QAA

Learning from ELIR 2008-11

Staff development: Developing, sharing and recognising good practice

Sharing good practice

Contents

Introduction

Staff development is a key element within institutions' strategic approaches to enhancing the student experience. Since the first Enhancement-led institutional review (ELIR) cycle which ended in 2007, it is clear that institutions have made significant progress in aligning staff development strategies with strategies for learning and teaching and research, and are targeting staff development more effectively to underpin wider strategic developments and recognised needs. Centres for Learning and Teaching have a pivotal strategic role in supporting educational development, promoting innovation in learning and teaching through internal initiatives as well as through wider national and international engagements. In particular, there is evidence of strong institutional engagement with the national Enhancement Themes as a driver for development in learning and teaching and associated staff development. While there remains a need to encourage wider and more consistent staff engagement in this area, staff who are involved affirm the positive impact of such engagement. The combined impact of revised promotion criteria, clearer career paths and more strategic approaches to staff development is positive, and is contributing to improved staff development provision to encourage greater engagement with pedagogical and enhancement-led initiatives.

Enhancement-led institutional review includes specific consideration of the effectiveness of the institution's approach to supporting and developing staff to promote effective learning for their students, which includes induction and probation arrangements for new academic staff, career development and staff appraisal, staff development programmes and training opportunities, support for innovation in learning and teaching, recognition and reward for excellence in teaching, and overall strategic approaches to staff development. It also includes consideration of the effectiveness of the institution's approach to identifying, disseminating and implementing good practice in the context of its strategic approach to enhancement.

This overview draws on the evidence of the 14 ELIR reviews conducted in 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11.

The purpose of this report is to utilise this evidence to:

- provide an indication of what progress Scottish higher education institutions are making in developing their strategic approach to staff development
- highlight examples of positive practice identified in the ELIR reports
- note areas for ongoing development identified in the ELIR reports to inform enhancement projects both at sectoral level and in individual institutions.

Summary overview

The evidence suggests that there has been a significant shift towards a more integrated strategic approach to enhancement which incorporates staff development. This is apparent in a number of different ways.

Strategic approaches to staff development

- The ELIR reports reflect a much greater institutional emphasis on strategic approaches in which staff development is aligned with priorities or themes identified in the wider context of supporting effective student learning and enhancing the student experience.

Strategic role of Centres for Learning and Teaching

- Centres for Learning and Teaching continue to provide a range of educational development activities for staff and students, as well as playing a key role in supporting innovation in learning and teaching, establishing communication networks and communities of practice, and in the identification and dissemination of good practice.

- Centres for Learning and Teaching have a pivotal role in supporting institutional enhancement strategies. A more targeted and strategic approach, aligned with institutional strategic priorities for enhancement, allows staff development provision to be tailored to key strategic needs in the institution.

- Career development and staff appraisal schemes are helping to embed a more systematic approach to identifying and meeting development needs

- Specific initiatives have focused on curricular development or have targeted specific groups, for example advisors of studies, researchers (including staff and students) and research student supervisors.

- A small number of institutions already provide ongoing staff development opportunities or induction programmes for UK and overseas collaborative partners.

Engagement with Higher Education Academy

- The reports reflect widespread engagement with the Higher Education Academy (HEA) including through participation in HEA staff development opportunities and interaction with the former subject centres, through the HEA professional recognition scheme, and through the provision of HEA-accredited postgraduate certificates in learning and teaching which are available to new academic staff (for whom the programmes are usually mandatory), and experienced staff, who are encouraged to enrol.

Improvements in sharing good practice

- Institutional approaches to sharing good practice have become more systematic and consistent. Reports reflect the use of effective and wide-ranging communication channels, including annual programme monitoring and institution-led subject review, dedicated websites, and magazines, as well as

institution-wide staff development events to disseminate information, stimulate debate on academic policy and curricular reform, and provide a forum for the showcasing of good practice.

Institutional and individual staff engagement with the Enhancement Themes

- There is evidence of strong institutional engagement with the Enhancement Themes as a driver for strategic development and associated staff development, as well as by individual academic staff. Where there is an integrated strategic approach to enhancement, staff engagement is strengthened. Staff affirm the positive impact of engaging with the Enhancement Themes on institutional enhancement strategies and in supporting institutional priorities.

Recognition and reward of excellence in learning and teaching

- Institutions have made clear progress in the recognition and reward of excellence in learning and teaching through the positive impact of revised criteria for academic promotion, and through the student-led awards for teaching excellence scheme which is supported by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and NUS Scotland, and through other institutional awards recognising excellence and achievement in teaching.

Areas for development

Areas variously identified in ELIR reports for further development or consideration include:

- the development of more strategic approaches to staff development, including alignment with the institution's strategic goals

- internationalisation, and more particularly, equipping staff to support international students more effectively in a multicultural classroom context

- continued staff development in support of learning, teaching and innovation on curricular reform (following implementation of a major curricular reform project)

- training for specific staff groups, including research student supervisors (mainly in the context of institutions which are developing their research activity), graduate teaching assistants and part-time staff

- providing staff development for collaborative partners

- developing more formal and systematic approaches to sharing good practice

- encouraging more proactive engagement with the national Enhancement Themes

- and developing ways of recognising and rewarding staff for excellence in learning and teaching practice.

Positive practice identified in ELIR reports

The following section lists areas of relevant positive practice identified in the reports of ELIR reviews conducted in sessions 2008-09, 2009-10 and 2010-11. The bullet points are drawn from the ELIR summary reports.

General approaches to staff development

Edinburgh Napier University

- **Staff development** - the University's approach to the initial and continuing development of staff is a strength which supports effective student learning.

Heriot-Watt University

- **Staff development** - the University has an effective approach to developing the academic practice of staff in learning and teaching. Particular strengths include the University's Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice to develop staff teaching skills, and the mentoring support for probationary staff.

University of Dundee

- **Staff development** - the University offers a wide range of staff development activities in relation to learning and teaching, and a number of opportunities for recognising and rewarding teaching and scholarship.

Strategic role of Centres for Learning and Teaching

Glasgow Caledonian University

- **The Caledonian Academy** - the Caledonian Academy is important in delivering key aspects of the University's quality enhancement strategy by, for example, coordinating projects which support the development of graduate attributes and employability skills.

Queen Margaret University

- **Staff development to promote effective student learning** - the significant role played by the University's Centre for Academic Practice in providing development opportunities for staff, including staff at collaborative partner institutions; and the active support for staff development within the University's schools.

- **Quality enhancement strategy** - the active roles played by the Quality Enhancement Unit and the Centre for Academic Practice in supporting the implementation of the University's quality enhancement strategy.

University of Aberdeen

- **Centre for Learning and Teaching** - creation of the Centre is a significant strategic development since the last ELIR (in 2005) which has helped the University to innovate its approaches to learning and teaching, and which provides a key coordinating mechanism for the delivery of the Curriculum Reform Project and other learning and teaching initiatives.

University of Glasgow

- **Staff development** - the University's Learning and Teaching Centre plays a very positive role in providing development activities and support for staff, in order to promote effective learning for students. There has also been clear progress made in the promotion of staff to professorial level, based significantly on strengths in teaching and learning.

University of Strathclyde

- **Educational development and support** - the Centre for Academic Practice and Learning Enhancement (CAPLE) provides a range of educational development activities for the University's staff and students. It has a strong reputation in the sector for its educational development work and research.

HEA-accredited Postgraduate Certificates in Learning and Teaching

Glasgow School of Art (GSA)

- **Staff development in learning and teaching** - GSA has successfully supported a wide range of staff to undertake a Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching.

Heriot-Watt University

- **Staff development** - the University has an effective approach to developing the academic practice of staff in learning and teaching. Particular strengths include the University's Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice to develop staff teaching skills, and the mentoring support for probationary staff.

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland (formerly Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Dance)

- **Staff development** - the significant developments in the Academy's approach to staff development, including offering a Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Arts in Higher Education, which has had a considerable, positive impact across the institution.

Support for innovation in learning and teaching

University of St Andrews

- **Learning and teaching development** - the University has implemented a range of mechanisms for supporting innovation in learning and teaching, including the recently established Centre for Higher Education Research.

Sharing good practice

Edinburgh College of Art

- **Sharing good practice** - the College's arrangements for identifying and sharing good practice have been helped by the development of greater consistency in its

key processes, and are likely to be helped further by the planned changes in its school structure, and by the work of the College Academic Planning Group.

Glasgow Caledonian University

- **Sharing good practice** - the Quality Office website is an effective way of sharing good practice, and the academic development tutors and heads of learning and teaching also play an important role in supporting quality enhancement by sharing good practice across the schools.

University of Dundee

- **Sharing good practice** - there has been improvement at all levels of the way in which good practice is shared across the University. The University magazine 'Highlighter' is identified by many staff as an effective way of sharing good practice across the University and beyond. The University's preparations for ELIR have themselves been identified as a valuable opportunity for sharing good practice.

University of Glasgow

- **Quality enhancement** - the University has taken effective 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' approaches to identifying, disseminating and implementing good practice in learning and teaching. These approaches include: making good use of the outcomes from its quality assurance activities; the important activities of the Learning and Teaching Centre; and initiatives such as the University's Teaching Excellence Awards.

National Enhancement Themes

Edinburgh College of Art

- **National Enhancement Themes** - the College has engaged productively with the national Enhancement Themes, using the outcomes from the Themes to inform strategic developments.

University of Dundee

- **National Enhancement Themes** - the University participates actively in the national programme of Enhancement Themes.

University of Glasgow

- **National Enhancement Themes** - the University has engaged productively with the national Enhancement Themes, and is using the outcomes from the Themes to inform strategic developments.

University of St Andrews

- **National Enhancement Themes** - the University has engaged actively with the national Enhancement Themes since they were first in place, and there is evidence of institutional policies and activities being influenced by the outcomes of the Themes resulting in improvements to the student learning experience.

Recognition and reward of excellence in teaching

University of Aberdeen

- **Recognition of excellence in teaching** - the introduction of the new Procedures for Managing Promotion and Recognising Contribution is beginning to have a positive impact on the recognition of excellence in teaching in the University.

University of Dundee

- **Staff development** - the University offers a wide range of staff development activities in relation to learning and teaching, and a number of opportunities for recognising and rewarding teaching and scholarship.

Quality enhancement culture

University of St Andrews

- **Quality enhancement culture** - the University has been successful in creating a culture which encourages staff to enhance the student learning experience. It has undertaken a number of successful initiatives aimed at involving more staff and students in enhancement activity, and is encouraged to continue this work.

Developing shared identity and vision following merger

University of the West of Scotland

- **Merger** - the University has made good progress in achieving the merger between the two former institutions, with mechanisms in place to promote good communication between campuses and a broadly shared sense of identity among students and staff. A significant volume of work has been carried out to establish a new academic framework including a common credit rating, and this has had a positive impact in bringing staff from the two former institutions together with a shared sense of purpose and vision for the new University.

Areas for development identified in ELIR reports

While in general staff development strategies are better aligned with institutional priorities or themes identified in the wider context of supporting effective student learning, ELIR teams identified a range of areas in individual institutions where further development was required. ELIR reports have variously asked institutions to take action in the following areas.

Developing strategic approaches to staff development

- Progress plans to adopt a more strategic and coherent approach to staff development, and continue developing approaches for recognising and rewarding good practice in learning and teaching.

- Develop detailed implementation plans for staff development activity to support the [institution's] strategic priorities for quality enhancement. The institution is also encouraged to continue its current initiatives to support scholarship in learning and teaching.

- Develop a greater oversight of how staff development provision meets the [institution's] strategic goals.

Support for learning and teaching

- Continue to support and promote the Centre for Learning and Teaching, and staff development in support of learning, teaching and innovation in curriculum reform once the Curriculum Reform Project has reached the end of its implementation phase.

Staff development for specific staff groups

Collaborative partners

- Implement a planned staff development programme for staff in the [institution's] Approved Learning Partner institutions.

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for experienced staff

- Continue to monitor the extent of participation by experienced staff in development activity.

Training and CPD for research supervisors

- To ensure effective support for research students, the [institution] is asked to strengthen its arrangements for the initial training and continuing professional development of research supervisors. The [institution] is also asked to reflect on how it might foster the sense of an institution-wide research student community.

- Implement formal, systematic arrangements for managing research degrees and the research student experience, including ensuring that all research students attend research skills training and that all supervisors receive appropriate training for the role.

Training for graduate teaching assistants

- Undertake the planned review of training and support for graduate teaching assistants.

Staff development for part-time staff

- The institution is also asked to consider ways of encouraging greater participation in staff development opportunities by part-time staff.

Staff development to support international students

- Identify and introduce more systematic arrangements for supporting the learning and teaching needs of international students. The [institution] is also asked to reflect on the development needs of academic staff in supporting these students.

Sharing good practice

- Establish a more formal and structured approach to identifying and sharing good practice, so that the positive approaches adopted by individual staff can be used to enhance the experience of students across the [institution]. The [institution] should undertake work to support more systematic interaction with the national Enhancement Themes by a wider group of staff.

- Introduce more systematic ways of sharing good practice across the [institution].

- Reflect on the ways the [institution] can, more purposefully, identify and disseminate good practice using the range of existing mechanisms, including capitalising on the expertise within the Centre for Learning and Teaching.

National Enhancement Themes

- Engage more proactively with the national Enhancement Themes to ensure the [institution] is taking full advantage of the opportunity to learn from practice in other higher education institutions, and to provide an opportunity for the [institution] to share its good practice with the sector.

Recognition and reward

- Reflect on ways to recognise and reward staff for excellence in learning and teaching practice.

Appendix A: Relevant links

Links to relevant ELIR reports are provided below:

Edinburgh College of Art
www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/Pages/Edinburgh-College-Art.aspx.

Edinburgh Napier University
www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/Pages/Edinburgh-Napier.aspx.

Glasgow Caledonian University
www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/Pages/Glasgow-Caledonian.aspx.

Glasgow School of Art
www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/Pages/Glasgow-School-Art.aspx.

Heriot-Watt University
www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/Pages/Heriot-Watt-University.aspx.

Scottish Agricultural College
www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/Pages/Scottish-Agricultural-College.aspx.

Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh
www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/Pages/Queen-Margaret-University.aspx.

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
(formerly Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Dance)
www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/Pages/Royal-Scottish-Academy.aspx.

University of Aberdeen
www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/Pages/University-of-Aberdeen.aspx.

University of Dundee
www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/Pages/University-of-Dundee.aspx.

University of Glasgow
www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/Pages/University-of-Glasgow.aspx.

University of St Andrews
www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/Pages/University-St-Andrews.aspx.

University of Strathclyde
www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/Pages/University-of-Strathclyde.aspx.

University of the West of Scotland
www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/Pages/University-West-Scotland.aspx.

The following reports and links may also be of interest:

QAA annual sector overview report to Scottish Funding Council (SFC) for academic
year 2009-10
www.sfc.ac.uk/effective_institutions/qualityassurance/quality_scotlands_universities.aspx.

QAA annual sector overview report to SFC for academic year 2010-11
www.sfc.ac.uk/about_the_council/council_board_committees/Committeepapers/2011/
QEGPC26October2011.aspx.

QAA summary overview of Higher Education Institution annual reports to SFC on the
outcomes of internal and external quality reviews at subject level, for academic year
2009-10
www.sfc.ac.uk/reports_publications.

Learning from ELIR 2003-07: Aligning enhancement strategies with staff development
www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Learning-from-ELIR-
2003-07-Aligning-enhancement-strategies-with-staff-development.aspx.

Enhancement Themes website
www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk.

Higher Education Academy accreditation of initial and continuing professional
development programmes delivered by HEIs
www.heacademy.ac.uk/accreditation.

Higher Education Academy UK Professional Standards Framework
www.heacademy.ac.uk/ukpsf.

Higher Education Academy Resources Centre
www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources.

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