



University of Dundee

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

March 2020

Preface

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

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

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

1. Introduction

The University of Dundee Enhancement-led Institutional Review took place in November 2018 and the [final report](#) was published in March 2019. The following document forms the University of Dundee [Follow-up Report](#) and provides an overview of the approach taken to reflect and act on the outcomes of the report. The report also outlines how we have continued to work in partnership with our students throughout the year and how we plan to continue to do so. The report has been developed on behalf of the ELIR Action Plan Steering Committee and has been considered at a range of institutional committees prior to being presented for endorsement at Senate and for final approval by Court on 25 February 2020.

2. Reflection and Action Planning

Following receipt of the final report the documentation was considered widely by a range of institutional committees including the University Executive Group, Quality and Academic Standards Committee, Learning and Teaching Committee and Senate as well as more informally through staff networks and dissemination activities. All staff and students received notification of the review outcome and access to the report via email. This supported the subsequent action planning by enabling a wide range of staff and students from all Schools and Directorates to engage with the outcomes of the report.

All outcomes of the report were considered and in particular the institution considered the priority action which focused on the oversight of collaborative partnerships in the context of its own internal reviews which took place and reported at the end of 2018 and in early 2019. This enabled staff and students to triangulate outcomes and fully consider all the options for taking forward our work in this area.

A Steering Committee, chaired by the Vice Principal Education, which reports to the Learning and Teaching Committee, was established to guide the subsequent action planning. This began with the recommendations and commendations outlined in the report and also included identification of a range of areas for enhancement noted in the [Technical Report](#). Each action within the plan was considered by the Steering Committee and members of the University community were invited to lead on each committing to report to the Steering Committee on a regular basis. Action Leaders established a work plan for each action, which was approved by the Steering Committee who remain a point of contact for support and guidance where needed. A schedule of meetings and update points was established to

ensure that progress against the plan could be considered by the Steering Committee and updates provided to the Learning and Teaching Committee, Quality and Academic Standards Committee and Senate.

Additionally the Steering Committee also reviewed the recommendations made within the [previous ELIR report](#) with the aim of ensuring that activity undertaken in response to these recommendations continued, where necessary, and that ongoing enhancement in these areas continues to be recognised. This was particularly relevant in considering how the institution continues to support the sharing and alignment of practice across the institution.

The following provides a summary of the actions taken to date on the 3 recommendations and 6 commendations identified in the ELIR report.

3. Response to Recommendations

- a. Institutional oversight of collaborative activity** – *the University should, as a matter of priority, improve its oversight of collaborative activity to ensure it has effective arrangements in place for identifying and mitigating academic risks. There would be considerable benefit in reviewing the location of responsibility at institutional level for the academic standards and quality of collaborative provision to ensure adequate oversight of key academic quality processes including approval and follow-up. There would also be benefit in providing greater clarification of the associate deans' roles in overseeing collaborative provision within schools.*

In the short-term colleagues from relevant Schools, the Education Partnership Development Unit (EPDU) and the Quality and Academic Standards team have been working together closely to ensure appropriate annual and periodic review activity is undertaken and where risks are identified these are managed appropriately. This activity has been reported to and overseen by the Education Business Development Oversight Group (EBDOG¹.) In the assessment of all current partnerships one partnership with a UK university has been identified as requiring remedial action. A recent review of the programme delivered has provided assurance of the standards of the teaching, learning and student experience. However, action is required to resolve outstanding issues which relate to the underpinning legal agreement between the partners and work is ongoing to ensure an effective solution is found and there is no impact on the student experience. A further example of this immediate activity includes revisions to the approach taken to Periodic Programme Review for programmes delivered in partnership. The revised approach includes an assessment of the partnership's ongoing sustainability one year prior to

¹ EBDOG Membership: Vice Principal Education, Vice Principal International, Director of Quality and Academic Standards, Director of Education Partnership Development Unit, Director of Finance

the Periodic Programme Review event, the response to which is considered by the Review Panel alongside the Reflective Analysis prepared by the School. The final report and subsequent follow-up reports of a Periodic Review of a partnership programme is considered by the Quality and Academic Standards Committee initially, and finally by EBD OG.

The institution also immediately began to focus on the medium to long-term response to this recommendation. A short-life Collaborative Oversight working group was established with staff and students forming the membership to ensure that both a range of experience of collaborative partnerships and representation were achieved. This working group was chaired by a Professor of the School of Life Sciences with significant experience in the delivery of collaborative programmes and professional body accreditation processes. This working group considered the ELIR reports and relevant internal review reports to identify the key goals and actions to be taken. Following approval of their action plan by the Steering Committee the working group began to review the current approaches to the approval and ongoing oversight of collaborative partnerships, explore approaches used in benchmark institutions and considered the revised Advice and Guidance within the UK Quality Code. Over a series of meetings, the group have designed a new approach to the development, approval, implementation and ongoing review of collaborative partnerships. A consultation was launched by the working group in November 2019 inviting colleagues from across the institution to consider the proposed approach. Feedback was received from a range of Schools and Directorates and the working group have incorporated this into the final proposal to be submitted for approval in Spring Semester of 2020. It is anticipated that the new approach will be launched in the summer of 2020.

The process for the approval and ongoing review of partnerships will include four key stages.

- 1) A 'light touch' first stage that will support a robust, but proportionate, review of all proposals at School and University level ensuring an appropriate level of risk assessment and consideration of strategic alignment is undertaken prior to further development of the partnership proposal.
- 2) Proposals that are successful at stage 1 will progress to a second stage that includes the development of the programme (where applicable), the undertaking of necessary due diligence and business development activities and preparation of the final, full, proposal. The exact route for development will be proportionate to the scale of the partnership and the identified level of risk, which will be determined by EPDU. This will ensure that simple, low risk partnerships can be developed robustly but expediently while those partnership which involve a higher level of risk or are more complex in structure will require more detailed planning and scrutiny.

- 3) The third stage of the approach will see the implementation of a University level committee which will have responsibility for the final approval of partnerships following consideration by School Executive Groups, a business oversight group and the Quality and Academic Standards Committee, this group will be chaired by a Vice Principal. A decision-making matrix has been developed to enable the objective assessment of proposals and to support a transparent and reportable decision-making approach.
- 4) The fourth and final stage of the approach is the ongoing review and oversight of a partnership which will incorporate a short range review of the partnership before full integration into the annual assessments of the sustainability of the partnership, the annual review of the programme (where appropriate) and the periodic review of the partnership and/or programme.

The working group will oversee the submission of the proposals for approval by the University, which will include an implementation plan inclusive of training, support and development for colleagues throughout the institution and the development of appropriate resources to support both partnership development and ongoing oversight. Oversight of the implementation of the new approach will be undertaken by the Steering Committee and it is anticipated that the working group will be reconvened in approximately 18 months to evaluate the progress made against the approved plans.

- b. Online distance learning** – *progress its work aimed at improving student engagement, representation and support for distance learning students. The University is also asked to develop guidance for programme teams on expected good practice for the design and use of its virtual learning environment in order to provide greater equivalence of experience across programmes and schools.*

An Online Learning working group, chaired by the Vice Principal Education, was established to monitor and evaluate enhancements implemented to improve student engagement, representation and support. The group identified a number of areas for potential enhancement including the introduction of 24/7 support for IT services and the customisation of the virtual learning platform [MyDundee](#). Over the coming year this working group will continue to support colleagues to achieve equivalency and consistency of the online learning experience with the introduction of peer review of online teaching delivery, the development of exemplars for online modules and the good practice guidance. The group have also taken forward a review of the online learning experience through the consideration of learning analytics and enhanced engagement with student representatives. Outputs of this review will be considered by appropriate committees and working groups throughout 2020. The outcomes of this work will report to the Learning and Teaching Committee, chaired by the Vice Principal Education, and the group will continue to meet and support this collaborative, enhancement-led approach.

- c. **Widening participation and flexible entry** – *take an overview of the wide range of very positive initiatives the University has in place to support fair access and flexible entry routes. This would enable the University to form a clear view of the approaches that are most effective in helping students to enter from different academic backgrounds. It would also ensure students have an equivalent experience of key stages such as welcome and induction.*

The working group model has also been used for this third area of activity, and the membership includes a representative from Dundee and Angus College and is chaired by the Vice Principal Education. The group is undertaking a mapping exercise to establish a clear understanding of the breadth of activity undertaken by schools in support of widening access, to support the ongoing enhancement of a consistent experience across the institution through the effective sharing of good practice and consideration of the most effective activities undertaken. Additional activities include a review and update of the institution's recognition of prior learning policy (also linked to the collaborative oversight action) and, through the Retention and Progression Committee (RPC), chaired by the Vice Principal Education, an ongoing commitment to increase retention of MD20/40 students beyond their first year of studies. This goal is being taken forward through the development of School level Retention Action Plans, produced following review and consideration of available data and used as a basis for ongoing discussion at RPC to ensure the sharing of practice and the measurement of outcomes.

4. Updates on Commendations

- a. **Student partnership** - *the University and Dundee University Students' Association (DUSA) have a productive and collaborative relationship bringing a wide range of benefits to the student experience, for example there is a well-established Student Partnership Agreement in place which the University and DUSA monitor through mutually-agreed key performance indicators (KPIs) and, through SRC online, students can provide feedback anonymously with examples of feedback topics being considered and actioned by the University.*

The University and DUSA have continued to work in partnership and in early 2019 together reviewed the [Student Partnership Agreement](#) (SPA) and the [Joint Agreement on Student Representation](#). It was agreed to move to a three-year plan for the SPA to support the development of a sustained approach to the priority areas: Community and Representation; Learning Experience; Welfare and Development. All four priority areas are underpinned by the sustainable partnership between the two organisations. Each year individual goals will be identified within the priority areas enabling the DUSA Executive Teams to reflect their manifestos in the work taken forward. The University and DUSA will continue to work together to highlight the outcomes of the SPA and support the use of the joint agreement across the

University by hosting briefing sessions for staff, meeting with key stakeholders and continuing to host training and provide support to student representatives.

- b. Postgraduate research student experience** - *there is an excellent postgraduate research student experience provided across the University including monitoring which takes place at least twice-yearly through thesis monitoring committees, independent of the student's supervisor, and includes both academic progress and pastoral support needs. In addition, a range of imaginative support is available to students such as the Thesis Bootcamp.*

The University has continued to support its postgraduate research students to achieve success throughout their studies. Since the ELIR team visited in November 2018 the Doctoral Academy has been established and staff were appointed in November 2019 and January 2020 to take up post in early 2020 and take forward work to continue to advance the support provided to doctoral students and enhance the research environment across the institution. Representation from the postgraduate research community and DUSA continues to play a key role in the evolution of the Doctoral Academy through their valued input on governance and all related doctoral matters via the Doctoral Academy Board. Alongside this continuing work DUSA is leading the development of representation for taught and research postgraduate students and reviews of the periodic and annual review activities will seek to strengthen the approach to the review and enhancement of our research degree programmes.

- c. Institutional oversight and enhancement** - *the University has brought about greater institutional oversight and opportunities for systematic enhancement through the introduction of the pivotal associate dean role. Associate deans enhance communication within and between schools, for example through their membership of school committees, bringing greater consistency in the student experience. Together they form an effective cross-school community which serves to enhance learning and teaching and share good practice across the University.*

The University continues to develop its OneDundee approach through a range of activities that are supporting proportionate oversight and ongoing enhancement of the student learning experience. A development programme for the Associate Deans for Quality and Academic Standards (QAS) included sessions on periodic review, programme and partnership development and School and Institutional Committees. This supported both new members of the Associate Dean team and more experienced colleagues to share practice, identify new ways to work collaboratively and supported the development of the way in which colleagues across Schools and the Directorates work together to achieve the goals of the Quality Framework.

- d. Prioritising learning and teaching** - *since the previous ELIR in 2013, the University has introduced a number of measures which prioritise learning and teaching across the institution. Staff are recognised for the delivery of high-quality learning and teaching, for example through the promotions policy, and are supported through opportunities to develop their practice provided by the Academic Skills Centre and the Organisational and Professional Development team. The University now has in place a wide variety of systematic approaches for identifying and sharing good practice including those linked to its regular quality processes, supplemented by innovative practice such as the presentations by Teaching Award winners at Discovery days.*

The University continues to prioritise the learning and teaching experience and over the past year we have seen continued opportunities for development of their practice. The BSc Medical Education programme, PGCert in Academic Practice in Higher Education, The Professional Learning Framework and the Associate Module have all been accredited by AdvanceHE in the past year. An Education Advisory Group has been established in early 2020 to support the enhancement of learning and teaching by bringing together colleagues to discuss and debate key areas of activity relating to our degree provision. Work is also being undertaken to identify and clearly articulate the institution's Curriculum Principles which will be used in the development of new programmes and the review and amendment of existing programmes, ensuring students continue to have impactful and transformative learning experiences.

- e. Assessment and feedback** - *the University has embedded the use of the Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment (TESTA) approach across all of its academic schools, integrating the use of TESTA with the institution's periodic programme review method. This has had a positive impact on assessment design and the experience of students.*

The University continues to use the TESTA method within the periodic review of undergraduate programmes and is piloting an approach to mapping assessment within taught postgraduate programmes to ensure the impact seen from the use of this methodology can be shared across the portfolio. The organisation and management of TESTA now sits with the Academic Skills Centre.

The University hosted a symposium, in partnership with the University of Stirling, to share best practice and innovation in TESTA in Scotland. This event saw practitioners from across the UK share their use of TESTA and the impact this has had on assessment design and the student learning experience.

An online hub focusing on assessment and feedback is under development to provide resources to staff and students to assist in the implementation of activities identified through the TESTA approach, NSS action plans and the institution's work on retention and progression.

- f. Staff and student development provided by the Academic Skills Centre - *the University's Academic Skills Centre (ASC) is a centre of excellence with a wide-ranging, innovative, responsive and proactive portfolio for students and staff. In addition to the Academic Induction Programme, the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice in Higher Education and a shorter Learning to Teach in Higher Education programme, the ASC provision includes liaison staff dedicated to schools. For students, ASC offers a comprehensive selection of academic skills support and also works with the Centre for Technology and Innovation in Learning to provide bespoke training in response to topics identified by the schools.***

Over the course of 2019-20 the focus of ASC has been on the professional recognition of teaching through the launch of a Professional Learning Framework which will enable the institution to recognise individuals as Associate Fellows, Fellows and Senior Fellows of the Higher Education Academy and to grow the community of leaders in learning and teaching. This is supported by the accreditation of the programme by Advance HE.

5. The Next Steps

The Learning and Teaching Committee will continue to monitor progress against the ELIR Action Plan over the course of the identified objectives, and beyond as required. In particular, there will be a focus over the course of 2020 to ensure the implementation of the new approach to the collaborative partnership life cycle is successfully implemented and adopted.

Learning and Teaching Committee will continue to report regularly to Senate on the work undertaken and the related outcomes. Continued reporting and collation of evidence of enhancement will support our ongoing approach to enhancing the student learning experience and the institution is committed to working in partnership with the student body to achieve this goal.

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Approved by University Court 25 February 2020

QAA2531 – Mar 20

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