



Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Edinburgh Napier University

Outcome Report

March 2015

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About the Enhancement-led Institutional Review method

A dedicated page of the QAA website explains the method for [Enhancement-led Institutional Review](#) of higher education institutions in Scotland and has links to the ELIR handbook and other informative documents.¹ You can also find more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.²

Further details about the enhancement-led approach can be found in an accompanying [ELIR information document](#),³ including an overview of the review method, definitions of the judgement categories, and explanations of follow-up action. It also contains information on the Scottish Funding Council's response to ELIR judgements.

About this review

This is the Outcome Report of the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Edinburgh Napier University. The review took place as follows: Part 1 visit on 10 on 12 February 2015 and Part 2 visit on 23 on 27 March 2015. The review was conducted by a team of six reviewers:

- Lesley Howie (Academic Reviewer)
- Chris McIntyre (Academic Reviewer)
- Professor John Sawkins (Academic Reviewer)
- Dr Roy Ferguson (International Reviewer)
- Anne-Marie Docherty (Student Reviewer)
- Dr Clare Parks (Coordinating Reviewer).

This report sets out the overarching judgement formed by the ELIR team on:

- the current and likely future effectiveness of the institution's arrangements for managing academic standards and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience.

It is possible for the overarching judgement to be expressed in three levels which indicate that the institution's arrangements are: effective; have limited effectiveness; or are not effective. More detail on these categories is provided in the ELIR information document.

The overarching judgement for this report can be found on page 3, followed by the areas of positive practice and the areas for development.

A more detailed [Technical Report](#) is also available for this review.⁴ The Technical Report sets out the ELIR team's findings under each of the headings in the ELIR 3 method.

¹ Further information about the ELIR method:

www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/enhancement-led-institutional-review.

² Further information about QAA: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us.

³ ELIR information document:

www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=61.

⁴ Technical Report: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/provider?UKPRN=10007772.

About Edinburgh Napier University

Edinburgh Napier University is one of the largest higher education institutions in Scotland, with over 18,000 students from 109 countries. The University's programmes are based at three campuses in Edinburgh with partners in other locations including Hong Kong, Singapore, India and Sri Lanka.

The University describes itself as an 'enterprising University' whose values are 'to be professional, ambitious, innovative and inclusive'. It has a broad portfolio of degrees with a professional focus that are linked to the workplace and to communities at home and abroad. It is committed to research that has impact; contributes to policy development and environmental, economic and social wellbeing; and is supportive of business innovation and growth. The University states that it is committed to widening access and to developing graduates who are highly valued by employers.

The University recently developed its new institutional strategy, Strategy 2020: Building Success, and is less than a year into its implementation. A key strategic objective is to deliver an excellent, personalised student experience.

Overarching judgement about Edinburgh Napier University

Edinburgh Napier University has **effective** arrangements for managing academic standards and the student learning experience. These arrangements are likely to continue to be effective in the future.

This is a positive judgement, which means Edinburgh Napier University has robust arrangements for securing academic standards and for enhancing the quality of the student experience.

Areas of positive practice

1 The ELIR has identified a number of areas of positive practice and these are summarised below.

2 **Reflective culture** - the University has developed a culture of critical self-evaluation as evidenced, for example, by the thorough mapping it has undertaken using the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. In preparing for the current ELIR, the University has evaluated its policies and practice, identifying actions that are likely to strengthen its approach to support the implementation of its key strategic priorities.

3 **Effective strategic development and commitment to communication** - the University has an effective approach to developing and implementing its strategic plan, known as Strategy 2020. This includes senior leaders being open and responsive to staff and student views during the period of significant transformation and change while Strategy 2020 was developed and first implemented. More widely, there has been a cultural shift in the way senior managers engage with staff and students, placing value in open communication and consultation through a range of approaches including the Principal's Campus Conversations, which have contributed to promoting wider engagement in the strategic planning process.

4 **Partnership with Students' Association** - the University is committed to working in partnership with Napier Students' Association across a wide range of strategic and operational developments, for example: engagement with development of the University's Strategy 2020, developing representation, the volunteering service, and sports and societies.

5 **Personalised student experience** - the University is meeting its strategic objective to provide an excellent personalised student experience. The personal development tutor role is key to achieving this aim, and there is a strong partnership between academic and professional support staff. In addition to students being actively engaged in their learning experience across the University, there are some positive examples of students being engaged as co-creators of the curriculum.

6 **Staff engagement with international partners** - University staff are proactive in their engagement with, and support for, colleagues in international partners to the benefit of the students. There is clear evidence of Edinburgh Napier staff reflecting on practice at the module and programme level, and sharing the outcomes of this reflection with colleagues in international partners to enhance the student experience.

7 **Identifying and sharing of good practice** - the University has a wide range of systematic approaches for the identifying and sharing of good practice. These include use of the Learning Resource Bank, engagement with the University's Teaching Fellows community, and academic and professional support staff engagement with the national Enhancement Themes.

Areas for development

8 Edinburgh Napier University is asked to consider the areas summarised below.

9 **New frameworks for transnational education** - continue to progress existing plans to develop new models for managing transnational education (TNE), given the University's strategic objective for a significant increase in the volume of TNE activity. In particular, the University should continue to explore staffing models, opportunities for student representation, and student support.

10 **Postgraduate research student experience** - continue to reflect on the ways in which the University maintains oversight of the holistic research student experience, in the context of the planned growth in research student numbers. This should include arrangements for monitoring and enhancing the research student experience as well as ensuring there is enough capacity amongst academic staff to provide effective supervisory support for the planned increase in numbers. Linked to the University's efforts to establish a research culture and a research student community, the institution is encouraged to extend the opportunities for research students to gain teaching experience, ensuring that students are trained and supported to fulfil this role.

11 **Use of the virtual learning environment** - building on the positive work carried out at the programme level to provide a comparable student experience of module delivery, develop clear guidelines on threshold requirements for the information to be included on the virtual learning environment at the module level.

12 **Assuring quality during significant change** - continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the existing quality framework during the organisational restructure, particularly as responsibilities are delegated to schools when the faculties are disestablished.

What happens next?

13 QAA Scotland will continue to engage with the institution through the annual discussion visits which, among other matters, consider the ways in which the institution is responding to the ELIR outcomes.

14 One year after publication of the ELIR Outcome and Technical reports, institutions are asked to provide a Follow-up Report to indicate how they are responding to the outcomes of ELIR. Institutions also engage in a follow-up event with colleagues from other institutions to explore the ways in which the ELIR outcomes are being implemented. The final version of the institution's Follow-up Report is published on the QAA website.

Further information

15 A more detailed [Technical Report](#) is also available for this review. The Technical Report sets out the ELIR team's findings under each of the headings in the ELIR 3 method.

16 This review and its findings relate to the institution as a whole and do not provide information about individual programmes of study or subjects. For further information about those, contact the institution or visit its website: www.napier.ac.uk.

17 University sector institutions in Scotland also engage in systematic Enhancement Theme activity. Further information about that work, which has a sector-wide and institutional focus, can be found on the [Enhancement Themes website](#).

18 Further information about QAA Scotland and the enhancement-led approach, including the ELIR method, can be found on the [QAA website](#).

19 For further information about the Scottish Funding Council see: www.sfc.ac.uk.

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