



# Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Strathclyde

## Outcome Report

March 2019

### Contents

<b>About the Enhancement-led Institutional Review method.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>About this review .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>About the University of Strathclyde .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Threshold judgement about University of Strathclyde .....</b>	<b>3</b>
Commendations .....	3
Recommendations .....	4
<b>What happens next? .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Further information.....</b>	<b>4</b>

## About the Enhancement-led Institutional Review method

The QAA website explains the method for [Enhancement-led Institutional Review \(ELIR\)](#) and has links to the ELIR handbook and other informative documents.<sup>1</sup> You can also find out more about the [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education \(QAA\)](#).<sup>2</sup>

Further details about ELIR can be found in an accompanying [brief guide](#),<sup>3</sup> including an overview of the review method, information about review teams, and explanations of follow-up action.

### About this review

This is the Outcome Report of the ELIR conducted by QAA at the University of Strathclyde. The review took place as follows: Planning Visit on 31 January 2019 and Review Visit on 11-15 March 2019. The review was conducted by a team of six reviewers:

- Mrs Pamela Calabrese (Coordinating Reviewer)
- Professor Stephen Doughty (International Reviewer)
- Professor David Lamburn (Academic Reviewer)
- Professor Ian Pirie (Academic Reviewer)
- Mr Edward Pollock (Student Reviewer)
- Professor John Sawkins (Academic Reviewer).

This report sets out the threshold 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.

The threshold judgement for this report can be found on page 3, followed by commendations and recommendations.

A more detailed [Technical Report](#) is also available for this review.<sup>4</sup> The Technical Report sets out the team's findings under each heading in the ELIR 4 method.

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<sup>1</sup> About ELIR:

[www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/en/reviewing-higher-education-in-scotland/enhancement-led-institutional-review](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/en/reviewing-higher-education-in-scotland/enhancement-led-institutional-review)

<sup>2</sup> About QAA: [www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland)

<sup>3</sup> Brief Guide to ELIR: [www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/reports/brief-guide-to-elir-method.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/reports/brief-guide-to-elir-method.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Technical Report: [www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/quality-assurance-reports/University-of-Strathclyde](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/quality-assurance-reports/University-of-Strathclyde)

## About the University of Strathclyde

The University of Strathclyde can trace its roots to 1796 and was granted its Royal Charter in 1964. The University's vision is that of a leading international technological university which is socially progressive and makes a positive difference to the lives of its students, to society and to the world. It has a specific focus on developing a deep integration and relationship with industry through research and through industry's direct involvement with student learning. The University has a strong commitment to widening participation in higher education.

The University has a strategic approach to achieving its vision, articulated in its Strategic Plan 2015-20 and, at the time of the current ELIR, was preparing to transition into the next five-year planning period. The Strategic Plan has three main themes: outstanding student experience; internationally-leading research; and world-leading innovation and impact. In turn, these are underpinned by two cross-cutting themes: global engagement and operational excellence. The University has four faculties: the Strathclyde Business School, the Faculty of Science, the Faculty of Engineering and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Science.

In 2017-18, the University had a student population of just over 20,000 full-time equivalent (FTE), of whom 70% were studying at undergraduate level, 22.5% were engaged in taught master's-level provision and 7.5% in postgraduate research. In the same year, 16% of the total student population were studying on a part-time basis however, a large proportion (46%) of these are taught postgraduate students. By headcount, 71% of the institution's students were from Scotland, 5% from the rest of the UK and the remaining 24% were international (including the European Union).

## Threshold judgement about the University of Strathclyde

The University of Strathclyde has **effective** arrangements for managing academic standards and the student learning experience.

This is a positive judgement, which means that the University meets sector expectations in securing the academic standards of its awards and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience it provides currently and into the future. This judgement confirms there can be public confidence in the University's awards and in the quality of the learning experience it provides for its students.

### Commendations

- 1 The University is commended for the following areas of good practice.
- 2 **Institutional approach to articulating and implementing vision** - the University has a clearly articulated vision which is implemented in a coordinated manner enabling it to enhance the curriculum and the wider student experience.
- 3 **Benefit to learning and teaching of institutional links with industry** - the University has well-established links with industry which impact positively on curriculum development, pedagogy and the student learning experience. Related to this, the implementation of the Graduate Apprenticeship and Degree Apprenticeship schemes has informed the enhancement of the University's other provision.
- 4 **Working in partnership with students** - the University's approach to student partnership has continued to evolve since the previous ELIR. Student partnership is evident in a range of ways including in the work of the student-led Student Experience Committee, engagement with substantial campus infrastructure projects and in the opportunities provided by the University's use of student interns.
- 5 **Availability and use of data to inform decision-making** - the University makes extensive suites of data available to academic and professional services staff which are widely and actively used to inform evaluation and decision-making.
- 6 **Approach to digital education** - the collaborative approach adopted by the Strathclyde Online Learning Committee towards the development and delivery of online courses, has transformed the way in which expertise and resources are shared across the University. As a result, the University's use of digital technologies and online resources has acted as a catalyst for enhancement across its portfolio of provision.
- 7 **Alignment of staff development with institutional strategy** - the University's staff development opportunities are aligned to the institution's strategic ambitions and to supporting staff in delivering institutional strategy, particularly in the areas of digital education.
- 8 **International outlook and opportunities** - students are provided with an international element to their experience, drawn from a diverse range of opportunities including study or work abroad. In addition, there are positive examples of the University's links with international partners being used to inform the curriculum.

## Recommendations

9 The University is asked to consider the following recommendations.

10 **Training for postgraduate research students who teach** - ensure that all postgraduate research students receive formal training before commencing teaching or assessing others. These arrangements, along with the facility to monitor attendance at training, should be introduced by the start of next academic session.

11 **Student engagement with external examiners** - share information with students about the work of external examiners including their role and the recommendations and commendations they make relating to programmes.

12 **Review of professional services** - pursue the University's intention to implement a process for reviewing the professional services which contribute to the student experience. The University is strongly encouraged to make demonstrable progress within the next academic year.

13 **Institutional oversight of collaborative provision** - reflect on the information about collaborative programmes and student numbers made available to the Collaborative Provision Agreements Sub-group in order to support its institution-level oversight of collaborative activity.

## What happens next?

14 QAA Scotland will continue to engage with the University through the annual discussion visits which, among other matters, consider the ways in which institutions respond to the ELIR outcomes.

15 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. The final version of the institution's Follow-up Report is published on the QAA website. Institutions also engage in a range of enhancement and development activities including Focus On projects where institutions work collaboratively to improve policy and practice relating to topics that are frequently occurring in ELIR outcomes.

## Further information

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

17 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](#).

18 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](#).

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

20 For further information about the Scottish Funding Council see [www.sfc.ac.uk](http://www.sfc.ac.uk).

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