

Thematic Report on Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) Technical Reports 2012-16: Approaches to Institution-led Review (ILR)

Areas highlighted in the ELIR Outcome Reports

Overview

In this report we highlight good practice and areas for development as featured in the ELIR Outcome and Technical Reports 2013-16. The key findings emerging from Outcome Reports in relation to **Approaches to Institution-led Review (ILR)** were:

Activity to promote good practice

- **Self-evaluation and information about quality** - there is a strong culture of institutional self-reflection at Queen Margaret University, drawing on the outcomes of quality assurance processes to enhance the student experience. For example, the Student Experience Committee takes an evaluative overview of the outcomes from a variety of key processes, including annual monitoring and review. The Learning and Teaching Panel is effective in assuring quality and maintaining academic standards on behalf of the Student Experience Committee. Information about the quality assurance arrangements is provided through the 'Quality at QMU' website, which is well-structured, comprehensive and informative.
- **Internal Teaching Review** - the Internal Teaching Review process at the University of Aberdeen provides methodical and detailed critical analysis of discipline areas. The plans to include a more explicit enhancement focus to this assurance-based process are likely to ensure the University can benefit further and provide greater linkages between its assurance processes and the variety of enhancement activities.
- **Identifying and sharing good practice** - Glasgow School of Art has developed a range of systematic mechanisms which facilitate the identification and sharing of good practice. These include an annual learning and teaching event, as well as the Programme Monitoring and Annual Reporting and Periodic Review processes which include quality enhancement as a standard heading in report templates and take a critical friend approach to disseminating good practice across the schools.
- **Identification and dissemination of good practice** - linked to its institution-led review processes, and supported by its Centre for Academic, Professional and Organisational Development, The University of St. Andrews has systematic arrangements for identifying and sharing good practice. These include an annual dissemination event attended by the directors of teaching from every school drawing on the outcomes from the Annual Academic Monitoring process.

- **Integrated quality assurance and enhancement procedures** - the University of the West of Scotland continues to have a comprehensive and robust approach to self-evaluation using a number of review methods including institution-wide holistic review, subject health review, policy review and thematic reviews. The methodologies used allow the University to be responsive, carrying out mid-term adjustments, where appropriate, to policies and strategies. An example of this approach can be seen in the annual updating of the Assessment Handbook to reflect changes in regulations and current good practice, based on sector benchmarking and reflection on external examiners' comments and the outcomes of annual monitoring. The outcomes of institution-led quality reviews, including annual monitoring processes, are effectively disseminated to staff and students, with students having a leading role in the conduct of reviews.
- **Quality monitoring and review for academic and support services** - the University of Edinburgh has comprehensive and detailed arrangements for monitoring and reviewing its courses and programmes. Academic and support staff are committed to the effective implementation of these arrangements. Thematic reviews help to ensure that the academic and support areas make a coherent contribution to enhancing the student learning experience.
- **Approach to quality assurance and quality enhancement** - Robert Gordon University has comprehensive and robust arrangements for annual appraisal and periodic Institution-Led Subject Review and the consideration of outcomes from these processes. This is complemented by annual monitoring and periodic Student-Facing Support Services Review (SFSSR) which cuts across organisational boundaries. Annual and periodic processes are overseen effectively by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee with the operational support of the Academic Affairs department, including the faculty quality officers. A particularly positive development has been student partnership in the SFSSR of IT services, which was well received by staff and students and will inform the approach taken to subsequent enhancement of the student experience.

Areas for development:

- **Institution-led quality review** - the University of Strathclyde to make demonstrable progress, within the next academic year, in revising the approach to periodic institution-led review to ensure that the revised process gives adequate scrutiny to learning and teaching across all parts of the institution. The University should consider the scope, focus, granularity and consistency of implementation across the institution. It should also consider the linkages with the existing, and effective, annual monitoring processes.
- **Institution-led review** - the University of Abertay to ensure the quality review exercise the University has planned for 2017-18 is not only a review of the curriculum reform project but also meets all of the guidance for institution-led review including undertaking detailed and self-reflective scrutiny of all provision at the subject level, with ample opportunity for engagement by external subject specialists. In addition, there would be considerable benefit in the University reflecting on its annual monitoring procedures following curriculum reform and the changes to organisational structure to ensure that annual scrutiny continues to provide the best insight to the ongoing academic health of programmes and provides a good fit with the revised periodic subject review arrangements.

Introduction

As part of the ELIR 3 method, QAA Scotland produces regular Thematic Reports to support the sector in learning from the outcomes of individual ELIR Reports. The purpose of Thematic Reports is to inform future development work in the sector and, in particular, to inform future QAA activity including work carried out in collaboration with the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC).

Scope and structure of this report

This report identifies material relating to approaches to institution-led review (ILR) contained within the ELIR reports for all 18 Scottish higher education institutions reviewed in the ELIR 3 cycle (2013-16). The institutions included in this report are: the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (Conservatoire); Queen Margaret University (QMU); University of Aberdeen; University of Dundee; University of Strathclyde; University of Glasgow; Scotland's Rural College (SRUC); Glasgow School of Art (GSA); University of the West of Scotland (UWS); Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU); Heriot-Watt University; University of St Andrews; Edinburgh Napier University; University of Stirling; University of Edinburgh; University of Abertay, Dundee, The Robert Gordon University; and the University of the Highlands and Islands.

This report summarises examples of positive practice and areas for development as highlighted in the ELIR Outcome Reports (see page 1), and the more detailed findings included within the ELIR Technical Reports (see below). It is possible that additional practice takes place in these 18 institutions, but only those elements of practice included within the ELIR reports is included here. The report then outlines briefly the next steps in the ELIR process following the publication of the reports.

The annex includes references to institutional approaches to ILR within the ELIR Technical Reports. The paragraph numbers used in the annex are taken directly from the original reports.

Previous analysis of institutional evaluation

At the start of the ELIR 3 cycle in 2012-13, Professor Paddy Maher, on behalf of QAA Scotland, carried out a project exploring institutional approaches to self-evaluation (IASE). The project aimed to consider and codify the various arrangements institutions had in place at that time. The project also aimed to identify features that make institutions' evaluative arrangements effective. A summary report, a full project report and a further related publication, *Effective approaches to evaluation in Scottish university sector; What makes self-evaluation work?* were made available on the QAA website.

The report considered four types of institutional evaluation: annual monitoring; institution-led quality review; preparation for ELIR and transformational reviews of institutional processes. The IASE project found that institutions' evaluative processes have developed in the following ways: approaches have become more reflective and analytical; there had been a positive shift from assurance to enhancement; there was greater alignment between annual monitoring and periodic reviews; the quality and accessibility of data has improved; there is greater student engagement in these processes; and there is a greater use of external reference points such as the National Student Survey (NSS) and Enhancement Themes. The report concluded that monitoring and review processes in Scottish higher education institutions had become more enhancement-focused since the establishment of the Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF)

and stated that the sector had demonstrated 'vigour and [a] 'continual improvement' ethos in relation to its approaches to self-evaluation.'¹

This thematic report identifies the findings from the ELIR 3 cycle in relation to institutional approaches to ILR. From these findings, it is clear that ILR continues to be conducted with vigour and in an ethos intended to promote continuous improvement.

Areas highlighted in the ELIR Technical Reports

Activity to promote good practice

In ELIR 3, each Outcome Report sets out the ELIR team's views of positive practice and areas for development at the institution. These key findings in relation to approaches to ILR are summarised on page 1 of this report. This section identifies current interesting practice at the 18 institutions as identified in the longer ELIR Technical Reports.

Culture of self-evaluation

There is strong evidence of institutions' continuing commitment to continuous self-evaluation through analysis of ILR outcomes and other quality procedures. In addition, there is some evidence of institutions effectively linking annual quality monitoring and periodic review processes to their institutional strategies and policies. The ELIR 3 reports identify a wealth of activity in this area to promote good practice.

At QMU, there is a strong culture of institutional self-evaluation which draws on the outcomes of quality assurance processes to enhance the student experience.

The approach at Glasgow Caledonian University to the management of the academic standards of its provision is designed to encourage critical reflection and enhancement of the student learning experience and that this is achieved through its committee structure, organisational management structure, and quality enhancement and assurance processes, policies and procedures. During the ELIR, this approach was particularly evident in the University's periodic review processes, both subject-based review and Thematic Review. For example, self-evaluation documents for periodic review must analyse and respond to a range of external and internal benchmarking data.

Heriot-Watt University has enhanced its ILR process by seeking feedback from graduates on the programme under review, and by including the requirement for schools to report on their engagement with and reflection on activities relating to the implementation of the objectives of the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy, with specific reference to the school's Learning and Teaching Strategy and Enhancement Plan. In addition, the ELIR team found that the University has taken steps to ensure that review processes established in the UK can work across campuses and with partner institutions.

Key strands of institutional strategy are also used to shape arrangements for annual appraisal and ILR and periodic review at Robert Gordon University. Here ILR has a strong developmental role and a considerable degree of external involvement both in the review of lessons learned from past appraisals and in suggesting the future development of the subject within the University's overall strategic parameters. Commitment to producing quantitative and qualitative institutional data is also enabling evidence-based enhancement plans to arise as direct outcomes of the various monitoring and review processes.

Similarly, at SRUC, ILR processes allow for systematic checking that the subject under review is of professional relevance.

¹ QAA Scotland, *Institutional approaches to self-evaluation (IASE) project summary*, 2012-13, p.4.

The University of Stirling's periodic review processes also provide opportunities for systematic self-reflection. There have been enhancements to ILR processes here since the 2011 ELIR, including the reporting of data for monitoring and review purposes; making data easier to access and large data sets being produced centrally allowing school-specific data to be accessed. However, the University described the extraction of data for monitoring and review purposes as work in progress.

At the University of St. Andrews, the Centre for Academic, Professional and Organisational Development (CAPOD) produce a summary report on the findings of University Reviews of Learning and Teaching for the year, which is received by the Academic Monitoring Group. Consideration of his report provides a focus for the key issues that are arising and allows ILR outcomes to shape University policy and practice.

UWS continues to have a comprehensive and robust approach to self-evaluation using a number of review methods, including institution-wide holistic review, subject health review, policy review and thematic reviews. The methodologies used allow the University to be responsive, and to carry out mid-term adjustments to policies and strategies. Management information to support review processes is provided through the Performance Management Information System (PMIS) which is easily accessed by staff through a dashboard system. Data incorporates a learner analytics approach allowing staff to compare student performance on their programmes across the University's campus sites. Staff can also benchmark National Student Survey (NSS) returns in their subject areas to those in similar institutions across the UK. The ELIR team regarded the provision and use of data to support quality assurance processes and maintenance of academic standards at UWS as an area of positive practice.

Explicit link between assurance and enhancement in ILR processes

There is evidence across the sector that institutions are linking assurance and enhancement within their ILR processes to drive institutional change.

There has also been a move towards institutions creating space within periodic review processes dedicated specifically to enhancement activity led by the areas under review. For, example Heriot-Watt University introduced a session that focuses specifically on quality enhancement, where schools are invited to select their own enhancement topics for exploration and discussion during the session and to share good practice and receive feedback from peers.

At the University of St. Andrews, the review is also intended to be enhancement-led and discipline areas are requested to identify enhancement themes prior to the review event. The ELIR team's view as that the significant number of commendations, recommendations (both to the school and the University) and the constructive critical analysis seen in the ILR reports indicated a rigorous approach to periodic review. Since the 2011 ELIR, other development have been a move to align ILR with PSRB reviews, formalise the process for evidence provided by students, and pilot the inclusion of an international reviewer who will provide a written submission to the panel.

At RGU monitoring and review mechanisms have resulted in the effective identification of institutional topics for enhancement and good practice for dissemination. Recent enhancement topics have included assessment feedback timeliness and technology enhanced assessment; information services including the wireless network; the provision of social space on campus; and work-related experience. Action taken as result of monitoring and review process outcomes have included: the creation of more flexible placement opportunities for undergraduate management students; online moderation arrangements for collaborative provision; work with community colleges to develop new markets in North America; peer

support for online distance learners; and a range of technology-supported teaching and assessment practices.

The University of Aberdeen's Internal Teaching Review process was found to serve well as a vehicle for assuring quality and there were also plans here to include a more reflective, enhancement-orientated approach.

This move to a more explicit link between assurance and enhancement is also evident where there are no specific sessions within the review programme, but where processes have been developed to ensure that the consideration of enhancement is a key part of the review preparation and the event.

At GSA, the ELIR team noted that annual and periodic review processes have been strengthened and systematically encourage a reflective approach that supports enhancement.

Significant positive practice leading to quality enhancement was identified at Queen Margaret University through effective monitoring and review procedures carried out at programme and school level and the ELIR team considered that the University had achieved an appropriate balance between quality assurance mechanisms and quality enhancement.

Thematic and professional services reviews

A number of institutions have successfully implemented professional services review or thematic reviews that examine areas of strategic importance. However, there are a variety of approaches to the review of professional services evident from the ELIR reports and institutions are still developing their approaches and retaining the flexibility to adapt processes to meet their needs.

Where thematic and professional services reviews have been identified in the ELIR reports, the ELIR team's view is that they have been successful and led to a number of benefits for the institutions involved, including greater staff and student engagement in ILR and successful and ongoing sharing of good practice.

A number of institutions have moved towards a thematic approach to the periodic review of support services. For example, at the University of Edinburgh, academic and support staff are committed to the effective implementation of thematic reviews which help to ensure that academic and support areas make a coherent contribution to enhancing the student learning experience. In 2014-15, the second periodic review of student services took place at the University. This focused on support for disabled students provided by the Student Disability Service, in partnership with the University's schools and colleges. As such, the exercise was a holistic review of support for disabled students rather than a review only of the Student Disability Service. The University considered that this model worked well and the Senate Quality Assurance Committee agreed that further periodic reviews will only be conducted on a thematic basis to take into account a range of services and academic areas. In 2014-15, the University also conducted a pilot Postgraduate Programme Review of online distance learning (ODL) in the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine. The University concluded that the review was helpful in identifying how students might be engaged more fully in review processes and in confirming that the review method was appropriate for reviewing ODL programmes.

Queen Margaret University conducted a thematic review of the support provided to international students and used the outcomes to implement recommendations.

In other institutions, individual reviews of student services were also found to be effective. For example, Robert Gordon University's approach to professional services review was found to be systematic, yet flexible enough to allow periodic reviews of student-facing services as the

need is identified, as in the case of the work-related experience review. The involvement of students and external contributors, including PSRBs is high and supports the enhancement of existing arrangements.

The University of the Highlands and Islands reported that a professional services review of its Library Services had been successful in defining a strategy for future enhancement and at the time of its ELIR, was developing a programme of student-facing service professional services reviews which it stated would be most effective if aligned with annual quality processes.

Other institutions have taken professional services review into account as part of their subject review processes or have taken this approach and supplemented it with thematic reviews, as can be seen below.

Edinburgh Napier University approved an amendment to its Quality Enhancement Framework to ensure that the effectiveness of the role of the professional service areas was taken into account as an integral part of the overall scrutiny of the quality of the student learning experience during the subject review process.

Glasgow Caledonian University recently decided that its ILR process would incorporate professional services review and be supplemented by a programme of thematic reviews. The report of the first of these reviews which considered the work of the University's Learning and Development Centres was thorough and reflective. The revised thematic review process is making a useful contribution to the University's quality assurance and enhancement agenda.

Heriot-Watt University has a specific thematic method of periodic review for use following the implementation of any major projects.

At the University of the West of Scotland the ELIR team found a dynamic review structure that allows the institution to carry out mid-term adjustments to key policies and strategies, which includes bespoke or 'thematic' reviews that ensure the institution responds promptly to specific issues.

Committee oversight of outcomes

Many institutions have established working groups and committees to undertake the self-evaluation processes and oversee the outcomes from ILR process in order to drive enhancement. Where these processes are clear and systematic, committee oversight of outcomes allows for more effective sharing and dissemination of good practice. Examples include:

- QMU's Student Experience Committee (SEC) which takes an evaluative overview of the outcomes from a variety of key processes, including annual monitoring and review. An annual report of validation and review events is also compiled in the Quality Enhancement Unit and submitted to the SEC. This then undergoes thorough analysis highlighting good practice and areas for development;
- The University of Dundee's Quality Forum, which reports to the Learning and Teaching Committee and provides oversight of quality assurance and enhancement issues. These structures support a process of systematic self-evaluation by academic and services;
- RGU's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) which acts as a proactive hub for the collation and analysis of data from a variety of sources, have oversight of outcomes from ILR and receive an annual report summarising key themes. This enables the early identification of issues requiring action.

- UWS disseminate the findings of reviews to staff and students through the committee structure and this includes producing a newsletter to students on the outcome of any ILR in which their programme has been considered. Institutional committees also identify areas of University operation for future review and evaluation.

Deliberate and systematic sharing of good practice

Across the sector ELIR reports indicate that institutions are prioritising the sharing of good practice in ILR processes and that this is becoming more effective. This is being achieved both through committee oversight of outcomes, see above, and through a variety of other mechanisms outlined below. For example, GSA has put in place systematic mechanisms which facilitate the identification and sharing of good practice, including the requirement for programmes and schools to identify and share good practice, as an explicit part of the ILR process. Annual and periodic review processes include quality enhancement as a standard heading in report templates and a critical friend approach is used to disseminate good practice across schools. All programme leaders in a school work together to develop the school's self-evaluation report and other documentation. In addition, cross-institutional peer learning is encouraged through the inclusion on the review panel of a senior member of staff from the area next scheduled for review.

At the UWS there is careful consideration of the outcomes of reviews and actions arising. Subsequent follow-up includes the creation of short life working groups to address particular themes or issues, consideration of outcomes at the annual learning and teaching conference and a variety of more informal networks to share good practice.

At the University of Glasgow, where instances of good practice are identified and endorsed via periodic review, they are highlighted as 'commendations' which are then considered by Academic Standards Committee. This approach is reinforced and augmented by the Senate Office which identifies good practice from one periodic subject review report which corresponds to recommendations from another. Schools or subjects are then strongly encouraged to consider the good practice when responding to the recommendations. A summary of good practice arising from the periodic subject review process is disseminated by the Senate Office to the school level on an annual basis.

During each ILR at RGU, a representative from the reviewed school presents examples of effective practice to the review panel using what the University calls a 'Snapshots' format, essentially short case studies of effective practice. These case studies are made available on the Snapshots website. The use of Snapshots is monitored by the Faculty Quality Enhancement Subcommittees at least one of which monitors the frequency with which the case studies are accessed to determine whether the approach is effective.

At Heriot-Watt University summary reports, produced from Academic Review Reports and School Annual Monitoring and Review reports, known as School-level Review and Enhancement Reports, contain enhancement and good practice sections for consideration by the Learning and Teaching Board. The Learning and Teaching Board then identifies initiatives that should be progressed as institutional projects or adopted by all schools.

Similarly, the Centre for Academic Professional and Organisational Development at the University of St. Andrews prepares an annual summary of University Review of Learning and Teaching reports.

At SRUC, the ELIR team found a variety of examples of ILR being used to identify good practice.

At the University of Stirling, good practice identified during internal periodic learning and teaching reviews is shared through school Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) meetings, meetings of the Director of Learning and Teaching and various short-life working groups.

Student engagement

There is evidence of institutions increasing the level of student partnership in ILR processes to enable greater enhancement of the student experience. Across the period of the review cycle, institutions have developed approaches that go beyond simply including students as members of institutional ILR panels, and they are continuing to develop their approaches in this area and demonstrating a willingness and enthusiasm for doing so. For example, at the University of Stirling, the ELIR team noted that the institution had an exceptional commitment to extensive consultation and collaboration, noting student participation in ILR as an example of this. Periodic learning and teaching review processes engage directly with the relevant Staff Student Consultative Committee (SSCC) as a method of obtaining student feedback. Student members of the SSCC for the subject area under review are invited to contribute to the review process by producing a document detailing any issues they wish to draw to the attention of the review panel. Annual programme review reports also include an explicit section on student feedback from SSCCs, which the ELIR team views as an effective way of emphasising the importance of student feedback. In addition, action taken as a result of ILR is communicated to students by a number of means including through the VLE, email, social media, plasma screens in key locations and 'You Said, We Did' announcements.

- At the University of the West of Scotland, the review of existing programmes require schools to map, evaluate and review how well the design of their curricula, modules, programme structures, pedagogical approaches and resources support the achievement of a student-centred, personalised student experience. In addition, the ELIR highlighted recent practice to foreground the student experience with student presentations opening review events.

At Glasgow Caledonian University, the ELIR team saw opportunities for self-critical analysis provided through the University's monitoring and periodic review processes: ELISR and Thematic Review. These processes involve staff, students and external participants, and reflect the University's partnership approach with students.

At RGU, significant emphasis has been placed on ensuring that students are able to contribute effectively to ILR. In particular, there has been a high level of student engagement with the University's periodic Student-Facing Support Services Review (SFSSR) which considered problems flagged up in student surveys and formulated effective solutions. Action taken as a result of the SFSSR continues to have significant student engagement/involvement after the original review event.

Information and documentation in support of quality procedures

To ensure adherence with institutional quality procedures, institutions are producing clear and concise information about what these processes, including ILR, entail, as well as clearly reporting on outcomes for a staff and student audience. Examples include:

- Aberdeen's ILR documentation is comprehensive and review panels provide detailed critical analysis of the discipline being reviewed.
- QMU's 'Quality at QMU' website is well-structured, allowing straightforward access to comprehensive and high quality guidance on all aspects of academic regulation, quality assurance and enhancement. In addition, reports of validation and review events have detailed critical comment and analysis;

- Institution-led quality review reports at GSA are thorough, with evidence of attention to standards and enhancement, and include discussion of how best to disseminate good practice across the institution.
- The Academic Registry supports all quality assurance activity, ensuring that knowledge, understanding and expertise are available to deliver processes in a consistent way across the University, offering continuity of support to senior managers. Summary Briefing Papers developed by the Academic Registry also provide a concise and helpful overview of the key policies for approval, monitoring and review.
- At the time of the ELIR, the University of St. Andrews was about to pilot a learning and teaching fact sheet, produced on behalf of CAPOD and the Proctor's Office with the aim of improving the provision of information and data for the annual monitoring and ILR processes.
- UWS's Quality Handbook is an extensive document which provides detailed guidance on procedures associated with the management and review of provision and the enhancement of the student experience.

Areas for development

This section of the paper outlines the areas for development identified relating to institutional approaches to ILR in the ELIR 3 Technical Reports.

Link between institution-led review and annual monitoring processes

The link between institution-led review and annual monitoring processes varies across the sector and institutions are continuing to try develop effective ways of linking the processes for maximum effectiveness.

In 2010-11, QMU's Student Experience Committee working group recommended a move towards a continuous monitoring model to enhance and supplement the existing annual monitoring arrangements. However, QMU was encouraged to consider the specific benefits of this and how the new system would complement current, effective annual monitoring and review processes.

The University of Abertay was also encouraged to ensure its quality review exercise planned for 2017-18 reflected on its existing annual monitoring procedures which were considered by the ELIR team to be working well.

The University of Strathclyde was also asked to consider the scope, focus and consistency of implementation across the institution of its ILR process and reflect on the linkages with existing annual monitoring processes.

Processes with appropriate scrutiny at subject level, including external involvement

The University of Strathclyde was asked to ensure that it implemented institution-led quality review processes that allow for comprehensive scrutiny of all provision at subject-level as the University had undertaken a number of reviews that have followed a different format from that described in the University's policy and procedures. The ELIR team noted considerable variability in the scope and focus of implementation, including the extent of reflection and supporting information related to learning and teaching. This variability was not related to the size of the unit being reviewed; for example the documentation for the recent review of the seven departments in the Business School included significant discussion of learning and teaching, supported by extensive, detailed appendices, whereas documentation for a number of smaller departments in other faculties included very limited evidence and discussion of

learning and teaching. The University was also asked to consider the impact of student-facing support services in its periodic review processes.

The University of Abertay was strongly urged to ensure that following its curriculum reform project, its ILR process meets all of the guidance for ILR, including undertaking detailed and self-reflective scrutiny of all provision at subject level since the last quality review, including appropriate dialogue and engagement with external subject specialists.

Review of postgraduate programmes

Institutions across the sector continue to consider the most effective ways of reviewing postgraduate provision for their context. However, the review of postgraduate provision is, on the whole, less well-developed across the sector than approaches to reviewing undergraduate provision or professional services areas, with many institutions reviewing or changing their approaches, especially in light of growing postgraduate numbers.

In its Technical Report, the University of Glasgow was asked, in the context of different monitoring and review processes applied to postgraduate taught and research provision, to reflect on how the graduate schools maintain oversight of the totality of the postgraduate student experience.

At Glasgow Caledonian University, the ELIR team noted that there was less emphasis placed on the postgraduate research experience in comparison to taught programmes. The University was asked to ensure sufficient coverage of the postgraduate research student experience in its periodic review process in order to support the institution's strategic aim in respect of postgraduate research numbers.

At the time of the ELIR, the future of Robert Gordon University's process for the periodic review of research degrees, Research Degree Internal Review, was under discussion. The most recent periodic reviews of research degree provision took place in 2012-13. The Research Degrees Committee recognised that there had been an extended hiatus in progressing the outcomes of those reviews, but that the outcomes had informed the decision to create a single Graduate School. The University has indicated that the planned creation of a single Graduate School, under the leadership of the recently appointed Vice-Principal (Research and Research Commercialisation), will shape the revised arrangements for reviewing research degrees. As a result, the ELIR team asked the University to progress with the implementation of revised arrangements for periodic review of research degree provision.

There was also significant variation in the extent to which reviews explicitly considered the experience of postgraduate research students at the University of Strathclyde.

Consideration of collaborative provision

Approaches to the review of collaborative provision vary across the sector as institutions develop and grow their activity in this area.

The University of the West of Scotland were encouraged to ensure that robust processes are in place for evaluating, monitoring and reviewing the planned expansion and its impact on the student learning experience, both for existing and new students.

While not identified in the Outcome Report, the University of St. Andrews were asked to reflect on their annual report on collaborative activity, considered by their Academic Monitoring Group. The report is produced by the Collaborations and Study Abroad Office and covers all reviews of collaborative provisions, making recommendations on continuing, amending or terminating a partnership as appropriate. Sample reports provided to the ELIR team evidenced strong statistical information about institutional provision but provided limited evaluation of the

student experience. In addition, schools are required to review collaborative programmes through the Annual Academic Monitoring and University Review of Learning and Teaching processes but, as the University recognised, reports from these processes do not always include explicit reflection on academic standards or the student experience on collaborative programmes. The University intends to include a prompt for this in a revised template.

However, activity to develop and promote good practice in the periodic review of collaborative provision was outlined in the Technical Report for Heriot-Watt University, where the ELIR team noted that the University were taking significant steps to ensure that processes and procedures established in the UK (including periodic review) could work across campuses and with partner institutions, and where policies had been developed to facilitate this work.

Further detail on activity to promote good practice in the review of collaborative provision can be found in [The Thematic Report on Enhancement-led Institutional Review \(ELIR\) Reports 2013-16: Managing Collaborative Activity](#).

What happens next?

QAA Scotland follows up the ELIR outcomes with institutions individually through annual discussion visits and each institution is required to produce a Follow-up Report indicating how they have addressed their own ELIR outcomes. QAA Scotland also promotes collaborative working between institutions to share good practice and to find collection solutions to common areas for development. Each institution is invited to participate in a Follow-up event to engage with the ways other institutions who were reviewed at around the same point of the ELIR have addressed their review outcomes.

References to institutional approaches to Institution-led Review (ILR) in the ELIR 3 Technical Reports

The paragraph numbers in this section refer to the original ELIR Technical reports.

University of Aberdeen

62 Internal Teaching Review (ITR) is the process by which programmes are revalidated. Introduced in 1994 and modified on a number of occasions to meet various external requirements, ITRs explore both undergraduate and postgraduate provision. The ITR system is methodical and represents good practice. The documentation is comprehensive and the review panels provide detailed critical analysis of the discipline being reviewed. The ITR process will be redesigned in light of the new ACR and APR procedures with the expectation that it will continue to be a reflective process which is more enhancement focused.

65 Overall, the University makes effective use of a wide range of external reference points in managing its academic standards. The Advance Information Set provided for the current ELIR contained an extensive mapping of the University's policies and practices against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code). The SENAS forms are designed to ensure conformity with the SCQF and European Qualifications Framework. All new programme proposals must identify the subject benchmark statement to which the programme is aligned. *Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review* of the Quality Code influenced the development of the recently introduced Annual Programme Review procedures. In considering course and programme proposals, QAC checks for adherence with the Quality Code and the SCQF. ITR panels refer to relevant QAA subject benchmark statements and to external examiners' reports. Schools are responsible for managing PSRB accreditations but, from 2013-14, in order to assure matters at an institutional level PSRB reports will also be considered by QAC.

69 The University is encouraged to progress its intention of promoting more explicit links between its assurance and enhancement activities. The ITR process serves well as a vehicle for assuring quality. As the University recognised, a revised ITR system could take a more reflective, enhancement-orientated approach and, in so doing, could also address the 2010 ELIR report's recommendation that there would be benefit in reviewing the volume of documentary evidence required for ITR. Similarly, in highlighting the strengths of its system for scrutinising external examiners' reports, the University acknowledged that it will continue to seek opportunities to introduce a greater role for external examiners in identifying innovative approaches to the design and delivery of the curricula.

117 The team heard that, following curriculum reform, the University planned to introduce a three-year gap before beginning the next round of periodic reviews, with interim arrangements planned for the period 2015-16 to 2017-18 (paragraphs 121, 122 and 123). The University's rationale for this approach was to allow time to reflect on the experience gained from the last round of quality reviews and partnership quality reviews, as well as from the implementation of curriculum reform undertaken in 2014-15. The University also considered that the curriculum reform exercise demonstrated adherence to SFC guidance on institution-led review such that it could be used as a proxy for institution-led review of the institution's whole portfolio.

118 The ELIR team was keen to understand the University's position on this matter in more detail and engaged in extensive discussions with key staff as well as considering all of the available documentation relating to curriculum reform. The team recognised that the curriculum reform exercise was conducted with due rigour. The team saw evidence of engagement with the proposed changes to programme specifications and programme learning outcomes on the part of external colleagues both from within the University ('internal externals') and from outside, as well as programme teams responding to those comments. Guidelines for outlining the process and the main changes associated with curriculum reform were produced centrally, and narratives accompanying the revised programme documentation were generally of high quality. The available documentation and discussions with staff indicated that SACs largely discharged their responsibilities for approving revised programme documentation satisfactorily. Overall, the team concurred with the University's view that curriculum reform had created widespread opportunities for critical and creative reflection on the future shape of programmes, which programme teams had engaged with.

119 While the process had been well managed, the ELIR team identified limits in the extent to which curriculum reform could be considered to fully meet the expectations of periodic subject review as set out in the Quality Code and the SFC Guidance. In particular, the team was mindful that this reform had, on the whole, considered existing programmes, which had been revised to accommodate delivery using 20 credit modules, resulting in minor changes to the vast majority of the provision. This, given the University's criteria for major and minor changes, resulted in almost all programmes being re-approved at SAC level. While students were consulted about the proposed changes, the team heard that, in the main, the discussion had focused on the move to 20 credit modules and there were limited opportunities for students to interact with external reviewers. The team also heard from staff about a lack of opportunity to discuss subject development in more depth and more broadly with external colleagues or to reflect on the ideas for enhancement that often result from such opportunities. The team therefore took the view that curriculum reform was essentially programme focused in nature and did not explore the wider consideration of subject health which would have been part of a holistic institution-led review.

120 The ELIR team recognised the hard work involved in planning curriculum reform and defining its parameters but did not consider that this exercise provided adequate justification to defer the start of the next cycle of institution-led review for three years to 2017-18 (paragraph 135).

135 In developing its plans for undertaking the evaluation of curriculum reform planned for session 2017-18, the ELIR team strongly urges the University to ensure that the scope of this exercise is not confined to the development and implementation

of curriculum reform but that it also meets all of the guidance for institution-led review including undertaking detailed and self-reflective scrutiny of all provision at subject level since the last quality review and ensures appropriate dialogue and engagement with external subject specialists and students. In addition, the University is asked to reflect on its existing annual monitoring procedures in light of curriculum reform and changes to organisational structures to ensure this annual scrutiny gives effective oversight of the academic health of programmes and subject areas, and fits with the revised periodic review arrangements.

[University of Dundee](#)

79 The University has mapped the Quality Assurance Framework to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education to ensure that the Framework continues to meet sector expectations. Validation documentation, annual reviews and periodic reviews demonstrate comprehensive and effective use of external reference points. All programmes are designed to meet the principles embodied in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

[University of Edinburgh](#)

50 In 2014-15, to further support enhancements in ODL provision, the University undertook a thematic review of online/distance taught postgraduate provision in the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine, with one aim being to explore student representation for ODL students. There would be benefit in the University disseminating the outcomes of the review to all staff involved in ODL provision across the institution.

111 The University's institution-led quality review processes are Teaching Programme Review and Postgraduate Programme Review. Schools and colleges are responsible for deciding which process includes the review of taught postgraduate provision. Both Teaching Programme Reviews and Postgraduate Programme Reviews aim to ensure linkages between quality assurance and enhancement processes. Review panels are chaired by a senior staff member from outside the college and include normally at least two members external to the University, internal members from different subject areas/schools to that under review and student members, who are jointly selected by the University and EUSA. The standard review remit is tailored for each review according to key University, college, school/subject areas and student priorities agreed at a formal remit meeting of the review panel members (including students) with key college/school staff. The outcome reports are published on the University website. Review panels and subject areas are supported by an annual review briefing meeting for all staff involved in review activity and by detailed guidance material on the quality webpages. During the current ELIR, staff who had attended commented positively on the value of these briefings. Sample documentation demonstrated a comprehensive, robust and professional approach to internal periodic review, and confirmed the application of the University's terms of reference and composition of review panels. Since the 2011 ELIR, the University has reduced the number of meetings in the internal review process related to academic standards and quality, placing greater reliance on documentary evidence for assurance to allow greater emphasis during the discussions on enhancement.

112 In 2014-15 the University conducted a pilot Postgraduate Programme Review of online distance learning (ODL) in the College of Medicine and Veterinary Medicine. The University concluded that the review was helpful in identifying how students might be engaged more fully in review processes and in confirming that the review method was appropriate for reviewing ODL programmes.

113 In 2014 the University introduced periodic reviews of student services, starting with Information Services. The reports of the review team, which includes a specialist external to the University, include observations on good practice and recommendations for action and are published on the website. In 2014-15 the second periodic review of student services took place and focused on support for disabled students provided by the Student Disability Service, in partnership with the University's schools and colleges. As such, the exercise was a holistic review of support for disabled students rather than a review only of the Student Disability Service. The University considered that this model worked well and the Senate Quality Assurance Committee has agreed that further periodic reviews will only be conducted on a thematic basis to take into account a range of services and academic areas. The University does not have a forward schedule for student support service periodic review, preferring to adopt an approach whereby themes emerge through the annual monitoring process. The 2015-16 review focuses on student mental health support (see also paragraph 46).

Edinburgh Napier University

98 The University has positive experiences of working in partnership with a range of professional bodies, including the Nursing and Midwifery Council and NHS Education for Scotland. There was a successful internal subject review of law provision that reported in March 2013 and took account of the Law Society of Scotland annual review outcomes. Activities have been designed to enable the University to be confident that it can make better use of outcomes from PSRB activities to enhance the learning experience of students and it intends to build on this experience. The University has recognised that it does not currently use external accreditation monitoring and review activity to reduce the burden of quality assurance activity on relevant subject areas. The QAMRC received proposals related to this activity in September 2014 and the University indicated that it would continue to monitor progress throughout 2014-15.

105 Annual reports produced for the ASEC by the Academic Quality department serve an important function in highlighting recommendations for the improvement of the effectiveness of the Quality Framework itself. For example, an amendment to ensure that the effectiveness of the role of the professional service areas was taken into account as an integral part of the overall scrutiny of the quality of the student learning experience during the subject review process. Enhancements to the Quality Framework are also informed by staff feedback through the Campus Conversations and such projects as Actions for Change. Work has been done to address concerns around the clarity and accessibility of key information, and to improve the mechanisms by which information about provision is entered into the student record system. The outcomes of the review of the Quality Framework are summarised in the paper introducing the purpose of the Quality Framework.

106 The new school review process was introduced in 2014-15 and provides scheduled peer review activity over a five-year cycle, resulting in a report to the ASEC on the effectiveness of the management of the student learning experience across the school. This process aims to provide a strong enhancement focus and relationship with programme review and annual monitoring. Subject areas now provide an evaluation of their engagement with professional services as part of programme and school review. At the time of the current ELIR, only the School of Computing had been reviewed using the new method. The ELIR team heard from staff, both those involved as part of the review team and one who acted as an internal panel member, who highlighted the focus on the student experience and

confirmed the opportunities the new process presents for sharing good practice across schools.

107 Internal monitoring and review provides opportunities to ensure that the student voice is being heard and to respond to feedback from students. Both staff and students indicated that this was the case at module and programme level. Staff confirmed that students from across the range of the school's programmes had been involved in the School of Computing review.

120 The University has effective arrangements in place for the regular and systematic review of its academic programmes and support services. The strategic decision has been taken to change the academic structure of the institution, in particular to remove the faculties (see paragraph 3). The University is encouraged to continue evaluating the effectiveness of its existing Quality Framework during the organisational structure to ensure that the Quality Framework remains effective particularly as responsibilities are delegated to schools.

[University of Glasgow](#)

33 Following a successful pilot the University is implementing software to enhance student feedback mechanisms. The new system will support the use of feedback questionnaires, tailored to meet the needs of the different schools. The implementation of the system is intended to facilitate the more systematic use of feedback to enhance the student learning experience, and the data will underpin annual monitoring and periodic review processes to enable comparison across the University.

34 The University's arrangements for delivering graduate attributes are systematic and the role of Graduate Attribute Champion in each college is an effective mechanism for ensuring that graduate attributes are embedded into the curriculum. There is effective monitoring of the embedding of graduate attributes through routine monitoring in annual monitoring and periodic subject review processes.

39 Where instances of good practice are identified and endorsed via periodic review, they are highlighted as 'commendations' which are then considered by Academic Standards Committee. This approach is reinforced and augmented by the Senate Office which identifies good practice from one periodic subject review report which corresponds to recommendations from another. Schools or subjects are then strongly encouraged to consider the good practice when responding to the recommendations. A summary of good practice arising from the periodic subject review process is disseminated by the Senate Office to the school level on an annual basis. This is an effective mechanism for the dissemination of good practice across schools.

52 The University's Academic Quality Framework sets out the procedures for course and programme design and approval, annual monitoring, external examining and periodic subject review, as well as University services review and professional, statutory and regulatory body review. The framework identifies efficiency and enhancement as underlying principles, with the acknowledgement that efficiency in this context relies on significant devolution of responsibilities in relation to setting, maintaining and reviewing academic standards.

54 The graduate schools have responsibility for reviewing both postgraduate taught degrees and postgraduate research degrees, and postgraduate taught programmes are normally reviewed alongside undergraduate degree programmes as part of the annual monitoring and periodic review processes. There is an annual progression review for all postgraduate research students at the end of each year. However, this is not equivalent to the annual monitoring process of the overall programme that occurs for postgraduate taught programmes, as it does not include a broader review of student progression, or student feedback and engagement with training and research courses, across the postgraduate research student cohort.

55 In the context of the different monitoring and review processes which are applied to postgraduate taught and research provision, the University should reflect on how the graduate schools maintain oversight of the totality of the postgraduate student experience.

65 The approach to periodic review is well established and meets Scottish Funding Council and Quality Code expectations, which is confirmed by the advance information set. An outcome of University restructuring has been the creation, in many areas, of larger subject groupings (for example, multiple departments being merged to form a single school), and the University has adopted a flexible approach to the unit of review so that reviews are generally held at the subject level, but where appropriate may be at the school level and incorporate a number of subjects.

66 Since the 2010 ELIR the University has developed the support it provides for periodic review panel members, and there has been an increase in training delivered by the Senate Office. This includes targeted support for review panel members, including students and convenors, and from 2013-14 support sessions for heads of school or subject.

[Glasgow Caledonian University](#)

49 There is an effective approach to student support at the University. Since the 2011 ELIR, student support has been restructured and devolved to school level, with the formation of Learning Development Centres (LDCs). LDCs are embedded within each school to provide support for students that is contextualised, targeted and accessible. Services available to students through LDCs include academic writing support for home and international students, ICT support, advice on study skills and guidance for students. The academic development tutor role is key, providing discipline-specific support working in partnership with the programme and module teams to embed support within the curriculum. There is evidence of good practice being shared between LDCs. The University identified this devolved model of student support as having a significant positive impact on achievement, retention and progression. This is reflected in the University's recent thematic review of GCU LDCs and in feedback from staff and students during the ELIR. Students now engage with LDCs to enhance their understanding and performance, not simply to address perceived weaknesses. The University has recognised there will be value in reviewing the sustainability of this model as increasing numbers of students seek to access the service.

79 The LDCs were established in 2011 and underwent Thematic Review in 2014. The University has identified student engagement as a key challenge and a number of mechanisms are in place to support staff in developing their approach to engaging students, with the LDCs providing an effective approach to engaging students from across the institution. The LDC structure follows a devolved model and ADTs work closely with programme teams at the school level. The impact of the

LDCs has been strengthened and enhanced by this inclusive approach where ADTs are increasingly involved as part of local teaching teams. The activities of the LDCs provide evidence of a partnership-based and enhancement-led approach to development, and have been described as representing a 'fusion of learning'. Each School Associate Dean, Learning, Teaching and Quality (ADLTQ) meets with the LDC Director and staff regularly and LDC Directors now meet together on a regular basis. There would be benefit in the University reflecting on the re-introduction of a pan-University LDC forum, as recommended in LDC Thematic Review, in order to further enhance the sharing and embedding of good practice from the LDCs.

87 In the Reflective Analysis (RA) the University noted that its approach to the management of the academic standards of its provision is designed to encourage critical reflection and enhancement of the student learning experience and that this is achieved through its committee structure, organisational management structure, and quality enhancement and assurance processes, policies and procedures. This approach was particularly evident in the University's periodic review processes, both subject-based review (ELISR) and Thematic Review (such as its recent review of its LDCs).

96 The University's ELISR process is set out in the QEAH; the University has revised its ELISR schedule since the last ELIR to better reflect its current subject groupings. Reviews are conducted on a five-year cycle. Panels include external and student membership. Self-evaluation documents produced by the subject area in preparation for the event are comprehensive and the review process is thorough, although the ELIR team noted that there was less emphasis placed on the postgraduate research experience in comparison to taught programmes. The team concluded that this process operates in line with sector expectations and clearly demonstrates the University's self-critical approach. Reports identify good practice as well as issues to be addressed and the former is shared through the University's staff portal. Action plans are produced which are considered and approved by LTSC and APC and a one-year-on follow-up visit is held to assess progress. The University is encouraged to ensure sufficient coverage of postgraduate research student experience in ELISR in order to support the institution's strategic aim in respect of postgraduate research student numbers (see paragraph 21).

97 Since 2005, the University has subsumed the review of its student-facing professional support service review into the ELISR process. The University has recently decided that this would be supplemented by a three-year programme of Thematic Review covering three themes: academic development support; student engagement; and CPD in learning and teaching. The report of the first of these reviews which considered the work of the University's LDCs was thorough and reflective. It made four recommendations concerning the strategic direction of the LDCs, their professional standing, sustainability of the model, and feedback, monitoring and evaluation of their effectiveness. The report and its action plan were approved by LTSC in January 2015.

103 The University's programme design, approval, monitoring and review processes require consideration of a range of external reference points including the Quality Code, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), Subject Benchmark Statements, and PSRBs. This was evident in documentation read by the ELIR team. There is appropriate externality in approval and periodic review processes and the latter includes student representation.

109 The University has robust, well established enhancement and assurance processes for programme approval, monitoring and periodic review. There is evidence of student engagement with quality and enhancement processes, promotion of an active culture of self-reflection and enhancement, and appropriate levels of externality embedded in processes. The University's revised annual monitoring system enables matters to be identified and addressed promptly to the benefit of the student experience and promotes greater staff engagement with the process, and is a feature of positive practice. The ELISR process is thorough and operates in line with sector expectations, although it gives less consideration to the postgraduate research student experience than to that of undergraduate and postgraduate taught students. The revised Thematic Review process is making a useful contribution to the University's quality assurance and enhancement agenda.

116 At programme and school level, opportunities for self-evaluation are built into the University's monitoring and review processes, for example, the production of a Self-Evaluation Document for ELISR which analyses and responds to a range of external and internal benchmarking data and the revised Annual Programme Monitoring process which requires programme teams to reflect on a range of KPIs provided by the Strategy and Planning Department and to comment on implementation of the SfL. Advice and guidance on self-reflection is incorporated into the Quality Enhancement and Assurance Handbook.

139 GCU INTO is a joint venture between INTO University Partnerships and the University that provides foundation certificate/diploma/graduate diploma programmes and English language tuition to international students intending to progress to undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. There are further plans to develop a partnership with INTO and GCU London and establish a Joint Academic Management Board, reporting to APC, to oversee the provision. The ELIR team heard from senior staff that there are plans to carry out an INTO Thematic Review.

145 An internal review of international partnerships was conducted in 2012-13 following the launch of the Internationalisation Strategy 2012-2015, as well as an audit by PricewaterhouseCoopers. A number of recommendations emerged from both the internal review and the audit which were implemented in 2014-15. These recommendations included the need to ensure that the QEAH processes for partnership and collaborative arrangements were consistently followed; to ensure that there was clear oversight of international partnership development at institutional level; to ensure that the collaborative register reflected all activity; and ongoing monitoring of collaborative partnerships to assess whether planned benefits had been achieved.

151 The ELIR team was informed that staff from the Glasgow-based School of Engineering and the Built Environment had recently been to CCE Oman to deliver workshops on the SfL and SEF. The University also undertook an Enhancement-led Internal Review at CCE Oman in November 2014, the report of which is to be discussed at the LTSC in April 2015. The findings highlight features of the enhanced student learning experience in Oman, such as the use of guest lectures, and encourage further staff exchange opportunities between GCU and CCE staff.

[Glasgow School of Art](#)

7 In line with the ELIR method, GSA identified areas that it would like the ELIR team to focus on during the review. These included providing feedback on a number

of projects and initiatives introduced since the 2010 ELIR, in particular progress with the annual monitoring and institution-led review processes (see paragraphs 54-57).

24 GSA provides a wide range of student services including the Student Support and Development Department which offers support services direct to students, and the Learning Resources Department, which comprises the Library, as well as the Archives and Collections Centre. There is also a Technical Support Department which supports students by providing workshop spaces and facilities staffed by specialist technicians. The services are accessible and well signposted, and are well regarded by students. Support services are subject to annual monitoring, periodic review and internal audit, as well as being benchmarked externally.

40 The need for a more structured approach to identifying and sharing good practice across the institution, noted in the 2010 ELIR report, is recognised in one of the five strategic aims of the 2011-14 Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy: 'Identify and share the benefits and lessons of enhancement, within and beyond the School of Art'. GSA has put in place systematic mechanisms to help achieve this aim, including the requirement for programmes and schools to identify and share good practice as an explicit part of the Programme Monitoring and Annual Reporting (PMAR) and Periodic Review processes.

50 GSA has developed a range of systematic mechanisms which facilitate the identification and sharing of good practice. Annual and periodic review processes include quality enhancement as a standard heading in report templates and take a critical friend approach to disseminating good practice across the schools. There is an annual learning and teaching event, and various enhancement projects, such as those associated with the national Enhancement Themes. The Consolidated Enhancement Fund provides support for individuals or groups to explore innovative opportunities for enhancement (see paragraph 11).

56 As part of its revision of academic policies, GSA introduced a separate process for validation (programme approval) and incorporated revalidation within new periodic review procedures, in line with sector practice. Whereas previously review/revalidation was carried out on an individual programme basis, the new periodic review process is focused on the school and is closely aligned with the University of Glasgow's process. A team within the school to be reviewed completes a self-evaluation document (the periodic review pro-forma), which forms the core of the documentation submitted to a panel of internal and external members. The panel's report is submitted to the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Committee (UPC) and Academic Council (AC) for consideration and then forwarded to the school for action regarding conditions or recommendations. The school reports to UPC and AC on progress in addressing its action plan. The school's submissions, the panels' reports and the subsequent action plans and progress reports that were seen by the ELIR team were comprehensive and reflective.

57 Academic staff who met the ELIR team were positive about the opportunities for the revised periodic review process to enhance provision as a result of peer learning and the exchange of good practice through the involvement of all programme leaders in the area being reviewed, together with external panel members. Potential loss of detail at programme level was not considered to be an issue because this was covered in the PMAR reports that were part of the school's submission.

63 GSA makes effective use of an appropriate range of external reference points in managing its academic standards. In revising the procedures for Programme Approval, Programme Monitoring and Annual Reporting, and Periodic Review, GSA took account of subject benchmark statements, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and the Quality Enhancement Framework. There is an explicit requirement within PMAR and periodic review to show how programmes and schools have engaged with the current Enhancement Theme.

65 External Examiner reports are considered by schools, programme leaders, staff student consultative committees and boards of studies at the start of the academic session. Programme leaders are required to report on any action taken as a result of external examiner feedback in the Annual Programme Report as part of PMAR. External examiner reports, and evidence of any action taken in response to issues raised in the reports for the previous three sessions, form part of the documentation available to Periodic Review panels. The external examiner reports seen by the ELIR team were constructive and thorough, and were appropriately acted upon as part of programme management and review.

66 Periodic Review panels include one external subject specialist for each subject area covered by the review. External specialists also contribute to Programme Approval by providing an external perspective on the appropriateness of the curriculum at the statement of intent stage; by contributing in writing to the Board of Studies consideration of programme approval documentation; and by attending the appropriate UPC meeting.

67 GSA has formal relationships with a number of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs): the BArch and DipArch are accredited by the Royal Institute of British Architects and the Architects Registration Board, and the BEng/MEng Product Design Engineering are accredited by the Institute of Mechanical Engineers and the Institute of Engineering Designers. PSRB accreditation reports are taken into consideration in validation events and as part of PMAR and Periodic Review.

69 GSA has effective arrangements for securing academic standards. The annual and periodic review processes have been strengthened and systematically encourage a reflective approach that supports enhancement.

72 Peer learning is a deliberate feature of periodic review, which since 2011 has been done on a school basis. This means that all programme leaders in a school work together to develop the school's self-evaluation report and other documentation. In addition, cross-institutional peer learning is encouraged through the inclusion on the review panel of a senior member of staff from the area next scheduled for review. Academic staff who met the ELIR team were very positive about the enhancement opportunities offered by these new procedures.

77 The Institution-led quality review reports are thorough, with evidence of attention to standards and enhancement, and include discussion of how best to disseminate good practice across the Institution. External examiner reports include a useful summary report and provide evidence that schools have undertaken individual analyses of the reports.

81 Material formerly allocated to the Academic Handbook is now published on the GSA website, including academic policies relating to, for example, the PMAR

process, Periodic Review and the Code of Procedure for Appeals, and these are all available to the general public.

89 The relationship with the University of Glasgow is governed by a memorandum of agreement which is scheduled for review during 2014-15, and the partnership with Singapore Institute of Technology is governed by a Collaboration Agreement which is scheduled for review in 2016-17. Collaborative provision is monitored through GSA's quality assurance system, including annual monitoring and periodic review processes as well as the external examiner system, to ensure a comparable student experience.

[Heriot-Watt University](#)

56 The University's systematic mechanisms for identifying and sharing good practice are set out in the Framework of Institutional Approaches to Good Practice, which summarises a range of processes at University, school, professional services, and Student Union levels. The quality assurance processes of school-level Annual Monitoring Review and Academic Review also include recently enhanced mechanisms to identify and share good practice (see paragraph 104).

73 Increased emphasis has been placed on identifying and tracking good practice arising from the Academic Review Reports and the Annual Monitoring Reports, through the inclusion of enhancement meetings and reporting within periodic review processes (see paragraph 104).

79 The Academic Registry supports all quality assurance activity, ensuring that knowledge, understanding and expertise are available to deliver processes in a consistent way across the University, offering continuity of support to senior managers. Summary Briefing Papers developed by the Academic Registry also provide a concise and helpful overview of the key policies for approval, monitoring and review.

87 In May 2014 the University enhanced externality at the initial programme approval stage through the appointment of external members to the Undergraduate Studies Committee and the Postgraduate Studies Committee. This was in response to QAA's review of UK transnational education at the University's Dubai campus, which recommended that the University 'keep under review policy and practice in relation to the Quality Code, in particular in the use of views external to the institution in programme approval'. Externality is also provided through external membership of periodic Academic Review teams (who are responsible for programme re-approval), accreditation by PSRBs, and external examiner involvement in the development of programmes.

98 The University reviews its provision annually through School Annual Monitoring and Review (SAMR) and Partner Annual Monitoring and Review (PAMR), and periodically through Academic Review, Academic-Related Review and Internal Audit, all of which are informed by the outcomes of annual monitoring.

99 The University revised its annual monitoring process in 2012, with the intention of: integrating assurance and enhancement; increasing interactivity by introducing discussion sessions; incorporating review of academic performance data (including retention, progression, student success, student feedback and employability data); and enabling ALPs to engage effectively. SAMR includes taught and research programmes at all campuses, and programmes delivered in conjunction with partners

or as independent distance learning. SAMR involves the consideration of feedback received from external examiners, which provides an external reference point for assuring the standard, level and currency of the curriculum. Feedback from other stakeholders such as employers and PSRBs is also considered as part of the process, alongside academic performance data. Students are fully involved in the monitoring and review processes, and the Student Union provides training and support to those participating.

102 Academic Review and Professional Services Academic-Related Review of all programmes are undertaken on a five-year cycle, at all campuses, with the exception of the new Malaysia campus. The Malaysia campus is reviewed using a bespoke process, considered by the University to be relevant to the scale and size of the activity until the scale of provision merits review under the University's standard Academic Review process. There would be benefit in the University introducing externality to this bespoke process, as to date there have been no external members on the review team for the Malaysia campus.

103 Since the 2011 ELIR, the University has enhanced its Academic Review process by seeking feedback from graduates on the programme under review, and by including the requirement for schools to report on their engagement with and reflection on activities relating to the implementation of the objectives of the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy, with specific reference to the school's Learning and Teaching Strategy and Enhancement Plan. In addition, a session has been introduced during the review schedule that focuses specifically on quality enhancement, where schools are invited to select their own enhancement topics for exploration and discussion during the session and to share good practice.

104 From 2013-14, summary reports, produced from Academic Review Reports and School Annual Monitoring and Review reports, known as School-level Review and Enhancement Reports, contain enhancement and good practice sections for consideration by the Learning and Teaching Board. The Learning and Teaching Board then identifies initiatives that should be progressed as institutional projects or adopted by all schools. The University gave examples of action taken as a result of this new process where summary reports identified concerns around assessment feedback turnaround times, which will be progressed as a priority for action by the Student Learning Experience Committee in 2014-15.

105 Additional periodic review processes include Internal Audit, which focuses specifically on assurance. It operates within schools on a three-year cycle and covers all activity that the University considers to be high risk, including academic and industrial partnerships, and independent distance learning programmes. A separate thematic review method is used following the implementation of a major project.

106 Action plans and one-year progress reports are produced following all Academic and Academic-Related Reviews, and Internal Audits. Good practice highlighted through Academic Review is reported through the Quality and Standards Committee and the Learning and Teaching Board.

114 The University has a culture of self-reflection and action planning based on systematic review and monitoring of academic programmes and support services. The University is taking steps to ensure that processes and procedures established in the UK can work across campuses and with partner institutions, and has developed policies, including the Multi-Code, to facilitate this work.

125 The monitoring of quality and academic standards provided by ALPs and at the University's Associate Campus is effective. The University employs a diverse set of review and audit arrangements to ensure quality and review risks (see paragraphs 99-106, which set these out at length). The University also has appropriate arrangements to ensure that feedback obtained is duly considered and acted upon as appropriate. Monitoring of academic standards and the quality of experience provided in articulation agreements and with joint collaborative partners is effective. Monitoring of this activity is managed through the Partner Annual Monitoring and Review, and School-level Review and Enhancement Report processes (see paragraphs 100, 101 and 104).

[University of the Highlands and Islands](#)

36 The University has a Student Engagement Manager whose role is to work with students, lead on student representation work, and to support staff engaging with students. The post-holder chairs the Student Engagement Group, comprising staff and students from all APs, which sends proposals to senior committees. A Student Engagement Plan was produced in 2016, which seeks to ensure that students feel part of a supportive institution, that they are engaged in their own learning and work with the University in shaping the direction of learning. These objectives are supported and facilitated by formal mechanisms of student representation on committees, participation in institutional reviews and involvement in the Highlands and Islands Student Association (HISA), AP student associations and in a range of other activities including the involvement of student representatives from across the academic partnership at HISA Higher Education Regional Committee, Regional Council and national events.

59 The Library Services Review, undertaken in May 2015, provided commendations and recommendations and the Review Coordinator, Chair of the Review Panel and Chair of QAEC met in May 2016 to report on progress with the recommendations. The University reported that the review had been successful in defining a strategy for future enhancement, in forging links between the Libraries Practitioner Group (LPG) and the Learning and Information Service and it strengthened the role of the LPG in evaluating and addressing the quality of provision. In discussions with the ELIR team, PGR students were positive about the Library services. The undergraduate students were less enthusiastic, although they did appreciate the online resources.

111 All degree programmes and schemes are subject to re-approval, normally after a period of four years, after which re-approval is required only in exceptional circumstances. Thereafter, regular reviews of programmes are carried out as part of the subject review process which provides an opportunity for detailed reflection on how the requirements and standards of all subject network (SN) awards are managed and maintained. The scope of subject review includes all higher education provision within an SN, including collaborative and overseas provision, and is normally carried out on a six-year cycle, currently projected to 2021-22. Reviews are undertaken by a panel, including two external specialists, two internal members and a student member, which considers a self-evaluation document prepared by the SN team. The review panel engages in discussions with subject staff, students and relevant employers. The ELIR team noted the thoroughness of the SN review reports, and the extensive composition of the panels, which are chaired by a dean and include at least two external specialists, a student and staff not associated with the subject network. The panel reports conclude with commendations, recommendations and requirements, the latter two being addressed to the SN,

the University as a whole or both. These are considered by QAEC which, in turn, reports the outcome of the review to AC. The SN makes a formal response to QAEC on actions taken in response to the report within a year of the review.

112 At the time of the current ELIR, the University was developing a programme of student-facing service reviews, the Information and Communication Technologies review was scheduled for May 2017, following the completion of the Library Review in 2015 (see paragraph 59). Rather than preparing a long-term schedule for such reviews, the University intends to prioritise service reviews on the basis of student feedback, with the intention of reviewing all services over time.

123 The University seeks a range of external engagement. In addition to external examiners, UHI ensures that up to two external experts are members of programme advisory groups and approval panels (see paragraph 109) and contribute as specialists to subject review panels (see paragraph 111). Liaison with employers and industry bodies is a regular feature of the interaction between the University and its external community. A number of the University's programmes are accredited by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) and recognition from the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS) for the delivery of initial teacher education underpins a range of Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) programmes.

131 The University stated that subject review and student support services review (see paragraphs 111 & 112) will be most effective if they are aligned with the annual quality processes. Accordingly, the annual SN SEDs contribute to the periodic subject review documentation. Similarly, themes emerging from the annual SN QMG dialogues and from the SNLQM Forum would, where relevant, be included in subject review documentation.

137 The University stated that throughout its development it had sought to learn from other organisations in order to enhance the student experience; for example, it consulted with other higher education institutions when developing the methodology for its student support service review process. In discussion with senior staff, the ELIR team heard that development of the CPIs contained in the Strategic Vision and Plan 2015-20 had been informed by external benchmarks.

156 The University's arrangements for managing collaborative activity are effective, including detailed and rigorous scrutiny at the approval stage. The requirement of all partnership proposals to be considered by EPSC on the basis of the detailed completion of a sequence of templates adopted University-wide ensures consistency of approach. Ongoing monitoring and review arrangements mirror those applied to UHI's own programmes, supplemented by additional reporting after the first three and six months of operation. While UHI monitoring reports focus on all programmes wherever they are delivered, it is positive that the University is able to monitor the academic standards of a partner's provision by viewing student performance data disaggregated by location.

[Queen Margaret University](#)

21 In December 2012, the University conducted a review of the support provided to international students which identified various positive aspects, including the responsiveness of RILO staff, improvements to pre-entry support, and the work of the ELS. Based on the review, the University is considering the creation of a central support location for international students, mechanisms for improving cultural

awareness amongst all members of staff and increased support for learning and teaching that effectively addresses a diversity of educational backgrounds.

54 The University's approach to setting, maintaining and reviewing academic standards is based upon robust and self-reflective procedures for annual monitoring, validation and review. Self-reflection at an institutional level is achieved through the discussion of a number of overview reports by the Student Experience Committee (SEC), and these reports give an accurate reflection of good practice and areas for development identified in the individual programme level reports and external examiner reports. The SEC minutes indicate that appropriate action plans for improvement arise from the overview reports.

55 Procedures, policies and regulations available on the Quality at QMU website form a framework for setting, maintaining and reviewing standards. The website is well structured allowing straightforward access to comprehensive and high quality guidance on all aspects of academic regulation, quality assurance and quality enhancement.

57 The University's approach to programme design, validation and review is carefully aligned with the Quality Code. The Portfolio Development Group takes a strategic decision on whether a proposed programme is consistent with the mission and strategic direction of the University, and considers its academic rationale, level compliance and staffing resource in a two stage process. Minutes of PDG meetings demonstrate a robust approach to evaluating proposals. Reports of validation and review events have detailed critical comment and analysis and commonly have stringent conditions to be met before final approval. External reviewers have commented favourably on the validation and review process, and postgraduate research students reported that serving on panels provided a valuable insight into academic procedures.

66 The composition of the SEC, which consists of members of academic and professional services units, allows the committee to develop an integrated view of the results of self-evaluative activities across organisational units and levels. Self-evaluation at programme and school level is considered later (see paragraphs 69-71). For professional services, the University has since 2010 carried out service area reviews and, at the time of the current ELIR, reviews had been conducted of library services, student services, and the international student experience.

67 Students are full members of review panels for programmes and support services. Students confirmed that they receive adequate training for their role, and are able to make a constructive contribution to the review process. The ELIR team heard that the large number of surveys in use may contribute to confusion amongst students with respect to the purpose of specific surveys and to survey fatigue. Accordingly, the University is encouraged to continue to review its strategic approach to the management of student surveys, in three respects: first, to provide for consistency in the approach to the external survey of the student experience; second, to review the number and scope of surveys with a view to their possible consolidation; and third to develop an effective system for the collation and synthesis of all student surveys into a coordinated framework of action planning.

68 The University recognises the need to strengthen its capability in the area of data analysis in order to support planning, monitoring and review activities, and has recently appointed a Head of Planning who will coordinate the work in this area. As part of this process, during 2010-11, the student records system was modified to make it possible to provide data on withdrawal and retention, especially for priority

groups. The ELIR team endorses the measures that the University is taking to strengthen the functionality of its student records system in order to improve its understanding of the student profile and to improve its understanding of the student profile and to enhance planning.

70 At school level, the annual monitoring report provides a very thorough review of programme-level monitoring in addition to analysis of feedback from students and other stakeholders (for example external examiners), reflection on key performance indicators, performance against key strategies (for example QELTA), identification of good practice and items for consideration by School Academic Boards and the Student Experience Committee. It also provides an action plan for the coming year, as well as an open and reflective account of progress on the previous action plan. Overall, the ELIR team found that monitoring and review procedures were effective, and that significant positive practice leading to quality enhancement was derived from annual monitoring and review carried out at programme and school level.

72 From its reading of the advance information set and related discussions, the ELIR team concluded that the University has an effective approach to securing academic standards and to identifying positive practice and enhancement arising from its quality assurance processes. The team considered that the University has achieved an appropriate balance between quality assurance mechanisms and quality enhancement through its annual monitoring and review, validation and periodic review processes.

78 There is evidence at all levels of the University of a strong culture of self-reflection and action planning which promotes good practice and addresses areas in need of improvement. The University uses its governance and committee framework to support a process of systematic self-evaluation and has effective arrangements in place for the regular and systematic review of its academic programmes and professional services. The planned improvements to the management information system should make a significant contribution to the University's ability to provide focused data in planning, monitoring and review activities, and to aid it in understanding the needs of specific groups within its student population. While effective use is made of individual surveys, the University is encouraged to review its approach to the strategic management of surveys, so that a systematic framework is developed for incorporating survey results from all levels of study into action planning. The University's policies and procedures for managing public information are generally effective.

[Robert Gordon University](#)

17 The University has an effective strategic approach to developing and implementing strategies. The Strategic Plan and Business Plan set a clear, distinct and focused strategic direction, which is generally well understood and subscribed to throughout the University, and is strongly reflected in, and supported by, the plans of academic and support service units. The implementation of these plans, their outcomes in key strategic areas and their contributions to KPIs are monitored through the well-established and rigorous Annual Appraisal process (see also paragraphs 94-98), which has been developed to provide detailed analysis, particularly in relation to students' feedback on their learning experience, and to allow early and more precise information on course performance. The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) (see also paragraph 65), chaired by the Deputy Principal, acts as an effective proactive hub for the collation and analysis of appraisal data, and the early identification of issues requiring action.

While appraisals consider the past year of a course's performance, the periodic Institution-Led Subject Reviews (ILSRs) (see also paragraphs 99-102) have a stronger developmental role and a considerable degree of external involvement both in reviewing the lessons learned from past appraisals and in suggesting the future development of the subject within the University's overall strategic parameters. The Strategic Plan also guides staff development and performance review processes (see also paragraph 73) and helps to determine institutional priorities for enhancement.

26 The University uses key data sets effectively to monitor its performance in relation to its student population, and management information relating to student recruitment, retention, progression and achievement is considered as part of formal monitoring and review processes (see Section 5) and by the Department of Learning, Teaching and Access (DELTA), which has the remit to support the University in implementing its strategic goals in teaching and learning, extending access and the student experience (see also paragraphs 32, 106-109, 116 and 121).

36 Student representation is embedded at all levels of the University. Students participate in decision-making through staff/student liaison committees and, as student faculty officers, through their involvement in faculty quality Enhancement Subcommittees. Students also contribute to decision-making through the University-level Academic Council; Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee; Teaching, Learning and Assessment Sub-Committee and the Learning Infrastructure Sub-Committee. The University has placed significant emphasis on ensuring that students are able to contribute effectively to institution-led review processes (see paragraph 39 and Section 5). Participation in well-established training for representative roles is high, and the University and RGU:Union have a number of mechanisms for recognising student contribution to representative activity including certificates, and student achievement and extracurricular awards.

39 A particularly positive example of student engagement and the University's responsiveness to student feedback was the establishment of the Student-Facing Support Services Review (SFSSR) of IT resources. This adaptation of the institution-led periodic review process provided the ELIR team with clear evidence of an enhancement project being initiated in response to student feedback. The SFSSR found that students were satisfied with the effectiveness of the University VLE and students indicated to the team that IT Services were engaging students about ongoing system enhancements based on the user perspective following the SFSSR (see also paragraphs 99 and 103-105).

65 QAEC is the key standing committee of Academic Council and maintains strategic oversight of enhancement-related matters. Two of its subcommittees share responsibilities for contributing to the development and monitoring of enhancement activities – LISC concentrates on the student experience and TLASC on teaching, learning and assessment. The FQESCs promote and coordinate enhancement activities, share best practice, and act as a conduit between the faculty and QAEC. The work of these committees illustrates the University's commitment to enhancement and makes a positive contribution to identifying and sharing good practice. An example of this can be seen in the Annual QAEC Report to Academic Council on Annual Appraisal, which highlights examples of good practice and innovation drawn from course appraisal reports. In 2014-15, the report included as an example of activity inspired by the Enhancement Theme on Student Transitions, the work of the School of Computing Science and Digital Media in organising an honours

project showcase at the end of semester 2. This created an informal opportunity for degree year and earlier stage students to meet honours students, who were close to completing their project, and gain an insight into the experience they had acquired and the wide range of possible projects. QAEC also acts as a hub for the consideration and dissemination of positive practice from periodic review outcomes. The inclusion on each ILSR panel of members of academic staff from outside the reviewed subject area, including a dean of another faculty as the panel chair and a LEC from another subject area, was considered by the ELIR team to be an effective approach.

66 During each ILSR a LEC from the reviewed school presents examples of effective practice to the review panel using what the University calls a 'Snapshots' format, essentially short case studies of effective practice. These case studies are made available on the Snapshots website and are classified under four headings: Designing and Planning Learning; Supporting Learning; Assessment and Feedback; and Learning Environments. Currently, some departments and schools are more frequently represented on Snapshots than others. This uneven distribution may be mitigated as other subject areas reach the ILSR point in their review cycle. The use of Snapshots is monitored by the FQESCs at least one of which monitors the frequency with which the case studies are accessed to determine whether the approach is effective.

89 ILSRs of school-based courses take place every six years. These provide an opportunity to reflect on internal and retrospective data, but also importantly, to incorporate external perspectives, with a view to make recommendations as part of course revalidation arrangements which normally take place within six months of the review. ILSR panels include at least four external members drawn from the professions and other universities. Programme approval and review arrangements make effective use of PSRBs in line with the University's mission (see also paragraphs 91, 99 and 128).

99 Periodic, institution-led quality reviews take three formats: Institution-Led Subject Review of taught provision (ILSR); Research Degree Internal Review (RDIR); and Student-Facing Support Services Review (SFSSR). ILSR operates at school level on a five to six year cycle and involves a high level of external scrutiny and effective student contribution (see also paragraphs 36 and 39). ILSRs are chaired by deans from another faculty and include at least one Learning Enhancement Coordinator from another school to facilitate the sharing of good practice across the University. Wherever possible, the requirements of PSRBs are incorporated into ILSR processes.

100 Outcomes from ILSR form the basis of course and programme validation and/or revalidation, normally within six months of a review meeting. Oversight of outcomes from all ILSRs are considered through QAEC, who receive an annual report summarising the key themes from all ILSRs and validations undertaken in the previous session.

101 The University's own assessment of the ILSR process, supported by the ELIR team, is that it is effective, prompts useful reflection, links strongly to annual appraisal processes, capitalises on extensive external involvement, aligns with institution-level strategy to inform future developments, and provides an opportunity to showcase and share good practice.

102 At the time of the current ELIR, the future of the University's process for the periodic review of research degrees, Research Degree Internal Review, was under discussion. The most recent periodic reviews of research degree provision took place in 2012-13. The Research Degrees Committee recognised that there had been an extended hiatus in progressing the outcomes of those reviews, but that the outcomes had informed the decision to create a single Graduate School. The University has indicated that the planned creation of a single Graduate School, under the leadership of the recently appointed Vice-Principal (Research and Research Commercialisation), will shape the revised arrangements for reviewing research degrees. As a result, the University should progress with the implementation of revised arrangements for periodic review of research degree provision.

103 The Academic Quality Handbook sets out a process for the annual review of student-facing support services. Arrangements for more significant, periodic reviews of student-facing support services are kept deliberately flexible, so that current priorities can be addressed in a way that is considered most likely to lead to effective enhancements. QAEC determines the theme for periodic Student-Facing Support Services Review (SFSSR) based on its analysis of external factors and internal data sets.

104 The 2015-16 SFSSR theme, provision of placements and other work-related experiences, was identified in recognition of the downturn in the local economy, strong professional orientation of courses in the curriculum portfolio, and the University's desire to ensure students have access to quality work-related learning opportunities (see also paragraphs 47-50).

105 An SFSSR of IT resources took place in 2014-15, following consideration of student survey feedback. The LISC considered the SFSSR outcome report in late 2015, which was wide-ranging and included consideration of wireless reliability, workstation access, printing, helpdesk support, access to IT labs, information services based communications, online submission of coursework and electronic storage. It was evident to the ELIR team that this SFSSR was particularly useful in shaping the University's approach both to the provision of information services and resources and to harnessing the benefits of effective student contribution to institution-led review. The SFSSR process was well received by students and staff, cut across departmental boundaries and, from the outset, involved high levels of student engagement to help pinpoint the specific problems flagged up in student surveys to formulate effective solutions. Action taken as a result of the SFSSR continues to have significant student engagement/involvement after the original review event and this was seen as particularly positive by the ELIR team (see also paragraph 39).

110 The University provided useful illustrations of course, programme, school and faculty monitoring and review arrangements, as well as documents demonstrating how these culminate in institutional-level consideration and outcomes. These materials, in conjunction with other supporting references allowed the ELIR team to develop a good understanding of the arrangements in place for quality assurance and enhancement, and provided reassurance that the institution is meeting sector expectations. University monitoring and review mechanisms have resulted in the effective identification of institutional topics for enhancement and good practice for dissemination. Recent enhancement topics have included assessment feedback timeliness and technology enhanced assessment; information services including the wireless network; the provision of social space on campus; and work-related experience. Action taken as result of monitoring and review process outcomes have

included: the creation of more flexible placement opportunities for undergraduate management students; online moderation arrangements for collaborative provision; work with community colleges to develop new markets in North America; peer support for online distance learners; and a range of technology-supported teaching and assessment practices.

111 The information contained within the Advance Information Set (AIS) demonstrates the University's reflective approach to self-evaluation, and its commitment to producing quantitative and qualitative data to enable evidence-based enhancement plans to arise as direct outcomes of the various monitoring and review processes. The AIS demonstrated the University's commitment to evaluating the effectiveness of these monitoring and review processes within a reduced resource base. The University's approach is systematic, yet facilitates periodic reviews of student-facing services as the need is identified, as in the case of the work-related experience review. The involvement of students and external contributors, including PSRBs is high and supports the enhancement of existing arrangements.

126 All academic collaborations are subject to formal approval, monitoring and review. The approval process typically involves two stages: initial approval 'in principle' and formal approval. The Head of School/Associate Dean proposing the collaboration will liaise with the Dean of Faculty, and if satisfied, permission is given to prepare an Academic Collaboration Proposal Pro forma plus a Risk Assessment Matrix. These documents are considered by the University Academic Development Committee (ADC). If the ADC approves the proposal in principle, the University will appoint a Course Development Consultant to assist the partner institution in preparing for a validation visit, which is undertaken in accordance with the University Academic Quality Handbook Procedures. The validation panel is approved by the Convenor of the QAEC on recommendation of the Dean of Faculty and Academic Registrar. A validation report is prepared together with a response by the programme team to address any issues or recommendations arising from the validation event. The QAEC reviews and confirms the final decision from the validation event, reporting the decision to Academic Council for review and onward reporting to the Board of Governors. Ongoing monitoring and review of collaborative provision is embedded within the normal University quality assurance processes, including annual course review and Institution-Led Subject Review.

128 The University has mapped its approach to collaborative provision against the Quality Code, *Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others* and makes appropriate use of other external reference points, such as PSRB accreditation reports. All collaborative activity for taught credit provision is reviewed as part of the University's ILSR process (see paragraphs 99-102) and is also included in the course re-approval element of this activity. As part of the ILSR process, the University may determine that an ad hoc visit is required to any collaborative partner. The University maintains a register of all institutional partnership links involving taught credit-rated provision.

[Royal Conservatoire of Scotland](#)

47 The Conservatoire has systematic processes in place for setting, maintaining and reviewing academic standards. The processes have been enhanced since the 2009 ELIR through a number of developments associated with the new curriculum including: the establishment of the common academic framework; the cross-institution assessment matrix and criteria; the mapping of learning outcomes to

assessment criteria; enhancements to the programme monitoring arrangements; and greater clarity in the role of the specialist external assessors and examiners.

Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)

22 SRUC has a number of informal arrangements in place for supporting equality and diversity. There would be benefit in ensuring that informal arrangements, for example, relating to small class sizes, are linked systematically to the formal monitoring and review arrangements. In addition, linked to wider efforts to improve data management, there would be considerable benefit in SRUC disaggregating data for different student groups to identify any differences in progression and completion rates.

42 SRUC identified assessment, with appropriate and timely feedback, as important in encouraging student engagement. It also expressed the intention to continue working on this area, following the NSS outcomes in addition to the outcomes of the institution's own subject review and annual programme review processes.

50 SRUC emphasised its strong and specific vocational links, with significant employer engagement in the curriculum and wider activity including the work of the Consulting Division. Programme teams have close links with industry throughout the development of the curriculum and in delivery, for example through the involvement of guest lecturers who are based in industry. Staff are encouraged to maintain their industry knowledge and skills in a variety of ways including through the Return to Industry programme which is part of the staff development fund. Current practice (from the former SAC) is for a member of the programme team to take responsibility for industry liaison and providing career advice to students. In the new curriculum structure it is proposed to establish Curriculum Advisory Panels for each department with representation from industry and the further and higher education sectors. In addition, the procedures for annual programme review, institution-led subject review and revalidation provide systematic checks on professional relevance. It was evident from discussions during the ELIR that students are very aware of these industry and employer links, including through research and consultancy undertaken by staff who teach them.

61 SRUC has reintroduced the annual Learning and Teaching Conference, which is positive. There is also evidence of good practice being identified in the institution-led subject reviews and from external examiner reports. Annual Programme Review is used at programme level by SRUC and the 2012-13 template highlights good practice. SRUC is encouraged to ensure that its approach to Annual Programme Review continues to incorporate and follow up on the identification of good practice at institution as well as programme level.

68 SRUC has acknowledged that engaging large numbers of staff and students with the Themes has been more challenging since the merger. A need for greater engagement by teaching staff with the Themes has also been identified in the most recent institution-led subject review. The ELIR team would support moves to promote greater engagement. The team noted the limited awareness of Themes-related initiatives among the groups of students it met. The team would support SRUC's plan to disseminate its own Theme case studies through cross-SRUC staff development days.

85 The Institutional-led Subject Review (ILSR) process, which is also detailed in the current Education Manual, incorporates the revalidation of programmes within the subject group and takes place normally on a six-year cycle. The recently-established curriculum departments have been constructed partly to ensure that the complete departmental provision will undergo ILSR at the same time. The ELIR team noted that a new six-year cycle had been agreed by the awarding universities, involving one ILSR being conducted per year, with two reviews (Applied Sciences and Technology, and Environment and Countryside) taking place in 2014 to establish the cycle.

86 Reports and responses to validation and review activities seen by the ELIR team confirmed the commitment to include appropriate external specialists, including representation by the awarding universities, the thoroughness of panels' consideration of the self-evaluation documents, the rigour of their engagement with programme teams and the timely and comprehensive responses from programme teams. The team noted that approved validation reports are currently reported to the Divisional Management Team before submission to the relevant university Senate sub-committee. In future, SRUC intended to present these to its own Academic Board in advance of submitting them to the awarding university. The team would endorse that plan, and would also encourage SRUC to apply the same arrangement to the consideration of ILSR reports.

109 As a matter of priority, SRUC should ensure it has an inclusive institution-wide critical overview of the academic standards of its programmes through the scrutiny of and reflection on the outcomes of validation, institution-led subject review, annual programme review and external examiner reports. This could be achieved by developing the role of the Academic Board and its associated committees.

[University of Stirling](#)

38 Since the 2011 ELIR, the University has initiated a considerable number of student facing and institutional business process projects, many of which are reflected in the Transforming the Student Experience project. It was evident to the ELIR team that the University and the Students' Union officers had an exceptional commitment to extensive consultation and collaborative ways of working to enable these initiatives to be delivered. Particular examples include the introduction of School Officer training delivered jointly by schools and the Students' Union; consultation with students around the change in the number of teaching weeks; an increasing emphasis on student participation in learning and teaching reviews; and student involvement in the development of the Personal Tutor role.

41 School Officers who met the ELIR team were enthusiastic about their role, indicating that they had an important facilitative effect providing a valued interface between student course representatives and school staff. Both staff and students in the wider population spoke very positively to the ELIR team about the benefits of School Officers. Through a combination of the periodic learning and teaching reviews and student focus group feedback, the University has identified some variation in the impact of School Officers across schools. The University and the Students' Union are addressing this by providing additional support to enhance communication with course representatives (and Staff Student Consultative Committees) and are enhancing the training provided to School Officers during 2015-16. This is positive evidence of the University reflecting on its activity and seeking to enhance it.

43 The University is proactive in seeking to provide opportunities for students to provide feedback on their experience and is responsive to the feedback provided. Student feedback is obtained through a wide range of mechanisms, both formal and informal. Action taken as a result of student feedback through external surveys - and internal processes such as Staff Student Consultative Committee (SSCC) meetings, discussion forums, and learning and teaching reviews - is communicated to students by a number of means, including the virtual learning environment (VLE), email, social media, plasma screens in key locations and You Said, We Did announcements. The University recognises that communication of the outcomes of SSCC meetings remains variable and intends to address this jointly with the Students' Union as part of the ongoing review of course representative training.

44 It is positive that the periodic learning and teaching review process engages directly with the relevant SSCC as a method of obtaining student feedback. Student members of the SSCC for the subject area under review are invited to contribute to the review process by producing a document detailing any issues they wish to draw to the attention of the review panel. Annual programme review reports also include an explicit section on student feedback from SSCCs, which the ELIR team views as an effective way of emphasising the importance of student feedback.

62 The University employs a variety of strategies for identifying and sharing good practice and these are actively promoted by the Deputy Principal (Education and Students). Good practice is identified and disseminated through the committee structure by the Directors of Learning and Teaching (DLTs). For example, good practice identified during internal periodic learning and teaching reviews is shared through school Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) meetings, meetings of the DLTs and various short-life working groups.

76 Overall, there are effective arrangements in place for promoting good practice across the University. There would be benefit in the University providing a more coordinated approach to academic staff development, and reflecting on the ways in which it can encourage wider engagement, including among senior and research-focused staff, with opportunities to develop and reflect on teaching practice. There would be value in the University coordinating the identification and dissemination of good practice with those themes arising from its regular quality processes, such as annual monitoring, institutional-led review and student feedback. This would also help to promote greater consistency between schools in the extent to which good practice is identified and shared.

98 The University's procedures for reporting and responding to external examiner reports are clear. External examiners report on a standard template, which prompts explicit comment in relation to external reference points, including Subject Benchmark Statements and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. Examiners are also asked to comment on good practice and identify areas for enhancement. Any areas of concern are drawn to the attention of the Deputy Principal (Education and Students). Schools are required to respond formally to external examiners' reports; programme directors consider any matters raised by external examiners as part of the annual programme review process; external examiners' reports, and school consideration and responses to these reports, are also considered as part of the learning and teaching review process. Schools produce a summary of external examiners' comments, and an institutional level report, which is produced by Academic Registry and Governance Services, is considered by ESEC.

104 The University's annual monitoring and periodic review processes, which include module review, annual programme review and periodic learning and teaching review, provide opportunities for self-reflection. There have been enhancements to these processes since the 2011 ELIR, including the reporting of data for monitoring and review purposes. In discussions with the ELIR team staff confirmed that data is now easier to access, with large data sets produced centrally allowing school-specific data to be accessed, although the University also described the extraction of data for monitoring and review purposes as work in progress. The University is encouraged to continue enhancing this aspect of its activity.

107 The University reviews its curriculum regularly through its periodic learning and teaching reviews, which operate on a four to six-year cycle. The University publishes a schedule of its reviews on its website. The University considers its learning and teaching reviews to be a significant element of its quality processes, given the primary responsibility of schools for the quality of provision and the maintenance of academic standards. Subject areas produce a self-evaluation document and compile supporting documentation as part of the process. Reviews are conducted by panels, chaired by the Deputy Principal (Education and Students) and supported by a senior officer from Academic Registry and Governance Services. Composition of the panels adheres to Scottish Funding Council guidance. Following the 2011 ELIR, the University is still considering ways in which the pool of student reviewers may be increased. Learning and teaching review reports demonstrate a comprehensive approach, in line with sector expectations, which considers all aspects of a subject area. The final version of learning and teaching review reports, together with the subject area responses, are submitted for formal approval to ESEC. Staff spoke positively about the changes that have been made to the learning and teaching review process since the 2011 ELIR, including the greater involvement of staff in the preparation of the self-evaluation documentation, and an increased emphasis on student engagement and feedback.

112 The University routinely seeks student feedback through a wide range of means, including: external surveys (NSS, PTES and PRES); module evaluations; internal surveys; School Officers; course representatives; SSCCs; LTCs; the Student's Union; and annual programme, and the periodic learning and teaching reviews. Module evaluation feedback, following a pilot of an electronic system, is now gathered uniformly across the University; a comprehensive document showing analysis of student feedback was presented in the AIS. The University seeks to identify themes arising from its analysis of student feedback and the ELIR team noted this being given careful consideration in the committee structure, including at the Academic Council, ESEC and LTCs, with actions being taken in response. The quality of student feedback was commended in the external examiner reports. Overall, the ELIR team recognised that a commitment to engage with the student voice is part of the University's regular way of operating.

128 The International Affairs Team of the Development and External Affairs Directorate is responsible for the coordination of collaborative activity. Within this team there are two dedicated International Partnership Managers who provide support to schools when developing collaborative arrangement proposals, and also support the monitoring and oversight of the arrangements once they are running. The International Affairs Team maintains oversight and tracking of Memoranda of Agreement end dates to ensure that periodic review is scheduled before Memoranda of Agreements end if the arrangement is to continue. Procedures for the approval and monitoring of collaborative partnerships are set out in the Quality Handbook and

meet the expectations of the Quality Code. At the time of the current ELIR these procedures were identified as under review.

140 The University requires each of its collaborative partnerships to establish a joint programme committee (or equivalent) to manage the collaborative programme(s). Collaborative programmes are subject to the same quality assurance arrangements as the rest of the University's awards, that is: student feedback on modules; annual monitoring; periodic review; and external examining processes. Schools consider the annual reports and submit a summary report to Academic Registry and Governance Services each year. Academic Registry and Governance Services prepares an annual aggregated report for consideration by ESEC.

University of Strathclyde

86 The University has a documented quinquennial, faculty-led process for internal review of learning and teaching at the departmental level. The review format has a wide scope and considers not only teaching but research, knowledge exchange and management in the department and the interaction between these functions. University policy and procedures on the Internal Review of Learning and Teaching date from 2009.

87 Since the 2010 ELIR, the University has undertaken a number of reviews that have followed a different format from that described in the University's policy and procedures. In 2011, the Strathclyde Business School replaced the existing process of quinquennial departmental review with a quinquennial faculty-wide review which looked at seven departments simultaneously. Subsequently, the establishment of the new Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in August 2010 produced an organisational structure in which courses belong to the faculty or a school rather than to a department. To reflect these changes, the Faculty undertook a quinquennial school-level review in 2013, following the same procedures as for departmental reviews.

88 The ELIR team considered documentary information relating to recent reviews, and discussed review practices with groups of staff and students. The team noted considerable variability in the scope and focus of implementation, including the extent of reflection and supporting information related to learning and teaching. This variability was not related to the size of the unit being reviewed; for example the documentation for the recent review of the seven departments in the Business School included significant discussion of learning and teaching, supported by extensive, detailed appendices, whereas documentation for a number of smaller departments in other faculties included very limited evidence and discussion of learning and teaching. There was also significant variation in the extent to which reviews explicitly considered the experience of postgraduate research students.

89 The ELIR team concluded that institution-led quality review was an area of development for the University due to variability in practice across the institution and lack of evidence that recommendations from the 2010 ELIR had been actioned. The Reflective Analysis identified plans to revise the process as a priority for March 2014, but also indicated that the University considered the current approach provided an appropriate level of scrutiny.

90 The University is asked to make demonstrable progress, within the next academic year, in revising the approach to periodic institution-led review to ensure that the revised process gives adequate scrutiny to learning and teaching across all parts of the institution. The University should consider the scope, focus and

consistency of implementation across the institution, reflecting on the linkages with existing annual monitoring processes. The University is also asked to consider the consistency of interpretation and implementation of periodic review across the institution. In doing so, the University should consider the extent to which analysis, synthesis and reflection undertaken during periodic review connects with the learning experience of students.

91 There would be considerable value in the University reflecting on how all of its institution-led review activity interrelates, for example by considering links between periodic review, annual faculty reporting and monitoring processes, and collaborative audits. The University should also evaluate the best way to consider the impact of student-facing support services in its periodic review processes.

92 Student engagement in representation supports evaluative activity. Students are engaged formally through student staff liaison committees, membership on University committees (including Senate and Court) and in periodic reviews. Informally, the University also seeks to engage students through meetings between USSA officers and senior staff, including the Principal.

93 Collectively, the Advance Information Set (AIS) indicates that the University has systematic arrangements for identifying and addressing situations that have the potential to threaten the academic standards of its awards or the quality of the student learning experience. As noted above, the ELIR team had significant concerns about periodic institution-led review. However, the effective implementation of the annual monitoring process enables the University to identify and address potential threats as well as recognising good practice.

101 The ELIR team considered that the University's approach is effective overall in meeting sector expectations, including those of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and Scottish Funding Council guidance. The University should make demonstrable progress to address the recommendations on institution-led quality review without delay.

[University of St Andrews](#)

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

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

101 Periodic review of modules and programmes, known as University Review of Learning & Teaching, includes consideration of external reference points such as the

SCQF and the Quality Code. Sample documentation confirmed there is also explicit consideration of assessment.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

134 An annual report on collaborative activity is considered by the Academic Monitoring Group. The report is produced by the Collaborations and Study Abroad Office and covers all reviews of collaborative provisions, making recommendations on continuing, amending or terminating a partnership as appropriate. The sample reports provided to the ELIR team evidenced strong statistical information about institutional provision but provided limited evaluation of the student experience.

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

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

[University of the West of Scotland](#)

10 The LTAS contains a core set of KPIs that enable schools to monitor progress. The design and development of new programmes and the review of existing programmes require schools to map, evaluate and review how well the design of their curricula, modules, programme structures, pedagogical approaches and resources support the achievement of a student-centred, personalised student experience. The KPIs are reflective of the needs of the particular student demographic and pay particular attention to ensuring alignment of programme, level

and module learning outcomes with the development of appropriate 'work-ready' attributes as suited to future employability and career paths. (See also paragraphs 50-51).

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

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

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

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

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

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

guidance on procedures associated with the management and review of provision and the enhancement of the student experience.

79 Subject Health Review (SHR), defined in the Quality Handbook as the internal and external peer review of the academic health of the total taught and research provision in a subject, is the University's main periodic internal review process. SHR aims to provide an in-depth examination of how provision is managed and to allow the University to assure itself that the integrated elements of its enhancement-led approach to quality works across all subject areas and campuses to enhance the student experience. All provision is reviewed on a six-year cycle focused on eight areas: provision; learning, teaching and enhancement; research and knowledge exchange; student assessment and feedback; progression and achievement; student support and guidance; quality enhancement and assurance; and strategic development. The SHR process, while designed to be strong and holistic, is located within an enhancement-led approach to quality, and is intended to be supportive and developmental in nature. Accordingly, it is designed also to benefit the subject team and the school in providing a periodic juncture for reflection, evaluation and focus on future plans and opportunities. The University is confident that this system of review fully embraces and embeds each of the characteristics identified in Scottish Funding Council guidance, provides a robust and inclusive evaluation of subject health, and affords an opportunity for a high level of self-reflection and detailed analysis.

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

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

88 The University has a comprehensive and robust approach to self-evaluation using a number of review methods: The SHR (six year cycle, which includes collaborative provision), policy review (three year cycle), thematic review (annual set of themes identified), specific reviews (response to specific issues), and holistic review (four year cycle in preparation for ELIR). At School level there is also

enhancement and annual monitoring of programmes. Examples of the various review documents indicate a careful and rigorous approach with appropriate action plans. The University has also demonstrated that it uses reviews to carry out mid-term adjustments to key policies and strategies (for example the refresh of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy to align with the new Corporate Strategy).

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

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

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

93 The ELIR team found the Advance Information Set provided a wide-ranging and informative sample of the University's evaluative practices. The information provided assisted the team in identifying, or confirming, a number of themes for further exploration. These included student progression and attainment, the effectiveness of student representation in review processes, and the effective use of student feedback on programmes and from the NSS. Areas of potential positive

practice identified by the team included the span of evaluative processes and the quality of the review documentation; the badging of the quality of module information on the VLE; and the 'Routes for All' student mentoring initiative.

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

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

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

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

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

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

QAA1955 - Sep 17

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2017
18 Bothwell Street, Glasgow G2 6NU
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel: 01415 723420
Website: www.qaa.ac.uk