Enhancement-led Institutional Review of the University of Glasgow

Outcome Report

March 2014

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About the Enhancement-led Institutional Review method

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

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

About this review

This is the Outcome Report of the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at the University of Glasgow. The review took place as follows: Part 1 visit on 19-20 February 2014 and Part 2 visit on 24-28 March 2014. The review was conducted by a team of six reviewers:

- Dr Lorraine Anderson (Academic Reviewer)
- Professor Hilary Grainger (Academic Reviewer)
- Dr Tina Harrison (Academic Reviewer)
- Professor Bairbre Redmond (International Reviewer)
- Mr Edward Woodhouse III (Student Reviewer)
- Ms Rhiannon Tinsley (Coordinating 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.

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[1] Further information about the ELIR method: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/enhancement-led-institutional-review
[2] Further information about QAA: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us
[3] ELIR information document: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication/?PubID=61
[4] Technical report: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/provider?UKPRN=10007794

About the University of Glasgow

The University of Glasgow (the University) was founded in 1451 and is one of the oldest universities in the UK. Its mission is to undertake world-leading research and to provide an intellectually stimulating learning environment, thus delivering benefits to culture, society and the economy.

The University has undergone major restructuring since the 2010 ELIR, with four new colleges, 19 schools and seven research institutes replacing nine faculties and more than 50 departments.

The strategic direction of the University is articulated in its strategic plan: Glasgow 2020: A Global Vision. The strategy has three aims: a focus on student and research funders' needs; an ambition to extend its global reach to become a 'truly international' university, and the encouragement of multidisciplinary research.

Overarching judgement about the University of Glasgow

The University of Glasgow 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 culture of self-evaluation** - The University has an effective culture of self-evaluation which enables it to identify successful practice in one area and then adapt and mainstream this for the benefit of the wider student body. An example of this is academic writing skills support which began as a Learning and Teaching Development Fund (LTDF) project in the College of Arts. This was subsequently rolled out to other schools and then made available to all students through the formation of the Writing Centre.

3   **Delivery of strategic objectives** - Following restructuring, the role of dean of learning and teaching has been created at the college level and international dean at the institutional level. These senior roles are playing an important part in delivering the University's strategic objectives in relation to learning and teaching and internationalisation, and are also supporting the dissemination of good practice across the institution.

4   **Student engagement** - The University has a strong commitment to student engagement. There is a positive relationship with the Student Representative Council (SRC), and students are clear that their contributions are valued and acted upon. There are opportunities for student views to be considered at all levels of the institution, and formal student representation has been strengthened by the inclusion of 12 student members on the recently established Council of Senate.

5   **Strategic approach to widening participation** - The University has a successful track record in recruiting and supporting widening participation students and has in place a range of widening participation initiatives. In particular, students who had participated in the Top Up programme were very positive about the support they received. The programme helps secondary school pupils to develop academic skills in support of their transition to and retention in higher education. The University is now developing its strategic approach to widening participation by creating the MD40 group, which brings together academic and support staff from across the University to promote an integrated approach to supporting the success of MD40 students.

6   **Use of data to support student progress** - The University undertakes detailed analysis of student data in relation to MD40 students. This enables it to identify those students who may need additional help, and to provide targeted support without such students being aware that they are being singled out in any way. The University now intends to expand this successful approach to supporting student progress to include its international students.

7   **Enhancing learning and teaching** - Students are very positive about their learning experience at the University. They recognise the benefits of being part of an increasingly international community, in particular the range of different learning perspectives brought by

a growing diversity of nationalities. Students are also aware of the University's commitment to research-led teaching, and they spoke positively during the review about the way in which research-led teaching is helping them to develop their own research skills.

8   **Graduate attributes** - The University's arrangements for delivering graduate attributes are systematic and the role of Graduate Attribute Champion in each college is an effective mechanism for ensuring that graduate attributes are embedded into the curriculum. There is effective monitoring of the embedding of graduate attributes through the annual monitoring and periodic subject review processes.

9   **The Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice** - The Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP) is an effective mechanism for enhancing the student learning experience. University Teachers who participated in the programme were very positive about it, recognising its benefits in developing their learning and teaching capabilities and improving their understanding of the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy. The case study approach of the PGCAP supports the dissemination of good practice at the subject level and PGCAP participants were widely acknowledged by more experienced members of staff to be drivers of innovation in learning and teaching.

10   **Dissemination of good practice** - The University has a range of effective mechanisms in place for identifying and sharing good practice, including an annual Learning and Teaching Conference, Teaching Excellence Awards and the Learning and Teaching Development Fund (LTDF). Each call for proposals for LTDF projects is aligned with priorities identified in the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy and the national Enhancement Themes, and there is also a requirement that LTDF projects must be able to be mainstreamed and sustainable.

11   **Support for international students** - The Overseas Immersion Programme is an effective mechanism for enhancing the learning experience of international students on collaborative programmes. It is a four-week intensive programme with academic and cultural elements, delivered in Glasgow, which provides opportunities for Singapore-based students to work with academic staff on a project-based assignment. Students who met the ELIR team were positive about their experience of the programme, commenting that it enabled them to feel part of the University community and to engage with their programme of study.

Areas for development

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

13   **Support for technology-enhanced learning** - The University has identified e-learning as a focus for driving enhancement, and has recently published its E-Learning Strategy which sets out its ambitions for technology-enhanced learning underpinned by a robust information technology (IT) infrastructure. Staff understand and support the vision for technology-enhanced learning, however, as the University recognises in its IT Services Review Report, it is important to communicate the implications of the strategy to all areas of the University so that the appropriate IT infrastructure is in place to support delivery. In taking forward the implementation of the E-Learning Strategy the University should also reflect on the need to put in place appropriate staff development, as well as considering the role and location of learning technologists within the University to ensure there is appropriate support across all areas.

14   **The Student Voice portal** - The Student Voice portal has been developed from the Student Voice website to facilitate student engagement and feedback. However, there is a lack of clarity about the purpose and ownership of the Portal among staff and students.

Although the portal is intended to link students to their student representatives and to facilitate student-to-student communication, use of the portal is intermittent and students and staff are using other media for such communication. The University is encouraged to consider the effectiveness of the system in consultation with the student body.

15   **Career progression for University Teachers** - The University is encouraged to continue developing its promotions criteria and the process for supporting the career development of staff on teaching, learning and scholarship contracts.

16   **Oversight of the postgraduate student experience** - In the context of the different monitoring and review processes which are applied to postgraduate taught and research provision, the University should reflect on how the graduate schools maintain oversight of the totality of the postgraduate student experience.

17   **Consistent application of assessment regulations in relation to exam boards** - 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.

18   **Consistency of information** - Ensure consistency of the information provided to staff and students. The University has in place codes of practice for postgraduate research students at both the institutional and college levels, and there are some examples of conflicting advice in the different codes, for example regarding extensions to period of study, and leave of absence.

What happens next?

19   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.

20   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

21   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.

22   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.

23   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.

24   Further information about QAA Scotland and the enhancement-led approach, including the ELIR method, can be found on the QAA website.

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