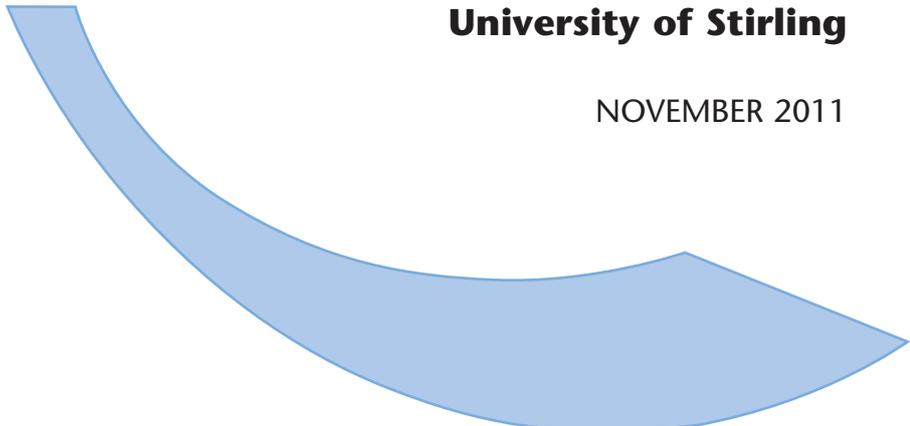


# Enhancement-led Institutional Review

**University of Stirling**

NOVEMBER 2011



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## Enhancement-led Institutional Review

### University of Stirling

#### Introduction

1 This is the report of an Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) of the University of Stirling (the University) undertaken by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). QAA is grateful to the University for the willing cooperation provided to the ELIR team.

#### ELIR method and report

2 The ELIR method was revised during 2007-08 following extensive consultation with the Scottish higher education sector. Full detail on the method is set out in the *Enhancement-led institutional review handbook: Scotland* (second edition, 2008) which is available on the QAA website.

3 ELIR reports are structured around three main sections: the management of the student learning experience; institution-led monitoring and review of quality and academic standards; and the strategic approach to quality enhancement. Each of these three sections leads to a 'commentary' in which the views of the ELIR team are set out. The three commentaries, in turn, lead to the overarching judgement on the level of confidence which can be placed in the institution's management of academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience. A summary report is also available in printed form (from QAA) and on the QAA website.

#### Method of review

4 The University submitted a Reflective Analysis (RA), which provided the focus for the review. The RA was supported by a number of accompanying documents including six case studies that sought to illustrate the University's approach to enhancing the student experience: student induction; managing the transition into higher education; the learning environment; sporting excellence; the enhancement of academic provision; and provision for graduate students. The ELIR team also received the report of the University's previous ELIR which took place in 2006.

5 The RA was drafted by a Steering Group, which included academics, administrators and student representatives. The University stated that a collaborative approach to the authorship of the RA was adopted with opportunities for staff to be involved in a variety of ways, including commenting on specific themes. The University also stated that it adopted a consultative approach, with opportunities for both staff and students to offer material for inclusion within the RA. Student representatives contributed to the development of the RA, both by contributing material and by giving detailed reflections on the document.

6 The ELIR team visited the University on two occasions: the Part 1 visit took place on 5 and 6 October 2011, and the Part 2 visit took place in the week beginning 7 November 2011.

7 The ELIR team comprised: Professor Rae Condie; Mr Alan Ducklin; Professor Diane Meehan; Professor Martin Oosthuizen; Mr Mike Ross; and Ms Rhiannon Tinsley. The review was managed on behalf of QAA by Dr Janice Ross, Assistant Director, QAA Scotland.

#### Background information about the institution

8 The University of Stirling, which was established in 1967, describes itself as a pre-1992 campus-based university located in the geographical and historical heart of Scotland. The University's vision is to 'address the social and environmental needs of society through innovative interdisciplinary research and education', and it researches and teaches in the areas of: health and

wellbeing; culture and society; environment and people; enterprise and the economy; and sport. In 2010-11, the University had approximately 11,500 students (by headcount), of whom some 8,200 (71 per cent) are undergraduates and some 3,300 (29 per cent) postgraduates. The University is primarily located in a purpose-built campus on the outskirts of the city of Stirling. In addition to its main campus, it has two small campuses in Inverness and Stornoway.

9 At the time of the 2006 ELIR, the University had very recently undertaken a fundamental review of its academic structure, moving from four faculties to a structure based on 15 academic departments. At the time of the current ELIR, a further phase of academic restructuring had recently been implemented, resulting in the creation of a school structure with a number of subject-based divisions within each school. In place since January 2011, the seven schools are: the School of Applied Social Science; the School of Arts & Humanities; the School of Education; the Stirling Management School; the School of Natural Sciences; the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health; and the School of Sport.

10 In 2008-09 the University undertook a review of its academic portfolio, which involved rationalising the range of programmes offered with the aim of ensuring that the revised portfolio would be attractive to potential students, enhance students' employability, and link to the University's research themes and clusters.

11 The University offers collaborative provision in partnership with some 39 further and higher education institutions, both in the UK and overseas. Most of the partnerships are organised through the Stirling Management School and the School of Arts & Humanities. A significant number (25) of these partnerships are articulation agreements, which allow students from partner organisations direct entry to an agreed year of the University's programmes. Other forms of collaboration include: jointly delivered or double degrees; validations of programmes delivered at other institutions; and an overseas franchise arrangement. The University is currently reviewing its portfolio of collaborative partnerships with the aim of sustaining selective collaborations with partners in the University's niche areas of expertise.

### **Institution's strategy for quality enhancement**

12 The University's strategic approach to quality enhancement is set out in its Learning, Teaching and Quality Enhancement Strategy (LTQES) for 2010-15, which is guided by the University's Strategic Plan for 2011-16. The LTQES identifies three key areas of activity: the student experience; quality enhancement; and quality assurance.

## **Management of the student learning experience**

### **Key features of the student population and the effectiveness of the institution's approach to managing information about its student population**

13 In 2010-11, the University had some 8,341 full-time equivalent (FTE) students, of whom 6,641 FTEs (80 per cent) were undergraduates, and 1,700 FTE (20 per cent) postgraduate. The number of postgraduate taught and research students has grown slightly in recent years, so that by 2011-12 taught postgraduate students comprise 16 per cent of the student body and postgraduate research students 4 per cent of the student body. The growth in taught postgraduate students is attributed to an increase in the enrolment of international students from outside the European Union. A significant percentage of postgraduate students (about 40 per cent) are located in the Stirling Management School, corresponding with the high proportion of enrolments in collaborative programmes through that School.

14 Over recent years, the geographical profile of student enrolments has shifted towards an increased proportion of international students from outside the European Union (12 per cent in 2009-10 and 14 per cent in 2011-12), with a slight decline in the proportion of students from Scotland (72 per cent in 2009-10 and 70 per cent in 2011-12). The proportion of the student

population deriving from the rest of the UK and from the European Union has remained relatively constant at 11 per cent and 5 per cent respectively. In terms of widening participation, 9 per cent of the University's Scottish students come from the bottom quintile of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, which is broadly comparable with the enrolment rate of this demographic group in the Scottish higher education system as a whole. The University has identified that a low proportion of its students enrol from the college sector or study on a part-time basis, and indicates that the institution is seeking to increase its recruitment of both these student groups.

15 The University is currently reviewing the size and shape of its student population in order to achieve what it considers to be a more appropriate balance of undergraduate, postgraduate, UK, international, full-time, and part-time students. The Strategic Plan for 2011-16 indicates that the University intends to achieve a postgraduate student population (both taught and research) of at least 25 per cent by the end of this period, and also that the University is seeking to increase the number of non-European Union students on its Stirling campus. To support such a changing student profile, the University states that it is committed to revising its approaches to learning and teaching, as well as to the wider student experience.

16 The Student Administration Office, which is located within Registry and Governance Services, is responsible for the maintenance of student records. Data used in monitoring and review processes, and for other purposes, is drawn directly from the student record system. The Policy, Planning and Governance (PPG) Office is responsible for the generation of management information which is used to support institutional planning, the development and monitoring of performance indicators, the monitoring and review of modules and programmes, and the development of a Management Information Handbook and school profiles. The Management Information Handbook is being phased out and will be replaced by the development of performance reports at both institutional and school levels. The first institutional performance report and the first iteration of the school profiles were developed in 2011, bringing together statistics relating to students, staff, research, and other indicators. Both profiles are linked to the University's Strategic Plan for 2011-16 (and in the case of school profiles, to school-level plans) and make use of a dashboard system to flag areas of concern. The plans will be developed on a biannual basis, and will be used in the annual planning and budgeting process.

17 Heads of school confirm the usefulness of the school profiles made available to them for planning, monitoring and review purposes, and indicate that they are able to receive customised reports on request. One of the objectives of the University's Learning, Teaching and Quality Enhancement Strategy (LTQES) for 2010-15 (see paragraphs 115 to 120) is to continue to strengthen the culture of critical reflection and use of robust data to inform learning, teaching and quality enhancement. Related to this, the University acknowledges the need to make management information more accessible in order to inform decisions on the student population. The University is undertaking a major project to strengthen its information management capabilities in order to improve the accessibility of data and its use in planning, monitoring and review processes. As part of this project, academic managers and other members of staff will be able to develop their own data-sets from the central database. Regular consultation is taking place with academic managers on the design of the system, and the project will also include workshops aimed at enhancing the capacity of academic managers and other staff members to interpret and use data meaningfully.

## **The effectiveness of the institution's approach to engaging and supporting students in their learning**

### **Student representation**

18 Students are represented on school committees and on a large number of University committees, including: the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC); Academic Council; and the University Court. The University also notes that student representatives are included in matters of

academic policy development, such as the review of the Academic Portfolio (see paragraph 9), and the development of the Learning, Teaching and Quality Enhancement Strategy (LTQES) for 2010-15 (see paragraphs 115 to 120). Student representatives on both University committees and academic policy working groups are drawn from the Students' Union executive, or are appointed by the Students' Union. Students and senior staff indicated that this is an effective way of representing the student body.

19 The Students' Union also meets annually with the QEC (see paragraphs 121 to 124) to enable student officers to raise, and lead discussion of, learning and teaching matters of importance to the student body. While students view these meetings as potentially constructive, they considered that, to date, limited action had been undertaken as a result. The University is encouraged to reflect on how the effectiveness of these annual meetings might be enhanced.

20 The University has over 300 student class representatives operating at the module or divisional level. Students consider that, on the whole, such student representation works well, with a good ratio of class representatives to the wider student body. All schools are required to convene a student:staff consultative committee (SSCC) at least twice in each semester. The purpose of these is to represent the views of undergraduate and taught postgraduate students, and to gather student feedback.

21 The University permits some variation in the arrangements for SSCCs to suit local circumstances, for example for different subject groups, for programmes at different levels, or with different modes of study. In some schools, the meetings are chaired and minuted by student representatives. The minutes of meetings are reported to the relevant school's learning and teaching committee, and are also posted on the student web portal. Students from across the schools indicated that there are inconsistencies in the ways in which the outcomes from SSCC meetings are communicated to students. For example, in some schools the outcomes are communicated to students by the circulation of SSCC minutes, including on the student web portal; in other cases, the onus is on student representatives to disseminate outcomes. Overall, however, students indicated that the feedback loop is not completed consistently. The University is encouraged to consider how to improve the effectiveness of SSCCs in informing students of the actions that have been taken in response to their feedback, including how the pilot of a school officer system (see paragraph 22) might address this.

22 The Students' Union and the University have both identified that there is a lack of formal student representative structures at the school level, which presents challenges for the Students' Union sabbatical officers to make linkages between the views of class representatives and student representation at the University level. The school officer project is run in conjunction with the School of Arts & Humanities which is piloting the project to address this challenge, and this is a positive development which also has the potential to improve the effectiveness of the SSCCs. Once the pilot project has been evaluated, the University is encouraged to consider the benefits of establishing school officer posts in the other schools.

23 Research students are represented on the University's Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee and, at the school level, are currently represented by two students who sit on most of the schools' research committees. Research students consider that this makes a positive contribution to the research student experience.

## **Student feedback**

24 The University aims to ensure that students have direct involvement in formulating learning and teaching policy and practice, and that their views are the primary evidence on which the quality of learning and teaching is assessed. The University gathers students' views by using module questionnaires, and by participating in national surveys of the student experience. Module questionnaires are issued towards the end of each semester. All modules use online

questionnaires, though some module coordinators also use their own paper versions. Feedback from the module questionnaires is summarised by the module coordinator, with action points being reported to the relevant school learning and teaching committee and the SSCC.

25 Students were generally positive about the use of online module questionnaires. However, the University recognises that student response rates for these module evaluations have tended to be low in recent years, leading to a concern that the information collated is not sufficiently comprehensive as to be statistically meaningful. In an effort to address this, the University revised the module evaluation form in 2008. However, low return rates continue to be a challenge for the University. The University recognises the importance of gathering valid information on the student experience, and is encouraged in its intention to continue to explore how to improve return rates.

26 The University takes part in an extensive range of external surveys, including the National Student Survey (NSS), the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), and the International Student Barometer (ISB). The University has been participating in the NSS for the past four years and considers that it now has data which enables it to identify and act upon trends in students' views. Within the University, the outcomes of the NSS are first analysed by the Policy, Planning and Governance (PPG) Office, the results of which are then considered by the QEC (see paragraphs 121 to 124) and the school learning and teaching committees. Schools are required to build on the strengths and issues arising from the NSS, and this action planning is monitored by the QEC and the Admissions, Progress and Awards Committee (APAC). The outcomes of the NSS are also included in schools' subsequent annual programme monitoring and review reports.

27 The University participated in the PRES for the first time in 2009 and in the PTES for the first time in 2010. The University indicates that the issues arising from the PRES outcomes have led to a number of enhancements to the research student experience. The University has participated in the ISB since 2006, and has taken a number of steps to enhance the international student experience as a result. The University considers the ISB to be an important tool for ongoing tracking of how student expectations and perceptions change within the University in the context of national and international benchmarks. There is no significant involvement of students in the consideration of these survey outcomes within the schools (for example, through the SSCCs), and the University is encouraged to consider ways in which students could engage more with survey findings in order to contribute to action planning at the school level.

### **Learning, teaching and assessment**

28 The University's Code of Practice for Assessment and Examination of Students' Work for Taught Programmes (see paragraph 100) outlines a number of principles regarding assessment, including student entitlement to receive grades and feedback on coursework within a reasonable period in order that the assessment exercise has an educative function, and that with the exception of dissertations, feedback should always be returned within four weeks of submission. Individual feedback on examinations is not normally expected to be given to students, although schools are encouraged to provide general feedback on overall examination performance. Students confirmed that, in general, they do not receive feedback on examinations.

29 Since the 2006 ELIR, the University has taken steps to ensure greater consistency in the provision of generic and specific assessment criteria for students, and that generic criteria has been supplemented by more highly developed specific subject-level criteria. However, during the current ELIR, some students expressed the opinion that the assessment criteria were still too generic to be fully helpful.

30 The University commented that feedback from the NSS has indicated some student dissatisfaction with assessment and the quality and timeliness of feedback on their assessed work.

Students indicate that, in practice, the timeliness and utility of feedback on assessment remains variable, and that the expectations regarding its timing are not well understood. The University identified that it is developing a Code of Practice on feedback in conjunction with the Students' Union. This is a positive step that has the potential to clarify the University's expectations regarding assessment feedback for both staff and students.

### **Support for learning**

31 The University's Student Development and Support Services (SDSS) aims to provide support at all stages of the student life-cycle: pre-entry; induction; on-course; and beyond graduation. The SDSS seeks to deliver support by working collaboratively across the University, including with the Students' Union, to provide a coordinated support structure for students. This is achieved through the provision of what the University describes as increasingly integrated services, which currently include: Career Development; Counselling and Wellbeing; Student Disability; Student Money Advice; general student support; and retention and achievement projects. Students confirm that the SDSS has a positive impact on their experience at the University. For example, the University's Counselling and Wellbeing service is viewed as offering a supportive service for students, and the Student Disability service is also considered to be effective (see paragraphs 54 to 55).

32 The University employs a number of approaches to support international students. The International Students Handbook provides a range of information on topics such as: immigration, travel and accommodation; financial planning and facilities; healthcare; living in the UK; student life at the University; and support services. Special orientation sessions are held for international, study abroad and exchange students during orientation week. The Centre for English Language Teaching provides various pre-sessional and in-sessional courses on English language support that focus on academic English and study skills for international students. The pre-sessional courses are tailored to meet the needs of students with different profiles in terms of their English language competencies. Additionally, international students may request access to a student 'buddy' to assist them in their adjustment to the University.

33 The University recognises that its planned growth in the number of international students, particularly in taught postgraduate programmes, will have implications for the management of the international student experience, and also for the promotion of intercultural understanding among the student body as a whole. In addition to the establishment of a Graduate School (see paragraph 34), the University is reviewing aspects of support for international students, including: the role of the international student adviser; postgraduate research support; and English language support. The University is encouraged to plan proactively for future student needs in order to maintain the quality of the learning experience across different student groups.

### **Research student experience**

34 The 2006 ELIR report indicated that the University had recently established its Stirling Graduate Research School (SGRS). It considered that the School provided a good level of support for research students and that it promoted a feeling of community and belonging. A review of postgraduate provision has since been completed by the University and the SGRS has been replaced by the Stirling Graduate School (SGS), which has oversight of postgraduate taught, research provision, and research students. At the time of the current ELIR, the Graduate School was very recently established, and the newly appointed Head of School was in the process of engaging with other senior staff to determine its objectives and priorities.

35 The University aims to increase the research student population by 25 per cent over the next three years, and also to expand postgraduate taught provision for home-based and international students (see paragraphs 15 and 33). The development of the SGS provides the basis of a framework for developing and enhancing the postgraduate student experience by

building on the experiences of the previous Graduate Research School.

36 Research students are very positive about the quality of induction sessions provided for them. They also identify that good support was available from a range of sources including their supervisors, the Graduate School, and the Centre for Academic Practice and Learning (CAPL). For example, those research students who teach are supported through the CAPL training provision for graduate teaching assistants (see paragraphs 56 to 62). Research students also considered that they were treated as fellow researchers and that they were part of a wider research community, for example through participation in a seminar series, presentation opportunities, and the annual postgraduate research conference.

37 The University's expectations regarding the management of its postgraduate research students are set out in the Code of Practice for the Support of Postgraduate Research Students and in the Postgraduate Research Student Handbook. In terms of monitoring progress, the Code of Practice states that the principal supervisor will agree a schedule of meetings with the research student. They will normally hold meetings with full-time students at least monthly and with part-time students every two months, and a record should be kept of these meetings. An annual progress report is provided to APAC. It is apparent that staff and postgraduate research students' understanding of these expectations and their implementation varied considerably across the University. For example, while minimum standards for supervision are clearly laid out in the Postgraduate Research Handbook, practice is variable; with differing approaches to supervision coupled with variability in recording supervision meetings. The establishment of the SGS provides an opportunity to promote awareness of the University's guidelines for the support of postgraduate research students and a greater consistency of practice across the University.

### **The effectiveness of the institution's approach to promoting the development of graduate attributes, including those relating to employability, in all of its students**

38 The University emphasised that at the heart of its Learning and Teaching Quality Enhancement Strategy (see paragraphs 115 to 120) is the belief that it is producing graduates who are equipped to cope with the complexities of life and work in the twenty-first century. To that end, the University believes that the Stirling graduate should possess the following graduate attributes: knowledge and skills within and between academic disciplines; critical and intellectually curious thinking; employability; and being active global and local citizens. Employability is understood in a broad sense as the development of higher level skills for multiple careers during graduates' working lives. These graduate attributes are considered by the University to reflect the aims of the Scottish Government's policy for the school sector's Curriculum for Excellence. This alignment of terminology and intentions has the potential to be helpful in communicating with Scottish schools and prospective students.

39 The University considers that the embedding of employability initiatives in the curriculum, along with co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, are key mechanisms for the development of graduate attributes. In relation to the formal curriculum, schools have the key responsibility for developing approaches to employability that are appropriate to the nature of their disciplines. Proposals for new academic programmes are required to include in the programme specification template an indication of the ways in which programme design and delivery includes consideration of employability. It is clear that employability is consistently addressed within new programme proposals.

40 The Career Development Centre (CDC) plays a key role in promoting employability initiatives in the curriculum. The Employability Adviser, located in the CDC, has assisted a number of schools in the development of internships and workplace experience for their students, and the Stirling Management School has seconded a member of staff to the CDC in order to develop placement opportunities for its students. Staff members from across the schools indicate that they are considering ways of incorporating experiential learning in the curriculum. For instance, the School of Natural Sciences in conjunction with the Students' Union

Nature Society is introducing a student-led certificate of employability in environmental conservation that is recognised by employers.

41 Overall, the University is taking an effective approach to the integration of employability into the curriculum, which is supported by the CDC, in helping schools to develop appropriate models for the incorporation of experiential learning into the curriculum.

42 The University identifies the Student Leadership Programme, personal development planning (PDP), and student volunteering as important in the co-curricular development of employability. The Student Leadership Programme, which was initiated by the Students' Union in 2009 in collaboration with the Centre for Academic Practice and Learning (CAPL) and the CDC, is a three-year personal development programme designed to build employability skills such as time management, public speaking, and team leadership. Students progressively develop their skills through the three levels of the programme and receive bronze, silver or gold awards upon the successful completion of each phase. However, during the ELIR, students suggested a limited awareness of the Student Leadership Programme. As such there would be benefit in the University considering ways of increasing students' awareness of the Programme and the opportunities that it provides for the development of employability-related competencies.

43 PDP, which is web-based, allows students to define an individual developmental plan for their academic, career and personal goals and their transferable skills, and to build up a personal development record and curriculum vitae. The University acknowledges that the development and implementation of PDP has achieved limited success to date. University staff indicate that a credit-bearing PDP module that is currently under development will allow students to map their experience to the University's graduate attributes. This may contribute to a more effective integration of PDP into students' learning programmes.

44 The CDC also offers credit-bearing volunteering modules that allow students the opportunity to develop employability-related skills. The CDC works with the Stirling Volunteer Centre and the voluntary sector in the Forth Valley to assist students who wish to do voluntary work locally. Additionally, the Sports Development Service supports students in training volunteers in sports-related activities across Scotland. Further afield, the Sports Development Service also runs a summer placement for students to teach sport and physical education in Lusaka, Zambia. The University's initiative in providing students with a range of opportunities to take part in voluntary projects makes a positive contribution to the promotion of employability, although the number of students participating is relatively modest. The University is encouraged to continue to explore ways in which students' experience gained from work-based learning can be further linked to the curriculum.

45 Overall, the University has made significant progress in providing opportunities to develop employability skills, and the CDC provides a comprehensive range of services to support this. The schools pay considerable attention to the employability agenda and to the integration of experiential learning into students' learning programmes. The University is encouraged to reflect further on the ways in which the co-curriculum may be used as a vehicle for the development of graduate attributes through mechanisms such as the Student Leadership Programme, as well as opportunities for volunteering. The University is encouraged to complement its strong focus on employability by considering how curricular and co-curricular activities can be used to promote and embed a wider framework for all graduate attributes.

### **The effectiveness of the institution's approach to managing the learning environment**

46 The University highlights that its Learning and Teaching Quality Enhancement Strategy (see paragraphs 115 to 120) is supported by the significant development of the University Library, which it is seeking to transform into 'a twenty-first century Library serving the information needs of twenty-first century students and scholars'. The transformation of the Library has involved three major strands of activity: refurbishment of the Library building; enhancing the scholarly content; and improving the delivery of services. The newly refurbished Library opened

in August 2010. The refurbishment of the Library includes the creation of a significantly increased infrastructure for collaborative or group study, including bookable group rooms, group study tables, and study pods. The significant enhancement of the University's library facilities has been positively received by students. Students consider that the use of new technologies in the Library, such as the use of mobile phone applications to inform students about the availability of computer work stations, has been a very positive development.

47 Students confirm that during the process of Library refurbishment the University's Information Services engaged constructively with the student body, and that students' views were significant in shaping the development of the new facilities. Students also confirm that Information Services have maintained effective communication with the student body, and that they had been kept well informed about changes in Library provision by email and through the virtual learning environment. Consultation with the student body has continued as the new facilities have been rolled out. For example, the Students' Union President has bimonthly meetings with the Director of Information Services, and the Vice President has regular meetings with the Director of E-learning. The Library is responsive to student feedback and works closely with students on new initiatives. Overall, the ways in which Information Services engage with students in developing its provision is very positive. The University is encouraged to consider how it might adapt this model for communicating and consulting with the student body when undertaking other projects to enhance the student experience.

48 Since the 2006 ELIR, the University has updated and replaced its virtual learning environment (VLE). The content of the VLE is comprehensive and includes, for example, information for students on induction, student learning services, student support services, and the Careers Development Service, as well as module evaluation questionnaires. Students consider that the updating of the VLE has been, on the whole, well managed, and that the VLE is effectively integrated into student life. Overall, the University's approach to managing the VLE is very effective.

## **The effectiveness of the institution's approach to promoting equality of opportunity and effective learning for all of its students**

### **General approach to equality of opportunities**

49 Since the 2006 ELIR, the University has consolidated its previously separate equality schemes relating to disability, gender and race into a Single Equality Scheme (SES). The purpose of the SES is to contribute to the creation of a supportive environment that enables staff and students to have equal opportunities to achieve their potential. Since 2010, all staff have been required to complete a module on equality and diversity training which familiarises them with the requirements of the SES, and the module is part of the induction process for new staff.

50 The SES indicates that a wide range of mechanisms are used to promote the University's commitment to equality and diversity, and to provide guidance and support on equality and diversity issues to students. The University has developed an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) Framework and toolkit as a means of evaluating its policies and procedures, and a number of equality impact assessments have been conducted, especially in the areas of campus services, human resources, and estates. The SES indicates the intention to have a regular dialogue between the Students' Union and University officers with responsibility for equality and diversity, in order to promote awareness of the policy and to ensure that students receive the necessary support to address their needs. In the SES annual report for 2010, the University identified a priority action point to improve communication with the Students' Union, and the University is encouraged to pursue this intention.

51 The University Diversity and Equality Group (UDEG) oversees the implementation of the SES, and uses an action plan to monitor progress. The UDEG provides a quarterly monitoring report as well as an annual report to the University Strategy and Policy Group. The Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC) includes diversity and equality-related matters in its business and, since 2007-08, the QEC's annual reports have included a section on these activities.

52 One of the goals of the SES is the promotion of equality in teaching and learning activities and within the overall student experience. As a result, a pilot project on the development of an inclusive curriculum was undertaken in three schools during 2010-11. As part of this project, a template has been developed which describes the characteristics of an accessible curriculum, and which makes reference to the Academic Infrastructure (guidance developed by QAA and the higher education sector). At the time of the current ELIR, two of the participating schools had completed the template as a means of assessing the extent to which the contents of the curriculum, as well as practices relating to induction, teaching, learning and assessment, promote inclusivity. The completed templates provide valuable perspectives on how the accessibility of the curriculum may be addressed from diverse disciplinary perspectives, and have the potential to make a substantial contribution to further work on embedding equality and inclusion in the curriculum and arrangements for teaching and learning. There would be benefit in the University considering how the outcomes of the pilot project can contribute to the consideration of equality and diversity matters in programme approval and review processes, and also to the development of training resources for academic staff; these having been identified in the SES action plan as areas for development.

### **Widening access**

53 While the Single Equality Scheme signals the University's commitment to widening participation, the Learning and Teaching Quality Enhancement Strategy (LTQES) (2010-15) action plan refers specifically to the development of recruitment targets for students from local and niche further education (FE) colleges, and the development of partnerships with FE colleges in targeted areas. The University has a validation agreement with Forth Valley College, which provides an articulation route for students from the College to complete the fourth year of the BA (Hons) Media and Communication Practice and the BA (Hons) Art and Design degrees at the University. The first group of students from Forth Valley College commenced their studies during 2011-12. Students from this articulation route indicated that they appreciated the support provided by academic staff in helping them to make the transition to the University, though they also expressed a desire for induction arrangements more tailored to their needs.

### **Students with disabilities**

54 Approximately 7 per cent of the University's students have a declared disability. The University employs a number of consultative methods to assess the adequacy of its arrangements for addressing the needs of disabled students. The Equality Forum, which meets each semester, is attended by the Senior Deputy Principal, and reports to the University Diversity and Equality Group. In addition, the University conducts an annual disabled students' survey to canvas the views of these students on the adequacy and accessibility of information, services and infrastructure. The most recent survey was conducted during 2009. Findings from the disability surveys have had a strong influence on the development of the Single Equality Scheme, and also on the steps that the University has taken to provide an integrated disability service, and to improve the accessibility and adequacy of facilities to support disabled students. As part of the enhancement of provision, an Assistive Technology Adviser has been appointed within Student Development and Support Services (SDSS) to provide training for students with alternative needs in the use of assistive technologies. In addition, SDSS has a register of personal learning assistants, consisting of students from their second year upwards, who are available to provide various types of support to disabled students.

55 At the school level, each school has a disability coordinator who provides advice to disabled students, helps to coordinate arrangements for students with alternative needs, and acts as a point of contact with the central administration on matters such as specialist support and arrangements relating to assessment. The University has developed a resource pack to assist school disability coordinators in the fulfilment of their role. Overall, since the 2006 ELIR the

University has achieved a more integrated disability service. The benefits of this have been recognised and have played a key role in ensuring that student support needs in this area are met consistently and effectively across the University. Overall, it is clear that students who declare their disabilities are well supported.

### **The effectiveness of the institution's approach to supporting and developing staff to promote effective learning for their students**

56 In its Learning, Teaching and Quality Enhancement Strategy (LTQES) for 2010-15, the University commits itself to the provision of a high quality annual programme of staff development that will update staff with current learning, teaching and assessment methods. The Centre for Academic Practice and Learning (CAPL), established since the 2006 ELIR, is responsible for the provision of professional development programmes that play a key role in achieving this objective. Each semester, CAPL offers a module on teaching, learning and assessment practice in higher education which is mandatory for new members of academic staff, and also offers an optional module for graduate teaching assistants and postgraduate students involved in teaching and supporting student learning. Staff and students regard these modules as a useful mechanism for developing their understanding and competence, with some graduate teaching assistants remarking that the module improved their teaching skills significantly.

57 The mandatory module for new academic staff forms part of the new optional Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP), which was introduced in autumn 2011. This part-time qualification is available online to lecturers, research fellows, graduate teaching assistants, and staff who support student learning, and will be accredited by the Higher Education Academy against the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education. At the time of the ELIR, six staff members were enrolled on the full PGCAP programme, while an additional seven staff were undertaking the first module. Overall, staff undertaking the PGCAP are positive about the programme, although they also indicated that further consideration should be given to allowing greater flexibility in module choice to take account of previous experience. The University is currently considering whether the PGCAP should be made compulsory for new members of academic staff, and is encouraged to give further thought to this matter, as the PGCAP represents an important vehicle for the professionalisation of teaching and learning.

58 Arrangements for staff induction vary considerably across the University. At the institutional level, the Human Resources division provides a voluntary half-day orientation programme for new staff. Within schools practice varies, with some offering a formal, organised induction process and others using an informal approach. In some schools mentors are appointed for new staff, while in others mentoring is provided on an informal basis. Academic staff indicated a range of experiences of induction, and recognised that a degree of flexibility at the school level was appropriate. While maintaining the benefit of flexibility in staff induction arrangements, the University should ensure that induction arrangements are sufficiently consistent to provide all members of academic staff with an effective orientation to their professional role as educators, and that appropriate support systems are in place within each school to provide guidance to new staff members.

59 At the school level, the Achieving Success programme provides a mechanism for staff to define and review their goals on an annual basis, and assess the extent to which they have achieved them. Because the programme is still being implemented, staff perceptions of its usefulness vary. In some schools, the Achieving Success programme plays a valuable role in helping staff to define and plan around their developmental needs, and is approached primarily as a peer review discussion. In other cases the process seems to be approached more as a compliance exercise. The lack of an institutional framework for the Achieving Success programme contributes to its variable implementation, and the University is encouraged to develop clear guidance relating to the programme and its use as a mechanism for staff development.

60 CAPL runs the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme for experienced staff members, and also provides bespoke training opportunities for staff in specific schools. Experienced staff indicated that they were aware of development opportunities, provided both by CAPL and external agencies, but also suggested that the uptake of such opportunities was limited due to a perception that research was prioritised over learning and teaching, both in day-to-day activity and with regard to longer term progress and promotion.

61 The introduction of CAPL has contributed significantly to the provision of staff development opportunities. However, it has a relatively small staff contingent of 3.5 full-time equivalent staff members, two of whom are responsible for staff development, while the other staff members support the Student Learning Services. CAPL is exploring various strategies to strengthen its capacity, including the provision of online training and the secondment of staff from academic schools to CAPL for specific projects. In addition to supporting such strategies, the University is encouraged to reflect upon the capacity requirements of CAPL in view of the strategic role it plays in the professional development of its staff.

62 Overall, the University has improved the opportunities for staff development. The University is encouraged to take steps to ensure that processes such as staff induction, staff development, and performance management are implemented with sufficient consistency at the school level.

### **The effectiveness of the institution's management of the student learning experience on collaborative programmes**

63 The number of students on programmes delivered through collaborative agreements (excluding articulation arrangements) is relatively small. The number of full-time equivalent students in collaborative programmes has declined slightly from 390 in 2009-10 to 310 in 2011-12. For 2011-12, 61 per cent of enrolments in collaborative programmes are located in Oman, 19 per cent in Singapore, and 14 per cent in China. All of these agreements fall under the responsibility of the Stirling Management School.

64 The University states that in all collaborative arrangements the Memorandum of Agreement ensures that there are clearly stated obligations on the partner institution to ensure that suitable student feedback mechanisms are in place, and to provide evidence that this feedback informs further action and development. Any matters for improvement should be picked up through the student:staff consultative committees (SSCCs) (see paragraphs 20 to 21) and the Admissions, Progress and Awards Committee (APAC).

65 Each collaborative programme has a staff member from the participating institution and from the University appointed as programme directors to jointly oversee the operation of the programme (see paragraphs 109 to 114). The University programme director is required to visit the partner institution at least once a year to discuss the operation of the collaboration. In the case of articulation agreements, the discussion includes students' preparation for the third and fourth years of study at the University, while in the case of franchise agreements it includes staff development to ensure the quality of the programme as well as the adequacy of library, IT and other resources at the institution. Similarly, in the case of validation agreements with other UK institutions, the programme director periodically visits the institution to confirm the quality of educational provision and the maintenance of academic standards. In addition, staff from partner institutions periodically visit the University to discuss the curriculum, staff development, student support, and other pertinent issues.

66 Matters relating to the student experience on collaborative programmes are identified through the SSCCs, and through cohort analysis by APAC. The Management Information Project (see paragraph 17) will deliver improved data capturing at the admission stage, and this should enable better tracking of students in collaborative programmes. This development is an important step in ensuring that the University has the necessary systems in place to use student data effectively to provide a consistently high quality learning experience in its collaborative programmes.

## Institution-led monitoring and review of quality and standards

### Key features of institution-led monitoring and review at the institution, and the extent to which these arrangements meet sector-wide expectations

67 The University's approach to institution-led monitoring and review is encompassed within a quality framework which covers a wide range of policies and procedures that seek to establish and maintain academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience. Information on the University's quality framework, which is well designed and comprehensive, is available through the web portal. The University highlighted that its use of the Academic Infrastructure is central to the management of academic standards and quality, and that the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)* serves as a key reference point in informing policy development. The University identifies that its processes for Learning and Teaching Review, annual programme review, and module review are key elements of its approach to institution-led monitoring and review.

68 The University states that at programme, divisional and institutional levels, executive functions are generally carried out by designated officers, with academic decision making residing within formally constituted University and school committees and subcommittees, each of which utilises appropriate external advice and benchmarks (see paragraphs 93 to 96). The University further states that the quality and academic standards of its educational provision are most effectively assured by academic staff on the basis of peer scrutiny and expert opinion.

69 The Policy, Planning and Governance (PPG) Office has operational responsibility for monitoring quality assurance and academic standards, including the scrutiny of: external examiners' reports; annual programme review and monitoring; and the operation of academic partnerships. PPG provides an annual report to the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC) and any matters that impact on aspects of policy are referred to the QEC for consideration.

70 Each school has an underpinning committee structure with particular focus on learning and teaching as well as research. Heads of school have responsibility for: the efficient planning and delivery of the schools' modules and programmes of study; the assurance and enhancement of provision; the monitoring and review of teaching and research supervision; and responding to external examiners' reports. Fortnightly meetings of heads of schools with the Senior Deputy Principal enable regular discussions of matters associated with learning and teaching to be addressed.

### Learning and Teaching Review

71 Until 2009-10 the University operated a rolling programme of Departmental Review, which encompassed all aspects of departmental operations including learning and teaching, organisation and strategy, resources, and research. Following internal reflection on the periodic review process, including consideration of the recommendations in the 2006 ELIR report, this review process was revised to give greater priority to and emphasis on the review of learning and teaching. From 2010-11, the University introduced a rolling programme of Learning and Teaching Review which it considers is consistent with, and meets the requirements of, the Scottish Funding Council's guidance for institution-led quality review.

72 Learning and Teaching Review includes scrutiny of all credit-bearing provision at both undergraduate and postgraduate level, and for all modes of study including any collaborative provision, continuing professional development, and continuing education provision, as well as the supervision of research degrees. All the University's provision is reviewed over a five to six-year cycle. At the time of the current ELIR, the University indicated that more work on the appropriate level of aggregation (for example, at programme or subject level) was being undertaken to maximise effectiveness of the review process.

73 A key feature of Learning and Teaching Review is the self-evaluation document, with detailed guidance on its preparation being provided by Policy, Planning and Governance. Students from the relevant student:staff consultative committee (SSCC) are invited to contribute to the review process by submitting a document detailing any matters which they would wish the review panel to be aware of. The review panel also meets with representative student groups during the review visit, which is normally conducted over one day.

74 The review panel is composed of a Deputy Principal (who chairs the panel); the Director of the Centre for Academic Practice and Learning (CAPL); a head of division, or director of learning and teaching from another division; an external adviser, who is a senior academic in the subject area; and a student representative, who is normally a Students' Union sabbatical officer. For reviews conducted during 2010-11, the same sabbatical officer served on all of the panels. There would be benefit in the University reflecting on ways in which greater student reviewer capacity could be developed to support the Learning and Teaching Review process.

75 The review panel reports to the QEC. The review report, which is a public document, includes recommendations for action and identifies good practice for wider dissemination. The division under review produces a response to the review report and both documents are formally approved by the QEC, which also monitors the division's follow-up actions. The division is also required to submit an interim response to the QEC during the review cycle, updating on progress made with the recommendations. The QEC produces an annual statement which seeks to identify areas of good practice as well as areas for further development, and these annual statements are available for reference on the University's quality assurance website. Overall, the University's revised Learning and Teaching Review process meets the Scottish Funding Council's guidance for institution-led quality review, and evidence from the early reviews indicates that the process is effective.

### **Annual programme review and monitoring**

76 The University's arrangements for annual monitoring have been reviewed on a number of occasions in recent years, including in 2008-09 to ensure alignment with the Code of practice. From 2009-10, new procedures for annual review were put in place, with an overt focus on programme-level review and enhancement and with module review now involving more opportunities for reflection and discussion at divisional committees rather than through formal reporting.

77 Annual programme review involves programme directors for each single honours and taught postgraduate programme of study reflecting upon the year's provision and includes consideration of: the outcomes of module reviews; feedback from external examiners; student achievement data; and students' views (module evaluations, the NSS, and SSCCs). These annual programme review reports are then considered by the school's learning and teaching committee and SSCC and reported to the PPG office, which monitors any necessary actions.

78 For module reviews, module coordinators are required to consider a range of evidence, including student module evaluations, feedback from external examiners, and SSCCs. Each semester the outcomes of module review are discussed at the school's learning and teaching committee, with any necessary actions being reported to the divisional committee and to the SSCC. The head of school, their nominee or the appropriate divisional committee is responsible for ensuring that appropriate follow-up action is taken and reported back to the SSCC (see paragraphs 20 to 21). Academic staff confirm that the module review process now has a greater emphasis on reflective discussion, and that this has been beneficial.

79 In 2004 the University established a Quality Archive, a web-based resource for the outcomes of annual monitoring. The 2006 ELIR report asked the University to give further thought to the Quality Archive's intended audiences, and how to facilitate greater accessibility to this resource. In response, the University agreed that an annual executive summary of review and

monitoring outcomes would be placed on the front page of the Archive, and that the location and appearance of the Archive would be enhanced. These annual reports are readily accessible, although staff indicated that their immediate usefulness is not yet fully realised.

80 Overall, the University's arrangements for the annual review of programmes and modules are clear and comprehensive, with appropriate action planning and follow-up.

### **The extent to which the institution's monitoring and review arrangements include consideration of all students**

81 The University indicated that it aims to ensure that all students have a voice, and that they have direct input in formulating learning and teaching policy and practice. As such, the University identified a number of important mechanisms for capturing the views of all students: module review; student:staff consultative committees (SSCCs); external surveys; and student feedback from collaborative programmes. For example, schools may exercise flexibility in the arrangements for SSCCs, convening separate committees for different modes of study (see paragraphs 20 to 21). For collaborative validated programmes, the University stated that it places a high degree of importance on suitable student feedback mechanisms so that such feedback informs programme enhancement.

82 Senior staff confirmed that the monitoring and review arrangements for all programmes are broadly the same, irrespective of location, and students from all three of the University's campuses confirmed that arrangements for review and for student feedback were very similar. The University is mindful that students on off-campus programmes are likely to be studying in very different contextual circumstances, and states that they seek to treat such students equitably. For example, while the module feedback form for distance learning students includes the same core questions as for all student groups, it also includes a further set of questions which reflect students' off-campus location.

83 Overall, the University takes effective steps to ensure its monitoring and review arrangements include consideration of all students.

### **The effectiveness of the institution's approach to self-evaluation including the use made of external reference points**

84 The University identified the Academic Infrastructure and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) as key external reference points in relation to its approach to institutional self-evaluation. The University indicated that the *Code of practice* is used as a key reference point for policy development, identifying that the University's policies were mapped against the *Code of practice* in 2002-03 and again in 2004-05. Relevant sections of the *Code of practice* also inform the continuous review and development of University policies such as the annual programme review process and the policy on academic misconduct. The University further indicates that a staged review of current policies is being undertaken by the Policy, Planning and Governance (PPG) Office.

85 The University highlighted the use of external reference points in the programme approval process, identifying in particular subject benchmark statements, market intelligence, involvement from employers and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs), and the expertise of external examiners. The University considers this to be a robust approach. The University considers that a division's self-evaluation document is fundamental to the Learning and Teaching Review process (see paragraphs 71 to 75). External reference points for this include the *Code of practice*, subject benchmark statements, the SCQF, and other reports and publications by professional, accrediting or funding bodies as appropriate.

86 Other major projects which exemplify the University's approach to self-evaluation include the review of its degree credit structure in 2003-04 in relation to the SCQF. The University further identifies that its degree credit structure was reconsidered again in 2008-09, as part of the

academic portfolio review (see paragraph 10), and also taking cognisance of the recommendations of the 2006 ELIR report. A significant outcome of this project included the introduction of a more uniform postgraduate credit structure.

87 Overall, the University makes effective use of external reference points as part of its approach to self-evaluation.

### **The effectiveness of the institution's approach to the management of information to inform the operation and evaluation of its monitoring and review activity**

88 Regular reports are produced by the Student Administration Office in a range of areas, including student enrolments, progression, and achievement, to support monitoring and review activity (see paragraph 16). Regular reports are provided to heads of school, and schools are able to request particular data-sets in areas which might inform strategic developments at school or programme level.

89 The University notes that as part of the Public Information on Quality initiative, and the anticipated European Diploma Supplement, a University template for programme specifications has been developed in line with the Scottish Funding Council and QAA guidance. The template is used for all new undergraduate and postgraduate programme proposals, as well as for the cycle of Learning and Teaching Reviews (see paragraphs 71 to 75).

90 The University is currently undertaking a significant review of its management information system which includes work on a Business Information Project, led by the Policy, Planning and Governance (PPG) Office (see paragraph 17). The Management Information Project will enable schools to develop their own reports and a customised view of the data to inform monitoring and review activity in the context of changes in a strategic direction.

91 Overall, the University's approach to the management of information to inform monitoring and review activity is effective, and the Management Information Project has the clear potential to further strengthen the institution's use of data to support these processes.

### **The effectiveness of the institution's approach to setting and maintaining academic standards including the management of assessment**

92 The University is confident in the effectiveness of its approach to setting and maintaining academic standards. The activities which underpin this approach include module and programme design and approval and the development and approval of the academic regulations for the award of degrees and other qualifications, including the regulations for assessment and external examining. The University's policies relating to academic quality and standards are published in its Academic Quality and Standards Handbook which is made available on the University website. The regulations, approved by Academic Council and published in the University Calendar, govern the award of degrees.

### **Committee structure**

93 The 2006 ELIR report encouraged the University to keep the remit and operation of its committee structure under review, and since then a number of changes to the committee structures have been made. Academic Council retains overall authority for quality assurance and academic standards, and responsibility for discussing and approving the Learning, Teaching and Quality Enhancement Strategy (LTQES) for 2010-15 (see paragraphs 115 to 120). It is supported in this role by two committees: the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC) (see paragraphs 121 to 124) and the Admissions, Progress and Awards Committee (APAC). The former Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Committee (ASQAC) was discontinued in 2008-09.

94 The QEC has responsibility for the University's enhancement agenda, development and approval of academic policies and regulations, consideration and approval of modules and programmes, approval of collaborative agreements, and monitoring of the LTQES. Both the QEC and its Programme Business Subgroup are chaired by the Deputy Principal (Learning and Teaching).

95 APAC has overall responsibility for a range of matters, including: student admissions, retention, progression and awards, including the collection and monitoring of data relating to both on-campus and collaborative provision and for both taught and research students; the determination of admissions policy, decision-making with respect to awards; and referral of issues on regulatory and procedural changes in respect of progression and awards to the QEC. The University's boards of examiners make recommendations to APAC regarding awards and classifications and there is evidence that APAC's role helps to ensure consistency of decision-making in respect of awards.

96 Academic Council receives annual reports from QEC and APAC which provide an overview and evaluation of their annual activities. Overall there is evidence that the University's committee structure is effective and that these committees are discharging their responsibilities in line with their respective terms of reference.

### **Module and programme approval**

97 The processes for approval of modules and programmes are published in the Academic Quality and Standards Handbook. Modules are approved through the school learning & teaching committee (or equivalent). Following approval, schools submit the proposal forms to the Policy, Planning and Governance (PPG) Office confirming the date of approval. Programme approval takes into consideration the use of external reference points such as the SCQF and subject benchmark statements. Externality in the approval process continues to be provided through the University's external examiners. The QEC devolves programme approval and modification to its Programme Business Subgroup, which was formed in 2008-9. The University considers that the creation of this Subgroup has allowed for a clearer focus on this element of QEC's business and has addressed the recommendations of the 2006 ELIR. Overall, the University's arrangements for programme approval are effective, and have been strengthened by the creation of the QEC Programme Business Subgroup.

### **External examining**

98 The University regards its external examiners as playing a central role in assisting it to maintain academic standards and in assuring the quality of provision. The University's arrangements for external examiners apply to both on-campus and collaborative programmes. The role of the University's external examiners, which has been reviewed since the 2006 ELIR, is to ensure that the academic standards of its awards are comparable with other UK higher education institutions, and that they are appropriate in relation to the SCQF and national subject benchmark statements; as well as ensuring that the processes for assessment, examination and awards are sound and fair. External examiners participate in assessment of all modules at SCQF level 9 and above, and are full members of boards of examiners. The University's policies and procedures relating to external examiners are set out in two handbooks: the Handbook for Taught Provision and the Handbook for Research Degrees. The University has appropriate procedures for the nomination and appointment of external examiners for both its taught and research degrees. Academic Council is notified of external examiner appointments biannually.

99 External examiner reports for taught programmes follow a template and are submitted electronically. Schools are expected to respond as part of the annual programme review and monitoring process (see paragraphs 76 to 80). External examiners' reports and schools' responses are also considered as part of the Learning and Teaching Review process (see paragraphs 71 to 75).

Serious institutional matters are forwarded by the school to the Deputy Principal (Learning and Teaching). PPG produce a summary report for consideration by the QEC. In terms of research degrees, reports and recommendations from examining committees are considered by the Admission, Progress and Awards Committee. Overall, the University's external examining system is secure.

100 The University's management of assessment is summarised in its Code of Practice for Assessment and Examination of Students' Work for Taught Programmes. The Code is divided into three sections: Assessment; Boards of Examiners; and External Examiners, and is kept under review by PPG on behalf of the QEC. The University's institution-wide scheme for calculating honours degree classifications, and its common grading scheme for undergraduate and taught postgraduate work, assist the University in promoting consistency of assessment practice.

101 The University has recently approved the merger of its policies on Plagiarism and Use of Unfair Means into one Academic Misconduct Policy. The University believes it is proactive in seeking to minimise incidences of plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct, and students indicated that they are made aware of the University's policy on Academic Misconduct.

102 Overall, the University's arrangements for setting and maintaining academic standards are secure.

### **The effectiveness of the institution's approach to managing public information about quality and academic standards, including the linkage with the institution's monitoring and review arrangements**

103 Information about quality and academic standards is published on the University's website in accordance with its Publication Scheme, through which the institution makes as much information publicly available as possible. The Policy, Planning and Governance (PPG) Office has responsibility for the Scheme and also oversee the production of annual statutory data reports, such as those to the Scottish Funding Council and the Higher Education Statistics Agency. Other key strategic documents, such as the University's Strategic Plan for 2011-16, are the responsibility of designated officers and are made available on the University's website, having been approved as appropriate through the Academic Council or the University Court.

104 Responsibility for the production and management of information for prospective and current students is shared between central services and the schools. Development and External Affairs oversee the publication of a range of internal and external publications including prospectuses. They also have responsibility for providing guidance on the use of corporate identity and the University logo, and are responsible for the University's website. The University Calendar, which contains the Regulations, is the responsibility of Policy, Planning and Governance.

105 The University has specific arrangements in place for public information related to its collaborative provision, as set out in the Memorandum of Agreement for each partnership. While the arrangements vary for each type of collaborative partnership, in general the University retains oversight of any information published in relation to its awards.

106 Overall, the University has appropriate procedures in place for the management of public information about quality and academic standards.

### **The effectiveness of the institution's approach to linking its monitoring and review processes to its enhancement arrangements**

107 The University is confident that it links its monitoring and review processes effectively to its enhancement arrangements through the Learning, Teaching and Quality Enhancement Strategy (LTQES) for 2010-15 operational action plan, which sets out action priorities, timescales, and indicates who is responsible for undertaking these actions (see paragraphs 115 to 120).

108 The University's module review process informs its programme review process, which in turn links to the Learning and Teaching Reviews (see paragraphs 71 to 75). Good practice identified through the Learning and Teaching Reviews is disseminated to schools for consideration by their learning and teaching committees. However there seems to be fewer opportunities to share and embed good practice between schools, although this is partly satisfied by the remit and operation of the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC). Overall, the University is striving to link its monitoring and review processes to its enhancement arrangements and is partially successful in this aim.

### **The effectiveness of the institution's approach to monitoring and reviewing its collaborative activity**

109 The University publishes a register of its collaborative agreements and academic associations on its website covering both UK and overseas partnerships,. The University distinguishes between four main types of collaborative arrangement: articulation, validation, franchise, and joint development. The largest number of partnerships are articulations, with both UK and international partners, which allow students from partner organisations to transfer into the University's programmes. The University has one long-standing franchise arrangement with an international partner and five validation arrangements with UK and international partners, including an embedded college arrangement with a private provider on-campus that provides appropriate validated progression routes for international students. The University's collaborative provision includes double/dual awards with two European partners, and a small number of jointly delivered programmes leading solely to an award from the University.

110 The University's procedures for developing collaborative agreements are published on its website. New collaborative arrangements and academic associations are initially given approval in principle through submission of an outline proposal from the relevant school to Policy, Planning and Governance, which in turn reports all approvals in principle to the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC). Following approval in principle, detailed negotiations with the partner are undertaken. In the case of validation, a panel including an external panel member visits the proposed partner institution, and reports back as part of the approval process. Full proposals, which include a draft Memorandum of Agreement (MoA), a programme specification, an accompanying case for the proposal and, in the case of validation, the panel's report, are approved through the QEC following input as necessary from central service teams. Due diligence forms part of the requirements of the approval process. Following approval, the final version of the MoA is signed and dated. Suitably qualified staff within partners who teach on University awards are appointed as recognised teachers of the University.

111 The MoAs conform to standard University templates which cover each of the four main types of partnership. They are generally valid for up to four years. MoAs outline the specific arrangements governing the management of the partnership and typically outline the responsibilities of the partner and of the University, including: the arrangements for quality assurance, delivery, assessment and management of programmes; oversight of information including promotional materials; and financial information. There is clear evidence that the process of preparing MoAs is rigorous, and that the finalised Agreements are comprehensive.

112 Collaborative arrangements are overseen by a programme committee, and managed by a named University programme director and a counterpart within the partner organisation. Programme directors are responsible for producing the annual programme review which programme committees consider in the same way as those for on-campus provision. Collaborative programmes are also considered through the University's Learning and Teaching Review processes. External examining procedures for programmes offered by a partner organisation are the same as, or demonstrably equivalent to, those used by the University for its own programmes. These procedures are specified and documented in the MoA.

113 Additionally, collaborative programmes are monitored through reports to the Admissions, Progress and Awards Committee (APAC), where statistics relating to student progression, retention and achievement are monitored in comparison to those achieved across the University as a whole, with any necessary action being referred to the relevant school. These steps taken by the University to monitor the achievements of overseas student cohorts demonstrate an active and positive approach.

114 Overall there was evidence that the University's arrangements for its collaborative provision are appropriate and the monitoring and review of this provision is generally effective.

## **Strategic approach to quality enhancement**

### **Key features of the institution's strategic approach to quality enhancement**

115 The University's strategic approach to quality enhancement is set out in the Learning, Teaching and Quality Enhancement Strategy (LTQES) for 2010-15 which has been developed to support the University's strategic goal of 'excellence in learning, teaching and quality enhancement'. The LTQES was approved in 2009 and builds upon the previous LTQES (2006-09). The University's Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC) has oversight of the development and implementation of the Strategy (see paragraphs 121 to 124). The University highlights that its strategic approach to quality enhancement is consistent with the principles that underline the University's Strategic Plan for 2011-16.

116 The University states that the LTQES encompasses the institution's approach to both quality enhancement and assurance, which it sees as interlinked, and identifies three key areas of activity that underpin the Strategy: the student experience; quality enhancement; and quality assurance. A number of strategic objectives are identified under each of these key areas, the majority of which are highly relevant to the enhancement of the student experience. Staff indicate that the LTQES had been subject to widespread discussion and consultation in its development.

117 The LTQES identifies six themes for development during the period 2010-15: employability; managing the transition into the University; accessibility, equality and inclusion; research-teaching linkages; international and community experience; and the important principle of ensuring the quality of learning and teaching. The University notes that the six themes are not wholly exclusive to each of the three key areas underpinning the LTQES, but considers that they do add value and reflect priorities for action within the period covered by the Strategy.

118 The LTQES is accompanied by an action plan that sets out a series of action points, allocates a priority to each (low/medium/high), indicates the individuals, units or committees responsible, and sets milestones for their completion. The action points vary considerably in nature and complexity, and in some cases the links with quality enhancement or assurance activity appear indirect. The action plan also lists a series of recommendations from the Academic Portfolio and Delivery Review (see paragraph 10), five of which are listed as 'high priority'. Overall, there are 10 'high', 17 'medium', and two 'low' priority action points while some action points have no priority rating. Taken together, these constitute a substantial number of actions, particularly in the context of the recent academic restructuring (see paragraph 9).

119 The 2006 ELIR report commented on the earlier LTQES, and recommended greater prioritisation of activity and greater clarity in determining how the aims of the Strategy might be achieved. There is evidence that the University has begun to address these matters, although there would be benefit in the University reflecting on how the LTQES and the action plan might achieve a clearer focus on quality enhancement, and also on the ways in which quality assurance and enhancement are interlinked in policy or practice within the Strategy.

120 The restructuring of the University has been accompanied by the revision of the Strategic Plan for 2011-16 and, in turn, the development of a new far-reaching Internationalisation Strategy (see paragraph 127). The LTQES slightly predates the Strategic Plan and the

Internationalisation Strategy, and may consequently need to be reviewed. Other related strategies at University and school levels are under development, along with action plans and targets. The University is encouraged to keep under review the cohesion of institutional-level strategies in order to ensure coordinated operational planning.

## **The effectiveness of the institution's implementation of its strategies and policies for promoting quality enhancement across the institution**

### **Quality Enhancement Committee**

121 The University states that the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC) has the key role in the development and oversight of the Learning, Teaching and Quality Enhancement Strategy (LTQES) for 2010-15. Therefore the effectiveness of the implementation of the LTQES depends upon the QEC and other mechanisms in place to support it. Membership of the QEC includes the directors of learning and teaching from each of the schools (see paragraphs 131 to 135). These directors provide a key link between the University and school enhancement priorities and activities. Since the 2006 ELIR the University has reviewed the remit of the QEC, and devolved some of its quality assurance matters to a subgroup (see paragraph 97). This has enabled the QEC to engage more fully with quality enhancement matters.

122 The QEC is also supported by the work of the Admissions, Progress and Awards Committee (APAC). The University notes that responsibility for the implementation of strategies and policies for promoting quality enhancement lies with APAC and the schools and service units. The University emphasises APAC's role in monitoring key performance indicators and trend data, and these provide feedback on the extent to which the aims of the LTQES are being realised. The results of discussions within APAC are passed to the QEC for further deliberation and, if necessary, action.

123 The Policy, Planning and Governance (PPG) Office is instrumental in updating the LTQES action plan for consideration by the QEC and in monitoring progress reports of the plan. At the time of the current ELIR, there was evidence of slippage in some areas. While some of the action points had been overtaken by further developments, much of the work remained ongoing, with several requests for updates and outstanding progress reports.

124 There is clear evidence that the QEC gives regular consideration to progress with the LTQES. The QEC also notes examples of good practice identified in Learning and Teaching Reviews and in the annual reports from non-academic units such as Information Services and the Centre for Academic Practice and Learning (CAPL). However, there are no readily identifiable formal mechanisms by which this good practice is routinely disseminated across schools and service departments, and the sharing of good practice depends upon the actions of individual members of the QEC. There would be benefit in the University considering how this dissemination could become more formalised and thus more embedded.

### **Progress with the LTQES themes**

125 Student employability is a well established theme within the University, and was initially driven from within the Careers Development Centre (CDC) in the form of a series of optional career-planning modules and other workshops for students. As new programmes have been developed and existing ones been reviewed, academic staff have worked with CDC staff to incorporate employability skills within the curriculum, embedding them within the disciplinary context. Overall, the expertise of the staff in the CDC is recognised and sought by academic staff (see paragraphs 40 to 45).

126 The University highlights that a key feature of its approach to quality enhancement includes being increasingly research-led, and schools have been asked to formulate action plans for developing research-teaching linkages that reflect the nature of their subject and student bodies. At the time of the current ELIR, only the School of Natural Sciences had formally

progressed its action planning for promoting research-teaching linkages, although a number of examples of the incorporation of this theme were provided by other schools. For example, in several instances research skills had been incorporated into the earlier years of programmes rather than focused in the final years of study. Additionally, Information Services have worked in cooperation with academic staff to develop practices to support this theme.

127 To date, the International and Community theme has been addressed in different ways across the University, reflecting the absence of an institution-wide organising strategy. The University has recognised this and a revised Internationalisation Strategy was under development at the time of the ELIR. Senior staff indicated that a number of strands would be addressed in the finalised Strategy, including increased overseas student numbers and new and extended strategic partnerships with institutions in other countries. The Strategy will also have an enhancement dimension and promote international student exchanges, internships, and work placements where appropriate. School learning and teaching committee minutes indicate that work is already progressing in this area in several schools. Other initiatives were concerned with engagement with the community. For example, the optional module 'Active learning in the community' allows students to gain credit for participating in voluntary work (see paragraph 44).

### **New school structure**

128 At the time of the ELIR, the new school structure had only recently been implemented, and adjustments were still ongoing. Academic staff expressed a range of views on the new school structure. Some staff were concerned that the new structure had created an additional layer of management that made decision making further removed from the local level than previously, and there was a perception that senior committees and their activities were less visible. Other staff viewed the restructuring more positively, considering that it had improved lines of accountability and created greater synergies between disciplines. More specifically, staff considered that there was already more open debate across the divisions, improved lines of communication with school directors of learning and teaching, and better communication with students.

129 At the time of the ELIR, the new committee structure was not fully operational in all schools. In some instances, schools were continuing to operate along previous lines, retaining the committee structure (including learning and teaching committees) and procedures of the earlier departments. The new school learning and teaching committees have been in place for less than one year, and the University recognises that schools are only beginning to address and disseminate policy in line with the Learning, Teaching and Quality Enhancement Strategy (LTQES) for 2010-15 and QEC priorities, although there was clear evidence that enhancement activities were being actively discussed by the school learning and teaching committees.

130 It is evident that staff are still adjusting to the new structures and procedures. On balance, the majority of academic and support staff are positive about the new school structure. There is evidence of more communication within the schools and an impetus to develop new programmes and learning experiences for students. As the new structures and processes embed, they are likely to support the University's enhancement strategy.

### **School directors of learning and teaching**

131 As part of the restructuring, school directors of learning and teaching (DLTs) have replaced the departmental directors of learning and teaching as members of the QEC. The DLTs are responsible for 'leading, stimulating, influencing and supporting good practice in learning and teaching on behalf of the Head of School'. The relationship between the DLT and their Head of School is therefore a significant one and provides the role with the authority required to address the enhancement agenda.

132 The DLTs are considered to play a key role in the dissemination of good practice and the implementation of strategy at the school level. Academic staff confirm that the role provides a key link between University and school levels with regard to learning and teaching policy and practice, and for disseminating good practice identified in other areas of the University or externally. The DLTs are able to draw on perspectives from internal sources to disseminate good practice at the school level, including learning and teaching reviews, annual programme review and monitoring, external examiners' reports, and external sources such as the national Enhancement Themes, while reporting good practice from the school to the QEC. Some schools also hold seminars to promote the discussion of good practice. However, academic staff members indicated that as yet there is limited evidence of good practice being shared within and among schools.

133 In practice, the DLT remit has been interpreted differently across the schools. For example, there is no university-wide agreement on the time allowance for the role, in part due to the absence of a consistent workload model across schools. Typically, the DLT allocation is notionally in the range of 0.2 to 0.4 full-time equivalents (FTE). Nor is there any formal and systematic support or development opportunities for DLTs in undertaking their role.

134 Some academic staff indicated a concern that the number of DLT posts had been reduced, as the establishment of a school structure has resulted in a diminution to seven DLTs on the QEC (as opposed to 15 departmental DLTs), and each DLT was expected to engage with more staff within a similar time allowance. Additionally, some considered that the DLT role was perceived as more administrative than pedagogic, with an emphasis on communication and administration, and this was considered to be a backward step. Several academic staff considered that academic restructuring had slowed progress on enhancement, in that prior to restructuring, DLTs had begun to develop departmental action plans but this activity had been disrupted. Other staff considered that the DLT role was still evolving and that it would be reviewed through the Achieving Success performance review process (see paragraph 59).

135 Given the pivotal nature of the DLT in the delivery of the institution's enhancement agenda, the University is encouraged to monitor the evolution of the role, and to ensure that it remains focused on supporting innovative approaches to learning, teaching and assessment in line with strategic aims. The University should also take steps to ensure that the DLTs are able to play an optimal role in the dissemination of good practice.

### **Schools' enhancement planning**

136 The University has set out its intention to establish corresponding school-level strategies and action plans. Each school has been charged with developing a learning and teaching plan and a timetable for action which reflects the University's strategic aims and priorities. At the time of the current ELIR, one school (the School of Sport) had completed this, and two other schools had produced draft strategies and action plans. The School of Sport has produced a LTQES plan for 2010-15 and an LTQES review report for 2010. Both documents reflect the University's priorities, and outline how they might be realised at a local level. The School of Arts & Humanities was in the early stages of developing a draft strategic plan. The School's Learning and Teaching Action Plan for 2011-12 outlines key enhancement activities, the responsible member(s) of staff, progress to date, and further action to be taken. The plan uses a 'traffic lights' system of monitoring progress. Again, this plan made explicit reference to enhancement of the student experience, including the development of internships, international exchanges, and bids for Higher Education Academy teaching development grants. The School of Education's Strategic Plan for 2009-14, while not yet fully aligned to the University's Strategic Plan for 2011-16 and the LTQES, is comprehensive and accompanied by a detailed action plan, and makes clear reference to enhancement activity including innovative teaching and assessment strategies.

137 The documents from the three schools demonstrate commitment to the enhancement of learning and teaching. The strategic areas identified reflect the main themes of the LTQES, tailored to local needs and interests. Although documentation from the remaining schools was not available at the time of the ELIR, there is evidence from the schools' learning and teaching committees that the development of learning and teaching plans was under discussion.

138 The University is encouraged to progress the development of school-level planning as a matter of priority in order that developments within schools are framed by, and coordinated with, the University's key institutional strategies. While some variation in the format of school plans and strategies may be necessary to accommodate particular subject and disciplinary emphases, greater consistency in format would facilitate institutional oversight. The University is therefore encouraged to consider providing guidance to schools aimed at aligning school and institutional strategies.

### **The effectiveness of the institution's use of external reference points in its approach to quality enhancement, including the extent to which the institution's approach is informed by national and international practice**

139 The University identified a number of key external reference points that it has used to inform its approach to quality enhancement: the national Enhancement Themes; a range of external student surveys; and the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*. Additionally, the University states that it has used a series of horizon-scanning reports, considered by University Court and Academic Council, to ensure that its approach to quality enhancement is informed by national and international developments.

140 The University is active in a number of external surveys of student opinion (see paragraph 26), which it considers to be important reference points for establishing enhancement priorities and for assessing the impact of enhancement activity. The findings from these are scrutinised in review processes and enhancement action has been taken in response to some of the key outcomes. For example, induction and orientation programmes for international students have been strengthened, and improved internet access in student residences provided in order to address issues raised in the International Student Barometer.

141 The University identifies the national Enhancement Themes as a key reference point in the development of its Learning, Teaching and Quality Enhancement Strategy (LTQES) for 2010-15 and corresponding action plan. The University considers that it has been attentive to the Themes and that a number of initiatives have drawn upon the Themes' published outcomes as well as the input of Themes' champions and experts, and that University staff have been active in Themes' events. The University also highlights that its annual learning and teaching conference, Edufair, has focused on targeted Themes. The University states that it has engaged with four of the national Enhancement Themes: Graduates for the 21st Century (with particular regard to employability); the First Year; Research-Teaching Linkages; and Assessment. Funding provided to the University to support the national Enhancement Themes has been used to support a series of innovative projects through the Stirling Enhancement of Learning Fund (SELF) (see paragraph 147). Proposals for projects aligned to specific Themes are submitted to the University, and successful applicants are expected to present their findings at the annual Edufair conference.

### **The effectiveness of the institution's approach to identifying, disseminating and implementing good practice in the context of its strategic approach to enhancement**

142 The University identifies a number of its arrangements as central to its approach to identifying, disseminating and implementing good practice. These include: the operation of the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC) and the schools' learning and teaching committees; the directors of learning and teaching; the Centre for Academic Practice and Learning (CAPL); the Stirling Graduate School (see paragraph 34); and the Students' Union Teaching Awards Scheme, RATE (see paragraph 148) .

143 The University identifies that one of the ways in which good practice is identified and disseminated is through the formal committee structure, primarily through the QEC and the school learning and teaching committees, to which the outcomes of quality assurance processes are reported. Service units are also required to produce annual reports for the QEC. Senior staff highlighted some initiatives, such as e-learning practices and the 'Listen Again' initiative, which have been identified and adopted by other schools as a result. The school directors of learning and teaching (DLTs) (see paragraphs 131 to 135) are viewed as instrumental in communicating good practice identified by the QEC to their schools. However, outwith the formal committee structure, there is no formal mechanism by which DLTs can share experiences and good practice. Therefore the potential for sharing good practice through the outcomes of monitoring and review processes is not fully realised. There are clear examples of enhancement practice within the schools, and the University should explore further ways in which these can be disseminated more widely.

### **Centre for Academic Practice and Learning**

144 The Centre for Academic Practice and Learning (CAPL) is a university-wide resource, and it has the dual role of providing staff development opportunities and academic support for students (see paragraphs 56 to 62). CAPL has also been involved in the dissemination of the work and outcomes of the national Enhancement Themes. Senior staff consider that CAPL has an important role in disseminating innovative approaches to learning, teaching and assessment as well as providing support to individual students or members of staff.

145 CAPL is considered by the University to be a key component in the implementation of the institution's enhancement strategy, and its remit is substantial. However, it has a small staff complement, supplemented by student interns who undertake administrative and clerical duties, and this limits the extent to which CAPL can support the enhancement strategy. The University is encouraged to monitor the demands on CAPL against their capacity to deliver effectively on the quality enhancement agenda.

146 CAPL also hosts the annual Edfair conference (see paragraph 141), which was introduced in 2001 as the key opportunity for staff to showcase and share good practice relating to teaching, learning and assessment, and to hear invited keynote speakers. The conference is currently attended by between 50 and 60 staff members. At the time of the ELIR visit, the University was considering including the RATE awards (see paragraph 148) in the Edfair programme with the aim of extending participation.

147 In 2010 the University introduced the Stirling Enhancement of Learning Fund (SELF) under the auspices of CAPL, in order to fund projects relating to the scholarship of teaching and learning. Four projects, which are integrally related to the national Enhancement Themes, were funded during 2010; a second round of SELF projects was being undertaken during 2011. Participants in SELF projects are required to present the outcomes of their project at the annual Edfair conference. The SELF scheme has the potential to make an important contribution to the University's work around the scholarship of teaching and learning.

148 In 2011, the Students' Union launched the Recognising Achievement in Teaching Excellence (RATE) award. The aim of the award is to promote and praise high quality learning and teaching across the University, and to acknowledge staff who have made a significant impact on students' learning and teaching. The University recognises the contribution that RATE makes to the dissemination of good practice across the institution.

149 Overall, University staff are supportive of the enhancement agenda, with considerable innovation taking place in areas linking to the national Enhancement Themes and in response to feedback from internal and external student surveys. The University is encouraged to consider how it can strengthen its mechanisms for capturing and sharing good practice across the institution.

## **The effectiveness of the institution's approach to enhancing collaborative provision**

150 The University identifies that it has relatively few and carefully chosen academic collaborations with external organisations (see paragraph 11). The University emphasised that its approach to enhancing collaborative provision follows the same strategic principles that apply to arrangements within the University. The University's collaborative programmes are overseen by their respective programme committees, and are considered through annual module and programme review and monitoring, as well as through the periodic Learning and Teaching Review process (see paragraphs 71 to 75) As such, collaborative programmes benefit from the quality assurance processes, and in turn the quality enhancement activities that arise from those processes, in the same ways as for on-campus programmes.

## **Conclusion**

### **Effectiveness of the institution's management of the student learning experience**

151 Overall, the University has effective systems for student representation. The Students' Union collaborates effectively with the University through its representation on University committees and academic policy working groups. There is also a well established system of class representatives through the student:staff consultative committees (SSCCs). While the SSCC arrangements generally work well, there is some variability across the schools in how the outcomes of these meetings are reported back to students, so that the feedback loop is not closed in all cases; and the University is encouraged to take steps to address this. One school is piloting a student school officer system and the University is encouraged to consider the benefits of extending this arrangement to other schools.

152 The student support services have responded effectively to the strategic changes in the student demographic profile. As the student profile continues to change, the University is encouraged to plan proactively for future student needs. The University's Management Information Project has the clear potential to improve the accessibility and utility of student-related management information. It is also likely to strengthen information management in support of planning, monitoring and review activities.

153 Over recent years, the University has taken steps to integrate the work of the Student Development and Support Services, including the Disability Service, which has had a positive impact on the student experience. The recent establishment of the Stirling Graduate School has also been positive, providing an important opportunity for the University to promote greater consistency of practice through increasing awareness among staff and research students of the University's Code of Practice for the Support of Postgraduate Research Students.

154 The University has made notable progress in embedding employability into the curriculum, and the Career Development Centre (CDC) has played a key role in supporting this activity. The University is encouraged to develop a more comprehensive framework for promoting and recognising the development of graduate attributes through curricular and co-curricular activities.

155 Information Services has developed a positive pattern of student engagement including ensuring that the development of new facilities and initiatives has been informed by student views. The University is encouraged to consider ways of adapting this model of communicating and consulting with the student body so that it might be adopted in other parts of the institution.

156 The University uses internal module questionnaires to gather student feedback on their learning experience, and is encouraged to continue exploring ways of improving the response rate. In relation to external surveys, such as the National Student Survey, the University is asked to reflect on the ways in which the SSCCs could engage more systematically with consideration of the survey outcomes in order to support action planning.

157 The University's expectations in relation to the management of assessment are set out in its Code of Practice for Assessment and Examination of Students' Work for Taught Programmes. In conjunction with the Students' Union, the University is also developing a Code of Practice on the provision of feedback to students on their assessed work. This is a positive step which has the potential to clarify the University's expectations and to promote greater consistency of practice across the institution.

158 Through its Centre for Academic Practice and Learning (CAPL), the University provides a range of training and development opportunities for new and existing staff. The University is asked to keep under review the balance between mandatory and discretionary elements of staff induction and development. There would also be benefit in the University clarifying its expectations regarding staff participation in learning and teaching-related continuing professional development.

### **Effectiveness of the institution's arrangements for institution-led monitoring and review of quality, and academic standards of awards**

159 Overall, the University's arrangements for the annual review of programmes and modules are clear and comprehensive, with appropriate action planning. The revised Learning and Teaching Review process is comprehensive and effective, meeting the expectations of the Scottish Funding Council's guidance for institution-led quality review. The University also has an effective approach to self-evaluation, including the use of a range of external reference points.

160 The University has appropriate arrangements for setting and maintaining academic standards. These include an effective committee structure, which has been revised in recent years with beneficial effect, and a robust external examining system. The University's arrangements for programme approval are effective, and the delegation of this business to a subgroup of the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC), has allowed a clearer focus on this business.

161 As part of the annual monitoring arrangements for its collaborative provision, the University considers statistics on the progression, retention and achievement of students on collaborative programmes against comparable data for the University's student population as a whole. This is a positive and proactive approach to maintaining the academic standards of the University's awards.

### **Effectiveness of the institution's implementation of its strategic approach to quality enhancement**

162 Overall, the University's revised committee structure has enabled the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC) to have effective oversight of the University's quality enhancement activities. There would be benefit in the University reflecting on how its Learning and Teaching Quality Enhancement Strategy, and the accompanying action plan, could achieve a clearer focus on quality enhancement and on the ways in which it could link quality assurance with enhancement. At the time of the ELIR, a number of key institutional strategies were at different stages of development and the University is encouraged to continue reviewing the cohesion of these strategies as they are developed in order to support a coordinated approach.

163 The University has indicated that schools will develop learning and teaching plans. At the time of the ELIR these plans were at different stages of development, although they indicated a clear commitment to enhancement, and were broadly aligned with the University's Learning and Teaching Quality Enhancement Strategy. Overall, academic and support staff are positive about the potential opportunities that the new school structure affords for the delivery of the University's enhancement agenda. The new role for school director of learning and teaching has the potential to establish a pivotal link between the schools, and the University in the delivery of its enhancement strategy. The University is encouraged to keep the role under review in order to ensure that it remains focused on supporting enhancement. There are many examples of effective enhancement activity within the schools and the University is encouraged to explore additional ways in which these can be disseminated more widely.

164 The Centre for Academic Practice and Learning (CAPL) has a substantial role in delivering the University's quality enhancement strategy. Given the breadth of the remit involved, there would be considerable benefit in the University ensuring that CAPL has sufficient capacity to contribute effectively to the aims of the Learning and Teaching Quality Enhancement Strategy.

### **Overarching confidence judgement**

165 The findings of the ELIR indicate that there can be **confidence** in the institution's current and likely future management of the academic standards of the awards it offers and the quality of the student experience it provides.

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