

Enhancement-led Institutional Review of The Robert Gordon University

Technical Report

April 2016

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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 Technical Report of the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at The Robert Gordon University. The review took place as follows: Part 1 visit on 16 to 18 March 2016 and Part 2 visit on 25 to 29 April 2016. The review was conducted by a team of six reviewers:

- Mr Brian Green (Academic Reviewer)
- Dr Abigail Hind (Academic Reviewer)
- Professor Paddy Maher (Academic Reviewer)
- Dr Roy Ferguson (International Reviewer)
- Ms Jeanine Sogaard-Forland (Student Reviewer)
- Mr Tony Platt (Coordinating 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. In addition, the University submitted an interactive online case study on Partnerships to Enhance the Student Learning Experience.

About this report

In this report, the ELIR team:

- delivers an overarching 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 overarching judgement can be found on page 3, followed by the detailed findings of the review given in numbered paragraphs.

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

¹ Further information about the ELIR method:

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

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

³ ELIR information document: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=61.

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

⁴ Outcome Report: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/provider?UKPRN=10005500

Overarching judgement about The Robert Gordon University

The Robert Gordon 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.

1 Institutional context and strategic framework

1.1 Key features of the institution's context and mission

1 The Robert Gordon University (RGU/the University) gained university status in 1992, but traces its origins and role in the community back to the educational work of the Aberdeen merchant and benefactor, Robert Gordon (1668-1731), after whom it is named. Its mission is 'to transform people and communities'. It sees itself as a focused rather than general university, concentrating on subject areas that are aligned with the needs of industry, business and the public services. Sixty-two per cent of the University's programmes are approved by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs).

2 The University's academic structure is based on three faculties: Design and Technology, Health and Social Care and the Aberdeen Business School. Each faculty contains a number of schools and departments and is led by a dean. The deans are line-managed by the Deputy Principal and Vice-Chancellor (Academic Development and Quality).

3 In its most recent Strategic Plan (2013) A Clear Future for a Leading University in a New Era (A Clear Future), the University sets out strategic aims in eight areas: teaching and learning; extending access to learning; student experience; research; commercialisation; the regional community; partnerships; and our university. Supplementing the Strategic Plan are strategic statements detailing four priority areas in which the University wants to focus its teaching and research: oil and gas; health and well-being; creative industries; and big data. There are two further strategic statements in two other areas of particular significance to the University – employability of graduates, and RGU and the region.

4 The University has a three-year Business Plan which aims to deliver sustainability and make the institution less reliant on public funding. The University's aspirations to grow other funding streams through commercialisation of learning, teaching, research and consultancy activities, and to maintain its graduate employability record are set against a background of various financial challenges and a downturn in the economy of the North East of Scotland.

5 At the time of the current ELIR, the University was undergoing a significant re-profiling of its academic provision and staffing profile including completing a voluntary severance scheme. The University describes the purpose of this re-profiling as being 'to achieve greater resilience for current core activity against potential further public sector funding reductions as well as strengthening capability and capacity to deliver strategic growth targets'. From its discussions with staff, the ELIR team was satisfied that effective measures were in place to safeguard the student learning experience during the re-profiling exercise. In particular, the team heard from senior staff that the changes would not be at the

expense of student contact time, and staff at all levels discussed action undertaken to protect the quality of the student learning experience during the re-profiling process.

6 There have been other significant changes since the 2012 ELIR including: the reorganisation of senior management groups; a review of research; the completion of two phases of the University's Estates Master Plan with all academic activity relocated from Aberdeen City Centre to the Garthdee campus; and further developments in the University's approaches to partnerships both with students in quality enhancement and with external partners in local and overseas collaborative provision.

7 At the time of the 2012 ELIR, a Strategic Planning and Resources Group (SPARG) had overall responsibility for strategy and resource allocation. SPARG was replaced in 2015 by a small executive group and two larger advisory groups: the Senior Management Group (SMG) and the Operational Management Group (OMG). The SMG includes members of the previous SPARG but supplemented by a larger constituency including heads of schools and some support areas; the aim being to aid communication and increase involvement. SMG focuses on and monitors strategy implementation. The OMG, which includes the heads of various support services, focuses more on professional, administrative and support functions. Once a semester the SMG and OMG have a joint meeting intended to ensure alignment in strategy implementation and to enhance communication.

8 Executive portfolios were under review at the time of the Part 1 ELIR visit, leading to a revised structure of senior roles, which had been approved by the time the ELIR team returned for Part 2. The team learned that the new structure is intended to: ensure leadership for key operational and strategic areas; create manageable portfolios; and reflect the increased emphasis on commercialisation. It comprises the Principal and Vice-Chancellor, the Deputy Principal (who is now designated the Chief Academic Officer), the Vice-Principal for Research and three new Vice-Principal posts for Commercial and Regional Engagement, Corporate Operations, and University Advancement.

9 A new appointment to the post of Vice-Principal for Research was made to the Executive in 2015 following the 2014 Research Excellence Framework (REF) outcome, which the University indicated was less positive than it had hoped. At the time of the current ELIR, the post-holder was consulting across the University about ways in which to improve research performance, and also about plans to replace three faculty-based research institutes with a single Graduate School to improve the quality of the postgraduate research student experience (see also paragraphs 40-41).

10 In discussion with the ELIR team, senior staff indicated that the University had valued the process of institutional self-evaluation involved in preparing for the ELIR. In its Reflective Analysis, the University emphasised two areas that it considered particularly significant for the future management of quality and which the ELIR team included within its themes for discussion during the review visits – managing the balance between new developments and enhancing quality of existing provision, and focusing actions to address local pockets of variability.

11 In preparing for the ELIR, the University submitted a video case study to illustrate its strategic approach to enhancement. Students were actively involved in the preparation of the case study, which effectively presented examples of the University's emphasis on, and continuing development of, partnership working between students and staff. The importance to the University of its engagement with students, employers, industry and the region was a recurring theme throughout the ELIR.

1.2 Strategic approach to enhancing learning and teaching

12 The University's approach to enhancing teaching and learning is set out concisely under the headings of the first three strategic aims of the Strategic Plan and is monitored through Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the Business Plan. These interlinked aims are: teaching and learning – inspire all individuals to achieve their maximum potential and excel in the world of tomorrow; extending access to learning – enable individuals to achieve their ambitions throughout life whatever their circumstances; and student experience – support students and graduates to enjoy and prosper within a vibrant learning community.

13 These high level aims are then expressed as lists of aspirations, for example the University's aspirations for teaching and learning are to: develop students' capabilities to thrive in an increasingly multi-disciplinary and fast-changing world of work with confidence; motivate students to see themselves as contributors to changing global societies both while students and as alumni; empower students to shape their learning experience and that of their peers; help students to become well-rounded individuals capable of contributing to society; challenge the design of our teaching, learning and assessment to enable best use of learners' abilities and time; lead thinking in the development of professional practice and emerging professions and roles and recognise teaching excellence.

14 The aspirations are not explicitly further articulated or developed into specific objectives and measurable targets, although in the case of those aspirations related to employability, the University's strategic intent and proposed actions are specified in more detail as Employability Plus @ RGU, one of the strategic statements that accompanies the Strategic Plan and which proposes a range of enhancements to current practices (see also paragraph 47). However, staff with key roles in planning and enhancement were aware of the aspirations and commented positively that the University was not driven purely by metrics in monitoring the implementation of its strategic aims for enhancing teaching and learning, but gathered intelligence from a wide range of sources, such as discussions in the Learning Infrastructure Sub-Committee (LISC) (see paragraphs 65, 97 and 105) and the views of student interns on the extent to which teaching and learning aspirations are met (see paragraph 38). It was evident to the ELIR team that data from a variety of sources is used to underpin strategic decisions and prioritise areas for action (see also Section 5).

15 The ELIR team saw a sample of the detailed annual plans produced by faculties, schools/departments and support service departments. These were both required to be, and were, strongly aligned to the strategic priorities of the Strategic Plan and the targets in the Business Plan.

16 There is currently little cross-reference between the University's strategies for teaching and learning, and for research. However, the current Research Strategy and Change Plan was produced following the results of the 2014 REF and before the appointment of the new Vice-Principal with responsibility for research, and it concentrates on improvements to the University's research profile. The ELIR team was told that extending a research culture across the University was an immediate priority and, from this, linkages to teaching would develop. In addition, it was explained that there would be an expectation that all research staff would undertake teaching duties. As the University develops its new approach to research areas and structures, including the move to a single Graduate School (see also paragraphs 40-41), more overt linkages might be expected between subsequent iterations of its strategies for teaching and learning, and research.

1.3 Effectiveness of the approach to implementing strategies

17 The University has an effective strategic approach to developing and implementing strategies. The Strategic Plan and Business Plan set a clear, distinct and focused strategic direction, which is generally well understood and subscribed to throughout the University, and is strongly reflected in, and supported by, the plans of academic and support service units. The implementation of these plans, their outcomes in key strategic areas and their contributions to KPIs are monitored through the well-established and rigorous Annual Appraisal process (see also paragraphs 94-98), which has been developed to provide detailed analysis, particularly in relation to students' feedback on their learning experience, and to allow early and more precise information on course performance. The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) (see also paragraph 65), chaired by the Deputy Principal, acts as an effective proactive hub for the collation and analysis of appraisal data, and the early identification of issues requiring action. While appraisals consider the past year of a course's performance, the periodic Institution-Led Subject Reviews (ILSRs) (see also paragraphs 99-102) have a stronger developmental role and a considerable degree of external involvement both in reviewing the lessons learned from past appraisals and in suggesting the future development of the subject within the University's overall strategic parameters. The Strategic Plan also guides staff development and performance review processes (see also paragraph 73) and helps to determine institutional priorities for enhancement.

18 Senior staff emphasised that in ensuring the University's strategy is fully embedded across the institution and reflected in all its actions, devolved leadership within the overall strategic framework was considered essential. This is reflected in the key priority for 2015-16 in the Human Resources Plan: to enhance leadership capability (see also Section 3).

19 During the ELIR, it was evident that close relationships between the University and the students' association, RGU:Union, were also helping to ensure effective communication of strategic direction. The ELIR team found evidence of strong student involvement in the development of strategy through the Student Partnership Agreement (see also paragraph 38) and the completion of the relocation to the Garthdee campus, where there is continuing and effective liaison about campus development and operation (see also paragraph 34).

20 Although recently established, it was evident from discussions during the ELIR that joint meetings between the SMG and OMG groups were proving to be particularly useful for communication and discussion about strategic developments among academic and administrative leaders. Topics for discussion so far have included consideration at a draft stage of the University Operating Plan, which, at the start of each academic session, draws together the actions from the Business Plan and any other significant institutional actions identified by the Executive.

21 The ELIR occurred at a time of considerable changes for the University, some having just been completed and others being implemented just before or during the ELIR visits. Against such a background, the ELIR team noted particularly the extent to which the staff and student representatives whom it met were generally well-informed about the changes, recognised the importance of continuing open communication and saw alongside challenges, potential opportunities for positive developments. The team also noted the widely held view among staff at all levels that in managing the change agenda, a high priority for the University would be to maintain, and indeed enhance, the quality of the student learning experience. The University was aware of the need to maintain the current rigour of its quality management processes during changes to its academic profile and was using effectively increased levels of granularity in its appraisal and review processes to identify those courses providing less satisfactory student outcomes and taking appropriate action (see also Section 5).

2 Enhancing the student learning experience

2.1 Composition and key trends in the student population, including typical routes into and through the institution

22 In 2014-15, the University had a total student population of 17,198 (headcount), of whom 62 per cent were studying at undergraduate level. Of the 38 per cent postgraduate students, 36 per cent were taught postgraduates and 2 per cent postgraduate research students. The student body has a strong international component with nearly one third of all students coming from outside the UK (1,679 from the EU and 3,787 overseas students). Part-time students made up 41 per cent of the total student population and, of those, 83 per cent were distance learners.

23 The University has seen a positive growth in student numbers, particularly at postgraduate level, with online distance learning student numbers increasing by over 500 (headcount) in the last two academic years. This growth aligns with the University's intention to maintain Scottish Funding Council (SFC) supported places, while increasing international and postgraduate research students.

24 The University's commitment to providing flexible and accessible routes into higher education is reflected in its portfolio of articulation arrangements with other institutions, including North East Scotland College (NESCOL) and Dundee and Angus College (see paragraphs 28-29). The number of students entering through articulation arrangements increased from 892 in 2010-11, to 1,339 in 2014-15. The University has well-established widening participation links and initiatives (see paragraphs 28-30) and the number of students entering from areas identified as the most deprived in Scotland (referred to as MD20/MD40 or quintiles 1 and 2 through the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, SIMD) has risen from 230 in 2014-15, to 274 in 2016-17.

25 International College at RGU (ICRGU), a strategic partnership between the institution and Navitas UK Holdings Ltd, is an associate college on the University Campus and is an important entry route for international students. ICRGU was established in 2011 to provide dedicated articulation pathways for international students (from outside the EU) to enter specific University courses, both at undergraduate and postgraduate level. The University provides accommodation and Navitas provides staffing and operational management. ICRGU recruited its first cohort of students in November 2011, and student numbers have increased from 5 in 2011-12, to 84 in 2015-16, with students coming predominantly from China (undergraduate and postgraduate), Nigeria (undergraduate) and Kazakhstan (undergraduate), (see also Section 6). The collaboration is viewed positively by both students and staff. The ELIR team met students entering from ICRGU who felt well supported and prepared to begin their studies at the University. Former ICRGU students were also being used to introduce and integrate new associate college students to life at the University.

26 The University uses key data sets effectively to monitor its performance in relation to its student population, and management information relating to student recruitment, retention, progression and achievement is considered as part of formal monitoring and review processes (see Section 5) and by the Department of Learning, Teaching and Access (DELTA), which has the remit to support the University in implementing its strategic goals in teaching and learning, extending access and the student experience (see also paragraphs 32, 106-109, 116 and 121).

2.2 Supporting equality and diversity in the student population

27 The University has an effective approach to supporting equality and diversity. It has developed a statement of Equality Outcomes which maps equality and diversity activity under each of the headings within the Strategic Plan. During the current ELIR, the team met University equality champions who outlined how the outcomes worked in practice and current priorities for supporting equality and diversity in the student population including enhancing accessibility in the new campus and increasing provision for student mental health issues.

Widening participation

28 DELTA has responsibility for the coordination of the University's widening access activity and delivers a range of outreach strategies and collaborative initiatives which are specifically designed to support non-traditional students in accessing the University. These include: the partnerships with NESCOL and Dundee and Angus College, which are intended to maximise the impact of articulation and other pathways as a means to supporting access to students from MD20/MD40 areas across the region; ACCESS RGU (see paragraph 30); the use of contextualised admissions; and the development of specialist support groups, for example for care-experienced young people. DELTA also has oversight of support services for students entering through an articulation pathway. This support is provided in a variety of ways, including one-to-one and small group support; a portfolio of generic skills workshops; and a variety of online self-study resources available via the University virtual learning environment (VLE). The ELIR team noted that DELTA is also leading the University's engagement with the current national Enhancement Theme on student transitions, which includes a set of activities specifically focused on college articulations (see also paragraph 70 and Section 3.2). The ELIR team considered the coordination of these activities by DELTA, and the linking of them to the current Enhancement Theme, to be a particularly effective approach.

29 The North East Articulation Hub initiative, funded by the SFC, is a partnership between the University and NESCOL to promote and support enhancement through activities at the discipline level. Activities undertaken by course teams have included familiarisation visits to reciprocal colleges; information sessions about accessing the University; the development of degree preparation programmes which are coordinated by DELTA but delivered by course leaders; and the Associate Student Scheme, which is available to all students studying on a Higher National Diploma programme at a partner college, which is designed to assist prospective articulating students to become familiar with the University prior to entry. A key feature of the collaboration is the use of guaranteed places, so that a student commencing a qualification at NESCOL can understand the requirements for articulation to the University. During the ELIR, students commented favourably on the transitional arrangements in place for students on the NESCOL pathway.

30 The ACCESS RGU initiative delivers outreach activities with local schools and communities; coordinates on-campus learning opportunities for prospective students; and provides advice and guidance for applicants, enrolling students, parents and teachers. ACCESS RGU has developed a Reference Guide for Teachers to provide information for learning providers on the range of established outreach activities undertaken by the University, including skills workshops; drop-in advice sessions; Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) advice clinics and specialist support groups. Current students are employed as ambassadors to contribute to this work.

Induction

31 The University considers the needs of particular students, including international students and widening participation students, as well as other groups of students, through a range of tailored induction programmes. A positive example is the programme of induction for campus-based international students which covers academic and pastoral dimensions in recognition of the international student transition. Induction provision also includes effective use of the VLE for campus-based and distance learners, and for all new students module inductions are available on individual course VLE pages.

Support for online distance learners

32 The University identified that, as part of its intention to increase the number of online and distance learning students, there was a need to more effectively support the learning experience of these students. During the review visit, the ELIR team heard that DELTA was using student data and survey feedback to determine the differing needs of students according to mode and predominant place of study, and was intending to use the results of this work to tailor support.

33 Online distance learning students who met the ELIR team commented positively about the underpinning technology for study, the quality of the VLE and access to library-based information and advice. In addition, support provided by programme leaders was considered to be effective and students were positive about the nature and content of their programmes which allowed them to study off-campus, balance family and professional responsibilities and gain relevant, professionally-focused awards. However, a number of students expressed frustration about a lack of flexibility in the pace of some modules and access to support outside traditional working hours. Students said that they would welcome the opportunity to work at a self-directed or accelerated pace where appropriate, to benefit from times where they had the opportunity to study more, for example during holidays or periods of work-related travel.

34 Partnership working between the University and RGU:Union has led to extended library opening hours during teaching semesters, assessment periods and non-teaching times and the University is continuing to work to make other support services more accessible to all students, including online distance learners, by providing round the clock careers advice, a help desk for library and VLE services, and ensuring that services available through the RGU:Union is accessible to students studying away from the Garthdee campus. The ELIR team also heard that the University and RGU:Union have begun to work on ways to improve representation for students studying at a distance, including work with student partnerships in quality Scotland (sparqs).

2.3 Engaging and supporting students in their learning

Student representation and engagement

35 The University places a high value on student engagement and has an effective and proactive partnership with RGU:Union. Student representation and engagement are prioritised and clearly defined in the University's strategy and policies and the University uses a variety of methods to underpin partnership working with students including: the use of data from student surveys (see paragraphs 43, 59, 106-109 and 114); effective student representative structures (see paragraphs 36-37); the establishment and development of the role of Student Faculty Officer (see paragraph 37); the Student Partnership Agreement (see paragraph 38); external engagement with sparqs and formal reporting on student partnership/involvement in quality assurance and enhancement processes (see Section 5). The partnership approach between the University and RGU:Union has allowed for open and

ongoing dialogue around the challenges and issues resulting from campus relocation from the students' perspective, including students' desire for more informal social learning spaces on campus as well as allowing for discussion around further benefits that could be realised from co-location.

36 Student representation is embedded at all levels of the University. Students participate in decision-making through staff/student liaison committees and, as student faculty officers, through their involvement in faculty quality enhancement subcommittees. Students also contribute to decision-making through the University-level Academic Council; Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee; Teaching, Learning and Assessment Sub-Committee and the Learning Infrastructure Sub-Committee. The University has placed significant emphasis on ensuring that students are able to contribute effectively to institution-led review processes (see paragraph 39 and Section 5). Participation in well-established training for representative roles is high, and the University and RGU:Union have a number of mechanisms for recognising student contribution to representative activity including certificates, and student achievement and extracurricular awards.

37 A key liaison and enhancement role is that of Student Faculty Officer (SFO), introduced in 2012. SFOs are part-time, paid roles, appointees having been trained by RGU:Union to work in partnership with academic course leaders and professional services staff across the University, particularly at faculty level. Student entry into these roles is open, with no requirement for previous representative experience. A key feature of the SFO role is that students are recognised and rewarded for their student engagement in the various enhancement activities conducted across the University. This includes the Student Contribution and Involvement Award, as well as the Extracurricular Award.

38 The University introduced a formal Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) in 2013, developed using guidance from sparqs, which consists of two parts – part one describing and promoting various ways in which students can work with the University and part two outlining annual themes which the University and the students' association want to progress. Themes identified and developed through the SPA have been clearly linked to strategic priorities and include: student representation, campus community and learning expectations on assessment and feedback (2013-14); and student representation at school level, campus socialisation and health and wellbeing (2014-15 and 2015-16) with a focus on creating a sense of identity and establishing what it means to be a student at RGU (2015-16). The ELIR team found evidence of actions resulting from SPA themes being clearly embedded in institutional practice. Work initiated through the SPA has extended opportunities for students to inform the development of policy and practice and strengthened the partnership between the University and RGU:Union. Examples include the development of a Staff and Student Charter at Gray's School of Art which extends and develops the idea of the SPA and tailors the partnership approach to a specific context; the use of paid student interns to work with DELTA to shape support service arrangements and VLE content; and a range of enhancement activities within Library Services. Both staff and students commented positively on the SPA and viewed developments in relation to assessment and feedback practice, established and implemented as a result of the SPA, as particularly important. The ELIR team was positive about the awareness, profile and use of the SPA and its impact on partnership working between the University and RGU:Union.

39 A particularly positive example of student engagement and the University's responsiveness to student feedback was the establishment of the Student-Facing Support Services Review (SFSSR) of IT resources. This adaptation of the institution-led periodic review process provided the ELIR team with clear evidence of an enhancement project being initiated in response to student feedback. The SFSSR found that students were satisfied with the effectiveness of the University VLE and students indicated to the team that

IT Services were engaging students about ongoing system enhancements based on the user perspective following the SFSSR (see also paragraphs 99 and 103-105).

Postgraduate research student experience

40 Students and staff who met the ELIR team were positive about the potential benefits of establishing a single Graduate School. Senior staff explained that merging the three existing graduate schools would provide an opportunity to grow research activity, embed a strong research culture among the institution's postgraduate research students and ensure greater consistency of experience and opportunity across all faculties. As part of its plans for the Graduate School, the University intends to strengthen its programme of workshops, collaborative research activity, and the external engagement opportunities that are open to postgraduate research students, linking these more directly to training and support for those involved in teaching activity.

41 During the transition to the new arrangements, the University should pay particular attention to the needs of existing postgraduate students and ensure that appropriate opportunities for training and development are open to this group of students in the interim period before new structures and resources are embedded.

Assessment and feedback

42 In its preparation for ELIR, the University highlighted that there were pockets of variability in teaching and learning and the student learning experience. Consistency in practice on assessment and feedback was identified by the team as an area where this variability was evident.

43 Responses to the Student Experience Questionnaire (SEQ) in 2013-14 indicated that students did not always know what was expected of them in coursework and exams. During discussions with the ELIR team, some students commented that assessment criteria were not always clearly communicated or understood by students, and that feedback was not always timely or useful for the next assignment. The consistent application of maximum timescales for assessment feedback to students was identified as a development area in ELIR 2. While timeliness expectations have been reinforced to staff and students, and improvements were evident in the 2014-15 SEQ, the University has identified, from its own review of student surveys, that this matter continues to require attention. Accordingly, a number of enhancement projects have taken place including the production of University guidance on feedback on summative assessment; a DELTA guide on assessment and feedback; the inclusion of assessment and feedback as a theme in the 2013-14 SPA (see also paragraph 38); changes to the SEQ to better identify student views on assessment and feedback practice; and work on assessment and feedback language to clarify staff and student expectations at Gray's School of Art.

44 A priority for DELTA in 2016-17 is to work with staff and students to communicate recent revisions to the University's assessment policy, guidance and procedures and to begin the implementation of online assessment. DELTA officers have already visited each school to begin this process. The ELIR team heard that in areas where online assessment had been implemented, for example in the School of Nursing and Midwifery, where staff have adopted and embedded paperless marking and grading using the VLE, and focused on providing consistent feedback to students following summative assessment, both staff and students were positive about the opportunities for improving the quality of the feedback given/received. The use of module assessment criteria grids and subject-level assessment officers in schools to identify enhancements and oversee the implementation of online assessment, were also viewed positively by staff.

45 The University should continue to reflect on the ways in which assessment expectations are communicated to all students; variability in the implementation of approved procedures for marking moderation can be reduced (see paragraphs 85 and 92); and issues around the timing and quantity of feedback can be addressed across schools. The University aims to move to online submission and marking of all written student work through its Assessment Technology strand of its Learning Technology Programme (see also paragraphs 58 and 80). The University is encouraged to use the intended implementation of online assessment, where appropriate, to review assessment practice and identify areas for improvement.

Study abroad

46 The University has seen a steady increase in the number of students participating in the Study Abroad Scheme, with outbound student numbers increasing from a total of 165 in 2012-13, to 223 in 2015-16. Inbound exchange student numbers have been relatively stable with 156 in 2012-13, and 136 in 2015-16. The University is actively seeking to increase opportunities as part of its Employability Plus @ RGU strategy (see also paragraph 47), although certain restrictions remain for those on courses with specific PSRB requirements. The University provides targeted support to incoming and outbound study abroad students. Support for students participating in study abroad and overseas work placements is provided by a range of services and University staff, with the relevant contact point being determined by the particular course of study the student is enrolled on, for example these contacts include: Aberdeen Business School Global Engagement Centre; the International Exchanges Manager/Erasmus Institutional Coordinator; course leaders and placement officers. Support available includes a wide range of information targeted at students, staff and parents. This information is supplemented with face-to-face pre-departure briefings for students going on exchanges or work placements which provides practical information and a list of 'dos and don'ts'. During the ELIR, students were positive about the opportunities for study abroad and the support provided when overseas. They also valued the opportunities to report and feed back on their experience to influence future overseas experiences.

2.4 Approaches to promoting the development of graduate attributes, including employability

47 Employability Plus @ RGU is the University's strategic approach to employability. The University's vision is for its graduates to be recognised as the most fit-for-work, innovative, creative and engaged participants in the labour force and the economy, and for the University to be recognised for its close engagement with employers. The University's commitment to employability is evident throughout its course portfolio and provision of extracurricular employability activities, with a wide and appropriate range of links to and with employers, PSRBs and local and international collaborators, embedded within courses and in its consistently high performance in league tables on graduate employment destinations.

48 The University has decided not to have a set of institution-level graduate attributes, preferring to articulate attributes at programme level in order to ensure their relevance to students. Staff told the ELIR team that schools and departments play key roles in shaping curricula and the student learning experience to reflect specific professions and disciplines with the aim of reinforcing subject identity and promoting a strong outward-facing professional focus.

49 In discussions with the ELIR team, students commented that the University's links with employers and PSRBs were highly valued and many said that the applied and professionally focused nature of courses had influenced their choice of University. Students

in these meetings commented positively on their courses, which they considered to have provided effective experiences that had improved their skills and readiness for employment in their chosen field. A number of students also indicated that the applied and externally focused elements of the course were more extensive than they had expected.

50 Of particular note is the University's Talent Exchange, which offers undergraduate and postgraduate students the opportunity to undertake short consultancy projects with local small and medium-sized organisations, as well as placements of varying lengths. A range of experiences are available to students including: business challenge (a one-off competitive challenge, usually lasting a few hours linked to a taught session); projects (normally based in a business or at the University, lasting up to a few weeks and typically part of a module); placements (where students are based in a business for periods lasting anywhere from a few weeks to a full year, full-time); and connections (businesses work with academic staff to contribute to guest lectures, employer presentations or workshops whereby business and academic staff collaborate on research or knowledge transfer partnership). The placements, challenges and projects developed through Talent Exchange can be part of a taught course or extracurricular module for which students can receive additional credits. The variety of approaches offered allow for tailored opportunities to suit individual student's needs. In addition, the variety of partnerships and ways of working with employers have protected work-related opportunities for students during the economic downturn; for example, where employers have no longer been able to offer a traditional year-long placement, other models used by Talent Exchange have proved to be possible. The ELIR team recognised the University's approach to employability and work-related experience as an area of positive practice. The University intends to continually review its approach to work-related experience planning and placement sourcing and the team learned this will be the subject of the SFSSR in spring 2016 (see also paragraph 53).

2.5 Effectiveness of the approach to enhancing the student learning experience

51 The University has a highly effective approach to enhancing the student experience and there is clear evidence that student partnership plays a central role. Student representative structures are effective and the SPA and resultant activity allows engagement of the wider student body in identifying priority areas for action from the student perspective, such as previous work on assessment and feedback and the current work to capitalise on opportunities to enhance the community atmosphere on the new campus.

52 The University's approach to engagement with the national Enhancement Themes (see also Section 3, paragraphs 69-71) demonstrates an active commitment to foregrounding the University's commitment to widening participation and also to effectively utilising student data and learning analytics to identify areas for development (see also paragraph 26 and Section 5).

53 The University has a network of established and embedded relationships with employers and PSRBs. These links complement the curriculum, are recognised and valued by staff and students, and form the basis of embedded and diverse opportunities for work-related experience. The University is clearly focused on maintaining its position on graduate employment and is continuing to seek student involvement in enhancing this area by undertaking the current SFSSR on work-related experience planning and placement sourcing.

54 The University should continue to work to minimise pockets of variability in assessment practices, reflecting on the ways in which assessment expectations are communicated to students and issues around the timing and quality of feedback can be

addressed across schools. There would be value in using the implementation of online assessment, where appropriate, to review assessment practice and identify areas for improvement.

55 In the context of the positive work carried out in online distance learning provision, coupled with the University's intention to grow the number of online distance learners, there would be value in the University making use of student data from both quantitative and qualitative sources (see paragraphs 106-109) to take account of student views regarding the pace of learning, to ensure that programme delivery and organisation is flexible enough to meet the varying needs of this student group.

56 The University has identified the benefits of moving to a single Graduate School to facilitate consistency in the postgraduate research student experience and strengthen the research community for this group of students. The University should pay particular attention to the needs of existing postgraduate students transitioning to the new structure to ensure that all students, not only those commencing their studies after the changes have been fully implemented, benefit from the restructure.

3 Enhancement in learning and teaching

3.1 Approaches to identifying and sharing good practice

57 The University has an effective approach to identifying and sharing good practice. The systematic use of the range of formal and informal mechanisms to identify and disseminate good practice, outlined below, was considered by the ELIR team to be an area of positive practice.

58 DELTA is the University's main focus for the enhancement of teaching and learning. In 2015 it was reorganised into four areas – academic practice, e-learning, study support, and wider access and outreach. It has a remit to support the University in implementing its strategic goals in teaching and learning, extending access and the student experience. It is seen by staff as having high visibility in leading the enhancement agenda in an inclusive and integrated way and providing a very effective service of identifying, initiating and disseminating effective practice. DELTA also coordinates a number of University-wide projects including the Learning Technology Programme, which has a project board chaired by the Deputy Principal and includes among others the Head of DELTA and the three faculty deans. The ELIR team received a presentation on one strand of the programme on electronic assessment, which demonstrated the importance attached by the University to seeking new approaches to areas of practice where student feedback had identified variability. The presentation also illustrated how DELTA was aiding the development and embedding of enhancement activities by identifying and supporting innovative practitioners, who could then facilitate the development of informal communities of practice.

59 DELTA provides other fora for sharing good practice in teaching and learning across disciplines, including its series of 'Focus On' events. The first of these, 'What our students tell us about Course Organisation and Management', addressed another of the areas that student survey data had suggested was in need of further development, by sharing the experience of one school that had obtained more positive student feedback. More recently 'Students as Partners' shared good practice from within and outwith the University in developing student engagement and embedding the Student Partnership Agreement.

60 Alongside, and in some cases supported by DELTA, are other groups of designated staff across the University who have roles in enhancement of teaching and learning and

in identifying and/or sharing effective practice. These include: Learning Enhancement Coordinators (LECs) academic staff members to coordinate and support enhancement activities within their own school/department and faculty, and for some, more widely across the University; Teaching Fellows (TFs), promoted posts for staff who have been recognised for outstanding teaching performance; and Faculty Quality Officers (FQOs) who coordinate quality management activities within their faculties, service the Faculty Quality Enhancement Sub-Committees (FQESCs) and collate the Look Back overview of annual appraisals for ILSRs.

61 Partly in response to the 2012 ELIR Report, in 2015 the University undertook a survey of the LEC role among LECs and other key stakeholders. The survey results suggested that, while respondents generally welcomed the opportunities for LECs to drive and support change within and across schools and appreciated the support of DELTA, there was a need to make the role more effective. Suggested changes included a clearer definition of the role and its responsibilities, an increase in allocated time, increased alignment with the strategic development of teaching and learning, and greater involvement with University-level projects. The ELIR team was also told that the supportive role of DELTA could be strengthened if there was less local diversity in the interpretation of the LEC role. QAEC, after considering a report of the survey, noted that the LEC role was now well embedded and proved particularly effective where LECs were empowered by the respective heads of school/associate deans. LECs were also seen to be active as members of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Sub-Committee (TLASC) and FQESCs, enabling the sharing of good and innovative practice, and as participants in the University's Teaching and Learning Conferences. QAEC had also acknowledged that the role of TF was less well developed than that of a LEC, possibly due to the lack of an agreed remit, and there was a view that TFs should have more of a leadership role than was then the norm: more recently, the team was told, TFs were responsible for coordinating the 2016 Teaching and Learning Conference.

62 The ELIR team was told that further consideration of the LEC role had been subsumed into the work of another group with a broader remit to review academic roles of grade eight and above, which also include titular awards such as Teaching Fellow. The team noted various examples of the ways in which the coordination of learning enhancement had been of practical benefit to members of academic staff, and their support for the role. There would be value to the University in completing its review of the LEC and TF roles and implementing outcomes arising from the review, to maximise the effectiveness of the coordination and leadership of learning enhancement activity, building on the experience gained from the existing networks of LECs and Teaching Fellows.

63 Through their roles in quality management and coordination, the three FQOs gain an overview and understanding of quality-related matters in their faculties including noting and sharing examples of effective practice. Academic colleagues commented positively on the contribution of staff in these roles. As well as informal networking between the FQOs, their attendance at regular Academic Affairs Faculty Liaison meetings, attended by the Deputy Principal and including the Head of DELTA, facilitates consistency in the application of policy and regulations, allows learning to be shared widely and helps to ensure that the University's strategic objectives are reflected in faculty-based planning, appraisal and review processes.

64 The University has developed an effective range of interlinking structures and processes both formal and informal for identifying and sharing good practice in teaching and learning. These include formal committee structures (see paragraph 65); the identification of effective practice during the annual appraisal and ILSR processes (see paragraphs 94-102); annual student-led and organised awards for effective teaching practice (see paragraph 68) and the Annual QAEC Report to Academic Council on Annual Appraisal (see paragraph 96).

The cross-faculty networking of LECs and the completed location of all academic activity on the Garthdee campus, with greater sharing of teaching accommodation between faculties, also serve to facilitate interactions within and between groups of staff and students from different subject areas and the dissemination of effective practice.

65 QAEC is the key standing committee of Academic Council and maintains strategic oversight of enhancement-related matters. Two of its subcommittees share responsibilities for contributing to the development and monitoring of enhancement activities – LISC concentrates on the student experience and TLASC on teaching, learning and assessment. The FQESCs promote and coordinate enhancement activities, share best practice, and act as a conduit between the faculty and QAEC. The work of these committees illustrates the University's commitment to enhancement and makes a positive contribution to identifying and sharing good practice. An example of this can be seen in the Annual QAEC Report to Academic Council on Annual Appraisal, which highlights examples of good practice and innovation drawn from course appraisal reports. In 2014-15, the report included as an example of activity inspired by the Enhancement Theme on Student Transitions, the work of the School of Computing Science and Digital Media in organising an honours project showcase at the end of semester 2. This created an informal opportunity for degree year and earlier stage students to meet honours students, who were close to completing their project, and gain an insight into the experience they had acquired and the wide range of possible projects. QAEC also acts as a hub for the consideration and dissemination of positive practice from periodic review outcomes. The inclusion on each ILSR panel of members of academic staff from outwith the reviewed subject area, including a dean of another faculty as the panel chair and a LEC from another subject area, was considered by the ELIR team to be an effective approach.

66 During each ILSR a LEC from the reviewed school presents examples of effective practice to the review panel using what the University calls a 'Snapshots' format, essentially short case studies of effective practice. These case studies are made available on the Snapshots website and are classified under four headings: Designing and Planning Learning; Supporting Learning; Assessment and Feedback; and Learning Environments. Currently, some departments and schools are more frequently represented on Snapshots than others. This uneven distribution may be mitigated as other subject areas reach the ILSR point in their review cycle. The use of Snapshots is monitored by the FQESCs at least one of which monitors the frequency with which the case studies are accessed to determine whether the approach is effective.

67 The first annual teaching and learning conference, 'Innovate to stimulate', was held in 2014, and was followed in 2015 by 'Lots to Learn: Sharing Learning Experience'. The ELIR team was told that the 2016 conference on 'The Enterprising Teacher: doing things differently, doing different things' had attracted the highest number of contributors yet with abstracts from all schools attesting to the extent of interest in teaching and learning practice across the University.

68 Students also contribute to identifying and sharing good practice through the student-led STAR (Support Teaching Appreciation Recognition) Awards. Any student can make a nomination of any staff member that they feel has made a difference to their learning experience including support staff and other non-teaching staff. Previous recipients of awards told the ELIR team that the recognition the award represented was very welcome, as was the support given by senior managers to the ceremony.

3.2 Impact of the national Enhancement Themes and related activity

69 The University has engaged positively and proactively with the national Enhancement Themes which have had a visible impact on the University's policy and

practices. For example, DELTA's resources include guidance statements on topics drawn from involvement in past Enhancement Themes, while senior staff commented on the transformational impact of the University's involvement in The First Year Experience Theme. More recently, the University has had extensive and effective engagement with the Developing and Supporting the Curriculum (DSC) Theme and the current Student Transitions Theme. Given the importance that the University attaches to enhancing employability, a particularly useful outcome of DSC was the early development of Employability Plus @ RGU as the institution's strategic-level approach (see paragraphs 14 and 47). Another outcome of the DSC Theme was a response to student feedback about inconsistency between staff in their use of the online medium and, for some distance learners, a lack of clarity about what to expect from their modules. The 2013-14 Learning Expectations staff development project aimed to enhance use of the VLE for distance learning students by restructuring online module material into a more common format across the University, with the results audited by each faculty and presented at TLASC.

70 In meetings during the current ELIR, staff commented that engagement in the current Student Transitions Theme, led by DELTA, has proved particularly valuable, given the close alignment between the Theme and the University's aspirations for widening participation and considering the learning experiences of different groups of current and potential students, including online distance learners. To help with scoping work for the Theme, the University appointed a student intern to investigate issues of transition from a student perspective and a new lecturer in student transitions to help to build engagement across the institution. In line with sector expectations, the University has a Theme Institutional Leadership Group. Inclusivity was demonstrated by membership of the Group comprising staff and students from across the University, and through development of a Theme partnership with RGU:Union to support student engagement with the Theme and to consider student-led transitions support.

71 In the first year of the current Theme, the University focused on case studies of transitions for potential students from low progression schools, college students articulating to the University and care leavers. 'My Career Toolkit', an online employability resource, was also produced to support students' transition into employment. Following this, further work was then carried out focusing on three distinct areas: the challenges facing students transitioning from ICRGU to the University; student satisfaction during transition to Stage 3 (where the University had noticed a dip in levels of satisfaction from its Student Experience Questionnaire); and identifying which types of students were likely to be early leavers, at which points in the year, and the factors influencing their decisions to withdraw. Each strand produced useful resources, available on the VLE, to help to address the issues identified in the studies; in some cases targeted support services were also set up. The University shared learning from the first year of the Theme at a Student Transitions Final Event held in 2014-15 to showcase outcomes. In addition to the above institutional projects, the Theme launched its inaugural set of Student Transitions Enhancement Awards in April 2014. The purpose of these awards is to recognise and reward staff commitment to enhance transitions, providing support and a small amount of funding in each case to enable further enhancement. The Theme made nine awards in this initial round with topics ranging from enhancing transition into healthcare practice to work to engage student evaluators in course redevelopment aimed at enhancing transition. In addition to supporting colleagues to undertake enhancement in their discipline, which is relevant to their students, these awards have also enabled the Theme to grow the number of colleagues directly engaged in Theme activities. Sharing and applying the knowledge gained through these projects will be a key focus of Theme activity in year two.

3.3 Engaging and supporting staff

72 The University's HR Strategy was produced in 2013 to align with the Strategic Plan. Part of the strategy includes reviewing current roles and role expectations, enhancing leadership capability and ensuring effective performance management. During the current ELIR, senior staff emphasised the importance of developing leadership potential and encouraging devolved leadership within the overall strategic framework. This strategic direction was reflected in the decision to replace SPARG with the expanded membership of academic and support services leaders in SMG and OMG (see paragraph 7), and in the development of the Future Leaders' Programme, Pioneer, which recruited its first group of 20 staff members in March 2016. Among Pioneer's key objectives is 'to nurture a cohort of talented "RGU ready" leaders' in what is described as an intense staff development programme.

73 When the HR strategy was introduced, the University's approach to staff development was revisited, revised and rebranded as Learning and Development at RGU, underpinned by a set of principles and responsibilities linking to the Employee Performance Review (EPR) process. EPR includes all employees with contracts of six months or longer and is intended to give all staff members regular opportunities to discuss their performance and development needs with their line managers, to get and give feedback and to raise any issues of concern. Staff who met the ELIR team were generally positive about EPR from the perspectives of both reviewer and reviewed. EPR had proved useful in a number of ways: for example, to a course leader in managing responsibilities outside the line management structure and in ring-fencing research time for a lecturer registered for a research degree.

74 DELTA has responsibility for engaging and supporting staff across the University in enhancement and is also the provider of staff development for academic and academic-related staff in teaching and learning. The Academic Practice team oversees implementation of the Professional Teaching Framework (PTF) and supports the enhancement of the student experience across courses. The PTF is accredited by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and aligned to the requirements of all four categories of its Fellowship scheme from Associate to Principal Fellow. The PTF is offered as a matrix of modules and courses, with taught provision and mentoring for new staff with less than five years' relevant experience. For more established staff, experiential pathways are available: staff can achieve recognition for appropriate enhancement activity such as preparing for validation or subject review. The ELIR team met staff who had obtained HEA accreditation through both the taught and experiential routes; they were positive about their experiences, noting the structured approach of the taught PTF and the value of self-reflection on teaching practice. DELTA is encouraging staff to progress to HEA Fellowship and is monitoring the completion rates of those registering for the experiential route.

75 Postgraduate research students who are seeking Graduate Teaching Assistant roles and who meet certain criteria can also participate in the PTF by taking individual modules. If they successfully complete a specific set, they can gain the award of Postgraduate Certificate Professional Studies. The ELIR team met several students who had taken up this opportunity and were generally positive about their experience, although there was some frustration that the opportunity to gain the teaching experience required was not always available at the appropriate time to complete the award.

76 The Academic Practice team is also involved in a range of other activities and projects with a staff development dimension. The latter includes the peer review project, which aims to develop a range of relevant and appropriate peer review activities. Although there is a long tradition of relevant practice in specific parts of the University, and new staff members were experiencing peer review through their involvement in the PTF, it was estimated that only about 30 per cent of staff were engaged in peer review at a formal level

across the University. A Steering Group with cross-faculty representation had produced a draft policy on peer review for further consultation, based on a supportive and non-judgemental approach, which it hoped would benefit both reviewer and reviewee. The ELIR team was told that DELTA would be offering the scheme to teaching staff from September 2016.

77 The University recognises that its academic staff who teach and otherwise support off-campus students have particular needs for staff development in facilitating online distance learning, particularly when first taking on such responsibilities. The 2013-14 Learning Expectations staff development project (see paragraph 69) was an earlier example of a response to perceived inconsistencies in the use of the VLE and continuing work in this area is exemplified by school-based case studies in Snapshots and elements of the Learning Technology Project, particularly the ongoing work on assessment technology. However, the ELIR team noted that online distance learners whom it met still reported variability among tutors in their use of the VLE. Given the numbers of distance learners that it recruits and its continuing emphasis on developing blended learning approaches for all its students both on and off-campus, the University is encouraged to continue its efforts through staff development to ensure less variability between modules in use of the VLE.

3.4 Effectiveness of the approach to promoting good practice in learning and teaching

78 The University has an effective approach to promoting good practice in learning and teaching and the ELIR team identified its approach to sharing and disseminating good practice and engagement with the national Enhancement Themes as areas of positive practice.

79 As evidence of the effectiveness of its approach to promoting good practice in teaching and learning, the University cites the relatively high and generally steady levels of positive responses to teaching-related questions in the last three years of the National Student Survey (NSS) and the SEQ. Coupled with the evidence of these outcome data, the ELIR team noted the extent to which the University's strategic intent in teaching and learning was being reflected in the planning processes and practices of relevant units, particularly DELTA. The increasing use and usefulness of the analytical data and qualitative evidence about the student learning experience derived from Annual Appraisal and ILSR and their timely collation, analysis and presentation at the QAEC 'hub' give the University increased confidence that it can recognise and act on examples of less effective practice – the 'pockets of variability', which it recognised in its RA and identified as areas of interest for the ELIR team – and can capitalise on examples of good practice (see also paragraphs 58 and 77).

80 The work of DELTA is impacting positively on the practice of academic staff and is generally viewed as an approachable, enthusiastic, supportive and practical service. DELTA's work is underpinned by increasingly reliable analytical data on teaching and learning and the student experience which is helping it to maintain the overall quality of academic practice and existing provision, galvanise enthusiasm for teaching and learning and bring about improvements based on identifying trends and variability from data on specific student groups. The outcomes from the Student Transitions Enhancement Theme, the further development of Snapshots (see paragraphs 66 and 77), the introduction of the PTF and the initial results of the Learning Technology Project are just some examples of DELTA's coordinating influence. In other areas, development is at an earlier stage, for example the intended introduction of a University-wide peer review scheme (see paragraph 76), which as a supportive, mentored and reflective scheme could offer considerable potential benefits. There are strong networks both formal and informal to support teaching and learning practice across the University. The FQESCs provide a forum for practitioners,

including those with specialist roles, such as LECs, to share, propose and discuss enhancement-related activities both within and beyond the faculty, while the standing agenda items ensure that information about University-wide or extra-faculty developments in areas such as Enhancement Theme engagement and the PTF can be disseminated and discussed. The 'horizontal network' of LECs has been shown to have an important role in both raising the profile of enhancement and helping it to happen. The three FQOs ensure that quality management across the faculties is coordinated and facilitated and the group of Teaching Fellows comprises members with a distinguished teaching record. The University is encouraged to maximise the benefits to be gained from active and potential horizontal networks by reaching a decision about the future nature and scope of learning enhancement coordination and leadership roles. Among other less formal networks are the groups of enthusiastic practitioners, who develop as 'communities of practice' in the process of implementing projects, such as in the Assessment Technology strand of the Learning Technology Programme. In addition, the University's emphasis on partnership with students is effectively manifested in a number of areas supporting teaching and learning practice, for example in the work of a student intern in the early stages of engagement in the Student Transitions Enhancement Theme. Building on these networks there would be value in the University continuing to expand opportunities for staff development in blended learning practice to support the growing online, off-campus community (see also paragraph 77).

4 Academic standards

4.1 Approach to setting, maintaining and reviewing academic standards

81 The University has robust arrangements for setting, maintaining and reviewing academic standards. The Academic Council, chaired by the Principal, has overall responsibility for maintaining academic standards. The arrangements are set out in a number of online documents maintained by the Academic Affairs office. These regulatory and organisational documents are supported by a consolidated set of online policy, guidance and procedures documents setting out more detailed assessment arrangements.

82 The setting, maintenance and review of academic standards for taught courses are considered through programme validation and revalidation, internal moderation, school-based assessment boards which include external examination arrangements, annual appraisal, institutional-led subject review for all taught courses, and PSRB reviews where applicable. The expectations of academic standards for taught courses are referenced against the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and set out in course specifications and module descriptors which are hosted on an open online course database, and in module performance descriptors and individual assessment instruments.

83 Assessment boards for taught courses operate at school level, working to a University-wide set of regulations, and consider module and progression or award decisions for each candidate. Membership includes external examiners and representation from another school, to provide an internal 'external' reference point and for the sharing of good practice. Boards have delegated authority from the Academic Council to make progression and award decisions but are required to seek approval if there is a need to apply discretion outside of the regulations.

84 Arrangements for research degrees are overseen by the Research Degrees Committee on behalf of the Academic Council. This involves oversight of the three graduate school boards' approval of supervision, registration, annual progress reporting, transfer and examination arrangements for individual candidates. The Research Degrees Committee also considers annual appraisal and research degree internal review arrangements at school and university level. The recommendations of examining teams, including external examiners,

are made to the Research Degrees Committee for award conferrals to be ratified by the Academic Council.

4.2 Management of assessment

85 The Academic Regulations Sub-Committee reviews and maintains academic regulations and promotes consistency in their application across the schools, to which most operational activities are devolved. Staff in Academic Affairs and the Research Office provide administrative support to school assessment boards, and on validation and review arrangements and provide advice to facilitate the consistent management of University-wide approved assessment arrangements. Assessment Policy, Guidance and Procedures are available online and provide a consolidated set of resources on the management of assessment. These documents include guidance on preparing summative assessments and providing associated information to students, marking and moderation arrangements and feedback on summative assessments. The ELIR team heard that these documents had recently been subject to review in order to clarify the minimum expectations of staff in relation to assessment procedures, for example in relation to marking moderation arrangements.

86 The University uses a common A-F module grading system, which should be reflected in module performance descriptors and assessment criteria grids and against which all work must be marked or, for weighted module assessment components, against which percentage marks must be mapped. The ELIR team heard that a previous grading system used a numerical (1-6) scale which had proved problematic. The team also heard that one course in one school had retained the numerical system, and students had indicated that they had been confused when provided with percentage marks. While the various grading schemes in operation are all criterion-referenced, the team identified isolated pockets where students had potential to be confused by the grading systems in place. The University's own monitoring activity has also identified that, on occasion, taught students have indicated that they occasionally do not know what is expected of them in coursework or exams. The University is seeking to minimise pockets of variability in assessment practices that had been identified through internal monitoring arrangements, including external examiners' reports and student feedback. The University aims to move to online submission and marking of all written student work through its Assessment Technology strand of the Learning Technology Programme (see also paragraph 45).

4.3 Use of external reference points in managing academic standards

87 The University's use of external reference points is in line with sector expectations.

88 The University's arrangements require new course proposals to take account of the SCQF and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) and for validation panels to include at least one external subject expert, in order to assist in standards setting. Annual appraisal reports for courses, prepared to a template, inform school and faculty annual appraisal reports and include consideration of assessment and academic standards, including module achievement rates and grade profiles, student achievement data, award classifications, external examiner reports, and reports from PSRBs.

89 ILSRs of school-based courses take place every six years. These provide an opportunity to reflect on internal and retrospective data, but also importantly, to incorporate external perspectives, with a view to make recommendations as part of course revalidation arrangements which normally take place within six months of the review. ILSR panels include at least four external members drawn from the professions and other universities.

Programme approval and review arrangements make effective use of PSRBs in line with the University's mission (see also paragraphs 91, 99 and 128).

90 The University makes comprehensive and robust use of external examiners in taught and research degrees. Annual reports prepared by external examiners are incorporated into annual course appraisal reports and the responses are considered as part of the school reports to each school academic board, with overarching themes and recurring issues from school reports incorporated in the faculty reports to the QAEC. The QAEC considers a summary evaluation of external examiner reports, including data from the previous two years, in order to gauge direction of travel. Overarching good practice and areas for development are identified. Data from external examiners' reports is included in the Annual Appraisal Report prepared by the Deputy Principal for consideration by the Academic Council and Board of Governors. The University makes effective use of external examiners who have a professional practice background in support of its mission, although such examiners would be expected to form part of a team of external examiners, who would have an extensive understanding of academic standards within UK higher education. A similar arrangement operates for research degrees, in that a summary of external examiner reports is considered annually by the Research Degrees Committee.

4.4 Effectiveness of the arrangements for securing academic standards

91 The University has effective arrangements for managing the security of its academic standards, based on institution-wide requirements for the approval, monitoring and review of courses, drawing heavily on sector reference points and external involvement in its arrangements. The annual appraisal process culminates with University-level consideration of student achievement rates, including by access and protected characteristic groups, on a trend basis and benchmarking against other Scottish universities. ILSRs also draw extensively on external expertise, including from PSRBs. Consideration of external examiner reports is also robust.

92 Planned enhancements to assessment arrangements (see paragraph 86 and also Section 2, paragraphs 42-45) are intended to support student achievement and provide evidence of the University's commitment to securing academic standards and reducing pockets of variability in approved assessment arrangements. This work includes, for example, the use of the VLE to support the moderation of marking in collaborative courses; action to achieve more consistent application of approved marking moderation arrangements; and developments in the provision of computer-aided assessment.

5 Self-evaluation and management of information

5.1 Key features of the institution's approach

93 The University has effective systems in place to evaluate its practices. These are centred upon annual monitoring and periodic review of academic and professional support service areas and the use of data to enhance the student learning experience.

Annual monitoring

94 The annual appraisal cycle commences with a preliminary, institutional-level review of data, to determine if there are any high level issues which merit early referral to the QAEC. This review, convened by the Deputy Principal, considers: student survey data; student achievement rates; reports from the three FQOs on other key data relating to the student lifecycle; external examiner and external accreditation reports; and progress with

themes from the SPA. It also highlights areas for course teams to consider and identifies issues requiring immediate action by heads of school.

95 Action plans are prepared by course teams at award level. School reports are subsequently collated for undergraduate and postgraduate taught awards and incorporate collaborative courses, which are subject to annual appraisal in a similar way to those courses based in Aberdeen (see also paragraph 126). School reports detail actions planned and completed, as well as identifying issues for action at faculty or University level and examples of good practice for dissemination. School consideration of their own annual appraisal reports takes place through school academic board meetings, following which the Dean of Faculty prepares a faculty report for consideration by QAEC. Faculty reports summarise the key themes arising from school reports and confirm that appraisal arrangements have been effectively completed. There also is a specific section outlining faculty performance against University-level KPIs, for consideration by QAEC.

96 The University-level Annual Appraisal Report is prepared by the Deputy Principal (as convenor of QAEC) for consideration by the Academic Council and Board of Governors. It draws on the discussions at QAEC as well as a summary of data related to institutional performance indicators. The QAEC also reports to the Academic Council on the effectiveness of the monitoring arrangements and alerts it to any urgent issues requiring its attention. Minor adjustments to arrangements were made in 2015 to ensure that annual appraisal is evidence-based and action focused, while minimising administrative burden. It was the view of the ELIR team that these processes were systematic and thorough in using a comprehensive evidence base to identify enhancement actions and good practice at all levels of operation.

97 Routine monitoring of taught courses is complemented by the preparation of annual appraisal pro formas by each student-facing service. Each service is required to produce a preliminary report evaluating its provision and considering its accessibility, responsiveness, supportiveness and value. Where a service cuts across departmental structures, line managers are expected to liaise in order to produce a useful report. The Vice-Principal (Student Experience and External Relations) convenes a series of meetings to discuss these reports, the summary being reported to the LISC, which in turn summarises its findings to QAEC. The ELIR team considered that these appraisals usefully complemented programme level monitoring.

98 Annual monitoring of research degrees had, until 2014-15, been undertaken by each of the three graduate schools, taking account of student achievement; student survey feedback; external examiners' reports; and arrangements for support, collaboration and staff development. Monitoring identified good practice, risks to future quality and standards, and proposed actions for the school or for onward referral on to the Research Degrees Committee, including for University-wide matters. Each graduate school board considered and endorsed an annual Research Degree Appraisal Overview, prior to submission to the Research Degrees Committee, a summary of which was subsequently reported to the Academic Council. At the time of the ELIR, revised management arrangements for research degrees were under consultation as part of the move to a single Graduate School.

Institution-led quality review

99 Periodic, institution-led quality reviews take three formats: Institution-Led Subject Review of taught provision (ILSR); Research Degree Internal Review (RDIR); and Student-Facing Support Services Review (SFSSR). ILSR operates at school level on a five to six year cycle and involves a high level of external scrutiny and effective student contribution (see also paragraphs 36 and 39). ILSRs are chaired by deans from another faculty and include at least one Learning Enhancement Coordinator from another school to facilitate the

sharing of good practice across the University. Wherever possible, the requirements of PSRBs are incorporated into ILSR processes.

100 Outcomes from ILSR form the basis of course and programme validation and/or revalidation, normally within six months of a review meeting. Oversight of outcomes from all ILSRs are considered through QAEC, who receive an annual report summarising the key themes from all ILSRs and validations undertaken in the previous session.

101 The University's own assessment of the ILSR process, supported by the ELIR team, is that it is effective, prompts useful reflection, links strongly to annual appraisal processes, capitalises on extensive external involvement, aligns with institution-level strategy to inform future developments, and provides an opportunity to showcase and share good practice.

102 At the time of the current ELIR, the future of the University's process for the periodic review of research degrees, Research Degree Internal Review, was under discussion. The most recent periodic reviews of research degree provision took place in 2012-13. The Research Degrees Committee recognised that there had been an extended hiatus in progressing the outcomes of those reviews, but that the outcomes had informed the decision to create a single Graduate School. The University has indicated that the planned creation of a single Graduate School, under the leadership of the recently appointed Vice-Principal (Research and Research Commercialisation), will shape the revised arrangements for reviewing research degrees. As a result, the University should progress with the implementation of revised arrangements for periodic review of research degree provision.

Student-Facing Support Services Review

103 The Academic Quality Handbook sets out a process for the annual review of student-facing support services. Arrangements for more significant, periodic reviews of student-facing support services are kept deliberately flexible, so that current priorities can be addressed in a way that is considered most likely to lead to effective enhancements. QAEC determines the theme for periodic Student-Facing Support Services Review (SFSSR) based on its analysis of external factors and internal data sets.

104 The 2015-16 SFSSR theme, provision of placements and other work-related experiences, was identified in recognition of the downturn in the local economy, strong professional orientation of courses in the curriculum portfolio, and the University's desire to ensure students have access to quality work-related learning opportunities (see also paragraphs 47-50).

105 An SFSSR of IT resources took place in 2014-15, following consideration of student survey feedback. The LISC considered the SFSSR outcome report in late 2015, which was wide-ranging and included consideration of wireless reliability, workstation access, printing, helpdesk support, access to IT labs, information services based communications, online submission of coursework and electronic storage. It was evident to the ELIR team that this SFSSR was particularly useful in shaping the University's approach both to the provision of information services and resources and to harnessing the benefits of effective student contribution to institution-led review. The SFSSR process was well received by students and staff, cut across departmental boundaries and, from the outset, involved high levels of student engagement to help pinpoint the specific problems flagged up in student surveys to formulate effective solutions. Action taken as a result of the SFSSR continues to have significant student engagement/involvement after the original review event and this was seen as particularly positive by the ELIR team (see also paragraph 39).

Use of management information

106 The University makes effective use of a comprehensive data-set to monitor and analyse institutional effectiveness across the totality of the student lifecycle, measured against strategic priorities and KPIs. The data, alongside the use of student surveys at module, course, school and University levels, is used to identify areas for development and potential good practice. Data is easily accessible, with bespoke reports available through DELTA's analytics team to examine data based on groups with particular characteristics, for example international students or students entering the University through widening participation routes.

107 Analysis of student satisfaction and achievement can also be provided on any student characteristics of interest, including those related to access and protected characteristics, as well as data to determine whether articulating students perform any differently than others. Survey reporting capabilities include the analysis of textual data, as well as quantitative information. Review of such data has helped inform work to support distinct groups, for example transitions work with students articulating from International College at The Robert Gordon University (see also paragraphs 25 and 71). The University plans to introduce new business information software in 2016-17, and this will allow further opportunities to obtain more accessible and granular data for use by all staff.

108 Extensive use is made of student survey data, including the NSS and SEQ as well as external surveys of research, international and distance learning students. Changes to the SEQ have increased the granularity of feedback at the module and course level. This data is incorporated into programme appraisal reports, with clear direction provided to course teams who receive data, which is 'traffic-lighted' to highlight outlying data and trends, and benchmarked with internal and external reference points.

109 The SEQ has also been developed so that students receive an online bespoke questionnaire early in the summer term, based on their individual study programme. This level of tailoring to the student's programme of study means that they only need to complete one survey on all aspects of their experience, in an attempt by the University to reduce 'survey fatigue' and increase engagement.

5.2 Commentary on the advance information set

110 The University provided useful illustrations of course, programme, school and faculty monitoring and review arrangements, as well as documents demonstrating how these culminate in institutional-level consideration and outcomes. These materials, in conjunction with other supporting references allowed the ELIR team to develop a good understanding of the arrangements in place for quality assurance and enhancement, and provided reassurance that the institution is meeting sector expectations. University monitoring and review mechanisms have resulted in the effective identification of institutional topics for enhancement and good practice for dissemination. Recent enhancement topics have included assessment feedback timeliness and technology enhanced assessment; information services including the wireless network; the provision of social space on campus; and work-related experience. Action taken as result of monitoring and review process outcomes have included: the creation of more flexible placement opportunities for undergraduate management students; online moderation arrangements for collaborative provision; work with community colleges to develop new markets in North America; peer support for online distance learners; and a range of technology-supported teaching and assessment practices.

111 The information contained within the Advance Information Set (AIS) demonstrates the University's reflective approach to self-evaluation, and its commitment to producing

quantitative and qualitative data to enable evidence-based enhancement plans to arise as direct outcomes of the various monitoring and review processes. The AIS demonstrated the University's commitment to evaluating the effectiveness of these monitoring and review processes within a reduced resource base. The University's approach is systematic, yet facilitates periodic reviews of student-facing services as the need is identified, as in the case of the work-related experience review. The involvement of students and external contributors, including PSRBs is high and supports the enhancement of existing arrangements.

5.3 Use of external reference points in self-evaluation

112 The University meets sector expectations regarding the appropriate use of a range of external reference points.

113 KPIs have been aligned to the University Strategy: A Clear Future; University Business Plan 2015; and SFC Outcome Agreement 2014/15-2016/17 across a range of categories and are used to help monitor the progress and implementation of the University strategic objectives.

114 In forming and evaluating its strategic approach, the University takes account of a wide range of external reference points, in particular those directly relevant to its links with industry, business and the public sector; its focus on employability; and requirements to demonstrate achievement of targets set out in its Outcome Agreement with the SFC. External Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data informs the employability KPI, while student satisfaction is gauged from the results of external student surveys including the NSS, the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), the iGraduate Distance Learning and International Student Barometers as well as by the University's own Student Experience Questionnaire, which was itself influenced by external practice in the USA and Australia (see also Section 5).

115 The University has embedded a range of external reference points within its quality assurance processes; for example, the annual appraisal system has an explicit section on external benchmarking KPIs. While the University has demonstrated effective use of performance metrics and quantitative data in its self-evaluation processes, the ELIR team noted that it also maintained a student-centred focus within its quality assurance processes making effective use of qualitative data where appropriate.

116 The DELTA analytics team provides analysis of a range of data sources and performance indicators to support ongoing enhancements to the student learning experience through increased granularity of data to identify enhancement opportunities and facilitate the sharing of effective practice (see also paragraph 121). Capturing improved quality of data also facilitates identification of areas of provision requiring remedial intervention and prioritisation of action aimed at enhancement. Since the 2012 ELIR, the University has strengthened its planning function by appointing a Director of Planning and Policy Development. A project to replace the University's business information system was underway at the time of the current ELIR.

5.4 Management of public information

117 Overall, the University has an effective approach to managing public information. The University uses sector references to guide the management of information, including relevant sections of the Quality Code; SFC Guidance on Quality; and the Unistats Key Information Set.

118 The University uses its website and VLE, as well as social media, in an effective way to provide a range of information to stakeholders. It has clear guidance for staff and students on the use of social media and has a comprehensive suite of user guidelines and other resources for staff and students in the use of the VLE. At the time of the ELIR, the University was undertaking a review of the various media mechanisms to remove duplication and out-dated web content.

119 Definitive records of courses and awards for University quality assurance and enhancement processes, including validation, changes and reapproval, are available online through the courses information webpage. Information on the website is monitored by the University Web Team supported by a network of school and departmental contacts who annually review and update course information. The University Academic Affairs Department is responsible for maintaining accurate course information, in the form of course specifications and administers the University's Course Information Database and Module Database.

120 The University, regardless of the type of collaborative arrangement, retains control over all related information, publicity, promotional material and standards relating to courses and awards in its name. Any proposed publicity and student information produced by the partner relating to the University's awards must be approved by the Vice-Principal: Student Experience and External Relations.

5.5 Effectiveness of the approach to self-evaluation and management of information

121 The University has an effective approach to self-evaluation and the management of information. It makes effective use of a comprehensive data set to monitor and analyse institutional effectiveness across the totality of the student lifecycle, measured against strategic priorities and indicators. The data, alongside the results of student surveys, at module, course, school and University levels, is used to identify areas for development and potential good practice. Data is easily accessible, with bespoke reports available through DELTA's analytics team to examine data based on groups with particular characteristics, for example international students or students entering the University through widening participation routes.

122 The University has an embedded culture of critical self-reflection and a proactive approach to integrating student feedback into self-evaluative processes which supports ongoing enhancements to the student learning experience and sharing of effective practice and this was viewed by the ELIR team as an area of positive practice.

6 Collaborative activity

6.1 Key features of the institution's strategic approach

123 One of the University's strategic aims is to develop further partnership links with a small number of universities. The ELIR team learned that, following an externally-facilitated review and internal discussions in March 2016, the University had approved a revised structure of senior officer/executive roles within the institution (see also Section 1, paragraph 8). This included the new role of Vice-Principal for Commercial and Regional Engagement, which will include responsibility for regional and international collaborative partnerships. The new management structure was being implemented at the time of the current ELIR. The University does not have an explicit Internationalisation Strategy but the ELIR team learned that the institution's approach to internationalisation is embedded in other institutional strategies and operational plans, for example the current Strategic Plan. The ELIR team

also learned that the University was considering the establishment of a 'partnership unit' to provide oversight of collaborative arrangements and had been developing a 'partnership toolkit' intended to guide and support staff proposing new collaborative initiatives.

124 The main developments in collaborative activity since the 2012 ELIR are: the continued development of the relationship with the International College RGU (ICRGU) (see also paragraph 25), for example the admission of international students who have successfully completed programmes at ICRGU; responding to changes in the organisation and funding of the Scottish college sector, such as specific performance measures relating to collaboration with colleges being included in the University's formal Outcome Agreement with SFC; and growth in the validated programme arrangements with Benedict Schools in Switzerland.

125 The University has an established partnership with Benedict Schools, Switzerland, part of the Benedict International Group. The University validates the third year of the Bachelor of Arts (BA) courses; a graduate certificate course and a master's course which are delivered by the Benedict Schools. The student populations in Lucerne and Zurich are different. In Zurich, students are predominately local, mature entrant undergraduates and are taught and assessed in German; postgraduate students are taught and assessed in English. In Lucerne, students are predominately international, mostly from the Far East, and are taught and assessed throughout their three year course in English. Student numbers for validated Benedict courses increased from 257 in 2011-12 to 401 in 2014-15.

126 All academic collaborations are subject to formal approval, monitoring and review. The approval process typically involves two stages: initial approval 'in principle' and formal approval. The Head of School/Associate Dean proposing the collaboration will liaise with the Dean of Faculty, and if satisfied, permission is given to prepare an Academic Collaboration Proposal Pro forma plus a Risk Assessment Matrix. These documents are considered by the University Academic Development Committee (ADC). If the ADC approves the proposal in principle, the University will appoint a Course Development Consultant to assist the partner institution in preparing for a validation visit, which is undertaken in accordance with the University Academic Quality Handbook Procedures. The validation panel is approved by the Convenor of the QAEC on recommendation of the Dean of Faculty and Academic Registrar. A validation report is prepared together with a response by the programme team to address any issues or recommendations arising from the validation event. The QAEC reviews and confirms the final decision from the validation event, reporting the decision to Academic Council for review and onward reporting to the Board of Governors. Ongoing monitoring and review of collaborative provision is embedded within the normal University quality assurance processes, including annual course review and Institution-Led Subject Review.

127 The University recognises the importance of ensuring student development opportunities and support services are available to students, regardless of location of study and this is evidenced through initiatives such as the provision of an enhanced induction programme for students articulating from link colleges (see also paragraphs 28 and 31). QAA Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight reports of ICRGU (2012-14) highlighted a number of areas of positive practice including: extracurricular activities for students; student support, such as the introduction of a student buddy scheme; and effective use by ICRGU of external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education.

6.2 Securing academic standards of collaborative provision

128 The University has mapped its approach to collaborative provision against the Quality Code, *Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others* and makes appropriate use of other external reference points, such as PSRB accreditation reports. All collaborative activity for taught credit provision is reviewed as part of the University's ILSR

process (see paragraphs 99-102) and is also included in the course reapproval element of this activity. As part of the ILSR process, the University may determine that an ad hoc visit is required to any collaborative partner. The University maintains a register of all institutional partnership links involving taught credit-rated provision.

129 The University will not normally consider entering into collaborative arrangements where the delivery and/or assessment is in a language other than English. Where exceptions to this are made, as in the Benedict School example above (see paragraph 125), the Contract of Collaboration will state what arrangements the University requires in order to secure academic standards by having clear oversight of student achievement; for example, in relation to the Benedict School link, the contract stipulates the appointment of bilingual external examiners with internal moderation being carried out by University staff who are also bilingual.

130 Institutional approval and oversight of collaborative activities, apart from ICRGU, are managed through the ADC and through the regular institutional appraisal and subject review processes. The collaboration with ICRGU is managed through a Joint Strategic Partnership Management Board (JSPMB), reflecting the nature and scale of this collaboration (see also paragraph 25). The JSPMB oversight is supported by a number of advisory committees: Academic Advisory Committee (AAC); Operations Advisory Committee; and the Marketing Advisory Committee. The AAC oversees quality and standards. Its remit includes academic reporting, including generating systematic information about standards and quality, including student progression rates in both the University and ICRGU. ICRGU has been subject to three external visits as part of the QAA Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight process – the latest report was published in June 2014 – and all three reports concluded with positive judgements.

131 For collaborative arrangements involving validated courses, such as the Benedict Schools, the University Moderator is the primary point of contact. A University Moderator is appointed to each collaborative partnership involving validated courses and that person is responsible for overseeing the administration, general operation and monitoring of the collaboration. The Moderator also fulfils a quality enhancement role, preparing an annual report, including feedback and observations on the student experience, which contributes to the annual appraisal process.

6.3 Enhancing the student learning experience on collaborative programmes

132 The AAC for ICRGU considers support for staff, including the identification and dissemination of effective practice. The AAC also works with DELTA to provide support for students and staff in managing transitions to the University (see paragraphs 28 and 31). For collaborative arrangements involving validated courses (such as Benedict Schools), the University Moderator has specific responsibilities for quality enhancement and consideration of the student learning experience (see paragraph 131 above).

133 In discussions with the ELIR team, international students transitioning from ICRGU and articulating students (including those who entered with advanced standing) were positive about their experience including the support provided by the University and its partners prior to entry. In particular, students expressed high levels of satisfaction regarding the accessibility of University staff.

6.4 Effectiveness of the approach to managing collaborative activity

134 The University has an effective approach to managing the current scale of collaborative activity, which is underpinned by robust policies and procedures and appropriate operations and support infrastructure. The ELIR team noted that the University's approach to the delivery of collaborative courses was characterised by high levels of contact between University staff and those working in partner institutions. This facilitates the early identification and resolution of issues and enables the enhancement of provision as well as securing academic standards and ensuring the delivery of a high quality student experience.

135 In view of the University's intention to expand the number of partnership links, there would be benefit in the University continuing to develop its operational infrastructure and strategic approach to the management and oversight of collaborative activity. The ELIR team noted that, at the time of the current ELIR visit, the University was undertaking a review of its arrangements for the consideration, approval, monitoring and review of collaborative activity, with a view to further enhancing institutional oversight. The University is encouraged to continue developing its operational infrastructure and strategic approach to the management and oversight of collaborative activity.

QAA1701 - R4504 - Aug 16

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