University of Glasgow

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

December 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 2014: Year-on Response

Introduction

As with previous ELIR exercises, the University of Glasgow's approach in responding to its 2014 ELIR report has been to seek to maximise the benefit of the review for the learning experience of our students and for the University more broadly.

Following receipt of the ELIR Technical Report, the document was scrutinised by the University's Senate Office. The 10 areas of positive practice and 6 areas for development identified by the ELIR team were noted and actions arising identified, These actions were incorporated into the ongoing Learning and Teaching Strategy Action Plan along with those that we had identified ourselves in our Reflective Analysis.

The Learning & Teaching Strategy constitutes the University's strategy for quality enhancement. Its associated Action Plan integrates ELIR-related actions with other objectives that the University has selected so as to align activities in a way that maximises the meaningfulness of the ELIR, promotes ownership of ELIR outcomes and subsequent progress, and helps enhance the impact of the actions taken. The Learning and Teaching Strategy Action Plan has been in place since 2010. Progress on the original set of actions was excellent and many were fully completed by the time of the University's 2014 ELIR.

In incorporating the actions identified from the analysis of the 2014 ELIR Technical Report into the Learning and Teaching Strategy Action Plan, we took the opportunity to update and refocus the entire Plan. The original actions were reviewed for completeness and ongoing relevance. Where work remained outstanding, discussion with the action 'owners' took place to reformulate the action to fit the current environment, and to identify metrics by which success might be more formally measured. The Action Plan was then re-aligned to the nine Strategic Aims of the 2011-15 Learning and Teaching Strategy.

In monitoring progress, action owners are asked to provide updates for each action indicating:

- work accomplished to date
- relevant timescales for the implementation of change
- how the effectiveness of change is being or will be evaluated, and
- an evaluation, where relevant, of the effectiveness so far of any change instituted.

Updates are requested annually (most recently in June 2015) and are made available in full at http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/senateoffice/policies/learningandteachingstrategy/

The information provided in these updates has been used to compile this year-on response. The following summarises the range of activity being taken forward; activities are grouped under the associated Learning & Teaching Strategic Aim.

Readers of this year-on response should note that the University is at the beginning of a new strategic period. The University Strategy for 2015-2020[1] was approved by the University Court in June 2015, and a Learning & Teaching Strategy, covering the same period, was

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[1] The University Strategy 2015-20: *Inspiring People Changing the World* is available at http://www.gla.ac.uk/about/strategy/

endorsed by Senate in October 2015[2]. Staff across the University, both in the Colleges and the Services, have been engaged in reflection on how they can support the new strategies through their work. As part of this, a new set of actions will be developed to facilitate the implementation of the 2015-20 strategic objectives

Summary of activity

Aim 1. To offer a culturally diverse learning environment that prepares students for local and global employment and citizenship and an experience built upon a wide range of world class-support services

Several strands of work focus on the continuing effectiveness of student support services to ensure that current and future demands of an increasingly diverse student population are met.

Our dedicated Equality and Diversity Unit continues to promote equality and diversity considerations in all standard practices and policies through staff training (52% of staff have completed training to date) and the Equality Impact Assessment process for all new policies. Recently, a review of the University's Course and Programme Approval process recommended that consideration of Equality and Diversity issues be an embedded part of course and programme design and approval. For some time now, authors of new policies have been required to identify equality implications when they are submitted for committee approval. The effectiveness of this in identifying the need for Equality Impact Assessments has been inconsistent; consequently, guidance on this is being developed for committees.

Student support services continue to maintain high levels of student satisfaction, with the Student Barometer 2014 recording 92.6% satisfaction. An on-line appointment booking system has been developed and is being used successfully across student services. This has produced efficiencies for the services and the service users but, importantly, by recording Student IDs and linking to MyCampus[3] data, management information is now available to permit analysis of service users against the demographics of the student body, so as to highlight any groups who appear less willing or able to engage. Progress with this has been delayed by other pressing priorities and the fact that the post of Director of the Student Lifecycle Support and Development Team has been vacant for the past session. However, the post will be filled from September 2015.

Pastoral and academic support for students is being enhanced through the roll-out of the revised Undergraduate Student Advisory System. This is a long-term project that began a phased implementation in 2011, aiming to reduce the adviser: advisee ratio to 1:25 and thus improve the experience of the students. While the Colleges have found this challenging to resource, the Chief Advisers report that the system is generally operating well.   The College of Arts has proposed adoption of a different approach, whereby a team of professional advisers provide expert advice about University and other support services to students in the first instance, but refer students on to core academic advisers when necessary. A trial of this system is underway and will be reviewed in 2015. The next steps for the University will be to focus on the advising needs of the growing Postgraduate Taught community and to improve this service in line with work on undergraduate advising.

Aim 2. To enhance our position as a leading postgraduate university through further development and expansion of our portfolio of high quality, relevant taught postgraduate programmes to complement our extensive undergraduate provision

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[2] The 2015-20 Learning and Teaching Strategy is available at
http://www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_433176_en.pdf
[3] The University's student record system

Growing our postgraduate portfolio and population continues to be a priority for the University and we recognise the need to ensure our processes, policies and services keep pace with demand. The four College Graduate Schools were formed during the restructuring of the University in 2009. Their remit is to support, nurture and develop a vibrant, supportive and stimulating environment for Postgraduate Taught (PGT) and Postgraduate Research (PGR) students. All four have now developed and agreed strategies in place to ensure a high quality postgraduate student experience.

The ELIR Team noted that the University has in place codes of practice for postgraduate research students at institutional and college levels, but identified some conflicting advice contained therein[4]. We recognise the importance of ensuring that information is consistent, and a thorough review of the materials was undertaken during the summer of 2014 and the necessary changes made. Such reviews are now being carried out annually.

The ELIR Team also commented on the postgraduate experience in the context of the different monitoring and review processes which are applied to postgraduate taught and research provision, suggesting that the University should reflect on how the Graduate Schools maintain oversight of the totality of the postgraduate student experience[5]. The concern was that the annual progress review for individual PGR students was not equivalent to the annual monitoring process of the overall programme that occurs for postgraduate taught programmes, and does not include a broader review of student progression, or student feedback and engagement with training and research courses, across the postgraduate research student cohort.

The following arrangements are in place to maintain oversight of PGR and PGT experience. Academic governance structures require each College to have a Graduate School Board and a College Learning and Teaching Committee[6]. Graduate School Boards provide oversight of PGR and PGT programmes with regard to strategic matters and have responsibility for the pastoral support of both groups of students. College Learning and Teaching Committee take responsibility for curricular matters in relation to PGT programmes. It is recognised that there is a need for appropriate dialogue between these committees, and they are required to report to one another. This overlap has recently been demonstrated by a theme emerging from Period Subject Review (of Undergraduate and PGT programmes) that relates to Graduate Teaching Assistants (exclusively recruited from the active cohort of postgraduate research students). Deans (Learning and Teaching) and Deans (Graduate Studies) are meeting to discuss the issues and propose a way forward. They made an initial report to the October 2015 meeting of the Academic Standards Committee and, arising from that discussion, the Deans have been asked to reflect further on the development of a clear and consistent policy for GTA support and training.

With regard to the annual monitoring function, PGT programmes lend themselves to similar treatment to undergraduate programmes. Postgraduate research students, however, are fewer in number and follow more individual pathways. The equivalent annual monitoring function for them as a group is carried out by the Graduate School Board whose remit includes monitoring of a comprehensive range of issues concerning the PGR student experience: admissions; the appointment of supervisors, examiners and advisers; supervisor training; examinations, progress and assessment; and student induction and consideration of the provision of generic and research skills training for PGR students. We have not yet reflected on the operation of these procedures to determine where they might be strengthened. This action will be developed in the new year as a contributor to the strategic objective to achieve "Improved Administrative support of teaching and the student

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[4] ELIR Outcome Report, para 18
[5] ELIR Outcome Report, para16
[6] Standard remits are provided here http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/humanresources/mgrs-admin/rolesresponsibilities/#d.en.262245

experience…through increased clarity and consistency of roles and professional support structures aligned to effective systems". Another aspect where we recognise scope for improvement in relation to our PGR students' experience is in student representation. Analysis of the student representative figures before and after the introduction of Student Voice shows a small increase. While this increase is positive, the issue remains challenging, with further work to be done to engage PGR students more fully in representation structures. A number of activities are under discussion with the SRC.

> **Aim 3.** Via a robust, transparent and fair admissions policy, to attract the best talent, irrespective of background, to engage in and successfully complete their study at this University. In doing so, to remain the leading University of choice for talented students from under-represented groups

We welcome the ELIR team's recognition of our successful track record in recruiting and supporting widening participation students[7] and restate our ongoing commitment to improving retention for students from MD40 backgrounds as well as other 'retention risk' students. Current activities being supported include an additional Orientation event and targeted support e-communications throughout Year 1. Our approach aims to identify those students who may need additional help, and to provide targeted support without such students perceiving that they are being singled out in any way. The Retention and Success Working Group has recently been replaced by a new Student Transitions Group to refocus work on a wider group of students and range of transitions throughout the student journey. This will also provide a forum for engagement with the current national Enhancement Theme. With regard to MD20 & MD40 students specifically, the recruitment target has been adjusted and is now more realistic; the WP admissions policy has been improved and promotion of WP entry routes and support enhanced. The latest data shows good progress on MD retention rates. Although overall it is still below our target, we are pleased to report that the MD20 figure already exceeds the target for 2017-18.

One of the alternative routes into the University for international students is via the Glasgow International College. As the ELIR Team noted, the University and the College work closely together to ensure the coherence of academic pathways and the integration of College students into the University environment. Progression from GIC to the University has increase from 60% in 2012-13 to 76% in 2014-15. Although GIC student progression and performance are improving, more action is required to ensure they reach the desired level. Academic colleagues from GIC and the University are meeting regularly to forge closer relations. The area where the greatest intervention is required is in the diversification of the GIC student body, both in terms of nationality and subject spread. The GIC student body remains predominantly East Asian and focussed on subjects within College of Social Sciences, particularly the Adam Smith Business School. A new joint recruitment strategy has been developed and targets have been agreed until 2018-19. Work is ongoing across all four Colleges to ensure GIC students have access to as wide a range of programmes as possible.

> **Aim 4.** To ensure that staff have excellent skills in teaching, in motivating and supporting student learning, have opportunities to continue to develop and improve their skills throughout their careers and that their excellence is recognised, celebrated and rewarded

The ELIR Team recognised good practice and areas for development in the area of supporting staff[8]. This reflects the University's view of its current position and also its belief

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[7] ELIR Outcome Report, para 5
[8] ELIR Outcome Report, para 9 and 15

that well supported staff will benefit the whole community, with a positive impact on the student learning experience.

The Learning and Teaching Development Fund continues to be oversubscribed and successful, in terms of attracting many strong bids. For the most recent round, 31 bids were received, but available resources meant only 9 were funded. One of the key requirements of funding is the potential of the project for impact across the University. To explore and evidence this further, the Learning and Teaching Centre has recently completed an HEA-funded project entitled 'Strategic Learning and Teaching Enhancement through funded teaching interventions'. This project investigated the impact of LTDF by analysing the outcomes of LTDF projects from the past 15 years to identify the nature, impact and longevity of the projects and specifically to identify those that have evolved to become embedded practices. The project aimed to identify factors that contribute to 'success stories' in order to influence future iterations of the LTDF process and the support we provide to funded projects. The findings of the project will be shared with the University Learning and Teaching Committee early in 2016.

The ELIR Team encouraged the University to continue developing its promotions criteria and the process for supporting the career development of staff on teaching, learning and scholarship contracts[9]. The University currently has in place a People and Organisational Development Strategy. This will be reviewed and refreshed following approval of the new University Strategy in summer 2015. Meanwhile, a short-life working group has been established with the specific objectives to: review and update the criteria for the recognition of teaching excellence used in promotions processes; propose revisions to the promotions process that will allow teaching excellence to be more effectively evaluated; and specifically for the Learning and Teaching promotions track, develop a coherent promotions pathway and propose revisions to the Performance and Development Review process that will support the career development of staff more effectively. Good progress is being made towards these objectives, and recommendations, expected towards the end of 2015, will be reviewed by Vice-Principals.

The University is also continuing to monitor the effectiveness of its approach to supporting continuing professional development for staff at all stages of their career. In our Reflective Analysis, we reported that the Learning and Teaching Centre was putting in place supporting structures for established academics to engage in CPD through a Continuing Professional Development Framework.   The Recognising Excellence in Teaching (RET) CPD Framework and Recognition Scheme was accredited by the Higher Education Academy in 2014. The Scheme is aimed at engaging all staff with a teaching or supporting learning role in a development process that will allow them to gain recognition for their practice. The Framework will bring greater structure and progression to the existing range of CPD opportunities.   The Scheme was piloted in 2014-15 with a select cohort of participants for the Associate (8) and Senior Fellow (13) categories of recognition.

Aim 5. To continually develop our assessment and feedback methods to be effective in promoting student learning, and efficient in their use of staff time.

In the reiteration of the Action Plan in summer 2014, no specific institution-wide actions were identified. However, assessment and feedback continues to be a priority for the University, as for many other institutions. In June 2015, Education and Policy Strategy Committee received an institutional and sector comparison of NSS scores in the Assessment and Feedback section. This was by way of introducing the topic of assessment and feedback as a focus of work for the next strategic period. Improving assessment and feedback scores in the NSS will be a Key Performance Indicator for the University going forward.

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[9] ELIR Outcome Report, para 15

Aim 6. To enhance the quality of our learning and teaching and uphold our academic standards while streamlining wherever possible the associated administrative processes

The University takes a robust approach to the enhancement of quality and maintenance of academic standards. We review the related administrative processes annually therefore a great deal of information is generated and recorded in the Learning and Teaching Action Plan. The summary provided here focuses on the processes that feature in the ELIR reports.

The ELIR Team identified the consistent application of assessment regulations in relation to Exam Boards as an area for development, suggesting that we 'continue to monitor the impact of the University's guidelines on the use of discretion by exam boards to ensure consistent application of the assessment regulations across all exam boards'[10]. On consideration of this point, it was agreed that direct monitoring would require significant disproportionate effort and staff time. However, it was further agreed that Senate Office would undertake to monitor the operation of the guidelines through the Academic Regulations Sub-Committee and Academic Standards Committee and, periodically, through engagement with the Colleges. Following some clarification and revision of the guidelines, ARSC noted that there were fewer comments from external examiners regarding the exercise of discretion (December 2014). During 2014-15, one academic appeal included an issue regarding the exercise of discretion; the Senate Office responded by providing a briefing for the School concerned. A small number of queries regarding the exercise of discretion arise annually and we expect this to continue. Anecdotally, the evidence is that Exam Boards are implementing the Guidelines. Any misunderstandings identified are always addressed.

The University welcomes the ELIR Team's encouraging comments on our approaches to identifying and sharing good practice[11]. It is an area that sees significant effort and activity across the academic community, including the Learning and Teaching Conference, Learning and Teaching Development Fund, Teaching awards, and is supported by information gathering via administrative processes. However, we believe there remains real scope to improve the impact of this work on enhancing learning and teaching and continue our efforts to raise awareness more effectively of areas of strength from which other parts of the University might learn. The most recent round of LTDF has supported a bid entitled 'GUIT: building a "best practice" online community' to develop a systematic approach to picking up local activity and making it readily accessible across the University.

Aim 7. To continue to build on our strong student-staff partnership to promote student engagement with learning and enhance student success

This is an important activity for us and we are proud of our positive relationship with the Students' Representative Council (SRC). Responding to student feedback on our provision has become embedded in our culture over the years and we are committed to improving our communications with students to ensure they know their engagement and contributions are valued.

One of the areas for development identified in the ELIR reports concerned the clarity of purpose of the Student Voice[12]. The University's intention was for the portal to provide a means of direct communication between students and their representatives and to facilitate other student-to-student communication. At the time of ELIR, usage was relatively low and staff and students were using other media. Since August 2014, usage has increased substantially, with 21,546 unique student users and 681,000 page views recorded. The number of topics raised has also increased to 2,633 from 1,074 last year. These usage

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[10] ELIR Outcome Report, para 17
[11] ELIR Outcome Report, para 10
[12] ELIR Outcome Report, para 14

statistics and the SRC's summer 2014 consultation on the Student Voice both indicate that there is a demand for a student-to-student forum. However, a limited proportion of the current use reflects the University's original purpose. A number of changes have been made to encourage different patterns of use. These have improved functionality, but have not seen much more engagement in discussion of academic issues. SRC, Senate Office and IT Services representatives now meet on a quarterly basis to plan further development, management and promotion activities. The next round of promotion activity will be planned to coincide with the arrival of the new intake of students. The Senate Office will engage with staff in Schools and Subject areas to promote the potential uses of the Student Voice with regard to posting Student-Staff Liaison Committee minutes and highlighting where student feedback has effected positive change. The SRC will also continue to promote Student Voice to new Class Reps through their training events and other fora. It is hoped that promoting awareness of the Student Voice and its structure to new students will encourage academic related discussion.

Course evaluation is a core method of gathering student feedback and input to quality enhancement. It takes engagement and participation in quality beyond the class representatives to the wider student body. We are working to improve our course evaluation processes to maximise their benefit. A Course Evaluation policy was developed during Session 2014-15 for implementation across the University for Session 2015-16. The policy stipulates that all courses must use a course feedback questionnaire that incorporates 5 core questions. It provides a range of optional question sets that can be added to gather data on specific topics and also emphasises the importance of closing the feedback loop. To facilitate the implementation of the policy, the University has adopted EvaSys Course Evaluation Software which greatly simplifies the design and distribution of questionnaires and the collation of data. EvaSys roll-out is progressing well across the University and, to date, 17 of the 19 Schools have adopted the system.

The Central Surveys Unit was established in 2014 to enhance analysis of the data sets generated by the various student surveys, e.g. National Student Survey, Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey, Postgraduate Research Experience Survey, Student Barometer, etc. The Unit has had a successful first year, with a fresh approach to reporting and maintaining the high participation rate of previous years for the 2015 NSS. The profile and awareness of PTES has been raised, and the manner of data distribution improved. Following disappointing participation rates for the Student Barometer and the International Student Barometer, the Unit are consulting with key members of staff to replace the Student Barometer with something that is more fit for purpose, more flexible and more timely.

> **Aim 8.** To embed and make transparent within our programmes, and throughout the student experience, the opportunities for the development of attributes that enhance the personal and professional development of our students so preparing them for global employment and citizenship

The Graduate Attributes project[13] has been very useful for staff in developing understanding of how generic skill sets are embedded in the curriculum. We have noted that, while students can talk about the skills they are developing through their courses and programmes and other activities, they are less aware of the term 'graduate attributes'. As of July 2015, we are considering new approaches to supporting further development. This includes reviewing the currently vacant Graduate Attributes Development Adviser post with a view to creating another, more focused on supporting and strengthening student engagement and participation in activities that contribute to graduate attribute development.

Our intention to increase outward student mobility is being taken forward via the Strategy to Create International Experiences for Students (SCIES) which outlines the broad range of

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[13] ELIR Outcome Report, para 8

activities which our students can engage in, including learning, study, work or volunteering, to internationalise their experience. Actions being taken to support this strategy include the introduction of a new marketing strategy for promotion of globalisation/mobility at UG level and new procedures for grade conversion and grade mapping, new support and recognition for mobility co-ordinators.

Work-based and Placement Learning opportunities are another element of preparing students for global employment and citizenship. In 2014, the University used SFC strategic funding for employability to fund five projects with work-based or placement learning elements. Graduate recruiters were identified as 'critical friends' to the projects to help the project leads gain a better understanding of the needs of employers and their expectations of academics. All five projects presented at the University's Learning and Teaching Conference in April 2015. The project in the College of Social Sciences has had a positive impact, leading to further investment in the work. In each of the other Colleges, the participation in the projects has stimulated internal discussion about sustainability.

> **Aim 9.** To continually improve our physical and virtual learning space to be a robust, accessible, and sustainable platform for innovation in our provision and the enhancement of student learning

Physical learning space is an issue which will ultimately be resolved through the planned expansion of the campus. The Campus Development Framework was approved by University Court and Glasgow City Council in 2014 following extensive public consultation. This major development project - which is larger than the original campus - is by nature a long-term solution. Current constraints continue to be challenging for staff and students. However, a theme running through our plans is the need to ensure the campus will accommodate future Learning and Teaching needs both in terms of capacity and pedagogy, and the first major initiative of the Campus Development Framework will be the creation of a purpose-built Learning and Teaching Hub to give the University more space and to enhance the student experience. The Hub will provide a 500- and a 300-seat lecture theatre that can be configured as one 800-seat auditorium to increase large teaching space capacity, alongside 1,250 learning spaces for students in a range of configurations, including individual formal and informal study space, bookable group study/teaching spaces and computer/IT suites of various sizes. The ambitious 18-month build period will begin at the end of 2015.

Next Steps

As noted above, the University is embarking on a new strategic period. Our new Strategic Plan for 2015-2020 was approved by the University Court in June 2015, and the new Learning & Teaching Strategy was endorsed by Senate in October 2015.

Technology-enhanced learning and online learning are key features across the range of the University's strategies[14]. We recognise the interrelationship of pedagogy, estates and information technology (IT) infrastructure as central to successful enhancement of the student learning experience in the future. Our current reporting structures were established before the need to align these activities became apparent. Steps are being taken to address this, as reflected in the recent expansion of the role of the Vice-Principal Learning and Teaching[15] to include oversight of the University's IT strategy. This will facilitate alignment of these two key strategies and help to ensure that learning and teaching activity across the University is securely underpinned by effective IT infrastructure.

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[14] ELIR Outcome Report, para 13
[15] Vice Principal (Academic and Educational Innovation) from July 2015

The University has embarked on strategic development of its online learning provision, and, though our BOLD (Blended and Online Learning Delivery) project, has committed £2.34M in 2013/14-2018/19 for the development of new programmes and courses and the adaptation of existing conventionally-delivered provision. Oversight of the development is carried out by a project board, with strategic oversight from the University Senior Management Group. Care is being taken to ensure quality and academic standards and their maintenance are consistent with our other provision and that appropriate infrastructure is in place to provide, inter alia, appropriate student support. Initiatives have been approved across the University, with particularly significant investment in the development of PGT programmes in the College of Medical, Veterinary & Life Sciences. Central investment has been augmented by the commitment of additional College funds including the appointment of an Associate Dean for Digital Education.

As these and other new Strategies are confirmed, we will continue our approach of using action plans to manage the streams of work that will move us forward to successful achievement of objectives.

In the most recent round of updates on the current Learning & Teaching Action Plan, we added metrics to evaluate progress in a more quantitative way. This has met with varying degrees of success. For some Action Owners, there was a disproportionate effort to obtain data; others were sceptical about the meaningfulness of the measures. In future, we will agree metrics and measures at the outset of projects, accepting that there will inevitably be some valuable activities that do not easily lend themselves to quantitative evaluation.