



Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Edinburgh Napier University

Technical Report

December 2019

Contents

About the Enhancement-led Institutional Review method	1
About this review	1
About this report	1
Threshold judgement about Edinburgh Napier University	2
1 Contextual information about the institution, student population and the review	2
2 Enhancing the student learning experience	6
3 Strategy and practice for enhancing learning and teaching	20
4 Academic standards and quality processes.....	26
5 Collaborative provision	31

About the Enhancement-led Institutional Review method

The QAA website explains the method for [Enhancement-led Institutional Review \(ELIR\)](#) and has links to the ELIR handbook and other informative documents.¹ You can also find out more about the [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education \(QAA\)](#).²

Further details about ELIR can be found in an accompanying [brief guide](#),³ including an overview of the review method, information about review teams, and explanations of follow-up action.

About this review

This is the Technical Report of the ELIR conducted by QAA at Edinburgh Napier University. The review took place as follows: Planning Visit on 9 October 2019 and Review Visit on 2-6 December 2019. The review was conducted by a team of five reviewers:

- Bobi Archer (Student Reviewer)
- Professor Jeremy Bradshaw (Academic Reviewer)
- Professor Peter Bush (Academic Reviewer)
- Dawn Martin (Coordinating Reviewer)
- Professor Valerie Webster (Academic Reviewer).

In advance of the review visits, the University submitted a self-evaluative document (the Reflective Analysis) and an advance information set, comprising a range of materials about the institution's arrangements for managing quality and academic standards.

About this report

In this report, the ELIR team:

- delivers a threshold judgement 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.

The threshold judgement can be found on page 2, followed by the detailed findings of the review given in numbered paragraphs.

Technical Reports set out the ELIR team's view under each of the report headings. Shorter Outcome Reports are provided that set out the main findings of the ELIR for a wider audience. The [Outcome Report](#) for this review is on the QAA website.⁴

ELIR Technical Reports are intended primarily for the institution reviewed, and to provide an information base for the production of thematic reports that identify findings across several institutions.

¹ About ELIR: www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/en/reviewing-higher-education-in-scotland/enhancement-led-institutional-review

² About QAA: www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland

³ Brief Guide to ELIR: www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/reports/brief-guide-to-elir-method.pdf

⁴ Outcome Report: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/quality-assurance-reports/Edinburgh-Napier-University

Threshold judgement about Edinburgh Napier University

Edinburgh Napier University has **effective** arrangements for managing academic standards and the student learning experience.

This is a positive judgement, which means that the University meets sector expectations in securing the academic standards of its awards and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience it provides, currently and into the future. This judgement confirms there can be public confidence in the University's awards and in the quality of the learning experience it provides for its students.

1 Contextual information about the institution, student population and the review

1.1 Summary information about the institution

1 The University's Vision is to be 'an enterprising and innovative community, renowned internationally, with an unrivalled student learning experience'. Its range of provision has an applied and professional focus that builds on strong links with the communities in which it operates. The University states that it is committed to: widening access to higher education; delivering graduates that are highly-valued by employers; and building a research base that contributes to policy, business and innovation growth.

2 The University has a total student population of around 20,000 students (headcount) from 140 countries studying at one of the University's three campuses in Edinburgh, online or through a transnational education partnership. The University has established collaborative partnerships in a variety of international locations including Hong Kong and Singapore, as well as a number of newer partnerships in countries including Myanmar, Mauritius and Vietnam.

3 In 2015, the University restructured its former three faculties into six academic schools (Applied Sciences; Arts and Creative Industries; Business; Computing; Health and Social Care; Engineering and the Built Environment) as part of a commitment to devolve more responsibility to schools, increase decision-making at the school level and strengthen academic culture.

4 At the time of the current ELIR, the University was coming to the end of its 2020 Strategic Plan (Strategy 2020) which was launched in 2014 with key objectives that included: growing the academic reputation of the institution; delivering an excellent, personalised student experience; building innovation, enterprise and citizenship; and internationalising its provision. Building the research base to enhance teaching was also a key priority identified by the University. Strategy 2020 was underpinned by five thematic strategies: Academic Strategy 2020, Estate Strategy 2025, Innovation and Enterprise Strategy, International Strategy, and the Student Experience Strategy, which supported its values of being recognised as a University that is professional, ambitious, innovative and inclusive.

5 At the time of the current ELIR, the University was developing a new Strategy with the working title 'Shaping our Future'. Senior staff indicated that it is intended to build on the foundations of Strategy 2020 rather than providing a change in institutional focus. The draft strategy has three strategic 'pillars': Creating Knowledge, Enhancing Networks and Inspiring Careers. The University has described the new strategy as having a clear aim to enhance the student experience and position the University as the leading institution in South East Scotland for widening participation. The new strategy is being developed through extensive consultation with staff and students who have had a range of formal and informal opportunities to contribute to its development.

6 In 2018, the University appointed two new vice-principals - one for learning and teaching and the other for research and innovation - to lead on progress against its key strategic objectives and strengthen the academic focus of the University. The Vice-Principal for Learning and Teaching has established Head of Learning and Teaching roles in each school intended to engage the University community in strategic development and improve the student experience by facilitating effective partnership working between the Vice-Principal Learning and Teaching, School Heads of Learning and Teaching, the Department for Learning and Teaching Enhancement, and school staff (paragraph 100).

1.2 Composition and key trends in the student population

7 Based on 2017-18 figures, the University had a total student population of 19,919 (headcount) including 15,318 undergraduates, 4,326 postgraduate taught (PGT) and 275 postgraduate research (PGR) students. Around 40% of the total student population studied in the Business School. All student numbers are headcount rather than full-time equivalent.

8 The PGR student population has been decreasing since its peak in 2015-16, and currently represents just over 1% of the total student population. The University has a strategic aim to build a strong research community and to grow the number of doctoral students studying across all schools (paragraph 79-84).

9 Since the time of the 2015 ELIR, student numbers studying in the UK have remained relatively steady at around 14,000; albeit with a small decline in overall UK student numbers from 9% in 2015-16 to just over 6% in 2018-19.

10 22% of the University's students study with transnational education (TNE) partners, although TNE student numbers have declined from 5,272 in 2014-15 to 4,339 in 2017-18. The decline noted is largely due to deliberate steps taken by the University to cease a number of TNE partnerships which no longer align with its strategic ambitions (paragraph 155). The University is continuing to develop remaining and new strategic collaborations and has 54 collaborative degrees with partners in the UK and overseas (paragraph 153).

11 The University's on-campus international student profile has remained relatively stable despite growth in PGT student numbers from 3,408 in 2014-15 to 4,326 in 2017-18. 26% of PGT students are international, and a further 17% are from the European Union (EU). EU and international student numbers studying on UK-based undergraduate (UG) programmes have remained relatively stable at around 6% and 13% of the total student body respectively.

12 The University is committed to diversifying its provision with part-time and online delivery being key areas of strategic focus. The overall part-time profile has remained stable with around a third of all students studying part-time (30% of UG, 65% of PGT and 50% of PGR students) but this varies significantly between schools. The School of Health and Social Care continues to have the highest proportion of postgraduate students studying part-time at 97.6% in 2016-17. The University anticipates that full-time student numbers in this school will grow due to the introduction of a new full-time Allied Health Professional programme in 2018-19.

13 Since the 2015 ELIR, the University has also had a strategic focus on growing online provision. The number of online students has doubled from 717 in 2014-15 to 1,496 in 2017-18. It is anticipated that 2018-19 will see online student numbers increase again to nearly 2,000.

14 The University notes an overall gender imbalance in the undergraduate home population where 58% of students are female. This imbalance is significant in particular

academic schools, for example, 16.3% of students in the School of Engineering and Built Environment are female compared to 91% of students in the School of Health and Social Care. The University is taking positive steps to address the imbalance (paragraph 52).

15 Due to the University's strategic commitment to widening participation, approximately a third (28%) of Scottish domiciled undergraduate students enter through articulation and college partnership agreements. 74% enter with advanced standing compared to the sector average of 47% (paragraph 57).

16 In 2017-18, 10.6% of full-time, first-degree students entered the University from the most deprived areas in Scotland (MD20 postcodes) based on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD categories). In 2018-19, this figure increased to 12.8%. The introduction of a contextualised admissions policy over this ELIR cycle has seen a 15% increase in the number of offers made to widening access students and a 34% increase in acceptances.

17 The University has effective measures in place to manage its student population and monitor recruitment, progression and retention of all student groups (paragraph 149).

1.3 Commentary on the preparation for the ELIR

18 The University has aligned the refresh of its University strategy with ELIR consultations and preparations, taking what is describes as a 'stepping back' approach to reflect on the institution's development since the 2015 ELIR. An ELIR steering group was established with a clear focus on using institutional data to prepare the Reflective Analysis (RA) and Advance Information Set (AIS). To support this, a bespoke dashboard was developed using the University's information management system. Staff leading the new strategy development were also members of the ELIR Steering Group, to ensure a cohesive approach and maximise the learning gained from the institution's self-evaluation of its current data.

19 During the current ELIR, senior staff indicated that engaging staff, students and other stakeholders was a key factor in the University's preparations. A range of formal and informal channels was used to encourage staff engagement. These channels included: Campus Conversations - open all-staff meetings hosted by the Principal and other senior leaders to provide an update on University matters and an opportunity for staff to ask questions on the implementation of strategy; workshops; suggestion boxes and online comment collection. Over 500 staff members engaged in the preparation with 1,900 unique comments received. During the ELIR visit, Edinburgh-based staff clearly described their engagement in these opportunities as well as their involvement in reviewing the RA and discussing ELIR at various stages through the formal committee structures. TNE staff and students were aware of ELIR but reported to the ELIR team that they did not contribute to the development of ELIR or the RA.

20 The University's contextualised themes were informed by its student population (profile and numbers), developments since ELIR 3, areas of strength and strategic priorities. A word cloud developed from staff feedback also informed thinking, and the keywords that staff highlighted - 'Applied, International, Inclusive, Innovative and Practice' - were reflected in the development of the final contextualisation (paragraph 21).

21 The University identified five areas of contextual focus for the ELIR:

- widening access
- the direct entrant student experience
- employability - students are ready to succeed and thrive in the professional world
- quality of student experience for students not on the Edinburgh campus

- student engagement in quality.

22 Overall, the ELIR team considered that the University had adopted an effective approach to preparing for ELIR with the RA providing a reflective, balanced self-evaluation of the University's approaches and impact in relation to the student experience, quality and standards, and learning and teaching. The topics and evidence chosen were good reflections of the strengths and challenges experienced by the University, and internal and external data were used effectively to inform the ELIR.

1.4 Summary of the institution's follow-up to the previous ELIR

23 ELIR 3 identified four areas of development for the University which included:

- progressing with the establishment of new frameworks for TNE
- assuring oversight of the PGR student experience, including arrangements for monitoring and enhancing the student experience, ensuring capacity among academic staff to provide effective supervisory support, extending opportunities for research students to gain teaching experience, and ensuring that students are trained and supported to fulfil this role
- consistency in academic use of the virtual learning environment (VLE)
- assuring quality during significant change.

24 The University has taken a structured and systematic approach to responding to the recommendations from ELIR 3. Progress with ELIR outcomes has been overseen by the University Leadership Team (ULT) and Academic Board with the University's Learning Teaching and Assessment Committee and Student Experience Committees monitoring progress with the University's ELIR action plan and evaluating the impact of resulting activity.

1.5 Impact of engaging students in ELIR preparations

25 The University aimed to engage with students in ELIR through a variety of channels that included the use of pop-up temporary information stalls, student newsletters, the running of ELIR information activities alongside their National Student Survey (NSS) campaign, and the Student Snapshot campaign where students were asked to submit a photograph that reflected their own personal student experience regardless of location or mode of study. All student programme representatives were invited to take part in discussions regarding the Snapshot campaign and Edinburgh Napier Students' Association (ENSA) promoted it through Student Council. Contributions were received from all schools and included submissions from TNE students, but University staff expressed the view that overall levels of engagement were disappointing, albeit the Snapshot images received were of high-quality and added colour and personality to the RA.

26 The former ENSA Vice-President Representatives and Volunteers was involved in ELIR preparations and contributed as a member of the ELIR Steering Group before her departure in spring 2019, but current ENSA sabbaticals reported having had little direct involvement. However, early drafts of the RA were shared with staff and student representatives through key university committees such as the Learning, Teaching Assessment and Student Experience Committee (LTASEC) and Academic Board where sabbatical officers were members.

27 Given the University's commitment to widening participation and transnational education, deliberate steps were taken to seek the voices of these student groups. The

University's Widening Participation Ambassadors (paragraph 51), widening participation staff leads and widening participation students contributed specifically to the ELIR preparations by sharing information about the process and encouraging other students to participate in the Snapshot campaign, and by contributing to a case study for the RA on ESTABLISH - the student-led transition programme that is run for widening participation students and supported by the University's widening participation team (see also paragraph 59).

28 Despite an inclusive approach being taken, students had limited awareness of the RA. In discussions during the ELIR visits, the ELIR team heard from students that they only engaged with the RA and ELIR the week prior to the review meetings, although ENSA had included ELIR as an item for discussion at their Student Council meeting in February 2019.

29 The ELIR team found that the University's approach to engaging students in ELIR was not wholly effective, but this had been impacted by an ongoing legal dispute between the University and ENSA. It was evident that this had a significant impact on partnership working between the two organisations.

2 Enhancing the student learning experience

2.1 Student representation and engagement

30 The commitment of the University to enhancing the student experience is outlined in the annual Student Charter for Taught Programmes. The charter also sets the expectations of students' participation in their learning experience, student representation and in promoting an open and inclusive university community.

31 At the time of the current ELIR, the effectiveness of the University's arrangements for student representation were limited by the legal dispute between the University and Edinburgh Napier Students' Association (ENSA). The University is aware that further enhancement could be achieved by establishing a more effective partnership.

Student representation

32 The student representation system is managed by ENSA. ENSA lead on recruitment, training and support for student representatives throughout their time in the role. The University has supported these activities by revising the Student-Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC) guidance to promote student engagement with quality processes.

33 ENSA operate a three-tier student representation system which includes three full-time sabbatical officers, six campus officers (two per campus), and around 350 programme representatives. In addition, there are two part-time positions - Activities Officer and Equality and Diversity Officer - which form the ENSA Executive Committee along with the sabbatical and campus officers.

34 Programme representative positions are allocated based on the number of students enrolled on a programme and those with small cohorts are clustered together. Guidance provided by ENSA encourages programme leaders to recruit programme representatives through elections at the beginning of the academic year. However, the majority of students who met the ELIR team said that these positions were often undertaken by students who had volunteered rather than having been elected, with these individuals often undertaking the position until they graduate. The team would therefore encourage the University to monitor the recruitment of programme representatives to ensure that candidates are routinely and regularly sought, and elected representatives are actively engaging in their roles.

35 The role description and responsibilities of programme representatives are outlined in the ENSA's 'Wee Rep Guide' - described as a pocket-sized guide to being an effective programme representative. Until 2018-19, a three-hour training session for programme representatives was delivered at an external venue (most recently, Murrayfield Stadium), organised by ENSA with university staff invited to contribute. In 2019-20, this was replaced by a one-hour online module developed by ENSA, which had been completed by 344 student representatives. Additionally, programme-specific training has been delivered in-person by academic departments within the University in collaboration with Student Partnerships in Quality Scotland (sparqs). The ELIR team would encourage a collaborative and institution-wide approach to developing these initiatives in order to enhance the training provided and to ensure that, taken together, the training covers all the necessary information and support needed by students to undertake representative roles effectively.

36 Programme representatives have membership of Student-Staff Liaison Committees (SSLC) (paragraphs 32, 45, 46, 47 and 160) and the opportunity to participate in Programme Approval Boards (PABs) and Institutional-led Reviews (ILRs) to incorporate the student voice into the learning experience. It was evident from discussions with staff and students that students were aware of, and involved in SSLCs, although some student representatives commented that it was challenging to gather feedback from the student cohort. While guidance on the operation of PABs and ILRs has also been refined recently by the University, the ELIR team found that there was limited engagement and understanding of these activities among students. The guidance outlines mechanisms available to support the students in these processes, but this does not include formalised training for students. The team learned from students that limited understanding of these processes and absence of formal support for preparation were barriers to their engagement. There would be benefit in the University reflecting on the support and training it provides for students engaging in these processes.

37 Following the University's organisational restructure, school-level Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committees were established. There is scope for two student representatives on each of these committees, who are intended to be nominated by ENSA. However, the ELIR team learned that students, often programme representatives, were being selected by school staff to attend these committees. ENSA sabbaticals indicated that they were not aware of students sitting on these committees and so had not made any nominations. It seemed to the team that there would be considerable value in formalising representation at school-level, establishing effective, transparent and democratic recruitment processes to support this, and providing additional training and support in consultation with ENSA in order to improve student engagement with these committees. The team considered that implementing these changes could potentially reduce the workload of programme level representatives, enabling them to engage more readily with SSLCs, PABs and ILRs.

38 Campus officers primarily represent students on non-academic matters, including campus services and facilities, and have the opportunity to engage with general ENSA campaigns and activities. They liaise with university staff and the ENSA Executive Committee to agree on action and outcomes resulting from student feedback.

39 Postgraduate representatives are in place for both postgraduate taught and research students and there has been recent investment in strengthening these roles. The positions permit membership to programme, school and university-level committees, including the Research and Innovation, and Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Student Experience Committees. During the ELIR, postgraduate students confidently demonstrated that they knew who their representatives were and how to contact them, highlighting email as a key mechanism for doing so. Postgraduate research student representatives also expressed the view that the Research Degree Committee was a useful forum to discuss matters.

40 The representative structure is open to all students at all modes of study with the majority of these positions being undertaken by on-campus students who are either self-selecting or recruited in-person. The ELIR team learned that some online programmes were recruiting representatives but found limited evidence to suggest this was a formalised process. The team would recommend the University ensures that current recruitment processes are accessible to students at all modes of study to enhance the quality of the student experience for students not studying at one of the Edinburgh campuses. In particular, and in light of the growth in online student numbers, there would be considerable value in reviewing the institutional-wide approach to online representation, training and support to ensure all students are provided with equal opportunities to engage in their learning experience (paragraph 92).

Responding to student feedback

41 The student voice is gathered and responded to using a range of methods: University strategies and committees, student representatives, national surveys (including the National Student Survey (NSS), Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)), modular feedback and Student Closeness Groups (paragraph 44).

42 The Student Experience Strategy (SES) is a thematic strategy of Strategy 2020 and focuses on the student experience outwith formal teaching and assessment. There are three key sections within the SES that outline the University's approach. These include: 'Valuing our Students' which outlines the University's broad aspirations around the experience it delivers; 'Opportunities' which highlights the aim to encourage all students to seek opportunities to develop personally and professionally during their studies; and 'Facilities and Services' which details its commitment to provide all students with access to high-quality facilities and services. The ELIR team noted that key measures of success and timelines for their completion are transparent and outlined in the SES 'route map' - a visual action plan that supports the strategy, and which is underpinned by relevant KPI's.

43 The Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Student Experience Committee (LTASEC) was established in September 2019 by merging two former committees: the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee and the Student Experience Committee. Prior to the formal merger, the committees met together to evaluate the benefits of merging. A working group was established to review duplication of business between the committees and the merger was approved in June 2019. Student membership of LTASEC comprises two Sabbatical Officers and two campus representatives, all nominated by ENSA. During the ELIR visits, staff indicated that the merger was effective in reducing the duplication of business. However, some staff and students expressed the view that there could be challenges in ensuring that some business relating to the wider student experience continues to be heard when learning, teaching and assessment matters take priority on the agenda of the committee. The ELIR team would encourage the University to continue monitoring the effectiveness of the merger, ensuring all issues pertaining to both learning, teaching and assessment, and the student experience are directed to the most suitable platform (paragraph 93).

44 Student Closeness Groups are informal consultation forums designed to gather feedback on the student experience and to measure the impact of university initiatives. They are conducted twice a year and have been in operation since 2011. The agenda is determined through an open call for ideas from staff across the University and recent topics have included student survey fatigue, services offered by the library and the Personal Development Tutoring (PDT) system. Reports from the groups are distributed to staff who requested consideration of the topics discussed and these are used to inform ongoing work and activity, particularly in professional services areas who do not have access to school

forums, such as SSLCs, that would allow them to seek student feedback. The ELIR team recognised the range of initiatives across the University to gather feedback on the student experience. To further engagement with these activities and with wider quality assurance processes, the University has been using its Student Ambassadors more widely and is at an early stage of considering how this body of students might be able to contribute further to quality assurance and enhancement activity. An example of this is the introduction of the role of Widening Participation Student Ambassador which, although in early stages of operation, has been viewed positively by the majority of staff and students (paragraph 91).

45 The University has revised its SSLC guidance to develop a consistent approach in gathering and responding to the student voice. While this was in its early stages of implementation at the time of the current ELIR, the ELIR team recognised the University's intention to progress towards a more consistent institutional application of the guidance, which includes the distribution of SSLC minutes through the VLE. Furthermore, students and staff collaborate to produce SSLC action plans which assign actions to specific stakeholders. The team viewed this as a positive step which points towards further commitment on the part of the University to create an atmosphere of transparency between staff and students in responding to the student voice.

46 At the beginning of each module, academic programme leaders outline to students the ways in which they will gather student feedback and take action on it, how the representative system works, how module surveys operate, the purpose of SSLCs and action taken as a result of recent student feedback. This is done with the deliberate intention of informing the next cohort of students of the decisions and actions taken as a result of feedback from their predecessors. This approach is understood to further student engagement as student feedback is being responded to and actions resulting from it are realised and shared. The ELIR team heard from students that they could see the positive impacts of their feedback, including changes to modules, programmes and developments with the PDT system.

47 A programme representative forum is run by ENSA twice a year, per campus, to gather and discuss any matters that fall outwith a student's programme of study, although it was highlighted by student representatives who met the ELIR team that there was limited engagement with this activity. Student feedback from SSLC meetings is discussed at Programme Board and a summary of the discussions are included in Annual Monitoring Reports. The team heard it was the responsibility of the programme leader to raise the feedback at school-level for further discussion. The team agreed that there would be considerable value in the University reviewing the effectiveness of its formal mechanisms in disseminating student feedback to the relevant forums and ensuring linkages between programme, school and university levels (paragraph 93).

48 School Action Plan templates were developed as a result of an internal review undertaken by an external consultant commissioned to look at the University's response to its NSS results. The templates enable a consistent form of reporting on action across the institution. As a result, the newly-established Student Surveys Group is able to review all School Action Plans to understand where areas for development remain or where good practice exists that could be shared more widely. The ELIR team viewed this as an effective process for maintaining institutional oversight of the student experience and to developing actions accordingly. However, the team would encourage the University to consider the student membership on the committee to enhance the discussions relevant to the student experience.

2.2 Recognising and responding to equality and diversity in the student population

49 The University has a range of effective initiatives aimed at supporting equality and diversity in the student population. Inclusion is one of the University's four values (see paragraph 4) and it has developed an Inclusion Strategy through its Inclusion Committee. In addition, the University has an Inclusion Statement which outlines its commitment to widening access to higher education. This statement includes protected and additional characteristics recognised by the University and it is used to underpin a range of successful initiatives, such as ESTABLISH and Countdown to Zero (paragraph 59 and 57). The University received an Institutional Bronze Athena Swan award in 2015 and aspires to obtain recognition for all schools.

Equality and diversity

50 The Equality and Diversity Officer was the strategic lead for equality and diversity across the institution. The postholder retired in summer 2019 and activity is now overseen by the Senior Vice-Principal and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Vice-Principal Learning and Teaching and the Human Resources department.

51 The Student Ambassador Scheme provides paid opportunities for student ambassadors to support the student population through a variety of events and initiatives. The role enables students to develop their interpersonal skills and gain work-based learning experiences, while supporting the University's strategic objectives. The ELIR team heard of the role being popular among students with competition to be recruited and ambassadors feeling proud of their contribution to the student experience. The scheme has since been developed to align with Strategy 2020 and now includes an additional focus on underrepresented groups with the introduction of new roles including Widening Participation Ambassador. The team recognised that these positions have increased engagement with the wider student community, open days and schemes such as ESTABLISH (paragraph 59). Senior staff told the team that there is an appetite within the University to expand these roles into other departments, including international and careers areas.

52 In 2017-18, the University started work towards mainstreaming inclusion with the establishment of the 'I'm In' project, intended to support schools and professional services in embedding inclusive approaches to learning, teaching and student support. The University is progressing work in a number of priority areas including diversity in the curriculum and gender-balance which includes: the 'Men into Nursing' campaign; the hosting of EQUATE Scotland - to encourage women into STEM and the built environment; and the appointment of three 'Women into STEM' champions. There are also developments being made into the recognition of the University's non-binary community and the production of supporting guidelines. Information and events on these activities are shared via the VLE to promote awareness across the University.

53 International students are provided with a pre-arrival induction called SPICE and have the opportunity to become part of a Family Friendship scheme. Student ambassadors are also engaged with the 'Uni Buddy' scheme which provides peer-to-peer support and advice to international students to help make an informed decision about their enrolment. The dates of inductions for international students have been revised recently to enable them to attend both school and university-wide induction events. The ELIR team heard from staff during the review visit that this has had a positive impact on their transition experience.

54 The University has a Disability Policy to support staff and students with disabilities, long-term health conditions and specific learning difficulties. In addition, a Disabled Student Engagement Worker was appointed in 2018 to liaise with students with disabilities and

ensure their voice is heard within the University. The ELIR team learned that the Disability Engagement Worker is currently collaborating with external organisations to enhance support and arrangements for students with autism which is positive.

55 Although the Student Council is the ENSA's student engagement forum, a new forum - ENSA 50 - was introduced in 2019-20 by the Students' Association with the aim of increasing engagement from underrepresented groups. The new forum, which sits outside of ENSA's formal constitution, includes dedicated membership positions for 50 students from a range of backgrounds, covering all schools and including direct entrants, EU and international, and postgraduate taught students. Enhancing the wider student experience, both including and extending beyond academic matters, is the main priority for the group and the first meeting was attended by 47 out of a possible 50 members. Feedback from ENSA 50 was reported to the University by sabbatical officers and has generated discussions at LTASEC. Students who met with the ELIR team and who had attended ENSA 50 were positive about its potential. However, the team noted that the initiative was too early in its development to assess its effectiveness and impact. There would be value in the University continuing to monitor the implementation of the forum and consider the extent to which outcomes relate to formal arrangements in place for student representation.

Widening access and articulation

56 The University recruits a broad portfolio of students, with particular emphasis on increasing the proportions of widening participation and online learners. To support student recruitment, the University has developed a contextualised admissions policy in support of its aim that all applicants who have the potential to succeed are given the opportunity. The system helps the University to make informed decisions on applications by considering the contextual information available alongside their academic achievements, including SIMD data. The University also has a strong track record in enabling students with Higher National qualifications to enter with advanced standing and it intends to continue and strengthen this activity further by expanding the number and type of qualifications it recognises. The ELIR team learned that support services have also been enhanced in parallel with the development of the contextualised admissions process, in order to enhance the student experience and build upon successful retention figures already achieved (paragraph 60).

57 The University's Associate Student Scheme, funded by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), provides 100 funded places for Scottish 2+2 further education (FE) applicants, who have dual matriculation status. This allows associate students to become familiar with university facilities and processes before they begin their studies and enables a more fluent transition into higher education. The Countdown to Zero project complements these opportunities by providing associate students with transitional support including face-to-face workshops and a four-week online module which ran for the first time in 2017. The University identified that students entering directly to Year 2, 3 and 4, coming from college, often struggled with the transition - technologically and emotionally, as well as academically. Each week, the course addresses concerns common to new students (including joining the community and orientation, matriculation, module choice and timetables) by using videos, information and quizzes to guide students. In early autumn 2017, a survey identified that the course had made a significant difference in allaying the fears of the incoming students. The ELIR team viewed this as a positive contribution to the University's work to widen participation (paragraph 91).

58 Staff deliver guest lectures to colleges and engage with associate students on campus, demonstrating a proactive approach to supporting student transitions. During the review visits, the ELIR team met staff and students who expressed the view that the University is sector-leading in its support for direct entrants, promoting inclusivity in everyday practice through a range of activity. Staff highlighted work being undertaken on

understanding the impact of language and behaviour on direct entry students that might emphasise the difference between them and other students in the cohort. Particular examples given by staff were the need to mitigate circumstances where students could be segregated depending on their point of entry and not using phrases such as 'you'll know this from last year' and similar terminology. This work on behaviours and language was viewed positively by the team in supporting widening access (paragraph 91).

59 The ELIR team found evidence of a range of initiatives to support students transitioning from non-traditional routes and widening participation backgrounds. A notable example is ESTABLISH, a fully student-led programme, supported by the Widening Participation team to support students during their application and transition into the University and throughout their learning journey. The aim of the programme is to foster a sense of belonging and develop a community for students before they even visit the campus, by encouraging community and conversation through a social media group. All students who have a widening participation characteristic/flag and an unconditional offer are invited to join the group. Currently-enrolled widening participation students answer questions from these applicants, support with the matriculation process for new students, and run events throughout the summer to provide familiarity with the university campus before the academic year begins. There are plans to continue developing the programme to incorporate a 'year-long induction'. The team learned from widening participation student ambassadors that the ESTABLISH programme also provides them with valuable opportunities to develop interpersonal skills.

60 To further the support for widening participation students, there are dedicated Widening Participation Support Officers within the Widening Participation team who are the main point of contact for students. Postholders proactively engage with students to offer support at challenging times throughout the semester and monitor student outcomes to improve retention. In addition, the University recruited a Student Retention and Success Officer who joined the Wellbeing team in June 2019. This role provides a central point of contact for students who wish to withdraw from the institution, both providing support to students and helping the University to gain better insight into the retention of students from a widening participation background. The information gathered is then incorporated into the retention strategy. The University indicated to the ELIR team that this is an area for development that they want to address (RA 2.6.6) and are actively engaged in, for example, the Widening Participation team are currently working with Planning and Business Intelligence to explore how learning analytics might enable more effective, consistent and timely interventions. The University is paying particular attention to making data on retention more accessible - both to the Widening Participation team and academic staff more generally.

61 The team considered that support for students entering from direct entry and widening participation routes was effectively embedded into institutional culture and the University is commended for its effective approaches to both support and retention.

Support for online learners

62 The University has a strategic objective to increase the provision for online learning (paragraph 12). To support this growth, guidance has been developed to establish minimum standards for VLE use at module level. Online students who met the ELIR team talked positively about their experience of the VLE and an induction module to introduce them to their programme and the University services which are available to them. The team also learned of developments within the Student Futures, Library Services, Wellbeing and Academic Skills teams to digitalise their support, making their services accessible to online learners in multiple time zones. While the current mechanisms are effective in ensuring that individual students receive support, the University has recognised the requirement to

continue developing systematic student representation and support for online learners and is considering undertaking a Thematic Review to scope this work. The team would recommend that this area is prioritised in the expansion strategy to ensure support is sustainable and to maintain a positive student experience for online learners as student numbers grow.

2.3 Supporting students in their learning at each stage of the learner journey

Student support

63 Most students who met the ELIR team considered there was a wide range of student support in place and that current structures were flexible enough to accommodate the needs of individual students. Support for employability and work-related learning was identified as being particularly effective.

64 The university-wide Personal Development Tutor (PDT) scheme provides support to undergraduate and taught postgraduate students during their studies. All programme leaders are automatically enrolled as PDTs with guidance recommending a ratio of one tutor to a maximum of 30 students. The ELIR team learned of several instances where this was exceeded and often a programme leader would be responsible for a full cohort of students including TNE students, graduate apprentices and online learners. The University has recognised that there is varied experience with the PDT system across programmes and campuses. As a result, work was undertaken in 2017-18 to review the operation of the system and provide recommendations. The University has introduced the role of Lead PDT in each school and developed resources that they regard as being valuable in supporting tutors to fulfil their roles and to provide a consistent service. Staff welcomed the resulting PDT Toolkit which offers guidance on the principles behind the PDT scheme and examples of good practice from across the Schools. Students who met the team indicated that they felt well supported and often had one point of contact on which they could rely. While this model is effective for small cohorts, the University is encouraged to continue developing the PDT system to maintain this level of support for larger cohorts (see paragraph 94).

Assessment and feedback

65 In 2015-16, the University approved a number of key principles intended to deliver a Programme-Focused Approach to Assessment and Feedback (PFAAF) and established a university-wide project to support the delivery of these principles. The University described the intention of the principles as being to place emphasis on formative assessment that generates high-quality feedback, reduce summative assessment and establish well-defined links between formative and summative assessments so that using feedforward is possible. The PFAAF project led to a number of enhancements taking place including greater information being included within module descriptors on formative assessment approaches, how feedback is provided to students, and the development of assessment and feedback guidelines with additional resources produced to support staff in developing provision (with links embedded within appropriate sections of the Quality Framework) (paragraph 120 and 126-129).

66 Students who met the ELIR team reported that they were aware, via their module VLE sites, of the broad assessment requirements and assessment deadlines at the beginning of each module. Most written assignments are submitted and assessed online, except for those programmes requiring large size paper submissions, and are returned to students with grades and feedback within three working weeks. Students studying both in Edinburgh and through TNE arrangements confirmed that they were aware of the grade descriptors, that they knew where to find information about assessment regulations and marking scales and that detailed marking criteria were supplied with each assessment.

They reported that feedback was usually helpful and received within the target three-week turnaround period. Students also clearly indicated that staff were available in person or online for further guidance if required.

Work-related learning and employability

67 The Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey results from 2014-15 to 2016-17 for five of the six schools have consistently shown over 68% (and in many cases consistent scores of over 85%) of undergraduates in managerial and professional roles. Although returns for students graduating from the School of Applied Sciences show over 95% in employment or further study, the numbers in the professional and managerial categories reached only 66% by 2016-17, in part because of a trend in some programmes of higher numbers of students proceeding to further study and also because DLHE does not classify all the careers resulting from the School's programmes within its 'professional' category. For example, the BA (Hons) Veterinary Nursing programme regularly achieves 100% employment of its graduates, but only 13% are recorded as being in professional or managerial roles. Nevertheless, the School is taking positive action to enhance careers support and external liaison panels for all its programmes.

68 Outcomes from the University's Institution-led Reviews (ILRs) regularly identify employer engagement as positive. For example, review panels commended the BA Hons Television and BA Hons Photography programmes on their effective relationships with industry, LLB programmes on their close links with professional practice and the School of Health and Social Care's strong and positive relationships with industry partners. Employers are often directly involved in programme design and guest lecturing, and as members of Advisory Boards.

69 The University outlines in the RA as part of its context that it has an applied and professional focus, aiming to develop students 'ready to succeed and thrive in the professional world' and be the first-choice destination in Edinburgh for students seeking to undertake applied learning. From a baseline of 66% in 2013-14, the number of programmes with a built-in work-related learning (WRL) experience had risen to 87% in 2017-18, and the University is working towards a 100% target. The University defines WRL as at least one experience that could range from a 20-credit module with time spent in industry to a 12-month industrial placement. The University's approach to employability and WRL includes ensuring programmes are reviewed regularly to confirm they meet current industry needs, working closely with employers, widely embedding placement opportunities within programmes, developing students' work-related skills within the curriculum, supporting innovation and enterprise initiatives additional to the curriculum, and supporting students in seeking career opportunities.

70 Schools are encouraged to develop students' work-related skills within the classroom. The ELIR team heard about a range of examples of good practice including: industry-focused group projects in the School of Computing, often based on live projects from business; interdisciplinary team projects involving private and public external agencies in the School of Arts and Creative Industries and the Edinburgh Napier Law Clinic run entirely by students to provide free legal advice for the local community. University-wide opportunities are available through initiatives such as the Get on Board project which enables students to gain board-level experience in local charities, voluntary sector organisations and public bodies.

71 It is the University's intention to offer placement opportunities on as many programmes as possible. All schools offer placement opportunities on some of their programmes, and opportunities include a wide range of formal and informal, compulsory and optional, and long and short-term placement opportunities in the UK and overseas. For

example, year-long placements are offered in the Edinburgh Napier Business School (ENBS) BSc (Hons) Business Studies programme and in the School of Computing, and a variety of short-term optional module placements can be found in the School of Applied Sciences (SAS). In addition, there are some notable examples of placements that support both the student and the partner, for example, the link between the English Department and the Scottish Prison Service whereby undergraduates may provide tuition in basic literacy, creative writing and English language during a six-week placement and the School of Engineering and the Built Environment's placement in its BEng(Hons) Civil and Transportation Engineering programme which offers authentic hands-on experience working for a week on the Bo'ness and Kinneil Railway.

72 While students are supported by academic staff and placement offices within schools, particularly in identifying and obtaining high-quality placement opportunities, the institution-wide Student Futures team has recently assumed coordination and oversight of the University's placement activity. At the time of the ELIR, defining the roles and responsibilities of each set of staff was in development, although statutory placements for programmes in the School of Health and Social Care (SHSC) remained exclusively the responsibility of that School, particularly due to the School's recently established 'In Place' system which allows students to manage their placement experience online. In Place enables students to view details of their placement, obtain further information during the placement period, submit expenses, and receive regular placement information from the placement setting. The ELIR team considered this initiative to have enhanced the placement support available to SHSC students.

73 Academic staff are responsible for the ultimate approval of placements and for monitoring student progress (particularly on year-long compulsory placements), ensuring that they meet the objectives of each programme. In the School of Computing, for example, the Placements Office comprises a placement administrator, a work-based module leader and a team of visiting academic tutors. Placement Learning Agreements are in place which clearly articulate the responsibilities of the placement supervisor and the student, while employers are required to monitor student attendance and complete a placement Health and Safety and Safeguarding checklist and data protection statement. As many of the placement opportunities are optional, student placement stories are presented on the student portal to encourage uptake, particularly from those with widening participation backgrounds. An institutional Student Mobility team also assists direct-entry students from colleges in awareness-raising of mobility opportunities.

74 Students who met the ELIR team generally welcomed the placement opportunities available and considered that they enhanced their employability skills, some reporting that their placements had led directly to employment offers. They found the placement experience positive and commented on the high quality of support received from both academic and placement office staff, both in seeking placements and in supporting them during the experience. Some students also commented that they found work-shadowing opportunities and short-term placements to be particularly beneficial in gaining short-term experience of a relevant working environment and that these too sometimes led to job offers.

75 The University includes study overseas within its range of placement opportunities and almost 450 students engaged in a variety of exchanges and intern/partnerships overseas in 2017-18 - an increase of 20% since the previous year. Students who met the ELIR team found the international placements, whether in full-time employment or linked with a period in an overseas university, especially helpful in developing employability skills and more general life skills, and they indicated that they appreciated the support they had received in sourcing and establishing these and in maintaining contact with the University during their time abroad. However, some students noted that some placement agreements were late, and not all students appeared clear on the criteria for paid and non-paid

placements. Voluntary placements are available to full-time students on TNE programmes, although there was limited take-up of these opportunities with students reporting a number of barriers to their participation including being part-time and in other employment, being too young to qualify for the opportunity or being unsure whether placements were available to them. The team would encourage the University to continue monitoring its support to students on the range of placements on offer, building on positive progress made to date.

76 The University offers enterprise and entrepreneurial development opportunities through the Bright Red Triangle (BRT) which it describes as a one-stop shop for innovation and enterprise activities, which provides students, graduates and staff with the experience and skills necessary to have a social or commercial impact. The BRT currently has six live projects, having completed 75 projects involving some 3000 students since it opened in 2004. It currently supports between 200 and 300 students per year, with around 50 start-up companies developed annually through its incubator support. BRT aims to provide an encouraging place for students to develop enterprise skills or start a business and to become confidently engaged in community projects. Students who met the ELIR team confirmed their awareness of opportunities provided by BRT which are available at each of the University's campuses. Those students and staff who had direct involvement with BRT were highly enthusiastic and supportive of the initiative, reporting that it provided a safe place for students to develop entrepreneurial and business development skills.

77 The University has expanded its provision in the last two years to include Graduate Apprenticeships (RA 1.3.5, RA 2.3.14). Three new programmes were approved in 2018-19 and scheduled for delivery in 2019-20 which the University anticipates will increase its intake by over 250 students (RA 5.1.11). Support for employers is provided through the University's MyFuture website, where 1300 employers have registered (RA 5.1.11). MyFuture was originally developed for on-campus students to support movement into graduate employment but has been refocused to include information for employers on topics including employer mentoring, work-based learning and industry liaison (RA 5.1.11).

2.4 Postgraduate taught and research student experience

78 Overall, the ELIR team considered that the University has effective arrangements for managing and enhancing the postgraduate student experience.

79 The University's research student population is relatively small with 263 students enrolled in 2019, from a peak of 308 in 2015-16. This peak followed a period of enhanced investment intended to grow the postgraduate research student community, including offering 50 university-funded PhD opportunities. As part of enhancing the University's research culture, and with the recently-appointed Vice-Principal (Research and Innovation), the University is exploring opportunities to grow its PGR numbers.

80 The University has recently been considering the PGR student journey and, as a result, has made the change to offering two, rather than many, entry points per year for PGRs (October and March) to promote the student experience and foster a sense of belonging and community. In addition, conversations are taking place at school level to review supervisory capacity and research space. PGR students who met the ELIR team had experienced a range of induction practice which ranged from minimal support to effective joint support from their supervisor and the Research and Innovation Office (RIO). The RIO provides training and development courses for research students and early career academics on a range of topics including: thesis writing; building positive relationships with research supervisors and the supervisory team; project managing the PhD; the viva experience; and stress management. However, attendance is not compulsory. Students expressed the view that the introduction of the two admission points provided an opportunity for a planned induction and training programme run on an institution-wide basis which would

complement specific school induction activity. The team also heard that PGR students felt a general lack of a research culture within the University, although they were positive about the opportunity to participate in the RIO's annual research conferences for research staff and students, and some were aware of an emerging research culture within their schools.

81 Monitoring and institutional oversight of the postgraduate research experience is undertaken through the University's Research and Innovation Committee chaired by the Vice-Principal Research. Oversight has been improved by the establishment of Research Degree Leaders (RDLs) in each school, who are responsible for all research degree matters within their schools, including the production of, and monitoring of progress towards, action plans responding to issues arising from the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). They are all members of the University's Research Degrees Committee. During the review visits, postgraduate students reported that the RDLs are their first points of contact for any general concerns and budgetary matters and found the RDLs to be supportive. The RDLs chair the School Research Degrees Committees, and report to the University's Research Degrees Committee (RDC) on school matters. The RDC meets 10 times annually, with five of these meetings devoted to considering PGR progress and chaired by an external member, and the other five focusing on strategic and policy matters. The RDLs have contributed to a greater cohesiveness within schools of support for and monitoring the progress of PGR students, and together provide an effective forum for the identification and sharing of good practice in the support of PGR students.

82 Since the 2015 ELIR, the University has significantly strengthened its arrangements for monitoring individual PGR student's progress towards completion of their research degree. PGR students who met the ELIR team discussed their supervision contract/agreement (recently introduced by the University in October 2018), where students and supervisors agree their roles and responsibilities, determine the frequency of supervisory meetings and the level of preparation required for these meetings to work effectively. Students also spoke positively about regular academic progress review meetings held on a biannual basis, involving an independent chair, where students can raise concerns about any issues, including concerns about their contract or supervisory arrangements. The ELIR team viewed these meetings as a particularly positive development.

83 The Research Degrees Framework requires all students who teach to have successfully completed the 'Teaching at University' course run by the Department of Learning and Teaching Enhancement (DLTE). However, completion of the course has only recently been made mandatory and not all students currently active in teaching and assessment had participated. The course prepares students for the teaching experience and those who have successfully completed the University's ENroute programme are supported to apply for Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. PGR students who met the ELIR team reported mixed enthusiasm from staff in encouraging students to teach, with only 34 of the 263 PGR students currently teaching. Only 44% of students currently teaching have participated in the training programme. Those teaching reported receiving guidance on assessing students and confirmed their proposed assessment outcomes were moderated by staff, and the risk to academic standards is, therefore, low. The University is asked to ensure that all postgraduate research students (current and future) who teach complete the mandatory course prior to commencing or continuing teaching (paragraph 96).

84 While results from the annual Postgraduate Research Experience (PRES) survey since the 2015 ELIR have shown an increasing proportion of responses scoring in the upper quartile of results, the 2019 survey showed a decline in overall satisfaction at 78% compared to 82% in 2018. The lowest satisfaction score of 45% related to research ambience with the largest decline (22%) in the provision of a good seminar programme. While response rates to PRES are low (31% in 2019), the University is responding to outcomes constructively in line with its strategic objectives. A notable example is the new requirement for each

supervisor and PGR student to commit to a supervision agreement in response to low scores relating to contact with the supervisor and an understanding of the responsibilities of a research student. The ELIR team viewed the supervision agreement as a positive response to the survey results.

85 Since the 2015 ELIR, PGT numbers have increased steadily from 3,408 in 2014-15 to 4,326 in 2017-18, totalling 22% of the total student population. In response to the University's strategic aim of supporting 'innovation, enterprise and citizenship', the University seeks to ensure that its programmes for PGT students continue to be professionally and industry-focused, incorporating applied skills from industry and often live projects (paragraphs 70). Placement opportunities are available on some master's programmes, and the University has recently agreed guidance for the approval of Extended Master's programmes (exceeding 180 credits).

86 For PGT student assessments, the University recently changed from a 16-point grading scale to a percentage scale in response to feedback from external examiners and a subsequent survey of staff which revealed that students found the 16-point scale difficult to understand. An implementation group has been established by the Quality and Standards Committee (QSC) to support the planned introduction of the new marking scale in 2020-21 and this was viewed positively by staff who met the ELIR team.

2.5 Learning environment, including the use of technology

87 The University's 2015-2025 Estates Strategy states a commitment to creating a learning environment that is 'fluid, adaptable and rich in technology', and seeks to improve spaces for learning and teaching and student-staff interactions, enhance postgraduate and research facilities and create environments that stimulate enterprise. Recent examples of the development of specialist teaching and research centres include: the Simulation and Clinical Skills Centre in the School of Health and Social Care; industry-standard facilities and equipment in the School of Applied Sciences and Art and Creative Industries; and the new Software Engineering and Games Lab within the School of Computing - the last being an element of the decision to locate the complete portfolio of that School to the Merchiston Campus. The University is also experimenting with classroom redesign and has converted three standard classrooms at its Craiglockhart Campus into flexible learning spaces. Designed as a pilot, an evaluation of the work was presented to the 2018 Learning and Teaching Conference as a basis for influencing the strategic development of further learning spaces, and this has been followed by discussions between the Estates team and DLTE. Staff who met the ELIR team reported mixed views on the effectiveness of the flexible learning spaces and considered that the project would benefit from greater involvement from teaching staff. The Estates Strategy is currently undergoing a mid-term review with the priority focused on the use of space to shape pedagogies and student learning in a more collaborative and interdisciplinary way, with the Director of Property and Estates working collaboratively with an ENSA Sabbatical Officer on this. Staff and students reported on the variability of campus environments, noting positively the generally high quality of computer laboratories, the wide variety of spaces available and the potential benefits of flexible spaces, but that research space was not always used effectively, and there was a shortage of quiet learning spaces at the Craiglockhart Campus.

88 The University's Information Services department was reaccredited with the Customer Service Excellence standard in 2018, receiving a 'Compliance Plus' award. This award recognised, in particular, the University's efforts to identify hard-to-reach and disadvantaged groups and individuals, the way it had developed its services in response to their specific needs, and the positive changes made to services as a result of analysing customer experience. Information Services has consistently received high NSS ratings, and students were complimentary on the quality and ease of access to learning information, both

in hard copy and online. TNE students were satisfied with their access to learning materials and, together with online students, are able to access learning materials wherever they study, using the Virtual Desktop Service and the AppsAnywhere tool that enables them to access the same software applications and materials as those studying on the Edinburgh campuses. Additionally, a dedicated Global Online team provides support for programmes in creating and delivering content exclusively for online learning.

89 Since the 2015 ELIR, the University has developed guidelines on minimum requirements for the information to be included on the VLE. These were introduced in 2016 and were updated in 2018-19 to include the requirement for library reading list upload and guidelines for structuring assessments. Staffing in the learning technology team has been increased to support academics in incorporating technology into their teaching and an online technology hub has been created to facilitate this work, in particular to support the online submission and marking of assessments. The hub includes the minimum VLE content standards for each module which staff welcomed. The University is also currently trialling lecture capture via brand software and has written a draft Classroom Recording policy. This initiative elicited a range of responses from students and staff, many supportive but with some raising concerns about intellectual property issues and, from some students, concerns about recording dialogue within lectures. The University reported the results of a survey indicating broad support from students to continue with the recording projects.

90 There was considerable evidence of professional support staff collaborating closely with academic colleagues in seeking to enhance the students' learning experiences and environment. Strong collaboration was evidenced in the development of online technologies, especially the availability of learning resources and the increased effectiveness of staff use of the VLE for module information and the submission and assessment of coursework (paragraph 89). Throughout the ELIR, the team heard about a range of collaborative activities developed between teaching and professional services staff. In particular, a range of academic staff expressed the view that professional staff are equal partners in working with them on committees and working groups and expressed confidence in the effectiveness of the partnership between academic and professional services staff to deliver a high-quality student experience (paragraph 91).

2.6 Effectiveness of the approach to enhancing the student learning experience

91 Overall the University has an effective approach to enhancing the student learning experience. In particular, the sustained, strategic, systematic and evidence-based approach to widening participation and direct entry is having a continued positive impact on the number of widening participation students admitted to and progressing through the University. Effective interventions are evident at all stages of the learner journey from pre-admission through contextualised admissions arrangements to induction, transition and on-campus support. These include the student-led and university-supported peer network of students from a widening participation background (ESTABLISH), the Countdown to Zero induction programme, and introduction of dedicated widening participation student ambassadors. There is strong evidence to commend the clear partnership working between academic and professional services staff at the University, with academic and professional support services staff working effectively at school and institutional levels to deliver the University's strategic priorities. Examples of effective partnership working are evident in the delivery of a high-quality online learning environment and collaborative working between the academic staff and professional services colleagues working on widening participation, placements, quality and planning.

92 Since the 2015 ELIR, progress with maintaining and enhancing the University's arrangements for student representation has been limited by the relationship between the

University and ENSA (paragraph 31) and further enhancement could be achieved by establishing a more effective partnership. There would be considerable value in ensuring that there are clear representative structures in place at all levels and, in particular at school level, for all modes of delivery including online learning. The University is asked to make certain that there are effective arrangements in place for the recruitment, training and support for all students undertaking a representative role, including and beyond programme level, for a variety of activities, including school and institutional-level committees, approval boards and institution-led reviews.

93 The University has worked to develop mechanisms to enhance student engagement and respond to the student voice and is encouraged to continue making progress in this area. The University is asked to routinely monitor the effectiveness of the arrangements in place to respond to the student voice, including specifically, the consistent operation of student-staff liaison committees and effectiveness of the merger of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee with the Student Experience Committee. It is also asked to ensure that students are supported to raise matters at relevant levels of the governance structure and that appropriate action is taken as a result with outcomes disseminated to the student body.

94 In the context of the University's growth agenda, it is asked to ensure there is a systematic and embedded approach to supporting all groups of students and that it continues to develop support mechanisms for online learners, graduate apprentices, transnational education students and other groups studying off campus to ensure accessibility of services, sustainability and a positive student and staff experience. In particular, the University is asked to carefully monitor the personal development tutor staff/student ratios as student numbers grow.

95 The University's commitment to the provision of professional and work-related programmes is demonstrated through a wide range of employment-related curricula, work-related experiences, employment-seeking opportunities, and interactions with external communities. The University is commended for its commitment to meeting its strategic objective of ensuring that all students are prepared to succeed and thrive in the professional world through offering a range of programme-led, work-related activities, placement learning opportunities and entrepreneurial skills development through its Bright Red Triangle service - a one-stop shop for extracurricular innovation and enterprise activities.

96 In relation to the postgraduate student experience, the University's arrangements for managing and enhancing the experience are effective and there is evidence of the institution having a proactive approach to addressing issues, enhancing practice and establishing a stronger research culture and community in line with its strategic objectives. In addition, the University has developed a robust approach to overseeing individual postgraduate research student academic progress with the introduction of regular review meetings every six months including an independent panel chair. To continue progress in this area, the University is asked to introduce a structured and longitudinal institution-wide induction, to include appropriate training and development. The University is also asked to ensure that all postgraduate research students (current and future) who teach, complete the mandatory course prior to commencing teaching.

3 Strategy and practice for enhancing learning and teaching

3.1 Strategic approach to enhancement

97 The University has an effective approach to enhancing learning and teaching and the wider student experience.

98 The University is currently consulting on a new Strategy which was still in draft form at the time of the current ELIR (paragraph 5). Progress against strategic objectives is monitored through school and department plans, budget setting activity, regular review by the University Leadership Team (ULT) and Academic Board and School. The University senior team have engaged widely to update staff on progress and to reflect on the aims outlined in Strategy 2020 to inform the University's future direction.

99 The University's approach to realising its vision in relation to the enhancement of learning and teaching is articulated clearly through its Academic and Student Experience Strategies (paragraphs 4, 42 and 99) which are well established. The restructuring of the faculties into schools (paragraph 3) has enhanced the delivery of strategy and practice by increasing accountability at school-level and providing greater integration and partnership working between professional services teams and schools, resulting in a more distributed leadership model which has been welcomed by staff. Strategy implementation is articulated and delivered through school annual plans. A considerable programme of work has been undertaken since the 2015 ELIR to deliver the Academic Strategy overseen by the Academic Board and its sub-committees.

100 The University's Department of Learning and Teaching Enhancement (DLTE) leads strategic initiatives in partnership with schools and professional services, to enhance the quality of learning and teaching. The University has also deliberately located the Quality and Standards team within DLTE to strengthen the relationship between baseline quality assurance processes and enhancement activities. The ELIR team heard how close working between the University Leadership Team (ULT), the Vice-Principal Learning and Teaching, school heads of learning and teaching, and the Director of DLTE was helping to coordinate institution-wide enhancement activity and improve research teaching linkages.

101 School learning and teaching committees are the main forum discussion about enhancement. The combined University Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Student Experience Committee (LTASEC) (paragraph 43) has responsibility for activities undertaken to enhance learning, teaching and assessment including annual monitoring. LTASEC reports directly to the Academic Board. In addition to committee consideration, annual monitoring reports are reviewed by the Quality and Standards team and collated reports of issues and good practice are disseminated to schools and via the DLTE newsletter and annual learning and teaching conference.

3.2 Impact of the national Enhancement Themes and related activity

102 The national Enhancement Themes are a key external reference point for the University and have impacted positively on its strategy, policy and practice development. The University's institutional strategy has enhancement as a central focus and Theme work has, in many cases, aligned with institutional work already underway or planned. University engagement with the Themes extends from senior university staff leading strands of work (at the time of the ELIR, the Vice-Principal Learning and Teaching was the chair of the current 'Evidence for Enhancement' Theme) to school staff engaging with the University's institutional plan and Theme collaborative clusters.

103 The University's approach to aligning Themes activity with institutional strategy has evolved since the launch of the previous Enhancement Theme - Student Transitions - in 2014. Earlier Theme working groups (for example, for the Developing and Supporting the Curriculum Theme) had comprised mainly senior colleagues with very little engagement from practitioners. The refreshed model, which was established during the Student Transitions Theme, involved recruiting staff from across the University to the Theme institutional team, some of whom used the experience to inform their submissions for Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. Staff engage with the Enhancement Themes through a range of

mechanisms, including using Theme funding to encourage staff and students to develop mini projects aligned to Themes. Key areas of the Transitions Theme - in particular, student belonging and community - have been priorities for the University, helping to ensure that the needs of the diverse student population are considered.

104 Overall the ELIR team considered that the University has a proactive approach to engaging staff and students at all levels with sector work on the Enhancement Themes. The team heard examples of the University learning from this Theme and using it to inform strategy and practice, in particular in the areas of community and belonging, and programme leader development - where the University has led on collaborative cluster work and produced a Programme Leader Operational Checklist for staff new to the role which outlines the tasks and responsibilities involved in the role. The checklist is currently being used both in the University and the wider sector.

105 The University continues to develop its approach to delivering and disseminating work related to the Enhancement Themes. The DLTE, under the leadership of the Vice-Principal Learning and Teaching, works in partnership with schools to oversee Enhancement Theme activity with the aim of increasing engagement further. During the ELIR, senior staff told the ELIR team about their commitment to the Theme and the developing strategic approach but acknowledged variations in engagement with the Theme across the University which they will continue to address.

3.3 Approaches to identifying and sharing good practice

106 The University identifies and shares good practice effectively through a variety of methods including: analysing and disseminating the outcomes of programme monitoring and review activities, as specified in the University's Quality Framework; holding learning and teaching conferences; promoting peer review; using feedback from informal student/staff groups to inform practice; nominating staff for student-led teaching awards; disseminating good practice from external bodies; and ensuring that the effectiveness of the leadership of learning and teaching at school level is reviewed regularly. Staff who met the ELIR team were aware of both formal and informal methods of sharing good practice and were positive about the range of opportunities available.

107 Following the appointment of the Vice-Principal Learning and Teaching (VPLT), changes have been made to the leadership of learning and teaching at school level. Reporting directly to the Dean, each school has a School Head of Learning and Teaching with responsibility for the oversight of learning and teaching, quality and the student experience. They chair their School Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committees and are members of LTASEC. They meet informally as a group and frequently either individually or together, with the recently appointed Head of DLTE. Together with the Head of DLTE, they meet monthly with the VPLT to engage in 'challenge discussions' about key aspects of the delivery of learning and teaching. In addition, these heads are senior single points of contact in each school with oversight of the preparation of the school-level reports and are in a position to alert teaching colleagues to the good practice identified and highlight good practice within their school reports at the university committees. Teaching staff reported that the new arrangements appeared to be operating smoothly and that the heads of learning and teaching engaged effectively with staff.

108 The annual Learning and Teaching/Teaching Fellows Conference aims to raise awareness of University learning and teaching priorities and showcase effective approaches to addressing these. The University is considering increasing the capacity for future conferences and inviting external delegates to secure a wider audience and network. In 2019, the conference was scheduled in the same week as the University's Research and Innovation conference, aiming to secure better alignment of the University's teaching and

research activities. Staff who met the ELIR team endorsed the value of these conferences and indicated that they had applied some of the good practice disseminated to their teaching practice.

109 While local peer review schemes have operated in the University for some years, DLTE has established a new university-wide peer review scheme aimed at promoting collaborative working and reflection on practice. The scheme, which is intended to operate on a cross-school basis, is underpinned by principles emphasising its confidentiality, partnership ethos and intention to be mutually beneficial to all partners involved. The University has decided that participation should, for the time being, be voluntary and 110 staff are already participating. It is envisaged that participation in the scheme would contribute to the discussions on personal and professional development for staff and inform performance and development review conversations.

110 The University also operates a 'Students as Colleagues' programme, whereby a student works closely with an academic from a different discipline to give the member of staff feedback on their practice with the intention of fostering a supportive relationship that enables academics to learn about current students' perspectives of learning and teaching issues. It also provides the student with experience of key employability skills such as performance review, collecting and evaluating evidence, offering constructive feedback and working with others. This initiative, which has been disseminated outside the University and has resulted in three peer-reviewed papers, has also been of assistance in supporting staff submitting applications for Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. Teaching and professional service staff who met the ELIR team welcomed this initiative, and those currently engaged in it spoke positively of their experiences. 'Students as Colleagues' was considered by the ELIR team to make a positive contribution to staff development (paragraph 124).

111 While there are often informal forums within schools and professional services departments which discuss and share good practice, many of the above initiatives are led and coordinated by DLTE. DLTE has recently launched a learning and teaching monthly newsletter that includes an item on learning and teaching practice of the month as well as what the University describes as 'University regulation of the month'. The positive practice noted in the 2015 ELIR of maintaining an active learning, teaching and assessment resource bank has been abandoned following a review by DLTE which found that it was largely text based, rarely consulted by staff and incompatible with current technological developments. DLTE is currently exploring ideas for the development of a more effective resource bank with School Heads of Learning and Teaching.

112 Other initiatives to share and disseminate good practice include the University 'Above and Beyond' awards where all staff can be nominated by colleagues and recognised for their contribution across eight categories (Professionalism, Ambition, Innovation, Inclusivity, Partnership, Student Experience, Leadership and Enterprise). The Student-led Teaching Awards, managed and overseen by ENSA, are another example of an award scheme facilitating the recognition and sharing of good practice. Additionally, examples of good practice have been disseminated to all staff through 'The Bones', the University's staff newsletter.

113 The University's Quality Framework (QF) also requires good practice to be identified from annual monitoring and institution-led review (ILR) processes with outcomes highlighted in school reports and discussed within programme boards of study. However, the University acknowledges that not all the good practice initially identified is captured in the school reports, and that staff engagement with these is often limited. The dissemination of good practice through formal quality processes continues to be a work-in-progress, with the University's current review of the ILR process potentially leading to the introduction of a

series of Thematic Reviews which are likely to identify good practice areas more clearly (paragraph 150).

3.4 Engaging, developing and supporting staff

114 The University has effective arrangements in place for engaging and supporting staff in the development of their learning, teaching and academic practices and support for student learning.

115 Strategy 2020 is underpinned by a set of staff development arrangements that the RA stated were designed to help staff feel 'proud, challenged and supported' and the University provides a range of opportunities developed and provided by the DLTE, the Learning and Development section of the Human Resources and Development department, and the recently established School Faculty Learning Communities (FLCs) which include both academic and professional services staff (paragraph 121). On appointment, academic staff are aligned to one of four pathways (learning and teaching, research, professional practice or enterprise) and staff promoted within these pathways are expected to be at the leading edge of their discipline and to contribute and influence their field externally.

116 Until 2016-17, academic induction consisted of an optional two-day learning and teaching event with a second event following six months later. However, the programme became unsustainable due to its optional status and lack of monitoring. New compulsory induction workshops were developed jointly by Human Resources and DLTE and were piloted in July 2019; these were well received, in particular as they provide new staff with the early opportunity to network with colleagues from across the institution. The intention is to offer the new induction programme once each trimester, and additionally if required. The induction sessions are complemented by an online resource pack for new teaching staff - 'In at the Deep End' - building on work commissioned from an external consultant.

117 The University's Professional Development Review (PDR) process, 'myContribution', enables reviewers (usually line managers) and reviewees to agree, track and measure their objectives, personal development and continuous professional development on an annual basis. The system focuses on review, development and career progression in line with staff contracts and job descriptions and includes a mid-year review progress review. While staff who met the ELIR team understood the principles of linking personal progress to the objectives of the University and were largely positive about the need to set and review agreed personal targets, there was some concern that the targets appeared to relate exclusively to personal rather than team objectives, and that expected levels of achievement for individual targets were sometimes unclear. In addition, staff at all levels within the University were in agreement that software underpinning the PDR submissions was not fit-for-purpose, causing delays, incomplete information and frustration. Senior staff are aware of these problems and, at the time of the current ELIR, the Director of Finance and Operations was reviewing the software issues to ensure that the benefits of myContribution could be more effectively realised. Professional services staff who met the team were positive about support for PDR, citing good guidance and university investment in developing the workforce, with myContribution being used to support this. In particular, the team learned it had been particularly beneficial for some technical staff as a route to gaining Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. Staff commented that, while the software is dated, it is up to line managers to make the PDR process work within their own context.

118 The University's Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) accredited Postgraduate Certificate in Learning, Teaching and Assessment Practice in Higher Education, is delivered by DLTE staff with contributions from student-facing professional services. The course recruits twice per year and is compulsory for staff new to university teaching; successful completion of the programme renders staff eligible for Fellowship of the

Higher Education Academy. Staff also spoke positively about ENroute, the University's Fellowship Scheme, designed for individuals who seek to have their practice recognised against the UK Professional Standards Framework's four descriptor categories. ENroute gained Advance HE reaccreditation in 2017, having received initial accreditation in 2013. The University acknowledges that its stretching target of having 100% Fellowship among academic staff by September 2020 is no longer realistic nor achievable, but is committed to supporting as many staff as possible towards Fellowship. Senior staff told the ELIR team that this target for professional recognition had significantly raised the profile of learning and teaching within the University among academic and professional services colleagues and had led to a greater sense of community. Since 2015-16, the University has produced an ENroute yearbook which celebrates and disseminates examples of good practice identified within the applications made for fellowship.

119 The ELIR team also learned about a variety of activity to support specific subsets of staff. The Programme Leader Operational Checklist, and accompanying VLE site, was developed by DLTE in consultation with Programme Leaders and LTASEC in mid-2018 as part of an Enhancement Theme collaborative cluster. The checklist will be reviewed annually and has been well received by both new and existing programme leaders. Research supervision training, mandatory for staff new to research degree supervision, is offered twice a year by the Research and Innovation Office (RIO) as a three-day course. Experienced supervisors are encouraged to attend on the third day to support the exchange of good practice and share their supervisory experiences. Staff also reported helpful informal research supervision networks within some of the schools. The University recognises the need to develop leaders who can successfully deliver strategic objectives by motivating and supporting others to realise their full potential. In response, it has developed the Inspiring Leadership Programme, designed specifically for senior leaders (academic or professional services at grades 7 to 10), who either lead or influence university strategy or who are responsible for leading others, leading projects or leading research or programmes. The programme consists of three workshops, each of which is two full days in length. The content is closely aligned to the University's values and leadership behaviours and is designed to support attendees' knowledge and understanding of how to role model these across the University. The range of development opportunities available to academic and support staff was considered positively by the ELIR team (paragraph 124).

120 An institution-wide project was undertaken by the University in 2015 and 2017 to deliver a Programme-Focused Approach to Assessment and Feedback (PFAAF) (paragraph 65). This led to the production of the University's Assessment and Feedback Design Guidelines, supplemented initially by a series of related school assessment workshops led by an external expert. These workshops and collaborative cross-institutional activity led to the production of paper and online practical *Quick Guides* to support staff in their assessment practices. The Guidelines include detailed annexes on marking schemes, grade criteria and moderation.

121 The University has recently introduced pilot Faculty Learning Communities (FLCs) to bring together and support academic staff and professional support staff, the first of which was established in the School of Applied Sciences and facilitated by DLTE and RIO. While the theme of this FLC was 'Supporting One Another in the University', a second recently established FLC is focused on consolidating pedagogic research knowledge. The pilot FLCs were welcomed by both academic and professional services staff who met the ELIR team. More generally, the University has established links with FLCs at other universities in Scotland with the intention of creating a Scotland-wide collaboration.

3.5 Effectiveness of the approach to implementing institutional strategies and enhancing learning and teaching

122 The University has an effective approach to enhancing learning and teaching and the wider student experience through its range of strategies and committee structures, the operation of which are regularly reviewed to ensure their continuing effectiveness, demonstrated in the recent merger of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment and Student Experience Committees. Responsibility for progressing enhancement activity has been devolved to academic schools, supported by new structures for the management of learning and teaching at institutional and school level and these changes were viewed positively by staff and students.

123 Since the 2015 ELIR, the University has strengthened its structures for the support of learning and teaching and research-teaching linkages through the appointment of new Vice-Principals for Learning and Teaching, and Research and Innovation and the introduction of new school leadership roles. This includes the establishment of the school heads of learning and teaching, who are members of school leadership teams and participate in weekly discussions with the University Vice-Principal for Learning and Teaching.

124 The University provides a wide range of opportunities, both formally and informally, to support the continuing professional development of staff and sharing good practice in learning and teaching. These include ENroute, the University's Professional Recognition Framework for staff involved in teaching and supporting learning provided by the Department of Learning and Teaching Enhancement, the Inspiring Leadership programme for senior leaders involved in leading or influencing university strategy, and the Students as Colleagues initiative where students are trained as voluntary professional 'reviewers' of teaching practice and are paired with a staff member from a different discipline.

4 Academic standards and quality processes

4.1 Key features of the institution's approach to managing quality and setting, maintaining, reviewing and assessing academic standards

125 The University has effective structures and processes in place for the management of quality processes and maintenance of academic standards that meet sector expectations.

126 The principles of the University's approach to managing academic standards and quality assurance are set out in the University's Quality Framework for taught provision, and in a separate Research Degrees Framework for research degree programmes. The Quality Framework outlines arrangements for the design, development, delivery, monitoring and review of programmes. It is supported by the Academic Regulations, Programme Design Guidelines and an Assessment Handbook and underpinned by the Academic Board and its sub-committees. The Quality Framework has been mapped to the 2013-18 UK Quality Code for Higher Education and the University is currently mapping to the 2019 Quality Code.

127 Academic Board and its sub-committees (the combined Learning, Teaching, Assessment and Student Experience Committee; Academic Conduct Committee; and Research and Innovation Committee) and their sub-committees (including Quality and Standards Committee, and Collaborative Provision Committee), oversee academic standards and quality.

128 The Quality Framework is implemented under arrangements which are devolved to schools. Following the 2015 university restructure, there were 18 School Academic Leads for learning and teaching and quality matters. The Vice-Principal for Learning and Teaching has

recently undertaken a review of these roles. Each school's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee is responsible for quality oversight, however, all schools have formed a Quality Sub-Committee to fulfil the operational aspects of this function and the School Academic Leads for quality play an important role in ensuring consistency across the institution. In order to facilitate effective working relationships between the schools and the central quality staff, School Academic Leads for Quality have a link contact within the Quality and Standards team in the DLTE.

129 To support devolved quality arrangements, the University has developed a range of guidance for staff on implementing quality procedures, policy and regulations including a staff toolkit to support Programme Design Guidelines - a Global Online Essentials resource to support programme leaders which includes links to the regulations, description of roles and responsibilities of module leaders, online tutors, the University's Global Online Support Team and research supervisors, and recent Assessment and Feedback Guidelines to support staff in the management of assessment practice (paragraph 65). In addition, the University has introduced an online course to help staff understand the regulations which form part of the mandatory training for committee convenors and clerks. The devolution of responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement to schools has been viewed positively by teaching staff who reported finding the processes more accessible and enhancements much easier to implement, with the online module change system being identified as particularly effective.

Programme approval, monitoring and institution-led review

130 Senior staff told the ELIR team that the University has begun a strategic project to examine the way in which academic programmes are managed across the institution. Although in early stages of implementation, the intention of the Curriculum Management Project is to build a system that will enhance the University's ability to design new programmes, refresh and reinvigorate existing programmes, and to support both students and staff during programme implementation. The project will run from May 2019 until 2021.

131 The 2015 ELIR identified the need to continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the Quality Framework (QF). The ELIR team noted that the University has responded constructively to this by continuing to undertake an annual review of the effectiveness of both the QF and introducing an annual review of the Research Degrees Framework. The resulting annual summary of operation of the Quality Framework is a comprehensive and action-oriented report. The example report provided to the ELIR team outlined a number of changes related to content and quality of documentation, deadlines, panel composition for ILR and panel training as a result of the review which were enhancing quality processes.

132 The University's approach to annual monitoring includes a formal reflective evaluation of each taught credit-bearing module at the end of each trimester, undertaken by programme leaders. Annual monitoring covers student, teaching team and external feedback on provision; student achievement data; and identification of good practice and areas for development. At the end of each academic session, schools conduct a formal reflective evaluation of all their taught awards, credit-bearing provision and component modules which results in the school annual summary report that is considered by the University Quality and Standards Committee. Following discussion at the Committee, a university-level report is produced which informs the University's annual report to the Scottish Funding Council. To assist staff in the completion of these reports, the Quality Framework webpages provide template forms, and performance data dashboards are available from the University's business management information system. The process also involves consideration of external data sources (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, QAA Subject Benchmark Statements) and feedback from external examiners. Thematic reports drawn from the outcomes of school annual monitoring are prepared by the DLTE and published in

'The Bones', the University's staff newsletter.

133 The University's Programme Review methodology was revised in 2018-19 as part of the review of the QF. As the name suggests, Programme Review considers individual programmes or a suite of programmes. It was supplemented by a process called School Review. Neither of these review processes required submission of a response from the area reviewed, other than providing evidence to the review convenor that recommendations and conditions had been addressed. The new methodology, called institution-led review (ILR), was approved by the Quality and Standards Committee in April 2019 and was being implemented from the start of the 2019-20 academic session. Changes include broadening the pool of staff for review panels, an increased focus on enhancement and the introduction of the flexibility to review suites of programmes together or individual programmes as required. The new ILR methodology emphasises the capacity for introducing conditions and time-limited recommendations, together with an increased focus on clarifying who is responsible for responding to a recommendation. 12 months after the review there will be a meeting with QSC members to monitor progress against recommendations and further development of areas that were commended. Although the changes are relatively minor, staff expect them to have a major impact on the richness of the information the method produces.

134 During the ELIR, the University recognised the Scottish Funding Council's requirement to have a method of systematically reviewing professional services and the need for a more holistic approach to reviewing the postgraduate student experience, as well as stating its intention to progress with further revisions to its ILR process. At the time of the current ELIR, neither PGR provision at the institutional level nor the contribution of professional services to the quality culture of the University were being systematically reviewed. Although the ELIR team found evidence of effective approaches to monitoring individual postgraduate student progress (paragraph 82) and strategy and policy, through the Research Degrees Committee (paragraph 81), no broader review of arrangements for reviewing the postgraduate student experience had been established. During the ELIR, the University provided examples of thematic review reports that had been undertaken prior to the 2019-20 changes, but these focused on the review of procedures and regulations at school-level, for example, examining the double-counting of credit, rather than the effectiveness of professional services supporting teaching and learning and the student experience at the University. The University is asked to progress with its intentions to extend its approach to reviewing these areas (paragraph 150).

4.2 Use of external reference points in quality processes

135 Overall the University has an effective approach to using external reference points.

136 The Academic Regulations state that the approval process for taught provision involves both internal and external peer review. Currently, the University makes use of a range of external stakeholders to inform programme development including external examiners, employers, programme advisory boards and works with over 30 professional bodies to achieve Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) accreditation of academic programmes.

137 The University considers that its external examiners play an important role in ensuring comparability of academic standards (paragraph 165-166). Schools are responsible for selecting and nominating external examiners, and their appointments are confirmed by the Quality and Standards team. The Quality and Standards team prepare a thematic summary of external examiner reports each November, and good practice emerging from these reports is published in the DLTE newsletter. The Quality and Standards team also respond to external examiners whenever an institution-level response is required.

Information about the role of external examiners is included in programme handbooks to help students understand their role and purpose. Students who met with the ELIR team had heard of external examiners but were neither aware of the existence of their reports, nor where to find them. The University had previously published redacted external examiner reports on the Quality and Standards webpages, but this stopped when responsibility for the operational management of the external examiner process was devolved to the School Support Service. External examiner reports are now shared at Programme Boards of Studies, where student representatives are present, but they are not widely distributed or made available to the wider student body. The University is asked to make external examiner reports accessible to all students (paragraph 151).

138 Noting that there had been an increase in the proportion of first and upper second-class degrees awarded by the University, a working group has been commissioned by the Quality and Standards Committee to undertake a review during the 2019-20 academic session. This work has been subsumed into Quality and Standards Committee business. As a result, the Committee had recently agreed to revise university regulations from 2020-21, so that the use of discretion to consider students for a higher honours degree classification, where their grades are close to an honours classification boundary, is no longer possible. The Committee has also discussed proposals to review the degree classification regulations (algorithm) as part of future work.

4.3 Commentary on action taken since ELIR 3

139 The 2015 ELIR identified four areas for development: new frameworks for transnational education; the postgraduate research student experience; use of the virtual learning environment; and assurance of quality during a period of significant change - and the University has taken steps to address these outcomes.

140 The proposals to develop different approaches to delivering TNE provision have not progressed as quickly as anticipated at the 2015 ELIR. As a result, the University's approach to TNE provision is largely unchanged (paragraph 153 and 156).

141 In 2015, the University was asked to reflect on the ways in which it maintains oversight of the holistic research student experience, including arrangements for monitoring and enhancing the research student experience as well as ensuring there is enough capacity among 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 was encouraged to extend opportunities for research students to gain teaching experience, ensuring that students are trained and supported to fulfil this role. Since the 2015 ELIR, oversight of the research student experience has been improved by the establishment of Research Degree Leaders (RDLs) in each school (paragraph 81). Progress has been made with extending the opportunities for research students to gain teaching experience, but the provision and monitoring of the uptake of training for this role remains inconsistent (paragraph 83 and 96), the extent to which longitudinal cross-institutional induction could impact positively on the development of a research community could be explored further (paragraph 96) and the totality of the postgraduate research student experience systematically reviewed (paragraph 80 and 96) in order to enhance the PGR student experience further.

142 The University was asked to consider 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 and this work has been progressing (paragraph 89).

143 The University was also asked to consider its approach to assuring quality during significant change and to continue to evaluate the effectiveness of the existing quality framework during the 2015 organisational restructure, particularly as responsibilities were delegated to schools when the faculties were disestablished. The University has undertaken significant work in this area, demonstrated in its approach to the annual review of the quality framework (paragraph 131) and new structures for managing quality processes at school level (paragraphs 99, 107 and 123).

4.4 Approach to using data to inform decision-making and evaluation

144 Enhancing the quality and use of data has been a priority for the University. Since the 2015 ELIR, the University has significantly developed its capacity to visualise and analyse trends in the student population, particularly through enhancement of its business management information system and dashboard. The dashboard receives data from a wide range of sources, including student records and performance data, surveys, benchmarking, academic quality processes, research and innovation, financial reporting, workforce analysis and information from the Higher Education Statistics Agency and the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service. The data are quality checked by the Planning and Business Intelligence team, combined and presented through a number of customisable dashboards.

145 The University described its information management system dashboard as 'the single source of truth' and its use has been integrated into a number of existing processes to enhance effectiveness, including the annual planning and budgeting cycle and quality assurance processes. For example, the AMR and ILR processes each require the analysis and consideration of student progression, retention and achievement data, including employability data. The dashboards allow student performance to be compared horizontally across modules, and longitudinally against historic data. Performance data may also be presented as a function of a number of student characteristics, such as widening participation students who reported having a disability. Data can be displayed at programme, subject group, school or university level, allowing individual teachers, module and programme leaders and committees to access the information in the form that is most useful for each level of the institution. The system was designed to be intuitive and accessible from the outset and, as a result, little user training is required. Academic and professional services staff who the ELIR team met, spoke very positively about the system and the responsiveness of staff in the Planning department to staff requests for customised reports, including to support the evaluation of the contextualised admissions process. In 2018-19, 475 individual academic staff engaged with the system, around 250 per month, and 7,950 reports were run by users, which the University considers indicates positive and continued engagement from staff.

146 Performance data from the NSS, PTES and module evaluations are used to produce School Student Experience Reports which identify common themes and issues from each school. The reports are received by a new committee which meets monthly, the Student Surveys Group. It is chaired by the Vice-Principal Learning and Teaching and has representation from each of the schools.

147 The ELIR team viewed the impact of the accessible provision of data to all staff (which includes student performance, survey, widening access and employability data) as a very positive step that is facilitating evidence-based enhancement, for example in the areas of widening participation and admissions.

4.5 Effectiveness of the arrangements for securing academic standards

148 The University's arrangements for securing academic standards are appropriate, effective and in line with the expectations of the Quality Code.

4.6 Effectiveness of the institution's approach to self-evaluation, including the effective use of data to inform decision-making

149 The University has an effective approach to self-evaluation and a proactive approach to developing its approach to the use of data to inform decision-making. The University is commended for growing its institutional capacity to provide data to staff in an accessible format to support the delivery of strategic and operational priorities including admissions and widening participation. Staff are beginning to routinely use data for a wide range of purposes, including to inform action planning and annual monitoring.

150 The University has made progress in reviewing the operation of its institution-led review processes. In order to strengthen its approach further, and adhere to Scottish Funding Council guidelines on quality, with regard to the review of postgraduate research student provision and the contribution of professional services to the quality culture of the institution, the University is asked to ensure that the current institutional approach to reviewing postgraduate study considers more fully the wider student learning experience beyond student progression. There would also be benefit in the University ensuring it includes an appropriate level of externality and considering the extent to which the method will continue to be fit-for-purpose as postgraduate research student numbers grow. In addition, the University is asked to establish a systematic and timely mechanism for reviewing the contribution of the professional support services to the quality of the student experience.

151 In order to strengthen the University's approach to student engagement in quality processes, the University should make external examiners' reports accessible to all students in order to give them the opportunity to engage in discussion and consideration of this element of the assessment process.

5 Collaborative provision

5.1 Key features of the institution's strategic approach

152 The University has an effective approach to managing its collaborative provision including arrangements for securing academic standards and enhancing the student experience.

153 The University has a wide range of partnerships that include transnational education provision with 58 overseas partners including 54 collaborative degrees, the majority of which are delivered in partnership with the Business School. The portfolio of partnerships includes the delivery of online modules and the development of a joint-college venture in China. The University has recently participated in two QAA reviews of transnational education - one in the Republic of Ireland in 2017 and one in Hong Kong (Special Administrative Zone) in 2018, which featured the University's partnership with CityU Scope in Hong Kong.

154 The University has an Online and Transnational Education Strategy 2020, which describes the key role that transnational education (TNE) plays within the University. The post of institutional lead for international partnerships has recently been changed from Assistant Principal to Vice-Principal in recognition of the growing importance of leadership in this area of the University's provision. There is a Collaborative Provision Committee (CPC) and an Online and TNE Strategy Steering Group (OTNESSG), which reports to University Leadership Team, while OTNESSG is a strategic executive group. The establishment of OTNESSG was instrumental in ensuring that equality and diversity are considered at a very

early stage in the approval of a new partner. Together, these committees ensure that the University has effective oversight of strategic and operational aspects of collaborative provision.

155 At the time of the current ELIR, around 22% of the University's students were studying on TNE programmes. While the University strategy outlines the aim to grow TNE and develop new models of delivery including Global Online, Global Online Blended, Partner-Supported and International Centre models, the number of TNE students has declined (paragraph 10). This decline is in part a result of the University's decision to rationalise its portfolio, a move which it views as a sign of maturity in its partnership arrangements. The University has gone through a period of partner review, both questioning the value of some of its existing partnerships at the same time as aiming to build stronger partnerships in some areas. So far, this has resulted in withdrawal from some partnerships, including all of those in India and Thailand, and an increased focus on others in new territories such as Myanmar, Mauritius and Vietnam.

156 The University operates a flying-faculty model with high contact-teaching and frequent meetings between Edinburgh campus and partner staff. In this model, no partner staff are involved in the teaching, though they do provide student tutorial support in some partnerships. There is generally a close, supportive relationship between the flying faculty and the partner staff. However, recognising that this model is not sustainable with an expansion in TNE provision, the University has started to move towards increasing franchised provision in some areas. The approach has been to handover responsibility for teaching delivery and assessment only once partners have demonstrated a good track record. The University continues moderation of assessments on a sampling basis for all locally-assessed work.

157 There is a rapid turnover of local staff in some markets. This is often compensated by increased engagement by the University's flying faculty. A required level of English proficiency is not specified for staff employed by the partner institutions, but the University retains control over suitability of staff appointments under the terms of its collaborative agreements.

158 The University's staff development framework does not currently extend to staff at collaborative partners. However, the University stated that it wants to ensure that overseas tutors working on TNE programmes receive adequate support. Induction arrangements follow those set down in the collaborative agreement, followed by ongoing dialogue with Edinburgh-based flying faculty, particularly where the turnover of partner staff is low. TNE staff who met with the ELIR team confirmed that they received support from the University prior to teaching, that they were offered opportunities to discuss course materials and guidance notes with Edinburgh based staff and that CPD online workshops were available. Academic skills modules, including academic English, are currently being developed by DLTE in partnership with collaborative partners in China.

159 The International Programmes team based in Edinburgh support academic colleagues in the development and delivery of TNE programmes. They are in regular contact with partners and support and administer the programmes on behalf of the University. All TNE programmes are taught and assessed in English and admissions criteria for collaborative programmes are set by the University and detailed in the Programme Specification. These include the required standard of English language. This requirement is monitored during the first-year review of the student's programme and a majority of students entering TNE programmes enter from programmes also taught in English. Despite this, there have been concerns raised about the English language proficiency of some TNE students through routine quality processes, and staff from partner institutions who met the ELIR team identified that this was the main challenge they faced. These staff expressed the view that

up to a third of students on one programme struggled to understand the syllabus and that poor English impacted on assessment performance and resulting grades. The University is asked to review, within the current academic year, the English language entry criteria and proficiency of students on all transnational education programmes to ensure future student intakes have adequate language proficiency on entry and provide language support for existing students where required (paragraph 168).

160 TNE students are able to provide feedback on their learning experience through SSLCs (typically held three times per year, reflecting practice in the Edinburgh campuses), through class representatives, student surveys and directly to their teachers. In addition, all TNE students have a PDT. This role is typically fulfilled by the local programme leader but, in the School of Health and Social Care, the PDT role for TNE students is shared among the teaching team. TNE students also participate in module evaluation surveys, the results of which are reported to the University. Focus groups are held to discuss matters arising through module evaluation. TNE students spoke very highly of the support from their tutors and tutors' responsiveness. Student representatives are appointed at collaborative partners. However, since TNE students are not considered to be eligible for membership of ENSA, they do not have access to the training and support provided by the Students' Association. There would be benefit in the University considering how current training for student representatives could be made available to support student representatives studying with collaborative partners.

161 The University has eight collaborative provision arrangements with UK further education (FE) institutions and, following a strong Government interest in promoting articulation and improving the efficiency of the learner journey, the University has become a main provider of direct entry higher education in the region. In addition, there are also articulation arrangements with overseas institutions, mostly in the Business School. The University recognises that effective student transitions require careful management. Transition into university programmes is supported by an FE Articulation Tutor and a range of activity is offered to support direct entry students (paragraph 57-58) including the introduction a new skills-based module that has been introduced as an option across the Business School and is compulsory within the BA Business Studies programme.

Arrangements for managing quality and academic standards

162 The University's Quality Framework outlines arrangements for collaborative provision, including approval of partners and additional monitoring and review requirements. The Collaborative Agreement covering each of the University's TNE partnerships clearly states that the final responsibility and accountability for the academic standards and quality assurance of the delivery rests with the University.

163 The University's annual monitoring processes cover collaborative provision in the same way as other programmes and there is space in the Annual Monitoring Report template to record how partners were involved in preparing the report. The emphasis in the process is on evaluation of the effectiveness of the management of provision delivered in partnership, reflection on the effectiveness of school mechanisms for sharing good practice, and identification of opportunities for enhancing the learning experience of students and the ELIR team viewed this positively.

164 Collaborative programmes are reviewed in the ILR process in exactly the same way as other programmes, with the exception that there is an additional First Year Review, resulting in a report that goes to CPC. Since each collaboratively delivered programme has a different code to the same programme delivered at Edinburgh, the University is able to compare student performance across the different locations of delivery.

165 The appointment of external examiners for collaborative programmes is the responsibility of the University. This is clearly stated in each collaborative agreement. External examiners are generally appointed to cover delivery on the Edinburgh campuses and the TNE programme. Exceptions to this are, in the Business School, the BA (Hons) Marketing delivered with CityU SCOPE in Hong Kong, and the MSc Marketing delivered in partnership with HKU SPACE, also in Hong Kong, which currently have an examiner who only reviews the TNE programmes. However, at the time of the current ELIR, the external examiner responsibilities had been amended to ensure that each external examiner has coverage of both the TNE and home modules/programmes. In the School of Applied Sciences, the BA Social Sciences programme in partnership with HKU SPACE has an external examiner who is only responsible for reviewing the TNE provision, but the ELIR team learned that this would be reviewed when the current external examiner completes their term this year.

166 External examiners report that academic standards are comparable between the international and UK cohorts of programmes. The University considers that the use of common teaching teams and common external examiners have been an important factor in securing this.

5.2 Effectiveness of the approach to managing collaborative provision

167 The University has an effective approach to managing collaborative provision including arrangements for securing academic standards and enhancing the student learning experience. There is clear evidence that careful consideration has been given to managing the risks and opportunities. The University has well-established processes for the approval of partners and programmes.

168 The University is asked to review, within the current academic year, the English language entry criteria and proficiency of students on all TNE programmes to ensure future student intakes have adequate language proficiency on entry and provide language support for existing students where required.

QAA2532 - R10872 - Mar 20

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2020

18 Bothwell Street, Glasgow G2 6NU

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

www.qaa.ac.uk