

# **Glasgow Caledonian University**

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DECEMBER 2005

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ISBN 1 84482 500 0

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## **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 to 2003, QAA, the Scottish Higher Education Funding Council, Universities Scotland and representatives of the student body 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
- 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 on 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 ELIR**

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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## Introduction

1 This is the report of an enhancement-led institutional review (ELIR) of Glasgow Caledonian University (the University) undertaken by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). QAA is grateful to the University for the willing cooperation provided to the ELIR team.

2 The review followed a method agreed with Universities Scotland, student bodies and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), 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)*, published by QAA, subject benchmark information, 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 the 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. The 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 The University submitted a Reflective Analysis (RA) which set out the University's 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 5 October 2005; the 2005 Update to the 2004 Strategic Plan: Achieving the 2010 Vision; the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook; the undergraduate prospectus 2006; the postgraduate prospectus 2005; the prospectus supplement for further education college students; and the international guide for 2005 entry. 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 the University approaches the management of quality, enhancement and academic standards.

5 The University submitted three case studies with its RA. These set out three ongoing projects at the University to enhance the student learning experience: Partners in Delivery; The Student Evaluation Project; and Student Support. The University regarded these as illustrative of the operation of its Quality Enhancement Strategy.

6 Overall responsibility for the preparation of the RA rested with the University's ELIR Planning Group, established in October 2004, comprising the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic), the Executive Director (Access), the Assistant

Principal (Learning and Teaching), the Director of Quality, two assistant directors of quality and the Students' Association President. In its preparations, the ELIR Planning Group met with school management teams and also with focus groups, comprising key staff and student stakeholders across the University. The clear and open nature of the RA provided a very helpful starting point for the review.

7 The ELIR team visited the University on two occasions: the Part 1 visit took place on 26-27 October 2005 and the Part 2 visit took place between 28 November and 1 December 2005.

8 During the Part 1 visit, senior staff of the University gave presentations to the ELIR team concerning the University and its academic portfolio, and on its approach to learning and teaching, and to quality assurance and enhancement. There were also presentations on the three case studies. Following the presentations, the team met with senior staff with responsibility for managing quality assurance and enhancement activity across the University, and with a group of staff involved in internal subject review. The team had a further meeting with a group of students that included those with a representational role at programme and University levels, as well as those who had participated in recent internal subject reviews. These meetings enabled the team to explore a range of matters, many of which had been raised by the University in the RA.

9 During the Part 1 visit, the University 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.

10 The ELIR team comprised: Professor John Harper, Ms Ann Kettle, Ms Sarah Nicholson and Dr Larry Roberts (reviewers), and Ms Cherry White (secretary). The review was coordinated on behalf of QAA by Dr Janice Ross, Assistant Director, QAA Scotland.

## **Background information about the institution**

11 The University was established in 1993 as result of a merger between Glasgow Polytechnic and the Queen's College, Glasgow. It was further extended in 1996 by the transfer of programmes from the Nursing and Midwifery Colleges in Glasgow.

12 The University's mission which is articulated in its '2010 Vision' includes the aims to be: entrepreneurial in approach; innovative in programmes, learning, research and knowledge transfer; inclusive of all sectors of society; and responsive to the needs of individuals, employers and other stakeholders. The 'Vision', established in 2002, following an extensive consultation process with the University community, has led the institution to re-appraise its policies and practices and has led, in turn, to a significant number of new initiatives and policies.

13 The University is organised into eight schools: Built & Natural Environment; Caledonian Business School; Computing & Mathematical Sciences; Engineering, Science & Design; Health & Social Care; Life Sciences; Law & Social Sciences; and Nursing, Midwifery & Community Health. The University is located in a purpose-built campus in the centre of the city of Glasgow.

14 At the time of the ELIR visit, the University had a student population of some 15,800 students, of which some 13,500 were undergraduates and some 2,300 were postgraduates.

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

15 The RA stated that the University '...is committed to the enhancement of the student experience at the University' and indicated that this would have two outcomes: first, students' time at University would 'become more rewarding', and secondly that graduate's employability would be improved. The RA further stated that this commitment is underpinned by five key principles which



guide the University's quality enhancement strategies, and that the strategies must:

- proactively seek to improve all of the activities of the University which have an effect on the student experience, including learning and teaching, research and knowledge transfer, academic and business-related support services
- assist the University in achieving its 2010 Vision, encourage innovation, responsiveness, and self-reflection by both staff and students, and include the involvement of stakeholders
- make the best use of staff competencies and skills, seek to maximise staff satisfaction, and link staff development to enhancement
- maintain academic standards
- proactively identify national and international best practice and embed it across the University.

## **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**

#### **Introduction**

16 The RA described how the Senate is responsible for the academic governance of the University with particular areas of responsibility delegated to its standing committees. At the time of the submission of the RA these were the Academic Policy and Planning Committee, Academic Practice Committee, Research, Knowledge Transfer and Commercial Development Committee, Higher Degrees Committee and the school boards. The RA also noted that all University assessment boards are formally constituted subgroups of the Senate. Between the time of submission of the RA and

the Part 1 visit to the University, a significant change to the standing committee arrangements had been approved by the Senate, the rationale being primarily to ensure more effective communication between the committees. The Academic Policy and Planning Committee was renamed the Academic Policy Committee. The Academic Practice Committee was reformed as the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee, reporting to the new Academic Policy Committee. This ELIR report refers to the new committee structure, unless explicitly stating otherwise. In general, the responsibilities of the two committees remain the same as their predecessors. The Academic Policy Committee takes responsibility for advising the Senate on a wide range of academic policies, maintaining a strategic overview of the academic portfolio and, through the new Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee, for ensuring the effective implementation and monitoring of academic policies and practice and the University's academic enhancement agenda. The ELIR team formed the view that, while it was too early to judge their full effectiveness, the changes to the committee structure were sound in principle and were indeed likely to lead to more effective communication. The team also noted that the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee retained its responsibilities for monitoring quality and standards, and for the implementation of learning, teaching and assessment strategies. While the team recognised that it is possible for the same committee to be responsible for implementing strategies and for the quality assurance functions, the University should ensure that the Academic Policy Committee monitors the clarity with which the two roles are separated by the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee as its work evolves, in order to ensure that conflicts of interest do not emerge.

17 At university level the Principal is supported by an Executive which includes four pro vice-chancellors (operations; academic policy; business development; and learning and information services), the eight deans of school, the University Secretary, the Executive Director (Access), the Executive Director (Human

Resources) and the Director of Finance. Two of the deans also fulfil the roles of assistant principals, one for teaching and learning and one for knowledge transfer. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) chairs the Academic Policy Committee, and the Assistant Principal (Learning and Teaching) chairs the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee. The RA described how these arrangements ensure that matters relating to quality management and to teaching and learning are communicated to the executive management structure as well as through the formal deliberative committee structure.

18 The RA described how the University had undertaken a major reorganisation, during 2001-02, from three faculties to eight schools, with each school headed by a dean. The RA noted that in terms of quality assurance this had involved a change from three faculty-based approaches to a single University system. The ELIR team was therefore interested in the progress made since 2001-02 in achieving consistency of approach to quality assurance across the new schools. The academic structure within the schools is organised into divisions. Each division manages a coherent group of academic programmes and is led by a head of division. Each school has an associate dean (quality), an associate dean (research and knowledge transfer) and a school manager. The remainder of the school management teams comprises school specific posts.

19 The roles and responsibilities of associate deans were of particular interest to the ELIR team. The role of the associate deans (quality) is described in the RA as one of advising the dean on all matters relating to quality assurance and enhancement within the school, and to coordinating and leading all assurance and enhancement activities. The associate deans (quality) also form an informal cross-University network in addition to their roles on central committees. It was clear to the team that they were well placed to facilitate the communication of good practice and to share experiences across schools. Oversight of research student supervision and the quality of

learning experience of research students is the responsibility of the associate deans (research and knowledge transfer). Typically, school boards have subcommittees that mirror the arrangements at university level; within divisions, programmes (or related groups of programmes) have programme boards and associated staff-student consultative groups for programme management and student consultation respectively.

20 The University's Quality Office was created in 2002 as part of a wider academic and administrative systems and services review, with the aim of creating a partnership between the academic units and central departments to assure the quality of the learning opportunities and secure the academic standards of the University's awards. The remit of the Quality Office includes:

- the administration of the process for the approval of external assessors for taught programmes and learning contracts
- the provision of advice and guidance to all staff on all aspects of the University's quality assurance procedures
- the periodic review of all schools and departments and the monitoring of the implementation of the associated action plans
- drafting proposed changes to academic regulations
- programme approval and review
- the development, approval and quality assurance/enhancement of modules
- programme monitoring
- academic audit
- collaborative arrangements.

21 The Quality Office also produces, maintains and updates the University Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook which the ELIR team considered to be a comprehensive and useful guide to the institution's quality assurance procedures.

22 The Quality Office is headed by the Director of Quality who reports to the Principal

and Vice-Chancellor via the Executive Director (Access). The Director of Quality is a member of Senate, Academic Policy Committee and the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee. The RA described how the Director of Quality works closely with the associate deans (quality), having monthly meetings with them and regular informal contacts. The RA also described how this ensured that there were channels of communication which allow the development of knowledge and expertise to lead staff development in quality assurance processes within schools. The Director of Quality was also described as working closely with the Assistant Principal (Learning and Teaching) and the Academic Practice Unit to ensure delivery of the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, and to help embed a culture of continuous improvement within the University.

23 Overall, the ELIR team saw evidence of clear structures and responsibilities for the management of quality and standards at all levels of the University and noted the pivotal roles of the associate deans (quality) and the Quality Office at school and university level respectively. The team formed a clear view that these roles were well understood and effective, a theme that will be returned to throughout this report. In addition the team noted a clear distinction between the responsibility for assuring and monitoring quality and standards, and the locus of responsibility for the delivery of quality and standards per se which was described as residing with all staff who teach, facilitate and support student learning.

## **Internal approval, monitoring and review**

### **Programme approval and re-approval**

24 The RA stated that the University has in place a rigorous process for programme approval. It described three stages: development of an initial proposal; detailed programme development; and the formal approval event with subsequent follow up. At the first stage a programme proposal pro forma is prepared by a programme development board. This is approved by the proposing school(s) and the

Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Information Services). At each stage the implications for central service and resource providers are considered. The Academic Policy Committee receives all programme proposal pro formas in order to keep the whole University portfolio under review. The second stage is detailed curriculum development, including preparation of a standard programme specification and reference to the professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB), as appropriate. The RA noted that the programme development board was supported in its work by the school learning teaching and assessment strategy coordinator and the Academic Practice Unit. The University is in the process of introducing a useful web-based programme development tool which guides programme development teams through the process, with links to policies, strategies and guidance. In these ways programme development takes account of strategic initiatives and good practice from elsewhere. Finally, an event is held where the programme development team meets with a programme approval panel which consists of at least two external subject specialists, normally one academic and one representing a related profession. The event normally lasts for one working day and may conjointly include PSRB approval/accreditation, depending on the procedures of the body concerned. Panels may set requirements which must be met before the programme starts, and recommendations that should be considered as the programme is implemented.

25 The ELIR team studied papers relating to a number of recent examples of programme approval, and discussed aspects of the procedures with staff it met during the visits to the University. It was clear that the initial approval process was effective, and that, in particular, implications for providers of resources and services were fully considered. Indeed, staff from central departments indicated that their views were given detailed consideration and that, on occasion, further development would cease if resources could not be provided, although this would be rare

because ongoing informal and formal dialogue at subject level would have taken place from the inception of a new idea. The team also saw clear evidence that programme development boards take account of relevant subject benchmark statements in their work and that the submissions to programme approval panels include comprehensive proposal documentation containing, amongst other things, background information, programme specifications and module descriptors (both in standard format) and staff curricula vitae. New programmes are approved in the context of the University's award definitions, regulations and frameworks. The team also saw evidence of panel compositions that conformed to University specifications, the thorough scrutiny of proposals by panels, reference to the Academic Infrastructure and effective follow-up of requirements and recommendations. On the basis of this information, the team would concur with the University's view that it has a rigorous programme approval process in place.

26 The University's programme re-approval process scrutinises programmes at a set time after initial approval. As programmes in a subject area may be approved at different times, they are likely to be re-approved at different times. Whilst introducing its process of enhancement-led internal subject review, the University has continued to implement its programme re-approval procedure. The re-approval process is essentially the same as that for initial approval, with the additional requirement of a critical review of the programme concerned. Evidence seen by the ELIR team indicated that programme re-approval was also a robust process.

### **Module approval and approval of changes to programmes**

27 The RA noted that ongoing changes to programmes normally occur through changes to the modules that they contain. All modules are written in a standard University format. New or substantially changed modules are approved using a standard procedure at school level, but also recorded centrally in the University's module catalogue. The RA noted

that external assessors are asked to approve changes (see below, paragraphs 45). The ELIR team concluded that overall, the procedures were both effective and secure.

### **Enhancement-led internal subject review**

28 The University has recently added a significant new procedure, enhancement-led internal subject review (ELISR), to its arrangements for managing and monitoring the quality and standards of its programmes. A five year ELISR cycle was introduced in 2003-04 and, at the time of the review visit, four reviews had taken place. The RA described how the process is intended to:

- promote dialogue on areas where quality might be improved
- identify good practice for dissemination within the institution, and encourage and support efforts to reflect critically on practice
- take full account of student feedback
- provide an objective view of provision based on an understanding of national and international good practice
- take full account of benchmarks and the QAA *Code of practice* and, where appropriate, the requirements of PSRBs
- take full account of the SCQF
- consider the effectiveness of annual monitoring arrangements and follow-up actions.

29 The RA described the documentation required for ELISR, which includes a self-evaluation with standard headings, a range of contextual documentation and an evidence base of material illustrating the ways in which quality and standards are maintained, and the provision enhanced. A key element of the process is a review event that lasts between two and five days depending on the scale of the provision. During this, a review panel meets with subject providers and other staff and students. The panel consists of external subject specialists, including, where appropriate, employer representatives, internal peers (independent of the subject concerned) and a

student (see below, paragraph 58). The panel is normally chaired by a dean from another school and the event is supported by the Quality Office. A review report, identifying good practice and areas for improvement, is produced and the school hosting the review is required to prepare an action plan within one month of receiving the review report. The action plan is approved by the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee, and is monitored after six months and one year by the chair of the event and the Director of Quality, who report progress to that committee.

30 The ELIR team studied a range of documents relating to ELISR and discussed with staff their experiences of the process to date. It was clear that the procedures as described in detail in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook had been consistently followed. Staff considered the process to be beneficial and regarded the investment of their time as worthwhile. Staff particularly welcomed the holistic review of a subject, as well as the emphasis on enhancement, in addition to the process of quality assurance. The team noted, in particular, the very high quality of documentation produced for ELISR. The self-evaluation documents available to the ELIR team were wide-ranging and comprehensive and were accompanied by a range of supporting documentation. Critical reviews of individual programmes are written specifically for ELISR and these include comprehensive data on student entry, progression and awards. The ELISR reports are detailed and informative. The action plans address matters raised in the reports, and subsequent monitoring was effective. The team concluded that the University had introduced a robust and effective process of internal subject review.

31 The ELIR team discussed with University staff whether there was an element of duplication between the ELISR and programme approval processes (see, above, paragraphs 24-25). University staff indicated that they were aware of this possibility, but did not wish to abandon programme re-approval until the effectiveness of ELISR had been evaluated.

The team learned that one school had assisted in this evaluation by piloting the incorporation of programme re-approval into the ELISR. The team noted that a single (longer) event had been held, with time allocated to each process, and that the aims and objectives of each process had been clearly differentiated and achieved. The team formed the view that it may be possible to integrate the two processes further, thus reducing the burden on staff without necessarily reducing the overall effectiveness of a joint process. The University could consider the integration of these processes in its evaluation of the effectiveness of ELISR.

### **Internal audit**

32 The RA described how the University undertakes internal audit to ensure that the quality assurance systems and procedures throughout the institution are efficient, effective and sufficient to deliver intended outcomes. Internal audit includes the procedural audit of programmes and thematic audit. The RA indicated that programmes are selected for audit on the basis of a number of factors, including the likely benefit of the process, and that all programmes can expect to be audited once every five years. A small internal team, supported by the Quality Office, audits a programme against a standard template of University requirements and procedures in what is essentially a compliance process. A report is produced covering each item on the audit checklist and a concluding section contains requirements, recommendations and identified good practice for dissemination. Where appropriate, matters are brought to the attention of the Academic Policy Committee, the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee or the University Executive. Programmes must produce an action plan in response to any requirements. The ELIR team saw examples of programme audit and concluded that it was a thorough, comprehensive and effective means of confirming programme compliance with University regulations, policies and procedures. The team noted that programme audit was an additional, separate process and discussed with

University staff why this should be seen to be necessary. Staff expressed the view that there might be scope for some rationalisation; a check on compliance is inherent, and could be made more overt, in programme re-approval and/or ELISR.

33 The thematic audit process addresses a particular theme or activity that crosses school and/or central department boundaries. Of necessity, the process is adapted to the topic of the audit, although the main principles remain the same. The ELIR team was provided with detailed information on two thematic audits, one relating to student engagement with quality assurance and enhancement processes, and the other on adherence to procedures for consideration of special factors by examination boards. Detailed reports are produced on the thematic audits and recommendations are made to the Academic Policy Committee and Learning & Teaching Sub-Committee. The team concluded that the outcomes of these audits provide useful information not only about compliance with University procedures, but also in relation to ways of modifying and enhancing procedures and, as such, complement the other quality assurance processes in place.

### **Annual programme monitoring**

34 The RA explained that all programmes are required to undertake annual monitoring, and the arrangements for this are set out in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook. The Handbook details a series of headings and key indicators for annual programme monitoring reports, including the ways in which programmes are addressing University strategic enhancement initiatives. Statistical information on student entry, progression and awards is required. A key outcome of the monitoring process is the production or updating of a continuous quality improvement plan (CQIP) which sets out how the programme board will enhance the quality of the programme, based on the improvement of key performance indicators and 'SMART' targets (targets which are specific, manageable, assessable, realistic and time-specific). Where programmes fall below key benchmark

indicators, an action plan, approved by the school board, is required. The key benchmark indicators include: negative student feedback on a programme; student progression rates below 'benchmark' levels; and external assessors' concern regarding maintenance of quality and standards. Where an action plan is required, this will supersede the CQIP, for that year only. The ELIR team was provided with a number of examples of annual monitoring reports and noted that most were comprehensive, thorough and followed the University's guidance template. In one instance, however, a report that contained a wealth of information and analysis lacked either an action plan or a CQIP. The team recognised that the standardised format for reports was a recent introduction, and would encourage the University to ensure greater consistency with its core requirements across schools.

35 Schools have the responsibility for approving annual monitoring reports and the ELIR team saw clear evidence that this responsibility is undertaken rigorously. In one school eight out of 21 reports were referred back to programme teams for revision before they were accepted. The process of approval of CQIPs and, where necessary, action plans, provides feedback to programme teams. Each school is required to produce a biennial report on annual monitoring against a standard series of headings for consideration by the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee. Consequently, the University receives detailed reports on half of the schools each year. The biennial reports seen by the ELIR team were detailed and provided clear accountability for quality and standards, and information on new developments and enhancements. In some instances the reports were accompanied by informative papers for dissemination, and it was evident that the University used these papers to identify and spread good practice. The team concluded that the University's annual monitoring procedures were on the whole effective and thorough, assuring quality and standards and also facilitating continuous improvement, but would encourage the University to ensure greater consistency across

all programmes in relation to annual programme monitoring.

### **Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies**

36 Approximately 70 per cent of the University's programmes are accredited by PSRBs, aligning with the University's objective of providing vocationally relevant education. In many instances this relates to setting standards for qualifying practitioners, for example in the healthcare professions. The University maintains a list of the programmes accredited by PSRBs. The RA noted that where possible, and without exception in the case of statutory bodies, approval and re-approval of programmes is carried out jointly with the accrediting body. It was clear to the ELIR team that effective processes are in place to consider and follow up accrediting body reports at school level. The team learned that not all PSRB reports are considered at university level (where PSRB accreditation is not linked to the University's programme approval/re-approval processes). While it is clear that the University has a positive record in gaining and maintaining PSRB accreditation, there would be benefit in the University considering ways in which it can have oversight of all the accreditation processes. This would be particularly helpful where accreditation does not form part of the University's own quality assurance processes.

### **Collaborative provision**

37 The University has a number of collaborative arrangements with UK higher and further education institutions, and with overseas institutions. The procedures for the quality assurance of collaborative provision are laid out in the University's Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook. The principle underlying the quality assurance of the University's collaborative ventures is that the quality assurance arrangements in the partner institution must mirror those of the University as closely as possible.

38 The most significant overseas link currently in place is a franchise agreement with the

Caledonian College of Engineering in Oman, where approximately 1,200 students are registered on engineering programmes which will lead to Glasgow Caledonian University awards. QAA undertook an overseas audit of this link in May 2005, the resultant report of which had been published relatively recently at the time of the current ELIR. The findings of the overseas audit supported a conclusion of confidence in the University's stewardship of academic standards and oversight of the quality of the student experience in this overseas collaboration.

39 Within the UK, the University's principal links are articulation arrangements with the further education sector, the major partner being the Glasgow Metropolitan College. The transitional arrangements to support students coming from further education to study at the University are considered in paragraph 74 below.

### **Use of data in quality assurance procedures**

40 The ELIR team looked at the ways in which quantitative data is utilised as part of the University's quality assurance processes. The team noted that, at module level, pass rates and mean achievement data inform module and programme action and enhancement plans (see above, paragraphs 34-35). Similar data showing temporal trends form part of the critical reflection incorporated into programme re-approval and ELISR (see above, paragraphs 28-31). In all of these processes the team saw evidence that the data is utilised effectively as the basis for future planning, with key indicators used to trigger action plans. At university level, the Senate and its subcommittees receive reports prepared by the Quality Office on key indicators across the University, such as progression rates and award profiles. The accuracy of the data is confirmed with the schools before being used. The team considered that the University's approach provided a secure basis for its quality assurance and enhancement activity. The University has identified that its current management

information system (MIS), whilst accurate in producing returns for external bodies and data for internal use, is not user-friendly, requiring significant effort and resource to produce reports. A major investment is under way to install a new MIS which is intended to make the University's use of data in quality assurance more efficient and cost effective.

### **Research degrees**

41 The University has detailed regulations in place relating to the award of research degrees. The ELIR team studied these and discussed their operation with staff and students. The academic standards of research degrees are clearly referenced to the SCQF, and there are published regulations and procedures covering the various stages from entry qualifications to the assessment process. Research students who met the team confirmed that the regulations were clear and were operated consistently. It was also evident to the team from discussion with staff, and from documentation provided, that research degree regulations and procedures have been considered in relation to the revised *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*, published by QAA. The team was interested in the Professional Doctorate by Learning Contract which the University had introduced in 2001. This programme provides doctoral level studies geared to the particular circumstances and work environment of the individual student. The Doctorate is described in a programme specification and has accompanying award regulations that appeared to the team to be comprehensive and appropriate for this innovative programme.

### **External assessors**

42 The University uses the term 'external assessor' for the role often known in UK higher education as external examiner. The RA described the University's external assessor system. Criteria for the appointment of external assessors are detailed in the University's assessment regulations. Proposals for appointments are scrutinised by a small

subcommittee of the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee comprising four associate deans (quality) and chaired by the Director of Quality. Appointments are for a fixed term and each programme normally has two external assessors, with each programme external assessor also having assigned module responsibilities. Where modules have very large student numbers they may have an external assessor appointed specifically to them. A one-day training event is offered to all newly appointed external assessors. The ELIR team studied the procedures for the appointment of external assessors and their induction, and considered these to be effective. The duties and responsibilities of external assessors are well documented and clear.

43 The University requires external assessors to submit an annual report on a standard proforma. The pro forma is designed to elicit responses on key matters such as the standards of student work and the comparability of the standards set with those found elsewhere in UK higher education. The pro forma also encourages more discursive comments on a wide range of topics that can provide valuable feedback to programme teams on assessment practice, teaching and learning and the curriculum. Finally, external assessors are invited to comment on the effectiveness of regulations and procedures. The reports are received centrally by the Clerk to Senate and distributed to the Chair of the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee and the Director of Quality, and to key individuals in the schools. The Chair of the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee and the Director of Quality may draw to the attention of the schools matters that should be considered and, if necessary, bring serious matters raised by external assessors to the attention of the Principal and the Senate. The University requires that the reports should be considered as part of the annual programme monitoring process where the standard reporting template has a section for responses to the reports. The reports themselves also form part of the annual monitoring submission from programme teams (see above, paragraphs 34-35). Once agreed by the programme team, the



responses are sent to the relevant external assessors to provide feedback.

44 The ELIR team saw a number of examples of external assessors' reports and noted that the report pro forma was comprehensive and elicited useful responses. The external assessors' reports were considered in the annual monitoring process and responses to them were full and detailed. Importantly, the external assessor reports seen by the team confirmed that the academic standards set are appropriate for the awards concerned and that regulations are appropriate and procedures are secure. The RA stated that an annual overview report is produced by the Director of Quality, providing an overview of the maintenance of standards as reported by all the University's external assessors and identifying generic matters raised. The team was provided with a single combined report on the academic years 2002-03 and 2003-04, which was considered by the (former) Academic Practice Committee in March 2005. Given the importance that the University ascribes to a timely overview of external assessors' reports in contributing to improvement plans, the team would encourage the University to complete the procedure annually as intended.

45 It was evident to the ELIR team that the University pays close attention to its external assessor system, which is generally robust and operated effectively. The team also concluded that the system was, in general, consistent with the QAA *Code of practice* and that recent revisions to the section of the *Code* on external examining had been considered. The University could usefully reflect on its approach in one matter. Currently, the University asks external assessors to approve changes to modules (see above, paragraph 27). The revised section of the *Code of practice* suggests that the involvement of external examiners in other matters beyond their 'core' roles should involve prior consideration of the potential risk this might impose to the examiner's ability to be impartial, and to subsequently critique the module changes.

### **Use made of external reference points for assuring quality and standards**

46 The RA described a range of ways in which external reference points are used in the maintenance of quality and standards, and the ELIR team saw a wide range of references throughout the documentation provided by the University. The University's taught and research awards are aligned to the SCQF, programme specifications are produced for all programmes and these are comprehensive and make reference to subject benchmark statements where such exist.

47 From the early 1990s the University adopted the Scottish Credit Accumulation and Transfer Scheme, and the advent of the SCQF consequently did not represent a major challenge to the University because awards were already referenced to credit levels, with associated descriptors and criteria. The University has taken advantage of the flexibilities inherent in the SCQF, formally adopted it, and has produced a helpful explanatory document about the SCQF for staff that defines how the framework operated. The significant changes that resulted from the adoption of the SCQF were a change in the method of classification of degrees and the removal of progression hurdles within master's level. The ELIR team concluded that the University's awards are congruent with the SCQF.

48 It was also clear that the University has made effective use of the *Code of practice* in framing regulations and procedures and has reviewed existing regulations and procedures using the *Code* where appropriate. As noted earlier in this report, the majority of the University's programmes are accredited by PSRBs, and this provides a range of national benchmarks against which programmes are regularly considered. Finally, the University uses external peers in a range of procedures relating to quality and standards, notably in programme approval, programme re-approval, ELISR and the external assessor system. Overall, the ELIR team concluded that the University made effective use of the external benchmarks available to it.

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

49 The University has effective procedures for the approval, re-approval and periodic review of programmes. The University's processes of enhancement-led internal subject review meet the SFC guidelines for internal review at the subject level. These procedures are complemented by internal audit of both programmes and generic themes that relate to academic and other units, and these are also effective processes. There may now be scope for some rationalisation of these processes to increase efficiency and reduce the burden on staff without compromising the institutions overall ability to monitor quality and standards. The annual module and programme monitoring procedures are thorough and effective; achieving an appropriate balance between assurance and making a contribution to the University's enhancement strategies. Staff are clearly committed to the University's quality assurance procedures, as reflected by their significant investment of time and effort. Central support for quality assurance processes is provided by the Quality Office, and the associate deans (quality) play an important and pivotal role in each school. Reporting through school committees to the Senate and its subcommittees provides for effective communication of information at all levels of the institution.

50 The quality assurance processes link to those arrangements designed to maintain academic standards. The University has in place regulations, policies and procedures for both taught and research awards which are aligned to external benchmarks and provide a clear framework for the maintenance of academic standards. Quality assurance arrangements monitor the frameworks and their implementation. The University also has in place a robust external assessor (examiner) system. External assessors confirm that the academic standards set are comparable to those at other UK higher education institutions and check that

the standards meet at least threshold expectations. The views of external assessors are considered in detail in the annual programme monitoring procedures and the University also takes an overview of all external assessors' views through an overview report produced by the Director of Quality. On the basis of these findings, **broad confidence** can be placed in the University's current, and likely future, management of the quality of its provision and the academic standards of its awards.

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

51 The University publishes a range of information for students. The ELIR team was informed of comprehensive routines for ensuring the currency and checking the accuracy of prospectuses. Details for updating existing programmes and entries for new programmes are routinely collected from schools using standard templates, and the resulting material, which is produced centrally, is checked within schools and then approved by a senior member of University staff prior to printing. Students who met the team confirmed that they regarded the prospectuses as accurate and informative, and that their prior expectations of the University, based on this information source, has been met. Publicity materials produced by collaborative partner institutions in the UK are approved by the University. In the case of the University's major overseas partner, the Caledonian College of Engineering in Oman, a recent QAA overseas audit report on the link recommended minor changes to the way in which the publicity is regularly checked to ensure that no inaccuracies could occur (although no specific inaccuracies had been identified during the audit) (see above, paragraph 38). Internally, the University publishes a wide range of information for students at both programme and institutional levels. The ELIR team saw a wide range of these documents and considered

them to be comprehensive and informative. This view was reinforced by all students who met the team, and by evidence of feedback about information collected by the University from students. The team also noted the positive steps taken by the University to ensure clarity in the information published for students by using 'plain English'.

52 The RA described the University's intranet site as containing essentially the same information as the prospectuses and, therefore, as being subject to the same checks. The RA also described 'My Caledonian', a password protected web portal for students, which gives access to a range of information including personal information on assessment results, academic record and registration details. Students were complimentary about the web-based information available to them and valued the My Caledonian portal. The University is continuing to develop its website to produce a more integrated whole and to further improve its currency, consistency and version control.

53 The ELIR team studied the information provided by the University as part of the requirements for externally published Teaching Quality Information (TQI) and discussed this with staff. The team concluded that the University was meeting the TQI requirements and endeavouring to ensure that the published information is accurate, by rationalising the information provided from national databases with its own internal sources of information. The University is fulfilling its obligations with respect to national requirements for TQI.

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

54 The University takes an effective approach to ensuring that the information it publishes about the quality of its provision is complete, accurate and fair.

## **The student experience**

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

55 The University fosters engagement with students at many levels across the institution, and from the highest levels of the committee structure to the classroom. The University views the contribution made by students into its quality assurance and enhancement processes as a strength. The University also recognises that greater student engagement remains a challenge which it is seeking to address in a range of ways.

#### **Student representation**

56 The University consults students both formally and informally on a wide range of matters, not solely confined to matters relating to learning and teaching. Officers of the Students' Association represent the student body on the University Court, Senate, the Academic Policy Committee and its Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee. Elected postgraduate research students sit on the Higher Degrees Committee, the Graduate Centre Board and the Research, Knowledge Transfer and Commercial Development Committee. There are student representatives on all programme, and school boards and school committees. Student-staff consultative groups, on which students are the majority of members, are one of the principal mechanisms for evaluating the student experience and responding to student concerns. Officers of the Students' Association meet regularly with senior members of University staff in the Student Officer and University Liaison Group (SOUL) to informally discuss student matters. SOUL is chaired by the Assistant Principal (Learning and Teaching) and makes recommendations to relevant committees. SOUL provides a useful informal forum for the exchange of views on matters affecting the student learning experience, and the senior membership of the Group enables an effective way of initiating action.

57 Students confirmed that staff were supportive, could be approached informally, and that students could make their voices heard at programme level through the student-staff consultative groups. Students views are also taken into account on senior University committees and students consider that they are able to make a positive contribution. A recent example of responsiveness to the student views was an opportunity for the Students' Association President to make a presentation to the University senior management on the 2015 Vision for the development of the Students' Association.

58 Students are full members of ELISR panels, and the panels that review business and academic support departments (see above, paragraphs 28-31). Students involved in ELISR have participated in training sessions organised by Student Participation in Quality Scotland (sparqs) and by the Students' Association Student Development Co-ordinator (see below, paragraph 63). Staff particularly praised the contribution made by student representations on ELISR panels. It is also clear from the self-evaluation documents prepared for the ELISR process that student feedback in different forms is a fundamental measure of the student learning experience of programmes, and that it is incorporated into the review process.

### **Student feedback**

59 Feedback from students is regarded by the University as an integral part of engagement with the student community, and the University employs a variety of feedback mechanisms, both formal and informal. These mechanisms include: informal staff-student interaction, including in classes; student representation on consultative groups, programme and school boards, and university level committees (see above, paragraph 56); module feedback questionnaires; the Student Evaluation Project; the research student questionnaire; and feedback through the University's virtual learning environment (VLE).

60 The University regards as a strength the levels of student satisfaction expressed through its module evaluations, although it is recognised that response rates via electronic

module questionnaires has been disappointing. The University is confident that there will be greater student engagement with this when the questionnaire is made available on the University VLE from 2005-06.

### **Student engagement**

61 The Partners in Delivery project was approved by Senate in 2003 with the aim of developing graduates who would be 'dynamic, confident, innovative, inclusive, responsive, and entrepreneurial and valued by employers', thereby reflecting the 2010 Vision of the University. The aims of Partners in Delivery include the establishment of new and innovative methods of increasing student engagement with the University, and the formation of a new and effective partnership with students and the Students' Association. The effectiveness of the Partners in Delivery project in taking forward the University's employability agenda will be monitored by the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee.

62 Two elements of Partners in Delivery are specifically concerned with increasing student engagement. First, the Partnership Agreement, launched in 2004-05, sets out the standards, services and facilities that students can expect from the University, including having the opportunity to comment on programme delivery through the election of class representatives. The Partnership Agreement also makes clear the responsibilities of individual students, including participation in learning activities. Secondly, the Student Leader Programme, run by the Students' Association in partnership with the University, aims to support and develop the leadership qualities of students who undertake roles such as sabbatical officers, class representatives, welfare volunteers, societies' officers or sports' captains. Students participating in the programme are asked to produce evidence of effective participation in, for example, staff-student consultative groups, and are eligible for a certificate signed both by the Principal and the President of the Students' Association, and for nomination as Glasgow Caledonian Student of the Year (details of which had still to be confirmed at the time of

the ELIR). A further aspect of the Student Leader Programme has been the introduction of paid positions as Student Guides to promote and assist student access to support services. These initiatives also contribute towards the embedding of the University's commitment to enhancing students' employability (see below, paragraphs 81-84).

63 In order to implement the Student Leader Programme and to help increase student engagement more generally, the University has funded a full-time Student Development Co-ordinator, based in the Students' Association, to facilitate student engagement with quality assurance processes. Through this new post, a more extensive Student Leaders training programme has been organised for 2005-06 and, in addition to, for example, class representative training, all participants must attend at least one personal development seminar. The seminar topics for 2005-06 include public speaking; time management; negotiations; and communicating with your membership.

64 In 2004-05 schools identified almost 400 class representatives and this information was shared with the Students' Association. Approximately 20 per cent of these class representatives had attended training instituted by the Student Development Co-ordinator with assistance from sparqs. At the time of the ELIR, over 100 students were currently enrolled on the Student Leader Programme, and the first Student Guides had been appointed in the library. The University has a number of plans to further encourage student engagement. For example, the University intends to offer class representative training via the VLE in order to extend this to more representatives. It also intends to appoint, from the student community, paid Academic Representative Co-ordinators in order to collate the views of student representatives at school level, so that the Students' Association is better informed of campus-wide matters. There are further ambitions to establish a Student Parliament once student engagement across the University has become more widespread. The University

plans to introduce, in 2006-07, a Student Development Account. The Development Account will reward students for their engagement with the University's representative processes by including reference to this activity on their personal transcripts, and through financial benefits such as supplements to individual printing accounts.

65 The University also regards as a strength its Student Evaluation Project. Established in 2001 as a research project, and in receipt of SFC Widening Access Premium Funds, the project aims to ensure that the University has more comprehensive and systematic data on the social and educational characteristics of its entrants and their experience as students, in order to inform planning to improve the student learning experience. The Student Evaluation Project is based in the University's Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning and is overseen by an Advisory Group, which includes the associate deans (quality) from each of the schools. To date, the project has generated three sets of student satisfaction studies, giving an overview of student reaction to their experiences as they have progressed through their programmes. These data were supplemented in 2003-04 by 25 group interviews designed to gather information on the student experience that was both 'school specific' and of more general interest. The results have identified the need for a clearer recognition of the diverse nature of the student body in the development of learning strategies. The data produced by the Student Evaluation Project is of a very high quality and the University is encouraged to continue in its plans to finalise its longitudinal study, and to continue its analysis of the progression of 2004-05 first-year student entrants. To date, in addition to university-level deliberation of the outcomes of the project, schools have also considered the outcomes of the project in relation to their own performance. The University is also encouraged to progress its planned consideration of matters surrounding the dissemination of the project's results, both internally, and more widely within the higher education sector.

## **The institution's approach to the promotion of effective student learning, and to providing an appropriate learning experience for all its students**

### **Learning resources**

66 In the last decade, the University has made a substantial investment to learning resources, support services and accommodation for its students. The current Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS) commits the University to ensuring that students have access to an integrated range of student services and an entitlement to academic guidance in the form of contact with, and feedback from, tutors. A recently revised Learner Support and Guidance Policy brings together the elements of the University's support policy in a single document with the aim of assisting 'students, past, present and potential, with making decisions and developing their skills to maximise their learning opportunities, academic, career and personal development'. It is intended that the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee will review the policy on a regular basis in the light of feedback from students and staff.

67 In order to enable a shift from teaching to learning as outlined in the LTAS, a Learning Services Department was formed in 2003 by the integration of the Library Service, C&IT Services, Student Services and a range of other units. Under the overall direction of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Information Services), Learning Services consists of six divisions: Academic Registry; General Academic and Professional Studies (GAPS); Learner Support; Learning Resources; the Information Strategy Unit and Open Campus Learning. The mission of Learning Services is to support and promote effective learning in the University community through the innovative use of resources, people and technologies.

68 The Saltire Centre, which will open in early 2006, is the most ambitious of the recent initiatives overseen by Learning Services intended to promote effective student learning. At the

time of the current ELIR, the Saltire Centre was at an advanced stage of preparation. The Saltire Centre builds on the success of an earlier University project, the Learning Café, which promoted the educational philosophy of social learning based on conversation and the use of technology. The Saltire Centre is a further development of this approach to innovative learning space and will double the space available for learners, provide a variety of study spaces and support a wide range of different styles of learning, from silent study areas to a 600-seat café-style space for group, project and team work. In acknowledgement of the amount of electronic-based information available, the paper-based library collection will be housed on compact shelves in order to provide the services and resources expected of a library but not at the expense of learning space. The Centre has been designed as an inclusive building and will also contain a range of technologies suited to students with learning and physical disabilities.

69 The Saltire Centre will house a student services mall, the culmination of a Student Access to Services project set up by Learning Services in 2003. The project began by consulting students on their requirements and then considered ways of giving students easy access to a range of student services including the Library, IT Services, Registry, the Finance Service, the Careers Service, Counselling, the Disability Advisory Service and the Effective Learning Service (ELS). Comprehensive information on student support services is accessible electronically on the Learning Services website. A 'one stop shop', at present in the Caledonian Learning and Information Centre (known as The Base), deals with initial enquiries and refers students to appropriate specialist support services. A central services desk in the student services mall in the Saltire Centre will supersede The Base. The intention is to provide for all students a straightforward, efficient and easily accessible service under one roof.

70 The completion of the Student Access to Services project has resulted in the development of 'a culture of service' within Learning Services and many aspects of the

project have become embedded, for example, the use of 'plain English' on the library web pages and the production of a student guide to academic regulations. Students spoke positively about the range of support services available to them and their easy accessibility.

### **Academic support and guidance**

71 Academic support and guidance is provided both centrally and within schools. Central support is provided through GAPS, a division of Learning Services. The focus of GAPS is on two interlinked themes: promoting and enabling accessible and flexible modes of study; and supporting the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. Specific GAPS activities aimed at providing academic support and guidance for students include the ELS, information and communication technology skills, the Scottish Centre for Work Based Learning and the University's summer school.

72 The ELS was established by the University in 2001 as part of an action plan to improve student progression and completion rates. The Service aims to assist all students to improve their learning skills by providing tailored support, including specific guidance and support to meet the learning and teaching needs of students with a disability, including dyslexia. The ELS includes a range of activities: individual and group sessions; generic workshops on, for example, revision and examination skills; workshops requested by staff or students to meet specific needs; and English language support for international students.

73 Support to students within schools is provided using a range of methods, including the academic tutor scheme, Personal Development Planning (PDP), and individual contact with academic staff and with programme support staff. In addition, individual schools have support structures tailored to meet the academic needs of their students. For example, in the School of Law and Social Sciences an Effective Learning Support Service aims to identify and address student learning needs by key interventions at early stages of the programme. In the School of Engineering, Science and Design, one of the

strategic priorities has been to enhance the student learning experience by conducting an entry point risk assessment to assign students to their tutors and to provide support for those at higher risk. Absence management, identified as a key element in the framework for student support, has been made more efficient by the development of the Keeping Every Lecturer Properly Informed Electronically (KELPIE), software that displays absence data and other information about students, including special needs, on-line for academic staff. Links between Learning Services and school-based support staff and structures are strong and well established, and considerable effort has been made, both centrally and in schools, to improve student retention and progression. There would be benefit in the University encouraging the dissemination of the innovative KELPIE software tool, both within the institution, and beyond.

74 There have been recent policy changes to two important aspects of the student's learning experience. The University recognises that traditional induction methods have been compressed into too short a time to enable students to assimilate the information provided, and that orientation is necessary at the beginning of each year of study. From 2005-06 all programmes are required to publish a student transition strategy that includes a range of activities that meet student induction entitlements and contains a re-orientation session at the start of each academic year. A further education (FE)/higher education articulation project extends the induction period for students in FE colleges back into the FE college and further into their University programme of study, and includes mentoring by students who have successfully made the transition.

75 In response to requests from students for improved feedback on their performance in assessment, and after a survey of current practice in schools, from May 2005 changes have been introduced at the programme and module level to the student feedback policy, with the aims of disseminating good and consistent practice across the University and

improving student performance. There would be benefit in the University monitoring the introduction and embedding of programme-based student transition strategies and module and programme based student feedback strategies. Evaluation of the effect of these on student progression and retention would also be beneficial.

### **Virtual learning environment**

76 The University recognises that the adoption of its VLE has been slow with inconsistencies in its implementation by the majority of its schools, but is working towards the position where all modules will be VLE enabled by the end of 2007 with a full site licence for the VLE software. Students confirmed inconsistencies in the use of VLE but were enthusiastic about e-learning where it was well developed. An e-learning innovation support unit provides support for staff in the use of VLE. In recognition of the potential of e-learning to contribute to the achievement of the University's 2010 Vision, an e-learning strategy was adopted in May 2005 with the aim of maximising the benefits of new technology to both on-campus and distance learners. In view of the substantial investment in learning technologies exemplified by the Saltire Centre, the University is encouraged to ensure the speedy implementation of its newly adopted e-learning strategy in order to ensure that activities to enhance the student learning experience are part of a coherent whole.

### **Postgraduate research students**

77 A Graduate Centre was established in 2004 to meet the requirements of the Funding and Research Councils, and to enhance and broaden the experience of postgraduate research students. Among the responsibilities of the Centre, which at present has only a virtual existence, are generic skills training for research students and the promoting of good practice in supervision. In response to the University's recognition of the need to improve the effective learning experience of postgraduate research students, the Academic Practice Unit has introduced a training scheme for new supervisors and staff development sessions

are provided for experienced supervisors to familiarise them with procedures for monitoring the progress of postgraduate research students.

78 Students are positive about the support that they receive in their schools from their teams of supervisors, from the associate deans (research and knowledge transfer) and the services offered by the Graduate Centre. Postgraduate research students are offered skills audits including PDP and can attend staff development activities relevant to their own skills development. Postgraduate research students are provided with clear information to guide them through the stages of preparing and submitting their theses, and constructive feedback on their progress. Postgraduate research students have good access to learning resources at the University and to research facilities at other universities in Glasgow. Postgraduate students offered teaching duties are expected to undertake the training offered by the Academic Practice Unit and their teaching is monitored. A Postgraduate Group, funded by the University through the Students' Association, has recently been reformed to organise informal activities such as research seminars and social events.

79 Supervisors spoke highly of the training and support that they had received, and it was clear that the associate deans (research and knowledge and transfer) formed an important link between school and university level committees and are instrumental in the identification and dissemination of good supervisory practice. Given the comparatively small number of postgraduate research students, and their uneven distribution between schools, the University's strategy of leaving the main responsibility for the postgraduate learning experience with schools and proceeding cautiously with the development of the Graduate Centre is appropriate. There had been considerable recent improvement in the opportunities open to research students and, as the number of postgraduate research students increases, the University intends to continue with its programme of enhancement to the postgraduate research student experience.



### **The Caledonian Academy**

80 The University is currently in the process of establishing a Caledonian Academy to foster 'excellent teaching for excellent learning'. The vision of the Caledonian Academy is to have a coordinated mass of teaching experts drawn from across the University who will work collectively to help shape and develop the University's learning, teaching and assessment policies and practices, and work locally in their academic units to implement these policies and practices (see below, paragraphs 110-111).

### **The institution's approach to the promotion of employability of its students**

81 The University's strategic goals include the ambition of 'enabling all [its] students to achieve their full potential (including life skills for the labour market and lifelong learning)'. The University recognises that employability is closely linked to PDP and careers education information and guidance.

82 The introduction of PDP is the means by which the University intends to ensure that students have the opportunity to develop 'reflection, planning, implementation, evaluation and recording activities' to help them become 'independent, autonomous and self-aware learners'. There has been a staged introduction of PDP and it is planned to be in operation for all students by 2008. In recognition of the fact that some schools are already engaged in PDP activity, a 'minimum specification' has been adopted for its implementation. Students are supported by academic staff such as personal tutors or module leaders in the creation of a progress file that allows students to reflect upon and improve their own learning. An analysis of the first year of operation of PDP revealed variable engagement by level 1 students, although there was also evidence that since the introduction of the PDP process more students have approached their academic advisers as a source of initial support and to answer queries.

83 In order to embed consideration of employability in programmes, each programme

is required to develop an employability strategy, based on the SFC framework for employability assets. Each programme is required to have a strategy that integrates four distinct strands of activity: learning, teaching and assessment strategies to develop independent learners; the provision of opportunities for reflecting on work experience; support for personal development planning; and the provision of careers, information and educational guidance. Each programme will be required to use an audit tool to evaluate its approach to fostering employability at least once during the period of its validation, and the success of programme employability strategies will be examined as part of the annual monitoring process. A new format for programme specifications includes the SFC employability assets as learning outcomes.

84 The University has a clear commitment to fostering the employability of its graduates. The University should monitor carefully the adoption and implementation of employability strategies at programme level and the effective use of the employability audit tool. As it moves towards the full operation of PDP, the University should continue to evaluate carefully the experiences of students and staff, to identify those factors that appear to facilitate student engagement in the process, and disseminate examples of good practice in embedding employability in schools and programmes.

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

85 The University has a comprehensive set of arrangements for encouraging student engagement in the quality assurance and enhancement of learning and teaching, and student representation in the University is systematic and effective. The University, working in partnership with the Students' Association, has taken effective steps to enhance student engagement, including through the Partners in Delivery project. The University seeks feedback from the student

community in a number of ways, and the Student Evaluation Project is an important element of the University's approach. The Project has produced high quality information on the student experience that has the potential to be of great benefit to the University.

86 The range and quality of learning opportunities provided for students is good. Of particular significance is the Saltire Centre which is planned to open in early 2006. It is intended to provide an innovative and inclusive learning environment for all students, and will also provide access to a wide range of support services. A comprehensive variety of academic support service is currently available for students, there are innovative projects at the school level to support undergraduates in their first year of study, and the University has recently taken a number of steps to enhance the postgraduate student learning experience. The University is clearly committed to raising the profile of learning and teaching, as exemplified through the establishment of the Caledonian Academy.

87 A key strategy of the University is the promotion of student employability, to be achieved through a range of integrated strategies and projects, including PDP and the Partners in Delivery project, jointly delivered with the Students' Association, and programme level strategies.

## **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**

88 The University's Quality Enhancement Strategy covers all of the activities of the University including its academic activity, and academic and business services. The components of the University's Quality Enhancement Strategy can be summarised

as the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, and associated University policies; the enhancement focus of both internal and external quality assurance procedures; and the staff development and performance review procedure.

89 In order to support the implementation of the University's Quality Enhancement Strategy, the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook has recently been revised (February 2005) to include guidance to staff in terms of the policies, processes and procedures to support the various components associated with the Enhancement Strategy.

90 Overall institutional responsibility for the development, implementation and monitoring of the University's Quality Enhancement Strategy is vested in the Academic Policy Committee and executive with its convener, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic). In support of this, the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee focuses on the monitoring, implementation and dissemination of enhancement activity relating to teaching and learning. Operationally, the Director of Quality and a network of associate deans (quality), supported by the Quality Office, play a key role in identifying, disseminating and implementing good practice arising through the University's quality assurance procedures. They, in turn, also work closely with the Assistant Principal (Learning and Teaching) and the Academic Practice Unit to ensure the implementation of the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy at school and programme level, and to embed a culture of continuous improvement. This is achieved through what the University describes as its 'hub and spokes' model, with the Academic Practice Unit acting as the central hub and the associate deans (quality), supported by school appointed learning teaching and assessment coordinators, acting as its spokes (see below, paragraph 109). The inclusion of the associate deans (quality) has been a recent evolution to strengthen this model with their role being identified by the University as pivotal to the integration at school level of the teaching, learning and assessment agendas

emerging at school and university levels. The associate deans (quality) are also responsible for coordinating school staff development needs in relation to teaching and learning and ensuring that these are met either at school or university levels.

91 It is clear that the associate deans (quality), through their multiplicity of responsibilities, are playing a significant role in the achievement of improvements in teaching and learning. Their efforts were widely acknowledged by teaching staff and, at university level, demonstrable enhancement had been achieved through their informal networking, particularly with the Director of Quality and their formal participation within the University's committee structure. Recent examples of such enhancements include dissemination and adoption of the KELPIE software too (see above, paragraph 73), and sharing information on 'special factors school boards', which consider students' mitigating circumstances in relation to poor assessment performance.

92 Associate deans (research and knowledge transfer) play a similar role in facilitating the enhancement of the learning experience for research students. At school level, they are responsible for overseeing all aspects of the research student experience and, in the process, identifying good practice and development needs. The associate deans (research and knowledge transfer) are also members of the Higher Degrees Committee and the Graduate Centre Committee, and hence are in a key position to help prioritise institution-level development needs and disseminate good practice within the schools. Recent enhancements, arising from interaction between the associate deans (research and knowledge transfer) and Graduate Centre staff have included the production of a research newsletter, and the establishment of a research 'space' on the University's VLE.

93 The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS) is a key component of the University's Quality Enhancement Strategy. The current version of the LTAS covers the period 2003 to 2006. The development of the LTAS is

also regarded as an important objective in seeking to meet the University's strategic goal of enabling all students to achieve their full potential.

94 The LTAS consists of a number of high level outcomes relating to both students and staff which schools and professional/support departments are expected to achieve. Schools are empowered to interpret the high level outcomes in a manner suitable for their own disciplines, student characteristics and vocational context. This is formally recorded and monitored through annual school LTAS Action Plans which must, in turn, reflect the implementation timescales incorporated within the University's LTAS. The intention is that school's LTAS Action Plans are included in the University's annual planning cycle so that resource issues can be addressed.

95 The LTAS Action Plan for staff support builds on the success of previous strategies, and include support for new teaching staff, training for part-time staff, peer support of teaching, recognising good practice, and raising staff awareness of sector-wide issues. The enhancement actions for students relate to: employability; personal development planning; careers education, information and guidance; induction; and academic guidance.

96 The University acknowledges that in order to facilitate the monitoring, planning and, where necessary, resourcing of enhancement activity identified at school level, the pro forma used for the production of annual school plans requires to be modified to include an explicit section on enhancement planning. The University is encouraged to adopt this proposal at an early stage.

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

97 In 2002, prior to the adoption of the Quality Enhancement Strategy, the University undertook a review of its quality assurance arrangements. The revised procedures which

arose from this exercise were designed to include a more explicit focus on enhancement as an outcome of assurance activity.

98 At school level, the main linkages between quality assurance and enhancement occur through the annual monitoring procedures at module and programme level, programme re-approval, and through the recently introduced ELISR process. The annual monitoring procedures at module and programme level include the development of an action plan to address any issues arising from the analysis of performance indicators. A further required outcome of the programme monitoring process is the production of an enhancement-focused CQIP which sets out how the programme board will improve the quality of learning opportunities within the programme (see above, paragraph 34).

99 Examples of annual programme monitoring documentation provided revealed variable practice, and not all reports contained explicit CQIPs at the programme level. Where the reporting procedures had been fully adhered to, their effectiveness in facilitating the monitoring, coordinating and reporting of CQIP at school level was apparent. There would be benefit in the University ensuring that the programme monitoring reporting procedures are systematically and universally implemented, in order to further support enhancement at the school level.

100 In the ELISR process, the aims of the reviews include promoting dialogue on areas in which quality might be improved, identifying good practice for dissemination within the University and providing an objective review of provision based on an understanding of national and international good practice (see above, paragraphs 28-31). Staff who have been involved in an ELISR are particularly positive about the benefits of the process in leading to quality enhancement, and a shift from the perceived compliance culture engendered through previous processes. The ELISR process is also perceived to have provided an effective catalyst for achieving greater coherence and harmonisation in approaches and practices to teaching, learning and assessment at the subject

and/or school level. The process was also seen to have facilitated the identification of subject and/or school development priorities and enhanced the dissemination of good practice between programme teams. It is clear that the planned emphasis on enhancement in ELISR is being achieved.

101 There are a number of quality assurance processes and procedures designed to inform enhancement planning and monitoring at university level. The Director of Quality produces annual reports summarising the key enhancement matters arising from an analysis of external assessor reports and from biennial school monitoring reports. This practice facilitates University-wide oversight of the main enhancement matters arising from school/programme quality assurance procedures and allows both the identification of good practice for wider dissemination as well as generic areas for further development.

102 In developing its Quality Enhancement Strategy, the University has taken the view that enhancement should apply across all of its activities. Accordingly, the revised quality assurance and enhancement procedures incorporate a framework for the review of Academic and Business Service Departments. The review model essentially mirrors the processes adopted for ELISR (see above, paragraphs 28-31). To date, three reviews have been completed, namely: IT Services; the Finance Office; and Learner Support. These reviews have engendered a number of initiatives to help enhance the student learning experience including a strategy to engage students in the planning and delivery of IT services; a 'one point of contact' for student enquiries in the Finance Office; and in Learner Support, a focus on the transformation of service delivery for all activities outside the classroom. The University is confident that these reviews have been beneficial but recognises the benefits of further revising the process in order to ensure that there is a sharper focus on the enhancement of the service provided.

103 The University's thematic audit process (see above, paragraphs 33) also contributes to enhancement. To date, three thematic audits

have been conducted, covering student engagement with quality assurance and enhancement processes; the consideration of special factors in relation to the assessment of students; and the operation of procedures with respect to students with disabilities. Thematic audit has been effective in producing tangible enhancement through providing an insight into the effectiveness of these arrangements, and in providing resultant action plans.

104 For the past two years, the University has piloted an internal institutional review process. This process is intended to provide a holistic overview of University activities and, based on the European Foundation Quality Management methodology, involves the use of a number of tools to measure the performance of the University. The most significant outcome from the first internal institutional review was a reinforcement of the recognition of the need to invest in the development of leadership. As a result, the leadership development programme was initiated with the University Executive, and is in the process of being rolled out to heads of departments (or equivalent). This initiative has the potential to further facilitate the implementation of the University's Quality Enhancement Strategy. The outcomes of the second internal institutional review were not available at the time of the ELIR visit. The University plans to review the continued use of this process based on whether it does add value beyond that achieved through the other processes already in place.

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

105 The University's internal quality assurance procedures are designed to focus on enhancement, including providing a vehicle for the identification and dissemination of good practice. The associate deans (quality) and the Director of Quality, both individually and collectively, play key roles in the wider dissemination and implementation of the good

practice identified through these procedures. The associate deans (quality) have particular responsibilities for disseminating good practice at module and programme levels, while the Director of Quality is responsible for collating generic issues, including good practice, arising through the quality assurance procedures and highlighting these for the attention of the senior academic committees, in particular the Academic Policy Committee and its Teaching and Learning Sub-Committee.

106 As part of the annual planning process, schools have the opportunity to bid for quality enhancement funding which has been ring-fenced at university level. Bids can be made against three specific funds: widening access; disability; and enhancement activities aligned with the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. As part of this process, schools are required to evaluate the effectiveness of any previous enhancement funding which have been allocated.

107 The Quality Office has recently established a website summarising the good practice identified through the audit of programmes, programme approval/re-approval, external assessors' reports, ELISR and the review of Business and Academic Service Departments. This development has the potential to make a useful contribution to the dissemination of good practice.

108 University staff have engaged with the national enhancement themes in a range of ways, both contributing to, and learning from, a sector-wide body of good practice. A large number of staff have participated in enhancement themes events, and the University has hosted a number of themes-related workshops covering the 'assessment' and 'employability' themes. The Steering Group of the 2004-05 'Flexible Delivery' theme was chaired by the Head of the University's Academic Practice Unit. The University views its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy as closely aligned with the national enhancement themes, and anticipates making use of the themes' outcomes in the preparation of its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy for 2007 and beyond.

### **The 'hub and spokes' model to support learning and teaching**

109 The University has developed a distributed model of support for staff in learning and teaching. At the centre of this 'hub and spokes' model is a small, permanently funded Academic Practice Unit (the hub), supplemented by staff on part-time secondments (learning, teaching and assessment coordinators) appointed by schools. The hub is responsible for the coordination of the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (taken by new lecturing staff) and the delivery of the Graduate Teaching Assistant training scheme. The Academic Practice Unit also contributes expertise to programme development teams, organises research supervision training and coordinates a continuing professional development programme in generic learning and teaching methods, techniques and tools. This approach to the professional development of staff in learning and teaching distributes the responsibility for, and awareness of, the learning teaching and assessment agenda across the University, while the 'spokes' (the learning, teaching and assessment coordinators) maintain credibility as active teachers. The associate deans (quality) have a pivotal role in the translation and integration of school learning and teaching agendas with the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, and through acting as conduits between the schools and the central Academic Practice Unit.

### **The Caledonian Academy**

110 The University has recognised some difficulties in operating the 'hub and spokes' model, particularly the need to attract staff to a career path in learning and teaching and to disseminate good practice more effectively. This has led to the development, with assistance from the Higher Education Academy Change Academy, of the Caledonian Academy, a major initiative to support learning and teaching. Elements of the 'hub and spokes' model, including the Academic Practice Unit, will be incorporated into the Caledonian Academy and peer-reviewed teaching fellows will work part-

time for the Caledonian Academy. The teaching fellows will be expected to work together to adapt and disseminate 'best teaching practice'. The Caledonian Academy will seek to provide a more visible, coordinated and hence effective vehicle for the fostering of high quality teaching and learning. There is demonstrable enthusiasm among staff for the development.

111 At the time of the ELIR the appointment of a Director of the Caledonian Academy was imminent. The Director will play a crucial role in the implementation of the vision of the Academy which has already been the topic of wide consultation among staff. The University is clearly committed to raising the profile of learning and teaching, and to recognising and rewarding staff for their contribution to excellence in teaching. The Academy is very likely to be instrumental in improving the student experience through the more effective dissemination of good practice in learning and teaching. In view of the pivotal role of the associate deans (quality) in the operation of the 'hub and spokes' model the University should consider carefully whether the associate deans (quality) should be given a similar role in the Caledonian Academy.

### **Staff development and performance review**

112 The University currently operates a staff development and performance review system which includes elements designed to identify both individual and generic staff development needs. University-level staff development is provided mainly from four sources: the Academic Practice Unit; the Communication and Information Technology Training Unit; the Organisational Development Team within the Human Resources Department; and the Research and Commercial Development Office.

113 The staff development and performance review system has been revised recently following joint development between the University management and the recognised trade unions. The revised scheme includes a redesigned pro forma which incorporates a staff learning and development plan, and the plans will now be held with schools or departments

to ensure that development requirements can be reviewed at that level.

114 The University's Academic Practice Unit provides support to all academic staff, both new and experienced, by providing a range of development opportunities relating to the various stages of their careers. These career stages, or levels, are referred to as the Orientation, Professional Academic, and the Learning and Teaching Scholarship (OPALS) levels. All new teaching staff pass through the Orientation level, most full-time teaching staff will operate at the Professional Academic level, and some may wish to pursue a career focused on learning and teaching and so move on to the Scholarship level.

115 The University has a comprehensive induction process involving a combination of central and school support. One-day central corporate induction is provided by the Organisational Development Team of Human Resources, and participation is monitored. This is in the process of being supplemented by the introduction of an on-line induction process. The Academic Practice Unit provides an additional half-day orientation programme for academic staff which includes a 'needs analysis' to facilitate the identification of further development requirements. All schools are provided with guidance packs in order to structure local induction programmes. A common element of local induction is for new members of staff to be assigned a mentor.

116 The University has offered a Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education to all full and part-time academic staff since 2003. A significant component of the programme is a work-based learning contract. Since its inception, 65 staff have enrolled on the course and the average period for completion is two years. At present, registration on the programme is strongly encouraged, though not mandatory.

117 The University offers a range of centrally supported development programmes which are available to all staff, including Graduate Teaching Assistants (see above, paragraph 78). This

provision is coordinated by the Academic Practice Unit and the Organisational Development Team following analysis of school and departmental annual plans. Staff development plans are submitted to the University Executive on an annual basis for approval and resolution of associated resource matters. Peer observation of teaching is not mandatory, but is encouraged. Schools organise this and, where it operates, it is found to be useful.

118 The University has recently introduced revised procedures for academic advancement and promotion. These have, in part, been informed by monitoring of institution-wide promotion statistics. The new procedures have been designed to align more effectively to the University's 2010 Vision and should afford more opportunities for promotion through achievements in teaching and learning developments. Prior to the introduction of the revised procedures, the main promotional route on the basis of teaching and learning, was to the position of Teaching Fellow, which was seen to be equivalent to a senior lectureship/readership. Only two staff have been successful in meeting the criteria for Teaching Fellowship and this category has now been removed from the current promotional framework. A new role of Teaching Fellow will be assigned to staff who are seconded on fixed term contracts to work within the Caledonian Academy (see above, paragraph 110). Staff are supportive of these new arrangements and view the implementation of the Caledonian Academy as an important opportunity to develop their experience and record in teaching and learning, and to facilitate promotion to senior lectureship or above, using the revised promotional criteria.

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

119 The University's decision to engage in significant institutional initiatives such as the Saltire Centre and the Caledonian Academy has

undoubtedly had a positive impact on both staff and students. The University has a systematic and comprehensive programme of support and development for new teaching staff and the new arrangements for the recognition and reward of good practice in learning and teaching have potential to enhance students' learning experience.

120 The revised quality assurance procedures have led to tangible improvements in teaching and learning. The ELISR process, in particular, has been effective in leading to enhancement at programme and subject level, achieving greater integration within the recently established schools and in engendering a culture of continuous improvement.

121 There is evidence of increasing effectiveness in the dissemination and adoption of good practice. For example, a project initiated by the School of Engineering, Science and Design to address student progression and retention was identified following monitoring at the university level, and is now being implemented in other schools.

122 The University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy provides an effective framework for initiating and aligning enhancement activity at school level to institution-wide objectives. The University's 2010 Vision and its associated strategic goals also have a significant influence on enhancement activity and priorities. A demonstrable commitment to, and culture of, enhancement permeates through the University.

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

123 Since the implementation of its Quality Enhancement Strategy in 2003, the University has introduced a significant number of changes to its procedures, policies, practices and facilities. There is demonstrable evidence of enhancement, although many of the changes or initiatives are recent, and so it is too early to assess their full impact. The University has,

however, demonstrated a capacity to critically review the implementation of initiatives and, where necessary, adapt or significantly modify them. If this critically reflective approach is sustained, the potential of recent and planned developments should be realised and continuing enhancement to the student learning experience will be achieved. The Saltire Centre and Caledonian Academy have the potential to achieve significant enhancement in teaching and learning, and to facilitate the implementation of the Quality Enhancement Strategy in general. As implementation of the Quality Enhancement Strategy progresses, the University would benefit from the further development of mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of the Strategy.

124 The associate deans (quality) play a key role in the implementation of the University's Quality Enhancement Strategy. As the term of appointment of the first cohort of associate deans (quality) comes towards an end, the University should seek to ensure that attention is paid to succession planning in order to maintain the current momentum.

125 The current expression of the Quality Enhancement Strategy and, in particular, its five key principles and eleven associated components, does not easily facilitate monitoring of its implementation at university level. In practice, enhancement activity appears to be primarily directed towards the six strategic objectives associated with the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and the wider 2010 Vision. These strategic objectives might usefully provide a framework against which university-level monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of enhancement activity could be undertaken. Accordingly, the University may wish to consider reviewing its current expression of its Quality Enhancement Strategy to explicitly incorporate this framework.



## Summary

### Background to the institution and ELIR method

126 The Glasgow Caledonian University (the University) was established in 1993 as a result of a merger between Glasgow Polytechnic and the Queen's College, Glasgow. It was further extended in 1996 by the transfer of programmes from the Nursing and Midwifery Colleges in Glasgow. The University's mission, which is articulated in its '2010 Vision' includes the aims to be entrepreneurial in approach; innovative in programmes, learning, research and knowledge transfer; inclusive of all sectors of society; and responsive to the needs of individuals, employers and other stakeholders.

127 The University is organised into eight schools: Built & Natural Environment; Caledonian Business School; Computing & Mathematical Sciences; Engineering; Science & Design; Health & Social Care; Life Sciences: Law & Social Sciences; and Nursing, Midwifery & Community Health. At the time of the enhancement-led institutional review (ELIR) visit, the University had a student population of some 15,800 students, of which some 13,500 were undergraduates and some 2,300 were postgraduates.

128 In line with the ELIR method, the University submitted a Reflective Analysis (RA) which outlined the institution'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. The University submitted three case studies with its RA. These set out three ongoing projects at the University to enhance the student learning experience: Partners in Delivery; The Student Evaluation Project; and Student Support. The University regards these as illustrative of the operation of its Quality Enhancement Strategy.

### Overview of the matters raised by the review

129 The University's Quality Enhancement Strategy states that the institution is committed to the enhancement of the student experience at the University and that this will have two outcomes: first, students' time at University will 'become more rewarding', and secondly, graduates' employability will be increased. Five key principles guide the University's Quality Enhancement Strategy: proactively seeking to improve all of the activities of the University which have an effect on the student experience; assisting the University in achieving its 2010 Vision; making the best use of staff competencies and skills, maximising staff satisfaction, and linking staff development to enhancement; maintaining academic standards; and proactively identifying national and international best practice and embedding it across the University.

130 The particular themes pursued in the review included postgraduate research students' learning experience; student support services; staff development recognition and reward; and the University approach to information management in relation to quality assurance and enhancement, and in relation to Teaching Quality Information.

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

131 The University has effective procedures for the approval, re-approval and periodic review of its programmes. The University's processes of enhancement-led internal subject review (ELISR) meet the Scottish Funding Council guidelines for internal review at the subject level. These procedures are complemented by internal audit of both programmes and generic themes that relate to academic and other units, and these are also effective processes. Over time the University has added to its range of quality assurance processes and there may now be scope for some rationalisation to increase efficiency and reduce the burden on staff

without compromising the institution's overall ability to monitor quality and standards. The annual module and programme monitoring procedures are thorough and effective; achieving an appropriate balance between assurance and making a contribution to the University's enhancement strategies. Staff are clearly committed to the University's quality assurance procedures, as reflected by their significant investment of time and effort. Central support for quality assurance processes is provided by the Quality Office, and the associate deans (quality) play a pivotal role in each school. Reporting through school committees to the Senate and its subcommittees provides for effective communication of information at all levels of the institution.

132 The quality assurance processes link to those arrangements designed to maintain academic standards. The University has in place regulations, policies and procedures for both taught and research awards which are aligned to external benchmarks and provide a clear framework for the maintenance of academic standards. Quality assurance arrangements monitor the frameworks and their implementation. The University also has in place a robust external assessor (examiner) system. External assessors confirm that the academic standards set are comparable to those at other UK higher education institutions and check that the standards meet at least threshold expectations. The views of external assessors are considered in detail in the annual programme monitoring procedures and the University also takes an overview of all external assessors' views through an annual report produced by the Director of Quality. On the basis of these findings, **broad confidence** can be placed in the University's current, and likely future, management of the quality of its provision and the academic standards of its awards.

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

133 The University takes an effective approach to ensuring that the information it publishes about the quality of its provision is complete, accurate and fair.

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

134 The University has a comprehensive set of arrangements for encouraging student engagement in the quality assurance and enhancement of learning and teaching, and student representation in the University is systematic and effective. The University, working in partnership with the Students' Association, has taken imaginative steps to enhance student engagement. The University seeks feedback from the student community in a number of ways, and the Student Evaluation Project is an important element of the University's approach. The Project has produced high quality information on the student experience, for example, on student satisfaction, progression and retention, that has the potential to be of great benefit to the University.

135 The range and quality of learning opportunities provided for students is good. Of particular significance is the Saltire Centre, which is planned to open in early 2006. It is intended to provide an innovative and inclusive learning environment for all students, and will also provide access to a comprehensive range of support services. A comprehensive academic support service is currently available for students; there are innovative projects at the school level to support undergraduates in their first year of study, and the University has recently taken a number of steps to enhance the postgraduate student learning experience. The University is clearly committed to raising the profile of learning and teaching, as

exemplified through the establishment of the Caledonian Academy, a major initiative aimed at developing a critical mass of expertise in teaching, learning and assessment.

136 A key strategy of the University is the promotion of student employability, to be achieved through a range of integrated strategies and projects, including Personal Development Planning and the 'Partners in Delivery' project, which is jointly delivered with the Students' Association. The University has a clear commitment to fostering the employability of its graduates.

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

137 The University's decision to engage in significant institutional initiatives such as the Saltire Centre and the Caledonian Academy has undoubtedly had a positive impact on both staff and students. The University has a systematic and comprehensive programme of support and development for new teaching staff and the new arrangements for the recognition and reward of good practice in learning and teaching have potential to enhance students' learning experience.

138 The revised quality assurance procedures have led to tangible improvements in teaching and learning. The ELISR process, in particular, has been effective in leading to enhancement at programme and subject level, achieving greater integration within the recently established schools and in engendering a culture of continuous improvement.

139 There is evidence of increasing effectiveness in the dissemination and adoption of good practice. For example, a project initiated by the School of Engineering, Science and Design to address student progression and retention was identified following monitoring at the university level, and is now being implemented in other schools.

140 The University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy provides an effective

framework for initiating and aligning enhancement activity at school level to institution-wide objectives. The University's 2010 Vision and its associated strategic goals also have a significant influence on enhancement activity and priorities. A demonstrable commitment to, and culture of, enhancement permeates through the University.

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

141 Since the implementation of its Quality Enhancement Strategy in 2003, the University has introduced a significant number of changes to its procedures, policies, practices and facilities. There is demonstrable evidence of enhancement, although many of the changes or initiatives are recent, and so it is too early to assess their full impact. The University has, however, demonstrated a capacity to critically review the implementation of initiatives and, where necessary, adapt or significantly modify them. If this critically reflective approach is sustained, the potential of recent and planned developments should be realised and continuing enhancement to the student learning experience will be achieved. As implementation of the Quality Enhancement Strategy progresses, the University would benefit from the further development of mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of the Strategy.

142 The associate deans (quality) play a key role in the implementation of the University's Quality Enhancement Strategy. As the term of appointment of the first cohort of associate deans (quality) comes towards an end, the University should seek to ensure that attention is paid to succession planning in order to maintain the current momentum.

143 The current expression of the Quality Enhancement Strategy and, in particular, the five key principles and 11 associated components, does not easily facilitate monitoring of its implementation at the University. In practice, enhancement activity appears to be primarily directed towards the six

strategic objectives associated with the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and the wider 2010 Vision. These strategic objectives might usefully provide a framework against which university-level monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of enhancement activity could be undertaken. Accordingly, the University may wish to consider reviewing its current expression of its Quality Enhancement Strategy to explicitly incorporate this framework.

