University of Dundee

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Enhancement-led institutional review

Preface

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

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

Enhancement-led approach

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

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

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

Nationally agreed reference points

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

Conclusions and judgement within ELIR

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

The ELIR process

The ELIR process is carried out by teams comprising three academics, one student and one senior administrator drawn from the HE sector. The main elements of ELIR are:
- a preliminary visit by QAA to the institution in advance of the review visit
- a Reflective Analysis document submitted by the institution three months in advance of the second part of the review visit
- a two-part review visit to the institution by the ELIR team; Part 1 taking place five weeks before Part 2, and Part 2 having a variable duration of between three and five days depending on the complexity of matters to be explored
- the publication of a report, 20 weeks after the Part 2 visit, detailing the commentaries agreed by the ELIR team.

The evidence for the Enhancement-Led Institutional Review

In order to gather the information on which its commentaries are based, the ELIR team carries out a number of activities including:
- reviewing the institution's own internal procedures and documents, as well as the Reflective Analysis institutions prepare especially for ELIR
- asking questions and engaging in discussions with groups of relevant staff
- talking to students about their experiences
- exploring how the institution uses the national reference points.

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Introduction

1 This is the report of the enhancement-led institutional review (ELIR) of the University of Dundee (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 Higher Education Funding Council (SHEFC), and informed by consultation with the Scottish higher education sector. The ELIR method focuses on the strategic management of enhancement; the effectiveness of student learning; and the use of a range of reference points. These reference points include: the *Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework* (SCQF), the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (*Code of practice*), 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 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 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 ELIR 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 its strategy for quality enhancement, its approach to the management of quality and standards and its view of the effectiveness of its approach. Other documents available to the ELIR team with the RA included the institutional profile at 1 September 2004, The Vision: towards 2007 (The Vision), the undergraduate prospectus 2005 and the postgraduate prospectus 2004-05. The RA provided a focus for the review and was used to develop a programme of activities by the team to provide a representative illustration of the way the University approaches the management of quality enhancement and academic standards.

5 The University submitted one case study with its RA. The case study detailed the central support for faculty-led, blended e-learning and focused on the recent and rapid development of e-learning within the University, in the context of The Vision and the University strategy for quality enhancement.

6 The RA had been approved by the Principal's Advisory Group and the Dundee University Students' Association (DUSA), following consultation and dissemination among all staff and students. The preparation of the RA was led by the Vice Principal (Educational Development) and the development of drafts was overseen by a task group comprising of members drawn from both the Academic Standards, and Learning and Teaching Committees, including DUSA sabbatical officers.

7 The ELIR team visited the University on two occasions: the Part 1 visit took place on 6 and 7 October 2004 and the Part 2 visit took place between 15 and 18 November 2004.

8 During the Part 1 visit, the Principal and Vice Principal (Educational Development) led presentations to the ELIR team on The Vision and aspects of learning and teaching at the University. Following the presentations, the team met a group of senior staff with responsibility for managing quality and enhancement across the institution, and staff who had been involved in internal review at the subject level in life sciences, education and social work, dentistry, nursing and midwifery, medicine, architecture, town and regional planning and engineering and physical sciences. The team met a group of students, who included members of DUSA, class representatives and students involved with

internal reviews. The team discussed a range of matters, many of which had been raised in the RA, including institutional structures and the integration of institutional cultures following a merger with four other higher education institutions; the devolved faculty management structures; the internal programme review process; the development of the learning and teaching strategy; the role of staff development in the quality enhancement process; and the ways in which the University engaged with DUSA and the wider student body.

9   During the Part 1 visit, the University made available a set of documentation which had been identified within the RA, and 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 of Dr Rae Condie, Mr James Dunphy, Dr Alan Howe, Professor Simon van Heyningen (reviewers) and Dr Margaret King (review 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 founded in 1882, as University College, Dundee, becoming part of the University of St Andrews in 1897 and being renamed Queen's College in 1954. The University received its Royal Charter in 1967. The University grew considerably in the 1990s following the merger in 1994 of the Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art as a new faculty of the University and the establishment in 1996 of the Tayside and Fife Colleges of Nursing and Midwifery as a new School of Nursing and Midwifery. In 2001, there was a merger with the Dundee campus of the Northern College to create the Faculty of Education and Social Work.

12   The University's Planning Statement 2002-07 states that '…the objects of the University shall be to advance and diffuse knowledge, wisdom and understanding by teaching and research and by the example and influence of its corporate life'. The mission statement of the University highlights the '…commitment to excellence in teaching and research, the personal and intellectual development of our students and the contribution we make to the community'.

13   The University is organised into seven faculties: Arts and Social Sciences; Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design; Education and Social Work; Law and Accountancy; Life Sciences; Medicine,

Dentistry and Nursing; and Engineering and Physical Sciences. The University currently has four campus sites: the city centre campus; the Gardyne Road campus, in the east end of the city; the Ninewells campus at Ninewells Hospital; and the Kirkcaldy campus (30 miles from Dundee city centre).

14   At the time of the review visit, just over 16,000 students were registered with the University; some 11,000 undergraduate students and some 5,000 postgraduate students (of whom 926 were research students). Within this total student population, some 2,700 students were registered on distance-learning programmes.

Institution's strategy for quality enhancement

15   The RA stated that, traditionally, the University's strategic objectives for learning and teaching were embedded in annual planning statements submitted to the Funding Council. The recent statement, The Vision is driving the development of strategy across the University. The Vision sets a course for the period to 2007, outlining:

a.   Key strategic goals for each of Learning and Teaching; Research and Enterprise; and Academic and Student Support Services

b.   A set of 12 objectives associated with these goals

c.   The development of a set of strategies for key areas of activity

d.   A set of key issues for each faculty.

16   The RA further stated that the University is now developing a learning and teaching strategy that will focus The Vision, and build on existing commitment and approaches to quality, to include a more explicit and integrated strategy for enhancement. At the time of writing the RA and the ELIR visits, a working group convened by the Vice Principal (Educational Development) was developing proposals for consultation during the early part of 2004-05.

Internal monitoring and review

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

Introduction

17   The RA stated that the University has explicit quality assurance policies. These policies place primary responsibility for the maintenance of quality and standards with the academic staff as they are

best placed to evaluate the current effectiveness of their courses, judge how they might be improved and drive the implementation of future changes. The academic departments report to, and are monitored by faculty boards, which are the key decision-making bodies regarding approval, monitoring and review.

18   A system of academic quality committees has responsibility for overseeing implementation of the University's quality assurance policy and procedures for taught provision. Each faculty has an academic quality committee that reports to both its parent faculty board and to the Senate Academic Standards Committee, which in turn reports to Senate by way of the Learning and Teaching Committee.

19   The University has recently restructured the management of postgraduate provision (both research and taught) by establishing a Postgraduate School and two subcommittees to oversee the operation of the University's policy and procedures: the Postgraduate Research Sub-committee and the Postgraduate Taught Sub-committee. The Postgraduate School has the status of a quasi-faculty, reporting to Senate through a Board of Studies convened by a Deputy Principal and has informal links to the Learning and Teaching Committee and Research Committee through shared membership.

20   In the RA, the University stated that the procedures for the design, approval, monitoring and review of taught provision have been progressively reviewed and revised, reflecting experience and learning gained from engagement with external review, internal implementation and external policy developments. The University has a comprehensive suite of quality assurance documents, and these are published on its intranet. These provide clear guidance for staff on quality and standards processes and cover the following: considerations of good practice in the design, approval and review of taught programmes; procedures for the approval of proposals for new provision at programme and module levels; annual monitoring of taught provision; periodic review of taught programmes; procedure for approving change to an existing programme or module (including proposed termination); student representation and feedback; and procedures for peer observation of teaching. There is also detailed documentation on the University's policies on: external examining; accreditation by professional and statutory bodies (PSBs); assuring the quality and standards of research degree programmes; and approaches to UK and international collaborative academic provision.

Internal approval, monitoring and review

Programme approval/validation

21   The University states that the primary aim of its policy for programme approval is to promote the efficient development of new programmes that will achieve high standards and quality. In designing a new programme, the programme development team must evaluate standards by looking at a range of external reference points including the SCQF, the subject benchmark statements, the *Code of practice*, published by QAA, and PSB guidance where appropriate. The team must also take into account considerations of good practice and the future needs and opportunities for students.

22   The University requires that formal application for the approval of a new programme begins with the development team producing a family of supporting documents: programme development plan; programme and module specifications; and a programme design summary in which the team must reflect on seven specified aspects of the proposed programme and identify the focus and scope of each.

23   The application is submitted to an Approval Board, which is convened by a member of the relevant faculty academic quality committee. Other members of the approval board include a representative of the faculty with experience of managing quality and standards; a representative from another faculty; a representative of Careers Service; at least one external subject expert; at least one employer, graduate or representative from a professional body; and, if the programme is to be delivered through an open or distance-learning mode, an academic with relevant knowledge and experience of this mode of delivery.

24   The Approval Board considers the programme development team's submission, interviews the staff who will teach the programme, and submits a report to the faculty board with a formal recommendation on whether the proposed course should be approved.

Annual programme monitoring

25   The University specifies that, once approved, a programme is monitored annually through the submission of an updated programme development plan and annual report to the departmental academic quality committee. The report encompasses consideration of student retention, progression and attainment; student feedback; external examiner, PSBs and other external bodies' reports; and the programme team's reflections on

the effect of recently implemented changes and proposed suggestions for further change. These reports are considered by the relevant faculty academic quality committee, which makes recommendations of actions required to the department. Faculty overview reports arising from the annual monitoring process are submitted to the institution-level Academic Quality Committee (formerly titled Senate Academic Standards Committee) which is convened by the Vice Principal (Educational Development). The ELIR team learnt of recent improvements to the annual monitoring processes including a streamlining of the annual reporting requirements, the availability of better student progression data through a new student and course administration software (SITS) system, and revised committee lines of reporting which aim to better drive change when significant resources are required. The team, through scrutiny of a sample of annual programme monitoring documentation and in discussion with a sample of departmental staff, saw clear evidence that the annual programme monitoring process was implemented in full and was effective.

Periodic/programme review

26   The University requires that, every five years, each course is subject to Programme Review. Where a department has a cognate group of courses it may request that they are reviewed together. The process is very similar to the process of programme approval and the review board has a similar constitution to the approval board, with the addition of a student panel member, drawn from a pool of student reviewers provided by DUSA and trained both by *sparqs* ('Student Participation in Quality, Scotland') service and through an internally-delivered training programme. The process begins with the programme team gathering evidence on changes made since the previous review and reassessing the provision against the latest internal and external reference points, current good practice in learning and teaching, anticipated needs and opportunities for future students and graduates, and local developments both within and outwith the University. The staff gather views of students and graduates on the effectiveness of provision and ask for their suggestions on how it might be improved. The programme team also reports on trends in student performance and changes in graduate first destinations. The staff also address the views expressed by external examiners, comments in recent internal and external subject review reports, and the findings of annual programme monitoring reports. This information is digested into a programme evaluation summary and submitted with programme and module

specifications, a programme development plan, and publicity and marketing materials for prospective students to the review board. The board reports to the faculty board, which, in turn, reports its recommendations to the Senate.

27   The ELIR team found that the University is flexible in its approach to programme review, in that the procedures allow for the potential for joint University/PSB approvals or reviews, where PSBs will permit it, including submissions of documents in the PSB-prescribed format. Where the University's programme review process requires additional information, this may be supplied as an appendix to the accreditation documentation. Clear evidence was provided to the team that this approach was working effectively and the team considers the flexibility of these arrangements to be a strength.

28   The introduction in September 2003 of a modular, semesterised structure has allowed the University to introduce clear and coherent learning pathways for students, many of which are interdisciplinary and cross-faculty. The quality assurance arrangements for these programmes are comprehensive. The University recognises that the arrangements for joint honours degree courses could be improved. Responsibility for these programmes is shared by departments and, at times, this leaves both staff and students unclear where responsibility for a programme lies. To ensure that there is equity of provision for students the University could usefully reconsider its quality assurance arrangements for joint honours courses, in particular, to clarify the ownership of these programmes at the departmental level.

29   The guidance provided by the University to programme teams on programme approval, monitoring and review is exemplary. This information is available to staff through a family of web pages on the University's intranet and is clear, comprehensive, and well presented; it also offers staff useful templates.

External examining

30   The RA stated that the University policy on external examining is set out in the Guidance for External Examining for Undergraduate and Taught Postgraduate Courses, and in the External Examiner Report Form. The procedures for the appointment of external examiners, and guidance on their role, is provided on the quality assurance pages on the University's intranet. External examiners are appointed by the University Court on the recommendation of the appropriate department, endorsed by the relevant dean of faculty. Following

appointment, external examiners are provided with comprehensive information on the programmes they are to examine. Departments also provide external examiners with copies of internal programme and module review documents, and any relevant external reports. The induction of external examiners is undertaken at the departmental level, and the detail of the induction is at the discretion of the department. In addition, departments are encouraged to offer external examiners briefings with module or programme leaders and the convenor of the examination board.

31   The RA stated that external examiner procedures are well established with a clear top-down line of receipt and reporting. External examiner reports are considered at the executive officer level; the Academic Secretary and the deans. The deans transmit the external examiners' reports, and any associated comments from the Academic Secretary and the Principal, to departments and the relevant teaching staff. Departments are expected to consider issues raised, report proposed action to their faculty academic quality committee and communicate outcomes to the external examiners. Faculty/School secretaries prepare annual digests of issues for consideration by faculty/school academic quality committees. The RA noted that this process has been extended recently by the introduction of an annual summary report to the University's Academic Quality Committee taking an overview across the institution of issues raised by the external examiners.

32   The University's view is that external examiners' reports provide evidence of the effectiveness of internal arrangements for assuring quality and standards. The ELIR team was able to confirm that the external examining processes work well, that departments take full cognisance of the external examiners' comments and that their recommendations are incorporated into future changes in provision for the benefit of the student learning experience.

33   The RA indicated that external examiner reports are prescribed reference points for annual monitoring and programme review. Through study of a sample of annual programme monitoring reports and programme review submissions, the ELIR team observed that external examiners' comments are given very careful consideration by departments when they undertake these quality assurance activities.

Collaborative provision

34   The RA stated that the University's approach to collaborative arrangements is set out in two policy statements; UK Collaborative Academic Provision

and International Collaborative Academic Provision. It is University policy that the development of collaborative arrangements involving academic awards follow the same processes for programme approval and review as those which should apply to internally delivered awards.

35   The University's collaborative provision includes a number of types of agreements: articulation arrangements; validation; franchise; dual and joint awards; preliminary arrangements; and memoranda of understanding. The RA stated that the bulk of the University's collaborative arrangements are articulations; defining entry routes, generally with advanced standing, into specific academic programmes of the University. The RA further noted that there is a very small amount of franchise and validation activity, primarily associated with the former Northern College. At the time of writing the RA, two new validations in the area of animation were in the development stage.

Research degree programmes

36   The University has recently restructured the management of postgraduate provision (both research and taught) by establishing a Postgraduate School and two subcommittees to oversee the operation of the University's policy and procedures: a Postgraduate Research Sub-committee and a Postgraduate Taught Programmes Sub-Committee. The Postgraduate School reports to the Senate through a Board of Studies convened by a Deputy Principal, and has informal links to the Learning and Teaching Committee and Research Committee through shared membership. The procedures for assuring the standards and quality of postgraduate taught provision are equivalent to those for undergraduate provision (see above, paragraphs 21 to 33).

37   The key mechanism for assuring the standards and quality of research provision is the departmental thesis monitoring committee. The committee gives students the opportunity every six months (more often if they request it) to discuss their progress and to provide feedback on the supervision they are receiving. For part-time students, this meeting is held annually. The recorded outcomes of these meetings are reported to the relevant Faculty Board, to oversee action where necessary. The University recognises that there is an ongoing problem of low returns on student feedback (following graduation) and is currently considering the merits of seeking feedback at the midpoint in students' studies.

38   From its discussions with staff responsible for managing postgraduate provision, the ELIR team

came to the view that the University, through the restructuring of the management of its postgraduate arrangements, has improved its quality assurance procedures and that these changes have the potential to enhance the learning experience of its postgraduate students. For further discussion of this matter, please refer to section 3 of the report, which discusses 'the student experience'.

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

Use of the Academic Infrastructure

39   In its RA the University detailed the ways in which its policies and procedures relate to, and are informed by, the policies of external agencies and organisations, expressing the view that these external reference points are wholly integrated into its internal quality assurance processes.

Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework

40   The RA stated that the SCQF and credit rating are systematically embedded in the modular structure and in the core procedures for programme approval, programme review and definition of collaborative arrangements. Collaborative arrangements define the specific credit that will be granted for each articulation arrangement. In addition, the SCQF is being used to develop opportunities for more flexible, wider access, by way of articulation arrangements with the Scottish further education sector. In the RA, the University recognised that there are a small number of areas of non-adherence (for example, the use of the MPhil title for a number of taught programmes and a small number of master's awards which are not entirely postgraduate in either 'time' or 'level'). The RA indicated that these awards are currently being considered by the faculties.

41   As part of the approval/review process, the programme team produces a module specification which proposes a credit rating that conforms to the SCQF in terms of the level at which the module is designed to be taught and the volume of outcomes. The relevant faculty board formally confirms the credit rating of each module through its acceptance of the review report. The ELIR team had the opportunity to study a sample of documentation prepared by departments for programme review and the subsequent faculty board minutes, and can confirm that these arrangements are effective.

Subject benchmark statements

42   Subject benchmark statements are a prescribed reference point for all programme approvals and reviews. Departments are required to ensure that the aims and intended learning outcomes of their programmes at honours level conform to the relevant QAA subject benchmark statement. The ELIR team found clear evidence of the consideration of benchmark statements through its examination of a sample of departmental documentation for annual monitoring and programme review.

Code of practice

43   The University's internal policy and procedures are informed by the *Code of practice*, published by QAA, and the *Code* has been used to guide the form of internal review processes. There is clear evidence in the University's quality assurance web pages, in documentation prepared by departments for programme review, and in Faculty Board minutes that the precepts of the *Code* are given due consideration. The University is aware of a need to review a number of aspects of its assessment policy with reference to the *Code*, and the SCQF, for example, the scale used for reporting assessment results and approaches to compensation and condonement. The ELIR team learnt that work has begun in this area.

Use of external reference points in external examining

44   The University requires that external examiners are fully aware of the external reference points such as SCQF and subject benchmark statements. External examiners' annual reports to the Principal are on a pro forma based on the precepts of the *Code of practice*. The pro forma includes prompts that seek the external examiners' views on whether the programme structure and content are appropriate to the level at which it is delivered and whether the standards achieved by students are consistent with standards in other UK universities, with national benchmark statements, the SCQF, programme specifications and PSB requirements.

Programme specifications

45   Programme specifications are prescribed documents required for the approval of all new programmes and the reviews of all existing programmes, and the ELIR team saw examples of their use in both cases. The University has standard templates for programme and module specifications and indicated in the RA that while these have proved useful for quality assurance purposes,

their usefulness to a wider audience, including students, is questionable. However, the team did hear from some students that they found detailed module descriptors helpful and that information on learning outcomes was useful in preparing for assessment. The University is considering the way forward, noting recent EU developments regarding European Diploma Supplements.

Progress files

46   The University has chosen to introduce personal development plans (PDPs) that are intended to be resource effective, flexible and appropriate for both vocational and non-vocational subjects. Town and regional planning is piloting the development of a internet-based PDP (see below, paragraph 86). According to the University, initial feedback from students is positive and they are largely supportive of the concept of PDP and have recognised the advantages of using an electronic-based framework to assist their reflection. The University has plans to extend PDP arrangements to postgraduate students (both taught and research).

47   To support those students who are following courses that have no explicit vocational links with their career planning, an optional first-year 20-credit module (SCQF Level 7) has been established, approved by the Arts and Social Sciences Faculty Board.

48   To ensure that PDPs fully reflect the needs of students with disabilities the University Disability Officer is working closely with the PDP development team.

Professional and statutory bodies and employer concerns

49   The University invites PSBs and employers to participate in the programme approval and review processes and have representatives on the review boards. With the agreement of the relevant PSBs, departments may elect for a joint professional accreditation and programme review event (see above, paragraph 27). This close collaboration with PSBs and employers ensures that departments are fully aware of the views of these bodies or groups and give them due consideration.

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

50   The University's quality assurance procedures are comprehensive and effective. They focus on the enhancement of the student learning experience and encourage academic initiatives. The processes take into account external reference points and are

flexible to enable joint programme reviews with PSBs. The procedures are supported by a broad range of clear and comprehensive documentation, and the material available on the University's intranet is excellent. The management of postgraduate taught and research provision has recently been restructured resulting in improved quality assurance and reporting procedures which should have the potential to facilitate the enhancement of the student learning experience. The introduction in September 2003 of a modular, semesterised structure has allowed the University to introduce clear coherent learning pathways for students, many of which are interdisciplinary and cross-faculty. The quality assurance arrangements for these programmes are comprehensive. The University may benefit from reflecting on the quality assurance arrangements for joint honours programmes where ownership is at the departmental level.

51   On the basis of these findings, broad confidence can be placed in the soundness of the University's current and likely future management of the quality of its provision and the academic standards of its awards.

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

52   The University is currently developing a publications scheme based on the Universities Scotland model. It is University policy to place responsibility for the assurance of the accuracy and appropriateness of the information it publishes with the relevant units - faculties, departments and support services. The ELIR team was advised that the undergraduate, postgraduate and distance-learning prospectuses are issued by the Information Office, following consultation with the academic departments and support services on the accuracy of the content.

53   The University requires faculties and department offices to oversee core information issued to current students on matters relating to quality and standards, including degree regulations and programme handbooks. The University recognises that there are risks relating to the ease of creating and updating information, and that this can create uncertainties over the correct version of information. The University intends to give this specific consideration in the development of its new public information strategy. The ELIR team learnt that, in order to ensure the accuracy and reliability of information on its website, editorial access to the University web pages is restricted and that the responsibility for monitoring faculties' internet pages rests with the deans.

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 ELIR team believes that the University is acting appropriately to ensure that the information it publishes about the quality of its provision is complete, accurate and fair.

The student experience

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

Student representation

55   The University's approach to engaging students in the assurance and enhancement of the quality of learning and teaching is to encourage students to contribute in a number of different ways. There are two formal channels for student comment and representation: one through DUSA and the other through an almost universal network of departmental and programme staff-student liaison committees. DUSA representatives, traditionally primarily the President, are members of all major University committees, including Court and Senate with both the DUSA President and Vice-President (Education and Careers) sitting as full members of the Learning and Teaching Committee and Academic Quality Committee. A University policy statement sets out these channels and covers a comprehensive range of matters, including a statement of basic responsibilities and expectations; details of student representation on University, faculty and departmental committees; information on departmental staff-student liaison committees; student feedback mechanisms for taught and research programmes; student representation in review of taught programmes; and support for student representation and feedback. It was clear that the policy document is very helpful to both staff and students and serves as a useful indicator of how the University views student involvement in quality processes.

56   In the past year the University had funded a new sabbatical post within DUSA, with the Vice-President (Education and Careers) taking office in August 2004. This is a positive development, which hopefully will support DUSA in continuing to develop their ability to represent their members

effectively. The valuable informal links developed by the postholder and the University are a particular strength. Embedding this approach could help to develop a sustainable model of student engagement. Current arrangements put a large burden of work, and of expectation, on DUSA officers, particularly the new Vice-President (Education and Careers). There would be benefit in both the University and DUSA considering further how they might work in partnership to improve the support that is offered to the DUSA officers.

57   The University is currently piloting the inclusion of a student member on its internal programme review panels, which can be regarded as an important further step in embedding student engagement. While previously there was no formal barrier to student membership of the panel, the role of a student member has now been made explicit. Generic training for this role will be provided by *sparqs* with institution-specific information being delivered in training, both written and oral, by the Director of Quality Assurance. The ELIR team, in discussion with both staff and students, heard that this was an appropriate way forward. Arrangements are in place to provide adequate support for student panel members.

58   The University has acknowledged that there have been difficulties in the past concerning clarifying the different roles of staff-student liaison committees within departments, and the responsibilities and activities of DUSA. The University is also aware of variable practice in the operation of its staff-student committees. The University emphasises the importance of informal contacts between staff and students in terms of addressing day-to-day matters and informing enhancement. This approach was confirmed by DUSA representatives and students and, as such, is a particular strength of the institution. Postgraduate student representation is in place at the faculty level, for example, on staff-student liaison committees. There appears to be much less postgraduate representation on institutional committees. The Vice Principal and the DUSA have identified a need for greater postgraduate representation and have begun work on this. This partnership approach to addressing representation is very positive.

59   The University is trying to encourage and support effective student representation and feedback by providing guidance on the role of student class representatives and recognising their contribution. Both the University and DUSA are aware and are active in supporting course representatives. In the past year, a virtual learning environment (VLE)-based system called Class Reps

Central has been introduced to facilitate support and communication between DUSA and the class representatives, and also between class representatives and the wider student body. This tool is used in an impressive manner, for example, it enables class representatives to view presentations delivered by DUSA and *sparqs* and is clearly an important development in supporting effective student representation.

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

60   The University's general approach to the promotion of student learning reflects the devolved character of the University. Subject-level departments have primary responsibility, with faculties playing an intermediate role allocating resources and monitoring effectiveness at the subject level. The University provides a central infrastructure of academic and student support services, while DUSA is the focus of both student representation and of the social and recreational facilities within the Students' Association building.

Curriculum, learning, teaching and assessment

61   Responsibilities in this area (including the supervision of research students) are located at the subject level, and managed by department or programme boards whose effectiveness is monitored through the University's quality assurance processes (see above, section 2). Reports of internal programme review and monitoring processes indicate the general effectiveness of the University's approaches to promoting effective learning and an appropriate experience for students on taught programmes. This view is supported by the outcomes of QAA subject reviews which provide a very positive external perspective. The University also examines its performance against the SHEFC performance indicators data which suggest that, in general, the University's performance is close to the funding council's benchmarks. The University's performance in relation to the participation of underrepresented groups in higher education significantly exceeds the SHEFC benchmarks. It is clear that student opinions are sought and acted upon, through the staff-student liaison committee structures, and that students' views of the teaching and learning experience are generally favourable. In discussion with the ELIR team, students whom the team met were very positive about their learning experience at the University and stated that they would firmly recommend the University to potential applicants.

62   The University has planned a number of developments to improve monitoring and evaluation at the institutional level including increasing the emphasis in programme review on specific evaluation of effectiveness of student learning; evaluating information from programme monitoring and reviews more effectively at institutional level, with more systematic follow-up and dissemination of good practice and effective approaches; generating and using information on student progression more effectively, including follow up actions to the student retention project; and continuing evaluation of the effectiveness of recently introduced VLE-based approaches to learning and teaching. Students and staff agree that much of this work, particularly the widespread use of the VLE, is indeed improving students' experience of their courses. In discussion with the ELIR team, students were enthusiastic about the usefulness of the VLE and the training that they had received on its use. All new undergraduates undertake a compulsory induction session on information technology (IT) which, some students found, included little that was new to them, although they confirmed it was well delivered and generally useful.

63   The University provides an Access Summer School for students whose circumstances can lead them to under-perform at school and college, including those from outside the Dundee area. Satisfactory performance in this summer school guarantees entry into the University. In discussion with the ELIR team, students were insistent that the value of this summer school should be recognised; it is a model of good practice.

64   The Postgraduate Research Sub-Committee provides a staff perspective on the effectiveness of the University's general approach to research degree provision. Reports from faculty thesis monitoring committees, along with the outcomes of exit surveys of research students, provide a student perspective. Recent work undertaken by the Postgraduate Sub-Committees has included consideration of how to increase the effectiveness of surveys of the views of research students. This work is still at a relatively early stage, but is an indication of the University's awareness of the need to enhance practice in this area. A new Academic Doctoral Development Programme, introduced in response to the Roberts Report (on the supply of science and engineering skills in the UK) and the UK Skills agenda, is designed to lead to a more comprehensive and integrated system for developing the generic skills of these students: training in such skills is already widespread in the University and will be rolled out to all students regardless of the source of their funding.

Learning resources and environment

65   Responsibility for the maintenance and supply of accommodation and equipment is divided between the centre and faculties or departments. External reviews have consistently identified the University's library provision and the support for its students as a strength, and this view is confirmed by staff and students. Students also confirmed their satisfaction with IT provision. IT services are working on improving their mechanisms for obtaining direct feedback from students. In addition to the widespread use of the Blackboard VLE (see below, paragraphs 82 to 85), work has been undertaken on a number of improvements including the stability and reliability of systems for all new users; the student desktop providing standard software for all students; communications, including implementation of the Groupwise email system; the extent of computer suite provision; and infrastructure support for the Blackboard VLE, QuestionMark Perception (QMP) on-line assessment, and for developments in the library. There are many good examples of how IT is used to enhance the student experience, including on-line formative assessment; electronic personal development planning (ePDP); and work on student surveys delivered on-line. Particularly impressive is the portal MyDundee through which students can gain access to most of their course-related material, and Advance@Dundee, which is a pair of internet resources, one for postgraduate students and one for undergraduates. Advance@Dundee gives access to an exceptionally wide range of information from preparing for a viva voce examination for the PhD to guidance for undergraduates on how to take notes during lectures.

Student support

66   Primary responsibility for academic support resides at the subject level, with module and programme leaders for taught provision and supervisors for research students. Additionally, three units within the Centre for Learning and Teaching provide support for specific needs, groups of students and prospective students. Students confirm that they find the support offered valuable and most students are highly satisfied with the provision. Particularly helpful, for example, is a free-standing personal academic study-skills module (P@SS) which is credit-rated in line with the SCQF and offered within the modular structure to students in specific faculties to promote student success and progression.

67   Responsibility for academic advising is located at the faculty level. All undergraduate students have an adviser of studies whose main duty is to advise them on the details of the programme they are studying. There is some variation in the students' views of the benefit of the adviser system in relation to addressing personal problems, although students confirm that other members of staff could easily be contacted if students wished to discuss their problems. The University also has a hardship fund in place, with the DUSA President as a member of its management group. During the planning process for modularisation and semesterisation, a working group was established to consider the implications for matriculation and student advising. The group has continued to work on a range of projects to share good practice between faculties and improve the student management system. Examples include developing on-line matriculation; improving academic advising; considering student workload issues; and improving information on the availability of extra-faculty modules.

68   A system is in place for the regular overview and monitoring of the student support services on behalf of the University Court, with the regular analysis of suitable performance indicators. A new central directorate, Student Services, has been created recently, encompassing careers counselling, disability, health and student advisory services, the Nursery, the Institute of Sport and Exercise, Music, and the Student Support Worker. Student Services is becoming a more proactive development service, which is intended to help students develop themselves and help avoid or minimise problems. This is illustrated by a range of specific projects and initiatives, such as Peer Connections, a student mentoring scheme coordinated through the MyDundee student portal, new projects involving the Careers Service and the extension of Disability Services. DUSA's own Information and Support Services also provide a range of advisory and support services for students. There is a new liaison committee between the University and DUSA, which is charged with ensuring that all students have access to the support services they need. This is a positive development. The student services are very good for those students with easy access to the main campus. The University and DUSA recognise that access is less easy for students based at peripheral campuses. DUSA and the University provide some student support services to the Gardyne and Ninewells campuses, which are in Dundee, but providing adequate support to students in Kirkcaldy remains an issue. The University is fully aware of this need and is striving to improve matters.

69   The postgraduate subcommittees have been advancing a number of approaches to improving the support of research students, including an internet-based postgraduate portal, special

workshops, the introduction of dual supervision and the encouragement of research student attendance, with opportunities to make presentations, at both internal University and external conferences. The Advance@Dundee internet-based resource portfolio (see above, paragraph 65) is particularly helpful in supporting research students.

70   Students are very positive about the arrangements made for them during their first weeks at the University and about the organisation of 'freshers' week. The range of information made available by the University, as well as the variety of formats offered (including paper and electronic), is particularly good. One student commented that there is no excuse for not knowing things.

Social and recreational environment

71   The DUSA has its own building, which has recently been extensively renovated with support from the University. DUSA provides a good range of facilities which are praised by students. There is also an Institute of Sport and Exercise and a sports union. Students are very positive about the sporting facilities, which they found to be very good value for money.

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

72   The Careers Service provides guidance to student groups and individuals, and liaison with faculties and departments by way of a well established network of academic staff contacts. It organises events and participates in course development within the University's quality assurance procedures, participates significantly in admissions and recruitment visits to the various faculties and is involved in the work of the Access Summer School (see above, paragraph 63). It also assists with the University's approach to PDPs. The University believes that the effectiveness of student employability will be enhanced through the introduction of a number of initiatives that are currently being planned by the Careers Service: a career-planning module which is to be piloted in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences in 2004-05; extended career-planning support for the other faculties; an internship/placement programme; and an on-campus Jobshop, which will also support the implementation of the University's approach to PDPs. This year, careers academic liaison representatives have been appointed in all departments and meet as a group to discuss matters of common concern.

73   The University's policies for programme approval and review address employability in a variety of ways. For example, employability is one of several items highlighted for consideration in curricular design and evaluation. Programme approval and review also requires consultation between the programme team and the Careers Service, and representatives of employers are normally among the external members of the approval and review boards. Departments and programme teams have the implicit responsibility to promote employment through curriculum design, liaison with the Careers Service and, where relevant, through liaison with PSBs and industry. The extent of PSB-accredited provision means that such bodies are a major influence across the University. Graduate first-destination statistics submitted to the Higher Education Statistics Agency show a high overall level of employment, presenting a positive overall picture for the University and its Careers Service.

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

74   The University has a comprehensive set of arrangements for encouraging student engagement in the assurance and enhancement of the quality of learning and teaching. The University involves students effectively, both through formal committee structures at all levels, and through placing importance on informal contact between staff and students; these informal links are a particular strength of the institution. The University recognises a need for greater postgraduate representation on institutional committees, and DUSA and the University are working together to address this. DUSA and the University have developed a valuable partnership approach to enhancing the student learning experience, and there would be benefit in considering how to embed this partnership. High expectations are placed on sabbatical officers and both the University and DUSA could usefully consider how they might work to improve support for DUSA officers.

75   The range and quality of learning opportunities provided for students by the University is very good, in particular the use of IT and VLEs. Staff and students are committed to promoting an inclusive and supportive learning experience. Student support services are, on the whole, very good. The University recognises the need to provide comparable support services to students based on the campus outside Dundee, and is striving to improve matters.

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

76   The University's approach to quality enhancement reflects the nature and structure of the organisation, with actions at institutional and devolved levels. At the institutional level, recent activities have been focused on developing the University's vision for the future, developing the management and support infrastructure, restructuring central student and academic support services, and developing more effective key performance indicators. These significant developments have been complemented and supported by a range of specific initiatives and projects at university, faculty and subject levels.

77   A significant driver for change has been the merger of the University with four other institutions (see above, paragraph 11) each with its own systems and procedures for quality assurance, including validation, monitoring and evaluation. In working towards a common set of procedures and expectations, the University has adopted some aspects of practice from the other institutions and modified its own to meet the needs of the expanded institution. Such developments have necessitated reflection on practice and the evaluation of alternative systems, leading to enhanced procedures and processes. Staff indicate that this has been a positive and constructive experience across the University.

78   The University's enhancement strategy will be embedded in its learning and teaching strategy, rather than published as a separate document. The learning and teaching strategy itself is currently under development. The University's approach to enhancement draws on well-established quality assurance processes that are intended to both assure the maintenance of standards and quality, and to promote enhancement. A number of developments that have led to the enhancement of learning and teaching can be identified across the devolved levels of the University. Many of these have been introduced as a result of feedback received from students, staff or external individuals and bodies.

79   A significant feature of enhancement practice at the University is the partnership which exists between academic staff, members of the support service and the DUSA. This approach is highly likely to engender a sense of ownership in the developments and to ensure the sustainability of initiatives. Staff and students have a positive commitment to work together to achieve improvements in learning and teaching.

Postgraduate provision

80   Postgraduate provision in Scotland is currently subject to a number of national and international initiatives. The University is responding to these agendas strategically and operationally. The very recent establishment of a postgraduate school with two subcommittees (see above, paragraphs 19 and 36), aims to secure strategic oversight of both taught and research programmes, while ensuring that each is given due consideration. Given the increasingly close relationship between taught and research programmes, in part as a result of the national research councils' training requirements within doctoral provision, this seems a logical development from the previously separate management structure within the University.

81   The University has also drawn together existing disparate provision to offer a more comprehensive and integrated Academic Doctoral Development initiative. This was developed in conjunction with the University's support services, including the Careers Service and the Learning Enhancement Unit. It is currently being piloted with students who are funded by research councils, and will be extended over the next few years for all research students. This initiative meets external expectations, and it also has an enhancement dimension, going beyond key skills to offer, for example, language tasters and intercultural relations.

82   Given the rapidly changing external environment, there would be benefit in the University considering the ways in which it will monitor the work of its new Postgraduate School as it seeks to address these external demands.

Virtual learning environment

83   The University identified a case study for the ELIR review which focused on the development of the VLE, MyDundee, and the introduction of central support for faculty-led, blended electronic-learning (a combination of e-learning with conventional delivery). In line with The Vision statement and e-learning strategy, this has been a whole institution development, requiring considerable integration and collaboration across academic, support and technical services. As such, it provided a very useful case study in the context of the current review.

84   At first, the University's work in this area might be regarded as common practice, in that most universities are in the process of establishing, or have recently introduced, VLE capability. However, feedback from both staff and students is highly positive, providing clear indications of the ways in which this development has changed practice and, in turn, enhanced the students' learning experiences. The students are particularly supportive and appear to be driving the development of the VLE to a considerable extent. Staff and students are positive about the training provided to support access to and use of the VLE.

85   The VLE has a capacity for on-line assessment and this is developing rapidly. Recent years have seen a significant development in the use of on-line assessment through Blackboard and QMP for both formative and summative purposes. The IT suite in the Tower Building has been designed to accommodate whole classes of students who can tackle on-line assessment at the same time. Programmes have been quick to take advantage of this University development with significant numbers of individual assessments being undertaken. The University has identified considerable diversity in assessment policy and practice across the faculties, and is considering developing an institution-wide policy and rationale for practice in this area. In doing so, the University should consider the role of on-line assessment as there is a potential danger that the attraction of its efficiency may reduce the range of strategies used and, in turn, reduce the opportunities students have to demonstrate their knowledge and skills.

86   The VLE provides a platform for the development of PDPs using an e-portfolio approach. The introduction of PDP has been, in part at least, a response to the national expectation that all undergraduate students will develop a progress file during their time at university to identify their acquisition and development of a range of key skills. The University is piloting this approach to PDP in a number of departments. In the town planning pilot, PDP is supported by an e-portfolio on the VLE. While students in some disciplines, and those in the early years of most courses, remain to be completely convinced of its value, students in later years testified to the value of the process in their own development and in its likely impact on their future employability. All programmes were expected to consider the introduction of PDP during the programme review cycle, with a view to full implementation at undergraduate level within two to three years.

Modularisation

87   One way in which the University has brought about increased flexibility in its provision has been through modularisation and semesterisation. Programmes have been revised such that they are built from individual modules, which are aligned to the SCQF and normally attract 20 credits at levels 7 and 8 and 30 credits at levels 9 and 10. This has allowed for new combinations of classes within and across departments, thereby introducing elements of inter and multi-disciplinarity. This is being enhanced further through the collaborative working of staff across faculties to introduce new programmes, particularly at master's level. Some students have indicated that flexibility exists within rather than across courses, and the University could consider how the existing procedures that permit student choice might be extended beyond individual courses, following the example of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Developments to date have deliberately avoided what might be referred to as a 'pick and mix' curriculum, and have focused on coherent but flexible pathways that give students a degree of choice within certain parameters. Modularisation has also allowed part-time provision to be aligned more closely with full-time provision, and it has allowed further developments in distance learning and blended learning initiatives.

Widening participation

88   The University seeks to widen access through a number of initiatives, key among them being the Summer School and the ASPIRE programme. These are complemented by more general outreach visits as well as student shadowing, student tutoring (both involving student volunteers) and the Discovering Degrees programmes. The Summer School is discussed earlier in this report (see above, paragraph 63). ASPIRE is a shorter pre-entry programme for prospective students who have applied but just failed to meet the entry requirements; participation is by invitation. Successful completion can compensate for entry shortfall.

National enhancement themes

89   The University has pursued the national enhancement agenda in Scotland through a combination of incremental improvements and targeted initiatives. There is evidence of development in all four of the national enhancement themes; fexible delivery responding to student needs, assessment and employability. Despite the range and volume of activity, the University does not yet appear

to have a coherent strategy for the systematic development and dissemination of good practice in learning and teaching across the institution. The sharing of initiatives and good practice is in the early stages of development with in-house seminars and discussion forums becoming established. In a very postive development, these have been extended to include staff from the University of Abertay Dundee and the University of St Andrews. There would be benefit in the University reflecting on how this activity could be supported centrally so that all staff can become more aware of the enhancement agenda. For example, recently appointed and junior staff were involved in a range of activities in line with the enhancement themes although, they were not aware of the themes themselves and did not see their activities as part of an institutional strategy.

Learning and teaching strategy

90   The University has adopted an evolutionary approach to its enhancement work, implementing a considerable number of small-scale developments in, for example, strategic appointments, reviews of assessment methods and the promotion of wider access. These are essentially year-on-year and/or review-on-review changes which undoubtedly contribute to the general ethos of the University and improve the learning experience of the students. Many are faculty- or department-driven and are responsive to students, staff and/or external feedback. There would be benefit in the University considering how it could embed some of its initiatives more securely across the faculties, particularly outside the main campus, to ensure they continue to be sustained. The University could consider incorporating matters relating to sustainability within its learning and teaching strategy.

91   In practice, the University's learning and teaching strategy supports innovation from the grass roots, in line with the general principle of a devolved management structure where local solutions to institutional developments are encouraged. An institutional framework exists which encourages and supports initiatives, and senior managers have an overview of the ways in which these initiatives are developing. The recently established Learning Enhancement Unit within the Centre for Learning and Teaching is beginning to adopt a coordinating role and should be encouraged and supported in developing this further.

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

92   Recent revisions in quality assurance processes within the University have served to strengthen the emphasis on improvement and enhancement. This is reflected in The Vision statement which sets out the University's key strategic goals. Positive features include the identification of the senior officer who will have the responsibility for driving change, and the inclusion of an indicative timetable for developments and some indication of the factors involved. This provides the basis of a process as well as anticipated and desired outcomes. The Vice Principal (Educational Development) plays a significant role in these plans, providing a vital strategic overview on behalf of the senior management. The inclusion of the deans in the senior management of the University (a recent development) should encourage the flow of information and dissemination of good practice in both directions. Similarly, systems for ensuring that issues raised by, for example, external examiners and students, are collated and considered by university-level committees, have been strengthened.

93   The objectives set out in The Vision statement are reflected in the faculty strategic planning arrangements. The University was able to provide a summary of its assurance and enhancement procedures, indicating initiatives and developments intended to improve the learning experience for students. Some of these reflected concerns specific to a faculty while others indicated common themes across faculties. The faculty learning and teaching plans are comprehensive and include estates, academic provision, academic and support services, staff development and research involvement. Work is underway to realise a number of aspects of these plans.

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

94   For academic staff, promotion in the past has depended heavily on research standing. This is being addressed through the development of a broader set of criteria where excellence in teaching is acknowledged, although promotion above senior lecturer level still depends substantially on research activity. There are a number of examples where the profile of teaching is being raised across the University, including the growing tendency within faculties to appoint associate, or vice deans with

responsibility for learning and teaching. In Life Sciences the post of 'teaching lecturer' has been introduced. Post holders primarily have a teaching remit and it is possible to progress to 'senior teaching lecturer' on the basis of explicit promotion criteria. Generally, holders of these posts teach to first and second-year students (when the programme is more general) with staff involved in discipline-based research teaching in the final two years. Teaching lecturers are still expected to be involved in scholarship and some have developed research interests in teaching and learning practices, driving further developments in this area. This combination should provide an enhanced experience for students as they progress. The University should evaluate this development systematically as it addresses an issue that many universities are facing; to encourage discipline-based research while enhancing the learning experience of the students. The University could also consider how this might be extended across the institution, as appropriate, and beyond the senior lecturer level.

95   The University has induction and probationary periods for new lecturers which include the expectation that such staff will undertake the Postgraduate Certificate of Teaching in Higher Education (PGCHE). Probationers regard the PGCHE as highly relevant, although a small number consider that its focus is theoretical rather than practical. Staff are also supported through the Centre for Learning and Teaching, and by the use of the on-line support provided within the Centre on a range of topics.

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

96   Improvements in teaching and learning build extensively on the University's effective quality assurance policies and practices. While some improvement activities have been externally driven, for example, by the desire for alignment with external reference points, in most instances these have gone beyond compliance and introduced a genuinely 'enhancement-led' dimension. The range, volume and impact of the activities in place are notable.

97   In line with a growing emphasis on the quality of teaching, the University provides strong support for new lecturers undertaking development in learning and teaching strategies during their probationary period. The University is also evolving its arrangements for recognising and rewarding excellent practice in teaching. All of this will strengthen the commitment

to learning and teaching across the University and promote the development of innovative approaches to supporting learning.

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

98   The University's enhancement strategy is developing as an integral part of its learning and teaching strategy, and is embedded in a robust system of quality assurance. There is considerable activity at department, faculty and institutional levels which is responsive to, and anticipates, the changing demands placed on staff and students. It is clear that developments across the University are already improving the day-to-day experiences of staff and students. Activities are also underway across each of the four sector-wide enhancement themes, again partly in response to quality assurance issues as well as new initiatives. While some of the University's enhancement activities are 'top-down', most appeared to be 'bottom-up' and are developed within a framework that is supportive of new ways of working. The dissemination of good practice is a developing area at the University and it should continue to explore ways in which the effectiveness of its dissemination across the faculties can be enhanced.

99   The University's enhancement initiatives are, in the main, collaborative across academic and support staff as well as engaging the students' association. This partnership approach has proven to be effective in driving and managing change and the University will be able to develop and gain from the enthusiasm and energy which is clearly present in its staff and students.

Summary

Background to the University and the ELIR method

100   The University of Dundee (the University) was founded in 1882, as University College, Dundee, becoming part of the University of St Andrews in 1897 and being renamed Queen's College in 1954. The University received its Royal Charter in 1967. The University grew considerably in the 1990s following the merger in 1994 of the Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art as a new faculty of the University and the establishment in 1996 of the Tayside and Fife Colleges of Nursing and Midwifery as a new School of Nursing and Midwifery. In 2001, there was a merger with the Dundee campus of the Northern College to create the Faculty of Education and Social Work.

101   The University is organised into seven faculties: Arts and Social Sciences; Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design; Education and Social Work; Law and Accountancy; Life Sciences; Medicine, Dentistry and Nursing; and Engineering and Physical Sciences.

102   The University's Planning Statement 2002-07 states that its objects are to '…advance and diffuse knowledge, wisdom and understanding by teaching and research and by the example and influence of its corporate life'. The mission statement of the University highlights a '…commitment to excellence in teaching and research, the personal and intellectual development of [its] students and the contribution [the University makes] to the community'.

103   In line with the enhancement-led institutional review (ELIR) method, the University submitted a Reflective Analysis (RA) which set out its strategy for quality enhancement, its approach to the management of quality and standards and its view of the effectiveness of its approach. The RA provided a 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. The University submitted one case study with its RA. The case study detailed the central support for faculty-led, blended electronic-learning and focused on the recent and rapid development of e-learning within the University, in the context of The Vision and its strategy for quality enhancement.

Overview of matters raised by the review

104   The University's strategy for quality enhancement is embedded in a recent planning statement, The Vision: Towards 2007, in which it outlines key strategic goals for each of learning and teaching; research and enterprise; and academic and student support services. At the time of the review, the University was in the process of developing a learning and teaching strategy which is intended to focus The Vision, build on existing approaches to quality, and incorporate an explicit and integrated strategy for enhancement.

105   The particular themes pursued in the review included the management of quality and standards in a devolved University structure; student involvement in shaping the learning and teaching environment; the postgraduate student experience; enhancement of the learning and teaching environment, including the development of a virtual learning environment (VLE); student support services; and development and support strategies for staff in the context of the University's wider enhancement strategy.

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

106   The University's quality assurance procedures are comprehensive and effective. They focus on the enhancement of the student learning experience and encourage academic initiatives. The processes take into account external reference points and are flexible to enable joint programme reviews with professional and statutory bodies. The procedures are supported by a broad range of clear and comprehensive documentation, and the material available on the University's intranet provides excellent guidance to programme teams. The management of postgraduate taught and research provision has recently been restructured resulting in improved quality assurance and reporting procedures which should facilitate the enhancement of the student learning experience. The introduction in September 2003 of a modular, semesterised structure has allowed the University to introduce clear coherent learning pathways for students, many of which are interdisciplinary and cross faculty. The quality assurance arrangements for these programmes are comprehensive. The University should reflect on the quality assurance arrangements for joint honours programmes as the sharing of responsibility by departments has, at times, left staff and students unclear where responsibility for a programme lies.

107 On the basis of these findings, broad confidence can be placed in the soundness of 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

108 It is University policy to place responsibility for the accuracy and appropriateness of the information it publishes with the relevant units; faculties, departments and support services. The University is acting appropriately to ensure 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

109 The University has a comprehensive set of arrangements for encouraging student engagement in the assurance and enhancement of the quality of learning and teaching. The University involves students effectively, both through formal committee structures at all levels, and through placing importance on informal contact between staff and students; these informal links are a particular strength of the institution. The University recognises a need for greater postgraduate representation on institutional committees, and Dundee University Students' Association (DUSA) and the University are working together to address this. DUSA and the University have developed a valuable partnership approach to enhancing the student learning experience, and there would be benefit in considering how to embed this partnership. High expectations are placed on sabbatical officers in discharging their responsibilities and both the University and DUSA could usefully consider how they might work to improve support for DUSA officers.

110 The range and quality of learning opportunities provided for students by the University is very good, in particular, the use of information technology and VLEs. Staff and students are committed to promoting an inclusive and supportive learning experience. Student support services are, on the whole, very good. The University recognises the need to provide comparable support services to students based on the campus outside Dundee, and is striving to improve matters.

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

111 Improvements in teaching and learning build extensively on the University's effective quality assurance policies and practices, and recent revisions in quality assurance processes have strengthened the emphasis on improvement and enhancement. While some improvement activities have been externally driven, for example, by the desire for alignment with external reference points, in most instances these have gone beyond adherence and introduced a genuinely 'enhancement-led' dimension. The range, volume and impact of the enhancement activities in place at the University are notable.

112 In line with a growing emphasis on the quality of teaching, the University provides support for new lecturers undertaking development in learning and teaching strategies during their probationary period. The University is also evolving its arrangements for recognising and rewarding excellent practice in teaching; all of which will strengthen the commitment to learning and teaching across the University and promote the development of innovative approaches to supporting learning.

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

113 The University's enhancement strategy is developing as an integral part of its learning and teaching strategy, and is embedded in a comprehensive system of quality assurance. There is considerable activity at department, faculty and institutional levels which is responsive to, and anticipates, the changing demands placed on staff and students. It is clear that developments across the University are already improving the day-to-day experiences of staff and students. Activities are also underway across each of the four national enhancement themes. Some of these activities relate to matters identified by the University's quality assurance processes, while others are new initiatives. While some of the University's enhancement activities are initiated by the senior managers (or 'top-down'), most appeared to be initiated by staff in departments or faculties (or 'bottom-up') and are developed within a framework that is supportive of new ways of working. The dissemination of good practice is a developing area at the University and it should continue to explore ways in which the effectiveness of its dissemination across the faculties can be

enhanced. The University's enhancement initiatives are, in the main, collaborative across academic and support staff as well as engaging the students' association. This partnership approach has proven to be effective in driving and managing change, and the University will be able to develop further and gain even more from the enthusiasm and energy which is clearly present in its staff and students.