University of St Andrews

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

January 2022

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.

University of St Andrews

Follow-up report

Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR)

1. Endorsement

This year-on report was endorsed by the University Court on 21 January 2022.

2. Introduction

The University of St Andrews welcomed the review team for ELIR 4 in the spring and autumn of 2020. Preparations for ELIR were well supported by the QAA, and the University appreciated the collegial and open dialogue fostered by the review team.

This report summarises the University's response to the four formal recommendations identified by the review team in the outcome report, as well as areas for enhancement noted in the main body of the technical report.

3. ELIR 2020 outcome

The University acknowledged the team's judgement that the University has 'effective arrangements for managing academic standards and the student learning experience' and that the team expected that 'these arrangements are likely to continue to be effective in the future'.

The University was delighted to note nine areas of commendation: partnership working and responsiveness to the student voice; support for access, diversity and inclusion; the student learning experience; student wellbeing; graduate employment; the University's systematic approach to enhancement; the development of academic leadership; and the role of the Proctor's Office.

The University has further developed its reporting structures to enable the coordination and prioritisation of the working groups sitting under ESMG. This gives the Proctor's Office improved oversight of enhancement activities including those noted in the commendations.

The contextualised themes (Diverse St Andrews and Entrepreneurial St Andrews) were central to the review and led to valuable dialogue with staff and students.

4. The University's response to ELIR

The University's response to ELIR is led by the Proctor's Office. Development work is managed through ESMG, chaired by the Vice-Principal Education (Proctor), and its working groups.

The outcome and technical reports were made available to all staff and students and presented to University Court. The review outcomes were considered by the University's Learning & Teaching Committee (LTC), Postgraduate Research Committee (PGRC), Academic Monitoring Group (AMG), Academic Assurance Group, Audit & Risk Committee, and Court.

The University produced an action plan in response to the formal recommendations and areas for enhancement and is systematically working through this. The action plan was considered by the committees highlighted above. Actions were assigned to the relevant ESMG working groups, which include student representatives and other key colleagues from Schools and professional services. The University will continue to monitor progress on areas for development through its regular operational strategic review process.

This follow-up report was produced in consultation with the ESMG working groups and the committees highlighted earlier in this section. The report has been shared with the University's QAA contact for feedback prior to submission. A student-friendly version of this report will be produced and shared with School Presidents in the first instance.

5. Student engagement in the follow-up to ELIR

The Students' Association is actively involved in all discussions related to learning and teaching and the student experience. Sabbatical officers and other elected student representatives give voice to student interests on a wide range of University committees, including Court, Academic Senate, ESMG and its working groups, LTC, PGRC and AMG. Through this engagement, students were able to actively contribute to the development of the action plan, and to the actions being undertaken as detailed in this follow-up report.

6. Response to the review team's formal recommendations

The review team identified four formal recommendations. Actions taken in response to these are outlined below.

6.1 Oversight of postgraduate research students (PGRs) who teach

Recommendation: Develop more effective oversight of the training and support provided at school level to PGRs who teach. The University has put in place clear guidance regarding the mandatory generic teaching training provided to PGR students, but schools are responsible for overseeing teaching and marking activity, and students report a variable experience in terms of the provision of guidance, support and workload management.

PGRs and Directors of Teaching (DoTs) were surveyed in the summer of 2021. Survey data will be used to inform ELIR actions, and included questions on the support offered by Schools to PGR teachers (noting requirements in the [Doctoral students who teach policy](#)), and awareness of HEA Fellowship support. The DoT survey included questions about the support offered by Schools to PGRs who teach (including good practice worthy of sharing) and further support that could be offered by the Centre for Educational Enhancement and Development (CEED). Responses from both surveys will allow CEED to identify which Schools may benefit from additional advice and support to ensure a consistent, positive experience for PGRs who teach, as well as to identify and share good practice.

Every year CEED offers Schools a short briefing at a School committee meeting to outline the support for teaching available from CEED. To supplement this, the [Doctoral students who teach policy](#) and support for teaching available from CEED will be highlighted at the DoT inductions held each semester. In addition, the Proctor's updates will be used to highlight the mandatory training for PGRs who teach, and to share good practice identified by the surveys.

Support for research postgraduate who teach will be included as a standing agenda item for each University-led review of learning and teaching, which will allow for ongoing oversight of School support. We will also use the PGR Tutor Forum (organised by the Provost's Office) and the Staff-Student Consultative Committee meetings in Schools to gather regular feedback so that issues can be raised and tackled in a timely fashion by CEED and the Proctor's Office, as appropriate.

6.2 Engagement with staff development

Recommendation: Continue developing and implementing systems to monitor staff engagement with mandatory areas of training and support, such as academic induction. The University should also implement the system currently under development by Organisational and Staff Development Services (OSDS) to monitor the completion of all required training for staff, in particular PGR supervisor training.

A new QlikView dashboard is now in place to capture staff numbers and engagement in mandatory training and support such as induction and PGR supervisor training. OSDS has carried out an audit of all current PGR supervisors to identify who has not undertaken the mandatory or refresher training. Additional training is being organised to address any backlog. OSDS is also reviewing whether any research funders require additional/different refresher training timescales. Each section of PGR supervisor training is now being recorded separately and uploaded to Moodle. OSDS will ensure Moodle is refreshed on a regular basis with new materials and resources, and monitor viewings of the recordings. A 'course completion tool' in Moodle will enable PGR supervisors to confirm they have watched the recordings in full as part of their mandatory training. This will be audited by OSDS twice a year through random sampling of enrolled participants on the Moodle course. This approach will be used across all mandatory training.

6.3 Student access to external examiner reports

Recommendation: Ensure that all students have easy access to external examiner reports for their programme of study by the end of academic year 2020-21.

External Examiner reports have been made available to all students via Moodle. A new process was put in place and students have access to the reports from 2019/20 onwards. From 2020/21 classification data is also being shared with students. An annual reminder to share reports with students is issued to Schools via email by the Proctor's Office.

6.4 External examiner engagement in degree classifications

Recommendation: Implement, from 2020-21, the University's intended approach to sharing a final analysis of degree classification with external examiners and asking them to reflect on the distribution patterns when submitting their final reports.

External examiners now have sight of classification data covering a four-year period to allow them to identify any significant trends. In July 2021, external examiners received undergraduate classification data for 2017/18 to 2020/21 for their own School. The data was broken down into single and joint honours degrees. External examiners received an explanatory letter along with the classification data. A new question '*Do you have any comments on the classification data provided*?' was added to the annual report form.

Taught postgraduate (PGT) classification data was made available in October 2021. Four years of classification data and an explanatory letter was issued to external

examiners. The new question noted above has also been included in the annual report form for PGT external examiners.

Feedback received from external examiners on the classification data will be reviewed via the annual reports. Any actions required, following this feedback, will be considered and implemented if appropriate.

7. Response to areas for enhancement identified by the review team

The team highlighted 11 areas for enhancement in the main body of the technical report. These are italicised below together with actions taken in response.

7.1 More focused training for the postgraduate representatives

Postgraduate (PG) representatives felt that the training provided by CEED and the Students' Association was more appropriate for undergraduates in terms of the information provided and the approaches to activities such as surveying student groups. The University may wish to consider providing more focused training for the PG representatives.

In 2020/21, a wide-reaching review into PG representation was carried out by the Students' Association. The review report recommended that training should be tailored to prepare representatives on the specific functions of their roles. Training will be provided in two parts. Part one will cover basic information such as role responsibilities and resources available. Part two will provide a more in-depth overview of expectations and provide an opportunity to meet other reps and ask questions.

Work is underway to design a Moodle resource for newly elected PG Representatives, with an aim to have this available in September prior to elections in October. The live 'part two' event will be held later in the semester to help build a sense of community amongst the PG Representatives and consolidate the learning from the Moodle resource.

An Academic Representation Coordinator is now working as a permanent staff member in the Students' Association (who was one of the student leaders of the review of PG representation). This role holder will support PG training and elections.

7.2 Recruitment of sufficient numbers of counsellors

Students expressed concern about the University's plans for the expansion of student numbers in light of the existing challenges for the recruitment of sufficient numbers of counsellors.

Student Services are well-staffed and wait times are remarkably short compared to NHS services. Wait times are published for all services weekly on Facebook and Instagram to alleviate student concerns. The unit also continues to engage with students directly via several platforms to develop the service in accordance with student need.

Students Services are included in the periodic review cycle for 2021/22. It was agreed that this area for enhancement should be explored with staff and students during the review.

7.3   Institutional directive regarding the return-time for individual assessments

There is no institutional directive regarding the return-time for individual assessments, other than the guidance that: 'feedback should, whenever possible, be delivered in time for students to benefit from it in their next assignment'. Academic staff confirmed that, whilst there was no overarching policy specifying turnaround times, students were informed in advance of the return dates and that work was returned prior to submission of the next assignment.

An assessment workstream, led by the Associate Dean for Education (Science), has been established and reports into ESMG. An initial priority of the group is to review all policies relating to assessment and feedback to ensure they are clear, consistent and represent best practice in the sector. The group will be carefully reflecting on an institutional directive regarding the feedback return-time for individual assessments as part of this process and will make recommendations for the amendment of policy as required.

7.4   Associate Fellowship of the HEA

PG tutors can obtain Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy (HEA) through taking the two modules 'Introduction to University Teaching'. None of the PGR students met by the team, who engage in teaching, were aware of this route to recognition, which may reflect an area for further signposting.

The HEA accreditation of the Introduction to University Teaching modules ended in 2017 following the University's decision not to renew its subscription to the HEA. Instead, CEED offers a comprehensive programme of support to all staff who wish to make individual route applications for any category of Fellowship. Support available is signposted in several different internal communications, on social media, and at other related events.

Currently, only one colleague in the University reviews applications to offer feedback. In 2021/22, the plan is to approach previous successful applicants to create a network of staff willing to offer feedback on draft applications to colleagues in their School. These volunteers will be given support on making recognition judgements using the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF).

7.5   Peer observation

Peer observation is a requirement for PGR students who teach. However, engagement by staff more generally is inconsistent across schools with no evidence of systematic monitoring. The team encourages the University to consider ways to encourage greater awareness and engagement with the scheme.

All new academic staff are allocated a mentor within their School, who offers guidance, support, encouragement, and informed feedback. Part of the mentor's role is to offer to observe the probationer's full range of teaching and provide constructive feedback and advice.

Work on this area for enhancement will be led by the new Academic Developer who should be in post by the end of the semester 1, 2021/22. CEED is reviewing feedback from the DoT survey noted in section 6.1, which asked how peer observation is conducted in each School and how the scheme ties in with mentoring for new academic staff. Outcomes of a previous review of the scheme will also be taken into consideration. The value of teaching observations will be highlighted at the New Staff Induction in

conjunction with mentoring schemes. Once the new Academic Developer is in post, the existing teaching observation webpage will be updated with additional good practice case studies and guidance.

7.6   Interaction between CEED, CHER and SALTI

The review team recognises the need to clarify the roles of, and interaction between CEED, the Centre for Higher Education Research (CHER) and the St Andrews Learning & Teaching Initiative (SALTI).

SALTI will be relaunched in late 2021 following discussions with relevant stakeholders including CEED and CHER. The paper setting out the terms of the relaunch places SALTI as an affiliated initiative within the Educational Development strand of CEED. SALTI will be led by an agile Management Group, consisting of key role holders within the Proctor's Office, CEED and Quality Monitoring. This Management Group will work closely with a larger Expert Advisory Council, on which CHER will hold two positions. The Advisory Council will provide advice and support for the running of a new community of practice, good practice exchanges and the promotion of evidence-led enhancement across the institution.

SALTI will work synergistically with CEED to develop the skills of academic and professional service staff in conducting Evidence-led Enhancement and the Scholarship of Learning and Teaching.   The expertise of staff within CHER, and other key stakeholders such as the International Education Institute (IEI), will be important in providing an experienced group of staff who can support development of the wider community. It is expected that as staff develop within SALTI, they will also increasing engage with CHER, who are well placed to lead the University's Higher Education Research activities.
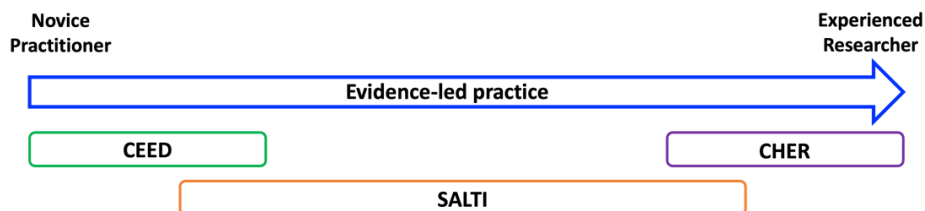
While CEED, SALTI and CHER are all individual bodies, crosstalk and shared practice will exist across these bodies. For example, a staff member may be a member of both SALTI and CHER, while a CHER member may also be a SALTI member and teach on CEED courses.

Figure 1. Relationship between CEED, SALTI and CHER in supported Evidence-led practice and research at the University of ST Andrews.

7.7   Variability in the Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQ) response rates

The review team noted variability in the MEQ response rates.

The work to improve MEQ response rates in Schools is ongoing. In consultation with colleagues in Professional Services, Schools, and the Director of Education (DoEd) in the Students' Association, an MEQ guidance document for staff and students has been produced and made available to staff and students. The document includes examples of how students can be encouraged to complete MEQs.

The School Presidents and DoEd have been further involved in the MEQ process so that they can help encourage higher response rates in their constituencies.

From 2021/22, response rates will be discussed at University-led reviews of learning and teaching. AMG will also review response rates at the end of each semester and follow up accordingly. A holistic review of MEQs is planned for 2021/22 and response rates will be considered as part of this.

7.8   Mapping of current practices to the UK Quality Code

Following the introduction of the new Quality Code, the University carried out a comprehensive mapping exercise. It intends to undertake such an exercise each year which will be monitored by the ESMG.

The University's policy and quality team is carrying out a mapping of current practices in Semester 1, 2021/22 to identify areas where further development is required, as well as where there is full alignment with the Expectations, Core and Common Practices of the Quality Code. Outcomes will be reported to ESMG and AMG, and actions to be taken to address any areas for development will be monitored by the Proctor's Office.

7.9   Renewal of collaborative agreements

There is ongoing work around the renewal of collaborative agreements and the framework to support them and ensuring the timely signing of memoranda of agreement.

A process for the renewal of collaborative programmes was successfully trialled in Semester 1, 2020/21 with a Stage 5 review of a programme within the School of Management. A second Stage 5 review (of an MSc in Sustainable Aquaculture, offered collaboratively with a third-party provider) is scheduled for September 2021. The structure and format of the review has been refined following the previous Stage 5 review, and in recognition of the specific nature of the Sustainable Aquaculture programme and relationships.

7.10   Enhance the experience of students on collaborative programmes

The University has a programme of work underway to enhance the experience of students on collaborative programmes, including the development of new websites, provision of information, an expansion to the joint programme with the College of William and Mary, and a fresh approach to transition between institutions and careers development.

In 2021/22, a new five-credit module will be launched for students on the BA (International Honours) programme to consolidate the transition events currently in place for the programme. The module will be run by the Associate Dean Arts (Curriculum), the academic lead for the programme, and will aim to build cohort identity and support students a key transition points. Staff from the Global Office, Careers, William and Mary, and CEED will also contribute to the module.

The new academic collaborations webpage is now live, providing a central resource for students on these programmes.

The new University travel webpages are now live and provide a comprehensive travel checklist for all students and staff travelling abroad, as well as comprehensive visa guidance, which should facilitate the transition between institutions for all students on study abroad, work placement and collaborative programmes.

The Global Office has restructured its Student Intern positions to provide more co-ordinated support across all cohorts supported by the Global Office, including undergraduates and postgraduates on international programmes, as well as cohorts such as China Scholarship Council students and sanctuary scholars.

7.11 Remit and structure of Joint Committees

The University is aware of the areas where further development [in terms of the oversight of collaborative provision] is required, for example the remit and structure of Joint Committees, and is taking appropriate action.

The Global Office staff webpages now include enhanced information about academic monitoring and Terms of Reference for Joint Committees have been approved. All new collaborative programmes will follow this model. Minor changes are being made to some existing Committees, though these are generally robust and fulfil the Terms of Reference requirements.

A new role description for Academic Co-ordinators for collaborative programmes has been approved. Proposal and approval processes including workflows are published online, and relevant documentation to support programme proposal are regularly reviewed and updated. Approval is relevant to the programme type and involves decanal or curriculum approval group support.

A remit for a new AMG Collaborations & Partnerships was approved and the Group meets once a semester to review collaborative provision and international programmes.