

The Glasgow School of Art

FEBRUARY 2005

Enhancement-led institutional review

Preface

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) exists to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education (HE) qualifications and to encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of HE.

To do this, QAA carries out reviews of individual higher education institutions (HEIs) (universities and colleges of HE). In Scotland this process is known as Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR). QAA operates equivalent but separate processes in Wales, England and Northern Ireland.

Enhancement-led approach

Over the period 2001-2003, QAA, the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, Universities Scotland and representatives of the student body have worked closely together on the development of the enhancement-led approach to quality in Scottish HE. This approach, which was implemented in academic year 2003-04, has five main elements:

- a comprehensive programme of review at the subject level, managed by the institutions
- improved forms of public information about quality, based on addressing the different needs of the users of that information including students and employers
- a greater voice for student representatives in institutional quality systems, supported by a national development service (known as the student participation in quality Scotland - sparqs - service)
- a national programme of enhancement themes, aimed at developing and sharing good practice in learning and teaching in HE
- Enhancement-led institutional review (ELIR) involving all of the Scottish HEIs over a four-year period, from 2003-04 to 2006-07. The ELIR method embraces a focus on: the strategic management of enhancement; the effectiveness of student learning; and student, employer and international perspectives.

QAA believes that this approach is distinctive in a number of respects: its balance between quality assurance and enhancement; the emphasis it places on the student experience; its focus on learning and not solely teaching; and the spirit of cooperation and partnership which has underpinned all these developments.

Nationally agreed reference points

ELIR includes a focus on institutions' use of a range of reference points, including those published by QAA

- the *Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)*
- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*
- subject benchmark statements, which describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects
- guidelines for preparing programme specifications, which are descriptions of what is on offer to students in individual programmes of study. Programme specifications outline the intended knowledge, skills, understanding and attributes of a student completing that programme. They also give details of teaching and assessment methods and link the programme to the SCQF.

Conclusions and judgement within ELIR

ELIR results in a set of commentaries about the institutions being reviewed. These commentaries relate to:

- the ability of the institution's internal review systems to monitor and maintain quality and standards at the level of the programme or award. This commentary leads to a judgement on the level of confidence which can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's current and likely future management of the quality of its programmes and the academic standards of its awards. The expression of this judgement provides a point of tangency between the ELIR method and other review methods operating in other parts of the UK. The judgement is expressed as one of: **broad confidence**, **limited confidence** or **no confidence**
- the institution's arrangements for ensuring that the information it publishes about the quality of its provision is complete, accurate and fair
- the effectiveness of the institution's approach to promoting an effective learning experience for students
- the combined effect of the institution's policies and practices for ensuring improvement in the quality of teaching and learning
- the effectiveness of the institution's implementation of its strategy for quality enhancement.

The ELIR process

The ELIR process is carried out by teams comprising three academics, one student and one senior administrator drawn from the HE sector.

The main elements of ELIR are:

- a preliminary visit by QAA to the institution in advance of the review visit
- a Reflective Analysis document submitted by the institution three months in advance of the second part of the review visit
- a two-part review visit to the institution by the ELIR team; Part 1 taking place five weeks before Part 2, and Part 2 having a variable duration of between three and five days depending on the complexity of matters to be explored
- the publication of a report, 20 weeks after the Part 2 visit, detailing the commentaries agreed by the ELIR team.

The evidence for the Enhancement-Led Institutional Review

In order to gather the information on which its commentaries are based, the ELIR team carries out a number of activities including:

- reviewing the institution's own internal procedures and documents, as well as the Reflective Analysis institutions prepare especially for ELIR
- asking questions and engaging in discussions with groups of relevant staff
- talking to students about their experiences
- exploring how the institution uses the national reference points.

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Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000
Fax 01452 557070
Email comms@qaa.ac.uk
Web www.qaa.ac.uk

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Linney Direct
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Mansfield
Nottinghamshire NG18 4FN

Tel 01623 450788
Fax 01623 450629
Email qaa@linneydirect.com

Contents

Introduction	1		
Style of reporting	1	Studio-based learning	13
Method of review	1	Student support	13
Background information about the institution	2	The learning environment	14
Institution's strategy for quality enhancement	3	Postgraduate students	14
Internal monitoring and review of quality and standards and public information	3	An inclusive learning environment	14
Overview of the institution's internal arrangements for assuring the quality of programmes and maintaining the standards of its academic awards and credit	3	Cross-institution synergies	15
Relationship with the University of Glasgow	3	Student satisfaction	15
Roles and responsibilities	3	Overview of the institution's approach to the promotion of the employability of its students	16
Committee structure and operation	4	Commentary on the effectiveness of the institution's approach to promoting an effective learning experience for students	16
Internal approval, monitoring and review	5	Effectiveness of the institution's strategy for quality enhancement	17
Research degree programmes	6	Overview of the institution's approach to managing improvement in the quality of teaching and learning	17
Common framework	7	Overview of the linkage between the institution's arrangements for internal quality assurance and its enhancement activity	18
External examining	7	Overview of the institution's approach to recognising, rewarding and implementing good practice in the context of its strategy for quality enhancement	19
Assessment	7	Commentary on the combined effect of the institution's policies and practices for ensuring improvement in the quality of teaching and learning	21
Analysing the outcomes of quality assurance procedures	8	Commentary on the effectiveness of the institution's implementation of its strategy for quality enhancement	22
Overview of the use made of external reference points for assuring quality and standards	8	Summary	23
Use of the Academic Infrastructure	8	Background to the institution and ELIR method	23
Programme specifications	9	Overview of the matters raised by the review	23
Progress files	9	Commentary on the ability of the institution's internal review systems to monitor and maintain quality and standards	23
PSBs and employer concerns	10	Commentary on the institution's arrangements for ensuring that the information it publishes about the quality of its provision is complete, accurate and fair	24
Commentary on the ability of the institution's internal review systems to monitor and maintain quality and standards	10	Commentary on the effectiveness of the institution's approach to promoting and effective learning experience for students	24
Overview of the institution's approach to ensuring that the information it publishes about the quality of its provision is complete, accurate and fair	10	Commentary on the combined effect of the institution's policies and practices for ensuring improvement in the quality of teaching and learning	25
Commentary on the institution's arrangements for ensuring that the information it publishes about the quality of its provision is complete, accurate and fair	11	Commentary on the effectiveness of the institution's implementation of its strategy for quality enhancement	25
The student experience	11		
Overview of the institution's approach to engaging students in the assurance and enhancement of the quality of teaching and learning	11		
Overview of the institution's approach to the promotion of effective student learning	13		
Learning and teaching strategy	13		

Introduction

1 This is the report of an Enhancement-led institutional review (ELIR) of The Glasgow School of Art (GSA) undertaken by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). QAA is grateful to GSA for the willing cooperation provided to the ELIR team.

2 The review followed a method agreed with Universities-Scotland, student bodies and the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC), and informed by consultation with the Scottish higher education sector. The ELIR method focuses on the strategic management of enhancement; the effectiveness of student learning; and the use of a range of reference points. These reference points include: the *Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)*, the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, subject benchmark information, published by QAA, and student, employer and international perspectives. Full detail on the method is set out in the *Handbook for enhancement-led institutional review: Scotland* which is available on QAA's website.

Style of reporting

3 ELIR reports are structured around three main sections: internal monitoring and review of quality and standards and public information, the student experience, and the effectiveness of the institution's strategy for quality enhancement. Each section contains a sequence of 'overviews' and 'commentaries' in which the ELIR team sets out its views. The first commentary in the first main section of the report leads to the single, formal judgement included within ELIR reports on the level of confidence which can be placed in the institution's management of quality and standards. This judgement is intended to provide a point of tangency with the methods of audit and review operating in other parts of the UK where similar judgements are reached. In the second and third main sections of the report, on the student experience and the effectiveness of the institution's quality enhancement strategy, there are no formal judgements although a series of overviews and commentaries are provided. These are the sections of the ELIR report which are particularly enhancement focused. To reflect this, the style of reporting is intended to address the increased emphasis on exploration and dialogue which characterises the team's interaction with the institution on these matters. The reader may, therefore, detect a shift in the style of reporting in those sections, and this is intended to emphasise the enhancement-led nature of the method.

Method of review

4 GSA submitted a Reflective Analysis (RA) which set out its strategy for quality enhancement, its approach to the management of quality and standards and its view of the effectiveness of its approach. Other documents available to the ELIR team with the RA included the Institutional Profile at 29 November 2004, the Academic Handbook for session 2004-05, The Strategic Plan Summary 04>08, the Prospectus for session 2005-06 and a selection of reports, codes, guidelines and other materials helpfully supplied on a CD-ROM. The RA provided the focus for the review and was used to develop a programme of activities by the ELIR team to provide a representative illustration of the way GSA approaches the management of quality, enhancement and academic standards.

5 GSA submitted two case studies with its RA which were chosen to coincide with the first two national enhancement themes and to illustrate GSA's approach to the management of enhancement. This approach was described as a combination, respectively, of 'top down' activity and 'bottom up' initiative. The case studies were:

- a report of GSA's Thematic Review of Assessment carried out in 2003-04. GSA had introduced its thematic review process two years earlier as a means of facilitating institution-wide discussion and reflection on topics which spanned different subject areas
- a report of the origins (dating to 1991) and current delivery of the elective short course Artists and Designers in Education, offered by the Historical and Critical Studies Department to all level 2 and 3 BA (Hons) students in Fine Art and in Design. The course provides students with the opportunity to deploy their skills and understanding by devising and implementing a project for and with school children.

6 The RA was prepared and approved by an ELIR Steering Group. The President of the Students' Representative Council (SRC) was a member of the Group and had been closely involved in the production of the RA section on the student experience. Although relatively concise, the RA was a helpful starting point for the review when used in conjunction with the other documentation that had been provided in advance. There were two especially useful supplements to the RA, first GSA's report of its internal institutional review, carried out in March 2004. That exercise was conducted by a team including members external to GSA as part of its preparation for the QAA ELIR. The second supplementary document was the report of the

review of roles and responsibilities conducted in July 2004 as a result of the internal institutional review.

7 The ELIR team visited GSA on two occasions: the Part 1 visit took place on 12 and 13 January 2005 and the Part 2 visit took place between 21 and 24 February 2005.

8 Part 1 began with a short, informal introduction to the members of GSA's ELIR Steering Group. This was followed by a series of presentations chaired by the Director of GSA who outlined GSA's vision and some of the major challenges which its realisation would entail, including redevelopment of the estate, expansion of the research and postgraduate community and the development of a common academic framework. Subsequent presentations provided an overview of GSA including an illustration of its approach to learning and teaching, using the level 1 Fine Art course; the strategic plan for enhancing postgraduate study and linking research to teaching; the approach to quality enhancement; and the two case studies. The session also provided students with an opportunity to tell the ELIR team about their involvement in these activities. An especially creative feature of this series of presentations was the presence of an audience consisting of GSA staff and students. The audience were, within time limits, afforded a chance to participate in discussion as well as having the opportunity to observe this part of the ELIR process.

9 The ELIR team had three further meetings during Part 1 with groups of senior staff, student representatives, and staff who had a close involvement with GSA's periodic review process. These meetings enabled the team to explore a series of overlapping topics, including GSA's relationship with its validating institution, the University of Glasgow; its quality enhancement strategy; the potential of, and barriers to, cross-institution synergies; the nature and effectiveness of student representation; the students' experience of assessment; employability; the impact of the national enhancement agenda on existing quality assurance processes; the use of external reference points; and the functioning of the GSA's recently established Quality in Learning and Teaching Committee (QILT).

10 During Part 1, GSA made available a set of documentation which had been identified within the RA and a small amount of supplementary information identified during the course of the visit. This enabled the ELIR team to develop a programme of meetings and to identify a set of documentation for the Part 2 visit in order to provide a representative view of GSA's approach to assuring

and enhancing quality, and maintaining the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its validating university.

11 The ELIR team comprised Dr Frank Quinault, Dr Larry Roberts, Dr Andrew Walker and Ms Allison Weightman (reviewers), and Mr Peter Watson (review secretary). The review was coordinated on behalf of QAA by Ms Ailsa Crum, Assistant Director, QAA Scottish Office.

Background information about the institution

12 GSA is one of the oldest independent art schools in the UK. It was founded in 1845 to support local manufacturing industries and has retained a close relationship with the city of Glasgow to the present day. Its identity is linked with the renowned building, designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh, which it occupies. The main campus is located in the Garnethill area of Glasgow, close to the city centre. GSA's digital design research centre, the Digital Design Studio, is located in the House for an Art Lover in Bellahouston Park some four miles from the city centre.

13 GSA is one of three designated Small Specialist Institutions in Scotland. Since 1992 its degrees, undergraduate and postgraduate, have been awarded by the University of Glasgow. In 1997 the University conferred 'Accredited Institution' status on GSA.

14 The Vision of GSA is to 'provide world class creative education and research in architecture, design and fine art which makes a significant economic, social and cultural contribution'.

15 GSA's academic provision is organised around three schools: the Mackintosh School of Architecture, the School of Design and the School of Fine Art. The Department of Historical and Critical Studies, which sits outside the three-school structure, makes a major contribution, in particular, to undergraduate degrees in the Schools of Design and Fine Art. The Digital Design Studio is a postgraduate and research centre specialising in 3D visual imaging.

16 In 2003-04, the student population totalled 1,628, of whom 1,000 were female, almost 6 per cent were aged 21 or over on entry, and approximately 15 per cent were from overseas. In the same year there were 73 full-time and 67 part-time academic and research staff.

Institution's strategy for quality enhancement

17 The aim of GSA's Quality Enhancement Strategy is to 'continuously and systematically improve the operation of courses, learning support services provided to students, and the learning environment of The GSA'. At the time of the ELIR visits, the strategy was undergoing revision as GSA considered that the current version 'does not in itself reflect the richness and complexity of its strategic approach to quality enhancement'.

Internal monitoring and review of quality and standards and public information

Overview of the institution's internal arrangements for assuring the quality of programmes and maintaining the standards of its academic awards and credit

18 The ability of GSA to be a self-reflective, self-critical and open institution was stressed to the ELIR team. The internal institutional review that GSA had undertaken was identified as an example of this ability. The review involved partnership with external peers and students. Referring to this exercise during the Part 1 visit, the Director indicated that the decision to undertake the review in an atmosphere of 'total transparency' had been a 'high risk strategy but highly effective' because GSA had been openly self-critical, addressing areas for development with robust plans. The Director stated that this is to the credit of the academic community at GSA and the 'invaluable support' of the external advisers.

Relationship with the University of Glasgow

19 The RA indicated that GSA has a productive and mutually beneficial relationship with the University of Glasgow. The University Senate has ultimate responsibility for the academic standard of the awards offered by GSA, but there is maximum delegation to GSA for its own quality assurance procedures. The RA stated that the strength of these procedures was recognised by the University when it conferred Accredited Institution status on GSA in 1997. The view was expressed that this had enabled GSA to develop its identity as a mature institution with the capacity for autonomous decision-making.

20 The Annual Report to the University Senate is the main reporting mechanism and forms the basis of an annual meeting of a GSA/University Liaison Committee. The RA described how the reporting mechanism has developed and how the University has delegated more responsibility to GSA for its own procedures.

Consequently, the Annual Report has developed over time from a detailed description of individual issues to an overview of monitoring processes.

21 In carrying out its analysis the ELIR team was careful to consider the interface between GSA and the University of Glasgow. Some procedures are carried out by GSA, with their operation being confirmed to the University in the Annual Report. Others interface with the University's processes, for example, the final approval of external examiner appointments. Undergraduate students are enrolled and registered with GSA, except for those undergraduates studying degrees jointly operated by GSA and the University who are registered with both institutions and have access to the resources of both. GSA has responsibility for approving students' research programmes, and for enrolling and registering the students. Research students are also registered with the University to provide full access to resources such as the University library.

22 The ELIR team was interested in GSA's management of its delegated processes, in particular, those it had designed and introduced itself. The team was also interested in the capacity of GSA's internal processes to meet the requirements of the University, normally without the proposals being referred back to GSA. The team's exploration of the partnership between GSA and the University did not extend to the procedures of the University itself, which was the subject of a separate ELIR in 2003-04.

Roles and responsibilities

23 The senior officer of GSA is the Director, who reports to the Board of Governors and is supported by the Deputy Director/Director of Academic Development and the Director of Finance and Resources. These three individuals form the GSA Directorate with all other senior staff reporting to a member of the Directorate. The GSA Executive Group comprises the Directorate plus the heads of the three schools, the Head of the Digital Design Studio and the Head of Academic and Student Services. The Deputy Director took up the appointment in June 2004. In September 2004 GSA appointed, for the first time, a Head of Research and Postgraduate Studies.

24 The RA stated that all staff have responsibilities for quality assurance and enhancement, and that information to support this in the form of policies, procedures and guidance is published in the Academic Handbook. The Deputy Director/Director of Academic Development and the Head of Academic and Student Services play key roles in the management of quality and standards across GSA.

The RA stressed the importance of staff owning the quality systems, and identified a number of initiatives GSA had undertaken in this respect.

25 One outcome of the internal institutional review GSA carried out was a series of meetings with staff, held in the summer of 2004, to discuss roles and responsibilities. This, in turn, led to a Roles and Responsibilities report containing recommendations for implementation during 2004-05 which, the RA indicated, was intended to address issues relating to a staff perception of a top-down management style. The ELIR team considered this review to be a valuable initiative that would build upon a clear commitment to quality management at all levels. GSA's annual monitoring process had identified that there was some confusion over the role of course leaders. A lack of clarity over certain roles, including course leader and head of department, was evident in the team's discussions with staff. This seemed to arise, at least in part, from the practice of role titles, such as course leader or director of undergraduate studies, being used either to describe different ranges of responsibilities, or being used interchangeably within the three schools. The team, therefore, considered that the review had been timely and that there was a pressing need to implement its recommendations.

26 The ELIR team found evidence in committee papers and in discussion with staff that GSA's objective of gaining staff ownership of quality systems was being achieved. Notable in this respect were the seminars on internal monitoring and review, widespread staff participation in the preparations for ELIR and in the arrangements for implementing the SCQF, and staff consultation on the development and review of policies and procedures. A very positive example of staff involvement in procedures is the two-day annual course monitoring event (see below, paragraph 33).

Committee structure and operation

27 The RA set out the formal committee structure, indicating that the Academic Council, which is convened by the Director, has responsibility for the planning, coordination and supervision of the academic work of GSA. Its membership includes elected members of staff and student representatives. The Academic Council is advised by a QILT and by a Research Committee. QILT is chaired by the Deputy Director/Director of Academic Development and is described in the RA as acting on behalf of the Academic Council on 'all matters relating to the development, implementation and monitoring of policies, procedures and structures for the maintenance and enhancement of academic

standards'. Each of the three schools has a board of study and these report to QILT and the Research Committee as appropriate. The boards of study are required to have student/staff consultative committees (SSCCs) and course committees and may convene other subcommittees as they consider appropriate, depending on the number of courses and 'sub-disciplines' within the school.

28 An outcome of the internal institutional review (see above, paragraph 6), was the revision of the role and membership of the former Learning and Teaching Committee to form QILT. QILT was established to ensure the involvement of course leaders and to make explicit the link between learning and teaching, and quality enhancement. Although QILT was relatively new at the time of the ELIR exercise, it appeared to the ELIR team to be working well. The team understood why, in a small institution, oversight of learning and teaching on the one hand, and quality assurance on the other might be the responsibility of a single committee. There would be value in GSA continuing to monitor the operation of QILT to ensure that conflicts of interest do not arise as a result of the same individuals assuring the outcomes of policies and practices that they themselves have developed and agreed. One way of providing this assurance would be to continue the clear element of independent scrutiny in the quality assurance procedures.

29 From its analysis of committee papers the ELIR team concluded that, generally, committee business is conducted efficiently and the papers themselves are well ordered and clear. The team did note some instances where greater clarity could have been achieved, for example, in recording the follow up to important action points and in setting clear action agendas and responsibilities for important new developments; there was a tendency to simply note these (see below, paragraph 53). Reporting lines, terms of reference and operational methods were also generally clear. The school committee arrangements conformed to the GSA requirements which permit considerable variation across schools. The team recognised the difference of scale across the schools and the nature of particular subject groupings. Nonetheless, the team considered that there would be benefit in GSA monitoring the school committee arrangements to ensure that such diversity is justified and that the structure is as streamlined as possible. In this context the team observed that, at any one time, GSA had in place a significant number of working groups for the small size of the institution. In discussion, senior staff expressed an eagerness to develop mechanisms for easing the burden of

committee attendance on staff, and the team would support GSA in keeping this under review.

Internal approval, monitoring and review

Validation and review

30 Under the terms of its Accreditation Agreement with the University of Glasgow, GSA is required to validate new programmes and review existing ones every five years. GSA is responsible for organising validation and review events, the outcomes of which are reported to the University Senate, via the University Academic Regulations Committee, for approval. Validation and review panels are established by QILT and include representatives from the University Senate and GSA (from areas other than those proposing programmes or being reviewed). The panels also have external members from other higher education institutions and/or employers. The RA indicated that, from 2004-05, review panels would include a student member. The RA expressed the view that the involvement of GSA staff in validation and review was valuable for the purposes of staff development and that the procedures themselves were kept under regular review and revised as appropriate.

31 The Academic Handbook specifies the documentation requirements and timescales for the procedures. For validation a proposal document is required, together with a definitive course document. Both have a specified format, the latter meeting the general requirements for programme specifications. For periodic reviews a self-evaluation document is required. The RA described how conditions and recommendations could be set and followed up by QILT. Validation and review reports are considered by QILT and endorsed by the Academic Council prior to submission to the University.

32 From the available evidence the ELIR team concluded that the validation and periodic review procedures used by GSA are fit for purpose and in conformity with the *Code of practice*, published by QAA, for example, in the involvement of external members of panels. The Academic Handbook provided clear guidance for all participants and helpful flow charts to show the timetable of the procedures required to ensure submission to, and approval by, the University in a timely way. The team was provided with examples of validation and periodic review reports, which provided a clear record of the events and the conclusions reached, although the team considered that a more detailed record of discussions and the evidence used to reach conclusions might be helpful in informing the future action plans of course

teams. In general, there was evidence that conditions and recommendations were followed up. However, the minutes and papers of QILT could, at times, have been clearer about how conditions had been met. The team noted an instance where a relatively serious condition had been set and QILT had received only an oral report of the condition having been met. There was no clear record of approval or any evidence of why the condition was considered to have been satisfied. GSA should consider maintaining a clearer audit record of how conditions have been met as well as tracking whether they have been met. Overall, staff confirmed that they had confidence in the procedures and gained a deeper understanding of quality management by being involved. The team also considered the arrangements for approving changes to programmes. These were clearly described in the Academic Handbook and were fit for purpose.

Annual course monitoring

33 The RA stated that annual course monitoring is one of the principal processes by which GSA assures quality and standards. Its aim is to encourage reflection on the operation of courses with a view to maintaining and enhancing quality and standards in learning and teaching. The RA summarised the annual course monitoring reports as being concerned with issues arising from external examiners' reports, performance indicators, results of student questionnaires/feedback and the proceedings of SSCCs. A quality enhancement plan is a requisite part of each annual course monitoring report that identifies a future action plan that can be monitored and which informs quality enhancement and strategic planning. Following the preparation of reports in schools for each course, the reports are considered centrally each autumn and spring. In the spring, a special meeting of QILT is convened for this purpose. In the autumn, QILT organises a two-day event to scrutinise the annual course monitoring reports. This meeting includes the three heads of school, heads of department, course leaders, and heads of services. It also includes the President of the SRC and two external members, one from the University of Glasgow. A recent addition to the process has been the inclusion of annual monitoring reports from academic support services. Each report is considered by a 'critical friend' from a different part of GSA. A full and detailed report is produced which is used both within GSA and for accountability in the Annual Report to the University. The RA noted that the annual course monitoring process is reviewed regularly and that, for example, in 2003-04 revised standard pro formas and guidelines had been produced, and are detailed in the Academic Handbook.

34 The ELIR team found that the procedures described in the Academic Handbook are clear and comprehensive, and are followed across the institution. Annual course monitoring reports are full and detailed. Although they differ in presentational style across GSA, they do adhere to the required common template. The team learned that GSA intends to build on the best practice demonstrated in the presentation of the annual reports for future years. The team concluded that the annual course monitoring process is effective and robust. It is reviewed regularly and GSA staff are committed to it. The process provides clear evidence to the Academic Council, via QILT, about the maintenance of quality and standards. The team considered that the involvement of external peers in the process was a strength. The two day QILT event, with the inclusion of annual monitoring reports from academic support services and the involvement of staff from those services, represents particularly positive practice. The claim in the RA, that the annual course monitoring process does more than check on the health of individual courses and is also able to identify common issues to inform planning and development more widely, is clearly justified.

Thematic reviews

35 GSA introduced thematic reviews in 2000-01 and the RA explained that they facilitate 'an institution-wide perspective on major themes and provide the opportunity to consider quality issues in broader terms than is possible through periodic review'. The thematic review process provides additional links between quality assurance, the dissemination of good practice and academic planning. The RA highlighted that the review method is flexible depending on the theme being reviewed, and is approved by QILT which monitors outcomes and reports to the Academic Council.

36 The ELIR team saw papers relating to three thematic reviews. The first was concerned with quality assurance procedures and was used to check GSA adherence to the *Code of practice*. In 2002-03, a review of library services was carried out and, in 2004, there was a review of assessment. The review of assessment was presented as one of the case studies submitted with the RA. There was evidence that the review had led to changes in assessment practice (see below, paragraph 121). The team was informed that GSA had a forward programme of thematic reviews planned, and was considering aligning this more closely with the programme of national enhancement themes. Overall, the team was able to confirm that the process was useful and complementary to the other review processes in place.

Research degree programmes

37 The RA stated that the operation of research degrees is overseen by the Research Degrees Sub-Committee of the Research Committee, which in turn reports to the Academic Council. Policies and procedures for research degrees are published in a PhD Students Course Handbook, which was developed in relation to the 1999 edition of the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*. The RA went on to note that as research degree provision grows, GSA is reviewing the related quality assurance framework, informed by the 2004 revisions to the *Code*. It indicated that as part of the intended review 'definitive course documents' would be prepared. GSA could consider using an alternative term, reserving the 'definitive course documents' title for taught courses rather than for regulations and procedures relating to individual research programmes.

38 The ELIR team met research students, research supervisors and the Head of Research and Postgraduate Studies, as well as receiving a range of related documentation. The team concluded that all aspects of the procedures for research degrees were very clearly laid out in the PhD Students Course Handbook. These included arrangements for registration and approval of programmes of work, supervisory arrangements, progress monitoring and examination. Research students confirmed that this was the case and it was also clear from the papers provided, and from discussion with both staff and students that the arrangements were effective and routinely followed. The team considered that the recent appointment of a Head of Research and Postgraduate Studies was an important step in developing the GSA research infrastructure and, in particular, in meeting the objectives set out in the RA, for example, putting in place arrangements for the more holistic collection of feedback from research students, monitoring the broad experience and progression of all research students, continuing to develop research student and supervisor training, and further developing the identity of a research community. The team noted the support given by the University of Glasgow to GSA, for example, a member of University staff is included on each supervisory team to support research supervisor development. Overall, the team concluded that GSA is paying close attention to the experience of research students, and had clear and appropriate plans for the further development of that experience to meet the planned increase in research student numbers.

Common framework

39 GSA's programme level regulations are governed by the regulations of the University of Glasgow. These provide a framework and guidance within which individual detailed course regulations can be approved at validation. GSA has used this approach to construct detailed regulations for each course individually and, consequently, the course regulations for progression and awards vary. In 2003-04, GSA reviewed all of its undergraduate courses for adherence with the SCQF in preparation for academic year 2004-05, with new definitive course documents approved by September 2004. This did not involve GSA developing its own common regulatory system, credit definitions and systematic awards definitions. Consequently, each course, while reviewed to be consistent with the SCQF, retained individualised regulations and a credit rating of 'course units' that differed from those on other courses. The ELIR team was interested to explore why GSA had not moved further towards commonality of regulations and credit rating of its undergraduate courses in 2003-04. The team heard that, at the time, such an approach would have been regarded as a radical change to subject level autonomy. However, this view has since changed and GSA is now developing a common regulatory framework. The framework was described by senior staff as having several purposes, notably equity for students across courses, simplification of systems and providing more opportunities for interchange between courses by adopting a standard internal credit rating system. The team would strongly encourage GSA to give this venture a high priority as common regulations across related subjects are more likely to lead to equity for students and an ability to compare academic standards than the current arrangements. The team would also highlight that once the common regulatory framework has been developed, GSA will need to review its courses for consistency with it in order for its benefits to be realised.

External examining

40 The RA stated that external examiners have a 'central role in assuring and enhancing quality and standards'. External examiner appointments are made in accordance with the University of Glasgow procedures. The RA indicated that GSA has clear procedures for nominating external examiners where nominations are reported from boards of study to QILT, which considers the nominations in detail for recommendation to the Academic Council. The Academic Council endorses nominations for

submission to the University Senate for final approval. The RA set out the role of external examiners and the mechanisms for receiving, considering and responding to their reports. The Academic Services section within GSA monitors the operation of the external examiner system and ensures appropriate responses are made. The RA also indicated that the external examiner system is kept under regular review and is updated following reflection on the process, feedback from external examiners and external developments, such as revisions to the *Code of practice*.

41 On the basis of the substantial range of information made available, the ELIR team concluded that GSA's external examiner system is working well. Procedures are described clearly in the Academic Handbook. Appointments are dealt with effectively and recommendations for nominations are made to the University using criteria that avoid conflicts of interest and ensure that external examiners have appropriate experience. External examiners' reports are received on a standard pro forma and there is evidence that they are responded to fully in the annual course monitoring process. Further evidence that the external examiners are responded to adequately is provided in the feedback given to the external examiners themselves. The team also saw a number of examples where the process itself had been reviewed, for example, to ensure greater consistency of approach, improve induction of external examiners and revise the standard report pro forma to elicit more detailed responses from external examiners. There is also evidence that the views of external examiners are acted upon with regard to more generic issues, such as consistency of second-marking of student work and moderation within individual courses. The team noted that GSA is developing a handbook on external examining to consolidate its procedures and practices in one document, and the team considered that this would be a useful development.

Assessment

42 The ELIR team noted that the Academic Handbook was silent with regard to assessment policy and practice. The team discussed with staff their approaches to assuring the academic standard of students' assessed work, particularly in relation to ensuring equity and fairness. The team saw clear evidence of shared information between staff and students in assessment briefs and marking criteria about the nature of work expected of students. Students confirmed that they were aware of what was expected of them, and generally received feedback

that allowed them to understand the marks awarded and to improve their performance in subsequent tasks. The team observed that the information provided for students in handbooks on how honours degrees are classified was somewhat sparse compared to that in definitive course documents, but students nonetheless informed the team that they had a reasonable understanding of the requirements to achieve the various degree classifications.

43 The ELIR team explored how the standards of marking are assured internally. From discussion with staff, it was clear that there is no common interpretation of moderation of marking across GSA, for example, whether this means sampling, double-marking, double-blind marking, anonymity in assessment etc. Consequently, different practices are employed, although it was generally agreed by staff that some form of moderation is necessary. The team noted particular instances of good practice, such as across-school moderation.

44 Senior staff indicated that GSA intends to develop a code of practice and policies relating to assessment, but had waited for the availability of a final version of the University of Glasgow's Code of Practice on Assessment. The ELIR team noted that the code had been published in the University's Calendar for 2002-03, but that it dealt primarily with regulations and not specifically with matters such as moderation of assessment. Although the team noted that external examiners reported that marking standards and methods generally lead to fair outcomes, it formed the view that GSA should develop its own policies and codes of practices in assessment as a matter of priority in order to provide more secure internal assurance of academic standards (see below, paragraphs 52, 121 and 137).

Analysing the outcomes of quality assurance procedures

45 During its review of the quality assurance procedures, the ELIR team looked for ways in which GSA compared information across programmes and identified common themes. In particular, the team was interested to explore the ways in which GSA seeks to assure equity for students and comparability of academic standards, and how it identifies generic issues for enhancement or dissemination of good practice. The team discussed these matters with staff and sought evidence in the range of documentation provided. In some instances the team saw evidence of the identification of common themes, for example, from annual course monitoring, but in other cases there appeared to be limited analysis of information. For example, GSA does not identify any common

themes arising from validation and periodic review reports. The conditions and recommendations are followed up, but there is little evidence of the reports being used more generally to generate a future action plan for courses. While an institution-wide review of external examiners' reports is included in the Annual Report to the University of Glasgow, the team could not identify where this analysis might be used within GSA. The team also noted that while data reports on matters such as recruitment, entry qualifications, progression and award profiles are produced, and trends could be tracked, they are not accompanied by performance indicators against which monitoring and evaluation could be carried out to help assure equity for students, comparability of academic standards and to evaluate developments. The team recognised that, because of the variation of regulations from programme to programme, such comparisons would be difficult within the institution. In discussion with senior staff, it was clear that GSA does not engage in a significant way in benchmarking indicators against similar institutions to gain a measure of comparability with the sector. The team concluded that, while GSA pays close attention to the review and effectiveness of procedures themselves, it could usefully consider further developing the ways in which it identifies common themes that emerge from quality assurance processes and consider ways of analysing comparative information across programmes and with similar institutions. Such analysis should support the GSA's enhancement initiatives and underpin confidence in the academic standards of awards across programmes.

Overview of the use made of external reference points for assuring quality and standards

Use of the Academic Infrastructure

46 The RA described how all of GSA's policies and procedures for assuring quality and standards are externally referenced. It also described how subject benchmark statements, the SCQF, the *Code of practice*, programme specifications and the requirements of professional and statutory bodies are integrated into GSA's procedures.

SCQF

47 In 2004, GSA reviewed its undergraduate courses individually and credit rated them in line with the SCQF. At that time, GSA did not analyse whether its definitions of awards were consistent with the SCQF, or develop an institution-wide academic framework. Nonetheless, the ELIR team concluded that the outcome of the process has led to broad consistency with the SCQF.

48 GSA has not yet reviewed its postgraduate courses against the SCQF. In the view of the ELIR team, there would be considerable benefit in GSA first developing its common regulatory framework, including identifying clear and consistent award definitions, titles and nomenclature and introducing cross-institution credit ratings for postgraduate taught awards. While the team is aware that the deadline for bringing postgraduate awards into line with the SCQF was a little more relaxed than for undergraduate programmes, it formed the view that ensuring adherence with the SCQF should now be a matter of priority for GSA.

49 In relation to award titles and definitions, the ELIR team noted that one master's degree handbook indicated that an exit award of a postgraduate diploma was available as an award of Glasgow School of Art. The team would strongly encourage GSA to review whether it has the appropriate authority confer the diploma and, if not, to make alternative arrangements, ensuring students are informed appropriately.

Subject benchmark statements

50 The RA set out the ways in which subject benchmark statements are used as reference points for the validation and review of programmes. External examiners are also briefed on the academic infrastructure generally. The recent review of the annual course monitoring process (see above, paragraphs 33 & 34) noted that more explicit reference to subject benchmark statements should be made within annual course monitoring reports. Overall, the ELIR team concluded that GSA does make effective use of subject benchmark statements both in curriculum design and in ongoing review.

Code of practice, published by QAA

51 The ELIR team was provided with information on how the GSA had considered the various sections of the QAA *Code of practice* and either confirmed adherence to the precepts or adopted new practices appropriately. The RA described how the Code was used as an 'audit tool' in the thematic review of quality assurance in order to confirm adherence to it. QILT was described as having a key coordinating role in overseeing GSA adherence to the Code.

52 The ELIR team was provided with detailed information relating to GSA's self-evaluation against the sections of the *Code of practice* and discussed the procedures and outcomes with staff. In general, the team was satisfied that GSA had taken this work seriously. However, as noted earlier (see above, paragraph 44), there is still some work to be carried out on aspects of assessment practice that relate to

the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*, for example, codifying arrangements for the quality assurance of marking standards. The team noted that these gaps still existed a number of years after the Code was published.

53 The ELIR team was informed that GSA is addressing systematically the recently revised sections of the Code. However, the team observed that QILT had simply noted publication of the new sections in its minutes without recording the actions taken (see above, paragraph 29). The team was, however, made aware of initiatives being taken by staff to address the revised sections.

54 The ELIR team noted that GSA has introduced a distance learning degree programme in ceramics (see below, paragraph 93). The team would encourage GSA to give early consideration to the 2004 revision of the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*, and ensure that it is able to adhere to the precepts.

Programme specifications

55 GSA has adopted its 'definitive course documents' as meeting the requirements of programme specifications. The Academic Handbook provides a standard template for these and they are a required part of the documentation for validation and periodic review. The ELIR team saw examples of definitive course documents and observed that they are consistent with the guidelines for the content of programme specifications. However, they are also very detailed documents written to be the single source reference point for regulations and fine description of courses, largely for internal use and in language that would not be easily accessible to the layperson. The team concluded that GSA may wish to review its approach to programme specifications and definitive course documents in order to both maintain accurate definitive records of courses and, in due course, provide user friendly information about them in programme specifications.

Progress files

56 The RA provided limited information on the GSA approach to progress files, noting that a standard transcript template had been adopted from June 2003. The RA went on to note that the format would be reviewed again to take account of the requirements of the European Diploma Supplement. It was stressed that a new student record system would be required to facilitate the production of student transcripts.

57 The ELIR team was provided with the papers of the Personal Development Planning Working Group which had been charged with developing GSA's approach to progress files, including transcripts and personal development plans. The Working Group had advised in May 2004 that there were 'significant barriers to [developing] school wide transcripts', largely due to the lack of a common framework of regulations and course structures. Consequently the Group had concluded that at least two different transcripts would be required. It appeared unlikely that a standard transcript would be produced in 2004-05, or before a common regulatory framework had been produced for GSA. The Working Group had noted that this was some way past the national deadline (of 2002-03) and consequently the team would encourage GSA to address this issue in the very near future.

58 In contrast, significant progress has been made towards implementing personal development planning for students. A scheme is being piloted in architecture with a view to being evaluated and adapted as necessary for use in other parts of GSA. The team considered that GSA was well placed to introduce personal development planning for 2006-07, in accordance with the revised national timescale.

PSBs and employer concerns

59 The RA indicated that GSA has important relationships with professional and statutory bodies (PSBs) in two areas: accreditation of the BEng/MEng Product Design Engineering programme by the Institute of Mechanical Engineers (the course is operated jointly with the University of Glasgow), and accreditation of undergraduate and postgraduate architecture programmes by the Royal Institute of British Architects/Architects Registration Board. PSB requirements provide a reference point for validation and periodic review, and PSB reports are monitored by boards of study (or joint board) and QILT, with recommendations and conditions followed up as necessary. GSA dovetails periodic review activity with PSB visits whenever possible. In discussion, students confirmed the importance of PSB recognition of their programmes (where relevant). The ELIR team formed the view that GSA adopted a systematic approach to its relationship with PSBs.

60 The RA stated that the majority of academic staff at GSA are practising artists, designers and architects. The RA indicated that part-time staff enrich programmes with their practice-based experience. In discussion, students expressed the view that their teaching and learning experience was enhanced by the professional experience of staff.

Commentary on the ability of the institution's internal review systems to monitor and maintain quality and standards

61 Glasgow School of Art (GSA) has systems for validation and periodic review that are fit for purpose and meet the SHEFC criteria for internal review at the subject level. The annual course monitoring system for taught programmes is secure and attracts the clear commitment of staff. Internal monitoring systems are linked to, and complemented by, an effective external examining system, with reference to the requirements of professional and statutory bodies as relevant. Arrangements for research degrees students are effective and consistently implemented.

62 GSA has a good record of implementing its internal procedures across its provision. Throughout the review, the ELIR team saw evidence that GSA is able to reflect on its practices, evaluate them and improve them where appropriate. For example, the team observed continuous incremental change and improvement to annual monitoring and the external examiner system. GSA is also aware that the development of a common academic framework of regulations and the development of an institution-wide approach to credit rating would improve its ability to maintain comparable standards across programmes. In a similar vein, GSA is aware that a code of practice and policies on assessment and a handbook for external examiners would further assist its ability to assure standards. Overall, the team's consideration of the implementation and effectiveness of GSA's internal review systems suggests that there can be **broad confidence** in GSA's current, and likely future, management of the quality of its provision and the academic standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its validating institution. The level of future confidence is based on GSA's recognition of the pressing need to develop its common academic framework for implementation across all taught provision and to develop an institutional code of practice and policies on assessment.

Overview of the institution's approach to ensuring that the information it publishes about the quality of its provision is complete, accurate and fair

63 The RA described how GSA assures the accuracy of its current public information and how it is preparing to meet the future SHEFC requirements relating to the public information set. The Marketing and Development Office works closely with course teams to ensure the accuracy of information in

publicity such as the prospectus and the website. GSA's approach to producing programme specifications was considered earlier (see above, paragraph 55). The RA also noted the importance of internal published information for students in the form of course handbooks and more general information about GSA and its various student support services.

64 The ELIR team considered a range of published information, including the prospectus, student handbooks and material on the public website and intranet. The team discussed the way in which information is produced and how the accuracy of it is ensured with staff, and sought the views of students on these matters.

65 It was clear to the ELIR team that there are effective routines in place for maintaining the accuracy and currency of publicity materials, with clear responsibilities and production schedules. Students confirmed that the information they had received was realistic and accurate and did not create any false impressions about the courses that they subsequently embarked on. The team was interested to know how single source documentation about courses was maintained and how 'version control' was managed when changes to courses were made that might apply to some cohorts of students but not others. The team concluded that arrangements were secure with a single definitive course document being used to derive other documentation such as student handbooks. The definitive document is updated as necessary following any approved changes to courses with other documentation changing as a consequence. Students confirmed that internal course level information was accurate and reliable. Similarly, information on the website is maintained accurately. The team noted that the intranet is at an early stage of development and that, in due course, attention will need to be paid to the information it conveys as well as the currency of that information.

Commentary on the institution's arrangements for ensuring that the information it publishes about the quality of its provision is complete, accurate and fair

66 GSA has effective routines in place for ensuring that the prospectus and other publicity materials are complete, accurate and fair. GSA has adopted a policy that its definitive course documents meet the requirements for programme specifications. GSA is aware that at some stage it is likely to be necessary to make these more 'user friendly' for public audiences. The ELIR team noted that the intranet was

at a relatively early stage of development and in due course clear routines for assuring accuracy would need to be developed.

The student experience

Overview of the institution's approach to engaging students in the assurance and enhancement of the quality of teaching and learning

67 GSA has an integrated approach to the engagement of students in quality assurance and enhancement which combines formal, centralised structures with more devolved, local interaction. There is student representation at every level of GSA's academic committee structure, including SSCCs, boards of study, QILT, the Research Committee, the Academic Council and the Board of Governors. The GSA/University of Glasgow Liaison Committee also has a student member, as do the joint boards of management and the Admissions Committee.

68 Representation on QILT and the GSA/University of Glasgow Liaison Committee, in particular, gives students the opportunity to be actively involved in the scrutiny of reports derived from the annual course monitoring process and from validation and periodic review panels. A recent development, from 2003-04, has been the inclusion of a student member on each validation and periodic review panel.

69 Each course has a SSCC which is expected to meet at least once a term and includes two student representatives from each year of study. To provide further support for the system, it has been recommended that course leaders must consult all student representatives from their area on a monthly basis. In discussion it emerged that some staff were unaware of the apparent differences in the ways that the SSCCs operate across GSA, although overall they indicated that the student representation mechanisms work well, with good student involvement.

70 A training programme for student representatives is being developed by GSA, in consultation with the SRC and the national organisation, sparqs (Student Participation in Quality Scotland). Training will be arranged by Academic Services which is to keep a central record of student representatives. These various developments are summarised in a set of guidelines for staff on 'Effective Student Feedback and Representation'. GSA has also recently revised its Student Representative Handbook, which was produced

with the help of sparqs and which provides clear, accessible advice on the role, responsibilities and effective functioning of class representatives. Quality assurance and enhancement are among the terms set out in a section of the Handbook on 'Speaking the language'.

71 The SRC President, one of two student sabbatical officers, believes that students have a strong and active voice within GSA. An analysis of the main issues arising from student feedback, along with a record of the action taken or proposed, is included in all annual course monitoring reports. One source of such feedback is the relevant SSCC. Until recently, a second source was the institution-wide questionnaire on the quality of learning and teaching. However, a recent review of student feedback mechanisms concluded that the questionnaire was too generalised to be fully effective. From the current session, course leaders are responsible for developing their own local feedback mechanisms. The methods to be used are not prescribed, although it is expected that questionnaires will continue to have a role alongside other possible means of eliciting students' views, such as focus groups. The feedback mechanisms must also be formalised and described in advance to the students concerned. To achieve parity across GSA, certain topic areas are specified. The SRC President indicated that the decision to discontinue the centralised questionnaire had been strongly influenced by student criticism of it, and he was confident that the new, more devolved system would be an improvement.

72 Some examples of the student feedback mechanisms now in use show the schools taking disparate approaches to gathering students' views. GSA recognises the risks of moving to a less centralised system of student feedback and indicates that the outcomes will be monitored through the annual course monitoring process and by QILT. This monitoring should be a priority to ensure that the different approaches do not obscure the identification of problems that may be emerging in more than one school or academic unit. The introduction of the new system would also afford an opportunity to review the way in which GSA's response to feedback from students is in turn reported back to them. In discussions, students believed that this could be improved.

73 GSA has been attempting to use focus groups for three years to obtain feedback on its admissions, recruitment, induction and enrolment arrangements. The level of participation was at first too low to yield meaningful results but has been improving and the

practice now appears to be established. In a creative approach, sparqs has worked with GSA to develop a process of student consultation described as Open Space meetings. This was one of the ways in which students were involved in the Thematic Review of Assessment (see above, paragraph 36). The method allows the student participants, free from any outside influence, to identify and discuss the issues that most concern them and also encourages them to propose possible solutions. GSA believes sparqs plans to adopt the method and use it nationally.

74 Following the internal institutional review (see above, paragraph 6), an external consultant was commissioned to undertake a systematic study of student satisfaction. The results of the survey indicated a high level of satisfaction. It is intended to make this an annual survey, using an external consultant employing a similar technique of one-to-one structured interviews.

75 In discussion, students were confident that they could raise issues of concern and that action would follow. Although student representatives were not familiar with the term 'quality enhancement', they were able to give specific examples of recent actions taken by GSA which they regarded as beneficial. Matters could often be dealt with directly and informally with a member of staff. All students highlighted the relatively small size of GSA which, they believed, facilitates comprehensive representation as well as informal contact. Student representatives expressed a willingness to take on that role because they felt a sense of ownership of GSA. To encourage students' participation, GSA has decided to remunerate those willing to devote the extra time needed for participation in exercises such as periodic reviews of teaching, a decision which the SRC President has praised.

76 Research students appeared to be less clear about the mechanisms for their representation through the existing SSCCs, but they knew that GSA is introducing a new consultative committee specifically for postgraduates. None voiced any criticism of the channels that had been open to them to date.

77 Information about the entitlement to lodge appeals or complaints is provided in the student handbooks. In discussion, student representatives were aware of their rights and of the procedures to be followed. Other students were less aware of how they could lodge a complaint, but expressed confidence that they could obtain the information should they need it.

Overview of the institution's approach to the promotion of effective student learning

78 In a presentation at the Part 1 visit, the GSA Director stated that GSA develops 'independent, self-reflective, mature and confident students through creative education'. She set out a number of strategic challenges which GSA is seeking to address, including the redevelopment of the estate; the development of the research and postgraduate community; and the creation of a common academic framework.

Learning and teaching strategy

79 GSA describes its Learning and Teaching Strategy as 'one of the main vehicles through which effective student learning is developed'. It is being reviewed as part of GSA's plan to produce an integrated Learning, Teaching and Quality Enhancement Strategy. The present version is described as a development plan rather than a definitive policy document, which is intended to support a 'middle-out' rather than a 'top-down' approach to improving the quality of the student learning experience. It is also intended to help staff respond to new challenges 'in order to maintain [GSA's] reputation for excellence'. The Learning and Teaching Strategy seeks to promote a shift from a teaching to a learning culture, and to respond to the needs of an increasingly diverse student population. It also proposes an explicit link between research and learning and teaching; encourages improved time and resource management; supports staff development and innovative practice; and emphasises the potential for cross-GSA synergies.

Studio-based learning

80 Studio-based learning is described as the primary mode of learning and teaching at GSA. A presentation during the Part 1 visit provided an insight into the nature of this approach. Video footage showed how, through various imaginative projects, entrant students in Fine Art were introduced to GSA and its learning resources, enabled to work with one another as well as on their own, and encouraged to reflect on what they had learned. The presenter summarised this as a 'studio centred approach that promotes independent and collaborative learning and uses projects that lead to self-reflection and support experimentation and risk taking'. In exploring the intended shift at GSA from a teaching to a learning culture, senior staff also stressed the central role of studio-based education, which of its nature encourages independent learning. These staff acknowledged that studio-

based learning has been the traditional approach at GSA, and the shift in culture is linked to more recent efforts to make the intended learning outcomes much clearer, so that it has become correspondingly easier for students to evaluate their own progress. In discussion, students were not aware that the culture shift was a strategic objective but they did make a link between studio-based projects and taking responsibility for their own learning, and they emphasised the value of 'learning by doing'.

81 GSA identifies the 'one-to-one nature' of studio-based learning as an asset in terms of student support. It is also recognised that one-to-one teaching in art and design could be seen as both a strength and a weakness as it is increasingly under resource pressure. However, staff emphasised that financial pressures are not the only driver for change. They are aware of developments in creative education, exploring, for example, new ways of working with groups of students, sometimes with the help of external agencies, such as the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA). A number of pedagogical developments were identified including team teaching, peer evaluation by students and, in some areas, structured independent learning using workbooks.

Student support

82 GSA maintains that the one-to-one nature of studio-based learning enables GSA to respond to individual needs at a local level and views this as a key element of its support for students. Local systems are, nevertheless, complemented by central, specialist services which were brought together as a unified Student Support Department following a review in 2001-02. GSA acknowledges that the relationship between central and local provision would benefit from clarification and work to address this is ongoing. The Head of Counselling and Student Support, whose appointment was one outcome of the 2001-02 review, described the progress that had already been made towards informing teaching staff about the services available and the arrangements for referring students. The counselling service operates a system whereby students are offered an initial appointment as soon as possible to assess and prioritise need. There is no waiting list for the service.

83 Mechanisms are in place for evaluating the student support services, including benchmarking student usage of them against national norms. High levels of student satisfaction are recorded and were confirmed in discussion with students. Students were clear where they could seek assistance on a range of matters, for example, the Learning Support

and Development Service provides study skills support and staff of the service were described as highly approachable. Individual tutors were also said to be very accessible. Nevertheless, it was expressed that relying on students to approach staff for support carries the risk that the needs of less confident students might be overlooked. It was suggested that the risk might be greatest during the third year of study in some disciplines when, for otherwise sound pedagogic reasons to do with independence and self-expression, there was less structured contact with teaching staff.

The learning environment

84 GSA's future plans for the development of its learning environment include the introduction of an integrated learning resource, linking the Library, IT and other support services. As part of this, the development of a managed learning environment (MLE) is one of GSA's strategic objectives. The current lack of an MLE is acknowledged as a limitation, and its development is said to be a priority for 2005-06. The Head of Learning Resources had only been in the post for two weeks at the time of the Part 2 visit, and focused discussion within GSA about the choice and implementation of a virtual learning environment (VLE), the first step in the process of developing an MLE, was only just beginning.

85 In discussion during ELIR, student representatives appeared largely satisfied with their learning environment. The external student satisfaction survey (see above, paragraph 74) found that students with knowledge of other art schools were especially likely to regard the learning environment at GSA favourably, and this was confirmed in discussions during ELIR. Technical staff were said to be excellent and really helpful. Postgraduates described the Library as 'fantastic'. It was also praised by undergraduates, albeit with the proviso that in their case access to the University of Glasgow Library did not extend to borrowing rights. This matter was addressed in the Thematic Review of Library Services in 2002-03, in the course of which students were advised that the cost of borrowing rights for undergraduates had proved too expensive in view of the number actually making use of them. The students who participated in that Review were nevertheless of the opinion that the GSA Library provided a very good service and were particularly appreciative of the decision to introduce Saturday opening. This extension to opening hours was highlighted by student representatives as an example of the effectiveness of the Student Forum on the Library, chaired by the SRC President. All students described the IT provision as good.

Postgraduate students

86 The development of its research and postgraduate community is one of GSA's principal strategic objectives and it is anticipated that taught and research postgraduates will constitute 15 per cent of the total student population by 2008 and 20 per cent by 2011. The way in which GSA intends to achieve this growth was clearly set out by the recently appointed Head of Research and Postgraduate Studies. GSA has created a number of new roles as part of the infrastructure for the planned expansion of research and postgraduate study. The role of the research developer is to foster research activity within a school and that of PhD coordinator to carry some of the associated administrative responsibilities, thereby facilitating the task of individual supervisors.

87 An objective of the Learning and Teaching Strategy is to create an explicit link between research and learning and teaching. GSA provided a succinct account of how it is attempting to achieve this, for example, through the development of a taught master's degree programme in Research Methods for creative practice which is directly informed by the expertise of many of its staff who are creative practitioners themselves.

88 The students described their overall experience of GSA in very positive terms. They all felt part of a research community, although it was harder for Digital Design Studio students to become involved in wider campus life because of the Studio's geographical separation. Links with the University of Glasgow were said to be good and complementary by those students utilising them and interaction between the component schools of GSA itself was said to be getting better, though there was still room for improvement. There was a suggestion that the way in which practice based PhDs differed from the requirements for more traditional doctorates could be more clearly articulated. Students also saw a need for more qualified and willing supervisors, and stressed the difficulty of obtaining funding for these areas of study.

An inclusive learning environment

89 Ensuring that the student community reflects the diversity of society is one of GSA's strategic objectives. Examples of progress towards this goal include the GSA Wider Access programme, GSA's support for students with disabilities and the introduction (in 2003) of a part-time, distance learning degree programme in Ceramics (see below, paragraph 93).

90 GSA's Wider Access Development Officer described the Greater Opportunity for Access and Learning in Schools (GOALS) project, of which the

Artists and Designers in Education scheme is a part; this was presented as one of GSA's ELIR case studies (see above, paragraph 5). As part of the GOALS project, GSA has introduced the Portfolio Preparation Project which is designed to stimulate an interest in the visual arts among school pupils with little or no previous experience and, specifically, to assist them with compiling a portfolio. The progression of GOALS students at GSA is not always as good as the institution would wish. Staff expressed a desire to benchmark this activity at GSA against appropriate national comparators once these had been agreed by the sector. Close attention is paid to student retention, for example, study skills have been embedded in the curriculum.

91 Almost 17 per cent of students at GSA have declared a disability, by far the most common being dyslexia. Staff have become adept at detecting possible indicators, with the result that some students first became aware of their condition after entry to GSA. Because of its experience in these matters, SHEFC commissioned GSA to produce the guide *Understanding Dyslexia* which has been distributed across the sector.

92 The new Learning Support and Development Service introduced the Individual Requirement Form to ensure that students' particular learning needs are clearly identified and thus addressed. Academic staff indicated that this was a major advance because it gave them specific guidance which had been agreed by the individual student.

93 GSA introduced a part-time BA (Hons) Design in Ceramics degree programme in 2003 and two student cohorts have begun their studies. The programme includes a distance-learning element which was intended to be delivered via a VLE. The original choice of VLE proved problematic and it was discontinued. GSA has had difficulty in locating and introducing a suitable VLE and currently one is not in place to support the course. Communications have been maintained using email and the students have expressed satisfaction with this, but it is not a substitute for a VLE. The introduction of a new system, developed in Australia, was being investigated but this may not have all the facilities of a full VLE. It is likely that a full VLE would require broadband access, to which students living in remote areas (who are among the target population) might not have access.

94 Students on the programme are positive about the opportunity it provides for them to study. In particular, they are enthusiastic about the twice-yearly two-week residential courses which enable students to meet their teachers, and other students, face to face.

95 Offering the programme is an innovative and interesting initiative but the decision to launch the degree when a key means of delivering it had not been tried or tested must be questioned. GSA will need to pay very careful attention to the development of this programme because it may become more difficult, as the students progress to more advanced study, to ensure parity of academic standards and student experience with full-time programmes.

Cross-institution synergies

96 The Learning and Teaching Strategy emphasises the benefits of developing cross-institutional synergies and senior staff were quick to articulate the benefits of greater synergy within GSA, including the justification that creativity often arises at the interface between disciplines. They also recognised the barriers to change, some of them subtle, stemming from the strength and tradition of specialist subject areas, but maintained that progress had been 'extraordinary'.

97 Student representatives reported on opportunities that students had to cross the boundary between one school or department and another, describing this as a strength of GSA. They highlighted the breadth of study in the first year, the encouragement given by the SRC and the responsiveness of staff to requests from students. The student representatives also indicated that it became more difficult for students in later years, and that any crossover became more dependent on their personal initiative. In general, they perceived architecture as being less integrated with the rest of GSA.

98 The Department of Historical and Critical Studies sits outside the three school structure of GSA but all undergraduates studying design or fine art (though not architecture) are required to take some of its courses. The review of roles and responsibilities (see above, paragraph 25) recognises a need to clarify the role of this Department in the overall GSA structure. Historical and Critical Studies is to be the subject of the 2005-06 Thematic Review, and the Head of the Department is now invited to attend all meetings of the GSA Executive Group when academic issues are being discussed. Given the potential of the Department to act as a unifying influence, these are positive developments.

Student satisfaction

99 In discussions students were able to identify and articulate areas for improvement but were, overall, highly enthusiastic about the education they are receiving. GSA's reputation had been part of their

reason for applying and they had not been disappointed once their studies began. They spoke particularly positively about the friendliness and expertise of staff, and the opportunity to be original with no enforced house style.

Overview of the institution's approach to the promotion of the employability of its students

100 There has been a strong vocational element to the education provided by GSA ever since its original foundation as a Government School of Design, and enhancing the employability of its graduates continues as one of GSA's strategic aims. Most GSA tutors are practitioners themselves, with links to the creative industries and to professional networks, and there are many examples of GSA graduates who have achieved distinction as architects, artists or designers. A staff conference, held in 2002, helped to foster various initiatives, including the creation of a dedicated careers service. The Careers Adviser has progressed a number of initiatives: mapping existing provision and building on it by developing the network of useful contacts, helping to initiate new projects, such as a longitudinal graduate destination survey, and devising appropriate means of evaluation. GSA also intends to use the national Enhancement Theme on Employability as a further catalyst for the development of a formal employability strategy, for which purpose it has established a steering group.

101 GSA's Artists and Designers in Education programme (see above, paragraph 5) allows second and third-year students the opportunity to share their skills and talents with schoolchildren through short placements in schools during which they design and implement a project in collaboration with the children and schoolteachers. Graduates who had participated in earlier years indicated how this had been beneficial, helping them to choose a career, illuminate an existing career choice or, more generally, by boosting their self-confidence. Architecture students are not currently able to participate in this programme, although in discussion a number expressed interest in doing so. GSA could reflect on the possibility of extending the programme to all schools.

102 Undergraduate students spoke positively about the instruction they received in such matters as intellectual property rights and the opportunity they had to attend talks by representatives from industry. In discussion one student referred to a project she had undertaken which had already resulted in a patent. Postgraduate students expressed a wish for still more information about the skills needed in industry; but they were similarly positive overall and one of them

said that the close relationship which existed between the Digital Design Studio and its external clients constituted a highly beneficial environment.

103 Student representatives highlighted several features of their courses which they believed would help them find employment, including a careers day held at the Tramway theatre and a Christmas sale of their work which had taught them about aspects of business practice. Nevertheless, this was one area where they clearly considered that GSA could do more, especially for those in later years of study. There was a call for more 'joined-up thinking' on this topic and for further use to be made of the good contacts which GSA has with its graduates.

Commentary on the effectiveness of the institution's approach to promoting an effective learning experience for students

104 GSA is providing an effective learning experience for its students based on the long tradition of studio-based teaching with its close partnership between learner and tutor; the effective way in which its student representative structures operate, including the readiness of students to engage with them; the underpinning provided by a number of GSA's central services, including the Library and its Student Support Department; and a combination of long experience and new thinking with regard to vocational education which should see it well placed to produce a successful Employability Strategy.

105 GSA is also aware that it faces some significant challenges. It has plans for redeveloping its estate and is committed to preserving its studio-based approach to learning. GSA intends to expand and diversify its student population, with wider access, more students from overseas and many more postgraduates. The realisation of these ambitions will require careful monitoring, for instance, because studio-based learning may not come easily to students from some other cultures. Recent developments, such as the expansion and integration of GSA's student support services and the new infrastructure for postgraduate study, will facilitate the successful achievement of the planned increase in numbers.

106 GSA has a clear appreciation of its strengths and vulnerabilities as a teaching institution. It recognises the requirement to complete the revision of the Quality Enhancement Strategy and link this to the Learning and Teaching Strategy. In doing so, it should potentiate those cross-institution synergies that have not yet been fully realised. It should also ensure that the operational plans derived from its strategies

incorporate realistic timescales so that worthwhile innovations, such as a VLE, are not presumed before they have been thoroughly investigated.

Effectiveness of the institution's strategy for quality enhancement

Overview of the institution's approach to managing improvement in the quality of teaching and learning

107 GSA produced a quality enhancement strategy in 2001-02 for submission to SHEFC. The aim of the strategy is to 'continuously and systematically improve the operation of courses, learning support services provided to students, and the learning environment of [GSA]'. GSA intends this to be achieved through two main approaches: as a result of the interrelationship of quality assurance and quality enhancement policies and procedures; and through the sharing of good practice in learning and teaching across the institution.

108 The internal institutional review found that staff did not all have a shared understanding or sense of ownership of the institutional quality enhancement strategy and its relationship with the strategic plan, although the concept of enhancement was embedded in quality assurance procedures and there was a strong commitment to enhancement within schools and departments. It was GSA's intention that its institutional quality enhancement strategy would evolve with other strategies, particularly the learning and teaching strategy. Consequently, a working group was formed to produce a revised integrated strategy for learning, teaching and quality enhancement. GSA extended the original deadline for producing the integrated strategy from December 2004 to May 2005 to allow external referencing and wide debate among staff and students.

109 In discussion, senior staff indicated that the development of the integrated strategy had been delayed because of issues raised during the internal institutional review, including a feeling among staff of a top-down management style (see above, paragraph 25). Senior staff maintain that GSA has a very flat management structure, which should help to counter this view, but acknowledge that over the past four years there has been substantial rapid change, and that it was now necessary to slow down in order to ensure better consultation. GSA identifies comprehensive consultation, with governors, staff and students, as a particular strength of the institutional planning process, and believes this fosters improvements in the quality of learning and

teaching. This view was emphasised by staff during the ELIR visits. It is clear that consultation is important and valuable, but GSA should ensure that protracted deliberations do not inhibit action.

110 The review of roles and responsibilities (see above, paragraph 25) exemplifies GSA's commitment to consultation. One of the findings was that the GSA structure had become complex and there was a need to clarify responsibilities of committees and individuals. Consequently, it was recommended that there should be a review of the institutional committee structure in relation to school-level committees and groups in order to avoid duplication of effort and structural complexity. Other recommendations from the review that might be expected to create an environment conducive to quality enhancement included the streamlining of the learning and teaching coordinators' role and clarification of their working relationships with the Deputy Director/Director of Academic Development and the Head of Academic and Student Services; and the preparation of a 'quality diagram' to show the various roles of senior staff in quality management.

111 GSA takes the view that all staff have responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement, and the institution seeks to ensure that ownership of quality systems is achieved (see above, paragraph 26). Teaching staff confirm that they have a sense of ownership of the quality assurance processes, believing them to be valuable. There is, however, no real appreciation of the distinction between quality assurance and quality enhancement and, in particular, the existence of quality enhancement that is not itself derived directly from quality assurance activities.

112 GSA identifies its engagement with ELIR and the wider quality enhancement framework as providing another opportunity to enhance the quality of learning and teaching, for example, it offered a series of staff development activities during 2003-04 and 2004-05 including ELIR briefing sessions, training in academic practice, and in disability and the curriculum. GSA engages with the national Enhancement Themes by responding to consultations and through representation at conferences and workshops, with encouragement from the learning and teaching coordinators. GSA representatives were involved in networks and focus groups relating to the Enhancement Themes for Assessment and Responding to Student Needs. The diseconomies of scale associated with a Small Specialist Institution understandably make it difficult for staff to find the time to sit on steering groups or to lead workshops.

113 GSA is working to promote greater consistency of practice across the institution, for example, it has plans to develop and implement a common academic framework (see above, paragraph 39) and has appointed learning and teaching coordinators in each school. The current lack of commonality in practice is recognised as a constraint to further improvements in the learning experience. For example, the Thematic Review of Assessment identified considerable variation in assessment practice between schools, and identified a number of areas for improvement in assessment procedures. Senior staff consider that there is more support among staff for the introduction of greater commonality than might have been the case in the relatively recent past, but recognise that staff still identify strongly with their particular school. In discussion teaching staff recognised the need for greater integration and progress is being made, for example, through the work of the learning and teaching coordinators (see below, paragraph 123).

114 The reports of relevant PSBs inform the annual course monitoring and periodic review processes. Similarly, employers constitute another external reference point that influences the quality of teaching and learning. Employers are involved through live projects, student placements and industrial liaison boards. GSA is aware of the scope that exists for these activities to be formally developed as part of its emerging employability strategy (see above, paragraph 100). GSA also highlights the benefits that flow from the majority of academic staff being practising artists, designers and architects, in particular for the professional practice elements of courses.

115 It is clear that the notion of enhancement is embedded in GSA's quality assurance procedures and that there is a strong staff commitment to enhancement. There is considerable scope to develop a strategy for quality enhancement that extends beyond activity derived solely from quality assurance procedures. A number of initiatives have been taken with a view to identifying ways of managing quality improvement more effectively, such as the internal institutional review and the associated review of roles and responsibilities. Two constraints identified by GSA are the diseconomies of scale of a small institution and the tendency for staff to identify with their individual school or department, rather than with GSA as a whole. The former means there is a limited number of people to deal with essential tasks at institutional level; the latter works against the adoption of common procedures and practices, thereby occupying time

that might otherwise be available for enhancement activities. Staff clearly recognise the need to make time available for enhancement at all levels. GSA has indicated the likelihood, in the future, of its management of quality improvement being guided by the outcomes of the national Enhancement Themes. This would require both careful planning and staff with enough time to implement the plans. GSA is, therefore, supported in its resolve to increase efficiency by reviewing committee and individual responsibilities in quality management, and by seeking commonality of procedures and practices.

Overview of the linkage between the institution's arrangements for internal quality assurance and its enhancement activity

116 GSA is aware that staff currently have difficulties in linking local enhancement to institutional strategy. One mechanism for making the link clearer is the annual course monitoring process, the quality enhancement role of which has been strengthened by the inclusion of a quality enhancement plan with each report. Boards of study therefore have a key role in enhancement through their responsibility for monitoring progress in addressing the quality enhancement plans. The two-day annual course monitoring event (see above, paragraph 33) is a valuable additional step in the process of monitoring, and provides a useful means of identifying good practice in the production of the reports. In this way, the process identifies issues at course level and across courses, including those relating to student services and the learning environment. The careful attention paid to the calibre of the quality enhancement plan and of the critical appraisal is a particularly positive feature of the annual scrutiny event.

117 A detailed report of the two-day event is produced, the most recent of which clearly set out a number of actions designed to increase the contribution of annual monitoring to enhancement. These included the introduction of amended guidelines and pro formas intended to make the critical appraisal more evaluative; more explicit links between research and learning and teaching; improved links between institutional objectives and those of schools; and clarified procedures for reporting on research degrees. In addition, the process has highlighted external examiners' comments about their role in the moderation process, and the consequent need for an external examiners' handbook. An example of a positive outcome generated by this institution-wide event is the proposal that the format of one school's quality enhancement plan will be adopted as a model for the others.

118 A review of the annual course monitoring process carried out in 2003-04 resulted in revised guidelines, one of the main changes being a refocusing of the process on individual courses rather than on schools. GSA has suggested that the previous practice of producing separate reports for the specialist departments within the BA (Hons) Fine Art and BA (Hons) Design might be too fragmentary. The revised guidelines include suggestions for how heads of specialist departments can produce reports collectively under the direction of the course leader and head of school. GSA believes this integrated approach has encouraged staff ownership of the management of quality and standards in their area, as well as the sharing of good practice. In discussion it was clear that staff fully recognise the value of the annual course monitoring process and the two-day scrutiny event.

119 The periodic review process should provide an opportunity to make connections between quality assurance, quality enhancement and institutional strategy (see above, paragraph 30). This opportunity has not yet been realised fully and GSA is encouraged to capitalise on the enhancement potential of periodic review, as it has evidently done with annual course monitoring.

120 GSA has indicated that the enhancement potential of its external examiner system was strengthened through the introduction of an institution-wide system of moderation in 2002-03 and its revision in 2003-04. QILT had agreed that the University's external examiner report pro forma did not solicit sufficiently detailed comments, and a revised pro forma was submitted for consideration by the University of Glasgow. The most recent two-day annual course monitoring scrutiny event highlighted external examiners' concerns about their role in the moderation process, and the range in quality of external examiners' reports. As noted earlier, GSA intends to address this by producing an external examiners' handbook (see above, paragraph 41).

121 The concept of the thematic review process and the ways in which the reviews are conducted have considerable potential for linking quality assurance and enhancement. This process is particularly important given that there are inconsistencies in the academic procedures across the institution. For example, the variation in assessment practice between schools and departments that was identified in the Thematic Review of Assessment revealed difficulties in comparing academic standards between programmes, and these inconsistencies also made enhancement more difficult to achieve because there was no clear base

line from which to move forward. The Learning and Teaching Strategy recognises the key role that assessment plays in facilitating and motivating students to become more independent learners. GSA has also noted that in the last complete round of Teaching Quality Assessments, assessment was highlighted as one of the weakest areas in the art and design sector across the UK. Despite this GSA does not yet have an assessment strategy. GSA is strongly encouraged to include explicit reference to assessment in the planned integrated strategy for learning, teaching and quality enhancement. GSA describes the current Learning and Teaching Strategy as a development plan to generate and structure discussion and debate, rather than as a definitive policy statement. There would be significant benefit in GSA moving beyond this approach as it develops its new strategy so that policy is defined. Ownership of this strategy might be achieved more readily if its policies were interpreted as specific activities designed to lead to enhancement. This would allow staff to see more clearly the links between action 'on the ground', the integrated strategy and GSA's strategic plan.

Overview of the institution's approach to recognising, rewarding and implementing good practice in the context of its strategy for quality enhancement

122 The recognition, reward and implementation of good practice is intended to be included in GSA's revised, integrated strategy for quality enhancement. It is not explicitly included in the existing version of the strategy as currently written, although an outline of the strategy in the 2004-05 Academic Handbook does refer to the sharing and dissemination of good practice. GSA has in place a range of approaches to the recognition, reward and implementation of good practice. Recognition and implementation may be achieved through the work of the learning and teaching coordinators, staff development, academic debate and the development and support of academic practice. Potential means of rewarding staff include the learning and teaching innovation fund and career review.

123 GSA has four learning and teaching coordinators, one in each school and one in the Department of Historical and Critical Studies, operating on a one day per week basis. Their role is to identify, share, reward and implement good practice in learning and teaching across GSA. Their job description describes the importance of the role in helping individual schools and departments to develop their own objectives and approaches to learning and teaching,

as well as operating across schools and departments to provide a synergistic approach to learning and teaching. In the review of roles and responsibilities, the learning and teaching coordinators indicated that the allocation of time to the role was inadequate for them to concentrate on what they saw as their main function: quality enhancement through innovation and the sharing of good practice. They were also unclear about the extent to which their activities were to be based in individual schools and departments or across GSA. In discussion during ELIR, the learning and teaching coordinators indicated that they were now clearer about their role. Although lack of time remains a problem, they consider that their part-time status is important because it allows them to continue as practitioners, rather than being regarded as another layer of management. They had recently become members of QILT, but questioned whether this was a good use of their limited time, given that they could contribute to debate and provide information through other committees on which they sat. In their coordinator role, they are now line-managed by the Deputy Director/Director of Academic Development, and they considered that this is helping to focus their activities. They meet regularly as a group and find this an important means of gaining insights across schools and departments. They are a focal point for action arising from the national Enhancement Themes and other developments in the sector, such as the Bologna process.

124 The appointment of the learning and teaching coordinators has strengthened the environment in which the sharing of good practice can thrive. The effectiveness of their role is currently constrained by the variation in procedures and practice across programmes, which to some extent is a reflection of the strong identification of programmes (and individual members of staff) with subject specialisms. Other teaching staff fully recognise the benefits that the learning and teaching coordinators bring. There would be benefit in GSA refining the coordinators' remit, particularly to prioritise activities, thereby ensuring that the objectives are practicable.

125 The learning and teaching coordinators are responsible for management of the learning and teaching innovation fund, which was launched in 2003-04 to promote ideas that will enhance learning and teaching, and encourage the sharing of experience across GSA. This is to be achieved through financial support of projects to pursue specific innovative learning and teaching initiatives. The September 2004 staff development programme indicates that three projects are in progress, and that money has been made available for 2004-05 for which

projects with an emphasis on student participation are sought. This initiative has considerable potential, not only for its primary purpose but also to increase the 'visibility' of the learning and teaching coordinators across GSA. The coordinators indicated that they believe the scheme is working well, although it is too early to judge its full impact.

126 The development and support of academic practice is carried out through the induction of new staff and the provision of seminars on the principles of learning, teaching and assessment. In discussion teaching staff confirmed that induction has worked well for them, although variable approaches have been taken. Initial induction currently is not mandatory. Similarly, there is no formal training for postgraduate students involved in teaching. The roles and responsibilities report noted the important contribution made by visiting lecturers and part-time staff to the students' learning experience, but identified some discontent over issues such as status, inclusion in the academic community and access to staff development. Students greatly value the 'external' influences that such staff bring to their teaching and, in discussion, the students indicated that there was no effect of any such discontent on their learning experience. It would clearly be beneficial for GSA to ensure that all staff involved in teaching have access to appropriate induction and staff development.

127 There is no formal scheme for the peer observation of teaching, although peer observation is an inevitable product of team teaching, with critical feedback being provided. It is likely that such informal systems work well, but clearly can benefit only those who take part. It is suggested that GSA might consider adopting more widely the good practice demonstrated within some departments and schools.

128 GSA is developing a Human Resources Strategy which includes targets for the achievement by staff of teaching qualifications and membership of the Higher Education Academy. The targets currently identified may be aspirational: for example, the target for all teaching staff to be members of the Higher Education Academy by 2010 seemed difficult to achieve, given that GSA currently has only 11 members (representing 6.5 per cent of academic staff). Teaching staff indicated that while they saw the benefits of working towards membership, and were encouraged to do so by GSA, the achievement of membership is a lengthy process and it is hard for them to devote the time required. GSA has acknowledged the pressures on staff in a small institution and recognises that without strategic action it would be difficult for staff to make time for development activities. One such action is the move

towards increased commonality across the institution which is intended to promote synergies and also to make more efficient use of time.

129 A proposed Centre for Creative Education was referred to during the ELIR visits. This is intended to play a key role in the implementation, development and evaluation of the new, integrated learning, teaching and quality enhancement strategy. Specifically, GSA believes that such a Centre would 'bring together the pedagogical research activities of [GSA and] act as an interface between the external learning and teaching agenda [and]...as the conduit for disseminating good practice within [GSA]'. In discussion it was indicated that the proposed Centre might act as a sector-wide resource, stimulating an improved understanding of the relationship between research and learning and teaching in art, design and architecture. The potential value of such an initiative is very great and GSA's vision is to be commended. Currently, much work remains to be carried out to progress this from an idea to reality.

130 An annual staff development week provides a varied programme of events, in addition to other development events offered throughout the session (see above, paragraph 112). The staff development budget is allocated to schools and departments by the Head of Human Resources. In bidding for a share of this, individuals are required to explain how the proposed development activity is linked to strategic goals and how the outcomes could be disseminated. There is access to the University of Glasgow's staff development programme, and GSA has plans to develop training in academic practice in collaboration with the Centre for Learning and Teaching in Art and Design, based in the University of the Arts, London. GSA introduced the idea of 'Headroom Days' to provide an opportunity for heads of department and other senior staff to discuss topics relevant to the strategic plan and thereby identify and share good practice. Two have been held so far, one in March 2002 on professional practice and life skills, and the second in December 2003, on the student profile and widening access. A third event planned for February 2005 was cancelled due to pressure of other work.

131 GSA recognises the need for staff development to support the planned expansion of research activity, particularly because of the relatively small number of staff qualified to supervise postgraduate research students. This is being addressed in a number of ways, including mentoring by University of Glasgow staff; through supervisor training; and through staff themselves studying for research degrees. Sharing of good practice and cross-

institutional consistency is being fostered through the activities of PhD coordinators in the schools, whose role is to provide practical support to supervisors, and through the appointment of a Research Degrees Coordinator at institutional level. Research staff confirm the value of these roles.

132 A career review and development process was introduced in 2003-04 and includes personal training plans. The scheme will be extended to all staff by the end of the 2004-05, but GSA acknowledges that it is too early to comment on its effectiveness in relation to the enhancement of learning. The guidelines available to staff on the intranet show that the process is well-structured and focused on personal development and training. Staff who have been reviewed confirm that it has been useful. The review process does not appear to link to promotion or advancement. In discussion, staff indicated that there is no formal system of promotion in operation. In a small institution the opportunities for advancement are, understandably, limited. Where such opportunities exist it would be reasonable to make known to all staff the criteria by which such an appointment may be made.

Commentary on the combined effect of the institution's policies and practices for ensuring improvement in the quality of teaching and learning

133 The range of quality assurance processes currently in place is effective in the maintenance of quality, but is also the source of activities leading to enhancement by identifying areas where improvements might be made. In this way, there are clear links between quality assurance and quality enhancement, although these are focused mainly on solving problems rather than on enhancing or disseminating good practice. This limited scope for improvement on a larger scale results from the variation in quality assurance practice between schools and departments, and a current lack of clear strategic direction for enhancement.

134 GSA makes good use of its annual course monitoring process, particularly through the two-day annual scrutiny event. This overview approach to annual course monitoring, which has helped to identify themes that are common across schools, could usefully be applied to validation and periodic review, as a means of enhancing quality more comprehensively across the whole institution. The thematic review process clearly has the potential for providing an institution-wide perspective, but its effectiveness is currently limited by the lack of a clear framework by which the outcomes could be

implemented. This reflects the current lack of commonality in policies, procedures and regulations, which GSA acknowledges acts as a barrier to the sharing of good practice and the development of cross-institutional synergies. It is, therefore, very important that GSA should progress its development of a common academic framework.

135 GSA has recently made a number of appointments specifically aimed at promoting cross-institutional developments, including the Deputy Director/Director of Academic Development, the Head of Research and Postgraduate Studies, the learning and teaching coordinators, and the posts that collectively provide integrated student services. In making these appointments GSA has clearly signalled its intention to promote the spread of good practice across the institution, and is in a stronger position to develop the necessary strategic approach to quality enhancement. A strong commitment to quality enhancement is also evident among GSA staff generally.

Commentary on the effectiveness of the institution's implementation of its strategy for quality enhancement

136 The current quality enhancement strategy is limited in that it refers only to improvements that might result from routine quality control and assurance activities, such as programme management and programme monitoring and review, without an explicit contribution from a planned, deliberate, strategic approach. As a result, although the existing strategy could be implemented through the interrelationship between quality assurance and quality enhancement, significant improvement in the students' learning experience will be limited until it is given clearly articulated strategic direction. GSA has acknowledged this, and is currently at a very early stage in developing an integrated strategy for learning, teaching and quality enhancement, which it intends will be the main focus for improving the students' learning experience.

137 There are potential benefits to GSA's careful and consultative approach to this development, but the current lack of any detailed information about the likely form of the quality enhancement element of this strategy makes it impossible to comment on the potential effectiveness of its implementation. Nevertheless, GSA is supported in its intention to make explicit the interrelated nature of its policies and procedures in the proposed integrated strategy. Improvement in the quality of teaching and learning can be expected to derive from this, not least because

it should help to reduce the current difficulties that staff have in linking local enhancement to institutional strategy. GSA refers to the proposed strategy as relating to learning, teaching and quality enhancement. It is important that a strategic approach to assessment should also be included.

138 GSA should develop a clear and realistic schedule for the development of the integrated strategy to ensure that it can be put in place without unnecessary delay. Effective implementation of the strategy will require the roles and responsibilities of individuals and committees to be more clearly defined than at present. The work that GSA has carried out on this has generated a wide range of recommendations, some of which have been implemented, but there is now a need to prioritise those remaining and act accordingly.

Summary

Background to the institution and ELIR method

139 Glasgow School of Art (GSA) is one of the oldest independent art schools in the UK. It was founded in 1845 to support local manufacturing industries and has retained a close relationship with the city of Glasgow to the present day. Its identity is linked with the renowned building, designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh, which it occupies. The main campus is located in the Garnethill area of Glasgow, close to the city centre. GSA's digital design research centre, the Digital Design Studio, is located in the House for an Art Lover in Bellahouston Park some four miles from the city centre. GSA is one of three designated Small Specialist Institutions in Scotland. Since 1992 its degrees, undergraduate and postgraduate, have been awarded by the University of Glasgow. In 1997 the University conferred 'Accredited Institution' status on GSA.

140 GSA's academic provision is organised around three schools: the Mackintosh School of Architecture, the School of Design and the School of Fine Art. The Department of Historical and Critical Studies, which sits outside the three-school structure, makes a major contribution, in particular, to undergraduate degrees in the Schools of Design and Fine Art. The Digital Design Studio is a postgraduate and research centre specialising in 3D visual imaging.

141 In line with the Enhancement-led institutional review (ELIR) method, GSA submitted a Reflective Analysis (RA) in advance of the review. The RA set out GSA's strategy for quality enhancement, its approach to the management of quality and standards and its view of the effectiveness of its approach. The RA provided the focus for the review and was used by the ELIR team to develop its programme of activities.

142 GSA submitted two case studies with its RA. One of these illustrated the thematic reviews which GSA uses to provide an institution-wide perspective and to explore quality issues in broader terms than is possible through annual course monitoring or periodic reviews of particular subject areas. The other case study described a long-standing scheme, with implications for wider access and for employability, whereby students in the Schools of Design and Fine Art are able to apply their skills by undertaking a project with children in a local school.

Overview of the matters raised by the review

143 The aim of GSA's Quality Enhancement Strategy as currently stated is to 'continuously and systematically improve the operation of courses, learning support services provided to students, and the learning environment of The GSA'. At the time of the review, this Strategy was undergoing revision as GSA considered it did not 'reflect the richness and complexity of its strategic approach to quality enhancement'. GSA is in the early stages of developing an integrated strategy for learning, teaching and enhancement.

144 The particular themes pursued in the review included the development of the common academic framework, with especial reference to assessment procedures; adherence to the external academic infrastructure, especially the *Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF)*; the nature of studio-based teaching and how it was evolving; the current and future experience of postgraduate students; GSA's response to its own review of roles and responsibilities; and its progress towards the revision of its quality enhancement strategy.

Commentary on the ability of the institution's internal review systems to monitor and maintain quality and standards

145 GSA has systems for validation and periodic review that are fit for purpose and meet the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council criteria for internal review at the subject level. The annual course monitoring system for taught programmes is secure and attracts the clear commitment of staff. A quality enhancement plan is a requisite part of each annual course monitoring report which identifies a future action plan that can be monitored and informs quality enhancement and strategic planning. The reports are considered at institutional level including at an annual two-day scrutiny event. The annual event includes the President of the Students' Representative Council and two external members, one from the University of Glasgow. A recent addition to the process has been the inclusion of annual monitoring reports from academic support services. The process itself is regularly reviewed and provides clear evidence to the Academic Council about the maintenance of quality and standards. The involvement of external peers in the process is a strength and the annual scrutiny event represents particularly positive practice.

146 The internal monitoring systems are linked to, and complemented by, an effective external examining system, with reference to the

requirements of professional and statutory bodies as relevant. GSA has arrangements for reviewing the operation of its external examiner system and, in a useful development, a handbook on external examining is being produced to consolidate its procedures and practices in one document. GSA is aware that the development of a common academic framework of regulations and the development of an institution-wide approach to credit rating would improve its ability to maintain comparable standards across programmes. This is a matter of priority to ensure equity for students and to facilitate the comparison of academic standards across related subjects. In a similar vein, GSA is aware that producing its own code of practice and policies on assessment would provide more secure internal assurance of academic standards.

147 In general, GSA has made effective use of external reference points. There is a need for GSA to prioritise its work to ensure its postgraduate programmes adhere to the SCQF, and to ensure that all of its assessment practices adhere to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, published by QAA.

148 Overall, consideration of the implementation and effectiveness of GSA's internal review systems suggests that there can be **broad confidence** in the institution's current, and likely future, management of the quality of its provision and the academic standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its validating institution. The level of future confidence is based on GSA's recognition of the pressing need to develop its common academic framework for implementation across all taught provision, and to develop an institutional code of practice and policies on assessment.

Commentary on the institution's arrangements for ensuring that the information it publishes about the quality of its provision is complete, accurate and fair

149 GSA has effective arrangements in place for ensuring that the prospectus and other publicity materials are complete, accurate and fair. GSA has adopted a policy that its definitive course documents meet the requirements for programme specifications, and is aware that at some stage it is likely to be necessary to make these more 'user friendly' for public audiences. The intranet is at a relatively early stage of development and, in due course, clear routines for assuring the accuracy of material posted there will need to be developed.

Commentary on the effectiveness of the institution's approach to promoting an effective learning experience for students

150 GSA is providing an effective learning experience for its students based on the long tradition of studio-based teaching with its close partnership between learner and tutor; the effective way in which its student representative structures operate, including the readiness of students to engage with them; the underpinning provided by a number of GSA's central services, including the Library and its Student Support Department; and a combination of long experience and new thinking with regard to vocational education which should see it well placed to produce a successful Employability Strategy.

151 The institution and its students highlight the central role of studio-based education which, with its close, individual contact between staff and student, lends itself both to partnership and to the emergence of independent learners. GSA recognises the need to adapt this traditional form of teaching because of financial pressures, and to meet the challenges of a growing and more diverse student population. GSA is seeking to preserve the strengths of its traditional approach while exploring a range of pedagogical developments, including team teaching and peer evaluation by students. The institution also seeks to fulfil one of the key aims of its Learning and Teaching Strategy, a shift from a teaching to a learning culture, by making intended learning outcomes more explicit. These are very positive developments. One area in which GSA needs to make rapid progress is in the creation of a virtual learning environment (VLE). This is in part because the creation of a managed learning environment is one of its stated strategic objectives, but principally because it is already delivering a distance-learning programme that is predicated upon the existence of a VLE.

152 Students are represented at every level of GSA's academic committee structure and the students themselves consider they have a strong and active voice within the institution. There have been a number of recent developments, such as the inclusion of a student member on validation and review panels, the involvement of the national organisation sparqs (Student Participation in Quality Scotland) in training for student representatives, and the creation of a student/staff consultative committee specifically for postgraduates. There have been developments in the methods used to obtain student feedback including the replacement of a central questionnaire with more tailored approaches to be designed and coordinated by course leaders.

Students are enthusiastic about the new approach and GSA is aware that it will require careful monitoring to ensure its overall effectiveness.

153 GSA has been able to expand and integrate its central support services for students with a number of recent appointments including a Head of Counselling and Student Support. Mechanisms are in place for evaluating the services, including benchmarking student usage of them against national norms. Evaluation outcomes indicate high levels of student satisfaction.

154 GSA has a clear appreciation of its strengths as a teaching institution and of its vulnerabilities. It recognises that it requires to complete the revision of its Quality Enhancement Strategy and link this to its Learning and Teaching Strategy. In doing so, it should potentiate those cross-institution synergies that have not yet been fully realised. It should also ensure that the operational plans derived from its strategies incorporate realistic timescales so that worthwhile innovations are not presumed before they have been thoroughly investigated.

155 Overall, students were highly enthusiastic about the education they are receiving, and expressed a strong sense of ownership of GSA. They were able to identify routes for making their views known and firmly believed that, when they did so, action would follow.

Commentary on the combined effect of the institution's policies and practices for ensuring improvement in the quality of teaching and learning

156 The quality assurance processes currently in place provide a source of activities leading to enhancement by identifying areas where improvements might be made. In this way, there are clear links between quality assurance and quality enhancement, although these are focused mainly on solving problems rather than on enhancing or disseminating good practice. This limited scope for improvement on a larger scale results from the variation in quality assurance practice between schools and departments, and a current lack of clear strategic direction for enhancement.

157 GSA makes good use of its annual course monitoring process for enhancement purposes, particularly through the two-day annual scrutiny event. This overview approach to annual course monitoring, which has helped to identify themes that are common across schools, could usefully be applied to validation and periodic review as a means of enhancing quality more comprehensively across

the whole institution. The thematic review process clearly has the potential for providing an institution-wide perspective, but its effectiveness is currently limited by the lack of a clear framework by which the outcomes could be implemented. This reflects the current lack of commonality in policies, procedures and regulations which GSA acknowledges acts as a barrier to the sharing of good practice and the development of cross-institutional synergies. It is, therefore, very important that GSA should progress its development of a common academic framework.

158 GSA has recently made a number of appointments specifically aimed at promoting cross-institutional developments, including the Deputy Director/Director of Academic Development, the Head of Research and Postgraduate Studies, the learning and teaching coordinators, and the posts that collectively provide integrated student services. In making these appointments GSA has clearly signalled its intention to promote the spread of good practice across the institution, and is in a stronger position to develop the necessary strategic approach to quality enhancement. A strong commitment to quality enhancement is also evident among GSA staff generally.

Commentary on the effectiveness of the institution's implementation of its strategy for quality enhancement

159 GSA has recognised that its current quality enhancement strategy is limited. It refers only to improvements that might result from routine quality control and assurance activities, such as programme management and programme monitoring and review, without an explicit contribution from a planned, deliberate, strategic approach. As a result, although the existing strategy could be implemented through the interrelationship between quality assurance and quality enhancement, significant improvement in the students' learning experience will be restricted until it is given clearly articulated strategic direction. GSA is at an early stage in developing an integrated strategy for learning, teaching and quality enhancement which it intends will be the main focus for improving the students' learning experience.

160 There are potential benefits to GSA's careful and consultative approach to this development, but the current lack of any detailed information about the likely form of the quality enhancement element of this strategy makes it impossible to comment on the potential effectiveness of its implementation. Nevertheless, GSA is supported in its intention to

make explicit the interrelated nature of its policies and procedures in the proposed integrated strategy. Improvement in the quality of teaching and learning can be expected to derive from this, not least because it should help to reduce the current difficulties that staff have in linking local enhancement to institutional strategy. GSA refers to the proposed strategy as relating to learning, teaching and quality enhancement. It is important that a strategic approach to assessment should also be included.

161 GSA should develop a clear and realistic schedule for the development of the integrated strategy to ensure that it can be put in place without unnecessary delay. Effective implementation of the strategy will require the roles and responsibilities of individuals and committees to be more clearly defined than at present. The work that GSA has carried out on this has generated a wide range of recommendations, some of which have been implemented, but there is now a need to prioritise those remaining and act accordingly.

