



University of Dundee

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

March 2015

Preface

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

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

Follow-up Reports are discussed with institutions as part of the ELIR annual discussion meetings. They also form the basis of a follow-up event which involves institutions that were reviewed around the same time coming together to explore the ways they have responded to their ELIR outcomes. This activity is intended to emphasise the enhancement-led nature of the review method.

Enhancement-led institutional review (ELIR) Follow-up report—March 2015

1. Preamble

1.1 The University of Dundee participated in the ELIR method during academic year (AY) 2012-13 and AY 2013-14, with the institutional visits taking place in October and November 2013. The overarching judgement from the visiting team appointed by QAA Scotland was that ‘the University of Dundee has **effective** arrangements for managing academic standards and the student learning experience. These arrangements are likely to continue to be effective in the future’.

2. Approach to following-up outcomes from the ELIR

2.1 The visiting team identified certain areas for development as well as several areas of positive practice, and these will each be addressed in Sections 4 and 5 of this report respectively. In addition to the areas highlighted by the visiting team, our own self-evaluation as part of the development of the Reflective Analysis (RA) also identified areas for development and areas of sound practice that we wish to embed further.

2.2 We dealt with the recommendations from the ELIR Outcome Report together with the outcomes from our own self-evaluation described in our RA through a single approach that involved the development of a Quality Enhancement Metastrategy. The narrative that describes our Metastrategy is accompanied by a supporting action-planning spreadsheet—the enhancement strategy grid. The grid is a living document that maps actions and projects to the enhancement-related strategies and is used to systematically check progress using a RAG (red, amber, green) approach.

2.3 The University Learning and Teaching Committee has formal responsibility for oversight of the Quality Enhancement Metastrategy and the enhancement strategy grid, and is asked to review progress on a regular basis. In addition, the Vice-Principal for Learning and Teaching leads a small Quality Enhancement Executive Team (comprising himself, the Director of Quality Assurance, the Quality Enhancement Officer, the Head of the Centre for enhancement of Academic Skills, Teaching, Learning and Employability (CASTLE), the Director of Policy, Governance and Legal Affairs and the Policy Officer for Academic Governance) who meet informally every 1-2 months to take a detailed and pro-active review of progress against the actions described in the enhancement strategy grid.

2.4 A Quality Enhancement Sub-Committee led by the Director of Quality Assurance and the Head of the CASTLE facilitates the operationalisation of the Quality Enhancement Metastrategy and ensures there is communication between and within the Colleges.

2.5 We have engaged students in the follow-up to ELIR through our student representation structure. The Dundee University Students Association (DUSA) plays a major role in all of the decisions that relate to the student experience at the University, and there is a robust link between the University, DUSA, the Students Representative Council (SRC) and the student body. DUSA executive members are involved in all of the activities that relate to our approach to quality enhancement, including each of the specific areas that emerged from the recent

ELIR. Members of the DUSA executive team contribute to all formal committee meetings that relate to learning and teaching and the student experience, and there are also informal catch-ups every fortnight between the DUSA President and Deputy President, and the University Secretary, the Director of Policy, Governance and Legal Affairs and the Vice-Principal for Learning and Teaching.

3. Development of the University's follow-up report to the outcomes from its ELIR

3.1 The first draft of this report was prepared by the University Director of Quality Assurance. Further input was provided by the DUSA executive team, the Vice-Principal for Learning and Teaching and his Quality Enhancement Executive Team, the University Learning and Teaching Committee and the Quality Enhancement Sub-Committee. Consideration of our year-on follow-up report will also be formally considered by the University Senate at its meeting of 25 March 2015, and University Court at its meeting of 20 April 2015.

4. Actions taken to address the areas for development identified in the ELIR Outcome Report

4.1 The Outcome Report identified three areas for development that the University was asked to consider. The actions taken to address each of these are described below.

4.1.1 Institutional oversight—*Consider the impact of variability of policy and practice on the student experience, ensuring the University has oversight of policy development and implementation across the colleges. The University has highly devolved structures which provide flexibility so that policy can be developed in a manner appropriate to each college. This can have positive benefits but the local determination and implementation of policy can also lead to variability of practice, for example policies regarding extensions to assessment deadlines and the recognition of prior learning are not consistent across colleges. The University is asked to consider the extent to which this impacts on the student experience, particularly for students studying across colleges.*

4.1.2 Several actions are currently being taken to ensure more consistent approaches to policy and procedures across the University. Of key importance is our review and proposed substantive revisions to our assessment policy. We undertook an extensive consultation during AY 2013-14 and now have a working draft of a revised assessment policy which will be considered by the Learning and Teaching Committee at its meeting of 9 March 2015. The proposed revisions to the assessment policy include clear guidelines on consistent University-wide approaches to:

- penalties for late submission of course work
- consideration of mitigating circumstances
- approaches to moderation and double marking.

The development of clearer guidance for a more consistent approach to the application of penalties for plagiarism and academic dishonesty will be developed as a part of a separate work stream. It is planned that a review of our Code of Practice on Plagiarism and Academic dishonesty will take place before the start of AY 2015-16.

4.1.3 During AY 2013-14 the Vice-Principal for Learning and Teaching and the President of DUSA led a review group to consider the effectiveness of our Advisers of Studies system. This was in response to a commitment in our 2013-14 Student Partnership

Agreement which stated 'It is recognised that Advisers of Studies should be an important component of pastoral provision within the University. To ensure that the current system is delivering for the needs of students the University and DUSA will work together to review School-based student support and consider options for future developments. This review will encompass all aspects of School-based support systems, identify opportunities for enhancement and consider the development of a University-wide framework for student support at the level of Schools and programmes'. The review group recommended that a general framework should be adopted, and proposed a set of guiding principles that all Schools should adhere to. The effectiveness of the new Advisers of Studies Framework will be reviewed by seeking student feedback on their experiences, as well as through our annual review process, which involves face-to-face discussions between Schools and the Vice-Principal for Learning and Teaching. This feedback will inform the development of a toolkit for Advisers of Studies, which will include a resource of case studies and examples of good practice.

4.1.4 Although not specifically undertaken to address the outcomes from ELIR, the Vice-Principal for Learning and Teaching led a review on the organisational and management structures of the University during the summer of 2014. The purpose of the review was to ensure that the University is optimally structured to deliver its Transformation Vision. The outcome of the review process was a decision to undertake a substantive restructuring of our academic and service units involving the disestablishment of our College structure and taking a single team ('One Dundee') approach to key activities across the University based on a 'hub and spoke' model. Although the restructuring is still in its development phase, it should result in greater consistency in approach to almost everything that we do at the University of Dundee.

4.1.5 *Recognition of prior learning* - *Progress the planned review of assessment policy including the policy for the recognition of prior learning. In particular, the University should ensure that, following the review, policy relating to exemptions granted for the award of second taught postgraduate master's degrees meets sector expectations.*

4.1.6 As described in paragraph 4.1.2 we now have a working draft of the assessment policy which is ready for further consultation. We anticipate that a final version will be approved by the Learning and Teaching Committee at its meeting of 12 May 2015. We dealt with our policy for the recognition of prior learning (RPL) as part of a separate work stream. A working group led by the Director of Quality Assurance was set up to decide on our approach to RPL, develop a revised policy and take forward implementation of the policy. The group met during the spring and summer of 2014 and developed a new policy which was approved by the Learning and Teaching Committee at its meeting of 18 November 2014.

4.1.7 The revised policy makes explicit reference to the maximum amount of credit transfer that can be recognised and to the avoidance of double counting. Exemption credit will be shown clearly on students' transcripts for the relevant awards.

4.1.8 Following on from the approval of the RPL policy, the next steps are to ensure appropriate implementation. This will involve the development of guidelines for candidates, a portal for applicants and a training programme for staff.

4.1.9 Support for postgraduate students who teach - *Ensure that appropriate training and support is in place for all postgraduate students who are involved in teaching and assessment.*

4.1.10 At the time of our ELIR visit in 2013, training for postgraduates who teach was delivered through the Educational Development division of the Library and Learning Centre (LLC) in response to demand. Mandatory training in learning, teaching and assessment for academic staff was provided through take-up of modules from the PGCert Teaching in Higher Education (THE), which was delivered by the School of Education, Social Work and Community Education (ESWCE).

4.1.11 The University has recently supported the development of a Centre for the enhancement of Academic Skills, Teaching, Learning and Employability (CASTLE), which is a partnership between the LLC, the School of ESWCE and Student Services. The CASTLE incorporates all academic development activities including academic induction, the PGCert THE and continuing professional development for academic staff. The bringing together of these activities offers better opportunities to deliver and profile training opportunities for staff and students.

4.1.12 The CASTLE is providing leadership in the further development and delivery of training for postgraduates in teaching and assessment. Workshops have been running over this academic year for small group teaching and assessment and feedback, and all Schools have been surveyed with regard to numbers of postgraduate tutors and the activities with which they are involved. A 'long, thin' module of development opportunities, incorporating current research skills training plus support for learning and teaching practice, will be piloted next academic year. The module has been designed so that successful completion will provide postgraduate tutors with eligibility for Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. Importantly, the CASTLE will ensure that there is greater awareness of the training programmes that are offered for postgraduates who teach, that a proactive approach is taken to this training, and also that there is an awareness of the importance of undertaking the training both for current practice and future career development.

5. Actions taken to embed good practice identified in the ELIR Outcome Report

5.1 The ELIR Outcome Report identified seven areas of positive practice. Actions to ensure that these areas of sound practice are appropriately embedded for the future are described below.

5.1.1 Effective development and implementation of Vision and Strategy - *The University has been reflective and self-evaluative in developing its new Vision and Strategy. This has involved effective consultation and communication with staff and students, who have a clear understanding of the strategic direction and objectives of the institution. There is an effective approach to the implementation of strategy through strategic leadership and the committee structure, and operational planning is clearly linked to institutional strategy.*

5.1.2 As described in paragraph 4.1.4 above the University is currently in the early stages of a substantive restructuring project. The principal aim of the restructuring is to ensure that the University is appropriately set up to deliver our Vision and Strategy, and

proposals are being developed through four work streams which are focusing on the School structures, Professional Services, Governance and Culture & Communication.

5.1.3 Student engagement - *Students are very positive about their experience of the University. There is a strong partnership with the Dundee University Students' Association, and student representation is embedded at all levels of the institution. During the review students confirmed that their views are actively sought and contribute to the University's enhancement agenda.*

5.1.4 In order to further embed our approach to working in partnership with our students, our first Student Partnership Agreement was signed by the President of DUSA and the Principal in December 2013. The partnership agreement sets out key concepts and principles that define student engagement and representation at the University. A new agreement is developed annually, and details the annual priorities that have been agreed between the University and DUSA. The aim is that these priorities are aligned with the DUSA manifesto and University operational plans.

5.1.6 We are now into our second partnership agreement, and analysis of the effectiveness of this approach was part of a recent internal audit that examined the relationship between the University and DUSA, focusing on matters relating to the memorandum of understanding between DUSA and the University, the Student Partnership Agreement and student representation. The outcome of the audit will inform future developments.

5.1.7 The University has supported DUSA's proposal for an additional sabbatical officer from AY 2015-16. The role is focused on student representation (Vice-President of Representation), and this new post should provide a better underpinning of the support for representation.

5.1.8 In 2015 the DUSA President was made a full member of the University's One Dundee Board, which brings together the Senior Management Team, Deans and Directors once a month to discuss strategy development and implementation. This development further strengthens our approach to student engagement with every level of decision-making at the University.

5.1.9 Proactive student support - *The University is successful in supporting a diverse student population. Academic and professional services provide integrated support across individual services for all students, both pre and post enrolment, as well as effectively targeting support for particular student groups. Feedback from students is particularly positive in relation to Disability Services, the Careers Service and the Library and Learning Centre. There is a proactive approach to supporting the progression and development of postgraduate research students. In particular, these students are very positive about the support provided by thesis monitoring committees and the generic skills training delivered by Organisational and Professional Development.*

5.1.10 The development of the CASTLE has provided an opportunity to further enhance our approach to student support, particularly through the integration of the Academic Skills Centre and the Careers Service with this collaborative Centre (see 4.1.11). CASTLE also provides a training programme for research student supervisors, and is continuing to develop appropriate links with the Organisational and Professional Development

Unit to ensure that there is a joined-up approach to training and support for our research students and their supervisors. In addition, our Research Degrees Quality Code is being further refined and developed through input from the University Postgraduate Research Degrees Committee.

5.1.11 Widening participation - *The University has an effective approach to recruiting and supporting the entry of students from non-traditional backgrounds. It provides a range of opportunities including articulation routes and the Dundee University Access to Learning (DUAL) Summer School. This programme provides academic and study skills support for students, particularly those from non-traditional backgrounds, who may lack the standard qualifications for entry into the University. Students accessing the University via the DUAL Summer School commented positively on the effectiveness of the programme in preparing them for study at the higher education level.*

5.1.12 Our commitment to widening participation has been strengthened further through the development of articulation agreements with FE Colleges (including co-curriculum arrangements, where students are part of a collaborative agreement that involves matriculation at their FE College and the University), the development of our Policy and Guidance on the Recognition of Prior Learning, our Outcome Agreements with the Scottish Funding Council and continued support for the DUAL Summer School. Recent developments include consideration of alignment of the DUAL Summer School provision with the CASTLE, and the potential credit rating of the Summer School programmes.

5.1.13 Employability - *The University provides a comprehensive range of opportunities for students to develop their employability skills. During the review students commented positively about the range and relevance of the initiatives provided, including the Enterprise Gym and the Placement Base.*

5.1.14 The University has continued to invest in Employability as a key strategic priority. At the beginning of 2014, a decision was made to develop a twin track approach to Employability and Enterprise & Entrepreneurship, with both strands being led by the Vice-Principal for Learning and Teaching. Our committee structures have been revised accordingly so that there are now two interconnected sub-committees for Employability and Enterprise & Entrepreneurship. Each is chaired by the Vice-Principal for Learning and Teaching, which ensures a robust connection between Learning and Teaching and the strategic approach to Employability.

5.1.15 As part of our commitment to graduate employability, we appointed a Head of Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Strategy in August 2014 with the intention to establish the University of Dundee as a global leader in enterprise and entrepreneurship education. An Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Strategy and action plan to support this goal was approved by the Senior Management Team in December 2014. A major Enterprise and Entrepreneurship symposium, organised by the CASTLE and the Head of Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Strategy, will be held at the University in May 2015.

5.1.16 We are currently building an action plan to support our Employability Strategy, and we held an Employability Forum during the autumn of 2014 to share and develop good practice in this area. Employability was also the focus of a special edition of our

regular Highlighter newsletter to disseminate positive developments in the area of employability throughout the University.

5.1.17 Staff support and development - *There is an integrated approach to staff support and development, with clear linkages between induction, the Objective Setting and Review process, and the range of learning and development opportunities provided by the Library and Learning Centre's Educational Development Division and Organisational and Professional Development.*

5.1.18 Development of the CASTLE described above should ensure that we build from our existing strengths in this area.

5.1.19 Enhancement from quality assurance processes - *The University has been successful in ensuring that the design of its quality assurance processes contributes to enhancement of the student learning experience by, for example, including quality enhancement as a standard heading in templates for annual monitoring reporting and the external examiner system. The quality assurance processes, alongside the committee structures and college roles, also facilitate the deliberate and systematic sharing of good practice across the institution.*

5.1.20 The disestablishment of Colleges as part of the restructuring process will mean that we will need to reconsider our approach to quality assurance. This will most likely be through the development of more centralised support mechanisms for quality assurance and the setting and maintaining of academic standards, which provides an opportunity to ensure greater consistency in the future (see 4.1.1 above). We will, however, need to ensure that our enhancement-focused approach to quality assurance is not lost or diminished through the restructuring, and we recognise that there is a considerable amount of strategic and operational planning to be done here. Preliminary proposals for quality assurance arrangements are currently being considered by the Structures Review work streams with responsibility for professional services and governance.

6. Commentary on the Technical Report

6.1 Specific developments that we would like to highlight relating to the Technical Report are outlined below.

6.1.1 Distance Learning. The interests of distance learners and the further development of distance learning as a method of course delivery is being supported by the development of a Centre for Technology and Innovation in Learning (CTIL). The purpose of the new Centre is to ensure the delivery of the highest quality online learning environment for students and to advise on and support the application of technology to enhance face-to-face learning. CITL is also providing support for the new MOOCs being developed at Dundee.

6.1.2 Academic and Pastoral Support. Since our ELIR in 2013, a one stop shop student advice centre, co-located with the students' union, was opened in the summer of 2014. 'The Enquiry Centre' is a first-stop drop-in centre where students are provided with assistance with a range of issues including travel, accommodation, finances, study support, health and careers advice. Anecdotal evidence and interim evaluations suggest that this facility has been well received by the students. Formal evaluation of

usage and student and staff feedback will be carried out at the annual Student Services feedback and planning event which will inform its future development.

6.1.3 Feedback to Students on Assessed Work. The University has been rolling out TESTA (Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment) methodology for the past year or so. It is anticipated that ten programmes will have participated in TESTA by April 2015. We will evaluate the success of TESTA at Dundee at that point, and in consideration of its effectiveness, make a recommendation to the Learning and Teaching Committee at its meeting of May 2015 on whether or not to continue with the methodology in its current format.

7. Conclusions

7.1 The ELIR method has been an important driver in focusing our thinking on our approach to quality assurance and enhancement. The development of our Metastrategy for Quality Enhancement emerged from the reflection and evaluation that we undertook as part of the development of our RA. The ELIR Outcome Report that was developed from the work of the QAAS visiting team is in alignment with our own self-evaluation, and it provided us with an impetus to prioritise areas for development and areas where good practice should be further supported.

7.2 We have worked as a community of students and staff to address the areas for development and embed the areas of good practice suggested in the ELIR Outcome Report. Our students are involved in all of our decision-making processes that relate to learning and teaching and the student experience, and we are committed to the continued working in partnership with our students through our representation structures.

7.3 The areas for development identified through the ELIR Outcome Report have been appropriately addressed (within the timeframe for the institutional year-on report). Whilst we recognise that there are certain aspects that will require further evaluation and refinement, our progress in each of the identified areas for development is on track. Our work to embed and support areas of good practice is also ongoing and is fully aligned with the views from the ELIR Outcome Report.

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