Robert Gordon University

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

August 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.

Recommendation 1: Implementation of policy and practice - reflect on the way in which institutional policies and practice are implemented at school level to ensure parity of student experience across the institution. In particular, the University is asked to consider the Personal Tutor system to ensure all taught students have access to and receive comparable student support.

Status:	Student Engagement:
The University's policies and practices are developed and approved primarily through the Standing Committees and Sub-Committees that report to Academic Council, thereby ensuring all Schools and the student body are represented in discussions during development and approval.	Academic Council, and the majority of its Standing Committees and Sub-Committees, include representation from: the Student Presidents; and/or from the pool of Student School Officers (SSOs); and/or from the Student Union, such as the Union's Student Advice and Administration Coordinator or through elections conducted by RGU Union.
The University has recently undertaken a *Future of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (FTLA)* project led by the Vice-Principal for Academic Development and Student Experience and facilitated by the Department for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Assessment. Working with members of the RGU community, a number of new *Standards* have been co-produced which guide and enhance the teaching, learning, and assessment activity of RGU into the future. The *Standards* have been the subject of a consultative process involving students, academic staff, Teaching Excellence Fellows, Academic Strategic Leads, School Operations Managers, Deans of Schools, Governance and Academic Quality, and professional service groups. They reflect the University's commitment, stated in its recently refreshed *Strategy*[1], "to provide students with an excellent experience that will enable them to raise their aspirations and thrive in their professional careers as global citizens". The *Standards*[2], being implemented for the planning of teaching, learning, and assessment activities from Session 2022/23 onwards, are:	The FTLA project is co-chaired by the Student President (Education and Welfare) and each working group had student representation. Student focus groups were conducted to ensure all the standards were co-created.
▪ RGU Assessment & Feedback Standard;	
▪ RGU Blended Learning Standard;	
▪ RGU Academic Calendar Guidance;	
▪ RGU Digital Learning Standard.	
Biannual Regulation Seminars are held to ensure consistency of policy and parity of the student experience. Areas of discussion include consistent interpretation and implementation of *Academic Regulations* and related	

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policies, such as the *Fit to Sit Policy* and the *Assessment Policy*. Staff from Schools and Support Services, as well as representatives from the Student Union, are invited.	
From 2022/23, the former Learning Infrastructure Sub-Committee and Teaching, Learning and Assessment Sub-Committee are being merged to form a new *Student Experience Sub-Committee (SESC)* that will report to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee. With a refreshed remit, its composition will include the three Student Presidents and six Student School Officers. The Student Experience Sub-Committee (SESC) also plans to run a series of seminars, similar in style to the Regulations Seminars, to facilitate more in-depth discussion of particular topics and to enable other colleagues from across the University to be involved. The first of these has already been planned to consider Attendance and Engagement, including the University-wide implementation of in-house developed attendance monitoring software, known as *Attendr.* The second seminar will cover issues arising and any lessons to be learned from the University of Bristol case regarding universities' obligations and practice arising from the Equality Act 2010.	
Action on the personal tutor system is being monitored by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC), as summarised in the *Combined RGU Student Experience Enhancement Projects and Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee: Action Plan for Institutional Annual Appraisal Process of Session 2020/21*. DELTA offered additional Personal Tutor development events throughout Session 2021/22.	

Recommendation 2: Embedding equality, diversity and inclusion - continue to develop and embed equality, diversity and inclusion strategy, actions and practices throughout all aspects of university activity and monitor the impact, ensuring that there is ownership and understanding among staff and students.

Status:	Student Engagement:
The Equality and Diversity Sub-Committee, which reports to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC), has responsibility, working with the Equality and Diversity Forum, to deliver on this action. The Sub-Committee reviews actions to deliver the equality outcomes of the University and also actions to address Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) issues identified in the Annual Appraisal Processes.	The composition of the Equality and Diversity Sub-Committee includes the Student President for Education and Welfare, and the Student Vice-President (Welfare), as well as the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Adviser.
Progress since the ELIR visit includes the appointment of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Adviser, who has since presented to the Board of Governors' Governance and Nominations Committee, the Executive, Academic Council and the University Management Group. An update on the work done to date to develop staff engagement with EDI has been prepared, and a *Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Calendar of Events* has been developed that will publicise events being supported and promoted by the University. An 'add-on' app is also being developed to enable the *Calendar of Events* to be downloaded into Outlook calendars.	The Equality and Diversity Forum includes the Vice-President (Welfare) and all Student Equality Champions, as well as the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Adviser.

The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Adviser supports the Student Equality Champions in their role. |
The University has revised and widely disseminated the *Dignity at RGU Policy* and is in the process of completing updates to the *Equality and Diversity Policy*.	The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Adviser has organised a Champions Network meeting that involved the Student, Staff and HR Champions.
Details of further EDI actions are also captured in the *Combined RGU Student Experience Enhancement Projects and Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee: Action Plan for Institutional Annual Appraisal Process of Session 2020/21*. Equality, diversity and inclusion data is also monitored by the School Academic Boards and the Equality and Diversity Sub-Committee, and reported to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC), as part of the Annual Appraisal Process.	
The University has recently refreshed its Staff Equality Champions[3], and appointed HR Champions from the Human Resources Department. They will, in liaison with the Student Equality Champions, support induction, training, networking activity, and the creation of Equality Action Groups with the aim of increasing wider staff engagement across all equality strands.	
The University is also progressing work to apply for the *Transformed Athena SWAN Charter*.	

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[3]   Currently one vacancy - Marriage and Civil Partnership

Recommendation 3: Criterion-referenced grading scheme - consider and resolve the institutional approach to the grading system to ensure consistency and understanding for students by the start of the academic year 2022.
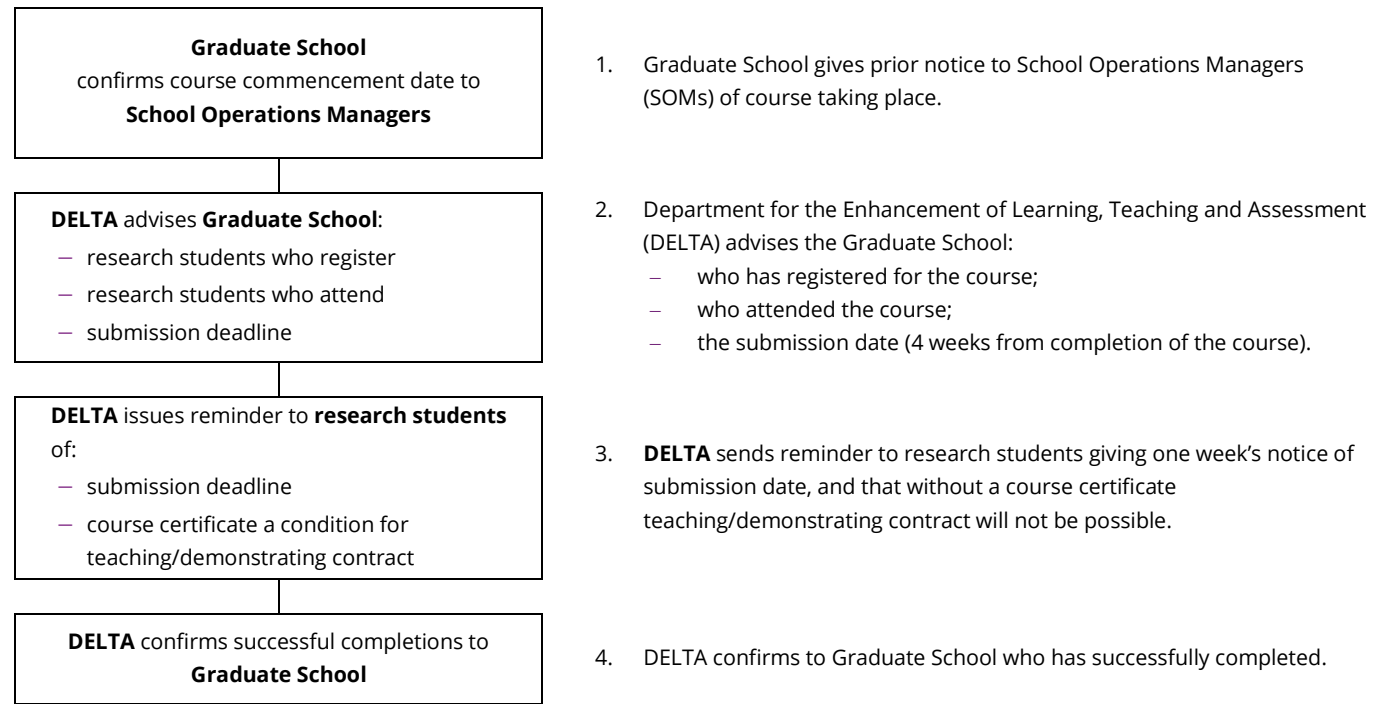
Status:	Student Engagement:
Actions to resolve the criterion-referenced Grading Scheme were implemented, briefing sessions provided and documentation reviewed and updated to ensure a consistent University-wide approach to the Grading Scheme. The University has now, through the institution-wide *Future of Teaching, Learning and Assessment (FTLA)* project described earlier, introduced further standardisation of approaches to teaching, learning and assessment, including the launch of the *RGU Assessment and Feedback Standard* for implementation by September 2022, which has been communicated to all staff and is available on CampusMoodle[4]. As noted above, the *Standards* have been developed as part of the FTLA project and were the subject of a consultative process involving students, academic staff, Teaching Excellence Fellows, Academic Strategic Leads, School Operations Managers, Deans of Schools, Governance and Academic Quality and professional service groups.	A Student President is a member of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee. Students were consulted in development of the FTLA's *RGU Standards*. Student School Officers are members of the Learning Infrastructure Sub-Committee and the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Sub-Committee that supported the development of the *RGU Standards*, and will be members of the replacement Student Experience Sub-Committee (SESC) from session 2022/23.

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[4]   available on CampusMoodle at https://campusmoodle.rgu.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=101439

Recommendation 4: Training for postgraduate students who teach - by the start of academic session 2021-22, develop an effective oversight mechanism to ensure that all postgraduate students receive formal training before commencing teaching and assessment.

Status:	Student Engagement:
Actions to address the recommendations regarding training for postgraduate students who teach/demonstrate by the start of academic session 2021/22 have been completed, with: ▪ the agreement of a formalised process coordinated by the Graduate School, supported by the Department for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Assessment (DELTA) and the School Operations Managers; and ▪ the requirement for an *Annual Report* to be considered by the Research Degrees Committee at its July meeting each session to permit monitoring of numbers attending the course, numbers completing the course, numbers subsequently having teaching/demonstrating opportunities, and any issues arising during the session. The first such *Annual Report* was considered by the Research Degrees Committee on 7 July 2022. The *Introduction to Teaching and Demonstrating* training course is delivered by DELTA, and is advertised to research students as part of the *Researcher Development Programme*, through the University Bulletin email, and also highlighted in the Researcher Development weekly programme of events. Completion of the *Introduction to Teaching and Demonstrating training* requires all of the following to have been achieved by the research student: ▪ participants must attend both live half-day sessions, as currently delivered, or attend for the whole of the one-day course in person when on-campus delivery; ▪ participants must complete and submit the requirements within 4 weeks of attendance; ▪ participants must complete one peer observation of teaching/support activity (agreed by their supervisor); ▪ participants must complete a log of 5 hours of relevant and recent teaching or support activities, including shadowing activity (live and/or recorded); ▪ participants must complete one reflection.	Due to its remit and nature of business, there are no student members on the Research Degrees Committee. A research student is elected, through the RGU Union elections, to the membership of Academic Council. The Graduate School actively engages with and seeks the views of the research student population at several points during each session, including at induction, and at events scheduled as part of the Researcher Development Programme. Research students' individual development needs are monitored through the six-monthly progress monitoring process undertaken for all research students.

Recommendation 4: Training for postgraduate students who teach - by the start of academic session 2021-22, develop an effective oversight mechanism to ensure that all postgraduate students receive formal training before commencing teaching and assessment.	
Status:	**Student Engagement:**

In Session 2021/22:

- the course was delivered four times, in September 2021, December 2021, February 2022 and June 2022;

- 101 research students attended the course over the four deliveries;

- 62 research students successfully completed the course;

- 38 students subsequently had the opportunity, to date, to undertake part-time teaching/demonstrating roles in their Schools.

The following flow diagram describes responsibilities for the process of recruitment to and completion of the *Introduction to Teaching and Demonstrating* training course that enables research students to teach and/or demonstrate:

Graduate School
confirms course commencement date to
School Operations Managers

1. Graduate School gives prior notice to School Operations Managers (SOMs) of course taking place.

DELTA advises **Graduate School**:
- research students who register
- research students who attend
- submission deadline

2. Department for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Assessment (DELTA) advises the Graduate School:
   - who has registered for the course;
   - who attended the course;
   - the submission date (4 weeks from completion of the course).

DELTA issues reminder to **research students** of:
- submission deadline
- course certificate a condition for teaching/demonstrating contract

3. **DELTA** sends reminder to research students giving one week's notice of submission date, and that without a course certificate teaching/demonstrating contract will not be possible.

DELTA confirms successful completions to **Graduate School**

4. DELTA confirms to Graduate School who has successfully completed.

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Status:	Student Engagement:
  Graduate School updates database **Graduate School** confirms successful completions to **School Operations Managers** **Graduate School** confirms to **research students** their non-eligibility to teach/demonstrate **Research Degrees Committee** considers Annual Report 5. Graduate School adds names to database accessible by SOMs. 6. Graduate School informs SOMs which students have successfully completed course so that contract can be issued if required to teach or demonstrate. 7. Graduate School contacts research students who did not complete the course to confirm they are not eligible to teach or demonstrate, copied to SOMs. 8. Graduate School prepares Annual Report for consideration by Research Degrees Committee in July. Provides information on: – numbers of successful course completions; – numbers who receive teaching/demonstrating contract and opportunity; – any relevant issues arising.	