

Enhancement-led Institutional Review of the University of Strathclyde

Outcome Report

March 2014

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About the Enhancement-led Institutional Review method

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

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

About this review

This is the Outcome Report of the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at the University of Strathclyde. The review took place as follows: Part 1 held on 4-6 February 2014 and Part 2 held on 10-14 March 2014. The review was conducted by a team of six reviewers:

- Professor Alan Davidson (Academic Reviewer)
- Dr Pam Harris (Academic Reviewer)
- Mrs Carol Morris (Coordinating Reviewer)
- Professor Ian Pirie (Academic Reviewer)
- Associate Professor Gordon Suddaby (International Reviewer)
- Dr Filippo Trevisan (Student Reviewer)

This report sets out the overarching judgement formed by the ELIR team on:

- the current and likely future effectiveness of the institution's arrangements for managing academic standards and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience

It is possible for the overarching judgement to be expressed in three levels which indicate that the institution's arrangements are: effective; have limited effectiveness; or are not effective. More detail on these categories is provided in the ELIR information document.

The overarching judgement for this report can be found on page 3, followed by the areas of positive practice and the areas for development.

A more detailed [Technical Report](#) is also available for this review.⁴ The Technical Report sets out the ELIR team's findings under each of the headings in the ELIR 3 method.

¹ Further information about the ELIR method: www.qaa.ac.uk/institutionreports/types-of-review/pages/elir.aspx

² Further information about QAA: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus

³ ELIR information document: www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/ELIR-information.aspx

⁴ Technical report: www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/Reports/Pages/ELIR-Strathclyde-14.aspx

About the University of Strathclyde

The University of Strathclyde became a University in its own right in 1964 when it was awarded its Royal Charter. It was originally established in 1796 when John Anderson left instruction in his will for the establishment in Glasgow of 'a place of useful learning' - a University open to everyone regardless of gender or class. The University maintains a strong commitment to widening participation in higher education and also has the ambition to be among the leading technological universities in the world, describing itself as 'distinctive in the Scottish Higher Education environment, but rooted in heritage'.

The academic structure is based on four faculties: Engineering, Humanities and Social Sciences, Science, and the Strathclyde Business School.

The University has a population of approximately 23,000 students of whom 64 per cent are studying at undergraduate level, 30 per cent are studying taught postgraduate programmes and 6 per cent are postgraduate research students.

Overarching judgement about the University of Strathclyde

The University of Strathclyde has **effective** arrangements for managing academic standards and the student learning experience. These arrangements are likely to continue to be effective in the future.

This is a positive judgement, which means the University has robust arrangements for securing academic standards and for enhancing the quality of the student experience.

Areas of positive practice

1 The ELIR has identified a number of areas of positive practice and these are summarised below.

2 **Development and communication of a clear strategy and vision** - The University has developed and communicated a clear strategy and vision, building on institution-wide self-evaluation and involving significant organisational change. The strategic leadership of the management team is evident, and the strategic goal to become an international technological university has been effectively communicated to staff and students.

3 **Staff engagement in institutional strategy** - The University has an effective and systematic approach to engaging staff in the delivery of institutional strategy. This is demonstrated by the Accountability Development Review (ADR) process and the 4 Pathways structure (academic, research, teaching and knowledge exchange) for staff recruitment and development. These arrangements ensure that staff have a clear understanding of where their individual performance contributes to the achievement of University aims and objectives. The online system developed for ADR also allows senior managers to analyse data on staff performance in real time for the purposes of staff development, resourcing and forward planning.

4 **Approach to widening participation** - The University has a strong commitment to widening participation, as demonstrated by its proactive outreach strategies and collaborative initiatives which are specifically designed to support non-traditional students in accessing the University.

5 **Support for innovation in learning and teaching** - The University has a culture of encouraging and supporting learning and teaching initiatives that enhance the student learning experience. This is underpinned by the University's use of innovative and active experiential learning environments which enable students to learn in live or simulated 'real-world' contexts.

6 **Researcher Development Programme** - The University's Researcher Development Programme, which has a compulsory credit-bearing element, supports the systematic development of a range of professional skills and attributes for all research students.

7 **Support for student mobility** - Priority is given to promoting and supporting student mobility. The University has evaluated students' experiences of study exchange, and has used the outcomes of this evaluation to enhance provision and identify ways of making mobility a more attractive, widely available and viable option for all of its students, including those with disabilities.

8 **Data analysis and reporting of information from external examiners and student surveys** - The outcomes of student surveys and external examiners' reports are systematically considered as part of the University's annual monitoring processes, and are used to enhance the student learning experience and inform institutional policy and practice.

9 **Peer review in annual quality reporting** - The cross-faculty peer review feature of the University's annual monitoring and reporting processes has particular benefits in promoting the identification and sharing of good practice.

Areas for development

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

11 **Institution-led quality review** - Make demonstrable progress, within the next academic year, in revising the approach to periodic institution-led review to ensure that the revised process gives adequate scrutiny to learning and teaching across all parts of the institution. The University should consider the scope, focus, granularity and consistency of implementation across the institution. It should also consider the linkages with the existing, and effective, annual monitoring processes.

12 **Assessment and feedback** - Continue to progress work to enhance assessment and feedback policy and practice. The University is asked to place particular emphasis on the scheduling and sequencing of assessments and the related feedback, making the policy explicit to students.

13 **Curriculum flexibility** - Continue to explore ways in which there can be increased flexibility to enable more students to engage in the types of innovative and active experiential learning that the University is providing.

14 **Embedding graduate attributes in curriculum design** - Make more explicit reference to the University's redefined graduate attributes (the 4Es - engaged; enterprising; enquiring; ethically, culturally and globally aware) in the development of the new online Course and Class Approval Process. This would ensure that the graduate attributes are embedded in the curriculum and would promote student awareness of their importance in learning and teaching.

15 **Postgraduate research staff-student contact** - Promote the equivalence of the postgraduate student experience across the institution by developing an approach to staff workload planning that recognises all aspects of learning and teaching, including research student supervision.

What happens next?

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

17 One year after publication of the ELIR Outcome and Technical Reports, institutions are asked to provide a follow-up report to indicate how they are responding to the outcomes of ELIR. Institutions also engage in a follow-up event with colleagues from other institutions to explore the ways in which the ELIR outcomes are being implemented. The final version of the institution's follow-up report is published on the QAA website.

Further information

18 A more detailed [Technical Report](#) is also available for this review. The Technical Report sets out the ELIR team's findings under each of the headings in the ELIR 3 method.

19 This review and its findings relate to the institution as a whole and do not provide information about individual programmes of study or subjects. For further information about those, contact the institution or visit its [website](#).

20 University sector institutions in Scotland also engage in systematic Enhancement Theme activity. Further information about that work, which has a sector-wide and institutional focus, can be found on the [Enhancement Themes website](#).

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

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

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