

Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Queen Margaret University

Outcome Report

April 2013

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About the Enhancement-led Institutional Review method

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

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

About this review

This is the Outcome Report of the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Queen Margaret University. The review took place as follows: Part 1 visit on 26-28 February and Part 2 visit on 22-26 April 2013. The review was conducted by a team of six reviewers:

- Mr Mark Charters (student reviewer)
- Professor Howard Colley (academic reviewer)
- Ms Lesley Howie (academic reviewer)
- Dr Maggie King (coordinating reviewer)
- Professor Diane Meehan (academic reviewer)
- Professor Martin Oosthuizen (international reviewer).

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

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

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

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

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

¹ Further information about the ELIR method: www.qaa.ac.uk/institutionreports/types-of-review/pages/elir.aspx

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

³ ELIR information document: www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/ELIR-information.aspx

⁴ Technical report: www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/Reports/Pages/ELIR-QMU-13.aspx

About Queen Margaret University

Queen Margaret University has around 460 staff and 6,500 students studying in disciplines allied to health science, arts, social sciences and business management. In 2011-12, around 30 per cent of the students were postgraduate and around 25 per cent of the total student population was from outside the European Union. The University has a significant number of UK and overseas collaborative partners. In 2007, the University moved to a new, purpose-built campus that includes student accommodation as well as academic administrative and sports facilities. It is located in Musselburgh, near Edinburgh.

Overarching judgement about Queen Margaret University

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

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

Areas of positive practice

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

2 **Coherent strategic framework** - There are coherent and well understood connections between the University's Strategic Plan, the Student Experience Strategy, the Quality Enhancement in Learning, Teaching and Assessment (QELTA) strategy, and the operational plans of schools, divisions and services. Individual objectives of all staff members align to these strategies and plans through the Performance Enhancement Review process. The delivery of the strategies and plans is well supported by an effective committee structure and an inclusive approach to communication.

3 **Institutional context and culture** - The University has a culture of reflection and continuous improvement. This can be seen by the engagement of staff and students in strategic development, the sharing of good practice, and support for enhancement activities at all levels.

4 **Enhancing the student learning experience** - There is an institutional culture of accessibility and responsiveness to students, by both academic and professional services staff. The collaborative approach taken between different support services and with the academic staff is effective in enhancing the student learning experience.

5 **Employability** - There is a strong commitment to promoting student employability. Work-related learning is embedded within the curriculum, and there is positive employer engagement. Support and opportunities for developing employment-related skills are provided by the Careers and the Student Employability services.

6 **Enhancement in learning and teaching** - The Centre for Academic Practice makes a significant contribution to enhancing the student learning experience through its work in developing and supporting learning and teaching.

7 **Self-evaluation and information about quality** - There is a strong culture of institutional self-reflection, drawing on the outcomes of quality assurance processes to enhance the student experience. For example, the Student Experience Committee takes an evaluative overview of the outcomes from a variety of key processes, including annual monitoring and review. The Learning and Teaching Panel is effective in assuring quality and maintaining academic standards on behalf of the Student Experience Committee. Information about the quality assurance arrangements is provided through the 'Quality at QMU' website, which is well-structured, comprehensive and informative.

8 **Collaborative activity** - The University maintains careful oversight of its collaborative provision through effective quality assurance processes and detailed risk assessment arrangements.

Areas for development

9 The University is asked to consider the areas summarised below.

10 **Institutional committees** - Continue to actively manage the business and operation of the Student Experience Committee to ensure that it remains focused on strategic matters and institutional self-evaluation.

11 **Scope and analysis of student surveys** - Continue to review the University's strategic approach to the management and use of student surveys. The University is asked to review the number and scope of the surveys that it uses. It is also asked to develop an effective system for analysing the survey outcomes, linking the outcomes to action plans.

12 **Assessment feedback** - Ensure that the University's requirements for the timely return of feedback to students on their assessed work are implemented consistently.

13 **Personal tutor system** - Evaluate the revised Personal Academic Tutor system as a mechanism for delivering personal development planning, in line with the University's intentions.

14 **Virtual learning environment** - Address student concerns about the accessibility and extent of module information on the University's virtual learning environment, the Hub.

15 **Support for teaching role** - Ensure that all postgraduate research students involved in teaching access appropriate training and support for this role.

16 **Annual monitoring** - Clarify the purpose and benefits of the proposed online continuous monitoring arrangements, and consider how the new system will complement the current, effective, Annual Monitoring and Review process.

What happens next?

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

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

Further information

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

20 This review and its findings relate to the institution as a whole and do not provide information about individual programmes of study or subjects. For further information about those, contact the institution or visit the [Queen Margaret University website](#).

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

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

23 For further information about the Scottish Funding Council, visit the [Scottish Funding Council website](#).

RG 1193 08/13

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ISBN 978 1 84979 910 2

All QAA's publications are available on our website www.qaa.ac.uk.

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786