

Enhancement-led Institutional Review of the University of Glasgow

Technical 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 Technical 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)

In advance of the review visits, the University submitted a self-evaluative document (the Reflective Analysis) and an advance information set, comprising a range of materials about the institution's arrangements for managing quality and academic standards. In addition, the University submitted three case studies on: Widening Access and Success; Developing Academic Writing Skills; and Developing Graduate Attributes.

About this report

In this report, the ELIR team:

- delivers an overarching judgement 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.

The overarching judgement can be found on page 3, followed by the detailed findings of the review given in numbered paragraphs.

ELIR Technical Reports are intended primarily for the institution which hosted the review, and to provide an information base for the production of thematic reports which identify findings across several institutions.

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/aboutus

³ ELIR information document: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication/?PubID=61

Technical Reports set out the ELIR team's view under each of the report headings. Shorter Outcome Reports are provided which set out the main findings of the ELIR for a wider audience. The [Outcome Report](#) for this review is on the QAA website.⁴

⁴ Outcome Report: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/provider?UKPRN=10007794

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.

1 Institutional context and strategic framework

1.1 Key features of the institution's context and mission

1 The University of Glasgow 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.

2 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 process began in 2009 and was led by the new Vice-Chancellor and senior staff. Restructuring has fostered self-evaluation and led to newly created roles, including the deans of learning and teaching and international deans, which are intended to bring fresh perspectives to the development of the University.

3 The strategic direction of the University is articulated in its strategic plan: Glasgow 2020: A Global Vision. The strategy was published in 2010 and it 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. Progress towards implementing the strategic plan has been supported by a series of transformational projects which the University sees as being key to the achievement of the strategy. These include: the restructuring of the University; the Student Lifecycle Project, which sought to support revised student support systems and led to the introduction of the MyCampus student information system; the internationalisation of the student population; and a sustained commitment to student engagement with a focus on enhancing the student experience. The University states that 'the transformative projects seek to enhance an already excellent student experience and maintain existing high academic standards'.

4 The University has used the transformational projects as opportunities to reflect on lessons learned in order to inform its evolving strategy. Students and staff who met the ELIR team were mainly positive about the challenges posed by the significant institutional changes, and could identify potential benefits. The University has placed considerable emphasis on communication and this has been beneficial in fostering the positive response.

1.2 Strategic approach to enhancing learning and teaching

5 The strategic approach to learning and teaching is embodied in the University Learning and Teaching Strategy (2010-15) which is being delivered through an action plan comprising nine high-level projects: Assessment and Feedback; Graduate Attributes; Infrastructure; Campus Solutions; Retention; Equality and Diversity; Innovation in our Provision; Staff Development; and Process Improvement. Each learning and teaching project has been assigned to a senior member of staff and there are key performance indicators in place to test the delivery of the strategic objectives. Progress is monitored by the University's Education Policy and Strategy Committee, which reports to Senate.

6 The Learning and Teaching Strategy is also enabled by school and college learning and teaching plans. College learning and teaching plans are updated on an annual basis, with reference to University strategic priorities, and the Learning and Teaching Committee receives and reviews annual reports from each college on learning and teaching plans. However, in their learning and teaching plans colleges may weight University strategic priorities differently and this has the potential to make institutional oversight of learning and teaching enhancement challenging.

7 The University has, following restructuring, created the role of dean of learning and teaching at the college level to ensure effective engagement of colleges and schools in University decision-making. The deans of learning and teaching play an important role in providing a bridge between the schools and the centre, and in coordinating and harmonising cross-institutional goals and initiatives. This is particularly important for the learning experience of students who study on programmes that cross college boundaries. The deans identify issues that are relevant to their schools and colleges and prepare action plans to address these, and local and University-level investment funds are available to support enhancement initiatives. The University is clear that the purpose of this new role should be to add value to what schools do, rather than adding to their burden.

8 The deans of learning and teaching, together with the international deans (see paragraph 2) 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 University.

1.3 Effectiveness of the approach to implementing strategies

9 The University has a highly devolved structure, with responsibility for quality processes, action planning and implementation of institutional strategies devolved to schools and colleges in order that these may be appropriate to the local context and student needs. This can have positive benefits but it is important that the University maintains institutional oversight to ensure parity of the student learning experience across the institution. The University is aware of this and has taken steps to ensure effective oversight following restructuring by, for example, appointing the deans of learning and teaching.

10 Since the last ELIR in 2010 the University has restructured in order to more effectively implement its strategic plan: Glasgow 2020: A Global Vision. The University recognises the importance of effective communication in managing change and has sought to engage staff and students in open consultation meetings, called Campus Conversations, to ensure understanding of and buy-in to its strategic objectives and future ambitions. The Campus Conversation events have been well attended and are viewed by staff and students as a positive means of engagement, and the University is planning to offer more of these events. In addition, the University has recently appointed an internal communications manager, which represents a change in focus for the University from external communication to enhancing its internal communication with staff and students.

11 The University has identified technology-enhanced learning as the key enhancement driver for future development of the student learning experience and sees the relationship between pedagogy, estates and information technology (IT) infrastructure as central to its ambitions in this area. The University recognises that when future campus developments are being considered it will be important to take account of IT needs in relation to any changes in pedagogy arising as a result of reconfigured learning and teaching spaces. The University's intention is that the IT Strategy will align with the Learning and Teaching Strategy, however reporting on the IT strategy is to the Information Policy and Strategy Committee and reporting on the Learning and Teaching Strategy is to the Learning

and Teaching Committee, so close monitoring will be required to ensure that the two strategies are aligned.

12 The recently published E-Learning Strategy sets out the University's ambitions for technology-enhanced learning underpinned by a robust 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.

13 The University has an effective approach to implementing strategies and is using the large-scale transformational projects to support delivery of the strategic plan. In particular, staff who met the ELIR team highlighted the Campus Conversations initiative as being an effective mechanism to raise awareness about developments across the University in a consultative manner.

2 Enhancing the student learning experience

2.1 Composition and key trends in the student population, including typical routes into and through the institution

14 In 2012-13 the University had a total headcount of 26,635 students, of which 20,012 were undergraduate students, 4,612 taught postgraduate students and 2,011 research postgraduate students. There has been an overall increase in the total student population of around four per cent since the last ELIR, with the main increase coming from EU and international undergraduate and postgraduate students. There has been a decline of six per cent in undergraduate home students. The increase in international students is not evenly spread across the University, and the Adam Smith Business School in particular has a very high proportion of international students as a result of high student demand and strong recruitment from South East Asia.

15 The University recruits a significant proportion of students from the wider Glasgow area and around 25 per cent of students studying at the University are from the most deprived areas in Scotland. The University's commitment to widening participation is evidenced in its Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council, which outlines the University's commitment to widen access further and improve the retention of MD40 students.

16 The University works with Kaplan UK Ltd, who operate Glasgow International College to support the recruitment of international students. 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. In 2013-14, 72 per cent of Glasgow International College students progressed to the University, a notable increase from the 60 per cent who progressed in 2012-13.

2.2 Supporting equality and diversity in the student population

17 The University has an effective approach to supporting equality and diversity. This is embodied in the Equality and Diversity Strategy and supported by the Equality and Diversity Unit which was established in 2007. There are also six equality champions, drawn from the University's senior management group, who promote equality and diversity

across the institution and report regularly to the Equality and Diversity Strategy Committee. The University was awarded an Athena SWAN Institutional Bronze award in April 2013.

18 The University has a successful track record in recruiting and supporting widening participation students. The University's use of contextual data for admissions was highlighted as a model for the higher education sector by the Scottish Funding Council in 2011, and there are a range of initiatives in place to support the induction and aid the transition of widening participation students into the University. There is also a strong focus on supporting the success of such students once they have commenced their programme of study. In particular students who had participated in the Top Up programme, which helps secondary students to develop academic skills in support of their transition to and retention in higher education, were very positive about the support they had received.

19 The University recognises that students who have attended the Summer School or the Top Up Programme have higher continuation rates than those MD20 or MD40 students who have not attended any pre-entry programmes. 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 widening participation students.

20 The introduction of the MyCampus student information system has enabled detailed analysis of student data in relation to widening participation students. Progression data is employed to track student success and the University is using this data to identify MD40 students who may need additional help. The offer of academic support is emailed to identified students, but without them being aware that they are being singled out. This targeted intervention is effective in providing additional support for widening participation students without stigmatising them, and the University intends to expand this successful approach to include its international students.

21 Staff and students are positive about the University's approach to internationalisation and state that the expansion in numbers of international students is having a generally positive impact on the student experience. International students who met with the ELIR team commented that they are effectively integrated as members of the University of Glasgow community. In a small number of cases, notably in the Adam Smith Business School, the international diversity is more limited, with some courses being almost entirely populated by students from China, which impacts on the international experience for both home and EU and international students. The University is addressing this issue through the development of a more finely grained international recruitment strategy, which draws on the expertise of international deans and staff of the Recruitment and International Office in matching regional and learner needs to the University portfolio to help balance the student profile and the curriculum.

2.3 Engaging and supporting students in their learning

22 The University has maintained a strong focus on the student learning experience throughout the period of restructuring and has sought to safeguard this experience by putting maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the student learning experience at the heart of its Learning and Teaching Strategy.

23 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 ELIR visits about the way in which research-led teaching is helping them to develop their own research skills.

24 Since the 2010 ELIR the University has introduced a new academic advising system for undergraduate students which is now fully implemented in three of the four colleges. The system has introduced compulsory training and induction for advisers, a formal network of chief advisers, and the Chief Advisers Sub Committee, which supports the sharing of good practice and has made considerable progress towards a desired ratio of one adviser to 25 advisees. The University recognises that successful implementation has been due to an increased number of academic staff taking on the adviser role during a period of significant change.

25 A significant proportion of the student population comes from the most deprived areas in Scotland (see paragraph 15) and retention is identified as a priority in the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy. All student-facing services are, where possible, expected to report and reflect on information about the demographics of their user base and to note any discrepancies with the main student body. In addition, the University has an Adviser Early Warning System in place to identify students at risk of withdrawing by monitoring their attendance at classes and engagement with information technology. This approach allows advisers of studies to contact students when they have missed classes, and/or failed to log into the virtual learning environment, and to provide support for students who might otherwise have withdrawn from the University.

26 The University's Writing Centre has an effective approach to providing academic skills support for all students in all areas and at all levels. It undertakes diagnostic testing for a growing number of undergraduate and postgraduate students, as well as providing writing support online, in workshops and in one-to-one appointments tailored to the needs of students across the University. There is a focus on individualised feedback and students are positive about the support the Centre provides. The Centre developed from a Learning and Teaching Development Fund project in the College of Arts, and is a good example of the way in which the University evaluates initiatives and mainstreams good practice across the institution.

27 The 2010 ELIR commented positively on the partnership between the University and the Students' Representative Council (SRC), and this continues to be a strong and effective relationship. The University restructuring has had a positive impact on student representative structures with the introduction of school-level SRC representation. The University is currently considering how it can establish appropriate metrics to measure the impact of student representation.

28 The University has a strong commitment to student engagement 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 University, and formal student representation has been strengthened by the inclusion of 12 student members on the recently established Council of Senate. The University works closely with the SRC to provide training for student representatives, and there has been a significant increase in the number of students being trained over the last five years.

29 Each college has a graduate school and a dean of graduate studies, and the graduate school is central to the postgraduate student experience at the University, acting as a focal point for induction and training, as well as providing administrative and pastoral support. The University's researcher development programme is delivered through the graduate schools and supported centrally by the Research Strategy and Innovation Office. The post of researcher development officer, which supports the Researcher Development programme, is based in the Research Strategy and Innovation Office, and the University has

demonstrated its commitment to supporting researcher development by centrally funding this post, which was previously supported by Roberts funding, since 2012.

30 In addition to the graduate schools the University has made recent commitments to providing dedicated postgraduate space for academic, study and social purposes, including the Gilchrist Postgraduate Club. The Club is supported by a postgraduate development officer, who is employed by the SRC but funded by the University, and who has responsibility for postgraduate student engagement as well as facilitating a range of academic and social events and activities.

31 Both the University and the SRC are keen to enhance postgraduate student representation, particularly for postgraduate research (PGR) students, which continues to remain a challenge. The SRC has delivered specific PGR student representative training since 2011, and following restructuring the SRC has introduced the role of postgraduate convenor for each college to increase opportunities for postgraduate student representation. There has been some difficulty, however, in filling the postgraduate convenor roles through election. The opening of the Gilchrist Club has increased SRC engagement with PGR students, and it is anticipated that this will lead to better engagement in terms of postgraduate student representation.

32 The Student Voice portal was developed to promote student engagement and has evolved from the Student Voice website. Despite a clear understanding on the part of the University about the intended role of the portal in facilitating student engagement and feedback, there is a lack of clarity about the purpose and ownership of the Student Voice portal among staff and students. The portal is intended to link students to their representatives and to facilitate student-to-student communication. However, 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 portal in consultation with the student body.

33 Following a successful pilot the University is implementing software to enhance student feedback mechanisms. The new system will support the use of feedback questionnaires, tailored to meet the needs of the different schools. The implementation of the system is intended to facilitate the more systematic use of feedback to enhance the student learning experience, and the data will underpin annual monitoring and periodic review processes to enable comparison across the University.

2.4 Approaches to promoting the development of graduate attributes, including employability

34 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 routine monitoring in annual monitoring and periodic subject review processes.

35 Staff are aware of graduate attributes and understand how they are embedded in the curriculum. However, while the University recognises that there is a lack of awareness among students of the term graduate attributes in itself, students who met the ELIR team were able to talk about the associated skills they were developing through their courses and programmes and through co-curricular activities. The Graduate Attributes Student Handbook, which was developed as a result of a student-led project in 2010-11 and which has recently been updated, is designed to address this lack of awareness by providing an overview of how graduate attributes are developed within the context of the University.

The handbook is to be supplemented by a student-produced video which is intended to provide an accessible overview of how students develop graduate attributes through their academic and co-curricular activities.

2.5 Effectiveness of the approach to enhancing the student learning experience

36 The University has an effective approach to enhancing the student learning experience. The University is successful in supporting a diverse student population and is particularly effective in its approach to student engagement, the use of data to support student progress, and its strategic approach to supporting widening participation students.

3 Enhancement in learning and teaching

3.1 Approaches to identifying and sharing good practice

37 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). The LTDF has been in operation for over 10 years and has benefited from substantial investment in order to provide support for the development of learning and teaching related projects linked to institutional strategic priorities. Each call for proposals for LTDF projects is aligned with priorities identified in the University 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.

38 LTDF project outcomes are shared at the annual Learning and Teaching Conference and LTDF lunchtime seminars. The Learning and Teaching Conference, which provides staff with an opportunity to showcase positive practice, receives high-level support from senior colleagues in the University, attracts considerable numbers of participants and is viewed positively by academic staff as a vehicle for sharing good practice.

39 Where instances of good practice are identified and endorsed via periodic review, they are highlighted as 'commendations' which are then considered by Academic Standards Committee. This approach is reinforced and augmented by the Senate Office which identifies good practice from one periodic subject review report which corresponds to recommendations from another. Schools or subjects are then strongly encouraged to consider the good practice when responding to the recommendations. A summary of good practice arising from the periodic subject review process is disseminated by the Senate Office to the school level on an annual basis. This is an effective mechanism for the dissemination of good practice across schools.

40 The University's Teaching Excellence Awards are for innovation of provision, enhancement of the student learning experience, leadership in learning and teaching and the promotion of scholarship in learning and teaching. The awards are intended to raise the profile of learning and teaching and encourage the dissemination of good practice across the University. The Students' Representative Council (SRC) introduced a range of student-led teaching awards in 2011, which recognise excellence in teaching and support provided by a wide range of staff. Good practice identified by these awards is disseminated by inclusion in the winners booklet which is published by the SRC.

3.2 Impact of the national Enhancement Themes and related activity

41 Engagement with the national Enhancement Themes has been significant in enabling the University to take forward aspects of its strategic vision, and this engagement has had a demonstrable impact on policy and practice. The University has had a longstanding and positive engagement with the Enhancement Themes, and the impact of activity carried out under the auspices of the Themes is recognised and acknowledged by staff. For example, the development of a University work placement policy was informed by successful initiatives in response to the Graduates for the 21st Century (G21C) Theme, including a work placement initiative in the creative industries introduced by staff in one school.

42 Since the 2010 ELIR the University's engagement with the G21C Theme has led to the development of a strategic approach to embedding graduate attributes across the institution. There is reference to graduate attributes in each college learning and teaching plan, and monitoring of graduate attributes is embedded within standard University processes (see paragraph 33). Staff who met the ELIR team stated that graduate attributes have had a major impact on the institution, although they would not necessarily be recognised as being linked to the Enhancement Themes.

43 There has been positive engagement with the G21C Theme by professional courses, whereby the institutional graduate attributes have been mapped against professional standards, which was viewed as a very useful exercise by academic staff who met the ELIR team. Other staff, however, perceived the institutional approach to engaging with the national Enhancement Themes as being 'top-down', citing the linking of the national Enhancement Themes to criteria for LTDF bids as an example.

3.3 Engaging and supporting staff

44 The University has an effective approach to engaging and supporting staff.

45 The Learning and Teaching Centre plays a key role in the engagement of staff by providing training and support for staff in order to enhance student learning. The Centre offers a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP) which is aligned to the UK Professional Standards Framework and those who successfully complete the programme may apply for automatic recognition as a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. In some colleges, in particular the College of Science and Engineering and the College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences, staff consider that aspects of the PGCAP would be better developed in a disciplinary-specific mode. It is likely that, in future, in addition to a compulsory core, the programme will include a series of 10-credit courses drawing on content delivered at the school and/or college level.

46 The PGCAP is an effective mechanism for enhancing the student learning experience. University teaching staff 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.

47 The Learning and Teaching Centre also supports graduate teaching assistants (GTAs) by providing training which is delivered in collaboration with schools and colleges. All GTAs are required to undertake an introductory training session which covers the role of the graduate teaching assistant, an introduction to learning and teaching, and effective ways

to facilitate learning. The Centre is in the process of establishing a continuing professional development framework, to be accredited by the Higher Education Academy, which is aimed at all staff with a teaching or learning support role, allowing them to gain recognition for their practice.

48 Since the 2010 ELIR the University has developed a more structured approach to staff and organisational development and a key aspect of this has been the introduction of the Maximising Academic Performance and Career Development Project. The Project aims to address parity of esteem between teaching and research within the promotional structures by adopting a more rigorous approach to the development of clear performance targets and promotional criteria for learning and teaching, as well as research and teaching, career pathways, which are aligned with University strategic priorities in relation to delivering a high-quality student experience and excellent research.

49 Although these developments are intended to provide clarity to staff about expectations in relation to performance criteria, staff who met the ELIR team expressed a lack of understanding about how those seeking professorial promotion on the learning and teaching pathway might meet the criteria. The University is encouraged to continue to develop its promotions criteria and the process for supporting the career development of staff on teaching, learning and scholarship contracts.

3.4 Effectiveness of the approach to promoting good practice in learning and teaching

50 The University has an effective approach to promoting good practice in learning and teaching. The Learning and Teaching Development Fund projects, Teaching Excellence Awards, the annual Learning and Teaching Conference, and the PGCAP are an effective set of mechanisms for the support, recognition and reward of effective learning and teaching practice. In particular, the creation of deans of learning and teaching to support and coordinate learning and teaching initiatives, together with school learning and teaching conveners within colleges, is an effective mechanism for enhancing learning and teaching.

4 Academic standards

4.1 Approach to setting, maintaining and reviewing academic standards

51 The University has systematic processes in place for setting, maintaining and reviewing academic standards.

52 The University's Academic Quality Framework sets out the procedures for course and programme design and approval, annual monitoring, external examining and periodic subject review, as well as University services review and professional, statutory and regulatory body review. The framework identifies efficiency and enhancement as underlying principles, with the acknowledgement that efficiency in this context relies on significant devolution of responsibilities in relation to setting, maintaining and reviewing academic standards.

53 Following restructuring, the processes for course and programme design and approval have been devolved to schools and colleges. This is working well and as part of the restructuring review in October 2012 it was concluded that the operation of college boards of studies was working effectively and no concerns were reported. There is evidence that the design and approval processes are being joined up with University priorities, particularly in terms of the embedding of graduate attributes, where they are effective in establishing and embedding graduate attributes within programmes.

54 The graduate schools have responsibility for reviewing both postgraduate taught degrees and postgraduate research degrees, and postgraduate taught programmes are normally reviewed alongside undergraduate degree programmes as part of the annual monitoring and periodic review processes. There is an annual progression review for all postgraduate research students at the end of each year. However, this is not equivalent to the annual monitoring process of the overall programme that occurs for postgraduate taught programmes, as it 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.

55 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.

4.2 Management of assessment

56 The University has an effective approach to the management of assessment. Generic regulations are in place for all types of degrees and are being used effectively. There are processes in place for the regular review and update of regulations, and supplementary guidance is made available as necessary to provide additional clarity.

57 Following the 2010 ELIR the University developed guidance on discretion for exam boards to ensure consistency across exam boards. This guidance was reviewed further and discussed at Academic Standards Committee in February 2014 and discussion at this Committee suggested that there is still the potential for variability. The University should ensure consistent application of the assessment regulations across all exam boards and continue to monitor the impact of the University's guidelines on the use of discretion by exam boards.

58 The University has in place codes of assessment 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. The University should ensure the consistency of information provided to staff and students.

4.3 Use of external reference points in managing academic standards

59 The University makes effective use of a range of external reference points in managing its academic standards.

60 Subject benchmark statements are an important reference point in course and programme design, and the way in which provision relates to the subject benchmarks is evaluated during the periodic subject review process.

61 The advance information set confirms that the approach to external examiners meets the Expectation of *Chapter B7: External examining* of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code). The University undertakes effective analysis of trends and issues arising from external examiner reports which are reported to the Academic Standards Committee for action. There is an effective approach to induction for external examiners and the University provides guidelines on report completion, although based on the sample of reports considered by the ELIR team there would be benefit in external examiners providing more detail in the enhancement section of the report.

4.4 Effectiveness of the arrangements for securing academic standards

62 The University has effective arrangements in place for securing academic standards. The processes and procedures for securing academic standards are thorough and well established, and meet sector expectations. Although there is a need for the University to ensure consistency of information provided to staff and students and in the use of discretion by exam boards, overall there is an effective quality framework and committee structure in place which enables the University to maintain appropriate oversight of its devolved quality management processes.

5 Self-evaluation and management of information

5.1 Key features of the institution's approach

63 The University has an effective culture of self-evaluation which meets sector expectations including Scottish Funding Council guidance and the Quality Code.

64 Since the 2010 ELIR the University has sought to enhance its annual monitoring process by, for example, including reference to strategic priorities in annual monitoring forms. Annual monitoring is devolved to schools and colleges via the quality officers who have oversight of the process through the Quality Officers' Forum, which reports to Academic Standards Committee. Quality officers are asked to provide feedback on the process and effectiveness of annual monitoring, and the Quality Officers Forum is an effective mechanism for the discussion and sharing of good practice in relation to this.

65 The approach to periodic review is well established and meets Scottish Funding Council and Quality Code expectations, which is confirmed by the advance information set. An outcome of University restructuring has been the creation, in many areas, of larger subject groupings (for example, multiple departments being merged to form a single school), and the University has adopted a flexible approach to the unit of review so that reviews are generally held at the subject level, but where appropriate may be at the school level and incorporate a number of subjects.

66 Since the 2010 ELIR the University has developed the support it provides for periodic review panel members, and there has been an increase in training delivered by the Senate Office. This includes targeted support for review panel members, including students and convenors, and from 2013-14 support sessions for heads of school or subject.

67 Management information underpins the University's self-evaluative and reflective practices. The University uses data to measure the success and effectiveness of its institutional activities and key performance indicators including retention, the use of contextualised data for admissions and the use of progression data to track student success.

68 The University also engages with the National Student Survey (NSS) and is in the process of establishing a Central Surveys Unit to enable better analysis of student data and triangulation between the NSS results and the substantial data sets generated by feedback from other external reference points, such as the International Student Barometer, the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey.

69 The University is a large and complex institution, with significantly devolved structures, which has recently undergone significant change through restructuring. The pace and volume of change has been considerable and staff and students have found this challenging. However, the University has reflected on the impact of change and sought to

communicate effectively with its staff and students. Staff, in particular, recognise the potential benefits of the changes introduced. The University makes it clear that it intends to learn from the self-evaluation that has taken place since 2009, in order to shape and refine its future plans, which include an ambitious campus redevelopment and measured growth in transnational education.

5.2 Commentary on the advance information set

70 The information provided in the advance information set confirmed that the University has systematic arrangements in place to secure academic standards and enhance the student learning experience. These include quality assurance processes such as annual monitoring, periodic subject review, adherence to the Code of Assessment and the use of external examiners.

5.3 Use of external reference points in self-evaluation

71 The University uses a wide range of external reference points in its evaluative processes. It has been active in the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee and uses the national Enhancement Themes to inform its strategic approach. The University benchmarks itself against other Russell Group Universities and also positions itself as an international institution. It is a member of Universitas 21, which has provided new opportunities for student mobility.

72 External reference points are also informing enhancement, for example the process of mapping the institution's policies and procedures against the Quality Code has identified areas for improvement in a number of policies.

5.4 Management of public information

73 Effective arrangements are in place to ensure the accuracy of the information provided by the University. Management of information on the University website, which is the main vehicle for the delivery of public information, is overseen by the Web Strategy Group, with responsibility for content creation and management being devolved to the school and college level. There is an identified member of staff in each school with responsibility for ensuring that content is accurate and current.

74 The Planning and Business Intelligence Office took lead responsibility for developing the Key Information Sets and this process highlighted areas for development, such as the accuracy of information in course specifications and in relation to accreditation. The University has updated documentation in response to this process, which has led to improvements in the accuracy of data for a variety of purposes.

5.5 Effectiveness of the approach to self-evaluation and management of information

75 The University has a strong culture of self-reflection and evaluation underpinning its strategic planning and management processes. The transformational projects, including restructuring and the Student Lifecycle Project, have involved self-reflection and evaluation, while also highlighting challenges in engagement and communication. The effectiveness of the University's approach to self-evaluation is demonstrated through its positive engagement in consultation and communication with staff and students about significant institutional change (see paragraphs 9 and 12).

6 Collaborative activity

6.1 Key features of the institution's strategic approach

76 The University has four well-established UK-based validation arrangements with Glasgow School of Art, Scotland's Rural College, the Edinburgh Theological Seminary and Christie's Education, as well as a range of other collaborative agreements, and does not intend to extend validated provision beyond the existing four UK partners.

77 The development of collaborative provision is a significant aspect of the University's internationalisation strategy and the University has a number of overseas partnerships. The University has a policy of not entering into franchise or validation agreements with overseas partners, instead the focus for collaboration with overseas institutions will be on the delivery of transnational education with a small number of international partners. The University already has partnerships with Singapore Institute of Technology, University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, and Majan University College, Oman. The University is planning to grow student numbers on transnational education programmes from 350 in 2012-13 to 1,560 in 2018-19.

6.2 Securing academic standards of collaborative provision

78 The University has an effective approach to securing the academic standards of collaborative provision.

79 Collaborative provision is governed by the University's Framework for Academic Collaboration and the Code of Practice for Validated Provision. Academic standards are set and monitored through the University's quality assurance systems. Collaborative programmes are normally overseen by a joint management board, which has a standard remit and composition, and which is responsible for reporting annually through the relevant College Learning and Teaching Committee to the Academic Standards Committee. This approach utilises the University's embedded quality assurance processes but also provides specific oversight for particular collaborative arrangements.

80 In the context of planned growth, the University has reviewed its approach to the management of collaborative provision and is in the process of taking forward the review recommendations which include a need to strengthen guidance for academic and support staff regarding the risk assessment, due diligence and Court approval of collaborative provision.

6.3 Enhancing the student learning experience on collaborative programmes

81 The University Learning and Teaching Strategy identifies, as part of its aim to deliver an excellent student experience, an objective to promote student engagement with learning and enhance student success. The University recognises that this commitment applies equally to students studying on collaborative programmes as it does to those studying at the home campus.

82 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 engage with their programme of study.

6.4 Effectiveness of the approach to managing collaborative activity

83 The University has an effective approach to the management of its collaborative activity.

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183 St Vincent Street, Glasgow G2 5QD

Tel: 0141 572 3420

Email: enquiries@qaa.ac.uk

Website: www.qaa.ac.uk

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