



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

## Technical Report

November 2019

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## 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 Technical Report of the ELIR conducted by QAA at the University of the West of Scotland. The review took place as follows: Planning Visit on 3 October 2019 and Review Visit on 18-22 November 2019. The review was conducted by a team of five reviewers:

- Ms Karen Barton (Academic Reviewer)
- Dr Gary Campbell (Academic Reviewer)
- Ms Kerry Harrison (Student Reviewer)
- Dr Maggie King (Academic Reviewer)
- Mr Paul Probyn (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.

## About this report

In this report, the ELIR team:

- delivers a threshold 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 threshold judgement can be found on page 2, followed by the detailed findings of the review given in numbered paragraphs.

Technical Reports set out the ELIR team's view under each of the report headings. Shorter Outcome Reports are provided that set out the main findings of the ELIR for a wider audience. The [Outcome Report](#) for this review is on the QAA website.<sup>4</sup>

ELIR Technical Reports are intended primarily for the institution reviewed, and to provide an information base for the production of thematic reports that identify findings across several institutions.

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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> Outcome Report:

[www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/quality-assurance-reports/University-of-the-West-of-Scotland](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/quality-assurance-reports/University-of-the-West-of-Scotland)

## Threshold 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.

This is a positive judgement, which means that the University of the West of Scotland 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.

### 1 Contextual information about the institution, student population and the review

#### 1.1 Summary information about the institution

1 The University of the West of Scotland (the University or UWS) was formally established in 2007 following the merger of the University of Paisley and Bell College. UWS comprises five campuses - four situated in the west and south-west of Scotland: Ayr, Dumfries, Lanarkshire and Paisley; and one in London. The London Campus was opened in 2015, and now accounts for around 8% of the University's total student numbers.

2 The University's vision is to be a transformational influence on economic, social and cultural development in Scotland and beyond, by providing student-centred, personalised and distinctive learning experiences underpinned by innovative and relevant research. In each of its three priority areas - Student Success, Research and Enterprise, and Global Engagement - the Corporate Strategy is supported by an enabling plan. These plans, which were created in response to the 2014 ELIR, incorporate explicit actions to support achievement of the aspirations set out in the Corporate Strategy and link to the plans of the University's schools and professional services. In addition, the Corporate Strategy articulates a set of 'UWS truths' that serve as guiding principles for the University.

3 At the time of the current ELIR, the University was developing a new Corporate Strategy for 2020-25, which was due to be considered by the University Court in January 2020. Staff and students were engaging in discussions around the development of the new strategy through an extensive series of discussions known as 'Our Big Conversation'. The University intends that the new strategy, to be named the 'UWS Strategy', would be an evolution of the current strategy, with strong values and principled approach, which will inform the development of key performance indicators (KPIs).

4 At the time of the current ELIR, following a 'rebalancing' process, the University was launching a revised academic and professional services structure to reflect institutional priorities, facilitate efficiencies and support institutional sustainability. The number of academic schools was reduced from five to four, with two new schools being created: Business and Cultural Industries; and Education and Social Sciences. At the same time, divisions (two to five per school) were created, formalising natural groupings within subject areas, and the new role of Head of Division was established to give stronger subject leadership. At school-level, the role of Assistant Dean has been streamlined into a Deputy Dean position in each school. Within professional services, student-facing support is located in Student Administration and Student Services, which report to the Deputy Principal; while Library and IT services are within the Office of the Chief Finance Officer. Quality Enhancement is supported by the Quality Enhancement Support Team (QuEST), Education

Futures and the UWS Academy; these three units are grouped together as 'Academic Life: Education'.

5 At the time of the current ELIR, the University was making changes to its committee structure, which included the dissolution of the Global Engagement Advisory Committee and a number of committees at school level; the alignment of cognate programmes around Divisional Programme Boards rather than Programme Boards; the creation of a Programme Approval and Review Group (PRG) to oversee new programme approvals and developments; and the replacement of Subject Panels and Progression and Award Boards by School Boards of Examiners (SBE) and School Assessment Boards (SAB).

## **1.2 Composition and key trends in the student population**

6 In 2018-19, the University had a total student population of 19,280 (headcount) of whom: 76% were undergraduate (UG); 19% were postgraduate taught (PGT); and 5% were postgraduate research (PGR). Of these: 17% of students were part-time; 4.8% were studying by distance-learning; and 8.3% were studying with overseas partners. 82% of students were classified as home/EU students; 2.1% were from the rest of the UK; and 16% were non-EU.

7 There has been a 21% increase in overall student numbers since the 2014 ELIR across all levels of study; however, the percentage increase for postgraduate students, both taught and research, has been greater than for undergraduates. The number of students entering with advanced standing increased by 32% over this period, reaching 1,367 in 2018-19. The University forecasts that its non-EU population will continue to grow, with applications to Scottish campuses for 2019-20 increasing by 25%. Postgraduate numbers are forecast to continue growing more quickly than undergraduate numbers.

8 In 2018-19, 29% of first-degree entrants to the University were from SIMD 20 backgrounds, which is above the sector average of 15.6%. Approximately 30% of students were aged 30+; 15% had a self-declared disability; and UWS has one of the highest populations of care-experienced students in Scotland. The University is committed to widening participation and has a range of initiatives aimed at recruiting, supporting and retaining students from the most disadvantaged and deprived backgrounds. Since the 2014 ELIR, retention rates for students have remained at around 90%. Within this figure, rates of retention for Scottish-domiciled first-degree entrants, and particularly those from areas of deprivation (SIMD20) have seen considerable improvements over the past five years (paragraphs 32 and 33). The University has effective mechanisms to manage its student population and monitor trends (paragraph 91, 116, 142-146).

## **1.3 Commentary on the preparation for the ELIR, including contextualisation**

9 Preparations for ELIR were led by a Steering Group chaired by the former Associate Vice-President Education, which comprised senior staff responsible for learning and teaching, and quality and standards, and the University of the West of Scotland's Students' Union (SU). The Steering Group held briefing sessions for key staff and student representatives. Preparations for the ELIR were underpinned by a communications plan that ensured the wider UWS community was engaged and informed. As a result, the ELIR team met staff and students who demonstrated a thorough understanding of the process and were well-prepared to engage in discussion.

10 The Steering Group was closely involved in drafting the Reflective Analysis (RA), which had also been considered widely through the University's committee structure. Broader consultation with staff and students had been facilitated through distribution of the draft RA to the SU, deans of schools, and heads of departments.

11 Following extensive consultation with staff and students, using a range of methods including surveys and focus groups, the University asked the ELIR team to focus on three aspects of its context:

- Student-Centred (student success, support, enhanced curriculum)
- Campus and Community (multi-campus, widening access, global reach)
- Engagement and Partnership (employers, industry/PSRBs, students).

12 Similar themes had emerged from consultations taking place in preparation for the new Corporate Strategy (paragraph 3), and the University was therefore confident that they characterised UWS. From the review documentation and discussions with staff and students, the ELIR team was able to confirm that these themes represent the key aspects of UWS as an institution.

13 The University viewed the ELIR process as an opportunity to reflect on the recent development and the changes it was currently undergoing.

#### **1.4 Summary of the follow-up to the previous ELIR**

14 The University has taken action to address each of the six areas for development identified in the 2014 ELIR. Responsibility for monitoring progress of ELIR actions rested with the Education Advisory Committee (EAC) and the Global Engagement Advisory Committee. Targets and actions were embedded in the Education Enabling Plan and the Global Reach Enabling Plan.

#### **1.5 Impact of engaging students in ELIR preparations**

15 The SU was extensively involved as members of the Steering Group and focus groups. Consultation with student representatives, and engagement with the broader student body through surveys and focus groups (paragraph 11), were significant factors in shaping the themes for this ELIR. These consultations, particularly the student surveys, yielded a wealth of data concerning students' experience of the University. Analysis of this data, according to characteristics such as campus location and mode of study, provided the University with detailed intelligence that will enable it to target its enhancement initiatives to even greater effect. The ELIR team considered the University's approach to engaging its students in preparations for ELIR to have been effective.

## **2 Enhancing the student learning experience**

### **2.1 Student representation and engagement**

16 Students are at the centre of the University's enhancement work - reinforcing the UWS Truth 'We are here for our students'. The Student Experience Committee (SEC), co-chaired by the SU President, is a key mechanism for enhancing the student learning experience and reports directly into the EAC. At the time of the current ELIR, membership of the Committee had yet to be formalised following the rebalancing process, but the University confirmed that it would include full-time SU Officers, student representatives, Student Enhancement Developers (SEDs) or equivalent, and professional service representatives. It is the responsibility of SEC to monitor student feedback, review the impact of professional services and make recommendations to improve the holistic experience of students at the University. It was evident from review documentation and from discussions with staff and students, that SEC is meeting its responsibilities, and that EAC is effective in considering the recommendations made by SEC. The ELIR team considered student representatives co-chairing committees to be good practice.

## **Student representation**

17 The University has effective arrangements in place to support the engagement and representation of students, including responding to student feedback. Student representation is evident across the institution and levels of study. Student representatives are elected at the programme level and trained by peers using the Student Participation in Quality Scotland (sparqs) framework. They receive a comprehensive handbook from the SU and are invited to attend regular Staff-Student Liaison Groups (SSLGs). To support this work, a short guide explaining the student representation structures at the University and best practice for engagement has been developed for staff.

18 A significant enhancement to representation since the 2014 ELIR, is the introduction of school officers in 2018-19, who act as senior student representatives for the student representatives, the University and sabbatical team. The team learnt that this structure had not functioned effectively in its first year of operation and revisions had been made by the SU for 2019-20. In discussions with the team, students spoke enthusiastically about the contributions they could make through the formal representative structures at programme level and with service departments, however, it was clear that the relationship between the representative structure and school academic staff leadership level could be improved.

19 The University has revised their Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) for implementation in academic year 2019-20 and identified the priority areas as mental health, student opportunities and education. The redesigned SPA includes a section that details successes achieved in the priority areas from the previous year. The effectiveness and implementation of the SPA is reviewed and updated annually by SEC. Although the students the ELIR team met were not familiar with the detail of the SPA specifically, it was clear students had seen the impact of the priority areas and the SU representatives viewed the SPA positively.

20 The University is aware that ensuring student representation across all campuses, levels and modes of study is challenging for a large multi-campus organisation and acknowledged that gaps in representation can occur. To address this, the SU led a review of student representation across committees, groups and forums in 2019 as part of the institution's Enhancement Theme project for implementation in 2019-20. The University is supporting the SU in these areas through initiatives such as the introduction of research representatives to all school boards and Senate. The ELIR team met staff and students who confirmed that there have been challenges with communication between the University and the SU and indicated that this was being addressed through mutual agreement of strategic priorities and practices.

## **Responding to student feedback**

21 Student feedback is gathered using a range of formal and informal mechanisms including SSLGs, the National Student Survey (NSS) (paragraph 145) and Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQ) (paragraph 23 and 145). The ELIR team met staff and students who confirmed that SSLGs are a key method for capturing and responding to the student voice. Students cited a number of examples where staff had made changes in direct response to feedback at SSLGs, such as, changing from open plan spaces to closed rooms in Lanarkshire for classes which require confidentiality. Furthermore, academic and support staff found SSLGs informative and enabled a timely response to student feedback.

22 Student partnership and engagement at the school level is supported by School Enhancement Developers (SEDs) who are responsible for co-chairing the Staff-Student Liaison Groups and responding to student needs and school priorities. SEDs operate in

three of the four schools with alternative arrangements in place in the remaining school (School of Computing, Engineering and Physical Sciences). Students and staff who met the ELIR team identified SEDs as key individuals for the communication of programme and school-level actions in response to student feedback. The culture of informal feedback and feedforward was evident to the ELIR team and it was clear that students valued this approach. Students provided good examples of how staff had implemented changes in response to feedback, for example, changing the location of classes to a more suitable space. The University recognises the importance of the SED role but are cognisant of inconsistencies across the schools which staff indicated would be reviewed following rebalancing.

23 The ELIR team learnt that, at school-level, changes derived from Module Experience Questionnaire (MEQ) feedback are communicated to students at the start of the module. In discussions with the team, staff and students reported the end of term MEQs to be one of the least effective mechanisms for feedback as it is retrospective. It was noted that some staff have developed methods for in-module evaluation which students viewed as a positive way to resolve problems quickly.

24 At the institutional level, actions taken in response to student feedback are communicated to students through MyDay and email. School communications are primarily through SSLGs and the minutes are available on school virtual learning environment (VLE) pages. The ELIR team met students who reported a lack of effective central communication which impacted their ability to understand changes at UWS, most recently with the University's rebalancing exercise. The articulation of the rationale and changes made was not well communicated to students; thus, students perceived key positions and contacts had been removed and were unclear about the reasons for the restructure. SEC have reviewed communication methods in response to institution-led review (ILR) comments and there would be value in the University exploring student communication strategies to ensure students are informed of institutional priorities and actions (paragraph 85).

25 Student representatives at the London Campus are invited to attend SSLGs and feedback is communicated to the Campus Director and programme teams. In addition, the Campus Director holds termly meetings with student representatives and minutes are distributed to all London students. Several examples of student feedback being actioned were reported, for example, increasing the number of industry guest lectures and case studies in the absence of direct work-based learning. In discussions with the ELIR team, it was clear that students would welcome opportunities to engage in extra-curricular activities and involvement with the SU. Senior staff told the team that the SU have been given additional resources and are developing strategies to engage with students at the London Campus (paragraph 83).

26 The University undertakes comprehensive data analysis from student surveys (paragraph 145 and 146) to be used in conjunction with institutional information available on the interactive dashboards. The evidence provided to the ELIR team was weighted towards quantitative data and benchmarking, however, it became clear during the review visits that enhancements from student feedback are made through the triangulation of all available information usually by programme leaders as part of the annual monitoring process.

## **2.2 Recognising and responding to equality and diversity in the student population, including widening access and mode and location of study**

27 The University has an effective approach to recognising and responding to equality and diversity among its students and has included equality in the University truths: 'We are an inclusive organisation that welcomes and values diversity'.

## **Equality and diversity**

28 The University's framework for supporting equality and diversity is outlined in its Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Procedure and Guidance Notes, and is informed by the relevant legislation. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) Committee is a standing committee of Senate which exercises strategic and management oversight of inclusivity for staff and students. It ensures inclusivity policies and practices are managed and implemented effectively at all levels and supports the University in meeting its legal obligations. The EDI Committee contributes to and advises on statutory reporting requirements and submits an annual report to Senate on relevant matters.

29 The University has considerable experience of attracting a diverse student body, most particularly in respect of mature students (70% of students are over 21; 45% over 25); and students from areas of high deprivation (29.4% of first-degree entrants are from SIMD20 areas). The University already exceeds the Scottish Government target that, by 2030, students from the 20% most deprived backgrounds should represent 20% of entrants to higher education. Across all campuses, 15% of UWS students have a self-declared disability.

30 The profile and diversity of the student body have changed over the past five years in two significant areas which present additional challenges for the University's approach to learning and teaching, and student support. The number of part-time students has fallen since the 2014 ELIR from 27.4% to 17%. The proportion of black and minority ethnic (BME) students studying at the University has doubled since the 2014 ELIR from approximately 10% to approximately 20%. This increase is mainly due to the rapid growth in international students studying at the London Campus over the past four years, along with increased numbers of students studying at international partners. The increase is greatest for postgraduate taught and research students.

31 The University has published a Gender Action Plan (2017), and provided several examples of the University's approach to meeting the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) requirement to have no programme with a gender imbalance of more than 75:25. This includes, for example, making use of targeted radio advertising to attract males into teaching; and an 'Inspiring Women' programme of speakers. Senior staff also indicated further work around the honorary degree system to challenge gender stereotyping would be undertaken.

## **Widening participation**

32 Widening participation remains a significant focus for UWS. The University has the highest proportion and percentage of full-time degree entrants from the 20% most deprived areas (SIMD20) of any Scottish higher education institution in every year since 2014. In the same period, the retention rates of SIMD20 students studying at the University improved by 10 percentage points to just below the sector average for this group in 2017-18. The ELIR team met a wide cross-section of students, including mature and care-experienced students, students with other protected characteristics, and students from areas of low participation - all of whom spoke passionately about the University's widening participation mission and its positive action in this area, identifying this as a key reason for taking up study at the University.

33 The University has a broad range of initiatives in place to support widening participation, retention and progression, some of which are targeted to specific underrepresented groups. The University works directly with 20 schools with low progression rates to higher education through the SFC-funded FOCUS West 'Routes for All' initiative. A team of around 50 University students are trained and act as mentors to support S5 and S6 high school pupils to gain the skills to progress to higher education. The ELIR



team met students who had benefitted from this scheme and who were very positive about their experience.

34 The University is involved in other widening participation projects and is one of three higher education institutions involved in the Access to a Career in Teaching (ACT) programme, which support pupils from Glasgow City Schools who can demonstrate a commitment to the teaching profession to follow this career path and return to teach in their own communities. The University has the largest proportion of Scottish Wider Access Programme (SWAP) West students progressing onto its degree provision, primarily in the School of Health and Life Sciences, and provides a range of pre-entry support to aid transition to university in partnership with SWAPWest.

35 Student retention overall has improved over the past five years and is monitored at programme and school-level via programme boards and school education forums. An *ad hoc* Retention Oversight Group was established in 2019-20 to monitor and improve progression for all students, using the University's data dashboards. In future, monitoring will be integrated into an annual Portfolio Review process and overall oversight of student retention will be the responsibility of a newly created Student Experience Group chaired by the Deputy Principal.

36 The University is committed to increasing the number of care leavers over the next three years as part of its SFC Outcome Agreement 2018-19 to 2020-21. In discussions with the ELIR team, students expressed concerns about a reduction in support for care leavers as a result of the recent University rebalancing exercise. The team learnt that support for care-experienced students had not been reduced but had been reconfigured and would continue through Marketing and Student Recruitment, where there are plans to ensure sufficient capacity and reduce the potential for 'single points of failure' in the system. The University is encouraged to continue to monitor this area to ensure effective support structures are in place.

37 The University has a long-established and close partnership with seven colleges. Two of the University's campuses are co-located with regional colleges and this enhances the capacity to work in partnership and supports high levels of articulation. Of the 64 undergraduate programmes offered at Scottish campuses, 62 accept articulating students. As a result, the University had the highest number of students articulating with advanced standing in Scotland during 2017-18. The ELIR team met students studying at the University who had articulated with advanced standing. These students were very positive about their experience at UWS and particularly their engagement with the University prior to enrolment. Specific, tailored support is provided to articulating students through Student Services and the Careers and Skills Service and includes funding, counselling, disability support, employability and study skills. The team noted that articulating students valued the level of support received during their transition to university but raised concerns about this continuing post-rebalancing which the team explored during the review.

38 The ELIR team explored the University's mission and approach to widening participation in some depth during the review visits. There is clear evidence that the University demonstrates a detailed understanding of its student population, and students who met the team spoke positively about their experience through various routes they had taken to study, irrespective of campus, comparing it favourably with other higher education institutions. The team did not see that the rebalancing process had adversely affected the effectiveness of support structures associated with this strategic priority and considered there was, in fact, the potential to ensure more effective deployment of resources.

## **2.3 Supporting students in their learning at each stage of the learner journey**

39 The University provides a student-centred, personalised and distinctive learning and teaching experience supporting students at each stage of the learner journey.

### **Admissions and transition to university**

40 The University has a transparent, fair and consistent approach to admissions. Policies for unconditional and adjusted unconditional offers, as well as Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) and Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL), are clearly set out. Care experienced students are guaranteed an adjusted offer for one of the University's recruiting programmes; or an interview/audition for one of the University's selecting programmes. The ELIR team noted that the Admissions Procedure does not provide specific details on contextualised admissions and the team would encourage the University to provide these.

41 Given the diversity of the student body, the University takes a supportive approach to providing pre-entry information, advice and guidance, working actively with applicants to support application and transition to university, for example, Care Leavers' support and mentoring through schemes such as SWAPWest. Following acceptance of a place, students receive a series of pre-entry communications and advice directly and via the student portal (MyDay) (paragraph 50), aimed at supporting transition into university. The portal is available to new students from May to July and provides an online 'Roadmap' with links to the various systems and support mechanisms students are likely to need at specific points, including enrolment and induction, or when applying for student cards and Student Awards Agency Scotland funding.

### **International students**

42 International students are included in all induction events and, in addition, receive a welcome guide specifically for international students alongside additional tailored events provided in their first weeks. Activities for international students are planned throughout the year by the International Student Support team including Discover Scotland visits, workshops and cultural celebrations. In discussions with the ELIR team, international students were very positive about their experiences of the support provided by the International Student Support team.

### **Student support services**

43 At the time of the current ELIR, the University was undergoing a period of significant realignment and change, which included the restructuring of student-facing services and academic schools through a process of 'rebalancing'. The RA referred to student services being provided through one department known as Student Life with the 'Student Hub' providing a 'single gateway for all student enquiries'. However, at the time of the review visits, this structure had been revised and these services are now provided through the rebranded department - 'Student Services'.

44 Student Services comprises several teams (Counselling; Wellbeing and Disability Support; Funding and Advice; International Student Support; Careers and Academic Skills; and Multi-faith Chaplaincy) and provides a range of specialist advice and guidance throughout the student journey. The work of Student Services has been recognised by students internally with a series of awards as part of the SU Big Awards and externally by organisations such as The Herald Higher Education Awards, CUBO awards and National Association of Student Money Advisors. Students who met the ELIR team commented

positively and clearly valued the support provided by Student Services, especially singling out Counselling, Careers and the International teams.

45 The Student Hub (The Hub) exists as a virtual enquiry service accessed via telephone, email and the MyDay Portal for students at all campuses and, currently, as a physical service at the Paisley and Lanarkshire Campuses. The Hub acts as a point of information and assistance providing online self-service and referral to specialist areas within the University where necessary. The response time for enquiries to the Hub is two to three hours, with direct contact from specialist services provided within five working days. Due to the multi-campus structure and increasing proportion of international students, support methods have diversified to include individual Skype appointments and video-conference workshops. There are plans to implement the physical Hub model at other campuses, with a strengthened 'on campus' support in the form of Careers and Academic Skills support already in operation at London.

46 The SU also provides a range of support services complementary to those of Student Services, including access to an emergency hardship fund and the SU case workers to support students through academic appeals and Extenuating Circumstances applications.

47 The ELIR team met students who expressed concerns that existing levels of student support would not continue following rebalancing. During the ELIR visit, students indicated that communication, particularly regarding rebalancing, could have been improved. At the time of the current ELIR, the new student support structures were being implemented. The University is strongly encouraged to review the student experience in the light of the rebalancing after a suitable period of time, and to introduce a process for ongoing holistic evaluation of student-facing professional services.

### **Student health and wellbeing**

48 Student mental health is a key priority area for the University. A recently-formed Wellbeing Group, reporting to the Health, Safety and Sustainability Committee, takes a holistic approach to staff and student wellbeing and oversees activities to support wellbeing and mental health, including staff development. A wide range of initiatives and support mechanisms are available to staff and students. Of note is the provision of free gym membership for students at all university-operated fitness facilities. At the time of the review visits, the University was in the process of developing a Student Mental Health Agreement (SMHA) in partnership with the SU.

49 Specialised support is provided through the Disability Service, Counselling Service and an Occupational Therapist and Student Wellbeing Adviser. Although demand for the Counselling Service has increased by 50% in the last five years, the average waiting time for an initial appointment is below sector and NHS averages. The University has achieved this through a number of approaches, for example, introducing initiatives to develop a sense of community including more inclusive sports activities, as well as the role of The Hub in triaging and signposting alternative sources of support that are available to students. The comprehensive and proactive approach to supporting student health and wellbeing was viewed positively by the ELIR team.

### **Personalised learning and study support**

50 The MyDay student portal plays an important role in supporting students at various stages of their learning journey, including access to their personalised timetable. A recent review of the MyDay portal resulted in a redesign of the system prior to launch in autumn 2019. At the time of the current ELIR, MyDay had been rolled out to first, second and third-year UGs and all PGT students. Data collected on MyDay was revealing patterns of use and areas for improvement. The ELIR team met students who had mixed experiences of

MyDay, with some students, usually those in later years of study, preferring to use direct links to services instead of accessing the portal directly. The team considered that the MyDay portal has the potential to provide a useful additional dimension to personalised learning and study support and the University is encouraged to continue to develop the portal, making use of data analytics to enhance it further.

51 The University has invested in a Learning Analytics platform: MyJourney to allow students to compare their engagement and performance with fellow students and provide an opportunity to discuss progress with a personal tutor. At the time of the current ELIR, a managed pilot to assess the effectiveness of the system was underway with the aim of personal tutors using MyJourney as part of an integrated approach to identify student engagement problems. Staff are using the platform to engage with students who are potentially at risk and as a tool to open communication with students about their engagement.

52 The University has a commitment to allocate a personal tutor to every student. Students who met the ELR team were very positive about the academic and pastoral support provided by staff. The University acknowledges that the process does not operate consistently across all schools and programmes and ensuring the system is more widely effective and identifies those students most in need of support, remains an ongoing challenge. At the time of the current ELIR, the role and operation of the personal tutor system had recently been reviewed to give a clearer recognition of the time involved, particularly in staff annual activity planning. Although training for personal tutors is not mandatory, new advice and support resources have been developed by UWS Academy to support staff undertaking this role. The team was of the view that, while some excellent practice was evident in the provision of personal tutoring and improvements were in the process of being implemented, areas of challenge were apparent as not all students had a consistent and effective experience of the personal tutor system. Therefore, the University is encouraged to continue to move towards greater consistency and understanding of the personal tutoring system for all students alongside the implementation of the MyJourney dashboard.

53 A range of study skills support is provided to students, for example, Academic Skills Advisors (ASAs) work directly with students to deliver embedded support within programmes, supporting students in areas such as academic writing, presentation skills, referencing and study skills. The positive impact of ASA staff in providing direct support to students has helped to improve retention rates and students who met the ELIR team commented positively on this aspect of academic support. In addition to ASAs, the University's Information Literacy Framework helps guide the integration of information literacy in the curriculum and aid learning activity design. Academic Liaison Librarians provide students with individual and bespoke support and act as a link between the UWS Library, schools and students.

54 The University's focus on student-centred approaches to learning and commitment to providing personalised support, underpinned by data, is evident even throughout a period of recent significant change and restructuring. Staff, whether in academic or student support roles, demonstrate a caring and personal approach to students that was universally recognised and valued by all students who met the ELIR team. However, poor communication about the rationale for recent changes in the provision of student support services at both school and institutional level has resulted in increased levels of anxiety among students and the University is strongly encouraged to seek ways to improve two-way communication with all staff and students in future.

## **Graduate attributes**

55 The visibility of graduate attributes was highlighted as an area for development in the 2014 ELIR and a refreshed set of UWS graduate attributes aligning with the three corporate drivers of Student Success, Research and Enterprise, and Global Engagement were approved in 2016-17: 'I am UWS - Universal, Work-ready and Successful'. In many cases, these attributes are inherently taught and embedded within modules, and the programme specifications will typically detail which graduate attributes a student can expect to achieve upon completion of the programme, and this is assured via the quality processes. However, the University acknowledges that there is still some way to go for all students to recognise and articulate graduate attributes. This was verified in discussions with the ELIR team when students indicated a lack of awareness and understanding of the terminology used around graduate attributes. To promote greater awareness of graduate attributes, the University is encouraged to progress with plans to focus on improved communications and ensure that all programmes highlight and identify graduate attributes, with identification of specific graduate attributes made in module descriptors and curriculum mapping.

## **Assessment**

56 Enhancing assessment processes has been identified as a priority in the University's Education Enabling Plan (EEP), and the Education Advisory Committee (EAC) set 'Assessment and Feedback' as a key focus activity in the 2018-19 and 2019-20 academic sessions as the subject of a UWS 'Focus-On' Assessment and Feedback project.

57 Assessment practice is supported by an assessment handbook, which provides operational guidance for staff on all aspects of the design, delivery and implementation of assessment strategies, including advice on producing timely and effective feedback (within 15 working days). The handbook is updated annually to reflect changes in regulations and current best practice - based on sector benchmarking, reflection on external examiners' comments and the outcomes of annual monitoring activities - and was extensively updated as a result of the UWS 'Focus-On' project.

58 The positive impact of the UWS Focus-On Assessment and Feedback work was evident, for example, in the development of a dashboard that allows assessment loading and variety across programmes to be viewed more easily by programme teams. Students spoke very positively about their experience of assessment and feedback including: the variety and type of assessments which allowed them to showcase their learning; the timeliness of feedback and personal dialogue with tutors aimed at helping them improve. Overall, the University has a positive approach to assessment and feedback practice and is encouraged to continue to progress further improvements and enhancements.

## **Employability and enterprise**

59 The University has set an ambitious goal to provide every student on an award bearing programme with the opportunity to engage in work-based learning or have access to work-related learning opportunities within their programme as a key part of improving student employability. A recent review of this commitment showed that take-up of these opportunities is not as high as hoped and the University has identified a series of initiatives to enable progress including: flexible module options; Careers and Skills team support; and a toolkit to support employability activities. In addition, flexible work-related modules are being developed. In May 2019, EAC agreed that ILR events and new programme approvals would require evidence of embedded work-based and/or work-related learning within programme delivery as part of the approval mechanism.

60 Most students were enthusiastic about the up-to-date content and relevance of their programmes to the workplace, and the work-related opportunities they had access to

including internships, work placements and industry mentoring. However, students at the London Campus who met the ELIR team, commented on the lack of work-related experiences available to them. Although external guest speakers from business had been introduced at the students' request and curricula made use of real-life case studies, London Campus students expressed a desire for better access to real-life work opportunities as part of their programme. The University is encouraged to continue in its innovative approach to providing work-related experiences for all students, and to extend this to students at the London Campus.

61 The Careers and Skills team provide career development support and student engagement activities across all campuses and work in partnership with academic schools to facilitate employability-focused events to enhance the work-related learning of students and promote work opportunities for students including part-time, volunteering, placement and graduate roles. Examples of the initiatives aimed at enhancing employability are impressive and include: an Employer Mentoring Programme - placing students with industry mentors, facilitating employability development and networking opportunities; an online Careers and Academic Skills Introduction Programme for new UWS students - encouraging the early development of key academic skills; the UWS Volunteer Recognition Award - allowing students to write reflectively on their volunteering experience, articulating skills and achievements gained. There is now a dedicated Careers Advisor in place at the London Campus which was viewed positively by the ELIR team.

62 The University's strategic commitment to employability is evident through various sector-wide projects it is involved in (paragraph 61). The University's focus on employability and initiatives to support this has resulted in a significant improvement in the number of graduates entering professional employment or further study following completion of their degree programme since the 2014 ELIR. The University continues to perform above its own targets in employability. Overall, employability was viewed positively by the ELIR team and the University is encouraged to progress with and extend these initiatives across all campuses.

### **Distance learners**

63 The University identifies distance-learning as a means to increase their non-EU student population. The University has a relatively stable number of students enrolled on distance-learning programmes, with a total of 927 studying at a distance in 2018-19 - ranging from 60 in Computing, Engineering and Physical Sciences, to 427 in Health and Life Science. Distance-learning students reported the convenience of online learning and the responsiveness and approachability of staff as the most positive aspects of studying at the University. ILR documentation indicates that students studying on distance programmes are generally provided with the same materials as all other students, with support provided through email and video conferencing. In meetings with the ELIR team, distance-learning students were positive about the use of the VLE to support their learning.

### **Student mobility**

64 Widening access to and the expansion of mobility opportunities for students is identified as a priority area in the EEP. The 2014-20 Corporate Strategy includes a KPI indicator, 'percentage of undergraduate and postgraduate students having an international experience', which sets the ambitious target of 80% uptake by end of 2019-20. Several groups were established over the past four years to take these plans forward, and the Global Engagement and Education Enabling Plans set out steps towards progressing outward student mobility and to correlate learning and teaching to these objectives. Specific examples of these were also provided at the review visits and include: shorter study abroad experiences; work with employers and alumni to develop overseas work placements or

internship opportunities; intercampus mobility among the UK campuses and with selected TNE destinations; engaging UK-based students in hosting inward international visits; development of online mechanisms to support cross-cultural, interdisciplinary and internationalised learning experiences through connecting cohorts of learners from different programmes, institutions and countries in joint activities and projects. The ELIR team recognises the challenges in encouraging students, especially those from areas of high deprivation or with other commitments such as caring, to take up international experience opportunities. However, those students who had done so were enthusiastic and the ELIR team learnt how the University offers financial support to students for placement. The team encourages the University to continue in its imaginative approaches to providing students with the opportunity to engage in an international experience.

## **2.4 Postgraduate taught and research student experience**

65 The University has seen a rapid growth in both PGT and PGR students over the past five years, with numbers more than doubling during that period. PGT and PGR provision is reviewed as part of the ILR cycle alongside undergraduate programmes, with the exception of MBA/DBA which is reviewed separately. A significant factor in this growth has been the opening of the London Campus where the majority of MBA and DBA provision is located. This has presented some significant challenges, particularly around student support and the need to recruit appropriate numbers of examiners and supervisors to support the research stage.

66 Initially, the DBA programme provided six intake opportunities per year, but this was reduced to three intakes with a cap of 20 students per intake in 2018 as a result of an institution-led review of the MBA/DBA. The ELIR team recommends that the University closely monitors and continues to enhance the student experience of MBA and DBA students located in London.

### **Research students**

67 The Doctoral College has developed bespoke surveys to provide specific insight to enhance the postgraduate student experience (paragraph 146) - the research survey pilot was ongoing at the time of the current ELIR. Responses are considered by the Executive and by senior committees such as SEC and the Doctoral College. The ELIR team was assured that, while using the UWS survey to benchmark was challenging, the University are benchmarking their performance against the sector. The University is encouraged to continue to benchmark the research student experience against the sector.

68 The impact of the Research Enabling Plan is evident with almost double the number of PGR completions from 44 in 2014-15 to 80 in 2018-19. In response to the increase in student numbers and the need to strengthen the management and support arrangements for PGR students, the Graduate School was restructured and became the Doctoral College in 2018. The change of name reflects the amended remit which focuses on assessment, progression and completion as well as fostering a collegiate and interdisciplinary postgraduate environment. In addition, UWS Academy provides support through a lecturer in Research Development with responsibility for the design, evaluation and promotion of research enhancement opportunities.

69 PGR students receive a copy of the Doctoral College Handbook which includes details of the Doctoral Training programme, aligned to the international Vitae Researcher Development Framework, and which all students are expected to engage with. All students are required to submit regular reports through the online university-wide progression monitoring platform 'My PGR'. The Doctoral College Progress Review Board meets quarterly, and more often when required, to review the progress of all PGR students.

70 Academic support for PGR students is provided through the schools and associated research institutes while the Doctoral College is responsible for the administration as well as organising cross-school events, wellbeing initiatives, developing student representation and professional development for PGR students. In discussions with the ELIR team, students indicated that they viewed the transition from the Graduate School to the Doctoral College as positive, in particular, the enhancements this had made to the research student experience. Students also commented positively on the Doctoral College staff and their approach to supporting students to attend training and development activities, and identified the PGR induction week as positive. The PGR students who met the team expressed a strong affinity with their school but were also critical of the lack of communication about the recent restructuring and consequent movement of some key staff to a different school. The students indicated that their experiences of research communities and cultures across the schools were inconsistent and opportunities for interaction with students from different schools and campuses were limited. The Doctoral College is aware of these challenges and is working to increase the number of cross-university events it hosts. The team encourages the University to continue its activities to enhance the student experience through the creation of a research community.

### **Postgraduate taught students**

71 Since the 2014 ELIR, the PGT population has increased by around 10% per year and the University intends to maintain growth. Historically, the PGT student experience has been monitored and evaluated through external surveys such as PTES, internal module feedback (MEQs), meetings (SSLGs), and considered at University committees alongside undergraduate student feedback as part of schools' annual monitoring. The University considers that the PTES survey does not provide sufficiently useful feedback for the specific type of postgraduate provision they offer and so, going forward, will use an in-house designed survey, based on PTES, in order to continue to benchmark aspects of their PGT provision against the sector where relevant. There are PGT student representatives on SEC and programme boards to ensure that the postgraduate student voice is represented which the ELIR team viewed as positive.

72 In meeting the ELIR team, students were positive about their overall experience as a PGT student at UWS; highlighting the approachability of academic staff and support provided, especially to those who were returning to study after a number of years. Induction was cited as a key element that prepared students well for their studies, which includes academic and support information. The University's commitment to personalised learning and support is evident as students appreciated that personal circumstances, such as childcare restraints, were considered for timetabling and attendance as far as possible. Students who met the team reported that their programme prepared them well for employment and included examples such as placements, employer-based projects, fieldwork, internships and guest speakers from industry as useful opportunities to network. The team would encourage the University to continue monitoring the support provided to postgraduate students during this period of rapid growth.

## **2.5 Learning environment, including the use of technology**

73 Overall, the University has effective arrangements in place for managing the quality of the learning environment, with strategic oversight provided through EAC. Each of the University's five campuses are designed to engage with the local community and exploit the opportunities embedded in the character, architecture and social aspects. The University acknowledges the challenges synonymous with the multi-campus model, such as differences in the learning spaces and face-to-face services they are able to provide, especially with a mixture of historic and new buildings. The University has the additional challenge of shared facilities with other institutions on their Ayr and Dumfries campuses.



The ELIR team met students from each of the Scottish campuses (for London Campus see paragraph 75) who were generally positive about their local learning environment and facilities and appreciated the uniqueness of their particular campus for various reasons. In terms of library provision, it was viewed favourably by the UG and PGT students at Paisley and Lanarkshire and there was agreement that library provision on other campuses could be improved.

74 The University has recently invested in new facilities in Lanarkshire, providing students with a modern learning environment with spaces designed to facilitate a change in pedagogy, teaching and use of technology. Additionally, a number of spaces at the Paisley Campus have been renovated. Academic staff have been supported by UWS Academy and Education Futures to transition into these spaces in order to adapt their practices and, most significantly, the University has employed a learning spaces specialist to provide personalised support to staff to maximise the use of the facilities and environment. Senior staff were enthusiastic about this unique support role. The University has received mixed feedback on the new campus to date with some students giving critical feedback on the open plan learning spaces. However, environment rated as the most positive element of studying at UWS in the university-conducted survey which was carried out in preparation for the current ELIR. The ELIR team met students from the Lanarkshire Campus who were very positive about the environment, noting that feedback they had provided through SSLGs had led to some improvements and better use of the spaces for teaching. Staff who taught at Lanarkshire also reported positive experiences and consequent changes and enhancements to their teaching practice as a result of using the teaching spaces. The effective use of innovative spaces at all campuses is driven, shared and reviewed EAC. It is evident that the Lanarkshire Campus is acting as a catalyst for change and transformation of the student experience.

75 Students from the other campuses consistently report the estate as an area in which they would request improvements to be made. Students at the London Campus express ongoing low satisfaction with their learning environment and this has been noted in various SSLG minutes as well as in the ELIR student survey. This dissatisfaction was also reinforced by students from the London Campus who met the ELIR team. They confirmed that classroom facilities, quality of IT and library provision, as well as lack of social space, have all been raised as points of concern, negatively impacting on the overall student experience. Senior staff acknowledged the issues with the learning environment at the London Campus and outlined plans to address this including changing the collaborative partnership model to taking full responsibility for all aspects of the student experience (paragraph 128 and 149).

76 The University makes use of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) to support student learning. A recently formed Digital Experience Group under the direction of Education Futures, has strategic oversight of the development of the VLE and staff and student digital skills. The University is aware there is inconsistent use of the VLE across modules and has initiated a strategic baseline review to enhance provision through the implementation of an updated version. Students who met the ELIR team were generally positive about the use of the VLE to support their learning.

77 The University recognises the importance of technology to facilitate parity of the student experience across campuses. Consequently, staff are increasingly using the systems available in order to achieve this, for example, by offering online appointments with student support services via video conferencing. As part of its strategic aim, Education Futures has conducted research into the digital capabilities of staff and students and is using this evidence to inform the services of the staff development required. The ELIR team viewed this positively.

78 The University identified community as one of its contextualised themes for the ELIR, however, the students the team met identified least with the sentiment of community across the University as a whole. This was, in part, due to the lack of intercampus communication and the perception of a hierarchy between campuses, with variations in facilities contributing mostly to this perception, and Paisley Campus being considered the centre of the University.

79 The variation in student experience across each of the campuses can be viewed as both a strength and a challenge, as students clearly identify with their programme of study and value their local learning community and, with the exception of the London students, appreciate the uniqueness of their different campus experiences. There are, however, several areas where parity of the student experience could be improved, including more flexible teaching spaces and better access to the provision of student services and support. The University is encouraged to continue its ongoing efforts to achieve this.

## **2.6 Effectiveness of the approach to enhancing the student learning experience**

80 Overall, the University is effective in its arrangements for enhancing the student learning experience across all campuses and modes of study. The University understands and is effective in meeting the complex needs of its diverse student population, undertaking positive action and tailoring individual support effectively to ensure student success. The approachability of staff is apparent across the institution. A genuinely student-centred approach to learning, teaching and assessment is a key strength and is effective in enhancing the student experience.

81 The University's commitment to outreach work in the communities in which it is located is evident and wide-ranging, and the strong link with local colleges to facilitate articulation is especially noteworthy. The University effectively engages with and provides a high-level of guidance and support for students from underrepresented backgrounds to access higher education. The significant improvement in retention and achievement for students from underrepresented groups is commendable.

82 The diversity of the campus experiences across the University as a whole presents both an opportunity and a challenge. It is clear that efforts are made at programme level to ensure parity of the academic provision, regardless of location or mode of delivery. However, variations in the availability of resources, facilities and personal tutoring also impact on the overall student experience. The University is encouraged to ensure that there is consistent support in place for students irrespective of the host school or students' location and mode of study including consideration of the support provided by professional services and the Personal Tutoring system.

83 In response, the University is focusing on the effective use of technology to provide a more streamlined and consistent student experience across all campuses. The University is encouraged, through its effective reporting and data mechanisms, to continue to analyse and explore differences in mode and location of study and take steps to respond appropriately within its operational constraints (paragraph 73). In addition, specific challenges around the parity of student experience at the London Campus have been recognised and are being addressed. The University is encouraged to continue with plans in this area to focus on ensuring parity and enhancement of the student experience which should include the provision of work-related opportunities and access to resources and facilities.

84 The University is to be commended for taking the opportunity to use the construction of a new-build campus in Lanarkshire as a catalyst for rethinking pedagogic practice and the effective use of learning spaces and technologies, and changing

infrastructure to enhance the student experience. Clear benefits are already evident which are being effectively and strategically implemented across the wider institution.

85 Community was identified as one of the key themes for the ELIR. There is evidence that this could be improved, particularly in the effectiveness of consulting and communicating with students around institution-wide changes that affect the student experience. This is especially true with respect to the recent rebalancing and review of professional services. The University is encouraged to develop a strategic approach for communicating institutional changes with students, and to consider the content, format and method of dissemination of information to ensure there is widespread understanding of institutional priorities and actions. The University is also encouraged to use improved communications to ensure that all programmes highlight and identify graduate attributes.

86 The University's truth that 'We are here for our students', is clearly reflected in the behaviours and values exhibited by the whole university community. The development of strategies and approaches to improve the effectiveness of two-way communications with students, principally at the institutional level, will further enhance this sense of community and of belonging at the University.

### **3 Strategy and practice for enhancing learning and teaching**

#### **3.1 Strategic approach to enhancement**

87 The University has effective and established systems in place to promote the strategic enhancement of learning and teaching. The University's commitment to teaching and learning is evident in the Corporate Strategy. At the time of the current ELIR, the Corporate Strategy was under review with a revised strategy nearing completion for approval by Senate in January 2020. The ELIR team learned that the Corporate Plan would be retitled the 'UWS Strategy'. The UWS Strategy would have a greater focus on learning and teaching and it would be based on principles and values which were underpinned with key performance indicators.

88 The Education Enabling Plan (EEP) provides a framework for enhancing learning and teaching, and the wider student experience articulating the objectives of the Corporate Strategy into targeted actions and measures. The key performance measures relating to learning and teaching focus on three aspects: student satisfaction; student continuation and successful outcomes; and graduate outcomes. The strategic enhancement of learning and teaching is guided by the Vice-Principal (Academic).

89 The proactive and strategic development and enhancement of learning and teaching at the University is the responsibility of the EAC. The EAC is responsible for the support and implementation of the EEP and reports directly to the Senate. The reporting lines for EAC were recently amended so that the Academic Quality Committee (AQC), the Student Experience Committee (SEC), the Programme Approval and Review Group (PARG) all report to EAC. These bodies advise on and operationalise the strategy for the enhancement of learning and teaching specified by EAC.

90 The annual planning process for schools and professional service departments ensures an active link between the planning process and enhancement of the student experience. Individual schools and departments incorporate relevant objectives into annual operational plans which are overseen by the school boards. The school boards report to EAC and Senate on their plans to match performance against the objectives set in the EEP. The plans are increasingly informed by rich data supplied via the University dashboards and other evidence from Enhancement and Annual Monitoring (EAM) events mediated by the professional services staff of Academic Life: Education.

91 The use of data is playing an increasingly critical role in translating the high-level strategy for enhancing the learning and teaching experience into targeted requirements at school-level and below (paragraph 136 and 142). The University has taken a methodical approach to the use of technology and data to the enhancement of learning and teaching with each IT system having a strategic, operational and technical lead. Before implementing the new version of the VLE, the Education Futures team, supported by the Digital Experience Group, carried out extensive research and a needs analysis to identify the most suitable VLE system. To support staff in the move to the new VLE, the UWS Academy has developed an online pedagogy model for the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PgCAP) and the ELIR team viewed this positively.

92 The University continues to invest in teaching and study facilities across all campuses to meet the aim of providing the best learning environment for students. The Lanarkshire Campus, which was built to 'drive changes to the pedagogy of teaching at UWS' and 'offer inspirational and transformative learning within a flexible and personalised curriculum' has given students access to excellent facilities (paragraph 74). Key staff who led the design and use of the Lanarkshire Campus are now part of the Education Futures team and are actively promoting the approaches initially adopted at the new campus to learning and teaching staff across the University. Since the 2014 ELIR, in addition to the investment in the Lanarkshire campus, there has been significant investment in the facilities at the Paisley Campus. The Learning and Teaching Spaces Working Group, bringing staff from across professional service areas, are implementing phased plans to develop teaching areas across the campus. Work is underway to replicate this in other campuses. This strategic approach to promoting the enhancement of the learning experience was viewed positively by the ELIR team.

### **3.2 Impact of the national Enhancement Themes and related activity on policy and practice**

93 The national Enhancement Themes are a key external reference point for the University and staff engage with the work of the Enhancement Themes to manage enhancement initiatives across the institution. The institutional leadership of Enhancement Themes depends on the nature of the Theme with the current Theme being led by the Head of UWS Academy.

94 The University makes strategic use of the outcomes of the Enhancement Themes to modify their practice and policies. Based on work undertaken through the 2008-11 Enhancement Theme - Graduates for the 21st Century - the School of Media, Culture and Society led the University in developing school-based graduate attributes. A refreshed set of UWS graduate attributes aligning with the three corporate drivers of Student Success, Research and Enterprise and Global Engagement were approved by EAC in 2016-17: 'I am UWS - Universal, Work-ready and Successful' (paragraph 55).

95 The impact of the work on the previous Enhancement Theme - Student Transitions led to the development of the UWS Roadmap. The UWS Roadmap was developed to support students through the first 12 weeks of study pointing out key aspects of university life along the student journey. The RA identified that the institution has seen improved retention and progression of students and achievement of relevant institutional KPIs as a result of this work.

96 Engagement with the current Enhancement Theme - Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience - has generated two baseline studies into data use by Module Co-ordinators and Programme Leaders (PLs) and a student-led investigation of how students engage with the feedback. Outcomes from these projects have resulted in changes to modules, programmes and student surveys. The Enhancement Themes steering group,

led by Academic Life: Education and with representatives from each school, allocates funding for staff to engage with Enhancement Themes. This approach balances centrally coordinated activity with cross-school collaboration.

97 Overall, the University has an effective approach to engaging with the national Enhancement Themes and other sector work.

### **3.3 Approaches to identifying and sharing good practice**

98 The University uses a multi-layered approach to identify and disseminate good practice including the EAM process (paragraph 130-135), use of external examiner reports, programme leader events, ILR and the annual Learning, Teaching and Research Conference. Staff identified the annual conference as an important mechanism for sharing good practice which was attended by staff from various campuses. The 2018 and 2019 conferences, 'Bridging Boundaries: Connecting Learning, Teaching and Research' explored research-teaching links and included external speakers as well as contributions from staff and postgraduate students.

99 Academic programmes are a significant unit of responsibility for teaching delivery and therefore important for identifying and sharing elements of practice that are effective at the subject level. Information from Programme Annual Monitoring Reports (PMRs) is considered at programme boards, school-based annual monitoring events, school boards and, ultimately, at the institutional EAM event (paragraph 132). This process allows staff at various levels to share good practice. An annual institutional report which includes the outcomes of the institutional events, common themes identified in ILR, external examiner reports and an action plan, is considered by EAC and Senate (paragraph 134).

100 The UWS Academy is responsible for identifying, developing and disseminating good practice through engagement at EAM, ILR and programme leader events. It is increasingly making use of electronic means to share good practice. Examples of this include the development by the UWS Academy of web-based resources to support the design and integration of assessments.

101 The two-stage ILR process was regarded by staff as an important mechanism to identify and share good practice. The ILRs are tailored to specific school challenges with the resulting reports being written by the Quality Enhancement Support Team (QuEST). QuEST is able to match good practice within and between schools, with corresponding challenges in other areas. Sharing good practice across the institution in this way was viewed positively by the ELIR team.

### **3.4 Engaging, developing and supporting staff**

102 The University has effective approaches for engaging and supporting staff in their continued development and for the ongoing enhancement of learning and teaching. These include formal credit-bearing programmes such as the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PgCAP); an academic induction Moodle resource; and the opportunity to engage at school-led events or making use of online materials such as those developed by the QuEST team. The Department of People and Organisational Development (P&OD) co-ordinates induction for new staff, Performance and Development Review (paragraph 107), and aspects of staff development such as leadership, mentoring, interview technique and managing staff.

103 The Corporate Strategy set a target that aimed to have 90% of academic staff with a qualification aligned with the current UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPFS) by 2020. Staff can achieve this by completing modules of the PgCAP programme or through the

experiential route to Fellowship. At the time of the current ELIR, across the University around 56% of staff have fellowships of the HEA. The University recognised that the target of 90% was aspirational but will keep it in place and continue working towards it. In support of this, the UWS Academy is focusing on HEA Fellowships supported by a new Moodle submission site, which will track applicants in a more structured manner than previously. New academic staff are systematically inducted into Fellowship recognition routes when they join the University.

104 Academic Life: Education plays a strategic role in coordinating and enabling staff development to enhance learning and teaching, and offers staff a comprehensive range of development opportunities. At the time of the current ELIR, both Education Futures and UWS Academy were relatively new units. Education Futures was set up with the strategic aim of supporting the needs of the institution rather than individuals in providing a modern effective, accessible and inclusive digital learning environment. UWS Academy supports seminars, the Annual Learning, Teaching and Research Conference, sALTiRE (Academic Learning and Teaching Routes for Excellence) introductory workshops, discussion and reading groups.

105 University staff take part in an annual workload activity and personal development process called MyContribution which aligns school and institutional needs with the personal development requirements of staff. The MyContribution process is well-established and supports reflection on achievements and staff activities for the year ahead. The University indicated that the process is designed to ensure that it is able to see best value from the staff and that the staff are supported in their career through a Personal Development Plan (PDP).

106 The MyContribution process was generally praised by staff who met the ELIR team. Some staff reported a degree of 'angst' around the activity plans as there was a perception of inconsistent practice between schools, programmes and campuses. In 2019-20, the University initiated a project to develop an online workload model to ensure a more consistent and transparent application of workload planning. The team viewed this as positive and would encourage the University to continue to implement the model across the institution.

### **3.5 Effectiveness of the approach to implementing institutional strategies and enhancing learning and teaching**

107 It is evident that the University has a clear strategic framework and effective arrangements for enhancing learning and teaching, and for promoting good practice across the University. Strategies are embedded within school and professional services operational plans and are monitored effectively by University and school committees. The University has focused on optimising resources, sustainability and quality of delivery, and student experience. This is underpinned by the commitment of staff at all levels and in the University's focus on learning, teaching and assessment activities which are designed to promote student success.

108 The University has used its multi-campus nature to purposefully implement change in the use of learning spaces, technologies and teaching practices. The University has begun the journey to transform learning and teaching, using the innovative Lanarkshire Campus as an agent of change to develop pedagogy practices. Academic and professional services staff are proactively enabling reflection in the use of learning spaces and technologies and wider adoption of some of the practices trialled at Lanarkshire at other locations. There are staff development opportunities available to encourage and support staff to embrace new learning environments and emerging technologies. This was viewed positively by the ELIR team.

## 4 Academic standards and quality processes

### 4.1 Key features of the institution's approach to managing quality and setting, maintaining, reviewing and assessing academic standards

109 The University has effective arrangements in place for managing quality and securing academic standards. Its regulations, policies and procedures are clear, robust and well-understood, and meet the expectations of the Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) and the guidance of the Scottish Funding Council to institutions on quality.

110 The University makes systematic use of its quality processes to enhance and maintain academic standards across a diversity of locations and modes of study. There is a student-centred approach to the monitoring and review procedures, demonstrated through the multiple levels at which the student experience is considered in processes for approval, monitoring and review. There is clear evidence of the student experience being considered at different campus locations and of students on TNE programmes, as well as the equity of experience. All quality-related matters are considered regularly at school and institutional levels.

111 The Senate is responsible for the institutional approach to setting and maintaining academic standards; in practice, this responsibility lies with schools. The University's key reference points are the *Regulatory Framework*, the *Quality Handbook* and the *Assessment Handbook*. EAC, in collaboration with QuEST, the Research and Enterprise Advisory Committee and the Doctoral College, are responsible for monitoring arrangements for the quality and academic standards of taught and research awards respectively. At the time of the current ELIR, both committees were chaired by the Vice-Principal (Academic), providing a senior level link between research and teaching.

112 The University reviews its internal reference points and its key quality processes annually with more significant reviews being undertaken periodically. In 2018-19, the *Regulatory Framework* and university policies were reviewed and consolidated into six Chapters of the *Regulatory Framework* and seven Policy Statements, and additional key information transferred into the *Quality Handbook* and the *Assessment Handbook*. The Quality Portal and the UWS Academy website provide the primary resource for all documents related to quality and academic standards. There was clear evidence of collaboration between the academic-facing services in maintaining and enhancing quality and standards. As the University continues to finalise its structural arrangements for academic-facing services, the ELIR team would encourage the institution to retain this collaborative approach.

#### Programme approval

113 The University's policies and procedures for programme design and approval are outlined in the *Quality Handbook* and on the QuEST website. They are robust and are aligned with sector expectations. The recent steps to integrate matters such as viability and strategic, fit more fully into its approval procedure and were viewed positively by the ELIR team.

114 An annual report on the outcomes of programme approval events enables effective practice, conditions and recommendations to be collated and to inform future practice. The annual report is considered by AQC, which pays particular attention to reviewing the summary of conditions emerging from programme approval activities. The ELIR team considered the University's process for programme approval to be effective and enabled sharing of good practice across the institution.

## **Enhancement and annual monitoring (EAM)**

115 EAM provides a key mechanism for reviewing academic standards. There is a clear process of cascading reports at the various levels and, at each level, reports have both an assurance and enhancement function - module review forms inform programme monitoring reports, which inform school reports and school EAM events, which in turn shape the University annual report and the institutional EAM event. The University report is considered by Senate via EAC and by schools at their EAM events, and confirmation is provided annually to Court, demonstrating that the reports are discussed at various levels across the institution.

116 The process for completing Programme Monitoring Reports (PMRs) has been enhanced through the introduction of a bespoke online site - Academic Data Services Applications - which enables reports to be completed online and provides staff with access to templates, examples and prepopulated data. The Programme Performance and Module Performance dashboards provide access to a very comprehensive, easily navigable suite of information to support EAM. The data facilitates analysis of cohort performance, enabling the impact of enhancements to be tracked and supports internal and external benchmarking. The transparency and accessibility of this data was welcomed by staff, enabling them to undertake more detailed monitoring of their programmes. The provision of programme and module performance data and its use in decision-making was viewed positively by the ELIR team.

117 The school and institutional EAM events provide opportunities for discussions of the themes and issues arising from annual monitoring. The school event includes a review of the previous year's SMART targets, development of SMART targets for the coming year and presentations by each programme leader on one area of positive practice and one area of development, thereby promoting wider awareness of key issues and also sharing good practice.

118 The institutional event is intended to enhance cross-school analysis, discussion and reflection of the student experience. Staff from all campuses are invited to participate in the event, which brings together academic and professional services staff. The ELIR team considered this to be a positive approach.

119 The outcomes of the institutional event are encapsulated in the annual institutional report which identifies trends, areas of positive practice and issues requiring institutional consideration, and incorporates the common themes identified in the ILR and external examiner annual thematic reports. The institutional report is considered by EAC and the Senate and includes an action plan which is monitored by EAC. The institutional report demonstrates how the University aggregates the outcomes of different monitoring and review processes and identifies key overarching themes. Staff who met the ELIR team spoke very positively about their experiences of the EAM process.

120 The ELIR team considered the EAM process to be very thorough, robust and well-understood, with alignment between Module Review Reports, Programme Reports, school SMART targets and school EAM events, and the University EAM event and Institutional Monitoring Report. There is a clear assurance and enhancement function at each level.

## **Institution-led Review (ILR)**

121 The University's periodic review process - Institution-led Review (ILR) - evaluates all credit-rated provision on a six-year cycle in accordance with SFC guidance and provides the mechanism for confirming the reapproval of awards. The University has significantly



enhanced its ILR process since the 2014 ELIR through two key developments. Firstly, schools have the flexibility, through discussion with QuEST, to aggregate programmes and subjects into a unit of review appropriate to the mode of delivery. This flexibility has been welcomed and valued by staff. The second development relates to the introduction of a two-phased approach to ILR.

122 The two-phased approach enables the review visit to be tailored more specifically to the subject area and to focus on pertinent topics, including a Core Discussion Area, identified both by the subject under review and by QuEST. Staff viewed the two-phased approach, particularly the opportunity for focusing in-depth on areas for development identified in Phase 1, as very positive. The ELIR team considered the two-phased process to be a highly-effective approach to internal review and noted that it had been showcased in a sparqs publication.

123 The ILR process considers the effectiveness of the school's own processes for monitoring and review, as well as key assurance and enhancement reports, such as programme monitoring reports, external examiner reports and student survey analyses. The process also includes a five-year strategic look forward, highlighting the enhancement function. Students are involved in ILR by contributing to the subject's Self-Evaluation Document, and in meeting with the ILR team during the review visit. All aspects of the student experience are considered in ILR, including across different modes and locations of study.

124 ILR reports and follow-up action plans are considered by AQC, with a one-year-on follow-up event enabling the subject team and AQC members (including student representatives) to discuss and reflect on progress. This reflection event was viewed positively by the ELIR team. The Thematic Summary of ILR Outcomes provides a concise, accessible overview of examples of positive practice and areas for development, which informs EAC's action planning.

125 The University does not operate a separate ILR process for professional services; rather, the support provided by professional services specifically to the subject area under review is considered as part of each ILR. The University confirmed that consideration has been given to separate ILRs of professional services but considers its current processes of integrating evaluation of services within subject-specific ILRs to be effective, particularly as QuEST, through producing all ILR reports, is able to take an informed view on service provision. The effectiveness of professional services is also considered through review of the alignment of Services' annual operational plans with school operational plans. School Operational Plans demonstrate requirements for support from professional services and feedback from the University Executive to professional service departments highlight recommended areas of collaboration between different services and areas of contribution by services to schools.

126 The ELIR team recognised that the University evaluates the contribution of professional services through these existing processes. However, none of the processes provide the institution with an overview of the provision of each service. The team would therefore encourage the University to introduce an explicit process for the periodic review of student-facing professional services in order to provide a more complete overview of the contribution and role of support services in the enhancement of the student learning experience. At the time of the current ELIR, the University was still putting in place the outcomes of its rebalancing activity and finalising the structure of its professional services. In the context of the post-rebalancing structure, it will be particularly important for the University to have a process which provides an overview of student-facing professional services. This process should draw upon the good practice developed in the ILRs of academic provision.

## Assessment

127 The University has effective arrangements in place for the management of assessment. Regulations, policies and procedures on assessment are provided as part of the *Regulatory Framework* and the *Assessment Handbook*. The Handbook provides guidance on assessment design and implementation and on assurance of academic standards (paragraph 56-58). The University has recently approved measures to enhance the structure and approach to assessment boards, particularly in terms of online assessment results processing and indicative decision-making.

128 The University has identified, through its established monitoring and review processes of external examining and ILR, lower levels of performance in assessment on the MBA/DBA programmes at the London Campus compared with similar programmes at other university campuses. The ELIR team learnt that the University intends to change the collaborative partnership model for the London Campus to take full responsibility for all aspects of the student experience and employ UWS staff at the campus. At the time of the current ELIR, induction and training on the University's assessment framework have been provided by UWS staff to Recognised Teachers of the University (RTUs) at the London Campus and there were regular visits to the London Campus by UWS staff. The team would encourage the University to continue in its plans to address the comparability of experience and student outcomes for students studying at different locations and modes as part of its future development of its London-based provision.

### 4.2 Use of external reference points in quality processes

129 The University is making effective use of external reference points in the management of its quality assurance and enhancement processes.

## Quality Code

130 The University's *Quality Handbook* is aligned to and meets the Expectations of the 2013-18 Quality Code and is currently being reviewed to ensure alignment with the revised Quality Code. The University confirmed that completed mapping will be presented to AQC in February 2020. AQC considers the Mapping Document throughout the year to ensure that it remains comprehensive and robust and the Institutional Monitoring Report provides confirmation that the Expectations of the Quality Code continue to be met.

## Programme approval and review

131 A range of external reference points is used in programme design and approval and in ILR, including approval and review teams with external panel members. Approval events can be held jointly with PSRB accreditations. The outcomes of programme approval and ILRs are embedded within Enhancement and Annual Monitoring, and relevant issues are considered by the Head of QuEST and by AQC.

## External examiners

132 The University's system of external examining operates at subject and programme/award level. External examiners report through the online 'smartsurvey', which facilitates identification of programme-specific issues, institutional themes and examples of positive practice or areas for development. External examiner reports are considered by programme boards. Schools consider comments from the reports in an institutional annual thematic report, as well as issues emerging from programme-specific reports, at their school EAM event. The annual report is considered by AQC and EAC.

133 Schools are responsible for ensuring that external examiners receive written responses to their reports and school EAM reports confirm receipt and response to all reports, with further confirmation provided in the Institutional EAM Report to the Senate. The University's consideration of the impact of new Extenuating Circumstances Policy demonstrates institutional responsiveness to issues raised by external examiners. The new policy was reviewed and revised in response to concerns raised by external examiners. There is also a clear process for following up on institutional actions related to sharing examples of positive practice.

134 External examiner reports are made available to students via the VLE. Although there were variable levels of awareness among students who met the ELIR team about the existence of these reports, students are involved in the consideration of the External Examiner Annual Thematic Report at AQC and EAC.

135 The ELIR team learned that a revised external examiner reporting process is being introduced for 2019-20 reports, which aims to encourage a more reflective, enhancement-focused commentary, including evaluation of student performance across different modes and locations. The University is encouraged to continue with these plans and to incorporate the outcomes into its annual thematic report on external examining.

### **Benchmarking data**

136 The University makes extensive use of data in its strategic planning and monitoring processes, which enables progress to be measured against internal targets and to be externally benchmarked. The University's dashboards facilitate Scottish and UK sector comparisons at module and programme levels. The University demonstrates further learning from the wider sector through its extensive review and redesign of its collaborative partnership processes, which included an evaluation of sector practices and responding to recommendations made by an external consultant (paragraph 159).

### **4.3 Commentary on action taken since ELIR 3**

137 The University has a systematic approach to implementing, monitoring and evaluating the impact of actions taken in response to the 2014 ELIR outcomes. EAC has institutional oversight of the ELIR Action Plan, and actions emerging from ELIR inform updates to the EEP.

138 The University was asked to address six areas for development in the 2014 ELIR. With regard to supporting the pace of international expansion, there has been a significant growth in international provision and international student numbers since 2014 ELIR. The University acknowledged that this rapid growth has put many of its systems and processes under strain, and is now adopting a strategy of consolidation, with the decision to take full responsibility of all aspects of the student experience at the London Campus (paragraph 128) and to reduce the number of partnerships overall (paragraph 153). For the second area - internationalisation of the curriculum - staff and students spoke of this as being embedded in modules and provided through case studies. Activities in support of internationalisation of the curriculum are specified in programme approval documentation, EAM reports and ILR reports (paragraph 115-126).

139 The majority of students who met the ELIR team were very positive about opportunities for direct work experience or opportunities for developing their employability skills (paragraph 59-62). The students at the London Campus would welcome similar opportunities (paragraph 60), and the University is encouraged to continue to implement its strategy on work-related opportunities for all, particularly in the context of London-based programmes. The University has undertaken a range of activities to improve the visibility of

graduate attributes and there is evidence of graduate attributes being embedded in modules and programmes, as demonstrated by programme approval, monitoring and review documentation. The University recognises the need to further improve the level of awareness of graduate attributes among its students and the team would encourage the institution to continue this work.

140 The University has identified further expansion of student mobility as a target in the current Education Enabling Plan. The challenges associated with mobility are recognised and the ELIR team would encourage the University to increase the provision of, and support for, short study visits, including through collaborative partners, in order to improve the accessibility of mobility options for all.

141 The University has taken a number of steps to optimise the use of technology through, for example, the establishment of a baseline for all VLE provision. The ELIR team learned that the University is planning to move to a new VLE which, it is hoped, will address issues of inconsistency and the difficulty of use associated with the previous arrangements, as identified in the 2018-19 ILR Thematic Summary and as reported to the team by students during the current ELIR.

### **Approach to using data to inform decision-making and evaluation**

142 The University has an effective, increasingly sophisticated, integrated, transparent approach to using an extensive range of data to promote enhancement and to inform decision-making and evaluation. The University is moving from retrospective use of data to a more proactive, forward-facing approach. There is a clear, well-understood process in the use of data across all levels of the institution; which has been enhanced through provision of dashboards that are accessible to all staff. The integration of data into all quality processes is encouraging staff to focus on performance, viability and to be forward looking. The key role of QuEST in this process was positively highlighted (paragraph 122 and 125).

### **Data and performance indicators**

143 Data is available to staff at all levels reflecting the institution's intention to build knowledge and understanding of student performance and programme viability, and to inform action from module to institutional levels. The recent UWS Focus On Assessment and Feedback project used data to inform institutional action and change. Staff who met the ELIR team confirmed the usefulness of the dashboards and the range of training and support, both formal and informal, available to staff in making effective use of the data.

144 The nine institutional performance indicators are displayed on the front page of the University dashboards, visible to all staff. Progress towards KPIs is reviewed by the Court, the Senate and the University Leadership Team. Schools and professional services develop annual Operational Plans which set out priorities and actions against the Corporate Strategy themes for the year ahead and are used by schools and departments to gauge progress towards institutional targets throughout the year. On an individual basis, the staff development and appraisal process - My Contribution - requires staff to reflect on their actions and activities over the past year which have contributed to the Corporate Strategy themes and to prioritise objectives for the year ahead to support the achievement of the University's KPIs. Staff were very familiar with the use of data for performance evaluation and decision-making at all levels, including their own personal targets, but were less certain in identifying examples of changes made following data analysis. The ELIR team considered that there would be merit in the University reflecting on how the outcomes of actions taken in response to quantitative data could be more widely communicated.

145 The University's data-driven approach includes institution-level, as well as module-level, student surveys. There is a comprehensive suite of reports on, and analyses of, the

University's own MEQ and the NSS, and clear evidence of this information being considered at multiple levels. Survey results are consolidated into school SMART targets, which form part of the school EAM Report. The ELIR team learned that some students were unaware of how their MEQs had influenced change. The University is encouraged to continue to develop its approaches to communicating with students around the actions it is taking in response to surveys (paragraph 24, 70, 85).

146 The University has discontinued its use of the national Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), and the iGraduate Student Barometer. The University has introduced its own postgraduate survey which has been initially aimed at PGR students at the time of the current ELIR (paragraph 67). The University confirmed that the internal survey will still enable external benchmarking but is more suitable for the variety of PGR modes of study at the University. The University is encouraged to continue in its plans to introduce a comparable survey for PGT students. In addition, the University is encouraged to continue its plans to introduce a TNE-specific survey for students on collaborative partnerships (paragraph 168).

#### **4.4 Effectiveness of the arrangements for securing academic standards**

147 The University has effective arrangements in place for managing quality and securing academic standards. Procedures are robust, well-established, widely understood and comprehensive, and meet the Expectations set out in the Quality Code and the Scottish Funding Council guidance to institutions on quality.

148 The recent rebalancing and institutional reorganisation have not impacted on its key quality processes. The two-phase, contextualised ILR process is commendable and provides a supportive, reflective analysis of programmes, particularly through the flexibility of areas to be reviewed and identification of key themes through the process. The introduction of school and institutional events, which have facilitated broader engagement in progressing areas for development and in disseminating good practice, was viewed positively by the ELIR team.

149 Lower levels of performance in assessment on the MBA/DBA programmes were identified at the London Campus compared with similar programmes at other university campuses. The ELIR team would encourage the University to continue with its plans to address parity of experience and student outcomes for students studying at different locations and modes as part of its future development of its London-based provision.

#### **4.5 Effectiveness of the institution's approach to self-evaluation, including the effective use of data to inform decision-making**

150 The University has effective arrangements for self-evaluation, including effective use of data to inform decision-making. Performance data, quality processes and reports are used extensively to inform enhancement at programme, division, school and institutional levels. The integration of data into portfolio review, programme approval, annual monitoring, periodic review processes and student survey analysis is encouraging an ongoing focus on performance, viability of programmes and enhancement of learning and teaching. There are clear processes for analysing, synthesising and responding to action plans emerging from quality-related procedures. The integrated and widely-understood approach to using an extensive range of external and internal data (both quantitative and qualitative) at multiple levels (student, staff, programme, school, professional service and institution) to promote enhancement and inform decision-making and evaluation, was viewed as positive and effective.

151 The University should introduce an explicit process for the periodic review of student-facing professional services in order to provide a more complete overview of the

contribution and role of support services in the enhancement of the student learning experience. Reviewing these services will be useful following the University's rebalancing exercise. The University should draw on the existing good practice in the ILRs of academic provision.

## 5 Collaborative provision

### 5.1 Key features of the institution's strategic approach

152 The University has an effective approach to managing its collaborative provision including arrangements for securing academic standards and enhancing the student experience. The University's Global Engagement Enabling Plan 2014-2020 outlines its internationalisation objectives which include 'offering UWS degrees and professional development through a range of off-shore arrangements' and a key performance indicator of 3,000 students enrolled on UWS degrees through TNE/online arrangements by the end of 2019-20. The University is aware that its growth targets have not been fully realised; however, there has been significant growth in TNE student numbers since the 2014 ELIR, with the main area of growth in validated arrangements with TNE partnerships - a shift from 2014 when the majority of partnerships were franchise collaborations.

#### Strategic approach

153 At the time of the current ELIR, the University was in the process of developing its Corporate Strategy 2020-25 and so had not yet specified its future strategic approach to collaborative provision. The ELIR team learned that the University aims to consolidate its TNE collaborative provision, to focus on franchise partnerships and to discontinue validation arrangements. The strategy of consolidation reflects the low student numbers of some partnerships, and the challenges and risks associated with assuring the quality and standards of validated provision.

154 Strategic development of TNE collaborations (franchise and validated) was transferred in 2019-20 to EAC for taught provision and the Research and Enterprise Advisory Committee (REAC) for PhD partnerships. At the time of the current ELIR, all taught partnerships were overseen at institutional level by the Vice-Principal (Academic) in order to ensure a focus on consideration of academic elements.

155 Until 2019-20, the Collaborative Forum (CF), which reported to both EAC and REAC, reviewed and monitored the effectiveness of all collaborative agreements and supported the development of collaborations. At the time of the current ELIR, CF had been reconstituted as the Partnerships and Collaboration Committee (PCC) and retained all of the responsibilities of its predecessor. One key change in remit was the transfer of responsibility to the new Programme Approval and Review Group (PAG) for 'approval to proceed' (to an approval event) for new collaborative proposals, which involves consideration of matters related to potential viability and strategic fit.

156 The ELIR team learned that the PCC provides oversight of each school's entire collaborative provision, and that the School of Business and Creative Industries, which has the largest number of partnerships, has in place its own, school-specific Collaborative Partnership Committee, which reports to the school board and on to PCC. In all schools, the school board provides oversight of partnership activity.

157 The seven PhD collaborations are all with institutions in Germany. Doctoral degrees are awarded by UWS, and the arrangements are administered by the Doctoral College. At the time of the current ELIR, the University was piloting a revised approach to manage research collaborations. The ELIR team would encourage the University to continue to

develop a more managed approach to managing research collaborations. Following the extensive review of collaborative processes, the role of Recognised Supervisor of the University (RSU) has recently been introduced by the University.

158 At the institutional level, the Vice-Principal (Academic) has delegated to the Associate Vice-Principal (Research), strategic responsibility for Graduate Apprenticeship provision, as a reflection of the University's intention to cultivate increased links between teaching, research and employer engagement. The University is expanding its Graduate Apprenticeship provision beyond the initial four programmes, which had 98 students in 2018-19. Monitoring and review of Graduate Apprenticeship provision is embedded into quality processes and are considered at school boards (paragraph 109-114).

159 In 2018-19, the University undertook a number of reviews of its processes for approval and monitoring of collaborative provision. Two internal reviews were undertaken, in addition to an external benchmarking exercise and engagement of an external consultant to evaluate the effectiveness of its revised approach to collaborative provision. These reviews have resulted in a strengthening of processes including: a revised approval process; new two-stage due diligence procedure; reintroduction of full approval events for approval of franchise partnerships; more robust procedure for withdrawing from partnerships; the formal linking of internal approval processes to academic oversight of the institutional portfolio. The clear alignment between strategic and school priorities, and between business and academic approval, was viewed positively by the ELIR team. The team commended the institution's more managed, consolidated approach to partnership activity, and the extent to which these approaches were widely understood by staff.

160 The procedures for the approval, monitoring and review of collaborative provision are outlined in the *Quality Handbook*. The procedures are differentiated by type of partnership, which demonstrates institutional awareness of the differences in nature of, and levels of risk associated with, different partnership models. Procedures have been revised in response to challenges experienced in approving and operating partnerships. Within schools, responsibility for partnerships lies with: the UWS Link Tutor (franchise) and the UWS Collaborative Contact (validated), both of which are academic roles and are supported by recently revised role descriptors.

161 Processes are in place for the approval of academic staff at partner institutions. For franchise arrangements, partner academic staff are approved by schools as Recognised Teachers of the University (RTU). PCC maintains oversight of schools' processes for approving and annually reviewing RTUs.

162 The academic approval process for partnerships require an approval event, as is the case for campus-based programmes. Approval events for franchise programmes may be in-country or 'UWS in-house'. Approvals for validations take place in-country due to the perceived higher risk. All partnerships are monitored annually and are reviewed regularly with regard to financial viability (annually by schools) and risk to the University (periodic due diligence review by the University legal team).

163 The University conducts a periodic Collaborative Review of all partnerships which considers the student experience, annual monitoring reports, and learning and teaching approaches of the partner, as well as considering ongoing viability and risks. For franchise arrangements, the Collaborative Review is in addition to the ILR. The effectiveness of the subject area's own quality assurance mechanisms in relation to TNE provision is considered during the ILR process which was viewed positively by the ELIR team. For validation partnerships, the Collaborative Review includes a reapproval event, conducted by a team including external experts.

## Assessment

164 The academic security of assessment on TNE franchised programmes is managed and assured through the use of identical examinations which are scheduled simultaneously with a third party managing the conduct of the examination. In the first year of a new programme, all assessment results are moderated by UWS. The assessments used on TNE programmes are the same as those used on campus, albeit adapted to take account of the local context, for example, local law and regulations. Training provided to RTUs by UWS Link Tutors and through the RTU VLE site covers key assessment-related information, such as assessment methods and providing feedback. The University's *Assessment Handbook* is issued annually to all partners, and moderation takes place in accordance with the Handbook's requirements. For validated programmes, where the assessment is set and marked by the partner, the University undertakes a sample of marking as part of its moderation processes.

165 The University has recently strengthened its external examining arrangements for collaborative provision. External examiners are no longer appointed by partners; this is the sole responsibility of the University. The University has introduced revised guidance and a revised online reporting template for external examiners involved in collaborative provision, which includes commentary on comparison between programmes offered by more than one mode or more than one location. In addition, the University has recently extended its on-campus model of two-tiered assessment boards to TNE partnerships, with results processing now being undertaken by university staff. There would be benefit to the University in reviewing these arrangements after the first year of operation.

## Student learning experience

166 Arrangements for student support, guidance and induction are specified as part of the academic case for franchise partnerships and are considered as part of the academic approval event for both validated and franchise partnerships. Oversight of the student learning experience is embedded within the University standard quality assurance mechanisms for annual monitoring and periodic review, with arrangements differentiated by partnership type. There is clear evidence that parity of experience across all modes and locations of study is reviewed through the Module Review Form EAM, ILR, local SSLGs and MEQs.

167 The UWS Link Tutor plays a pivotal role in the enhancement of the student learning experience on TNE franchise partnerships. There is a prescribed series of regular visits post-approval. Institution oversight of visits is maintained by the Collaborative Partnerships Operations Board with the Collaborative Forum determining annually the extent to which a satisfactory number of visits have been made. Visits are supplemented through regular interaction via video-conferencing and e-communications.

168 The views of students enrolled on partnership programmes are gathered and evaluated via the University's standard MEQs and SSLGs, which all partnership providers are expected to have in place. The University uses the Collaborative Review process to gain a more holistic view of the student learning experience on collaborative programmes during which the panel meets with students. The ILR process provides a further opportunity for evaluation of the student learning experience on partnership programmes, with feedback being provided directly by students through online surveys on all aspects of the student journey. The feeling of belonging to UWS has emerged as a recurring issue. At the time of the current ELIR, a variety of approaches were used to engage students and support them in developing an identity as UWS students, but the University recognised the need to develop a co-ordinated approach, rather than school-specific initiatives, and proposed to establish a short-life working group to take this forward. The University is encouraged to continue with



its plans to enhance the sense of belonging among TNE students to UWS and to coordinate developments through the proposed short-life working group. In addition, the University is encouraged to continue its plans to introduce a TNE-specific survey for students on collaborative partnerships (paragraph 146).

## **5.2 Effectiveness of the approach to managing collaborative provision including arrangements for securing academic standards and enhancing the student learning experience**

169 The University has an effective approach to managing its collaborative provision, including arrangements for securing academic standards and enhancing the student experience, which meet the Expectations of the Quality Code.

170 Procedures for the approval, monitoring and review of partnerships are robust, embedded in the institution's quality assurance framework and are differentiated by partnership type. There is clear evidence that the University keeps its approaches to managing collaborative provision under review. The University also evaluates and adapts the institutional committees and groups which have strategic and operational oversight of its collaborative provision. Procedures are aligned to delivering institutional strategic priorities in partnership activity.

171 The University is to be commended for the thoroughness of the reviews and redevelopment of its collaborative provision processes, to ensure that its arrangements are aligned to delivering strategic priorities as partnership activity has grown and diversified. In managing its collaborative provision, the University has taken a strategic and focused approach which includes targeting a smaller number of partners and strengthening processes for approving, monitoring and reviewing provision, ensuring a clear alignment between business processes and institutional priorities.

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