

Enhancement-led Institutional Review of the University of the West of Scotland

Technical Report

December 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 Technical Report of the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at the University of the West of Scotland. The review took place as follows: Part 1 visit on 21-23 October 2014 and Part 2 visit on 1-5 December 2014. The review was conducted by a team of six reviewers:

- Professor Howard Colley (Academic Reviewer)
- Professor Liz Deane (International Reviewer)
- Patrick Devlin (Academic Reviewer)
- Professor Ian Pirie (Academic Reviewer)
- Emilia Todorova (Student Reviewer)
- Gabrielle Weir (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: the National Student Survey.

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.

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

Enhancement-led Institutional Review of the University of the West of Scotland

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

⁴ Outcome Report: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/provider?UKPRN=10007800

Overarching judgement about the University of the West of Scotland

The University of the West of Scotland 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 of the West of Scotland (the University or UWS) was formally established in 2007 by the merger of the University of Paisley and Bell College. It has its basis in the foundation of Paisley Technical College and School of Art in 1897. The University has a strong commitment and mission to deliver accessible higher education to a wide range of students and to provide a transformative educational experience. The University describes itself as being highly learner-centred with a strong applied research and knowledge transfer culture. The University is spread across four campus locations in Ayr, Dumfries, Hamilton and Paisley. In 2013-14, the University had a total student population of 15,650 (12,289 FTE) of whom around 74 per cent were undergraduate, 8 per cent were postgraduate taught and 3 per cent were postgraduate research. A further 2,253 were enrolled as lifelong learning students.

2 The University changed in August 2014 from a faculty to a school-based structure, and schools are now the key academic unit. There are six schools: the School of Business and Enterprise; the School of Education; the School of Engineering and Computing; the School of Media, Culture and Society; the School of Science and Sport; and the School of Health, Nursing and Midwifery. Each school is led by a dean and three assistant deans who have responsibility for education; research, enterprise and engagement; and international work. Schools are supported at institutional level by three posts with the dual title Vice-Principal/Pro Vice-Chancellor who have institutional responsibility for education; research, enterprise and engagement; and international work.

3 Following the appointment of a new Principal and Vice-Chancellor in 2013, a new Corporate Strategy was formally launched in October 2014 which sets out an aspirational vision to 2020 with key performance indicators (KPIs) designed to stretch the University. At the core of the strategy is the focus on providing a transformational and internationalised learning experience for UWS students fit for the 21st century. This is reflected in the University's new vision, 'Dreaming, Believing, Achieving'.

4 Three operational thematic strategies have been in place since 2011: the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS); the Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy (RKES); and the International and Global Citizenship Strategy (IGCS). These are currently being reviewed to align with the new Corporate Strategy, as part of which they are being redeveloped into what the University calls 'enabling plans' for: education; research and knowledge exchange; and global reach. These enabling plans, which are in differing stages of redevelopment, are intended to be firmly grounded in their predecessor strategies, thus ensuring a degree of operational continuity. All three strategies will be replaced by their respective enabling plans by the end of the academic session 2014-15.

5 A key part of delivering the Corporate Strategy will require a phased re-profiling of the institution's portfolio. The University is planning for a potential reduction (from 2020-21) in local delivery of University awards at local colleges, and transition to a validated model with key further education partners where this is appropriate (see section 6.1). This is intended to enable the University to create the capacity and 'headroom' to develop the international dimensions of the new corporate plan outlined in the new 'Global Reach' enabling plan and to facilitate a significant drive towards more international partnerships and transnational education (TNE) activity.

6 Related to the portfolio reprofiling, the University is placing a renewed focus on academic programmes ('programme primacy') and, as a result, Programme Leaders are directly responsible for each of the programmes of study offered. The change is intended to provide greater coherence to the individual student learning experience and recognise the importance of the Programme Leader role. The Quality Handbook outlines how schools engage with the strategic environment, including the review of their programme portfolios, and how schools are aligned and can contribute to achieving the strategic vision.

7 With the introduction of the new Corporate Strategy, organisational re-structure and review of the academic portfolio, the University is undergoing a period of significant change.

8 The University indicated that it would like the ELIR to focus on a number of areas: the move to schools as key academic units; the revised organisational structure to support enhancement of the student experience (see section 2); the renewed focus on programmes (see paragraph 10-11, 15 and 73); development of the three supporting thematic strategies (enabling plans) (see paragraph 14); and the significant planned development of international activity (see paragraph 17 and section 6). The Reflective Analysis was produced as a collaborative effort across the University and has served to demonstrate the wide range of developments currently in progress.

1.2 Strategic approach to enhancing learning and teaching

9 The University's strategic approach to enhancing learning and teaching is set out in its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS) 2011-15, which is currently being developed into the Education Enabling Plan. The aim of the new Enabling Plan is to create a highly supportive, student-centred learning environment that seeks to personalise the individual student experience within the context of a coherent programme of study and to significantly enhance the international and cultural dimensions of the curriculum.

10 The LTAS contains a core set of KPIs that enable schools to monitor progress. The design and development of new programmes and the review of existing programmes require schools to map, evaluate and review how well the design of their curricula, modules, programme structures, pedagogical approaches and resources support the achievement of a student-centred, personalised student experience. The KPIs are reflective of the needs of the particular student demographic and pay particular attention to ensuring alignment of programme, level and module learning outcomes with the development of appropriate 'work-ready' attributes as suited to future employability and career paths. (See also paragraphs 50-51).

11 The responsibility for ongoing implementation of the LTAS/Education Enabling Plan lies with the Vice-Principal and Pro Vice-Chancellor (VP and PVC) (Education) with oversight by the Education Advisory Committee (previously the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Board). A key part of the vision for implementation and development is ownership, responsibility and accountability at the programme level and the provision of infrastructure, business information and support to achieve this. In discussion with the ELIR

team, staff explained that school-based Education Forums have a remit encompassing all matters relating to programmes, the student experience and quality enhancement, including matters relating to employability, placements and professional practice. The Forums play a key role in engaging staff in this kind of activity.

12 To help facilitate ownership at the programme level, there is increasing use of data, online tools and systems to inform enhancements in learning and teaching and to encourage the sharing of good practice. Systematic processes are in place for reviewing comparative performance data across the University. Examples of this include: a recently developed 'toolkit' for the analysis of modules with low pass rates which helps staff to develop action plans; and the systems development work led by the Centre for Academic Practice and Learning Development (CAPLeD) for the early identification of students who need additional or specific types of learning support.

13 The University has adopted an online 'dashboard' and uses learner analytics to enable schools and programme teams to take ownership of, and engage directly with, the analysis of a variety of data including National Student Survey (NSS) results, individual module feedback, and other comparator data. In discussion with the ELIR team, staff expressed a positive appreciation of the availability and utility of having easy access to this data in a user-friendly form. The ELIR team regarded this detailed and effective use of data as positive practice.

1.3 Effectiveness of the approach to implementing strategies

14 The University has an effective, structured approach to developing, managing and implementing its strategies. There is a clear understanding of the relationship of the three thematic strategies (and their emerging replacement enabling plans) to their expected and integral role in delivering the new Corporate Strategy. During the ELIR, staff at all levels indicated widespread understanding of, and support for, the University's new strategic direction.

15 While significant and rapid change has been outlined in achieving the new vision, this is built upon robust quality assurance and review processes which remain consistent with previous practice (see paragraphs 75-80 and 88-92 - sections 4 and 5). The Assistant Deans (Education) and Programme Leaders have strategic school-level leadership in learning and teaching, pedagogies, programmes, student experience and quality assurance and enhancement. They lead the School Education Forum within which all matters relating to programmes, the student experience and quality enhancement, including matters relating to employability, placements and professional practice, are managed. Both the focus on the programme as the key unit of learning and the move to schools has been embraced by Programme Leaders and their respective staff teams who indicated to the ELIR team that they already felt empowered by the changes. Although it is early in the first phase of the new strategy, a number of students indicated to the ELIR team that they had started to experience positive changes.

16 The development of Enabling Plans, intended to be monitored annually against defined targets and KPIs, is a helpful and transparent process for delivering the strategy. There would be benefit in the University finalising all three Enabling Plans prior to the commencement of session 2015-16.

17 The anticipated growth related to developing international collaborations and recruitment is acknowledged to be demanding and relatively 'fast-paced'. The University is encouraged to ensure that the pace of growth in delivering the international dimensions of the corporate strategy is actively monitored to ensure that any associated risk is carefully managed.

2 Enhancing the student learning experience

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

18 In 2013-14, the University had a total student population of 15,650 (12,289 FTE) of whom 90 per cent are Scottish, 1.5 per cent from the rest of the UK, 6 per cent from the rest of the EU, and 2.5 per cent international. In the same year, around 74 per cent of the student population were undergraduate, 8 per cent were postgraduate taught, and 3 per cent were postgraduate research. In addition, 14 per cent enrolled as lifelong learning students and 1 per cent on Graduate Diploma programmes.

19 Of the total student population, 50 per cent were based at the Paisley campus, 29 per cent at the Hamilton campus, 16 per cent at the Ayr campus, and 5 per cent at the Dumfries campus.

20 The total student population has decreased since the 2011 ELIR from 16,562 (12,489 FTE) students. The University attributed the decrease to a shift in the balance of full-time and part-time students over the period, the proportion of part-time students having decreased from around 50 per cent of the total in 2008-09 to 27.4 per cent in 2013-14, primarily as a result of fewer part-time students taking stand-alone modules.

21 The student body is diverse, with a number of features that the University believes make it unique in the Scottish university sector. It has the highest percentage of students articulating from further into higher education, and the highest proportion of students from Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 20 areas in Scotland (over 22 per cent of the University's Scottish full-time student population comes from SIMD 20 areas). Notwithstanding the overall decrease in part-time students, a significant proportion of the population (over 27 per cent) study part-time. Approximately 72 per cent of students are aged 21 or over and over 30 per cent of students are in the 30-plus age band. In line with University strategy, the number of research students grew from 151 in 2007-08 to 471 in 2013-14. In addition, partnerships with the college sector have resulted in an increase in the number of students entering the University with advanced standing, from 1,172 students in 2010-11 to 1,219 students in 2013-14, the latter representing nearly 12 per cent of all full-time undergraduate entrants. At the same time, the University indicated that it is committed to a phased reduction in the number of articulating students to free resource for international expansion (see paragraph 5 and section 6.1).

22 Approximately 90 per cent of the 2013-14 student population was domiciled in the UK before studying at the University. The University acknowledged that international and rest of the UK (rUK) student numbers are relatively low compared to other institutions, with 930 EU, 403 non-EU and 242 rUK students in 2013-14. A key institutional aim is to develop the University's international activity, including increasing the number of non-EU students studying at the University. The Corporate Strategy 2014-20 aims for the percentage of non-EU students enrolled at the domestic campuses to be 20 per cent of the total student population by the end of 2019-20.

23 The 2011 ELIR report indicated that the University should continue to explore ways of improving student progression and retention across all programmes. Some progress has been made, the progression and retention rate improving by three percentage points between 2010-11 and 2012-13. The University accepted, nonetheless, that this remains an area where improvement is required and stated that it intends to raise attainment across the range of student achievement. At the time of the current ELIR, nearly 40 per cent of students

chose not to progress to Honours (where an Honours programme is available). The Corporate Strategy 2014-20 aims for a 25 per cent increase in the number of undergraduate students progressing to Honours by the end of 2019-20. The Education Advisory Committee is overseeing a number of initiatives aimed at providing an in-depth analysis of student attainment, progression and retention (see paragraphs 35-37).

24 The University intends to grow its population of non-EU students from 3 per cent to 20 per cent of the total student population and have 3,000 students enrolled on UWS degrees through TNE/online arrangements by 2019-20.

25 Management information regarding the student population is prepared by specialist staff in Strategic Planning and Information Services. Information is provided in respect of student progression and awards. In addition, internal statistical reports are prepared for planning and monitoring purposes at subject team and school level, and to support the development of school plans. Staff at all levels expressed confidence in the accessibility, quality and usefulness of the information and indicated that they were able to ask for information in a suitable format, to query and, where necessary, correct information.

2.2 Supporting equality and diversity in the student population

26 The University's framework for supporting equality and diversity is contained in its Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Policy. Developed in April 2013 and informed by relevant legislation, the policy seeks to fulfil four objectives: to promote equality, dignity, respect and understanding across all equality groups, recognising that people have multiple equality identities; to attract a diverse range of talented people to study and work at the University; to create a culture that values diversity and individual differences; and to promote an environment that encourages and supports all staff and students to engage with the University and realise their full potential.

27 Following consultation with staff and students in 2012, a set of Equality Outcomes was developed for schools and departments to ensure that equality and diversity issues are clearly articulated and monitored. Senior managers are expected to devise specific actions based on these outcomes. Attainment of the Equality Outcomes is monitored by the Compliance Officer, who meets regularly with Deans of School and supports departments to discuss progress and identify issues of concern. An evaluation of how the Equality Outcomes are being met will be carried out by the University Equality and Diversity Coordinator in April 2015.

28 The Equality and Diversity Coordinator advises on all aspects of equality and diversity, and provides training to ensure staff awareness. Staff are required to consider and address equality and diversity issues in all module descriptors and programme specifications, ensuring a systematic approach to their identification and resolution. While there is some variability in the extent to which equality and diversity issues are outlined, the ELIR team considered this represented an area of particularly positive practice because of the mainstreamed, systematic and embedded nature of the process.

29 The University has considerable experience of managing a diverse student body, most particularly in respect of mature students and those with a disability. All module provision is expected to accommodate disabled students, with appropriate arrangements for delivery and assessment being put in place to support students with specific needs. Potential articulating students are provided with pre-entry advice, and an induction programme is run for those students entering with advanced standing. At the programme design stage, staff are expected to consider the efficacy of a part-time route.

Widening participation

30 Widening participation remains a significant focus for the University. One development in this area is the definition of the learner pathways from college to the University. Students on a learner pathway, irrespective of whether they are on a specific articulation route, can be associate students of the University, a status which allows them access to University learning resources. At the time of the current ELIR, there were over 500 associate students.

31 The University works with schools with low progression to higher education through the 'Routes for All' initiative. University students act as mentors to assist in the delivery of the initiative which aims to provide academic and study skills support for senior year high school pupils. University students involved in the initiative spoke very positively about their experience, highlighting that it benefits both recipients and the student mentors.

32 The University has recently invested in a mobile campus, a coach fitted with IT equipment and other resources. Although plans are at an early stage, the University is developing ideas on how to use this mobile campus to target potential students in communities with low participation in higher education, for example by taking the mobile campus to community locations that could include schools, community centres and shopping areas to illustrate and promote the range of learning opportunities on offer at the University.

33 During the ELIR, the team met with a number of students who were the first in their family to attend University and who had subsequently progressed to postgraduate taught and postgraduate research degrees. These students cited the support structures and encouragement received from the University as significant enablers in their success in Higher Education.

2.3 Engaging and supporting students in their learning

34 The University has an effective approach to engaging and supporting students in their learning.

Personalised learning support

35 One of the key aims of the new Corporate Strategy is to provide a personalised learning experience for students and engage learners further in their own learner journey. UWS supports this aim using various approaches that link to the Personal Tutor System including: the Student Support and Guidance Policy; a long-standing investment in the embedding of compulsory personal development planning (PDP) within all programmes; a network of effective learning tutors and the recent introduction of school enhancement developers.

36 The role of School Enhancement Developers (SEDs) is to devise and implement initiatives to support progression, retention and employability by identifying and managing these activities from pre-enrolment through to graduation within their school. In doing so, SEDs work with the school leadership teams to develop enhancement activity and engage with colleagues across the school and the University to implement activity. At the start of academic session 2012-13, one SED was appointed for each of the three schools in the Faculty of Science and Technology. In a case study submitted for the current ELIR, the University provided evidence of the contribution of the SEDs including a series of progression data for 2012-13 which illustrates improvements in student retention and progression compared to the previous year. As a result of this data, the University intends to appoint SEDs in all schools.

37 Academic and pastoral advice is provided for all students, and students who met the ELIR team commented positively on this support. As part of the planned focus on programmes as the key unit of the student experience, the University intends to review and develop the operation of the Personal Tutor System to consider variation in local implementation of institutional strategy and student engagement. This culture of personalised learning support, coupled with the ongoing evaluation and activity to improve services already available, represents positive practice.

Student representation

38 The University's arrangements for the involvement of students in quality processes are inclusive and embedded at all levels. There is a clear framework for student representation, with sabbatical officers from the Students' Association of the University of the West of Scotland (SAUWS) involved at the University Court, Senate and senior level committees, such as the Education Advisory Committee, the Research and Enterprise Advisory Committee and the Graduate School Board. Each School Board also includes student representatives. At sub-school level, student representation at Student-Staff Liaison Groups (SSLGs) has been a key part of ensuring that the student voice is heard at school level. Students are now represented on programme boards and the school education forums to enable more effective engagement of students at the subject management level.

39 There are differences in the election processes and appointment terms of class representatives, with some students expressing the view that ineffective representatives were not always replaced as alternatives could not be found. While the ELIR team recognise that these issues are not unique in the sector, the University is encouraged to review the election processes, in partnership with SAUWS, to ensure effective operation of the process and to promote the benefits of becoming involved in student representation to the student body.

Research students

40 The 2011 ELIR report identified that the strategy to increase research student numbers should be supported by appropriate learning resources. A number of developments had been introduced in response to this finding, including the establishment in 2013 of the Graduate School, which was outlined in detail by the University in a case study submitted for the current ELIR.

41 In discussions during the current ELIR, postgraduate research students were positive about the level and quality of support provided in their schools and, centrally, by the University. One example of the support provided is the use of the Vitae Framework in the Graduate School to embed graduate attributes for research students into the learning experience. The University has also provided internal opportunities for postgraduate students to showcase and share research across schools.

Internationalisation

42 Internationalising the curriculum is part of the University's Global Reach Enabling Plan and the University intends to increase opportunities for students to engage with modules to support the development of global citizenship, to provide curriculum design that is inclusive and accessible to a wide range of students and to increase opportunities for student mobility.

43 As part of this, the University is considering adopting the Higher Education Academy's 'Internationalising Higher Education Framework'. Members of the University

International Advisory Committee acknowledged that it would be a valuable tool for comparing and mapping internationalisation across all programmes and modules.

44 The University has also piloted a Global Citizenship module, which was commented on positively by staff during the ELIR. The pilot went well and during the ELIR, senior staff outlined plans to embed a global citizenship element in modules across programmes. Taking into consideration the positive staff and student feedback from the module, the University should consider ways in which internationalisation of the curriculum can be progressed and delivered in ways that all students can access.

Student mobility

45 The University also has an ambitious target of 80 per cent of undergraduate and taught postgraduate students undertaking a scholarly or professional international experience by 2019-20 (the current figure is 1 per cent, around 150 students).

46 The University is active in providing students with opportunities for exchange, such as Erasmus and short term international exchanges, but it recognises the socio-economic challenges the student body faces in order to take part in these. Partly as a consequence of the student demographic, the number of students taking advantage of international exchange opportunities has remained low.

47 From meetings with staff and student groups during the current ELIR, it was evident that the arrangements for managing the student exchanges could be strengthened. The ELIR team heard examples of students who had been interested in exchange but had been given information too late and/or had not felt encouraged to take up the opportunities available. There were students who considered that opportunities for international exchange would not fit with their personal commitments. Some students had gone on exchange but had felt unprepared, lacked information or found difficulty with matching courses at the exchange partner to ensure they would provide the necessary academic credit. Although students had given feedback to the University on the difficulties they had experienced, there was a sense that they had not been addressed. In discussions with the ELIR team, staff acknowledged that there would be benefit in the University undertaking a review of its processes relating to student exchange, paying particular attention to a number of matters including: curriculum matching, ensuring the compatibility of academic content in the host institution; student support on placement; re-integration of students on return to the University; and the use of student feedback after exchange. Addressing these matters will be important if the University is to meet its ambitious target for increasing mobility.

Use of technology to enhance learning

48 The University has made a clear commitment to improve technology for increasing engagement in learning and teaching across all campuses by investing £12 million and establishing a new ICT strategy. This has resulted in the development of new technology-enhanced classrooms and the commitment to introduce these across all campuses.

49 The University is aiming to provide students with a personalised learning experience and is seeking to develop this through its ICT infrastructure, use of a virtual learning environment (VLE) and technology-enhanced learning. Following discussion with students from across Paisley, Ayr and Hamilton campuses, the ELIR team considered that there would be benefit in the University exploring the ways in which technology-enhanced learning could be used to bring a consistent academic experience to students in all campuses, for example when programmes are delivered across multiple sites and through the use of initiatives such as lecture capture.

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

50 One of the ways the University has demonstrated a commitment to employability is through its compulsory and well-established approach to PDP and the progress that it has made in embedding this into the student learning experience and supporting it through the Personal Tutor Scheme. The University has also articulated graduate attributes, drawing on the Enhancement Theme, 'Graduates for the 21st Century'. Following a review, a revised set of graduate attributes were approved by the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Board in 2014. The University recognises that there is a need to raise the profile and improve engagement with the graduate attributes among students. This is consistent with discussions during the ELIR when students indicated a lack of understanding of the terminology used around graduate attributes. However, students were much clearer and more positive about their experience of developing employability skills, identifying the benefits of their participation in PDP and the skills they had gained. To promote greater awareness of graduate attributes, the University intends to use them in personal development plans, module descriptors, programme specifications and intended learning outcomes. The University is encouraged to progress with these plans.

51 The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2011-15 indicates that all students on award-bearing programmes will be given the opportunity to engage in assessed work-related learning. In discussions during ELIR, it was clear that students considered that opportunities for work-related and work-based learning were more accessible in those areas where study was directly related to a profession. In order to make greater progress towards delivering its own target, the University is encouraged to facilitate opportunities for students in non-professional areas, to recognise the need for flexibility in order to reflect the demographics of the student population, and to ensure that students are aware of the opportunities available.

2.5 Effectiveness of the approach to enhancing the student learning experience

52 The University has an effective approach to enhancing the student learning experience, demonstrating a number of areas of positive practice. Staff are required to consider and address equality and diversity issues in all module descriptors and programme specifications. Widening participation is facilitated through articulation and well-supported relationships with schools and colleges. A number of initiatives to improve progression, retention and engagement are in place and intended to provide a transformational student experience.

53 The University indicated that further improvements will occur as a consequence of reorganisation (see paragraph 2). It is anticipated that the focus on the school as the key academic unit will contribute to identifying improvements to the student experience and improve retention and progression by encouraging students to identify with their particular school and programme. In working towards further enhancing the student learning experience, the University would benefit from addressing a number of areas: enhancing student mobility (paragraphs 45-47), promoting graduate attributes (paragraph 50) and meeting its work-based learning targets (paragraph 51).

3 Enhancement in learning and teaching

3.1 Approaches to identifying and sharing good practice

54 The University has an effective approach to identifying and sharing good practice using a range of formal mechanisms including annual monitoring, external examiner reports and Subject Health Reviews, all of which are regular, well understood and embedded practice, and used systematically to identify and share good practice. External examiners' reports, which are specifically structured to provide an opportunity to comment on areas of good practice, are summarised annually and reported to the Academic Quality Committee. Subject Health Reviews, in particular, are acknowledged by staff as an effective mechanism for engendering, supporting and sharing good practice.

55 The University has initiated a pilot project that has placed external examiners' reports on a student-accessible VLE site to meet the relevant indicator in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code). Some students were aware of the site but usage is low at this early stage.

56 Module Review and Programme Annual Report forms ensure there is consistency of information to facilitate the annual monitoring arrangements. The forms also provide an opportunity to highlight good practice. The attendance of the Quality Enhancement Unit (QEU) at approval and review events further supports consistency and the identification of good practice.

57 In discussions with the ELIR team, staff outlined various methods through which they share good practice. These include formal events such as annual monitoring and validation events, school education forums and the annual learning and teaching conference, as well as more informal networks.

58 The restructure, with its focus on programme primacy, has precipitated the creation of new key staff forums, including a Programme Leaders group and an Associate Deans group. This is seen by the University as an opportunity for even greater sharing across operational areas. To support this, the People and Organisational Development (POD) department has also undertaken a training needs analysis for the professional development of these key staff groups. To further facilitate the changes, the University also plans to restructure a number of professional support areas to work more closely with these staff groups and operationally align with the Vice-Principal/Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education).

59 Two central units, the QEU and the Centre for Academic Practice and Learning Development (CAPLeD) play an important and effective role in quality assurance and enhancement and the dissemination of good practice. In particular, the ELIR team heard very positive feedback from staff on the support provided by CAPLeD, specifically in responding to and supporting skills development within the schools and with individuals.

60 The University successfully uses smaller task-oriented groups to focus on specific skills development needs. In particular the ELIR team noted the positive role played by groups such as HINT (Help I'm No Techie), LATTE (Learning and Teaching Technology Enhancement) and FLIT (Flexible Learning using Information Technology) in providing staff development to support technology-enhanced learning and teaching.

61 Subject development groups, now replaced by programme boards, complement the role of CAPLeD in providing an opportunity for capturing good practice. The information collected by programme boards feeds into school education forums to facilitate further sharing of good practice.

62 CAPLeD has a Good Practice website which provides an opportunity for staff to submit examples of good practice for sharing and to view materials. In meetings with staff the ELIR team also learned that events information from the learning and teaching conference, along with more routine lecture/seminar capture and digital learning resources, are retained and archived on a media library server.

3.2 Impact of the national Enhancement Themes and related activity

63 Overall, the University has demonstrated an increased engagement with the Enhancement Themes in response to the 2011 ELIR report. In line with sector practice, the University has a Steering Group with a remit to promote engagement with the Themes. Small grants (£500-£750) and larger grants (up to £2,500) have been awarded to support 'grass roots' learning and teaching initiatives. To date, 28 projects have been supported and their outcomes have been presented at the University's annual learning and teaching conference.

64 The University supports an annual student-led conference and, in 2013, hosted a conference on Curriculum for Excellence linked to the Theme 'Developing and Supporting the Curriculum'. Material from Enhancement Themes activity has also been included in the Quality Handbook and the 2014-15 Assessment Handbook, Effective Practice in Assessment.

65 The University has been more active in ensuring it is represented at and engages with the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC), and the Theme Leaders Group. Staff regularly contribute to the annual Enhancement Conference as well as to a range of Themes-related workshops and events. During the ELIR visit, staff expressed the view that engagement with the Theme 'Graduates for the 21st Century' had been pivotal in stimulating the discussion and subsequent development of the University's strategic focus on the programme as the key academic unit ('programme primacy').

3.3 Engaging and supporting staff

66 The University has effective arrangements for engaging and supporting staff in enhancing learning and teaching, from their initial employment and throughout their careers, with responsibility distributed and owned across a number of areas of the institution including CAPLeD and the academic schools. The recently-established Department of People and Organisational Development (POD) aims to ensure that staff are supported throughout their career to meet the developing needs of both the individual and the institution. POD is responsible for systematic, formal processes such as new staff induction, Performance and Development Review (PDR), and tailored career support programs such as leadership and mentoring. The University also formally recognises staff contribution through its Staff Recognition and Reward Scheme. The Students' Association of the University of the West of Scotland (SAUWS), also plays a role in recognition and awareness raising of good teaching practice through its own Student-Led (21st Century) Teaching Awards.

67 CAPLeD works collaboratively to support more specific programmes, including implementing the HEA Fellowship scheme, facilitating best-practice sharing events (including the annual Learning and Teaching conference) and on-the-ground support. CAPLeD has school development liaison staff with specific designated areas of responsibility and schools are responsible for more individual support and guidance, through Performance and Development Review (PDR) and Workload Management. The University anticipates further integration of staff support provision through POD, CAPLeD, the Library, QEU, and Student Services as the new Corporate Strategy is implemented.

68 Newly-appointed academic staff without prior teaching experience are required to take a short online induction course as well as a three-day teaching preparation course. Staff can proceed to complete the Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (PgCTLHE) offered by the School of Education.

69 The University is strongly committed to supporting staff to achieve national recognition for teaching and has set an ambitious target of 100 per cent affiliation of academic staff to the Higher Education Academy (HEA) Fellowship scheme through the UK Professional Standards Framework, at the appropriate level, by 2020. This strategy has achieved positive support from academic and professional staff and good progress is being made towards the target. CAPLeD has developed a comprehensive guide to support and encourage staff to achieve HEA Fellowship. The University scheme is fully aligned to the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) and accredited by the HEA. The University's commitment to the development of professionalism in learning and teaching was considered to be an area of positive practice by the ELIR team.

70 In order to stimulate staff use and development of the VLE, the University awards medals that recognise defined levels of practice in online design. Schools are encouraged and supported by CAPLeD to systematically evaluate the quality of course materials using a matrix of quality characteristics and student engagement, with each module on the VLE being awarded bronze, silver or gold medal status according to the range and quality of the online tools and resources being successfully implemented in support of learning. This initiative has stimulated a significant focus on improving the quality and use of the VLE module sites to support student learning and was considered to be an area of positive practice by the ELIR team. The positive practice around driving use of the VLE with medals was in part driven by student feedback on the inconsistency of VLE use across subject areas.

71 Staff described the Performance and Development Review (PDR) process as key to supporting the review of their achievements and future plans. PDR has an associated Personal Development Plan which allows staff and supervisors to plan skills development programmes and other career relevant activities. Workload management is seen as a key element which needs to be addressed to facilitate career and skills development.

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

72 Overall, the University has in place systems and processes that support and promote good teaching including: systematic approvals and review processes which include the identification of good practice; a number of school and University-wide sharing events; recordings disseminated via the CAPLeD website; a SharePoint repository of good practice; the introduction of regular communication updates and the key roles played by CAPLeD and QEU.

73 Schools provide the locus for developing and promoting good practice and the ELIR team noted the opportunities for sharing through the newly-formed Programme Leaders and Associate Deans Groups.

74 The University acknowledges that it can be difficult to assess the efficacy and connectivity of the multiple means whereby good practice can be promoted and has outlined a number of recent or planned changes to address this. These include a plan to restructure a number of professional support areas to work more closely with CAPLeD and QEU, and to align this work with the Vice-Principal/Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education). It was evident to the ELIR team that the University systematically collects and shares evidence of good practice

at multiple levels. Nonetheless, there is room to capitalise more systematically on these processes and resources. In particular, there would be benefit in the University increasing the accessibility, visibility and structured use of its good practice resources, particularly material stored on the SharePoint site and on the media library server.

4 Academic standards

4.1 Approach to setting, maintaining and reviewing academic standards

75 The University systematically uses a range of processes in setting, maintaining and reviewing academic standards. Strategic responsibility for setting, maintaining and reviewing academic standards rests with the Senate. The Education Advisory Committee (EAC), which reports to the Senate and replaced the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Board in August 2014, is responsible for the strategic development and enhancement of learning and teaching and dissemination of good practice and manages the arrangements for maintaining the academic standards of taught awards.

76 The Academic Quality Committee, a sub-committee of the EAC, advises on the operation and development of the University's quality assurance framework. The operational procedures in place are contained in the Regulatory Framework, the Quality Handbook, and the Assessment Handbook. The Regulatory Framework describes in detail the University's regulations and is updated annually to incorporate changes recommended by the Regulations Committee, a standing committee of Senate. The Quality Handbook is an extensive document which provides detailed guidance on procedures associated with the management and review of provision and the enhancement of the student experience.

77 Procedures relating to programme design and approval are delineated in the Quality Handbook and are designed to meet the expectations of the Quality Code. Programme development teams are expected to consult and engage with support services, employers, students and graduates, and, if appropriate, Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies. The QEU provides guidance and support in the development of programme proposals and prepares an annual report with a view to ensuring that approval event outcomes are collated and used to inform practice. The report is presented to the Education Advisory Committee, and its contents are shared with CAPLeD. In addition, programme teams developing a new programme are informed of any appropriate matters contained in the report.

78 The Enhancement and Annual Monitoring (EAM) process is designed to enable programme teams to consider quantitative and qualitative information on module and programme delivery and assessment. Module Review Forms and Programme Annual Reports are the main EAM reports. The Quality Handbook identifies that reflection at both module and programme level should focus on the quality of the student experience. In addition to offering reflective commentary and assurance, the EAM reports are required to take a forward-looking approach to provision and support arrangements, including consideration of any future development. Staff confirmed that programme teams use the annual monitoring process to set developmental objectives, based on a SMART target approach.

79 Subject Health Review (SHR), defined in the Quality Handbook as the internal and external peer review of the academic health of the total taught and research provision in a subject, is the University's main periodic internal review process. SHR aims to provide an in-depth examination of how provision is managed and to allow the University to assure itself that the integrated elements of its enhancement-led approach to quality works across all subject areas and campuses to enhance the student experience. All provision is reviewed on

a six-year cycle focused on eight areas: provision; learning, teaching and enhancement; research and knowledge exchange; student assessment and feedback; progression and achievement; student support and guidance; quality enhancement and assurance; and strategic development. The SHR process, while designed to be strong and holistic, is located within an enhancement-led approach to quality, and is intended to be supportive and developmental in nature. Accordingly, it is designed also to benefit the subject team and the school in providing a periodic juncture for reflection, evaluation and focus on future plans and opportunities. The University is confident that this system of review fully embraces and embeds each of the characteristics identified in Scottish Funding Council guidance, provides a robust and inclusive evaluation of subject health, and affords an opportunity for a high level of self-reflection and detailed analysis.

80 Staff confirmed that the University's quality assurance arrangements remained the same throughout the period of re-organisation. The University considers these well-established assurance arrangements to be strong and effective and therefore has no plans for significant change to its core procedures. There is continuity in that staff previously responsible for helping to oversee quality assurance arrangements in the faculties have similar roles in the schools. At the same time, it is envisaged that some of the changes associated with re-organisation, in particular the creation of the Assistant Deans (Education) posts (see paragraph 15), will strengthen the arrangements. Staff indicated that they anticipate that the quality assurance systems will in future be leaner, faster and more responsive. One area under consideration at the time of the current ELIR was the possibility of module evaluation taking place at the end of the first diet of examinations with a view to addressing issues earlier. In a similar vein, it is envisaged that programme boards and the School Education Forum will play a significant role in the annual monitoring process and that the EAM process will be adjusted to provide a sharper focus on data analysis and school-based activity. In addition, given its stronger emphasis on the centrality of academic programmes, the University intends to reshape the SHR process during the current academic year to reflect changes in academic structures and in its portfolio.

4.2 Management of assessment

81 The University is managing its assessment practices effectively. Assessment practice is supported by the Assessment Handbook. Introduced at the start of 2011-12, it is designed to provide operational guidance for staff on all aspects of the design, delivery and implementation of assessment strategies at module and programme level. It advises staff that assessment should be seen as a continuous and interactive process that enhances the learning process, measures the achievement of the learner and assures the quality of the learning experience. Built around a series of assessment principles, the Assessment Handbook is comprehensive in scope, containing five sections: principles of effective practice in assessment; assessment design and approval; implementing, marking and providing feedback; procedures and guidance for assurance of standards; and university assessment regulations. The Assessment Policy and Practice Committee, from August 2014 a sub-committee of the EAC, annually updates and approves the Assessment Handbook to reflect changes in regulations and current best practice, based on sector benchmarking and reflection on external examiners' comments and the outcomes of annual monitoring. The Assessment Handbook is also available in an online version designed to be user friendly. Staff confirmed during the ELIR that the guidance contained in the Assessment Handbook is helpful in designing assessments and in enabling consistency of practice across schools, programmes and modules.

82 The University indicated that use of electronic marking and provision of feedback on assessments is developing across the institution. At the same time it was acknowledged that, while good progress has been made, much work remains to be done. Students confirmed that the use of electronic feedback is variable.

83 The University operates a two-tier assessment panel system of subject panels and progression and awards boards. Subject panels are convened after each assessment diet and consider results for individual modules. Progression and awards boards are convened to consider individual student attainment at programme level and to confirm progression to the next level of study and/or eligibility for an award on completion of a programme of study. An Academic Quality Committee review of the assessment panel system carried out in session 2012-13 concluded that the two-tier system should be retained with some modifications. However, in light of the stronger focus on the centrality of programmes, the University stated that the assessment panel system will be kept under review to ensure that assessment processing is managed in the most appropriate way. The ELIR team supports this reflective and responsive approach.

4.3 Use of external reference points in managing academic standards

84 The University makes effective use of external reference points in managing its academic standards. A range of external reference points is used to inform subject teams in the development of modules and programmes. These include the relevant Subject Benchmark Statement; professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) requirements; and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Programme design teams are expected to inform themselves of good practice by using resources available from the HEA, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education and subject networks. Programme approval panels ensure that appropriate use has been made of external reference points. Where appropriate, professional body representatives attend approval events, and the University stated that PSRB endorsement is an important part of the external engagement with programme approval. In discussions with the ELIR team, staff confirmed that little if any use is made of international academic reference points. In taking forward its plans for internationalisation of the curriculum and increasing its international student community, the University is encouraged to take advantage of appropriate international academic reference points.

85 The University confirmed that external examiners play a key role in approving the assessment of modules and in securing the academic standards of its awards. The external examiners' remit is clearly defined in the Quality Handbook and the University's external examining procedures are in line with sector expectations as defined in the Quality Code. A one-day induction event is held each session for newly-appointed external examiners. An external examiner handbook is provided to support externals in carrying out their duties.

4.4 Effectiveness of the arrangements for securing academic standards

86 The University has an effective approach to securing academic standards. The processes and procedures in place are well established, well understood, and robust. Programme development and approval makes use of appropriate external reference points and has external involvement. To facilitate its plans for internationalising the curriculum and student experience more generally, the University is encouraged to make greater use of international reference points.

87 The University's core processes and procedures remained the same throughout the period of re-organisation. The Enhancement and Annual Monitoring process is thorough and explicitly designed to be reflective. Similarly, the Subject Health Review (SHR) process is thorough and designed to afford a reflective analysis of the academic health of the subject area. There are no plans to significantly alter these, but it is anticipated that some of the changes associated with re-organisation will strengthen the arrangements further.

5 Self-evaluation and management of information

5.1 Key features of the institution's approach

88 The University has a comprehensive and robust approach to self-evaluation using a number of review methods: The SHR (six year cycle, which includes collaborative provision), policy review (three year cycle), thematic review (annual set of themes identified), specific reviews (response to specific issues), and holistic review (four year cycle in preparation for ELIR). At School level there is also enhancement and annual monitoring of programmes. Examples of the various review documents indicate a careful and rigorous approach with appropriate action plans. The University has also demonstrated that it uses reviews to carry out mid-term adjustments to key policies and strategies (for example the refresh of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy to align with the new Corporate Strategy).

89 Management information to support the review, monitoring and examination processes is provided through the Performance Management Information System (PMIS) which is now easily accessed by staff through a dashboard system. Data incorporates a learner analytics approach allowing staff to compare student performance on their programmes across the university's campus sites. Staff can also benchmark National Student Survey (NSS) returns in their subject areas to those in similar institutions across the UK. School reports seen by the ELIR team demonstrate careful analysis of the NSS data, identification of key issues and appropriate action plans. The University's commitment to improving analysis of student data is also highlighted by the successful HEA-led workshop on enhancement using the NSS. Staff the team met spoke highly of the PMIS and the improved reliability and accuracy of data resulting from schools having link staff within the business intelligence unit. The ELIR team regard the provision and use of data to support quality assurance processes and maintenance of academic standards as an area of positive practice.

90 Students' Association of the University of the West of Scotland (SAUWS) sabbatical officers sit on SHR panels and the panels meet a wide selection of students (UG, PGT, PGR). In a meeting with student representatives the ELIR team heard that the representatives experienced good engagement with the SHR process. Panels reviewing collaborative provision also met students. At programme level, student feedback is mainly through module evaluation questionnaires. Students are made aware of outcomes of reviews and evaluations in a number of ways which includes access to SHR review minutes and the student-staff liaison groups. In the latter there is commonly a focus on module evaluation outcomes with informed discussion and actions required of module co-ordinators.

91 Overview of evaluative processes is provided by the EAC principally through its subcommittee Academic Quality Committee, in addition to the QEU. Formerly faculties also provided oversight and it was confirmed that in the new administrative structure schools will now take on this responsibility. Minutes of senior committees show there is careful consideration of the outcomes of reviews and actions arising may include the creation of short life working groups to address particular themes or issues. Dissemination of the findings of reviews to staff and students is through the committee structure and includes a newsletter to students on the outcome of a SHR in which their programme has been considered. Student engagement in reviews and monitoring is effective and recent practice is to foreground the student experience with student presentations opening review events, which the ELIR team considered to be an area of positive practice. The institutional committees also identify areas of University operation for review and evaluation. Committee members gave a clear explanation of how they disseminate the work of these groups to their colleagues.

92 The University meets sector expectations in its evaluative practices by taking into account the requirements of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) meeting Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Guidance and adhering to the Quality Code.

5.2 Commentary on the advance information set

93 The ELIR team found the Advance Information Set provided a wide-ranging and informative sample of the University's evaluative practices. The information provided assisted the team in identifying, or confirming, a number of themes for further exploration. These included student progression and attainment, the effectiveness of student representation in review processes, and the effective use of student feedback on programmes and from the NSS. Areas of potential positive practice identified by the team included the span of evaluative processes and the quality of the review documentation; the badging of the quality of module information on the VLE; and the 'Routes for All' student mentoring initiative.

94 The AIS, particularly through follow-up reports on SHR and action planning arising from external examiner reports, indicated that the University has effective processes for identifying and addressing matters relating to academic standards and the quality of the learning experience. In line with sector practice, the annual reports to the SFC highlight outcomes from institution-led review and initiatives to address any issues. For example, in the 2013-14 report to SFC, the Director of CAPLeD was given responsibility for evaluating student attainment and providing an institutional action plan to improve attainment.

95 The Advance Information Set contained an extensive mapping of the University's policies and practices against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code). The mapping identified where University practices matched the expectations and indicators contained in the Code, and where revisions needed to be made to current practice. An action plan was compiled and the University indicated that all revisions would be made by the end of 2014-15, with the process being overseen by the Academic Quality Committee. The mapping and action plan have been successfully implemented, for example the University has made a number of modifications to practice in relation to Section C, demonstrating its commitment to meeting sector expectations.

5.3 Use of external reference points in self-evaluation

96 The University uses a wide range of sector external reference points in its self-evaluative procedures and these include the Quality Enhancement Framework, SCQF, Quality Code, Subject Benchmark Statements and, where appropriate, PSRB requirements. The Quality Handbook provides direction in the use of external reference points for staff designing and developing programmes and this includes access to an extensive selection of guidance from the National Enhancement Themes. Programme approval documentation and programme specifications reviewed by the ELIR team include reference to SCQF level descriptors, the UK Quality Code and the Enhancement Themes. The team's view is that the University's use of the range of UK external reference points to support its self-evaluative processes meets sector requirements. (See also paragraph 84 regarding international reference points).

5.4 Management of public information

97 The undergraduate and postgraduate prospectuses are attractive and informative documents prepared by Corporate Marketing in collaboration with schools and programme teams. Overall management of public information on the University's website is also co-ordinated by Corporate Management with content management devolved to schools and

departments. The Executive Managers in schools have responsibility for monitoring the accuracy of school content. Students expressed satisfaction with the quality and accuracy of information provided through prospectuses and website.

98 The careful mapping of University practice in managing public information against the Quality Code, the provision of training for managing website content, and the overview of web content by Corporate Management indicates that the University has an effective approach to the management of public information.

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

99 The University has a comprehensive and robust approach to self-evaluation using a number of review methods including holistic review, SHR, policy review and thematic reviews. The methodologies allow the University to respond to specific issues raised through annual review and, where appropriate, to carry out mid-term adjustments to policies and strategies. Outcomes of reviews are disseminated effectively to staff and students, and the students have a leading role in the conduct of reviews. The ELIR team regards the University's approach to self evaluation as an area of positive practice.

100 In its preparation for ELIR, the University had identified the continued improvement in the use of data for informing practice as an area for development. The ELIR team considered the University had made considerable progress in this area with, for example, the increased availability of learner analytic data through dashboards and the HEA-led workshop on enhancing the use of NSS data (see paragraph 89).

6 Collaborative activity

6.1 Key features of the institution's strategic approach

101 Historically the University's collaborative activity has been largely with local and regional colleges to facilitate access to higher education. Around 12 per cent of the University intake each year is provided by articulating students and this is a key element of the University's commitment to widening participation. Previously the University favoured franchised programmes with college partners. However, the current strategy is for a move towards adopting a validation model with its partners. This was described by the University as a natural development, with college staff wishing to take on the responsibility for delivery of programmes. It is the University's intention to validate partner programmes that complement its own provision and also to have a phased reduction in articulating students, particularly those studying on a fees-only basis. The ELIR team recognised that the reduction in articulating students and franchised programmes would free resource for international expansion. There would be value in the University considering the potential impact of this change on its widening participation policy, particularly given the institution's success in providing education to many traditionally 'difficult to reach' student groups.

102 As set out in the Corporate Strategy 2014-2020 and 'Global Reach' Enabling Plan, the University has ambitious plans to expand transnational education (TNE). At present, the University has agreements with an institution in France for dual delivery of a master's programme and, in the latter half of 2014, agreements were completed for delivery of master's programmes in Malaysia, Ghana and Russia. Recruitment to these programmes was just commencing at the time of the ELIR visits and was intended to accelerate during 2015. At present the University is also considering setting up a campus in Dubai.

103 The University's Corporate Strategy sets challenging targets for the expansion of TNE with 3,000 students enrolled by 2019-20. In addition the strategy outlines the target of 20 per cent of the student population on its domestic campuses being non-EU students. The current figure is 3 per cent. In meetings with staff, the ELIR team was told that schools had existing Enabling Plans that covered international expansion and outlined targets at school level. Senior managers explained that these plans would be revised to accommodate the Global Reach objectives and KPIs.

104 To promote and facilitate the rapid expansion of TNE, the University reviewed its international activity in 2013. It has now established an International Centre and appointed senior staff to lead and manage the activity. It has also appointed Associate Deans International (ADI) who will have a pivotal role in progressing the expansion of international activity in the schools. All plans for international activity in schools will be channelled through them. The ADIs meet very regularly on a formal basis with the Vice-Principal International. In order to inform planning for expansion, the University has recently completed an international benchmarking project with the University of Tasmania. The ELIR team considered that this systematic approach would result in carefully controlled management of the expansion of international activity.

6.2 Securing academic standards of collaborative provision

105 Guidance on the arrangements for establishing, monitoring and reviewing collaborative provision are set out in a substantive chapter of the Quality Handbook. Oversight of the development, management, and enhancement of the quality and standard of collaborative provision is provided through the Collaborative Forum. The International Advisory Committee has a strategic remit and the Collaborative Forum a more operational remit through close liaison with schools and departments. Initially collaborative proposals are considered and signed off by the Academic Planning Group. Minutes of meetings and approval documentation seen by the ELIR team indicate that the University has effective arrangements for establishing and approving collaborative partnerships. The ongoing monitoring of academic standards is also carefully considered and, where necessary, appropriate action is taken. The team noted that the University had conducted an analysis of the performance of articulating students which found that continuation rates were similar to those of students entering through other routes.

106 Arrangements for the approval and review of collaborative provision meet sector expectations for example, there is alignment with *Chapter B10* of the Quality Code. International programmes are also aligned with other external reference points, for instance, requirements of UK professional bodies. With the expansion of international provision, the ELIR team would encourage the University to explore the potential for using international reference points (see also paragraph 84).

6.3 Enhancing the student learning experience on collaborative programmes

107 Oversight of the enhancement of the student learning experience is provided through the Joint Programme Panel for validated programmes and through the Collaborative Forum where there is an opportunity to share good practice. Student views are gathered through student-staff liaison groups for collaborative programmes and also through module feedback. Minutes of meetings of these groups reviewed by the ELIR team showed close attention to enhancing the provision, sharing good practice and giving careful consideration to student views.

108 As noted earlier (see paragraph 30), the University grants associate student status to students studying on franchised programmes at partner colleges which gives them access to UWS facilities. Staff from partner colleges are also offered support to gain fellowship of the Higher Education Academy as part of their professional development.

109 Communication with students studying at partner institutions is through student representation and student-staff liaison groups that have equivalence with arrangements on the home campus sites. Staff communication is through the Joint Programme Panels and Collaborative Contact meetings where, for example, the University's intention to move to validated models of programme partnership was discussed.

110 The Business School has piloted a model which ensures that support for the collaborative student experience is considered both in the school and across the support departments. The ELIR team noted the consistency in identifying the needs of a collaborative proposal arising from this approach. There would be value in the University giving consideration to building on this model as it moves into a phase of rapid expansion of international activity.

6.4 Effectiveness of the approach to managing collaborative activity

111 The University has an effective approach to managing collaborative activity through the regular formal meetings of Assistant Deans International and the Vice-Principal International, the strategic oversight provided by the International Advisory Committee and the sharing of information and practice through the Collaborative Forum. Recently completed approval and review processes for collaborative provision are thorough with robust action plans for improvement. Joint Programme Panels and Student-Staff Liaison Groups are effective for considering student and staff opinion.

112 The KPIs set out in the Corporate Strategy and 'Global Reach' Enabling Plan for expanding TNE are challenging (see paragraphs 24 and 102-103) and there would be benefit in keeping the arrangements for their implementation under review. In meetings with staff there was some disquiet about achieving the KPI targets. The ELIR team noted that similar concern had been expressed by a School Forum and, in the minutes of a School Board, by an international champion.

113 Given the pace of change required to meet stretching targets for international expansion in collaborative provision, the University is encouraged to ensure that robust processes are in place for evaluating, monitoring and reviewing the planned expansion and its impact on the student learning experience, both for existing and new students.

QAA1143 - R4194 - Mar 15

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Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786