Enhancement-led Institutional Review of the University of St Andrews

Technical 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 Technical 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).

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 a case study: BA (International Honours): An Innovative Approach to International Education.

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.

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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/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]

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[4] Outcome Report: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/provider?UKPRN=10007803

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.

1   Institutional context and strategic framework

1.1   Key features of the institution's context and mission

1   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.

2   Since the previous ELIR in 2011, the University has been engaged in what it described as an 'intensive examination of its overall strategic direction' and at the time of the current ELIR visit was in the early stages of preparing a new 10-year Strategic Plan. There are no plans for radical expansion, instead the strategy is to concentrate on a number of focused innovative academic projects that will support the University's ambition to feature among the world's top ranking universities. The University indicated that the common thread in these projects is to recruit the 'most brilliant' students and academic staff, to continue increasing the proportion of postgraduate research students and to provide an academic environment in which 'all can flourish'.

3   Estates and resourcing considerations have formed a significant part of the University's ongoing strategic discussions. The ELIR team was informed of a number of developments, each of which represents an imaginative approach to addressing the challenges of accommodation and space: the development of the research library at Martyrs Kirk in the town centre, the biomass plant outside the town of St Andrews at Guardbridge, and the planned building work across the town itself. Issues around teaching space and student accommodation were raised across a number of the team's meetings with staff and students (paragraphs 51 and 52).

4   The University identified five initiatives as being designed to strengthen its ability to fulfil its strategic ambitions relating to the enhancement of learning and teaching and the wider student experience: reform of the Proctor's Office, the creation of the Centre for Academic, Professional & Organisational Development (CAPOD), the Senate Efficiency Review, the re-launch of St Leonard's College, and a more recent focus on Enterprise.

5   Following restructuring in 2011, responsibility for learning and teaching together with a range of other student business is now the responsibility of a single role, the Vice-Principal (Proctor). The Proctor oversees Student Services and the Chaplaincy, provides the key liaison point for the Students' Association and the Athletic Union, and maintains an overall interest in the broader student experience by chairing a group comprising relevant Service Directors. The Proctor also convenes the Learning & Teaching Committee (LTC), the Academic Monitoring Group (AMG) and the Academic Assurance

Group (AAG). The Proctor's Office, comprising the Proctor, the Dean of Arts & Divinity, the Dean of Science and a small administrative team, has worked to integrate academic matters with the co-curricular aspects of the St Andrews education. In doing so, the Proctor's Office interacts closely with CAPOD. CAPOD was formed since the 2011 ELIR from the merger of three smaller units and is now regarded by the University as supporting the institution's strategic goals.

6   The Senate Efficiency Review (SER) involved a programme of administrative and IT projects aimed at streamlining and automating processes relating to the student lifecycle from admission to graduation and including curriculum development. Although the University recognised the initial work plan for the SER programme as having been overambitious, there were strong indications that, following a significant review of the programme plan, the project was on a much more positive trajectory. Wave 1 of the new workstreams was intended for implementation by June 2015 and, in discussions with the ELIR team, staff were optimistic about the potential of these new systems. Three initiatives were in progress during the current academic year: Curriculum Approvals; Enterprise Service Desk (student record management system); and Fund Management Phase 1. Subsequent Waves were scheduled to follow with projected completion planned for September 2016.

7   The University re-launched St Leonard's College in August 2013 under the leadership of the Provost (reporting to the Vice-Principal for Research) and with the assistance of two Pro Provosts (Arts & Divinity and Science & Medicine). The College has adopted a stronger research focus and has responsibility for all postgraduate research business with the strategic goal of enhancing recruitment and the research student experience. In response to student requests for a single postgraduate community, taught postgraduate students were granted membership of the College from January 2014 for extracurricular purposes. All other taught postgraduate matters, including the student experience, are the responsibility of the Proctor's Office. A new post, Pro Dean (Taught Postgraduate) was introduced in 2013 to work across the faculties reviewing taught postgraduate provision and enhancing the support for existing students.

8   In 2013, the University created the new post of Vice-Principal (Enterprise and Engagement) to lead on the strategic areas of business and research partnerships, enterprise education, and enterprise opportunities for students and staff. An Enterprise Working Group was established in 2013, including student representation, to develop the existing provision in enterprise education. Supported by funding from a commercial bank, the University runs an in-house enterprise competition. With support from the Vice-Principal (Enterprise and Engagement) students have led on developing the profile of enterprise activities across the University, including setting up conferences and events such as an Enterprise Week.

9   In preparing for the ELIR, the University identified three areas it wished the ELIR team to engage with: secure transitions in student progression (paragraphs 91-94); shared responsibility for educational excellence (paragraphs 14-16 and 105-110); streamlining of processes and reducing bureaucracy around learning and teaching (paragraphs 5 and 6). These three areas are considered as indicated and throughout this report.

1.2   Strategic approach to enhancing learning and teaching

10   The overall aim of the Learning & Teaching Strategy is 'to foster a world-class learning community in which top-level research influences educational design and practice, and where excellent students are supported to fulfil their potential as independent, analytical and thoughtful contributors to society'. There are two key supporting strategies: the Quality

Enhancement Strategy, which underpins excellence in learning and teaching, and the Student Experience Strategy which addresses extra-curricular matters.

11   Key strategic themes, known as Proctor's Priorities, have been identified for the period 2014-16. They were developed following consideration of staff and student feedback and approved by the LTC. There are seven identified priorities around topics including improving feedback to students, employability, student progression and streamlining processes. They are being progressed through a range of approaches including short-term working groups.

12   The establishment of the Proctor's Office was predicated on a strategic review of the entire Senate Committee structure. The intention of the review was to streamline structures, eliminate unnecessary work and delegate responsibility for decision-making to those with the most appropriate expertise. Staff endorsed the move away from committees, with responsibility being given to individuals to take decisions with advice as appropriate. The University identified directors of teaching as key to the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy within their schools. In discussions with the ELIR team, staff indicated that the compact size of the schools facilitated discussion and engagement. They told the team the restructuring had resulted in a flatter management structure, reinforcing the role of the Proctor and the Proctor's Office in sharing practice and consulting with schools. During the review visits, the ELIR team met staff and students who confirmed that the reconfigured Proctor's Office acted as an agency for change and enhancement. Staff who met the ELIR team indicated that the introduction of short-life working groups had been successful, encouraging 'brief, worthwhile' discussions that lead to realistic recommendations for implementation by the University.

13   The School of Medicine has not been wholly integrated with the rest of the University. Its alignment with General Medical Council expectations, while working to secure academic standards, has tended to work against its alignment with the other academic schools. Unlike the other deans who report to the Proctor, the Dean of Medicine (who is also the Head of School of Medicine) is line-managed by the Master. With the appointment of a new Dean of Medicine in summer 2014, the University has begun to see a shift towards closer integration between Medicine and the other schools. The ELIR team learned that, in future, the pro-deans of Medicine would attend Curriculum Approvals Group meetings with the other deans. The school also engages fully with the Annual Academic Monitoring process. The ELIR team considered that both the school and the rest of the University have much to gain from a closer working relationship and exchange of expertise, for example the team learned that the Teaching Fellow role was better integrated in the School of Medicine than in many other parts of the University (paragraphs 79 and 81).

1.3   Effectiveness of the approach to implementing strategies

14   Overall, the University has an effective approach to implementing strategies relating to learning and teaching. The closer links between academic and professional services achieved through the Proctor's Office have further strengthened strategic effectiveness. The Proctor's Office works closely with the directors of teaching and CAPOD to provide an enhanced strategic overview. Student representatives are involved in supporting the implementation of strategies, for example the work relating to enterprise education and school presidents are involved in key processes, such as the Annual Academic Monitoring dialogues (paragraph 105). It was evident from discussions with staff and students that the Proctor's Office is regarded as an agency for change and enhancement across the University.

15   The translation of institutional strategies into school plans and activities depends on good communication between staff. Directors of teaching fulfil a pivotal role in securing

school engagement with institutional strategies. The University regards the changes to its committee structures as having brought about clearer accountability and greater staff engagement. While key postholders were very familiar with the University's strategic intentions, the flow of information appeared to be less effective among the wider constituency of academic staff who, in discussions with the ELIR team, were not always explicitly aware of institutional initiatives. The team would, therefore, encourage the University to promote greater explicit engagement with, and reflection on, the Proctor's Priorities by teaching staff (paragraph 110).

16   In relation to the School of Medicine, the ELIR team would encourage the University to continue with the positive work aimed at integrating the School with wider institutional practices and processes for the mutual benefit of the whole institution.

2   Enhancing the student learning experience

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

17   In 2013-14, the University had a total student population of 7,954 FTE students spread across 6,278 undergraduate (79 per cent), 818 taught postgraduate (10 per cent) and 858 research postgraduate (11 per cent). The student population has remained stable since the 2011 ELIR, with less than 2 per cent overall growth in that time. Scottish domiciled students make up 30 per cent of the student population, 28 per cent come from the rest of the United Kingdom (rUK), 10 per cent from the rest of the EU, and 32 per cent are from overseas (outside the EU).

18   The number of overseas students from outside the EU has increased by around 10 per cent since the 2011 ELIR. The increase is mainly visible in the undergraduate student population with 76 per cent of all international students studying at undergraduate level. International students make up half of the total postgraduate student population. The University has a diverse international student population with over 120 countries represented. Significant numbers of international students come from the USA, China and Canada who comprise around 15 per cent, 4 per cent and 2 per cent of the total student population respectively.

19   The University has identified a strategic goal for growth in taught postgraduate student numbers over the next 10 years and has an ongoing focus on increasing postgraduate research student numbers. It is anticipated that this will lead to a change in the proportion of undergraduate and postgraduate student numbers and may create a change to the University's staff:student ratio.

20   The gender balance of students sits at 57 per cent female and 43 per cent male. Where a gender gap is identified within programmes, academic staff hosting open days will be drawn from the minority gender. Around 10 per cent of students have a declared disability, an increase of 15 per cent since the 2011 ELIR. Around 7 per cent of UK domiciled students come from black minority ethnic backgrounds, a 2 per cent increase since the previous ELIR.

21   The vast majority of students studying at the University are registered as full-time (around 99 per cent) with 100 FTE students enrolled on part-time study and 105 FTE students on distance-learning programmes. These figure have not changed since the 2011 ELIR.

22   The University identifies students from widening participation backgrounds using a range of access codes such as entrants from SIMD20 and SIMD40, low progression schools, participation within widening access programmes such as LEAPS, SWAP and Sutton Trust summer schools, applicants from the Access to Rural Communities project, applicants from carer backgrounds and applicants who have been out of education for more than three years without having attended university. All widening participation applicants are assigned an access code used to identify them during the admissions process. Using these metrics, the University identifies its widening participation population from Scottish domiciled students at 39 per cent and around 20 per cent of the rUK population.

23   Student retention remains high across the University at over 97 per cent. Students on an access code have a retention rate that is one per cent lower than the University average, which the institution has identified and indicated it is aiming to address.

Entry and Admission

24   Typically, students enter the University from secondary education and qualify for entry through Highers and A-Levels. Entry requirements set by the University are high and selection of students is highly competitive. The University expressed its commitment to the four-year Scottish degree structure that allows students to explore a variety of subjects in their sub-honours years. Since the 2011 ELIR, the University now provides Integrated Masters in most of the science subjects, successful completion of which also leads to accreditation by the relevant professional bodies. These Masters programmes are five years long by design but allow second year entry or accelerated progress for suitably qualified candidates and offer exit points at SCQF level 9 and 10.

25   Articulation is not a common entry route, although the University does have a small number of agreements with local colleges such as the Perth College Pathway to Medicine and agreements with Fife College and Dundee and Angus College allowing HNC-qualified applicants direct entry into the second year of a BSc. The University runs a number of 'gateway' programmes for students who do not meet the minimum entry requirements due to educational disadvantage. These programmes offer additional tuition to students and, upon successful completion, students can enter a Physics and/or Computing Science degree.

26   Since the 2011 ELIR, the University has increased the number of scholarships and bursaries given to entrants from 79 in 2009-10 to 321 in 2013-14. Financial aid and other support is targeted to those students with the greatest financial need. During the ELIR visit, students who had entered from articulation and widening participation backgrounds indicated that the support they had received during their transition into the University was effective and that the variety of programmes for support met their needs (paragraph 34).

2.2   Supporting equality and diversity in the student population

27   The University has an effective approach to supporting equality and diversity. The Single Equality Outcome Scheme encompasses a strategic direction and an action plan. A variety of arrangements aimed at addressing equality and diversity are also embedded in the University's practices.

28   The University has developed an Inclusive Curriculum Toolkit which programme and course designers are required to engage with in order to ensure programmes and courses meet legislative requirements. The Toolkit itself also promotes inclusive teaching practices. Most academic schools have a disability or equality and diversity officer and the University has demonstrated an active interest through the recent LTC Open Forum exploring Diversity in Academia. This led to a project exploring the diversity of authors within reading lists in the Faculty of Arts as part of the national Enhancement Theme, Developing

and Supporting the Curriculum. CAPOD offers students opportunities to attend workshops in cross-cultural working and from 2015-16, students will be required to undertake an online equality and diversity module.

29   The Faculty of Science has engaged with the Athena Swan toolkit and each school within the faculty has an Athena Swan committee. The University has been awarded a Bronze Institutional Athena Swan award and holds an Institutional LGBT Charter Mark. A number of schools within the Faculty of Science have also received awards in recognition of their work in promoting equality and diversity. The University has established an Equality and Diversity Awards group operating across the institution which aims to support the sharing of good practice and reduce duplication of effort. Plans have been identified to continue enhancing the approach to equality and diversity within the Faculty of Arts, and the ELIR team would encourage the University to pursue these.

30   Students who met the ELIR team valued the diversity of the student body, confirming that teaching staff capitalised on the benefits of diverse classes in bringing issues of inclusivity and diversity to the fore. Some students, particularly the postgraduates, acknowledged that this approach was more successful in some schools than in others.

Students with a disability

31   Around 10 per cent of the student population has a declared disability, an increase of 15 per cent since the 2011 ELIR. Student Services offers practical living support as well as providing a needs assessment in relation to teaching and assessment. Academic members of staff are notified, through the Module Management System, of students on their programme who require reasonable adjustments and each student has a named disability advisor in order to ensure effective communication.

International students

32   The University takes an integrated approach to supporting international students, seeking to ensure that they feel part of the wider St Andrews community and providing support for them in an inclusive manner. English Language Teaching provides a variety of programmes for students who are not native English speakers. There is also provision for students to learn about the cultural and philosophical basis for academic policies and what this means in practice within a Scottish higher education institution. The University provided very good examples of how this cultural induction was undertaken within schools and the curriculum, such as mock exams, formative assessment and supplemented grade descriptors.

33   The Students' Association hosts an International Students' Reception and offers events hosted by student societies featuring a wide diversity of groups, from the African and Caribbean Society to the Townsend Society which supports commuter students. Most students who met the ELIR team considered that there is a wide range of effective support structures for international students. The University is aware that some students studying on the BA (International Honours) collaborative programme found integrating with the St Andrews community challenging and actions have been taken to help address this (paragraph 139).

Widening participation students

34   The University supports widening participation with many initiatives in place across the institution. Senior staff told the ELIR team that the philosophy towards access provision focuses on admitting students who can succeed within the academic context of St Andrews Activity to support this philosophy include outreach work with colleges and low progression

schools and supporting student experience opportunities within the University. A number of academic schools offer specific outreach programmes within low progression schools providing support with UCAS applications, personal statements and aspiration-raising as well as offering opportunities for St Andrews students to work with S1 and S2 school pupils. These initiatives have reached over 31,000 school pupils in more than 150 schools throughout Scotland. The University also offers an evening degree programme. A number of places are allocated for students entering through the Scottish Wider Access Programme offering a flexible route to a general degree. Students can transfer to a designated Honours programme if they meet the academic requirements. Students who enter the University from a further education articulation or an access route are provided with dedicated mentoring for their first year through a peer mentoring system and an access-aware Advisor of Studies. The University's work with people leaving care or living in caring contexts has been recognised through the Buttle Quality Mark.

2.3   Engaging and supporting students in their learning

Student representation

35   There is an effective approach to student representation with a strong and constructive relationship fostered between the Students' Association and the University. Staff have welcomed the School President system, which had recently been introduced at the time of the 2011 ELIR. This system allows students to have a more strategic engagement in learning and teaching within the schools, for example the recent project relating to feedback on assessment (paragraph 44). Since the 2011 ELIR, a new tier of student representation has been created at the faculty level. Faculty presidents operate as a senior support and mentor for school presidents. Faculty presidents sit on the University Academic Council along with the Student President and allow an effective flow of student opinion from schools to institutional level. This system of representation is mirrored at a postgraduate level. Senior managers acknowledged there may be a gap for student engagement when school learning and teaching committee meetings take place during the summer, and indicated that they would address this.

36   School and faculty presidents and class representatives are all offered training which is delivered by CAPOD and the Students' Association. At the time of the ELIR visit, around 95 per cent of student representatives had been trained. Some students commented that the training they received had not adequately prepared them for their role, and there would be value in the University reflecting on the ways in which it could enhance this to ensure student representatives are supported in the schools.

37   Although not all students who met the ELIR team were clear about who their school president was, or the precise nature of the role, there was general agreement that the system has produced effective changes that have enhanced the student experience. As the student president arrangements embed, there would be benefit in the University and Students' Association considering additional ways of promoting these roles to the wider student body.

38   School and faculty presidents are recognised through their Higher Education Achievement Record and their role fulfils aspects of the St Andrews Award. The University also offers nominations for the Proctor's Award, which is given to a student who has made a substantial contribution to the enhancement of learning and teaching within the institution. From discussions during the ELIR visit, it seemed that recent changes to the arrangements for making nominations to the Proctor's Award were not clear to students. A number of students who met the ELIR team were uncertain whether they could nominate themselves or whether staff were meant to do this. The University could consider whether further clarification would be useful.

39   Taught postgraduate representation is facilitated through a system of programme representatives supported by the Postgraduate Convenor, an elected member of the Students' Representative Council. Postgraduate student representatives who met the ELIR team were satisfied with the effectiveness of the representation arrangements and could identify changes that had been made following their involvement.

Student evaluation questionnaires

40   Module evaluation questionnaires (MEQs) are completed by students at the end of each module and students commented that these contained generic questions about learning and teaching. From 2014-15, the University has moved to an online system for administering MEQs which has had a negative impact on response rates. The Students' Association is working on a campaign involving the student president network to boost return rates. Some students expressed the view that the generic nature of the MEQ made it difficult to identify particular changes that would enhance their experience.

41   Postgraduate research students found it difficult to identify any changes that had been made following feedback they had provided, and were not very aware of student surveys or other quality arrangements. However, they did identify the value of speaking directly to staff.

Feedback on assessment

42   Students had mixed views on the promptness and value of feedback and improvement of feedback to students is one of the Proctors' Priorities (paragraph 11). The University's Student Handbook 2014-15 contains a link to a document, the University's Policy on Feedback to Students on Work Submitted for Assessment. This policy does not prescribe timelines for turnaround of marking. However, it does state that 'feedback should, whenever possible, be delivered in time for students to benefit from it in their next assignment'. Although there seems to be widespread adoption of an unofficial two-week deadline, feedback return times vary across the schools. There are school-level policies for feedback response timetables but it was not clear from the ELIR team's discussions with students whether schools were routinely meeting these deadlines. The team's reading of student handbooks showed wide variations in the guidance offered about feedback, some stated a turnaround time for marking coursework, while most did not. Students reported that feedback return times were also cited on the University's Module Management System.

43   From analysis of the periodic review reports, the Academic Monitoring Group (AMG) has identified a tension between the speed of return of students' work and the quality of feedback, and a perception of variation in marks between tutors. The Annual Academic Monitoring overview report, received by AMG, acknowledges the need to communicate to students any possible delays in returning their work well in advance of the event. To help with monitoring at University level, the module evaluation questionnaires include a question on whether work is returned within stated deadlines.

44   During the current ELIR, a student-led project considering feedback on assessment was underway. The Director of Representation had led a group who interviewed class representatives from all schools to produce a snapshot of feedback practice across the University. The study found that detailed and prompt feedback was being provided in many parts of the University and that most schools were performing well. By the time of the Part 2 visit, students had presented a report on the project to the Presidents' Forum and the next stage was to prepare a more formal paper for the University LTC. The ELIR team noted that the project findings were largely positive with the report likely to focus primarily on disseminating good practice. In discussion with the team, teaching and support staff were

aware and supportive of the project, expressing confidence that its outcomes would be implemented. There was a clear commitment from the Proctor's Office to support students to develop the paper for the LTC to ensure a successful outcome and implement any recommendations.

Student support and development

45   The University operates a system of academic alerts which are generated based on students' engagement in their studies. Where a student's engagement reduces or is identified as an issue, the University initiates an early intervention through student support colleagues or through academic staff and advisors in order to identify any difficulties the student is experiencing and support them.

46   In 2010, the University established the Advice and Support Centre (ASC) as a one-stop shop for students. Students and staff view the creation of ASC as positive, indicating that it has led to a significant change in culture and to the provision of holistic support for students covering academic and pastoral matters. In addition to ASC, students identified a number of other points of contact for support, confirming that they felt sufficiently supported in their studies and wider student experience. Each school has a system of academic advisors who provide guidance on academic matters. Each faculty also has a Pro-Dean Advising who takes senior responsibility for supporting students in academic and pastoral matters. In discussions with the ELIR team, students were positive about their experience of engaging with the advisory system.

47   The Students' Association and CAPOD run a number of professional skills workshops and activities for students which students generally regard highly. The Proctor's Office runs a compulsory online module for all students, Training in Good Academic Practice, which is intended to support students to develop their academic literacy. The introduction of the module was viewed positively by the ELIR team and it was evident from discussion with staff and students that it has promoted a keen awareness of academic skills and misconduct. However, postgraduates and undergraduates in the later stages of their programme expressed strong views that the module was pitched at too low a level. There would be value in the University considering the student feedback and, potentially, reviewing the module.

48   In addition, CAPOD offers student support in mathematics and statistics led by trained postgraduate research students, and is also offering disciplinary-specific academic skills workshops in the Faculty of Arts. There are plans to develop similar workshops in the Faculty of Science in 2015-16. Students who had attended the workshops viewed them very positively and it was evident that this was a highly successful activity which had mutual benefit for students and tutors.

Postgraduate students

49   The University website describes St Leonard's College as the home for all postgraduate students. The College is a virtual entity which runs a series of events for postgraduate students including dinners and an initiative allowing students to bid for small amounts of funding to run a lecture series related to their research interests. The 'virtual' nature of the College seemed to militate against the promotion of strong student engagement. Students told the ELIR team they tended to identify with other places, such as their school, research centre or hall of residence rather than the College. There was also a view that the College was primarily aimed at research students. Nevertheless, students appreciated the effort to create a postgraduate community, indicating it was likely to evolve over time. Senior managers acknowledged the challenges of engaging students in a virtual concept, and considered that clearer marketing might help this. They also emphasised that

the drive to engage had to come from the students themselves, with the University supporting them.

50   CAPOD runs a range of courses for research and taught postgraduate students through the Gradskills and M-Skills programmes. Students who had participated in these programmes commented that they found them beneficial. Some students commented that, although CAPOD does provide a wide range of courses, even more partnership working with schools to provide discipline-specific workshops would be welcomed.

Learning environment

51   Since the 2011 ELIR, the University has refurbished the main Library and this has been welcomed by staff and students. The availability of study space within the Library remains an issue, however students who met the ELIR team were very positive about the University's approach to redeveloping spaces which has provided more flexible social and study space. The University redeveloped the Students' Association building to provide social spaces which are intended to meet a diverse range of needs, as well as introducing social study space to the premises.

52   In meetings with the ELIR team, staff and students raised the issue of on-campus accommodation and students, in particular, commented on the difficulties they experienced in accessing accommodation within the town. Students who were not based on the campus indicated that they found it problematic to engage fully in the range of activities that were on offer to other students, notably the extracurricular opportunities. They expressed the view that they were not able to enjoy the whole St Andrews experience. Given that the student population is likely to become increasingly diverse and there are always likely to be students who cannot live in the town, the University is asked to reflect on the ways in which it can support all students to engage with the opportunities provided.

Use of technology

53   The use of technology to support learning, including the virtual learning environment (VLE), was described to the ELIR team by staff and students as variable. The University has identified this as an area for development and had recently appointed a new Head of Learning Technology & IT Skills Development. She is expected to provide support for the strategic development of learning technologies and IT skills training across the University. She will work within CAPOD, which is likely to promote a strong link between technology and pedagogy.

54   Until now, the University's approach to using technology in learning has been 'bottom-up' rather than strategic and the focus has been on technology supporting structures rather than enhancing learning. Although the University is not expecting to grow its distance learning provision significantly, some staff indicated that there might be greater use of blended learning in the future. Several staff, including the directors of teaching, emphasised that the primary value of the St Andrews' student experience is in face-to-face teaching, suggesting that this limited the use of technology. At the same time, they provided a number of good examples of blended learning being used, for example flipped classroom. Undergraduate students did not express any wish for more technology-enhanced learning. They referred to the practice of recording lectures at the School of Medicine as something that might even make teaching less effective. Postgraduates commented that greater use could be made of the VLE to provide improved access to electronic resources, primarily books. It seemed to the ELIR team that there would be considerable value in the University engaging in an active debate on the ways in which technology could be used to support the St Andrews approach to learning and teaching.

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

55   The University and Students' Association offer a vast number of opportunities outside the curriculum for students to engage in curricular and extracurricular activities with over 230 student societies and sports teams. Students can participate in the St Andrews Award, which is being reviewed by the Students' Association to increase its flexibility and accessibility for a wider proportion of the student population. Students appreciate the breadth of opportunities available to both undergraduate and postgraduate students, although the postgraduates highlighted that it was difficult for them to engage in the wider elements of University life due to their academic workload. The ELIR team also heard that mature students found it challenging to engage in the co-curricular activities due to their other commitments, often having accommodation some distance from the University facilities, and some students referred to a lack of childcare at the institution.

56   CAPOD provides training for the students who have coordinating roles in the student societies and students were very positive about the support and encouragement they received. In partnership with the Students' Association, CAPOD has developed the Professional Skills Curriculum which comprises over 20 different professional skills topics delivered through a series of online workshops, lectures and practical skills sessions. Students who complete the Professional Skills Curriculum will have the achievement recognised on their degree transcript. Work has also been undertaken to review how curriculum and assessment can provide scope for the acquisition of skills that are directly relevant to the workplace. The University recognises this as an area for further activity in order to support students to identify these skills.

Careers and employability

57   The Careers Centre offers support to students in an extensive range of ways aimed at supporting student employability, such as CV development, job search, and support for placement and internships. It is evident that the Careers Centre is well used by students and feedback is generally positive. In discussions with the ELIR team, some students reflected that there was not enough support for students who were seeking employment in other countries or for postgraduate students. Support targeted at international students has been enhanced recently with the appointment of an International Opportunities Manager and, given student feedback about this aspect of the service, there would be benefit in the University monitoring its success in this area.

58   A range of internship opportunities are available to students within the University through work placements or research projects, as well as opportunities in industry. Around 57 per cent of undergraduate students undertake some form of internship before graduating and view these experiences as very valuable. Academic staff reflected on the challenges of finding enough suitable internships and highlighted the need to manage students' expectations in relation to their availability, as well as discussing with students the role placements fulfil as part of the overall learning experience.

59   The University has explored how curriculum and assessment can provide scope for acquiring skills that are relevant to the workplace, and it is recognised that further work could be carried out in this area. During the review visits, the ELIR team heard a range of views including that support for employability was very effective. A small number of postgraduate research students said the University focused more on developing them as researchers and preparing them for future roles in research and academia rather than for employment outside higher education.

60   Similarly, a small number of taught postgraduates reflected that there was a strong research orientation to their programmes, indicating that there were opportunities to embed more innovative approaches to employability in the curriculum, linking theory to examples of real world applications. Students studying on science programmes expressed a desire for greater engagement with industry. There would be benefit in the University reflecting on these opinions as it develops its work in this area.

2.5   Effectiveness of the approach to enhancing the student learning experience

61   The University has a highly effective approach to enhancing the student experience. There is very clear evidence that student engagement and representation play a central role in the learning and teaching environment. The school and faculty president structures allow students to be represented across the institution as well as through the Students' Association. Student representatives are very positive about their experiences and are proactive in identifying areas in which to engage, such as the current work on assessment and feedback.

62   Staff and students have a strong shared sense of the St Andrews graduate identity, which is underpinned by the extensive range of co-curricular opportunities made available by the University and the Students' Association. In the context of this very positive set of activities and in the likelihood of the student population continuing to become more diverse, the University is encouraged to reflect on the ways all students can be supported to engage with the holistic St Andrews experience.

63   Support for students has been enhanced through the creation of the one-stop Advice and Support Centre which, among other things, ensures there are links between the professional support staff and the academic staff, for example through the Academic Alert system. The University has engaged positively with the widening participation agenda, offering a range of initiatives aimed at raising aspirations and promoting access to higher education. There is a strategic and well-embedded approach to supporting equality and diversity including use of the Inclusive Curriculum Toolkit, and adopting teaching practices which support inclusion of the whole student cohort. The Faculty of Science has been particularly prominent in this area and the University plans to enhance activity in the Faculty of Arts, which it is encouraged to progress.

64   The University has identified the use of technology in learning and teaching as an area for future development, and is encouraged to reflect on the ways in which greater use of technology could enhance the institution's approach.

3   Enhancement in learning and teaching

3.1   Approaches to identifying and sharing good practice

65   The University has an effective approach to identifying and sharing good practice. Systematic sharing of good practice across the institution is a key feature of the revised annual monitoring and review processes (paragraphs 105-110). Good practice and development points are identified through the Annual Academic Monitoring (AAM) process and are reported systematically to the Annual Monitoring Group. CAPOD identifies around 10 areas of good practice on which directors of teaching are invited to vote. The most popular five examples of good practice are then disseminated by CAPOD in an email sent to schools, forming the basis of a University-wide Annual Academic Monitoring Dissemination Event. There are plans to widen the sources of good practice for the Dissemination Event to include, for example, external examiner reports and projects funded through the Teaching

Development Fund. The Dissemination Event is attended by directors of teaching and a limited number of colleagues. Senior staff told the ELIR team that greater demand to attend the Dissemination Event is coming from the schools. There is an intention to vary the name, subject and style of dissemination events to encourage broader attendance from across the University.

66   The directors of teaching view themselves as drivers of innovation in schools through various formal and informal sharing mechanisms, for example through the school teaching committees or teaching lunches. Many schools have regular events open to all staff where enhancement of learning and teaching is discussed. The directors of teaching provide a pivotal link between the schools and the centre of the institution, for example through their membership of the University Learning & Teaching Committee (LTC). LTC has a good teaching/good practice slot at the end of every meeting, and there is a LTC Open Forum on different topics open to all staff and students. Previous topics include 'Diversity in Learning and the Academy' (April 2014), 'The developing use of technology in teaching at St Andrews' (April 2013) and 'Making feedback work for you' (December 2012).

67   A recent initiative is the Teachers' Talk webpages, which draw together all the University's learning and teaching resources, including a resource for sharing good practice. Staff confirmed to the ELIR team that this provided a useful noticeboard which enabled staff to contact colleagues with a view to learning more about their practice. The Teaching Development Fund is designed to fund collaborative projects relating to learning and teaching across a group of schools. These projects are often collaborative across disciplines, and involve both academic and support staff, as well as students, with the outcomes being shared between projects. The University is developing mechanisms to ensure these projects can be more closely aligned with institutional strategic priorities.

The Centre for Academic, Professional & Organisational Development (CAPOD)

68   CAPOD plays a central and highly effective role in the identification and dissemination of good practice. The combination of support for development and academic monitoring and review in one unit provides for a holistic and well-integrated perspective on quality enhancement. CAPOD is closely involved with the revised AAM process (paragraph 65) and also prepares an annual summary of University Review of Learning & Teaching (URLT) reports (paragraph 113).

69   The directors of teaching reported very positive interaction between the schools and CAPOD, including the pool of academic staff and postgraduate research students who deliver CAPOD programmes and workshops. The ELIR team heard from staff who said the experience of being a member of the CAPOD training pool supported them to engage with others from across the University, for example as co-presenters which benefited them individually as well as those being trained. Drawing on the expertise of academics contributes to the perceived relevance of academic development activities and ensures that they are firmly anchored in academic practice. It was less evident to the ELIR team that academic development activities are research-led or that pedagogic and other relevant research inform their content and delivery. CAPOD staff do not carry out pedagogical research themselves, but rely on the co-opted academic staff from across the University to provide the research perspective. A proportion of these staff are engaged in pedagogical research and are part of a small network of colleagues across the University. The University is encouraged to consider extending CAPOD's work to include further development of this community of practice in pedagogical research to ensure that the academic development activities are informed by the latest research in learning and development.

70   The activities provided by CAPOD are perceived by staff as appropriate and responsive to the schools' needs. The range of support provided to postgraduate research

students, academics and administrators is highly appreciated, although it is acknowledged that there is less development support aimed at more experienced academic staff who, consequently, use CAPOD less.

71   The ELIR team learned that CAPOD has an evaluation strategy to determine the transfer of learning from development events and to consider the longer-term impact on performance. The strategy comprises five evaluation levels: baseline, reaction, learning, behaviour, and impact. Its implementation was at a very early stage at the time of the ELIR visits but looked like a potentially positive approach.

3.2   Impact of the national Enhancement Themes and related activity

72   The ELIR team learned that the University is revising its approach to the Enhancement Themes for the new Student Transitions Theme in 2014-15. Previously, funding had been provided to a range of small projects and, while these projects had been successful, the University recognised challenges with embedding and disseminating the outcomes. However, the University reflected that a benefit of this approach had been the successful encouragement of bids for funding from services and students, and hoped to maintain this level of interest. The Proctor is now responsible for institutional Enhancement Themes funding with CAPOD having key contact responsibility. The University expressed its intention to maintain its scheme of grants for small grass-roots projects, while working to align these more closely with institutional priorities, such as supporting taught postgraduate student transitions. The ELIR team considered that this has the potential to provide a more effective way of securing longer term impact.

3.3   Engaging and supporting staff

Academic development and support

73   New staff members receive an induction interview with their head of school at which requirements for staff development are identified with encouragement provided for follow-up. There is a one-day induction programme for new staff, but no requirement to undertake a formal teaching qualification. All new staff are provided with mentors, although the level of support and engagement is dependent on the needs of the individual. The ELIR team heard that staff can seek additional mentors from other universities, for example through the cross-institutional mentoring scheme with the University of Dundee.

74   Formal training from CAPOD, in the form of two workshops, is mandatory for postgraduate research students who teach. In exceptional circumstances they may be able to apply for exemption, but this is considered on a case-by-case basis. In addition, schools are intended to provide further training and support through the period of teaching. Student tutors are also expected to carry out a marking practical exercise and be involved in peer observation of teaching, both observing and being observed, for at least one teaching session. There are two optional HEA-accredited modules for postgraduate students who teach. Students who met the ELIR team were aware of this opportunity, but none had completed the modules. The students expressed the view that there was an over-reliance on CAPOD to cover all training and they indicated that they would like to receive more subject-specific training which might be developed by schools in partnership with CAPOD. It was evident that the current school-based support for teaching was variable with some students receiving limited context-specific guidance. The University is strongly encouraged to ensure that all postgraduate students who teach receive support from their schools for undertaking this role, in addition to the training already provided centrally by CAPOD.

75   Staff without prior experience of supervising research students at St Andrews, and all supervisors on a regular basis, are required to attend supervisor training. University policy states that it is the head of school's responsibility to ensure that new supervisors are appropriately trained.

76   There are no other minimum expectations for staff development, and senior managers indicated that this is partly related to resourcing. The ELIR team heard that the University has no intentions of offering a postgraduate certificate in academic practice (or equivalent) but funding has been provided for individual members of staff to access the programmes offered by other universities. The University will also provide support for staff seeking individual accreditation through the HEA.

77   Academic staff confirmed that the approach to staff development is voluntary but that directors of teaching or heads of school would strongly encourage individuals to undertake development where required. Staff told the team they were generally content with the support available, indicating that the University was good at providing support or filling gaps in provision through external speakers or targeting internal resources.

78   The ELIR team learned that CAPOD aims to expand the staff development opportunities for academic leadership for heads of school and directors of teaching. The team would endorse this initiative and encourage the University to recognise the importance of including learning and teaching aspects of strategic leadership as well as those relating to research.

Incentivisation

79   Teaching is recognised in the University's promotion criteria. The criteria are relevant and comprehensive, but the weighting procedure places considerably greater emphasis on research excellence over teaching excellence, other than for promotion to Principal Teaching Fellow. Teaching fellows fulfil a number of roles across the University and senior staff acknowledged that this was an issue. Currently there are two distinct approaches to the teaching fellow posts. One involving a permanent contract and a broad role that is likely to involve the individual becoming well embedded with the work of their school. The other involves a temporary contract, often replacing staff who are on research leave, potentially resulting in the individual being poorly integrated into the academic community. The University has identified the provision of better conditions for teaching fellows on fixed-term appointments as a priority, to ensure they have the same opportunities for mentoring, project funding, research funding and conference attendance as other teaching staff. In addition, there is a limited formal career structure for teaching fellows, who cannot advance beyond Principal Teaching Fellow. The University is encouraged to consider the role, status and promotion structure for teaching-only staff.

80   There are two Teaching Award Schemes that aim to recognise and reward excellence in teaching, an institutional University Teaching Excellence Award and a Students' Association Teaching Award. Representatives of each scheme sit on the other's awarding panel. Undergraduate students who met the ELIR team appeared to have limited awareness of these awards. The team also considered that the students' own criteria for nominating teaching staff seemed to be quite high. However, members of staff with a development and enhancement role emphasised the positive experience of the award ceremony, drawing together teachers and students from across the University.

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

81   Overall, the University has an effective approach. The suite of development opportunities provided by CAPOD is responsive to the University's needs and promotes positive engagement by staff and students. CAPOD also provides very effective support for the systematic arrangements in place to identify and share good practice. The University is encouraged to consider extending the role of CAPOD to include further development of the community of practice in pedagogical research and to increase support for mid-career and longer serving researchers. CAPOD provides effective central support to postgraduate students who teach and the University is asked to ensure the schools are supplementing this with adequate contextualised training and support. The University is aware of the variation in the role of teaching fellows and the limitations of the teaching-only career structure, and is asked to review this.

4   Academic standards

4.1   Approach to setting, maintaining and reviewing academic standards

82   The University's approach to academic standards is robust and generally meets sector expectations. It has a conventional approach with overall responsibility for academic standards resting with the Senate. Day-to-day responsibility for setting, monitoring and reviewing standards rests with schools, and the Proctor's Office has oversight of this. Each school has a teaching committee, which has school responsibility for curriculum development and links directly to the University Learning & Teaching Committee (LTC) through the directors of teaching.

83   Proposals for new modules and programmes generally originate in the schools with school teaching committees, directors of teaching or directors of postgraduate studies. Proposals for approval of new modules or programmes are submitted for the consideration of the deans, advised by the Curriculum Approvals Group (CAG). The role of the CAG is to ensure that standards are maintained in academic programmes offered at the University, using the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) as an external reference point. This includes providing an institutional overview of all modules and programmes and the alignment of assessment to learning outcomes. Final authority for new programmes lies with the Academic Council, who may also withdraw an existing programme, if necessary.

4.2   Management of assessment

84   Information about assessment, including timetables, policy and regulations for examinations, is available on the University website. The University's Assessment Policies and Procedures govern the amount of specific assessment per student, for example limiting the amount of group assessment. These policies and procedures make it clear that the assessment requirements of each module and any subsequent major changes to them must be notified to the relevant dean, who will scrutinise them for consistency with school and faculty practice. The document also states that all new module assessments must be reviewed by an external examiner.

85   Assessment strategies are described in the programme specifications, including all material submitted for assessment of each programme. Marking strategies vary between the schools, but the University requirement is that the strategies applied should be appropriate to the form of assessment and the subject discipline. There is also an expectation that the marking strategy should be consistent with best practice in that discipline. There are University requirements for second marking and moderation. Module handbooks are

required to contain details of their associated assessments, making this information, therefore, available to students at the start of the module.

86   Schools are required to publish grade descriptors for each appropriate level and type of assessment, with the expectation that these will conform to the SCQF guidelines for each level. The University's Assessment Policy and Procedures also state that descriptors should be sufficiently relevant to the assessment for which they are used to provide meaningful feedback to students about their performance and enable them to understand the judgements on their assessments.

Common Reporting Scale

87   The 2011 ELIR report asked the University to ensure consistency and clarity in the arrangements for mapping students' marks to grades by reflecting on the marking practices adopted in some schools.

88   The Common Reporting Scale (CRS) is included in the Student Handbook 2014-15, but the marks are only described in terms of the corresponding Honours classification. There is no explanation of what characteristics denote a piece of work worthy of any individual grade. There is an expectation that grade mappings should be included in course handbooks. Programme handbooks are available on the school websites. Most handbooks contained the grade descriptors although some did not.

89   Staff reported consistent use of the CRS and transparency of 'mapping' for staff and students. They said CRS is used consistently for reporting, but marking is carried out according to each school's preferred method. Some schools grade directly onto the CRS, while many others use percentage marking and then convert onto the CRS, or a mix of both approaches. Students reported considerable variation and dissatisfaction with the transparency of marking and a lack of understanding of the CRS. Students who studied across schools found the different expectations or priorities in marking complicated and confusing. They reported variation between schools in how useful the marking guidelines were and students from outside the UK found the guidelines difficult to interpret. The University is encouraged to strengthen the support it gives to students, particularly those studying across schools and from other academic cultures, to enable them to understand assessment requirements. This is particularly important given the University's practice of not requiring external examiners to attend programme exam boards thereby, in some cases, removing the opportunity for an integrated external overview of any student's performance. The University is encouraged, therefore, to develop a systematic process for monitoring cohort performance across modules and programmes especially, though not exclusively, for students studying across schools or institutions.

90   Taught postgraduate students expressed concerns about grade compression which they believed to be caused by the threshold for progression to Master's level, and a general reluctance to award marks at the top end of the CRS, meaning that the available marking range tended to be within a narrow band. Example data provided to the ELIR team supported this view. There would be benefit in the University encouraging academic staff to use an appropriately wide range of marks when grading students' work.

Progression

91   Honours entry criteria have been modified since the 2011 ELIR. There are still different requirements for entry into Honours study according to the school. All schools operate a system of automatic entry to Honours, in which any student who has attained sufficiently high grades in sub-Honours modules is eligible for progression. Some schools, typically in the sciences, use a University-administered examination to determine

progression to Honours where the student has failed at the first attempt. The School of Medicine operates its own conditional Honours entry system for students who have initially failed.

92   It was clear to the ELIR team that the rationale for different systems in Arts and Science did have a logical basis, associated with the number of Honours pathways in the Arts and the greater likelihood of students gaining direct entry to second year in the Sciences which reduces the range of Honours options available to those students. Students who met the team were aware that different systems existed and, generally, were clear about how the process worked in their schools.

Study abroad

93   Students studying abroad discuss their curriculum with staff before they leave to produce a Learning Agreement that details the modules they will study while away from St Andrews. Information about Learning Agreements is available to outgoing students on the University website. When the students return, there is a grade conversion process to translate their grades into St Andrews' marks. The grade conversion following study abroad is applied consistently. Staff told the ELIR team that grade conversions for each partnership are published routinely on the website. All students are briefed about credit and grade conversion in preparation for study abroad. Further information about the policy, grade conversion tables for different countries and guidance about credit loads abroad are all available online. The University is confident that the mechanism is robust, although staff acknowledged there would be benefit in further standardisation of grade and credit conversion across the schools. Students who had participated in study abroad reported a clear understanding of the credit conversion process.

94   Following a number of years of collaboration with some of its international partners, the University is in a position to monitor grade conversions by institution, and has started to track student performance at specific institutions to determine how that performance compares with Honours performance at St Andrews. The grade conversion tables for the BA (International Honours) programme (paragraph 128) have already been modified as a result of analysis of student performance and senior staff informed the ELIR team that other Grade Conversion Tables had similarly been revised. The University is encouraged to continue with this analysis across the entire portfolio of its collaborative partners.

Research students

95   The University's practice in relation to monitoring research students' progress is in line with sector expectations. There is an annual review of each student's progress with very clear guidance at institutional and school-level on how this should be carried out in the Policy for Supervisors and Students in Research Postgraduate Programme. The research student and their supervisor each submit a confidential report, following which a meeting is held between the candidate and a panel comprising at least two members of the school who are appointed by the school director of postgraduate studies. The panel should not include the research student's principal supervisor, nor anyone who might inhibit the student speaking frankly about his/her supervisor. Oversight of the progress review process is the responsibility of the school postgraduate committee, the convener of which is appointed by the head of school.

4.3   Use of external reference points in managing academic standards

96   The University's use of external reference points is, generally, in line with sector expectations.

External examiners

97   The University has a policy for external examining that describes procedures for the appointment and responsibilities of external examiners for taught courses. It states that no University qualification (other than honorary degrees) should be awarded without participation in the examining process by at least one external examiner. The responsibilities of the external examiner include curriculum approval, review of assessments, and modulation and benchmarking of assessment marks. They are shown an overview of the cohort grade spread at module level.

98   The University regards the final degree classification as a straightforward arithmetic calculation based on aggregation of module performance, which is carried out by the Registry. Academic staff expressed the view that, provided the module external examiner process is effective, then the degree process is secure. The policy for external examining makes it clear that external examiners have no role to play in determining final degree classifications. However, the policy does provide for the attendance of an external examiner at a final degree classification board, but it was clear to the ELIR team that this was not a common occurrence. The University is encouraged to reflect on this practice (paragraph 104).

99   The University has taken the decision that it will not routinely publish its external examiner reports. Examiner reports are currently considered by school teaching committees, which include student representation. However, this places a large burden for dissemination on a single student in each school. There are benefits of making the reports more widely available in that this makes the whole assessment process more transparent for students. The University is asked to reconsider its decision.

Programme approval and review

100   New programme proposals are required to adhere to the Quality Code, including any appropriate Subject Benchmark Statement, and to align with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) and, where appropriate, European Qualifications Framework (EQF), and any relevant PSRB requirements. Schools are also required to seek advice from external sources. For new modules, this will normally be an external examiner; for new programmes, University policy indicates that an external subject specialist should be consulted. The ELIR team's reading of a sample of documentation confirmed that there is detailed reference to external sources in the approval process.

101   Periodic review of modules and programmes, known as University Review of Learning & Teaching, includes consideration of external reference points such as the SCQF and the Quality Code. Sample documentation confirmed there is also explicit consideration of assessment.

4.4   Effectiveness of the arrangements for securing academic standards

102   The University generally has robust processes that have been reviewed and refreshed since the 2011 ELIR. The approach to setting, maintaining and reviewing academic standards is effective. However, there is still variation between schools, for example in relation to assessment marking practice.

103   The 2011 ELIR asked the University to ensure consistency and clarity in the mapping of marks to grades on the Common Reporting Scale (CRS). Progress has been made, but students would benefit from the University undertaking further work to help clarify the assessment requirements and to make the use of the CRS more transparent.

104   The current limited involvement of external examiners in the degree awarding process increases the possibility of inter-school or inter-institutional differences in marking criteria affecting students' final awards. The University should reduce this possibility by providing clearer guidance on the differences in marking criteria and establishing routine and systematic analysis of programme cohort performance, to provide an overview of student performance across modules and subjects. In addition, given the potential value of external examiner reports to identify enhancements that enrich the learning experience, coupled with the benefits of greater transparency for students, the University is asked reconsider its decision not to publish the reports.

5   Self-evaluation and management of information

5.1   Key features of the institution's approach

105   The University's evaluative practices are centred upon Annual Academic Monitoring (AAM) and periodic University-led Reviews of Learning and Teaching (URLT). Since the 2011 ELIR, the University has enhanced its AAM process through, for example, having a more focused pro forma for reporting, including the student school president in AAM dialogues and having an annual dissemination event where schools can share positive practice.

106   In addition to formal AAM reporting, a third of the schools had a dialogue each year with the Proctor, deans, the Director of CAPOD & Quality Monitoring, and the Student Association Director of Representation. Interviews rotate around the schools over a three-year cycle, but a school where quality and standards are deemed at risk would be called for interview regardless of their place in the cycle. Additionally, a school can request a meeting if it wishes to discuss an issue arising from the AAM process.

107   Examples of AAM reports seen by the ELIR team showed that schools highlight key features which include recording new and innovative practice and problems that have arisen during the year. Reports also provide updates on actions arising from the previous year's AAM. The reports are usually produced in June to coincide with, and inform, the learning and teaching strategic planning meetings between senior management within the school and senior University managers. These planning meetings cover topics such as staff workloads, new programme proposals, new appointments, teaching fellows, institutional IT systems and teaching accommodation requirements.

108   All the AAM reports are considered by the Academic Monitoring Group (AMG) at a meeting in August, and minutes of the 2014 meeting seen by the ELIR team show that there is a thorough and effective interrogation of school reports. Actions for dissemination of good practice and further investigation of issues are also identified. In addition, the AMG carried out a three-year review of the revised AAM process in 2014, and concluded that the process was working effectively and leading to greater sharing of positive practice (paragraph 65).

109   The ELIR team regarded the identification and dissemination of good practice arising from the AAM process by the AMG, along with facilitation by CAPOD, as an area of positive practice. The team also noted that the University was seeking to ensure that all school presidents were involved with the full AAM process and all heads of school attended the AAM dialogues. In addition, for 2015-16, the Proctor's Office has requested that the schools organise a reflective event, open to all academic staff, on the outcomes of the AAM process. This development is strongly supported by the ELIR team.

110   The directors of teaching were strongly supportive of the revised AAM process. They consider it to be streamlined but no less rigorous, emphasising that it is a more

evaluative and worthwhile experience for schools. They appreciated the shorter format of the report and central provision of student data. Senior staff believe they have had some success in engaging colleagues with the process. In discussion with the ELIR team, academic staff expressed the view that they received enough information from the directors of teaching, but many staff had little awareness of the AAM process, including those with responsibility for managing programmes. Senior managers indicated that they were comfortable about the lack of widespread awareness of AAM among teaching staff, preferring for them to be fully engaged in high quality learning and teaching, leaving the directors of teaching and committees to monitor quality. While the team has some sympathy with this approach, it places considerable responsibility on a small number of people who are not directly involved in the delivery of modules, with the risk of issues going unnoticed, as well as reducing the number of staff involved in the reflective process. The University is, therefore, strongly encouraged to secure the engagement of a wider group of academic staff in the reflective elements of the AAM activity.

111   The URLT process runs on a five to six-year cycle and includes professional service departments as well as academic schools. Up to 10 URLTs may be conducted during a year. Review panels include a postgraduate research student representative, the Student Association Director of Representation and discipline experts from outside the University. The ELIR team recognised that the Director of Representation can bring continuity to the URLT exercise, but also sees an opportunity for the University to engage a wider group of students from the pool of school and faculty presidents.

112   Since the 2011 ELIR, the University has moved to align URLTs with PSRB reviews, formalised the process for evidence provided by students, and, from 2014-15, will pilot the inclusion of an international reviewer who will provide a written submission to the panel. The review is intended to be enhancement-led and discipline areas are requested to identify enhancement themes prior to the review event. The significant number of commendations, recommendations (both to the school and the University) and the constructive critical analysis seen in the URLT reports indicate a rigorous approach to periodic review.

113   CAPOD produces a summary report on the findings of URLTs for the year which is received by the AMG. This report exemplifies the University's attention to self-evaluation, for example, in providing a focus for the key issues requiring University attention such as library space, the distinctiveness of MLitt programmes in comparison with fourth year Honours, and year 1 of PhD study.

114   Student involvement in evaluative processes is guided by the Director of Student Representation (DoRep). This is an important post and among the duties of the DoRep is representing student views on senior committees, training of student representatives and leading a cadre of faculty and school (student) presidents. In a meeting with the ELIR team, student presidents and class representatives confirmed that they made a positive contribution to evaluative practices. The school and faculty presidents also discussed University initiatives relating to evaluative practice, for example module evaluation, through the Presidents' Forum, a twice-semester meeting with the Proctor and deans.

115   Currently, the AAM and URLT reviews are informed by NSS results, external examiner reports, MEQs and internal reviews. With regard to the broader provision of data and information to support reviews and other self-evaluative procedures, the University has a range of sources including a central student records system and a teaching support system. Through these the University can generate information on staffing, research grants and budget monitoring. The teaching support system (MMS) provides information on data including student cohorts, marks and module numbers. At the time of the current ELIR, the University was about to pilot a learning and teaching fact sheet, produced on behalf of CAPOD and the Proctor's Office with the aim of improving the provision of information and

data for the AAM and URLT processes. A provisional template seen by the ELIR team indicated that a comprehensive set of metrics would be presented. It was proposed that a traffic light system would indicate performance in certain areas, for example student surveys.

116   Another example of the University's self-evaluative approach is the Senate Efficiency Review (SER). The project was developed following a LEAN management analysis of institutional practice and procedures including those centred on learning and teaching. The SER is aimed at reducing bureaucracy and streamlining processes, such as those around student admission, progression and curriculum development. After a difficult start, which required a reappraisal of work strands, the project is now well on the way to delivering improved information systems that will, for instance, capture curriculum developments and a more effective life-cycle approach to the management of student records (paragraph 6).

117   Outcomes of evaluative practices are considered by the University in a number of ways. The AMG has responsibility for overview of evaluative practice and this small group includes the Proctor, deans, Director of CAPOD & Quality Monitoring, DoRep and an external member. At a summer meeting it considers the outcomes from all AAM reports (paragraph 107) and minutes of this meeting indicate that areas of action are identified which may involve the schools or the University LTC. The AMG also identifies themes for the annual AAM Dissemination Event and, in turn, the outcomes of the event are considered by the LTC. For the URLTs, the annual CAPOD report is also considered by the AMG which identifies appropriate actions. The AMG reports to the University Court through the Academic Assurance Group (AAG) and the latter provides an annual report to the Audit & Risk Committee of Court. The most recent AAG report seen by the ELIR team identified areas of positive practice and areas of potential risk that needed close oversight. The team noted that the report gave an accurate reflection of the key outcomes from the AAM process.

5.2   Commentary on the advance information set

118   The Advance Information Set (AIS) produced for the current ELIR provided a comprehensive overview of the University's evaluative processes and the ways in which these are considered by University committees. The AIS demonstrated that the University has systematic and robust procedures for addressing the quality of student learning and academic standards. The AIS helped the ELIR team to identify themes around the effectiveness of CAPOD in enhancing learning and teaching, the effectiveness of annual and periodic monitoring and the dissemination of positive practice, and the impact of the revised Senate Efficiency Review on streamlining information provision and support for University processes such as admissions, student progression and academic monitoring. The team noted potential positive practice in the conduct of academic monitoring, the enhancement activities led by CAPOD, and the use of school and faculty presidents in evaluative processes. Student feedback in the AIS indicated some continuing issues regarding the library and availability of study space, which the University is continuing to address. The mapping of University practice against the Quality Code presented in the AIS also highlighted potential areas for further development (paragraph 119).

5.3   Use of external reference points in self-evaluation

119   The RA prepared for the current ELIR outlined a range of external reference points used by the University in its self-evaluative procedures, such as the SCQF and the Quality Code including Subject Benchmark Statements. The University is meeting sector expectations in its evaluative practices by taking into account the requirements of these reference points. For example, programme specifications show that the programmes are assigned an SCQF level, there is reference to subject benchmarks and, where appropriate,

recognition by the relevant PSRB. Alignment with external reference points is conducted during module or programme approval and external examiners confirm the programme continues to align with the subject benchmarks.

120   Since the 2011 ELIR, the University has mapped its provision and practice against the Quality Code using key staff and groups to map expectations and indicators against University practice and policy. It has adopted a traffic light system to identify the extent of alignment. University practice aligns with the great majority of indicators and, for a few indicators, the mapping document gives details of development work aimed at achieving closer alignment. The notable exceptions from full alignment with the indicators are in *Chapter B7: External Examining*. While the University is meeting the broad expectation of the Chapter, it has decided not to publish external examiner reports and is asked to reconsider this (paragraphs (97, 98 and 104).

5.4   Management of public information

121   The University meets the indicators set out in Part C of the Quality Code. Prospectuses are attractive, well-produced documents providing a good balance between academic information and more general information on the student experience at St Andrews. Module handbooks are generally adequate in providing students with essential programme information (paragraph 85).

122   The University provides much of its public information through its website with the Corporate Communications Unit having responsibility for oversight of the information. The Unit works closely with other professional support areas. Web content is provided and updated by support and academic units, however, the ELIR team learned that, recently, there has been increased central control of top-level webpages under the leadership of the digital communications team. The University acknowledges that there is scope for enhancing the provision and accuracy of public information and the Digital Advisory Board (DAB) is tasked with improving presentation and quality control of web material. A digital framework provides guidelines for staff on the use of digital information. In a meeting with staff it was stated that redesign of the web would focus on user requirements and that, for key areas of public information, the University would move towards a 'golden copy' culture with clearly defined ownership and responsibilities. Much of the redesign work will involve schools, and the digital communications team will work closely with school IT and computing officers. The ELIR team recognises the value and importance to the University of reviewing the way it provides information through the web.

123   The University also provides course information through some 500 Key Information Sets and, although sceptical of the value of the KIS, it has led to improvements in the accuracy of information in the course catalogues. The ELIR team noted the easy availability of important module and programme information, such as admission requirements and credit requirements for progression.

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

124   The University has demonstrated an effective approach to self-evaluation in a number of ways. The Reflective Analysis gave an accurate and balanced view of the University's approach to self-evaluation, in particular, highlighting areas for development with regard to: the initial progress of the Senate Efficiency Review (SER), the continued expansion of student study space, the Common Reporting Scale, and the provision and accessibility of public information. The University's commitment to a culture of self-evaluation

is also demonstrated by its review and revised phasing of the SER, and the improvements to the AAM process since the 2011 ELIR which have been monitored and reviewed.

6   Collaborative activity

6.1   Key features of the institution's strategic approach

125   The University adopts a strategic approach to internationalisation and this was illustrated by the Case Study, BA (International Honours): An Innovative Approach to International Education, submitted for the current ELIR. The University's Strategic Plan expresses the intention to increase overseas undergraduate student numbers. The University considered that its collegial approach to collaborative partnerships was illustrated by the development of the BA (International Honours) programme with a longstanding partner with which a number of student exchanges were already in place. The University recognises student mobility and international collaboration as fundamental cornerstones of its strategic vision to expand the boundaries of international scholarship.

126   The University has chosen to establish a small number of high quality, low-risk collaborations, which involve study at two or more institutions leading to a joint award. Current collaborations comprise one undergraduate programme, and 10 taught postgraduate programmes with: four UK partners, two international partners, and three European consortia. The University sees collaboration as a way of strengthening postgraduate research culture, for example through a co-tutelle approach allowing students to gain benefit from local and international researchers. There are collaborations through co-tutelle arrangements with around 20 institutions in the UK, Europe and overseas, for example through participation in the Science without Borders scheme providing links with institutions in Brazil. In the UK there are arrangements with the University of Stirling at postgraduate level in Philosophy and there is an established relationship with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.

127   Subsequent to the 2011 ELIR, the University reviewed the effectiveness of its collaborative agreement to validate and award research degrees for the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (RCS), giving particular consideration to the effectiveness of the reporting links between the two institutions. The University continues to enhance its links with RCS. Primary responsibility for the relationship now lies with the Provost (who leads on research matters), supported by a smaller, more focused group than before. There are annual meetings, chaired by the Provost, which include the Director of CAPOD & Quality Monitoring, to discuss sharing of resources, staff collaborations and how RCS students can engage in St Andrews' activities, such as the GRADskills programme and St Leonard's College. In 2013-14, the St Andrews Music Centre initiated a music research seminar and invited the RSC Director of Postgraduates along with a group of RCS postgraduate students to attend and contribute.

128   The BA (International Honours) programme represents a longstanding and close collaboration with the College of William and Mary, Virginia, USA. This is deemed to be a truly integrated joint undergraduate programme in which students spend two years at each institution studying Economics, English, History or International Relations. At the time of the current ELIR, the programme was in its fourth year of operation, with the first cohort due to graduate in summer 2015. Students who met the ELIR team attested to the wide-ranging academic and social benefits of this programme. The University acknowledges that, given the complexity and challenge of such a programme, a long-term commitment was vital and so the programme was conceived as having an initial 10-year duration. The benefits of already having established relations with the College through teaching and research collaborations was viewed as essential to the process.

129   Erasmus partnerships and research relationships have led to participation in the Masters Mundus programmes, as well as a new initiative to offer a joint Masters in German and Comparative Literature with the University of Bonn. This is a two-year degree programme involving two semesters of study in both institutions and is in line with models elsewhere in Europe. The Collaborations & Study Abroad (CSA) team have oversight of 42 school undergraduate programmes and 13 St Andrews Abroad Programmes. Every school, except Medicine, has either its own programmes or participates in St Andrews Abroad.

6.2   Securing academic standards of collaborative provision

130   Since the 2011 ELIR, the University has developed a new framework for the monitoring and review of collaborative programmes which is a five-step process focused on: approval, implementation, first review, annual monitoring and review, and agreement renewal review. Approval processes for new collaborative programmes now align with *Chapter: B10* of the Quality Code and should include: a comprehensive review of existing links with the institution; an assessment of the suitability of the partner(s), in particular the ability of the partner to provide a high quality academic experience to complement the St Andrews education; details of the arrangements for partnership operation; and an assessment of the sustainability of the projected collaboration. Approval documentation also requires details of the partner's procedures for module approval and review, along with strategies for enhancement at the partner institution.

131   New collaborative programmes are discussed by the Curriculum Approvals Group and require comments from external examiners. Proposed programmes are considered and approved by the Proctor's Office with final 'sign off' provided by the Vice-Principal (Enterprise and Engagement). Registry holds a centrally-approved list of collaborations and is responsible for updating this. The Collaborations and Study Abroad team, based in Registry, are responsible for facilitating the approval and 'setup' processes with the partner, as well as coordinating the various processes and colleagues to ensure the smooth operation of the collaboration.

132   Each partnership programme has an academic lead based within the relevant school, and it is the school's responsibility to ensure good relations with the partner institution, aligning their collaborative arrangement with wider curriculum provision. The Collaborations and Study Abroad Office is ultimately responsible for the operational management of collaborative programmes, however, responsibility for academic standards rests with schools and this is reviewed through the University's annual monitoring processes. In meetings with academic staff it was clear that colleagues who held direct responsibility for specific programmes were well informed about student progress and development of the programme. However, it was less clear to the ELIR team where overall academic oversight for collaborative provision rested within the University.

133   Each school is required to report on their collaborative activity as part of the Annual Academic Monitoring (AAM) process. Examples of AAM reports provided to the ELIR team evidenced that some schools did report on collaborative provision, however, this was 'light touch' in nature and some schools did not comment on their collaborative provision at all. The University has recognised this variation in practice and has committed to updating the AAM template, from 2014-15, to request reflections on collaborative programmes where relevant and to make it explicit that this should include consultation with students. The ELIR team would endorse this development, and would encourage the University to ensure that all schools with collaborative provision engage with the process.

134   An annual report on collaborative activity is considered by the Academic Monitoring Group. The report is produced by the Collaborations and Study Abroad Office and covers all

reviews of collaborative provisions, making recommendations on continuing, amending or terminating a partnership as appropriate. The sample reports provided to the ELIR team evidenced strong statistical information about institutional provision but provided limited evaluation of the student experience.

135   Each collaborative programme is required to host a Joint Committee including staff from the partner institution. In addition to the Joint Committee, the William and Mary Partnership hosts an internal Academic Board, which considers all academic matters and maintains institutional oversight of that partnership. The ELIR team's reading of this documentation confirmed that there is an insightful and evaluative consideration of the student experience on that programme.

136   The University emphasised that its new five-step framework for monitoring and reviewing collaborative programmes is intended to be a proportional process that can be adapted to suit the complexity and scale of the collaborative provision under consideration. However, it has not yet been made explicit how much flexibility there is for schools in adapting the framework to suit new partnerships.

137   Approval and monitoring of study abroad programmes is managed through the Collaborations and Study Abroad team. Schools are responsible for assessing curriculum alignment and suitability and can choose to work with any new student abroad partner the University has established a link with. The University believes this process has enhanced study abroad provision within the Faculty of Science by matching partner institutions within specific disciplines. Monitoring of study abroad is overseen through the AAM process and a site visit is required every three to five years. The Collaborations and Study Abroad Office have also established a Student-Staff Consultative Committee as a formal means of gathering feedback on study abroad programmes and services. A student internship placement has also been established to lead on projects and contribute to a peer support service for inbound and outbound students.

6.3   Enhancing the student learning experience on collaborative programmes

138   The University stated that students on collaborative programmes are fully integrated into the community, taking part in academic and extra-curricular activities in the same way as other students. The University also stated that this experience is to be replicated in partner institutions. The University has processes in place to track various student cohorts on collaborative programme, however it does not currently carry out systematic monitoring of cohort progress and achievement compared with students on the same modules/programme who are not on a collaborative route (paragraph 94).

139   While appreciating the benefits of studying in two (or more) institutions, both from a personal and academic point of view, students on the BA (International Honours) programme indicated that they had encountered some challenges in integrating into the St Andrews community, suggesting that the St Andrews approach was academically and socially more 'hands off'. In particular, these students believed that William & Mary had a more structured approach to transition. The students had established a Student Partnership Group to ease transition between the two institutions and reported that this initiative had been very well received by staff at St Andrews. Students confirmed that the University is very receptive to student feedback and had made changes to support their learning experience.

140   Students undertaking study abroad programmes acknowledged the benefits of these, confirming that they had been well prepared for the experience. Students with

experience of studying abroad were clear about who to approach with problems, including health and welfare as well as academic issues. The Collaborative and Study Abroad team was seen as an important conduit for student support while students were abroad.

6.4   Effectiveness of the approach to managing collaborative activity

141   The University has made progress since the 2011 ELIR to enhance the effectiveness of its frameworks for managing and monitoring collaborative programmes. A new five-stage process has been introduced which has the potential to be effective. The University intends that the five-step framework should be used flexibly, in proportion to the nature of the collaborative provision in question. Given the early stage in its introduction at the time of the ELIR visit, the ELIR team was unclear how this proportionate approach would operate in practice and, in particular, it was not explicit how much flexibility would be permitted.

142   It is clear that collaborative programmes are managed carefully at school level, particularly the William and Mary collaboration. The Joint Council and Academic Board provide strong management at the strategic and operation level with detailed evidence of any arising issues being resolved in an effective manner. However, the University is strongly encouraged to ensure that there is clear academic oversight of all collaborative activity at the institutional level. Currently, there is a possibility of this becoming distributed between schools. Schools are required to review collaborative programmes through the Annual Academic Monitoring and University Review of Learning and Teaching processes but, as the University has recognised, reports from these processes do not always include explicit reflection on academic standards or the student experience on collaborative programmes. The University intends to include a prompt for this in a revised template from the current academic year, and the ELIR team would strongly support that development.

143   The experience the University has gained from its partnership with William and Mary will be valuable to inform the establishment of future collaborative programmes as well as the institution's approach to internationalisation more generally. The University is encouraged to ensure that learning from the William and Mary experience is reflected on as part of future developments.

144   The University has a successful approach to promoting and supporting student mobility through its study abroad arrangements, including the wide range of partner institutions with which it has agreements in place. As noted earlier in this report, the University also has systematic arrangements for recognising learning undertaken elsewhere (paragraph 93).