economic Cost is nonetheless in the strategic interests of the University to pursue. In doing so, they will be mindful of the financial sustainability of our research activity, and the extent to which it can be subsidised by net income generating activities elsewhere in the School, as well as the expectations set out in our Outcome Agreement and the expectations of the Scottish Government in relation to SME engagement, knowledge exchange and innovation.

### **Enabling an excellent research environment and positive cultures**

In addition to our commitment to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and the Concordat to Support Research Integrity (detailed below), we are creating an excellent research environment and positive research cultures through:

- Our commitment to the HR Excellence in Research Award.
- Our participation in the Culture, Employment and Development in Academic Research Survey – (CEDARS). Our use of CEDARS to benchmark our research culture and identify priority areas for action, including the provision of additional training, researcher mentoring and links with external networks, was one of four case studies in Research Consulting's 2023 '[Review of annual statements on research integrity](#)' report.
- Our institutional subscription to the UK Research Integrity Office.
- Our commitment to the Responsible Use of Metrics in Research Assessment, as a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) and the Leiden Manifesto and through our Institutional Statement on the Use of Metrics in Research Assessment.
- Our Commitment to the Knowledge Exchange (KE Concordat) as one of the three Scottish HEIs who submitted to the Development Year, and
- Through supporting sector best practice and Narrative CV developments through participation in the UK Research and Innovation Alternative Users Group.

### **Concordat for Research Integrity**

Our updated annual statement for 2022/23 will be presented for approval by the University Court in December 2023. Once approved, the statement will be available here: [Annual statement on research integrity](#)

### **Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers**

We are a signatory to the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. The University's Annual Compliance Statements and Action Plan are available here: [Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers | Strategy and Policy | Queen Margaret University \(qmu.ac.uk\)](#). [Please note that the updated report will be available from this page once approved by the University Court in December '23]

## 11 UNIVERSITY INNOVATION FUND (UIF)

We confirm that the University intends to match the £250K UIF platform grant. Detail of the new initiatives that the UIF uplift (QMU received £73K) will support is set out in section 4 below. The University's innovation activity is strategically aligned with the Scottish Government's (SG) Innovation Strategy's vision and priorities. As a relatively small institution, collaboration with HEI and industry partners in R&D and spin-out support is essential, as has been a focus of our support and investment of UIF funding on a few areas of strength and greatest potential. The work of our Scottish Centre for Food Development and Innovation, the focus of our innovation activity, reflects SG's prioritisation of that sector and contributes to the achievement of a green recovery and wellbeing economy (e.g. through its development of a sustainable alternative to palm fat and its innovation collaboration with SMEs on functional food). This is explored further in our innovation case studies.

### OUTCOME 1. Demand Stimulation

Increase the demand and quality of engagement from businesses and the public sector for university services.

As a member of the Scottish Higher Education Researcher Developers (ScotHERD) we will embed the work of the sector to better understand the role that Researcher Developers play in supporting researchers traverse careers across academia and industry. In 2023-24 we are working with the other Scottish HEIs, to explore more opportunities for collaboration, aiming to increase the capacity and interest for industry engagement. Within QMU we have appointed our second Research and KE Special Projects Fellow which allows contract research staff the opportunity to work on institutional KE policy initiatives and gain transferable skills.

On an institutional basis, and through our membership of the Research and Commercialisation Directors Group (RCDG), we continue to strengthen our relationship with Interface as they evolve their delivery model and embed their new funding portal. We have valued their contribution to a range of QMU initiatives and strategy discussions around market demand and positioning in new (wellness and wellbeing) and existing sectors (health, food and drink, creative industries).

In 2023-24 we will have enhanced on-campus presence and input from the Interface Team to support new, ambitious QMU targets for delivery via our refreshed Research and KE Centres for Innovation Vouchers (Student Placement, Standard and Advanced), Inward Investment Catalyst Fund, and Healthier Products for Innovation Fund for Scotland, and explore more strategic initiatives when opportunities arise.

We were pleased to become a member of the SFC funded Scottish Alliance for Food, Health, Equity and Sustainability (SCAF) and look forward to working with partners to prime the Scottish landscape in responding to challenge-focused research funding opportunities.

The indication is that the next generation Innovation Centres (as 'infrastructure investments') will be strategically closer to HEIs, and this has the potential to increase the demand and quality of engagement from businesses and the public sector for university services. In an institutional capacity and through UIF collaborative groups, we will actively engage with Innovation Centres to influence more coherent relationships over the course of the next academic year.

Strong relationships with East Lothian Council and other Local Government partners are an important part of our research and KE culture. All researchers are encouraged to join our Ask the Expert Directory which allows you to set up an expertise profile in the Local Government procurement system. This opens a range of consultancy and tendering opportunities – all great pathways to research impact.

## **OUTCOME 2. Simplification/Commercialisation**

Simplify business access to the knowledge and expertise in Scottish universities.

Scotland's National Innovation Strategy (June 2023) states: 'We will design a new Research Commercialisation Framework for Scotland... we will work closely with RCDG to develop our detailed proposals for research commercialisation'. We welcome this opportunity to inform the detail and implementation of this strategy, and will work closely with our colleagues in collaboration via RCDG.

Following successful registration of a patent, our PalmAlt application from QMU's Scottish Centre for Food Development and Innovation was accepted for submission to the Scottish Enterprise High Growth Spin Out following a hugely successful press release, resulting in national and international media coverage and significant industry and venture capitalist interest.

We have secured Scottish Enterprise funding to support a review of QMU research and commercialisation processes. This aims to improve infrastructure and acumen around Intellectual Property (IP), Spin Out, Licensing and Company formation. QMU has extended its collaborative arrangement with the University of St Andrews for the provision of generic IP guidance and support in 20223/24.

## **OUTCOME 3. Simplification/Greater Innovation**

A new QMU KE Manager post has been funded with increased emphasis on generating and converting leads, bid writing and pre and post award account/project management, maximising alignment with key funding schemes and interventions including SFC Innovation Vouchers, Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs).

QMU's Research Centres have been relaunched in 2023/24 as Research and KE Centres, with a clear remit and KPIs for KE, Innovation and Enterprise. This aims to enhance School implementation of the QMU Research and KE Strategy and embed institutional commitments to sector Concordats.

Through the UIF Collaboration Manager, we continue to engage with the regional lead for Innovate UK in Scotland, to influence policy and increase opportunity for Scottish businesses to innovate. QMU continues its membership of the East of Scotland KTP Centre, who help define projects and prepare the funding application, alongside the Universities of Edinburgh, Stirling, St Andrews, Edinburgh Napier and Heriot Watt. In 2023/24 we will build on the outcomes of our Innovate UK KTP Capacity Building Grant.

## **OUTCOME 4. Entrepreneurialism**

Open to QMU, students, partners alumni and researchers, SHIFT is QMU's creative industries entrepreneurial skills and training collaboration with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and The Glasgow School of Art.

Similarly, THRIVE is QMU's entrepreneurial initiative, delivered by the Scottish Centre for Food Development and Innovation (SCFDI) to support the next generation of food and drink innovators, delivered in collaboration with Scotland's Rural College (SRUC). Building on the success of SHIFT and THRIVE, and given the strength of QMU's teaching, research and KE expertise across Allied Health, Nursing, Art Therapies and the Social Sciences, we are exploring a new entrepreneurial training programme – "WELL" - for session 2023/24.

The QMU Business Innovation Zone (BIZ) is currently being reviewed and will be refreshed and relaunched in 2023, aligned to Scottish Government Entrepreneurial Campus Developments. We recently undertook a full tenancy review, and currently have 28 Graduate Start Ups. We are exploring possible collaborative models of delivery with Edinburgh Napier

University and Edinburgh College. There is strong interest from external regional start-ups to locate in the BIZ.

We have launched a refreshed and enhanced package of funding and support to encourage QMU staff and student Start Ups to stay in the region and are working on a STUDY, STAY, GROW campaign with our Business Gateway partners. This includes a new East Lothian Council - UK Shared Prosperity Fund – Supporting Local Business 2023/24 New Business Support Grant.

We continue to participate in Enterprise Support Group (ESG), a formal subgroup of RCDG, comprising of staff responsible for spinout and start-up support and development in our HEIs. ESG meet quarterly to share best practice, deliver collaborative initiatives, and engage with the latest strategy and policy from Scottish and UK governments. Learnings from ESG leads to better service delivery in our own organisation, increasing the number and quality of new enterprises, ultimately improving impact on regional and national economic growth.

In the coming year, ESG aims to identify opportunities for alignment between HEIs and the Scottish Government's Techscaler programme. With support of the KE&I Collaboration Manager, we will explore ways to collaborate with other HEIs, colleges and Codebase (as the Techscaler delivery partner) to co-design and co-deliver new collaborative initiatives, where these may have a regional or sectoral focus.

We value the role Converge plays in creating a community and providing opportunity to our spinouts and start-ups, while also putting a spotlight on the enterprise creation in Scottish HEIs. We will continue to actively support and take advantage of Converge throughout 2023-24 and build on strengthening on-campus Converge support in developing our entrepreneurial culture.

We will build on the outcomes of the SFC workshop on Entrepreneurial Campus and, in partnership with the sector, will use this workshop to provide context for our plans to relaunch our Business Innovation Zone and use the UIF uplift (£73k for QMU) to invest in further collaboration with Edinburgh Napier University and Edinburgh College in line with the Regional Alignment actions (2-5) in the Entrepreneurial Campus blueprint. Discussions are at a commercially sensitive stage, but updates can be provided on this in due course.

In partnership with regional stakeholders and their enhanced on-campus presence in our Business Innovation Zone, we are working with East Lothian Council to maximise collaborative opportunities around the increasing imperative of community wealth building and joint bids for Shared Prosperity and Strength in Places funding.

In QMU's Student Experience Strategy, "Employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship" is one of the priority areas and one of the actions for this area is to "Support and encourage development of enterprise skills to foster employability and entrepreneurship in graduates". This also aligns very closely with our Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy and exciting new opportunities emerging from the new QMU Innovation Hub and SFC's Entrepreneurial Campus Strategy. Our informal new researcher-led Enterprise and Innovation Network offers opportunities to learn with others about what enterprise is and ways of embedding it in our programmes and research.

## **OUTCOME 5. International**

QMU has secured EU funding through the Start for Future (SFF) programme to create a sustainable alliance of European HEIs, incubators, start-ups, and industry partners with the aim of creating a leading European programme for entrepreneurship in the areas of Health and Food. This will enable us to deliver on the actions under the 'Inspire' theme in the Entrepreneurial Campus blueprint, and underpins a major step change in QMU's innovation culture and capabilities through collaboration with Edinburgh Napier University, East Lothian Council, and partner universities in the EU, aligned closely with opportunities arising from the



new QMU Innovation Hub. Our food innovation activity, supported by Innovate UK funding, involves international partners, as illustrated in our Innovation case studies.

### **OUTCOME 6. Inclusive Growth and Social Impact**

In addition to the development of our Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal funded Innovation Hub, construction of which is due to commence in December 2023, we engage with other HEIs through the City Region and Growth Deal HEI Network. This peer network meets quarterly online to share experience under common themes. In AY2023-24, the workshop themes include benefits realization, regional economic strategies, and community engagement. Learnings from this peer group will enhance our engagement with our local City Region Deal(s), influencing more productive interactions and improving outcomes for our local communities and economy.

QMU is part of the new Social Innovation Network being led by Glasgow Caledonian University and linked to the Social Innovation Connect initiative. The aim is to share, and accelerate, new ways of working to tackle the underlying causes of our shared social challenges, which have become increasingly prevalent in recent years.

Within the BIZ, we host the on-campus East Lothian Business Improvement District (BID). The BID represents 42 SMEs and offers a great network for business engagement for our researchers. The BID is part of SFF and is keen to enhance collaboration within QMU.

This session we will be looking to engage the BID in our new QMU Food and Drink Network and identify projects for collaboration including a joint bid with Edinburgh College for a Cloud Kitchen in East Lothian

QMU is a member of The Third Sector Research Forum - a fantastic network for all career stage researchers across all disciplines interested in collaborations with third sector partners. It provides support in formulating research to reach a whole host of populations in the voluntary sector or in co-producing research with those populations and interest groups.

### **OUTCOME 7. Equality and Diversity**

QMU, University of Strathclyde and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland have actively championed and piloted the KE Concordat in Scotland. This includes ongoing discussions with SFC to discuss the integration of the KE Concordat into KEIF and the review of KE Metrics in Scotland. At a UK level, QMU has been used as a case study of good practice in a range of Universities UK and sector initiatives. (QMU Best Practice Case Study in KE Concordat)

Within QMU we have increased the use of Equality Impact Assessments as standard practice across all aspects of our KE Culture. In 2023/24 plan to relaunch our Concordat for Researcher Development Working Group as the Research and KE Culture Working Group to reflect a new and extended remit to include the Concordat for Researcher Development and the Concordat for Research Integrity with an emphasis on Research and KE. We are particularly keen to apply sector developments relating to narrative CV principles and research integrity (including safeguarding and misconduct) to KE.

## Outcome Agreement between Queen Margaret University and the Scottish Funding Council for AY 2023-24

### On behalf of Queen Margaret University

Signed:




Print name: Paul Grice

Position: Principal and Vice-Chancellor

Date: 21 November 2023

Signed:



Print name: Pamela Woodburn

Position: Chair, University Court

Date: 21 November 2023

### On behalf of the Scottish Funding Council:

Signed:



Print name: Karen Watt

Position: Chief Executive

Date: 15 January 2024