

Enhancement-led Institutional Review of the University of St Andrews

Outcome Report March 2015

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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 St Andrews. The review took place as follows: Part 1 visit on 3-5 February 2015 and Part 2 visit on 9-13 March 2015. The review was conducted by a team of six reviewers:

- Professor Jeremy Bradshaw (Academic Reviewer)
- Professor Howard Colley (Academic Reviewer)
- Professor Hilary Grainger (Academic Reviewer)
- Associate Professor Asa Kettis (International Reviewer)
- Mark Charters (Student Reviewer)
- Gavin Lee (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.

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

⁴ Technical report: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/provider?UKPRN=10007803

About the University of St Andrews

The University was founded over 600 years ago and is the oldest university in Scotland. In 2013-14, it had a total of 7,954 students including 818 taught postgraduates and 858 postgraduate research students. Students are spread over 18 academic schools which are located within four faculties (Arts, Science, Divinity, and Medicine) with around 605 academic staff. The University describes itself as having a beautiful location in a small coastal town with an essentially medieval core which presents both the advantages of a close-knit community in a historic setting and also certain challenges such as remoteness, legacy estate and restrictions on growth.

Overarching judgement about the University of St Andrews

The University of St Andrews 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 **Staff and student development** - the suite of development opportunities provided by the Centre for Academic, Professional & Organisational Development (CAPOD) is responsive to the University's needs and promotes positive engagement by staff and students. CAPOD's work also supports the University to achieve a clear overview of its strengths and development needs.

3 **Identification and dissemination of good practice** - linked to the institution-led review processes, and supported by CAPOD, there are systematic arrangements for identifying and sharing good practice. These include an annual dissemination event attended by the directors of teaching from every school drawing on the outcomes from the Annual Academic Monitoring process.

4 **Enhanced role of the Proctor's Office** - the revised organisational structure has brought together learning and teaching with oversight of other student-related activity. The Proctor's Office works closely with the directors of teaching and CAPOD to provide an enhanced strategic overview, including identifying a set of priority areas.

5 **Positive approach to widening participation** - the University has a wide range of initiatives and activities aimed at raising aspirations and promoting widening access to higher education. There are effective arrangements in place to support students who enter the University from a widening participation background, in line with the University's intention to be academically, but not socially, elite.

6 **Proactive student engagement and representation** - there are highly effective student representative arrangements in place including the successful posts of school and faculty president. The student representatives are proactive in identifying areas in which to engage and are supported by the University to do so, for example student-led groups are currently considering feedback on assessment and module evaluation questionnaires with the outcomes of each being considered for action by University committees.

7 **Graduate identity and co-curriculum** - staff and students share a strong sense of a St Andrews graduate identity. This is underpinned by a varied and imaginative set of co-curricular opportunities which are provided to students including internships, sports activities and engagement with the community.

8 **Integrated student advice and support** - integrated student support is provided through the 'one stop' Advice and Support Centre which incorporates a range of formerly separate service areas. It also provides links between the professional services and academic staff to create a more holistic service for students covering academic and pastoral dimensions, for example through the Academic Alert system.

9 **Promotion of equality and diversity** - the University has a range of activities in place to support equality and diversity in the curriculum and in the wider student experience. Schools in the Science Faculty, in particular, have engaged with a range of sector awards and the University is encouraged to progress with its plans to involve the whole institution in this activity. There is an institution-wide Inclusive Curriculum Toolkit which provides advice for staff on good practice in curriculum design, delivery and assessment with staff engagement in equality and diversity being promoted through events and a project exploring diversity in undergraduate teaching. The University has plans in place to require all students to complete an online diversity training module as a condition of matriculation from 2015-16.

10 **Student mobility** - the University has a successful approach to promoting and supporting student mobility including agreements in place with a wide range of partner institutions and systematic arrangements for recognising learning undertaken elsewhere.

Areas for development

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

12 **Academic oversight of collaborative activity** - ensure there is clear academic oversight of collaborative activity, including securing the systematic engagement of academic staff in the arrangements for monitoring student performance as well as reflecting on the wider student learning experience.

13 **Role and status of teaching-only staff** - consider the role, status and promotion structure for teaching-only staff.

14 **Contextualised support for postgraduates who teach** - ensure all postgraduate students who teach receive support from their schools for undertaking this role. This would complement the well-regarded training already provided centrally by CAPOD.

15 **Academic engagement in annual monitoring** - secure the engagement of a wider group of academic staff in the reflective elements of annual academic monitoring to enhance the student experience.

16 **Use of technology to support learning and teaching** - reflect on the ways in which greater use of technology could enhance the St Andrews approach to learning and teaching.

17 **Integrate School of Medicine** - continue the positive work aimed at integrating the School of Medicine with wider institutional practices and processes for the mutual benefit of all schools.

18 **Engaging with the student experience** - continue to reflect on the extent to which all students can engage with the St Andrews student experience, in the context of a more diverse student body including those who live some distance from the University.

19 **Future development of CAPOD** - consider extending the existing positive work of CAPOD to include further development of the community of practice in pedagogical research and increase support for mid-career and longer serving researchers.

20 **Student performance and assessment** - develop a systematic process for monitoring cohort performance across modules and programmes, especially, although not exclusively, for students studying across schools or institutions. The University should also

undertake additional work to help students understand the assessment requirements, including clarifying the use of the Common Reporting Scale.

21 **Publication of external examiner reports** - publish external examiner reports in order to give students the opportunity to engage in discussion and consideration of this element of the assessment process.

What happens next?

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

23 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

24 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.

25 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](#).

26 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](#).

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

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

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