

Enhancement-led Institutional Review of the University of Dundee

Outcome Report

November 2013

Contents

About the Enhancement-led Institutional Review method.....	1
About this review.....	1
About the University of Dundee.....	2
Overarching judgement about the University of Dundee	3
Areas of positive practice	3
Areas for development	4
What happens next?	5
Further information.....	5

About the Enhancement-led Institutional Review method

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

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

About this review

This is the Outcome Report of the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at the University of Dundee. The review took place as follows: Part 1 visit on 16-17 October 2013 and Part 2 visit on 18-21 November 2013. The review was conducted by a team of six reviewers:

- Professor Graham Caie (academic reviewer)
- Dr Tess Goodliffe (international reviewer)
- Ms Elizabeth Marshall (coordinating reviewer)
- Professor Diane Meehan (academic reviewer)
- Mr Conor Murray-Gauld (student reviewer)
- Professor Clare Pickles (academic reviewer).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

About the University of Dundee

The University of Dundee became independent in 1967, having formerly been a college of the University of St Andrews since 1897. The majority of the University's activity is based on its city centre campus with its medical school and part of its nursing provision being located at Ninewells Hospital, Dundee and Kirkcaldy respectively.

The University is structured around 15 schools and four colleges: Art, Science and Engineering; Arts and Social Sciences; Life Sciences; and Medicine, Dentistry and Nursing. The University has approximately 16,500 students. Around 66 per cent of students are studying at undergraduate level, 30 per cent are studying taught postgraduate programmes and 4 per cent are postgraduate research students.

The University's Vision centres on transforming lives locally and globally through the creation, sharing and application of knowledge, with the ultimate goal to become Scotland's leading university.

Overarching judgement about the University of Dundee

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.

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

Areas of positive practice

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

2 **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.

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.

4 **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 **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.

6 **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.

7 **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.

8 **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.

Areas for development

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

10 **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.

11 **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.

12 **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.

What happens next?

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

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

Further information

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

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

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

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

19 For further information about the Scottish Funding Council see www.sfc.ac.uk

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