

Thematic Report on Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) Reports 2013-15: Transitions into University

Introduction

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

Scope and structure of this report

This report identifies material relating to transitions into university within the first twelve reports published in the ELIR 3 cycle. The institutions included in this report are: the University of Aberdeen; the University of Dundee; Edinburgh Napier University; Glasgow School of Art; Glasgow Caledonian University; the University of Glasgow; Queen Margaret University; the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland; Scotland's Rural College (SRUC); the University of St Andrews; the University of Strathclyde and the University of the West of Scotland.

This report summarises the more detailed findings included within the ELIR Technical Reports. Please note this report draws on the ELIR reports from the twelve institutions only. It is possible that good practice or areas of development are present in other institutions. It is also possible that additional practice takes place in these twelve institutions, but only those elements of practice included within the ELIR Technical Reports is included here. The report subsequently includes the areas of positive practice and the areas for development identified in the ELIR Outcome Reports, before it briefly outlines the next steps in the ELIR process, following the publication of the reports.

The annex includes references to transitions into university within the ELIR Technical Reports. The paragraph numbers used in the annex are taken directly from the original reports.

Transitions into university: Activity to promote good practice

This section identifies current interesting practice at the twelve institutions as identified in the ELIR Technical Reports.

Articulation

The University of Aberdeen's strategic plan identifies targets for widening participation through flexible entry routes and increasing the number of programmes offering further education articulation routes by 30 per cent. The number of students progressing to the university through articulation agreements has increased considerably over the past three years, while the University has established a number of new articulation arrangements with college sector institutions in Scotland. Further to this, during the time of its review, the

University was exploring potential new 2+2 articulation partners in India, Sri Lanka, China, Kazakhstan and Malaysia.

The University of Dundee was awarded additional student numbers for 2013 entry by the Scottish Funding Council to support widening access and articulation.

Edinburgh Napier University has 240 formal articulation agreements with eight colleges in Scotland and 29 formal articulation routes with international partners from eight countries. In 2013 an Associate Student Scheme was established to strengthen the University's approach to articulation. Edinburgh Napier is a member of the Edinburgh, Lothians, Fife and Borders Regional Articulation Hub (ELRAH). In 2013-14 887 new undergraduate entrants joined the University from Scottish colleges, and in 2014-15 565 students entered the University with advanced standing. For students entering through a formal articulation route, there are a range of pre-entry interventions on offer, including drop-in lectures, team teaching with college staff, campus visits and the use of social media. A Coming from College resource can be accessed through the University's virtual learning environment and is open for any student to self-enrol. This online support tool is designed to help college students negotiate the transition from college to university, and provides additional signposting to relevant services, such as employer mentoring, study abroad and study skills support.

Edinburgh Napier University staff work with college students from the time at which they begin their college studies, and students articulating from college partners are given Associate Student status, where they are able to drop in on normal timetabled University lectures to give them a first-hand insight into different teaching styles that they may expect. On arrival, Student and Academic Services signpost college students to relevant services, including study skills support. The progress of students joining the University through articulation routes is monitored, with progression and retention being reviewed. Project work in this area is currently being funded as part of the Student Transitions Enhancement Theme.

Glasgow Caledonian University has seen a significant increase in the number of Higher National Certificate and Diploma (HNC/D) students articulating into years 2 and 3 of its undergraduate programmes, from 490 in full-time education (FTE) in 2011-12 to 834 in 2012-13. The Scottish Funding Council also awarded the University an additional 157 articulation places for the 2013-14 academic year. Support for transition from the colleges into the University is provided through the University's College Connect Academy. Data suggests that the University increased the proportion of entrants from a disadvantaged background from 32 per cent of the total student population to 34 per cent in 2014. By 2015-16, the University hopes to have articulating students representing a third of the total undergraduate intake.

Queen Margaret University was a founding member of the Lothian Equal Access Programme for Schools (LEAPS) and engages in a number of widening participation initiatives. The East Lothian Hospitality and Tourism Academy, of which the University is a managing partner, supports articulation into higher education. More academies were about to be launched according to the University's ELIR report. Eight per cent of full-time entrants to the University articulate from an HNC or HND. Further to this in 2012-13, 13 per cent of Scottish domiciled-students were from the twenty most deprived areas as measured by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD); 15 per cent were direct entry students; and 17 per cent were from low progression schools.

The Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) ELIR report highlights that SRUC has chosen to develop fully integrated tertiary provision, with a view to maximising the opportunities for articulation and progression. SRUC's legacy colleges had a number of articulation

agreements in place with colleges across Scotland, and SRUC has indicated that it was in the process of renegotiating these agreements with the newly formed regional colleges. The ELIR report identifies flexible entry and seamless progression as defining characteristics of SRUC, and the institution is committed to improving the number and range of such opportunities for learners.

The University of Strathclyde has been developing international articulation routes, such as the provision of facilitated entry to the third year of undergraduate programmes for students from partner institutions in countries such as China, India, Malaysia and Pakistan. The University is engaged effectively in local outreach and widening participation, with new initiatives to promote advanced entry to level 2 or 3 of undergraduate programmes being developed across all faculties, in collaboration with schools and further education colleges. The aim of the initiative is to break down the barriers for college students articulating to higher education and enhance skills in this student group. The University has stated its aim to increase articulation in the local area further, as evidenced in its updated Widening Access strategy, which includes plans for a 30 per cent increase in the number of entrants from local colleges by the 2015-16 academic year.

The University of St Andrews ELIR Technical Report states that articulation is not a common entry route into the University, although there are a small number of agreements with local colleges, such as the Perth College Pathway to Medicine, and agreements with Fife College and Dundee and Angus College, allowing HNC-qualified applicants direct entry into the second year of a BSc.

Its ELIR report indicates that the University of the West of Scotland has the highest percentage of students articulating from further into higher education, and the highest proportion of students from the SIMD 20 areas in Scotland (with over 22 per cent of the University's Scottish full-time student population coming from SIMD 20 areas). In addition, partnerships with the college sector have resulted in an increase in the number of students entering the University with advanced standing, from 1,172 students in 2010-11 to 1,219 students in 2012-14, the latter representing nearly 12 per cent of all full-time undergraduate entrants. Potential articulating students are provided with pre-entry advice, and an induction programme is run for those students entering with advance standing. The University has also been supporting the definition of the learner pathways from college to the University. Students on a learner pathway, irrespective of whether they are on a specific articulation route, can be associate students of the University, a status which allows them access to University learning resources.

Widening access

The University of Aberdeen established a widening participation working group in February 2013 to develop a framework to promote widening participation from pre-application to post-graduation. Related to this, the University is developing partnership working to engage with school pupils at an early stage of their school career, in order to raise aspirations and attainment.

The University of Dundee delivers a number of outreach initiatives aimed at widening participation, including its 'Discovering degrees' programme for pupils from low progression secondary schools and the Dundee University Access to Learning (DUAL) Summer School, which is particularly aimed at MD40 students, and helps to prepare and qualify applicants for entry to a range of undergraduate programmes by providing academic and study skills support.

The University of Glasgow ELIR report notes the University's successful track record of recruiting and supporting widening participation students, due to its use of contextual

admissions and the range of initiatives in place to support the induction of students. The ELIR Technical Report indicates that students who had participated in the Top Up programme, which helps secondary students to develop academic skills in support of their transition to and retention in higher education, were very positive about the support they received. Students who attended the Summer School or the Top Up programme have higher continuation rates than those MD20/40 students who have not attended any pre-entry programmes. The University has now also developed the MD40 Group, which draws its membership from both academic and student-facing service areas of the University, to promote an integrated approach to supporting the success of widening participation students. The group is looking at a range of monitoring and intervention strategies specifically for the MD40 cohort.¹

Glasgow Caledonian University's ELIR Outcome Report identified the successful promotion of widening participation and student transitions as a positive practice. This has been demonstrated through its progression and retention data, and by the University's range of activities, such as the College Connect Strategy, which is designed to enhance and support students entering University from college. The Caledonian Club, which is organised by the University, provides targeted community engagement. The University also provides contextualised student support through its Learning Development Centres.

Glasgow School of Art has recently appointed a progression manager to support its strategy to increase the numbers of non-traditional students progressing into the School from further education colleges.

At the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in 2013-14 22 per cent of the undergraduate students and 28 per cent of postgraduates were recruited from SIMD 20 and SIMD 40 backgrounds. Processes are in place for admitting students who are outstanding performers but have not met the usual academic entry criteria. The Conservatoire's strategic plan also embraces institutional policy relating to widening access and lifelong learning, as well as equality and diversity. There is evidence that students from a wide variety of backgrounds and learning support needs are enabled to make the transition to study at the Conservatoire. In discussion with the ELIR team, students reported a strong sense of community within the institution, indicating that diversity was 'part of the norm' and that there were no barriers to access or inclusion. The ELIR Technical Report also noted that the Conservatoire actively welcomes applications from mature students and students with additional learning support needs, with a range of specialist staff available to provide support to specific groups of students. A range of positive activities were also noted in the ELIR Technical Report, such as the Conservatoire's work with Solar Bear Deaf Youth Theatre to develop training pathways for deaf actors.

To ensure that the University of Strathclyde's ambitious targets for widening participation are consistently met, from 2013-14 the institution is using contextual data in admissions. Such data include the applicant's postcode, and their school to higher education progression rate, as well as their care background. This information is drawn both from application forms and publicly available datasets, and is used to ensure that the context in which qualifications were obtained is appropriately understood and considered throughout the admission process.

The University of St Andrews' positive approach to widening participation, and equality and diversity, were noted as areas of positive practice in the ELIR Outcome Reports. The University runs a number of 'gateway' programmes for students who do not meet the minimum entry requirements due to educational disadvantage. These programmes offer additional tuition to students and, upon successful completion, students can enter a Physics

¹ University of Glasgow 2013-14 ELIR Case Studies, available at: www.gla.ac.uk/media/media_298620_en.pdf.

and/or Computing Science degree. The University increased the number of scholarships and bursaries given to entrants from 79 in 2009-10 to 321 in 2013-14. Financial aid and other support is targeted to those students with the greatest financial need. During the 2015 ELIR visit students who had entered from articulation and widening participation backgrounds indicated that the support they had received during their transition into the University was effective and that the variety of programmes for support met their needs. A number of academic schools offer specific outreach programmes within low progression schools, providing support with UCAS applications, personal statements and aspiration-raising. The University also offers an evening degree programme, where a number of places are allocated for students entering through the Scottish Wider Access Programme, offering a flexible route to a general degree. Students who enter the University from a further education articulation or an access route are provided with dedicated mentoring for their first year through a peer mentoring system and an access-aware Advisor of Studies. The University's work with people leaving care or living in caring contexts has been recognised through the Buttle Quality Mark.

Retention

At the University of Aberdeen, non-continuation rates and first year retention rates have both improved. The University uses the Personal Tutor System to support students and promote their retention. The University's 2011-15 Strategic Plan sets a target of improving overall retention rates to four per cent better than the University's benchmark figure.

Admission, pre-entry and induction

Before a student enrolls at the University of Dundee, applicants are given access to the University's virtual learning environment, email system and student management system, to provide them with generic and subject-specific information and advice. The University's 'Welcome Week' is designed to support students in their transition to higher education through a variety of social and other events, with tailored induction and orientation events at school and college level. Postgraduate and international students also participate in their own specific induction events.

During the Edinburgh Napier University ELIR review, students said that support services were embedded at induction, and that support services were well signposted and available through the University's intranet. A recent review of the University's Admissions Policy resulted in plans to implement a contextual admissions policy from 2016. Other widening participation initiatives include supporting care leavers and the MD20 students' two-week pre-entry scheme. International students are also supported in a number of ways, with English language provision offered to students whose first language is not English.

Glasgow Caledonian University's ELIR Technical Report identified that research students receive specific induction, along with development workshops and research writing skills support. The University's Outreach and Community Engagement department deliver a number of programmes, including the Advanced Higher Hub, to support transition from schools to higher education. The Hub delivers advanced higher awards to senior school pupils from the University's partner schools and is based on the University's Glasgow campus. The Hub provides pupils with full access to the University's facilities and gives them the chance to experience student life, which will aid them should they go on to attend university.

Queen Margaret University provides various pre-entry and induction programmes to support students from widening participation groups, such as QMAvance, QMAssist, QMConnect and MentorNet. QMAvance is a three-day orientation programme particularly aimed at widening participation students; QMAssist is an induction programme for direct entrants;

and QMConnect and MentorNet, run by Student Services, are face-to-face and online mentoring schemes. The University also hosts an international induction day prior to the start of the general induction week. The Effective Learning Service also offers international students support in English language through a four week pre-session course. The University has a Transition and Induction working group to oversee its induction processes. There are several elements to the University's approach, including an induction website, the use of continuing students as helpers throughout Induction Week, and mentoring through QMConnect.

The ELIR Technical Report of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland noted that it actively welcomes applications from mature students and from students with additional learning support needs. Students have access to a range of specialist staff, covering areas including international student support. Once identified, additional support needs are set out in each student's Learning Agreement. Entry with advanced standing, for example where students already have Higher National qualifications, is not currently a significant admissions route.

In meetings with the ELIR team, University of Strathclyde students commented very positively on the quality of their induction programmes. The University plans to strengthen support for international students by expanding the range of pre-arrival information provided to prospective international students. The buddying system recently introduced in Psychology was cited as a successful initiative that could be replicated in other departments.

International students

SRUC produces helpful pre-entry guides to provide EU and other international applicants with pre-arrival information. Specialist support is also available to international students on one specific programme, and all international students are able to access the support services provided by the wider learning and teaching teams.

In addition to the articulation arrangements with international institutions, the University of Strathclyde launched the Strathclyde International Study Centre. The Centre is based in Glasgow and at the time of the 2014 ELIR review there were 73 students studying on foundation programmes designed to prepare international students for entry to undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes.

The University of St Andrews provides a variety of English Language Teaching programmes for students who are not native English speakers. There is also provision for students to learn about the cultural and philosophical basis for academic policies and what this means in practice within a Scottish higher education institution. The Students' Association of the University hosts an International Students' Reception and offers events hosted by student societies featuring a wide diversity of groups.

Transitions into university: Areas for development

While most examples relating to transitions into the institution provided in the ELIR Technical Reports were of positive practice, a number of areas for development were also identified.

This section of the paper outlines the areas for development relating to transitions into a higher education institution in both the ELIR Technical Reports and the ELIR Outcome Reports.

University of Aberdeen

The ELIR Technical Report noted that, at time of the 2014 ELIR visit, the University did not monitor the non-continuation rates for part-time students. Senior staff acknowledged that this should become part of the annual data, and the University was encouraged to progress

these plans. The ELIR Outcome Report also recommended that the University should consider the access for part-time students to student support services, such as the Student Learning Service, out of core hours.

Queen Margaret University

The ELIR Technical Report noted the positive aspect of the various pre-entry and induction programmes that the University provided, such as QMAvance, QMAssist, QMConnect and MentorNet. Students who experienced the pre-entry and induction programmes gave positive feedback about the support, however they would have appreciated more course specific information.

Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)

The SRUC ELIR Technical Report noted that the institution would need to ensure it has systematic arrangements for identifying additional specialist support to meet the particular needs of international students at all of its campuses, particularly if international student numbers increased as intended.

Data on student progression is considered at individual programme level within SRUC, however, at the time of the 2014 ELIR, there was limited consideration at institutional level to inform admissions and student support arrangements.

The ELIR Outcome Report also specifically highlighted induction and mentoring as an area for development, with a recommendation for SRUC to progress plans to implement an institution-wide approach to staff induction and to mentoring.

University of the West of Scotland

The Technical Report notes the University's plans to have a phased reduction in the amount of articulating students and asks the University to consider the potential impact of this change on its widening participation policy, particularly given the institution's success in providing education to many traditionally 'difficult to reach' student groups.

Areas highlighted in the ELIR Outcome Reports

In ELIR 3, Outcome Reports identify areas of positive practice and areas for development. Below are examples of these areas of positive practice and development that are related to transitions into university.

Positive practice

University of Aberdeen

Systematic student support: There is an institution-wide Inclusive Curriculum Toolkit, which provides advice for staff on good practice in curriculum design, delivery and assessment, with staff engagement in equality and diversity being promoted through events.

University of Dundee

Proactive student support: The University is successful in supporting a diverse student population. Academic and professional services provide integrated support across individual services for all students, both pre and post-enrolment, as well as effectively targeting support for particular student groups. Feedback from students is particularly positive in relation to Disability Services, the Careers Service and the Library and Learning Centre. There is a proactive approach to supporting the progression and development of postgraduate

research students. In particular, these students are very positive about the support provided by thesis monitoring committees and the generic skills training delivered by Organisational and Professional Development.

Widening participation: The University has an effective approach to recruiting and supporting the entry of students from non-traditional backgrounds. It provides a range of opportunities, including articulation routes and the Dundee University Access to Learning (DUAL) Summer School. This programme provides academic and study skills support for students, particularly those from non-traditional backgrounds, who may lack the standard qualifications for entry into the University. Students accessing the University via the DUAL Summer School commented positively on the effectiveness of the programme in preparing them for study at the higher education level.

Edinburgh Napier University

Personalised student experience: The University is meeting its strategic objective to provide an excellent personalised student experience. The personal development tutor role is key to achieving this aim, and there is a strong partnership between academic and professional support staff. In addition to students being actively engaged in their learning experience across the University, there are some positive examples of students being engaged as co-creators of the curriculum.

University of Glasgow

Strategic approach to widening participation: The University has a successful track record in recruiting and supporting widening participation students, and has in place a range of widening participation initiatives. In particular, students who had participated in the Top Up programme were very positive about the support they received. The programme helps secondary school pupils to develop academic skills in support of their transition to and retention in higher education. The University is now developing its strategic approach to widening participation by creating the MD40 group, which brings together academic and support staff from across the University to promote an integrated approach to supporting the success of MD40 students.

Use of data to support student progress: The University undertakes detailed analysis of student data in relation to MD40 students. This enables it to identify those students who may need additional help, and to provide targeted support without such students being aware that they are being singled out in any way. The University now intends to expand this successful approach to supporting student progress to include its international students.

Glasgow Caledonian University

Development of a clear vision and engagement of University community:

The University's vision, 'commitment to the common good', is reflected in institutional strategies and by the engagement of staff and students. The vision therefore acts as a driver for activity and is reflected in the culture of the organisation.

Successful promotion of widening participation and student transitions: The University has a positive and successful approach to promoting widening participation and supporting a wide variety of student transitions into the institution. This is demonstrated through its progression and retention data, and by the University's wide range of activities, including implementation of its College Connect Strategy, designed to enhance and support students entering the University from college, and the Caledonian Club, which provides targeted community engagement as well as an opportunity for current GCU students to act as a mentor for school pupils.

Contextualised student support: Learning Development Centres are embedded within each school to provide support for students that is contextualised, targeted and accessible. There is sharing of experience between the three Learning Development Centres (LDCs) to further support the enhancement-led approach. The Academic Development Tutor role is key in this context, providing discipline-specific support and working in partnership with programme teams. As the University has recognised, there will be value in reviewing the sustainability of this model as increasing numbers of students seek to access the service.

Glasgow School of Art (GSA)

Student support: GSA provides a wide range of support services, which are accessible and well signposted, and which are well regarded by students. Support services are subject to annual monitoring, periodic review and internal audit, as well as being benchmarked externally.

Queen Margaret University

Enhancing the student learning experience: There is an institutional culture of accessibility and responsiveness to students, by both academic and professional services staff. The collaborative approach taken between different support services, and with the academic staff, is effective in enhancing the student learning experience.

Enhancement in learning and teaching: The Centre for Academic Practice makes a significant contribution to enhancing the student learning experience through its work in developing and supporting learning and teaching.

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

Student support: There is a holistic approach to providing support for individual students, including academic and pastoral support. This enables students to achieve their potential. Student support services are managed centrally and student access to them is coordinated through a single enquiry desk.

Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)

Commitment and progress towards creating a tertiary institution: SRUC has adopted an approach to creating a tertiary institution that is characterised by consultation with staff and a genuine willingness to listen and learn from good practice in each of the former institutions. SRUC has developed four key education strategies, which have the clear potential to integrate activities and educational opportunities across the institution. SRUC has restructured to bring about integration of further and higher education provision through curriculum departments. There is improved communication and cross-working between the Education, Consultancy and Research divisions, and across campuses, which are benefitting students and staff.

Network of student support: There is a network of easily accessible and highly supportive campus-based and central learner and learning support services, as well as campus-level senior tutors. At the programme level, good practice from two former arrangements (advisers of study/course tutors) is being combined to develop a year tutors' arrangement, which is another positive example of SRUC drawing on experience across the legacy institutions. This support network provides students with advice on curriculum content, personal tutoring and personal development planning. Students are positive about their experience, highlighting the accessibility and responsiveness of the academic staff.

University of St Andrews

Positive approach to widening participation: The University has a wide range of initiatives and activities aimed at raising aspirations and promoting widening access to higher education. There are effective arrangements in place to support students who enter the University from a widening participation background, in line with the University's intention to be academically, but not socially, elite.

Integrated student advice and support: Integrated student support is provided through the 'one stop' Advice and Support Centre, which incorporates a range of formerly separate service areas. It also provides links between the professional services and academic staff to create a more holistic service for students covering academic and pastoral dimensions, for example through the Academic Alert system.

Promotion of equality and diversity: The University has a range of activities in place to support equality and diversity in the curriculum and in the wider student experience. Schools in the Science Faculty, in particular, have engaged with a range of sector awards, and the University is encouraged to progress with its plans to involve the whole institution in this activity. There is an institution-wide Inclusive Curriculum Toolkit that provides advice for staff on good practice in curriculum design, delivery and assessment, with staff engagement in equality and diversity being promoted through events and a project exploring diversity in undergraduate teaching. The University has plans in place to require all students to complete an online diversity training module as a condition of matriculation from 2015-16.

University of Strathclyde

Approach to widening participation: The University has a strong commitment to widening participation, as demonstrated by its proactive outreach strategies and collaborative initiatives, which are specifically designed to support non-traditional students in accessing the University.

University of the West of Scotland

Widening participation: There are well-established relationships with schools and colleges that facilitate successful transitions to the University for students from non-traditional backgrounds. A range of activities aimed at widening participation are carried out, including providing access to University learning resources for groups of college students, who are given associate student status. Student mentors who had participated in the 'Routes for All' programme, an initiative that provides academic and study skills support for senior year high school pupils, were very positive about their experience.

Culture of personalised learning support: The University has developed a suite of activities and initiatives aimed at improving progression, retention and engagement, in alignment with its strategic aim to provide a transformational student experience. This approach includes compulsory and supported personal development planning, and the introduction of school enhancement developers across all schools to promote student engagement. Both of these activities are designed to link with the Personal Tutor System.

Systematic approach to equality and diversity: Staff are required to consider and address equality and diversity issues in all module descriptors and programme specifications, ensuring a systematic approach to their identification and resolution.

Areas for development

University of Aberdeen

Support for a more diverse student population: In the context of the University's plans to promote widening participation and diversify its student population, progress a range of intended actions, including those relating to internationalisation, and broadening its analysis of progression rates to include part-time and postgraduate students. The University is also asked to consider the access for part-time students to student support services, such as the Student Learning Service, out of core hours.

University of Dundee

Recognition of prior learning: Progress the planned review of assessment policy, including the policy for the recognition of prior learning. In particular, the University should ensure that, following the review, policy relating to exemptions granted for the award of second taught postgraduate master's degrees meets sector expectations.

Glasgow School of Art (GSA)

Provision of information: Progress the work being undertaken by senior staff in each of the three schools to review the provision of information for students. GSA should ensure that students on all programmes have access to comprehensive and user-friendly information, in addition to programme specifications, about their programmes of study and other aspects of academic provision at GSA.

Queen Margaret University

Personal tutor system: Evaluate the revised Personal Academic Tutor system as a mechanism for delivering personal development planning, in line with the University's intentions.

Virtual learning environment: Address student concerns about the accessibility and extent of module information on the University's virtual learning environment, the Hub.

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

New curriculum: In the context of a range of positive developments relating to the new undergraduate curriculum, ensure the purpose and role of transitions tutors is clearly defined and understood by staff and students. In particular, the Conservatoire should clarify the role of transitions tutors in providing advice to support students in fulfilling their learning contracts. There would also be benefit in the Conservatoire considering the ways it can work to manage the likely increase in student demand for elements of the new curriculum, including Bridge Week projects and popular 'Choice' modules.

Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)

Management of information: Ensure the data being collected is valid and reliable, following work to integrate legacy data management systems. SRUC needs to ensure it can make comparisons between programmes and within programmes, and to disaggregate data relating to students studying on different modes, for example to identify any differences in progression and completion rates. In addition, SRUC needs to use the information set for comparison against national norms and to inform decision-making, policy and practice at institutional, department and programme levels.

Assessment: As part of its planned work to improve assessment and feedback policy and practice, ensure there is greater consistency in the content and layout of programme handbooks and module descriptors, particularly with regard to the information provided on the nature and submission dates of assessments, and to ensure that all staff are familiar with and fully apply SRUC assessment practices.

University of St Andrews

Engaging with the student experience: Continue to reflect on the extent to which all students can engage with the St Andrews student experience, in the context of a more diverse student body, including those who live some distance from the University.

University of Strathclyde

Curriculum flexibility: Continue to explore ways in which there can be increased flexibility to enable more students to engage in the types of innovative and active experiential learning that the University is providing.

What happens next?

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

References to 'Transitions into University' in the ELIR 3 Technical Reports

The paragraph numbers below refer to those in the original ELIR Technical Reports for each institution.

University of Aberdeen²

12 In 2012-13, the University had a total student population of 13,308 FTE students of whom 10,967 were undergraduate, 1,458 were postgraduate taught and 883 were postgraduate research. The Strategic Plan expresses the intention for the University to increase the number of its postgraduate, international and part-time students.

20 In February 2013, the University established a widening participation working group to make recommendations on policy to UCTL and the Advisory Group on Student Recruitment and Admissions. The group is chaired by the Vice-Principal (Learning & Teaching) and includes representation from the Directorate of Academic Affairs, Policy, Planning and Governance, Colleges, SRAS and Aberdeen University Students' Association (AUSA). The group has been developing a framework to promote widening participation from pre-application to post-graduation. The group has been working to ensure that the University is using the most appropriate statistical indicators in relation to widening access and is also developing partnership working to engage with school pupils at an early stage of their school career. In the partnership working approach, the University recognises two key elements: raising aspirations and supporting schools to enhance attainment. The University is discussing this approach with local authorities and school head teachers.

21 The Strategic Plan also identifies targets for widening participation through flexible entry routes and increasing the number of programmes offering further education articulation routes by 30 per cent. The number of articulations has increased recently and the number of students progressing to the University through articulation agreements has increased considerably over the last three years. The University has established a number of new articulation agreements with college sector institutions in Scotland and it was made clear to the ELIR team that senior staff consider this to be one of the key ways in which the University can meet its widening participation targets.

22 The Strategic Plan 2011-15 sets a target of improving overall retention rates to four per cent better than the University's benchmark figure. Non-continuation data for the full-time undergraduate student population is analysed in detail annually and considered by the senior management team and the schools. This analysis includes the level of study, student domicile, incoming qualifications, and entry route (summer school, access, clearing). However, the University does not currently monitor non-continuation rates for part-time students. Senior staff indicated that this was because 'continuation' is more difficult to define for a part-time student, but acknowledged that this should become part of the annual data. The University is encouraged to progress these plans.

23 Overall, non-continuation rates have improved, although there is variation between the different schools, with the vocational subjects tending to perform better. First year retention has also improved, but remains a focus for the University's attention with a range of initiatives being put in place to improve retention and overall student satisfaction, such as the Personal Tutor System (see paragraphs 30-32). In May 2013, the University hosted a symposium to share good practice in recognising 'at risk' students and promoting student retention. The University hopes the event will be held annually. The ELIR team learned

² University of Aberdeen Technical Report, available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/provider?UKPRN=10007783.

about a variety of positive practice and supportive initiatives being undertaken in the schools to promote student progression.

86 A strategic objective of the University is to continue to promote partnership working and to engage fully with its regional, national and international partners. The University is committed to growing its work with further education partners, mainly in terms of articulation agreements. At the time of the current ELIR, the University was exploring potential new 2+2 articulation partners in India, Sri Lanka, China, Kazakhstan and Malaysia. The University indicated that it does not normally enter into franchise agreements, and, at the time of the current ELIR, did not have any.

University of Dundee³

18 The University sets out its commitment and approach to widening participation in its Learning and Teaching Strategy and its Outcome Agreement 2012-13 with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). The University was awarded additional student numbers for 2013 entry by the SFC to support widening access and articulation.

25 The University delivers a number of outreach initiatives aimed at widening participation, including its 'Discovering Degrees' programme for pupils from low progression secondary schools; 'Reach Scotland' and 'ACES', national initiatives supporting and enabling young people interested in 'high demand' professions such as Medicine, Dentistry, Law, Architecture and Art; articulation routes; and the Dundee University Access to Learning (DUAL) Summer School, which helps to prepare and qualify applicants for entry to a range of undergraduate programmes by providing academic and study skills support. The DUAL Summer School is particularly targeted at MD40 students and historically has helped those from all non-traditional backgrounds, and students who had experienced the programme were very positive about the support and preparation it provided for entry to the University.

38 The University's approach to induction, through its Welcome Week, is carefully designed to support students in their transition to higher education through a variety of social and other events, supported by tailored induction and orientation events at school and college level. The University also runs specific induction events for postgraduate and international students. This approach is reflected in the University's pre-enrolment support whereby applicants to the University are given access to the University's virtual learning environment (VLE), email system and student management system, which provides them with generic and subject-specific information and advice. Students who met the ELIR team commented positively on the effectiveness of their induction experience in helping them prepare for their programmes of study.

Edinburgh Napier University⁴

23 The University has 240 formal articulation agreements with eight colleges in Scotland and 29 formal articulation routes with international partners from eight countries. In 2013 the Associate Student Scheme was established in collaboration with local colleges to strengthen the University's approach to articulation. The University is a member of the Edinburgh, Lothians, Fife and Borders Regional Articulation Hub (ELRAH). The ELRAH established a national articulation database and route finder search tool, which aims to improve the statistical reporting of students entering through an articulation arrangement to provide a regional and national context. In 2013-14, 887 new undergraduate entrants joined

3 University of Dundee Technical Report, available at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/provider?UKPRN=10007852.

4 Edinburgh Napier University Technical Report, available at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/provider?UKPRN=10007772.

the University from Scottish colleges and, in 2014-15, 565 students entered the University with advanced standing.

29 The University aims to integrate student support and development resources within the curriculum to ensure support is tailored to meet specific programme requirements. This approach embeds academic skills development, including library literacy, essay writing and exam preparation, and participation in Confident Futures workshops at programme level. These workshops encourage students to take responsibility for their own personal and professional development, enhance their approach to learning and engage more deeply with their programme of study. The ELIR team heard examples of the way in which Confident Futures workshops are integrated in the curriculum, including the use of existing feedback as a feedforward mechanism through an action planning tool in immunology modules. At the time of the current ELIR, 66 per cent of academic skills development and 87 per cent of the Confident Futures activities had been integrated. Students told the ELIR team that support services are embedded at induction and that support services are well signposted and available through MyNapier, the University's intranet.

31 The University offers a range of pre-entry interventions to support students entering the University through a formal college articulation route, including drop-in lectures, team teaching with college staff, campus visits and the use of social media. A Coming from College resource can be accessed through the University's virtual learning environment (VLE) and is open for any student to self-enrol. This online support tool is designed to help college students negotiate the transition from college to university and provides additional signposting to relevant services, such as employer mentoring, study abroad, and study skills support.

32 Other widening participation initiatives include supporting care leavers, with the University holding the Buttle UK Quality Mark and the MD20 students two-week pre-entry scheme, Ask an Experienced Student e-mentor. A recent review of the University's Admissions Policy resulted in plans to implement a contextual admissions policy from 2016. This approach should ensure the context in which an applicant achieved their academic grades is taken into account when making admission decisions. Use of an interview, portfolio or equivalent will allow applicants to demonstrate potential and aptitude for the chosen subject. International students are supported in a number of ways, with English language provision offered to students whose first language is not English.

127 Links between the University and the colleges are mature and cemented by the engagement of professional services staff working in Student and Academic Services. As part of the University's commitment to delivering an excellent personalised student experience, University staff work with college students from the time at which they begin their college studies. Students articulating from college partners have Associate Student status. The University recognises that key challenges for Associate Students include issues relating to the learning environment and the learning culture. To support an effective articulation to the University, customised campus visits are organised to complement the work of University staff at the college. Associate Students are able to drop in on normal timetabled University lectures, giving them a first-hand insight into differences in teaching styles that they may expect. On arrival, Student and Academic Services signpost college students to relevant services, including study skills support, such as guidance in note taking; student-to-student mentoring; employer mentoring; and study abroad opportunities.

128 The progress of students joining the University through articulation routes is monitored with progression and retention being reviewed. Project work in this area is currently being funded under the auspices of the national Enhancement Theme, Student Transitions (see section 3.2).

University of Glasgow⁵

18 The University has a successful track record in recruiting and supporting widening participation students. The University's use of contextual data for admissions was highlighted as a model for the higher education sector by the Scottish Funding Council in 2011, and there are a range of initiatives in place to support the induction and aid the transition of widening participation students into the University. There is also a strong focus on supporting the success of such students once they have commenced their programme of study. In particular students who had participated in the Top Up programme, which helps secondary students to develop academic skills in support of their transition to and retention in higher education, were very positive about the support they had received.

19 The University recognises that students who have attended the Summer School or the Top Up Programme have higher continuation rates than those MD20 or MD40 students who have not attended any pre-entry programmes. The University is now developing its strategic approach to widening participation by creating the MD40 Group, which brings together academic and support staff from across the University to promote an integrated approach to supporting the success of widening participation students.

Glasgow Caledonian University⁶

18 The University offers flexible routes into programmes and has seen a significant increase in the number of HNC and HND students articulating into years 2 and 3 of its undergraduate programmes, from 490 FTE in 2011-12 to 834 in 2012-13. The Scottish Funding Council awarded the University an additional 157 articulation places for the academic year 2013-14. These places are delivered in partnership with local colleges and support for transition provided through the University's College Connect Academy. Data suggests the University has increased the proportion of entrants from a disadvantaged background from 32 per cent of the total student population to 34 per cent in 2014.

29 The Advanced Higher Hub delivers advanced higher awards to senior school pupils from the University's partner schools and is based on the Glasgow campus. The Hub provides pupils with full access to all University facilities and the chance to experience student life. This approach supports transition into higher education and inspires pupil confidence in their abilities and skills to cope with university life.

52 The revised Research Strategy, approved in 2014, and associated plans to double research student numbers by 2020 place an increased focus on the research student experience. The University described the Graduate School as being at the heart of the research community, providing specific support for research students including induction, development workshops, and research writing skills support. Allocating coordination of postgraduate training and development to the Graduate School has seen an increase in completion rates for full-time doctoral students to above the sector average over the last planning period. While postgraduate research students commented positively on the Graduate School provision and engage with existing structures, they also stated that they often form their own community groups for additional social support. Postgraduate research students suggested to the ELIR team that they would welcome more social and formal opportunities to meet and liaise with all research students on a departmental and cross-disciplinary basis.

5 University of Glasgow Technical Report, available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/provider?UKPRN=10007794.

6 Glasgow Caledonian University Technical Report, available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/provider?UKPRN=10007762.

138 The RA noted that, numerically, the most significant type of collaborative activity is articulation. By 2020, the University intends to increase the number of articulating students from 610 in 2012-13 to 1,000 post-2015-16, representing a third of the undergraduate intake. Underpinning this aim are the College Connect Strategy (2013-20) and College University Subject Partnerships (CUSPs). CUSPs are subject level areas of activity built on existing working relationships between the college and university sector to create a sustainable infrastructure for articulation. CUSPs were highlighted by the Scottish Funding Council in 2012 as a model of good practice.

Glasgow School of Art (GSA)⁷

22 Widening participation is a strategic indicator for GSA and the institution is working to increase participation from groups currently under-represented in higher education. The proportion of students from National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) classes 4, 5, 6 and 7 increased from 19 per cent in 2009-10 to 19.6 per cent in 2011-12. GSA is developing its approach to recruiting and supporting widening participation students. It is moving from a project-based approach to one where activities to support non-traditional entrants, such as a pre-sessional summer school, become embedded into its annual cycle of activities. GSA has also recently appointed a progression manager to support its strategy to increase the numbers of non-traditional students progressing into GSA from further education colleges.

Queen Margaret University⁸

15 In terms of widening access, 94 per cent of young, full-time entrants come from state schools and colleges, with 32 per cent of such students from social classes four, five, six, and seven. Eight per cent of the full-time entrants articulate from an HNC or HND. First generation students make up 36 per cent of young, full-time entrants. Students with a declared disability comprise nine per cent of the full-time undergraduate Scottish domiciled enrolments, which is two per cent above the sector benchmark. The University's Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) indicated that, during 2012-13, 13 per cent of Scottish-domiciled students were from SIMD 20, 15 per cent were direct entry students, and 17 per cent were from low progression schools.

17 The University was a founding member of the Lothian Equal Access Programme for Schools (LEAPS) and engages in a number of widening participation initiatives, including its partnership with the East Lothian Council and Edinburgh College. With the latter, the East Lothian Hospitality and Tourism Academy promotes employability amongst young people aged between 14 and 18 and also supports articulation into higher education. At the time of the ELIR visit a number of further academies were about to be launched in the University's flagship areas.

18 Various pre-entry and induction programmes are available to support students from widening participation groups and these include QMAvance, QMAssist, QMConnect and MentorNet. QMAvance is a three-day orientation programme particularly aimed at widening participation students, QMAssist is an induction programme for direct entrants and QMConnect and MentorNet, run by Student Services, are face-to-face and online mentoring schemes. Students who experienced the pre-entry and induction programmes gave positive feedback about the support, although they would have appreciated more course specific information.

7 Glasgow School of Art Technical Report, available at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/provider?UKPRN=10002681.

8 Queen Margaret University Technical Report, available at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/provider?UKPRN=10005337.

20 The Recruitment and International Liaison Service (RILO) provides induction and support programmes with advice on funding, practical aspects of studying in the UK, student welfare and social opportunities. The University hosts an international induction day prior to the start of the general induction week and the QMConnect programme was revised during 2012 to make specific provision for support to international students. The Effective Learning Service (ELS) offers international students support in English language through a four week pre-session course or during their studies by means of one-to-one appointments. The course is currently being reviewed to ensure that students develop appropriate levels of competence, especially where they have only met the minimum International English Language Testing System (IELTS) threshold for entry.

28 The University's approach to inducting students involves both induction on entry and longitudinal induction with the former processes being overseen by the Transition and Induction Working Group and the latter by the academic subject areas. There are a number of elements to the University's approach including an induction website, the use of continuing students as helpers throughout Induction Week, and mentoring through QMConnect (see paragraph 17). Longitudinal induction resulted from the University's work within the First Year Experience and Graduates for the 21st Century national Enhancement Themes.

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland⁹

6 The six aims of the Strategic Plan build upon the CR project and also embrace institutional policy relating to widening access and lifelong learning, equality and diversity, internationalisation, graduate attributes, and the student as a global advocate and citizen. A set of institutional profile and sustainability Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), aligned to the Strategic Plan, had recently been approved by the Board of Governors and were due to be implemented shortly after the ELIR visit. The ELIR team would encourage the Conservatoire to progress the implementation of the KPIs to enable the institution to measure progress and impact against its Strategic Plan and the strategic ambitions arising from the CR project.

14 The vast majority of students are full-time. They are recruited on the basis of both academic and performance ability, and processes are in place for admitting students who are outstanding performers but have not met the usual academic entry criteria. The vast majority of undergraduate students are school leavers. Entry with advanced standing, for example where students already have Higher National qualifications, is not currently a significant admissions route.

15 In 2012-13, international students formed around 10 per cent of the undergraduate student population and 33 per cent of the taught postgraduate population. In the same year, 22 per cent of the undergraduate students and 28 per cent of postgraduates were recruited from SIMD 20 and SIMD 40 (the most deprived parts of the population according to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation).

18 The Conservatoire has a positive approach to supporting equality and diversity in its student population. There is evidence that students from a wide variety of backgrounds and learning support needs are enabled to make the transition to study at the Conservatoire. In discussion with the ELIR team, students reported a strong sense of community within the institution, indicating that diversity was 'part of the norm' and that there were no barriers to access or inclusion.

⁹ Royal Conservatoire of Scotland Technical Report, available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/provider?UKPRN=10005561.

19 The Conservatoire actively welcomes applications from mature students and from students with additional learning support needs. There are appropriate arrangements in place for identifying, assessing and providing support for students. Students have access to a range of specialist staff covering areas including international student support, disabilities counselling, effective learning support and academic writing support. There is a specified Counsellor and Disability Advisor, and an Equality and Diversity Officer. Once identified, additional support needs are set out in each student's Learning Agreement. Students also have a learning contract. The role of those documents and that of the transitions tutors (see paragraph 30) are identified in the Student Handbook. There is an Equality and Diversity Forum which is chaired by the Vice-Principal. All students who met the ELIR team were aware of the range of support opportunities available to them.

20 The ELIR team noted a range of very positive activities in support of Equality and Diversity, including contributions to the It Gets Better global campaign, recognition by Stonewall of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) equality work within the Conservatoire, and the Conservatoire's work with Solar Bear Deaf Youth Theatre to develop training pathways for deaf actors.

Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)¹⁰

12 Flexible entry and seamless progression are identified as defining characteristics of SRUC and the institution is committed to improving the number and range of such opportunities for learners. In an effort to maximise opportunity and progression, SRUC has made the strategic decision to develop fully integrated tertiary provision, and has consequently not separated the organisational structures for further and higher education. The six academic departments in the Education Division were established in June 2013 and heads of department were appointed from across the legacy colleges. The departments are structured to have a subject focus across all further and higher education provision with the strategic intention of tertiary integration. There is an Assistant Principal for Further Education and an Assistant Principal for Higher Education who both have line management responsibility of colleagues in the curriculum departments. The Assistant Principals meet informally to coordinate activities and report formally to the Academic Board.

21 Since the merger, SRUC has been working towards strengthening the use of a consistent data set across its six campuses to inform review and planning, including benchmarking against internal and sector norms. The ELIR team learned that the harmonisation of student data into a single management information system was scheduled for completion later in 2014. The team considered that the oversight of student data, notably in relation to student success, could be strengthened. While student progression data was considered at individual programme level, there was limited evidence of consideration at institutional level to inform admissions, curriculum and student support arrangements (see paragraphs 58, 115 and 128).

26 Helpful pre-entry guides provide EU and other international applicants with pre-arrival information. Specialist support is available for international students at one campus on one specific programme, and all international students are able to access the support services provided by the wider learner and learning support teams. The ELIR team considered that, if international student numbers are increased as intended, SRUC will need to ensure it has systematic arrangements for identifying additional specialist support to meet the particular needs of international students at all campuses.

112 Rather than separate further education and higher education provision into different sub-divisions, SRUC chose to develop fully integrated tertiary provision, with a

¹⁰ Scotland's Rural College Technical Report, available at: www.gaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/provider?UKPRN=10005700.

view to maximising the opportunities for articulation and progression. Hence, six curriculum departments, in place since June 2013, deliver across both further education and higher education and across campuses. Here, too, SRUC recognised that more work is required in the short to medium-term to embed the structure and to develop a new tertiary multi-campus model of delivery.

130 SRUC's legacy colleges had a number of articulation agreements in place with colleges across Scotland which related to possible specific admission procedures for appropriately qualified students to join, for example, year three of a degree programme following completion of a relevant HND. SRUC indicated that it was in the process of renegotiating these agreements with the newly formed regional colleges.

University of Strathclyde¹¹

18 There is a growing international student population, in line with the University's internationalisation strategy and the aim of increasing the postgraduate research student population by approximately 230 to a total of 1,600 by academic year 2015-16. International students currently account for 14 per cent of undergraduates, 46 per cent of postgraduate taught and 30 per cent of postgraduate research numbers. A further dimension to the internationalisation strategy is the development of international articulation routes, such as the provision of facilitated entry to year three of undergraduate programmes for students from partner institutions in countries such as China, India, Malaysia and Pakistan.

22 The University is engaged effectively in local outreach and widening participation with new initiatives to promote advanced entry to level 2 or 3 (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework level 8-9) of undergraduate degree programmes being developed across all faculties, in collaboration with both schools and further education colleges. This includes the Engineering Academy, where students studying on enhanced Higher National Certificate provision in the further education sector articulate to level 2 (SCQF level 8) of the engineering degree course. The aim of the initiative is to break down the barriers for college students articulating to higher education and enhance skills in this student group. Following the successful launch of the Engineering Academy in 2013, the University aims to increase articulation in the local area further, as evidenced in its updated Widening Access strategy, which includes plans for a 30 per cent increase in the number of entrants from local colleges by the academic year 2015-16.

25 To ensure that the University's ambitious targets for widening participation are consistently met, from 2013-14 the institution is using contextual data in admissions. Such data include the applicant's postcode, their school to higher education progression rate, as well as their care background. This information is drawn both from application forms and publicly available datasets and is used to ensure that the context in which qualifications were obtained is appropriately understood and considered throughout the admission process.

28 In meetings with the ELIR team, students commented very positively on the quality of induction programmes, emphasising the consistency of support and experience provided across the institution, which is positive, given that much responsibility for induction lies with individual faculties. The University has plans to further strengthen support for international students and better facilitate their transition to the Scottish higher education system by expanding the range of pre-arrival information provided to prospective international students. In relation to interpersonal integration and inclusion of international students, discussions with student representatives during ELIR highlighted the 'buddying'

11 University of Strathclyde Technical Report, available at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/provider?UKPRN=10007805.

system recently introduced in Psychology as a successful initiative that could be replicated in other departments.

104 The University currently operates a number of types of collaborative activity including articulation with further education colleges in Scotland, and internationally with five universities in China, Malaysia, India and Pakistan. In 2012-13 these partnerships involved 124 students. In September 2013 the University also entered into a partnership with the private provider Study Group UK, and launched the Strathclyde International Study Centre. The Centre is based at the University and currently has 73 students studying on foundation programmes which have been designed to prepare international students for entry to undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes. The University also offers a master's degree programme in collaboration with Aalborg University in Denmark and Hamburg University of Technology in Germany, as well as a Master of Science programme with the International Prevention Research Institute in Lyon.

University of St Andrews¹²

25 Articulation is not a common entry route, although the University does have a small number of agreements with local colleges such as the Perth College Pathway to Medicine and agreements with Fife College and Dundee and Angus College allowing HNC-qualified applicants direct entry into the second year of a BSc. The University runs a number of 'gateway' programmes for students who do not meet the minimum entry requirements due to educational disadvantage. These programmes offer additional tuition to students and, upon successful completion, students can enter a Physics and/or Computing Science degree.

26 Since the 2011 ELIR, the University has increased the number of scholarships and bursaries given to entrants from 79 in 2009-10 to 321 in 2013-14. Financial aid and other support is targeted to those students with the greatest financial need. During the ELIR visit, students who had entered from articulation and widening participation backgrounds indicated that the support they had received during their transition into the University was effective and that the variety of programmes for support met their needs (paragraph 34).

32 The University takes an integrated approach to supporting international students, seeking to ensure that they feel part of the wider St Andrews community and providing support for them in an inclusive manner. English Language Teaching provides a variety of programmes for students who are not native English speakers. There is also provision for students to learn about the cultural and philosophical basis for academic policies and what this means in practice within a Scottish higher education institution. The University provided very good examples of how this cultural induction was undertaken within schools and the curriculum, such as mock exams, formative assessment and supplemented grade descriptors.

33 The Students' Association hosts an International Students' Reception and offers events hosted by student societies featuring a wide diversity of groups, from the African and Caribbean Society to the Townsend Society which supports commuter students. Most students who met the ELIR team considered that there is a wide range of effective support structures for international students. The University is aware that some students studying on the BA (International Honours) collaborative programme found integrating with the St Andrews community challenging and actions have been taken to help address this (paragraph 139).

34 The University supports widening participation with many initiatives in place across the institution. Senior staff told the ELIR team that the philosophy towards access provision

12 University of St Andrews Technical Report, available at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/provider?UKPRN=10007803.

focuses on admitting students who can succeed within the academic context of St Andrews Activity to support this philosophy include outreach work with colleges and low progression schools and supporting student experience opportunities within the University. A number of academic schools offer specific outreach programmes within low progression schools providing support with UCAS applications, personal statements and aspiration-raising as well as offering opportunities for St Andrews students to work with S1 and S2 school pupils. These initiatives have reached over 31,000 school pupils in more than 150 schools throughout Scotland. The University also offers an evening degree programme. A number of places are allocated for students entering through the Scottish Wider Access Programme offering a flexible route to a general degree. Students can transfer to a designated Honours programme if they meet the academic requirements. Students who enter the University from a further education articulation or an access route are provided with dedicated mentoring for their first year through a peer mentoring system and an access-aware Advisor of Studies. The University's work with people leaving care or living in caring contexts has been recognised through the Buttle Quality Mark.

University of the West of Scotland¹³

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

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

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

101 Historically the University's collaborative activity has been largely with local and regional colleges to facilitate access to higher education. Around 12 per cent of the University intake each year is provided by articulating students and this is a key element of

13 University of the West of Scotland Technical Report, available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/provider?UKPRN=10007800.

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

QAA1336 - Oct 15

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Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786