



Heriot-Watt University

Follow-up Report to the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR)

March 2022

Preface

One year after publication of their ELIR Outcome and Technical Reports, institutions are asked to submit a Follow-up Report to QAA Scotland. These reports are also submitted to the Scottish Funding Council. Follow-up Reports are written in the institution's own words and require to be endorsed by the institution's Governing Body prior to publication on the QAA website. Guidance on the content and structure is provided by QAA Scotland.

Institutions are asked to focus on the action they have taken since the review and to include an indication of the effectiveness of that action. ELIR reports highlight positive practice as well as areas for development, and institutions are encouraged to comment on key areas of activity relating to good practice that they have prioritised since the ELIR.

Follow-up Reports are discussed with institutions as part of the ELIR annual discussion meetings.

1. Introduction

1.1 Endorsement of Report

This Follow-Up Report provides the formal response of Heriot-Watt University to the Outcome and Technical Reports of its 2020 Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR).

The Report is presented to the Court of Heriot-Watt University for endorsement at its meeting on 24 March 2022, having previously been approved by the University Committee for Learning and Teaching on behalf of the Senate and by the University Executive.

1.2 ELIR Outcomes

The fourth Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) of Heriot-Watt University was undertaken in January-November 2020, and the Outcome and Technical Reports were formally published in March 2021. The University's Planning Visit proceeded as arranged in January 2020 and the Review Visit in March 2020 was postponed after the first day due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Review Visit was resumed and concluded in November 2020 through a wholly online process. The findings of the University's ELIR indicated the following:

*Heriot-Watt 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.

The University was delighted with the outcomes of its ELIR, particularly since the commendations were seen by the University as being fundamental to Heriot-Watt as a global institution, with student support and student partnership at the heart of all we do. The University was also pleased that the commendations additionally recognised the commitment to enhancing learning and teaching and the efforts of the institution to maintain global quality and standards during the pandemic.

The outcomes of the ELIR have been widely disseminated across all of the University's campus locations, with the first formal update being to the Court at its meeting on 20 November 2020 and further communications thereafter to the Senate, the University Executive, the Global Student Life Committee, the University Committee for Learning and Teaching and the University Committee for Quality and Standards (January-March 2021).

1.3 Contextual Factors

The University wishes to highlight formally in its ELIR Follow Up Report that while clear progress has been made in taking forward the four recommendations, this has been affected in part by the ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, as the University has spent two years (February 2020-March 2022) shifting its priorities to focus sufficient time, effort and resource on effectively delivering learning and teaching, maintaining quality and standards and, critically, supporting students to achieve successful outcomes.

Additionally, there have been other, contributory institutional factors: a major voluntary redundancy scheme (Scottish Campuses); an extensive restructuring of all Professional Services (all 5 campuses); changes in senior management positions and structures. The University has also introduced a new, more transparent and strategically aligned planning process: this has allowed resource to be allocated on the basis of collective, institution-wide agreement of priority strategic areas and the greater engagement and ownership have been wholly welcomed. As at March 2022, bids have been submitted in two key areas related to the University's ELIR recommendations: PGR student experience/environment; systematic access to, and use of, data (additional staffing in Strategic Planning, Performance and Projects was funded through the first iteration of the new planning process in 2020/21).

1.4 Consideration of ELIR Reports and Ongoing Management of ELIR Outcomes

Actions related to the University's ELIR (both those identified through the Review itself and by the University in its Reflective Analysis) have been managed, at the institutional level, by the University Committee for Learning and Teaching (UCLT) through a well-established ELIR action plan process. In the period immediately following an ELIR, the UCLT approves the initial Action Plan (the first plan following the ELIR4 was approved by UCLT on 6 May 2021) and receives regular updates on progress. In between ELIR events, the Committee considers an annual update (each January) on ELIR-related actions, with the most recent being on 19 January 2022.

In addition to the University Committee for Learning and Teaching, the Action Plans and Reports have been considered, and endorsed, by the following committees: University Committee for Quality and Standards; University Executive; the Senate; the Court. Independent monitoring of actions continues to be provided by the University's Audit and Risk Committee.

2. Preparation and Consideration of the ELIR Follow-Up Report

The ELIR Follow-Up Report was produced by the Academic Quality team for consideration by the University Committee for Learning and Teaching following its meeting on 19 January 2022. A final version of the report was considered by the University Executive on 22 February 2022 and this version is now being presented to the Court for endorsement on 24 March 2022. Due to meeting schedules, the Senate will receive the report at its meeting on 27 April 2022.

With the exception of the University Executive, students are represented on all of the aforementioned committees and groups through the Presidents and Vice-Presidents (Education), ensuring that students were involved in the preparation of the Follow-Up Report, with specific involvement in the response to the PGR-related recommendation.

3. Consideration of Recommendations

The ELIR Reports invited the University to consider four recommendations. The boxed sections in italics have been replicated from the ELIR Outcome Report (a more detailed explanation of each can be found in the Technical Report), with the University's response below. The University will make use of its Institutional Liaison Visits to update QAA Scotland on a biannual basis on its continued actions to address the ELIR recommendations.

3.1 Systematic Access To And Use Of Data

Systematic access to and use of data - implement an institutional approach to the use of data that is systematic and accessible to help improve decision making, enhance the student learning experience and support student attainment. In order to provide appropriate support and guidance, the University should, in the short term, prioritise the development of a more systematic approach to identifying students who may be disengaging from their studies.

The University had made two new senior, strategic appointments just before the Resumed ELIR in November 2020: Vice-Principal and Provost; Director of Strategic Planning and Performance. Under their direction, the University has invested significantly through its revised Planning Process in developing a systematic and more strategic approach to access to and use of data.

The ELIR Technical Report highlighted the University's limitations in this area (paras 140-144) and so addressing these shortcomings through a more strategic, better resourced approach is by no means a quick-fix. Initiatives are progressing at the expected rate of development, given that HWU is a global institution and solutions need to work consistently across all modes and locations. Other contributing factors include the timeframes required for scoping, investment, procurement, consultation and decision-making, and also the ongoing institutional effort in dealing with the pandemic. There are three key strands to the development of this more systematic approach, each of which is in progress:

- 1) Development of a Data Strategy: as at March 2022, the development of an institutional Data Strategy is underway, being initially led collaboratively by Strategic Planning, Performance and Projects; Governance and Legal Services; and Information Services. The Data Strategy will provide a framework for defining and governing the use of data.
- 2) Investment in establishing a systemic data solution: as recognised in the ELIR Technical Report (paras 140-144), the University has disparate systems for providing and accessing data. As a means of providing a more integrated, accessible and sustainable approach to data, the institution has committed the financial resources to initiate a data solution, enabling the integration of all related systems and providing a single source of truth for data, which will be ultimately accessible to users through a suite of analytic dashboards. As at March 2022, the University is in the early procurement stages, about to go out to tender for a proof of concept (prior to the full tender process) and aims to use student data and retention data as the basis for providers to demonstrate their proof of concept. The use of student retention data for the proof of concept reflects the fact that retention continues to be a priority area for the University, as was further demonstrated through the Internal Audit on Retention (November 2021-February 2022).
- 3) Funding for additional business intelligence analyst posts within Strategic Planning, Performance and Projects (SPP&P), who have recently produced a series of data dashboards covering a range of topics including Strategic Performance Indicators, Student Number Planning, NSS results and other key analytic areas. The team is also focused on supporting staff across the institution to make effective use of these dashboards. SPP&P are also engaged in upskilling key staff in other areas to develop their own reports and dashboards. The long-term aim is to enable every staff user to be self-sufficient in accessing and using data when needed.

In addition to the above longer term, more strategic approach, the University is beginning to make use of the functionality within its new VLE (Canvas; implemented from September 2021) to provide a basic, consistent set of learning analytics data. In this way, staff (academic staff as well as the central Student Success Advisors within Student Wellbeing) can track the progress of students, including those at risk, and set in motion early interventions. The cross-institutional use of a single VLE (a development since ELIR) and the support for Canvas amongst the academic community have facilitated the introduction of Canvas-based learning analytics functionality. The next stages will be to support a further roll out. In time, learning analytics provision will be enhanced through the strategic developments outlined above.

3.2 Postgraduate Research Student Environment

Postgraduate research student environment - engage proactively and work in partnership with postgraduate research students to identify ways to improve their sense of belonging in the university community and develop a consistent institution-wide postgraduate research student environment.

Following the retirement of the previous postholder, a new Chair of the Research Degrees Committee (RDC), which is responsible for the PGR student experience, was appointed in October 2021 (the Chair is Director of Postgraduate Research Students in the School of Engineering and Physical Sciences). Additionally, the permanent Clerk has returned following maternity leave. The new Chair, with support from the Clerk and the Quality Enhancement Officer (Student Learning Experience), has brought a renewed sense of purpose and drive for enhancing the PGR student experience, putting in place a more structured approach and also creating a more open culture, where PGR students have a number of routes by which issues can be raised. Key to this has been a clear increase in proactive engagement with PGR students and improvements in PGR representation.

The RDC has been particularly proactive in embedding an action planning process for student feedback, including PRES, and has mirrored the approach in place for taught provision, ie School action plans are developed locally, but reviewed and agreed by RDC. The RDC is also focusing on addressing low participation in PRES: one such approach is for PGRs to produce their own PRES survey action plan and to drive enhancement from their perspective. It is hoped that demonstrable evidence of improvement in response to student feedback (*see further below*) will encourage increased participation in PRES.

In terms of PGR representation, the Student Union has restructured its representative arrangements, providing more dedicated resource to support PGRs, and has also introduced PGR MP positions to match those for taught provision. PGR students are now represented on all key University Committees. At School level, PGRs are now

participating in Research Institute meetings, each School now has a PGR Student Committee and there are PGR societies in each School.

As regards more structured induction programmes, this is being progressed at the institutional level by the Research Futures Academy (RFA), facilitated by the fact that PGR intakes are now at set dates to ensure that all PGRs are automatically aligned to an induction programme.

The ELIR team highlighted the need to develop further the research communities and culture, particularly at the smaller Orkney and Scottish Borders Campuses. It is recognised that some PGR communities can be isolated, primarily due to geographical location and small cohort numbers. Actions are underway to address these issues, eg visiting these PGRs to discuss PRES feedback face-to-face and introducing student-led, whole School or whole campus events. There is also a recognition of the need to further develop research culture across the University, which includes engendering a feeling of community spirit. This has been particularly difficult due to the pandemic, but more face-to-face activities and student-led events are now being offered and opportunities provided for PGRs to talk with their peers from different parts of the University. Key to ongoing success will be the continuing need to support PGR involvement and buy-in.

Other actions to develop a more consistent PGR student experience include a major redesign of the Approved Teacher/Tutor/Marker/Demonstrator process so that the quality, HR and training functions are explicitly linked through an online workflow. As a consequence, inconsistencies in training have been addressed and no PGR student can now undertake any teaching without the requisite approval and training. The extension of the Personal Tutor Scheme for PGRs across all campuses is underway. The development of the scheme has been led by PGRs and has received excellent feedback to date. Questions developed by PGRs are purposefully not focussed on research and are aimed at supporting wellbeing in each year of study. It has been proposed that PGRs meet their PTs twice a year as a minimum.

The ELIR team highlighted the need to improve signposting to support services for PGR students. Through collaboration between the Student Union, PGR Representatives and Academic Quality, a dedicated SharePoint site for PGRs has been developed to signpost support services much more effectively. Discussion is underway regarding signposting across campuses, eg through screens at food outlets.

As at March 2022, a proposal has been submitted through the new Planning Round process to fund a new post of Quality Enhancement Officer (PGR student experience), providing a dedicated resource to collaborate with the Chair of RDC in shaping and implementing a strategic, institution-wide approach to enhancing the PGR student experience. Additionally, through the same Planning Round, a request has been made for a dedicated PGR post in Student Wellbeing Services, recognising that the challenges experienced by PGR students can be very different to those of students on taught programmes.

Additionally, through its *Resilient Learning Communities* Enhancement Theme initiatives (within the Student Action for Resilience sub-theme), the University has funded a student-led project on [Building a Resilient Postgraduate Research Community: Student and Staff Perspectives](#) (September 2021-February 2022; see visual below). The resulting report, which was based on an extensive series of focus groups and surveys with PGR students and academic and professional services staff, sets out a series of recommendations across the key themes shown in the visual below. The Research Degree Committee considered the Report and its recommendations at its meeting on 16 February 2022.



3.3 Staff Development Opportunities

Staff development opportunities - ensure equity of access to staff development opportunities across all campuses. In addressing this, the University should consider online delivery, the need for local provision and level of resourcing required.

The University's staff development offering is provided by the following three departments: People and Organisational Development; Learning and Teaching Academy; Research Futures Academy; each department works globally and each has staff members based in Malaysia, Dubai and Scotland. In addressing the ELIR recommendation related to equity of access to staff development opportunities across all campuses, it should be noted that, as at March 2022, all generic staff development is fully online and accessible across all locations.

People and Organisational Development

All staff development opportunities provided by the Professional and Organisational Development (POD) team are available for HWU colleagues to participate in across all campus locations. Some development is segmented and targeted at specific roles or work groups, eg Leaders/Managers, or a specific professional function, eg Technicians. At present, all sessions are being run wholly online, which provides equity of participation across campuses. All development is expected to be discussed between the individual and their line manager as part of the Performance & Development Review (PDR) and documented using the new HR system.

Some sessions are supported by UK funding and restricted to UK-based employees, but POD will contribute HWU-specific resource to enable colleagues in Dubai and Malaysia to attend, eg some of the Mental Health Awareness sessions offered during the pandemic.

The formal POD programme of development comprising programmes, courses and webinars is available online via standard platforms, using either Teams, Zoom or Collaborate Ultra. The Malaysia Campus also carries out a separate development programme aligned to the POD global programme, which provides more local specific development and time-zone friendly development for campus colleagues. The Dubai Campus generally participates in the programme of development arranged and offered globally by POD; however, local development is also arranged from time to time in line with business needs.

The formal POD development programme is arranged in a flexible and accessible way, with different days of the week and times to provide various opportunities for all colleagues to participate including those on part-time hours, dropping/collecting children from nursery or school, and those on compressed hours. Zoom is also used specifically to accommodate the deaf community.

POD aims to provide learning accessible to all, and also recognises that individuals learn in different ways and that not all learning can be carried out in the classroom. POD offers a range of development options for colleagues to learn using their preferred learning style and at a time to suit them, via [Online Learning](#), [LinkedIn Learning](#) (available to all staff and students) and a range of [eLearning](#).

POD provides an in-house coaching provision accessible to all colleagues across all campus locations. This is a rich resource and not only benefits individuals accessing the coaching, but also the staff members who develop their coaching skills. The coaching network has been successfully operating since 2010.

A learning management system (LMS) will soon be available via the Learn module of the new HR system; this is the final HR module to be delivered. This module will enable the creation and hosting of eLearning as well as developing learner journeys, scheduling of development activities and creation of learning records for staff in one platform.

Learning and Teaching Academy

The Learning and Teaching Academy's provision combines online and blended delivery, with on-campus engagement to ensure equitable access and context-specific opportunities. Recent developments include:

- The redevelopment of the PGCertificate in Teaching & Learning to a fully online programme and open to staff globally. This includes refreshed provision for postgraduates who teach, via the first *Learning About*

Learning course of the programme. Participants are part of a single cohort, allowing cross-campus discussion and sharing of practice. There are opportunities for asynchronous collaboration and synchronous sessions scheduled to allow staff to participate at a time that best suits their timezone and / or working preferences.

- The introduction of Senior and Principal Fellowship pathways to AdvanceHE accreditation. These are run online, opening opportunities for asynchronous and real-time collaboration across campuses.
- Campus-specific support related to the use of learning spaces has been developed. For example, materials and training tailored to the use of the spaces in the new Dubai campus have been developed and on-campus training and support offered.
- Networks such as New to Teaching, Programme Directors Forum, Assessment for Learning Special Interest Group, and Digital Pedagogies Group all operate globally and facilitate cross-campus development.
- Staff across the university are encouraged to participate in QAA Enhancement Themes activities and to build connections through the Themes networks to share practice beyond the University. This has an added sector benefit of bringing a global dimension to discussion in Theme-led activity within the sector.

All events are run in online or in blended mode, including *Learning and Teaching Week*, seminars and sharing practice events. With the gradual return to campuses as Covid restrictions are lifted, the core online offer of events and support is being complemented by opportunities for on-campus meet-ups to facilitate community building within campus locations.

The University has increased investment in staff development in learning and teaching. Three additional posts have been created to enable the LTA to enhance institutional capabilities in curriculum design and digital pedagogies.

Research Futures Academy

Pre-pandemic, the training and development programmes provided by the Research Futures Academy (RFA) were typically delivered as 'in-person', face-to-face workshops or events on the Edinburgh Campus. In 2019, the RFA was beginning to consider how to 'internationalise' researcher development for the wider community, collaborating on delivery of some events for new PGRs in Dubai and Malaysia, and developing some online courses (eg on avoiding plagiarism).

In the past two years, this had necessarily been accelerated, with the majority of our provision for both staff and students being delivered virtually, using online platforms such as MS Teams and Zoom. The training and development activities have mostly consisted of live webinars with some online Canvas/Sway courses and learning materials accessible via our SharePoint pages (including a curated list of 'Linked-in Learning' courses related to researcher development). The advantage of virtual delivery is the increased opportunities for staff and students at all campuses to engage in the training and development we offer, but feedback has suggested that the 'in-person' mode would also be welcomed to facilitate more peer networking amongst PGRs. As Covid restrictions are being relaxed and there is a greater return of staff and students to campus, RFA is aiming to continue to deliver its activities in a hybrid mode with additional on-demand resources offered online.

RFA has obtained further feedback about its provision by encouraging HWU staff participation in the recent national CEDARS survey, with the results discussed at the Research Staff Forum and the University Committee for Research and Innovation (UCRI). Analysis and interpretation of Heriot-Watt staff responses inform the delivery of 'HR Excellence in Research' and 'Concordat for the Career Development of Researchers' plans. An internal 'Review of the Research Futures Academy' has also been undertaken in 2021, and the outcomes are supporting additional resourcing requests related to 'Research Culture' via the University's internal Planning mechanism.

3.4 Variation in the Implementation of Policy and Practice across Schools

Variation in the implementation of policy and practice across schools - in pursuing the 'One Heriot-Watt' ethos, reflect on the appropriateness of variations in practice regarding implementation of policy across schools which may lead to inconsistency in the quality of provision.

A critical principle by which Heriot-Watt maintains the quality of its provision on a global scale is the fundamental principle of *identical academic standards; diversity of learning experiences*. All our policies and procedures are designed to assure that the quality and standards of our programmes are the same across all modes and locations of study. However, we do recognise that as our Schools have grown and diversified, there have emerged inconsistencies in practices, which we do not consider to be a concern as regards quality and academic standards, but do, in some instances, lead to inefficiencies for both staff and students or to miscommunications.

The restructuring of the Registry and Academic Support Directorate (RAS), which was the final phase of the global, institution-wide restructuring of all Professional Services (the *Building Our Commonality* project), has provided the organisational framework for ensuring more consistency in the implementation of policy and practice across Schools. Former Professional Services staff in Schools involved in learning and teaching support, quality processes and student support have been transferred into the four Divisions within RAS: Academic Operations, Academic Quality, Off-Campus, Student Life. Additionally, there has been a significant review and redesign of key processes to enable a more standardised approach all Schools, with this being facilitated in a number of cases by online workflow and by the introduction of a central team to manage the process and the implementation of the associated policy, eg: Mitigating Circumstances; Temporary Suspension of Studies; appointment and approval of Approved Teachers/Tutors/Markers/Demonstrators; management of exams, exam papers and results; institutional induction for different groups of students (UG, PGT and January starts); appointment and allocation of Chairs of Boards of Examiners; appointment of External Examiners; consideration of External Examiner reports.

The University Committee for Quality and Standards has also been engaged in standardising implementation of policy and practice, eg in relation to review of assessment tasks/exam papers by External Examiners. There remains the outstanding matter of reaching greater standardisation in the weighting of Honours degree classification across Schools, although much is determined by the individual requirements of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs).

The University's Learning and Teaching Group, which has been in place since March 2020 and has continued to manage the institution's global response to the pandemic, has been particularly effective in ensuring a more consistent implementation of policy and practice. With over 70 members on the Group, all key individuals are engaged in decision-making and in implementation, and with weekly and fortnightly meetings, there is a regular opportunity to identify inconsistencies, in which student representatives play a particularly active role, eg in identifying variation in communication of information. Recently, the Group has ensured that there is a more consistent approach to: release of assessment results; access to exam papers; turnaround times for feedback on substantive pieces of coursework; feedback on take-home exams.

4. Update on Commendations

The ELIR Reports highlighted five commendations. This section provides an update on how the University developed further the areas commended by the ELIR4 Review.

4.1 Strategic Approach to International and Multi-Campus Provision

Strategic approach to international and multi-campus provision - building on progress made in its effective implementation of clear vision and strategy, the University has continued to strengthen its approach to further develop the sense of a shared identity and 'One Heriot-Watt' ethos, engendering a sense of a global community. This has been achieved through strong institutional vision, strategy and leadership and rapid upscaling of the use of technology and working practices for remote working.

For all the challenges brought by the pandemic, it has afforded Heriot-Watt many opportunities to accelerate its *Flourishing Communities* strand of Strategy 2025, as multi-campus working and teaching have been made much easier by collaborating in a wholly online environment.

The weekly meetings of the L+T COVID Groups held on Teams have enabled engagement by a much larger, broader membership than would have been possible with physical meetings. As a result, there has been increased: engagement in and discussion of key issues and proposed solutions; ownership of collective decision-making; understanding of the issues and experiences of different campuses, Schools, Professional Services and student groups; pace of implementation.

The online format has continued to be kept in place for all scheduled committee meetings and local School and Service meetings, as this approach has had a critical levelling effect between all campuses, removing the disconnect caused by in-person meetings being held in person in Edinburgh, with colleagues in other locations participating remotely. As an additional benefit, there has been a greater understanding of the different circumstances of colleagues in different locations, eg in simple ways such as adjusting meeting times to suit the three timezones.

4.2 Positive Partnership Working with Student Representative Bodies (SRBs)

Positive partnership working with student representative bodies (SRBs) - the University effectively engages with its SRBs, involving them in active consultation and decision-making processes. They have built, over a period of time, open and collegial relationships between senior management and student officers which demonstrate mutual respect, leading to increasing effective student representation and, in turn, effective enhancement of the student learning experience.

The University continues to develop its highly-valued partnership working with the three Student Representative Bodies (SRBs) in Scotland, Dubai and Malaysia. Through a well-established level of trust and collaboration, the SRBs are able to highlight areas of concern, knowing that these will be addressed proactively and at senior levels, eg the shift to fully timed take-home exams in 2021/22 was modified in response to interventions by the SRBs to provide a more phased approach, with exams with a 24-hour window remaining in place for Semester 1. Student feedback has also been instrumental in reshaping the approaches to Mitigating Circumstances, Academic Integrity and Communications.

Partnership working between the SRBs has continued to develop and strengthen, as the three SRBs have come together to address issues related to the recruitment and training of Class Reps and School Officers in Dubai and Malaysia, ensuring a more consistent approach, with greater support from staff members in the Scottish Campuses' Student Union.

In a virtual, global ceremony, which was showcased at the All-Staff Executive Briefing in January 2022, the [2021/22 Student Partnership Agreement](#) was signed by the three Student Presidents and key Senior Officers of the University. The Partnership Agreement outlines the key collaborative initiatives across the themes of Academic, Community and Wellbeing, and with a Quality Enhancement Officer dedicated to the student learning experience, there is increased institutional support for developing, managing, implementation and reporting on the actions within the Partnership Agreement.

4.3 Global and Connected Approach to Student Support

Global and connected approach to student support - the University has taken positive steps to strengthen the coherence and integration of student support services to enhance the student experience and sense of community. This is demonstrated through the work of Student Success Advisors and the sharing of good practice and resources among global student support service teams. This is particularly evident in the successful implementation of the Personal Tutor system in Dubai and Malaysia.

The University continues to strengthen the coherence and integration of student support services across all campus locations. The existing Global Student Success Advisor team of 6 FTE has benefitted from further investment and we now have a global team of 9 Student Success Advisors (an additional post has been funded in each the Dubai, Malaysia and Scottish campuses). Other key student support teams also work closely as a global team and meet on a regular basis (normally monthly) to review activities, plan and to share good practice. In addition, the three 'Heads of Student Life' in Scotland, Dubai and Malaysia meet on a fortnightly basis to provide strategic overview and direction to student support services across all campus locations.

Planning for new initiatives, or systems developments, also routinely takes place on a global basis, with key stakeholders from all campus locations involved as equals. Current examples include planning for new student induction, the development of the Heriot Watt Award, the post-pandemic relaunch of Go Global (inter-campus mobility) and developments across the Student Service Centres located in each campus location (including the ongoing development of the MyHWU Student Information Desk).

4.4 Institutional Commitment to Enhancing Learning and Teaching

Institutional commitment to enhancing learning and teaching - there is strong commitment and vision from senior leadership to the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. This is exemplified through clear and accessible policies and procedures, the establishment of the Learning and Teaching Academy and the further development of the role of Directors of Learning and Teaching in Schools. The University has ensured that all staff have the opportunity to contribute to the enhancement of learning and teaching, in particular through the extensive consultative approach taken to develop and implement the Learning and Teaching Strategy, Enhancement Workshops in Academic Review and Learning and Teaching Enhancement Fora in the Dubai and Malaysia campuses.

The University has continued to prioritise the enhancement of learning and teaching across all its campus locations, and is particularly proud of the collaborative, consultation approach taken.

The Learning and Teaching Academy continues to play a pivotal role in supporting the University to adapt learning, teaching and assessment practices in response to the pandemic. Special interest groups in digital education and assessment practices have been established to support the continuation of changes introduced through the Covid-response. As at March 2022, the LTA is now leading a *Globally Connected Learning/Shaping Learning and Teaching* initiative to build on these changes and take forward the University's ambitions in learning and teaching.

The extensive consultation around the Learning and Teaching Strategy was replicated and exceeded in the September-November 2021 consultation on the Review of the Academic Architecture, a strategic initiative (within the *Pioneering in Education* strand of Strategy 2025, the University's Strategic Plan) to reconsider the structure of the academic year and the structure of taught programmes. Over 1,000 individuals (staff, students, alumni, employers, other HEIs) contributed during the 7-week period, with more than 200 contributing to earlier discussions.

The approach to Enhancement Workshops in Academic Review have been revised so that they focus more on local plans for implementing institutional objectives in learning and teaching; additionally, the workshops are now global (due to the new Global Academic Review process; see 4.5), facilitating the engagement of staff across all campuses. The Enhancement Workshops retain their all-important developmental purpose, enabling disciplines to share emerging plans with the Review Team and to receive helpful feedback in turn.

4.5 Institutional Quality Framework

Institutional quality framework - the University has a mature and effective institutional quality framework which is well understood by staff across all campuses and is supported by the use of clear and accessible documentation. This has enabled an agile and effective response to the global coronavirus pandemic across all campuses, which was effectively led and coordinated at senior level, working across different national contexts.

The commendation of the ELIR team was affirmed additionally by the Audit and Risk Committee of the Court at its meeting on 21 April 2021. The Committee was reassured that the University's quality framework was sufficiently robust in terms of managing not only quality and standards, but also managing academic risk and that there was no need for additional measures to be put in place. A [Summary Paper](#) and [Presentation](#) provide further detail.

QAA UK and the Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) in Dubai both agreed in December 2021 that the overall ELIR outcome and this specific commendation were sufficient evidence to justify not having a full review visit to the University's Dubai Campus as part of the TNE of the United Arab Emirates. A case study on embedding an enhancement-led approach has instead been submitted. This commendation is also critical as the University moves forward with its application for federal accreditation of its Dubai Campus by the Commission for Academic Accreditation (CAA).

Following the success of our online ELIR visit and as a positive impact of working entirely online during the pandemic, the University has accelerated the implementation of its Global Academic Review process (a single review covering disciplines in all locations; previously, location-specific reviews were held). Global Academic

Reviews are now held wholly online, enabling effective and equitable participation of staff and students from across all campus locations and providing a more integrated evaluation of disciplines.

5. Recent and Planned Developments

Since the conclusion of the University's Resumed ELIR Review in November 2020 and the publication of the ELIR Reports in March 2021, there have been several major developments which have shaped, and are continuing to do so, the strategic direction of Heriot-Watt.

The University is engaged in an extended series of events and developments to celebrate its Bicentennial Year 1821, which had been hampered by the pandemic. These events have been combined with the first (since the pandemic) in-person graduations in Dubai, Edinburgh and Malaysia.

In April 2021, the [new state-of-the art campus opened in Dubai](#), providing inspiring, learning, teaching and study facilities. Also in connection with Dubai, the University is in the process of applying for UAE federal accreditation by the [Commission for Academic Accreditation \(CAA\)](#), with the external review team due to visit 26-29 April 2022 (expected completion date of December 2022).

Development of the UK National Robotarium is underway at the Edinburgh Campus, with construction having started in [2021](#) and the first [CEO](#) now appointed.

Recent and forthcoming changes in senior leadership will also shape the ongoing direction of the institution:

- Appointments of a new Chancellor of the University and of Pro-Chancellor posts at the Dubai and Malaysia Campuses;
- New Provost and Vice-Principal appointed at the Dubai Campus, and also in Dubai, new Deputy Vice-Principal posts in the areas of learning and teaching and student experience and in academic leadership;
- Reappointment for a further five years of the Provost and Vice-Principal at the Malaysia Campus;
- New appointment to the post of Deputy Principal (Research and Impact);
- Planned new appointment to the post of Deputy Principal (Education and Student Life);
- Appointment of the first Deputy Principal (Global Sustainability);
- New or forthcoming appointments to the role of Head of School (now known as Executive Dean) in three of the five Schools.

In terms of external achievements, the University has been awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize awarded for pioneering research in the [frontier science of photonics](#). We are part of the Islands Growth Deal with the Islands Centre for Net Zero based at our [Orkney Campus](#). Heriot-Watt has been showcased the [Dubai Expo](#). The University placed 30th in the UK in [The Times and The Sunday Times Good University Guide 2022](#), and climbed to its highest ever position in the [2022 QS World University Rankings](#).

In connection with the University's governance framework, the establishment of a Global Operations Executive has taken responsibility for much of the University Executive's operational activity, providing a broader engagement in strategic decision-making and its implementation. A Partnership Management and Approval Group has been set up to facilitate a more integrated, collaborative approach to the development and management of partnerships.

6. Conclusion

The University continues to welcome the opportunities for self-evaluation and enhancement afforded by participation in ELIR. As the impact of the pandemic reduces, it is hoped that there will be further and more rapid progress towards the ELIR4 recommendations.

The University also welcomes the opportunity to engage in the development of the next institutional review process as part of the Scottish sector's Tertiary Quality Framework.

7. Further Information

Requests for further information on, or questions related to, any matter in this Follow Up Report may be directed to: Dr Maggie King, Head of Academic Quality: m.king@hw.ac.uk

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