QAA
Scotland

Enhancement-led institutional review

Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh

MARCH 2009

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Introduction

ELIR method and report

1   This is the report of an Enhancement-led institutional review (ELIR) of Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh (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 ELIR method was revised during 2007-08 following extensive consultation with the Scottish higher education sector. Full detail on the method is set out in the *Enhancement-led institutional review handbook: Scotland (second edition) 2008* which is available on QAA's website.

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

Method of review

4   The University submitted a reflective analysis (RA), which provided the focus for the review. The RA was supported by a number of accompanying documents including four case studies which sought to demonstrate the University's approach to the review and enhancement of arrangements for the management and support of collaborative programmes; the use of e-Portfolios; programme redesign in the School of Business, Enterprise and Management; and the development of a Sociology module, as part of the University's widening participation agenda. The ELIR team also received the report of the University's previous ELIR which took place in 2004.

5   The production of the RA was coordinated by a working group, convened by the Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching) and with staff and student members drawn from across the University and from the representative bodies of the University, including Court. Iterations of the draft RA were presented to students, staff and external stakeholders through focus groups and through existing committees including school academic boards, the Educational Policy Committee, the Senate, the Court and the Student Parliament of the Students' Union.

6   The ELIR team visited the University on two occasions: the Part 1 visit took place on 18-19 February 2009 and the Part 2 visit took place in the week commencing 23 March 2009.

7   The ELIR team comprised Dr Alan Davidson; Mr Iain Delworth; Professor Marianne Howarth; Dr Deirdre Lillis; Dr Judith Vincent; and Mr Peter Watson. The review was managed on behalf of QAA by Dr Janice Ross, Assistant Director, QAA Scotland.

Background information about the institution

8   The institution became known as Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh when University title was awarded in 2007. Taught degree awarding powers had been granted in 1992, and research degree awarding powers in 1998.

9	In 2007, the University relocated to a purpose-built campus at Craighall, Musselburgh, just outside the Edinburgh city environs (the RE:Locate project). In the same year, the University adopted a revised organisational structure, with four schools:

- Business, Enterprise and Management

- Drama and Creative Industries

- Health Sciences (incorporating the Institute for International Health and Development)

- Social Sciences, Media and Communication.

10	The University's vision is to be a highly focused institution, with an educational portfolio which includes a range of programmes that reflect an emphasis on primary care, the allied health professions, nursing, hospitality, tourism, creative arts and leisure industries, and associated social sciences.

11	In 2008-09, the student population is approximately 4,250 (full-time equivalent) students.

12	The University works with 22 partner organisations, both within the UK and overseas, to deliver award-bearing programmes and short programmes for academic credit from the University. At the time of the ELIR visits, this involved some 1,310 students (577 in UK; 733 overseas) enrolled on 35 programmes.

Institution's strategy for quality enhancement

13	The University's high level strategy for quality enhancement is set out in its Quality Enhancement of Learning Teaching and Assessment (QELTA) Strategy. The QELTA Strategy has three primary goals: maximising potential through learning; the University as a community of learners; and quality assurance and audit.

Management of the student learning experience

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

14	The University has a relatively small student population, in 2008-09 this comprises approximately 4,250 students (full-time equivalent). The majority of students are female (77 per cent) and undergraduate (77 per cent); 23 per cent of the student population is postgraduate. A relatively high proportion (38 per cent) of the student population is part-time. A significant majority (72 per cent) of the student population is recruited from Scotland, 13.5 per cent from the rest of the UK and 14.5 per cent from the rest of the EU and overseas. Of the overall student population, approximately 10 per cent study on a distance-learning basis and 8 per cent through overseas collaborations.

15	The University generally performs in line with its own benchmarks for recruitment. Of the undergraduate student population, 4.7 per cent have a declared disability and 9 per cent are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Mature students also make up a significant proportion of the campus-based student population. Ninety-five percent of undergraduates are from state schools or colleges, and a significant proportion from socio-economic groups that are traditionally under-represented in higher education. The University considers that this represents the successful outcome of sustained collaboration over the last five years with a range of schools, colleges, voluntary and community agencies in the locality to make higher education accessible and available to a wide constituency, and to promote the diversity of the student population.

16   As at December 2008 some 1,310 students were enrolled on collaborative programmes, with some 577 in UK-based collaborations and 733 in collaboration with overseas partners. The structural arrangements for collaborative provision do not allow for information on the composition of the overall collaborative student population to be held centrally. The relevant schools analyse and interpret information relating to the student population through the annual monitoring process, and specifically through the joint boards of study and the school academic boards.

17   The University plans to expand its student population to 7,500 full-time equivalent by 2020 and expects to achieve this target principally through growth in part-time, postgraduate and overseas student numbers. In this context, the University places particular emphasis on increasing the range of programmes and the number of students enrolled for its awards within its existing collaborative arrangements, both with UK and overseas partners. The Internationalisation Strategy (2007-12) sets out an increased international student recruitment target for 2012 of 30 per cent of students from outside the UK, comprising 10 per cent from within Europe, and 20 per cent from outside Europe.

18   Management information relating to the student population is considered at programme, school and institutional level (see paragraphs 70-71). Central to the operation of this system is the provision of reliable data, and the University has invested in upgrades to its core management information systems in order to enhance the management of information relating to all aspects of the student population.

19   In 2007, the University decided to introduce institution-level monitoring of student data, by programme and student category, from 2008-09. In line with this, the University intends that the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) will now consider institution-level data on applications, admissions, progression, and awards. This data will enable AQSC to form a view of key trends in relation to the composition and progression of the student population, and this analysis will inform University policies and strategies, such as the Student Recruitment Strategy and the Student Retention Strategy. This is a positive development with the potential to provide a useful basis for informing future policy formulation and implementation.

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

Student engagement and feedback

20   The University seeks to promote and support student engagement with their learning through a number of means including: formal and informal feedback from students on their experience; through the operation of its committees; and also through the use of surveys, focus groups and advisory activity, such as the Students' Union Advisory Board (see paragraph 24).

21   All programmes (or groups of programmes) have a Student-Staff Consultative Committee (SSCC) or equivalent forum. SSCC membership normally includes more students than staff, and student members convene the committees. SSCCs normally report to the programme committees (these also include student representation) which, in turn, report to the relevant school academic boards. Recently, the University has extended its formal arrangements to include student representation on school academic boards. At the time of the ELIR visits, this new element was still developing, with some variation in practice between schools.

22   Generally, students are positive about the range of opportunities (both formal and informal) to provide feedback on their learning experience, including through module evaluations, online, and using the virtual learning environment (VLE). Students view these routes as effective, and can identify ways in which change has resulted arising from their feedback. Overall, staff and students consider that course-level representation works well; although students do perceive some variability in practice, for example, in the number of staff who attend SSCCs, which may impact upon the effectiveness of these committees. Students would welcome the

introduction of threshold expectations for SSCCs, programme and school committees (including, for example, training for staff). The University has plans to extend the representation of students on school academic boards, and is also considering the constitution of these committees. The Students' Union would welcome the establishment of a common policy for the way in which student representatives are appointed or elected to school academic boards. The University is encouraged to consider these students' views as it continues to develop its arrangements for student representation.

23   The University has reflected on the inclusivity of its representation arrangements, and recognises that there are some logistical difficulties in operating these processes for postgraduate and part-time students. The University is encouraged to continue to develop these arrangements, through its planned work with the Students' Union, to optimise student representation.

24   At institution-level, students are represented on the principal policy-making committees, including the Educational Policy Committee, Research Degrees Committee, Research Ethics Committee, Equal Opportunities Committee, the Senate and the Court. In addition to these formal structures, the University has relatively recently established the Students' Union Advisory Board, a more informal route for an exchange of ideas between senior University staff and the Students' Union sabbatical officers and staff. The Students' Union Advisory Board is viewed by both senior staff and sabbatical officers as a helpful development, and the Students' Union is positive about this, and other, opportunities for informal communication with senior staff. Additionally, the Students' Union would welcome more formal involvement at a strategic level in relation to services or facilities that impact upon the student experience, and the University is encouraged to consider this.

Student engagement and campus relocation

25   In September 2007, the University realised its longstanding ambition when it relocated to a new, purpose-built site at Craighall (see paragraph 9). The University views the RE:Locate project as having provided the institution with the opportunity to engage in a fundamental review of the student learning environment. University staff are aware that the campus relocation has impacted significantly upon the student learning experience, and that there has been a period of readjustment, with both staff and students 'growing into' the new campus. Staff recognise that students have less ready access to staff than before (now that academic staff are located in a controlled-access area of the campus), and an 'open door' policy is no longer possible. Staff and students are working to develop new ways of interacting outside the teaching timetable, including booking meeting times (and meeting rooms), and making greater use of email and the virtual learning environment for communicating. Students, on the whole, are positive about the new campus experience. Some feel that being on the new campus promotes a greater sense of an identity as a University, and many more are very positive about the learning environment, including the Learning Resource Centre (LRC) and Effective Learning Service (ELS) (see paragraphs 38-40). Overall, many students and staff consider that the new campus is more student-centred than the previous accommodation However, students tend to be less positive about how the relocation to the new campus was managed by the University and, in particular, perceive that the processes of communication and consultation with students were less than ideal. The University has recognised the challenges inherent in the relocation project, and has identified a number of matters for further consideration, including: the potential for communication 'overload'; the need for early communication with students, even if there are future uncertainties; and establishing the extent of concerns among the student body. The University is encouraged to continue to reflect on how most effectively to consult and communicate with the student body, as the new campus continues to become established.

Personal Academic Tutor system

26   The University considers that its Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) system is central to the student support system at the institution. The role of the PATs is to act as the personal interface with the University, providing support for students and referral to other parts of the student support service when necessary. Each student is allocated a PAT at the start of the academic year, and the expectation is that the PAT arranges at least one tutorial per semester with each student. Schools are expected to establish a system for coordinating the PATs, and for providing an effective monitoring and evaluation process of the PAT arrangements in that school.

27   Some students are positive about the support provided by their PAT, including how they also support personal development planning (see paragraphs 33-35). Other students viewed the PAT arrangements as more of a formality, but confirmed that it was good to know their PAT was there as a 'safety net'; others still had not met their PAT or had little contact with them (though in some cases this was not viewed as problematic). Overall, the student experience of the PAT system is variable. The University is encouraged to monitor the implementation of the PAT system, and to identify and disseminate good practice in the system, as appropriate.

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

28   The University promotes the development of graduate attributes, including those relating to employability, in the following principal ways:

- the design and the development of the curriculum to include alignment with the University's Quality Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (QELTA) and generic graduate attributes

- programme validation and review

- the accreditation of many programmes by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs)

- placements and work experience opportunities

- the work of the Employability Co-ordinator

- the support and encouragement offered to students to engage with personal development planning (PDP)

- extra-curricular activities, including volunteering.

Graduate attributes and the design and development of the curriculum

29   The University's aim is to develop its reputation as a distinctive institution offering professional and vocational education. As such, its undergraduate and postgraduate course portfolios are characterised by a strong professional and vocational focus. Many programmes are also accredited by PSRBs. While this focus remains a key feature of taught provision, the Strategic Plan (2007-12) sets out the intention to significantly decrease specialisation at undergraduate level. The rationale for this derives from the University's desire to reduce the potential vulnerability of graduates to fluctuations in the employment market, and to promote interdisciplinary learning and teaching as the basis for inter-professional practice. To achieve this aim, all schools are currently engaged in a curriculum revision exercise, although schools are currently at different stages of the curriculum revision process. At the time of the ELIR visits, only the School of Business, Enterprise and Management (BEAM) had completed the exercise; its revalidated programmes have been operational since the start of 2007-08.

30   The University has relatively recently undertaken a review of graduate attributes. At the time of the ELIR visits, these attributes were being piloted, and the University plans to review the effectiveness of the implementation of the revised graduate attributes during 2008-09. These generic graduate attributes are also reflected in the proposed revisions to the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. Collectively, the graduate attributes represent a range of social and personal attributes which the University seeks to ensure its graduates possess in order to equip them for life and society. The attributes are presented as overarching principles to guide the design of learning outcomes at honours degree level. The University anticipates that, at validation/revalidation, programme teams will demonstrate how the programme's learning outcomes align with these graduate attributes and how they have been interpreted in learning, teaching and assessment.

Graduate employability and the QELTA Strategy

31   The first primary goal of the University's current QELTA Strategy, 'maximising potential through learning', places a strong emphasis on programmes being designed to demonstrate a balance of 'fitness for purpose', employability, sustainability and creativity. Employability is built into the curriculum in a variety of ways, including PSRB accreditation, the involvement of employers in programme review and validation events, the design of specific career-orientated modules, and periods of placement or work-based learning. The formal curriculum is supplemented by a range of other opportunities, including volunteering, offered through the Careers Office and the Students' Union.

32   The schools place a strong emphasis on employability in their programmes' content. In their school operational plans all schools identify the employability of their graduates as a key strength. For example, the School of Health Sciences' plan includes a detailed assessment of the employment market in a variety of healthcare professions, noting the need to design curricula which expand the range of career paths available to graduates. A similar set of considerations informed the wide-ranging revision of the undergraduate programmes offered by the School of Business, Enterprise and Management (BEAM) (see paragraph 29). A common core for all first year students in BEAM was introduced in order to provide students with more flexibility in their eventual choice of specialist named award, and to provide a multi-disciplinary overview to guide such choice.

Support for employability: personal development planning and the role of the Employability Co-ordinator

33   The University has a strong commitment to the place of PDP in the student learning experience. In 2006-07, the University's PDP policy was adopted as a requirement for all programmes with a minimum of 120 credits. Under the terms of the current policy, all students have an entitlement to the development of a PDP portfolio, and the University has committed to providing materials and support to enable students to do so. Materials are available both in paper and electronic form and the policy indicates that support is provided through the PAT system (see paragraphs 26-27). At the time of the ELIR visits, the University was reviewing its PDP policy, in the light of its own experiences, and practice in the higher education sector more generally.

34   The Centre for Academic Practice supports academic staff to embed PDP within the curriculum and also provides support for the broader involvement of the University in sector projects which support the implementation of ePortfolios. The University has accumulated substantial expertise in developing PDP, including ePortfolios, and has a strong track record of implementing PDP in certain subject areas, notably Health.

35   There is evidence of some differentiation in student engagement with PDP. Some students are unaware of their entitlement, while other students recognise they have been encouraged to make use of PDP, but believe that they have not been given support to do so, including lack of feedback from staff. Some students identify that, although PDP is a formal course requirement, it is not regarded as such in practice. These experiences may be linked to uncertainty on the part of some academic staff about the role of the PAT system in supporting PDP. The University recognises that implementation of PDP remains uneven across the institution, and that there is considerable work still to be done in this area. To address this, wider engagement with PDP has been included in the remit of the University's Employability Co-ordinator.

36   At the time of the ELIR visits, the Employability Co-ordinator had been in post for approximately 18 months. Work undertaken has included an extensive audit of employability-related activities within the schools, Student Support Services, the Centre for Academic Practice (CAP) and the Students' Union. This work has identified much good practice at school level, including dedicated careers modules, placements, and formal and informal links with employers. However, the Employment Co-ordinator's progress report also indicates the need for wider dissemination of this practice across the University, and to help address this, the employability section of the CAP website will hold information and resources on existing good practice.

The Students' Union volunteer recognition programme

37   From the start of 2008-09, the Students' Union has had a volunteer recognition programme in place, through which it has identified some 200 volunteering opportunities for students. These cover a wide range of activities, including fundraising, Student Parliament membership, advice services to the student community, and social and environmental engagement. While only some of these are directly linked to employment, for example editorial responsibilities on the student newspaper, all of them provide students with opportunities to acquire and develop a range of transferable skills which have the capacity to complement the generic graduate attributes developed by the University. The volunteer recognition programme makes a positive contribution to the University's promotion of graduate attributes and employability.

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

38   The RE:Locate project has allowed the University to create accommodation for the full range of student support services in a single and highly accessible, location. The LRC is located at the heart of the campus, with a design which promotes a transition from structured learning spaces, through to the social learning spaces and into social space, in doing so meeting the need for a mix of learning modes. Students and staff are very positive about the new technologies embedded in the LRC (including the VLE, virtual classroom and interactive whiteboards) as well as the facility to access the Centre remotely. The LRC is responsive to student feedback, and there are clear examples of the Centre responding to student feedback, including devoting more space to student priorities such as quiet learning.

39   The ELS, which is based within the Centre for Academic Practice, is also located in the LRC, and provides key support and guidance to students seeking to develop their learning skills. Students are appreciative about the range of support activities and resources provided by the ELS, and its location within the LRC.

40   Overall, the RE:Locate project has delivered a new campus that both students and staff are positive about. It has allowed the coming together of previously disparate departments and schools and has created a campus with the potential capacity to be flexible in relation to future pedagogical and technological change. One of the major successes of the RE:Locate project is the development of the new LRC, and there is clear evidence of its significance for supporting and engaging students in their learning.

RE:Locate and Timetabling

41   During the ELIR visits, students identified a number of difficulties with the timetable, including issues related to communications between the University and the student body (see paragraph 25). The University has recognised the ongoing challenges with the timetabling system, and acknowledges that solutions are complex. The University has identified a two-year change process, in order to achieve improvements in the student timetable, with a view to implementing new systems by 2010-11. In the meantime, the University has put in place measures to ensure students have accurate timetable information for the start of 2009-10 .

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

42   The promotion, development and embedding of equality and diversity within the University is formally delegated to the Equal Opportunities Committee (EOC) and the Educational Policy Committee (EPC). The EOC has developed a number of policies in relation to promoting equality and diversity, and the impact of these on learning, teaching and assessment is considered by the EPC. Additionally, the Students' Union has extended the membership of the Student Parliament to include a number of post-holders for under-represented groups. Related policies and activities which support the University's work in promoting equality of opportunity include the Student Retention Strategy (see paragraph 19); Student Services provision (including disability support); and the ELS.

43   The University considers that the move to a new campus has provided the opportunity to design a building with appropriate regard to equality and diversity matters. Students expressed the view that the new campus has greatly improved the University's ability to support all of its students and that the centralised location of student support services and the ELS have significantly improved the accessibility of these services.

44   The 2004 ELIR report identified the University's integrated approach to the support of students with disabilities as good practice. A key element of the support is the post of Disability Adviser, whose remit covers both student support and staff awareness. Part of that remit is to work closely with staff in the ELS to support students with dyslexia and dyspraxia. In addition, at least one member of academic staff within each department undertakes the role of Academic Disabled Student Co-ordinator. This coordinator acts as the first point of contact for students with disabilities and facilitates links to other support staff. In 2008, the University's Disability Service was designated as an Assessment Centre for determining disabled students' needs. This will potentially reduce the time students will have to wait to undertake their assessment, and thus to secure their support requirements.

45   Students are generally positive about the ongoing support for students with disabilities, which they found very helpful, although they did comment that students may need to be proactive in seeking support. Student Services staff have been reviewing disability support and recognise that demand for the services can exceed supply; in response, a number of steps are being taken to enhance provision, including the appointment of an additional (0.5) Disability Adviser. Overall, the University's approach is responsive to student demand and, in general, continues to be a positive feature of student support.

46   Some international students consider they are not integrated fully into the University's community. This may be accentuated by the decision to provide residential accommodation for international students that is separate from the rest of the student accommodation. Some international students expressed the view that there was good support during induction and the beginning of the academic year, but that there is much less support following that. For example, during the ELIR visits, both international students and the Students' Union specifically identified the need for further support and advice for students in relation to plagiarism, and the University is encouraged to pursue this.

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

47   The University emphasised its long-standing commitment to the support and development of staff involved in learning, teaching and assessment, highlighting that this commitment is set out in the QELTA strategy (see paragraphs 89-91), and also emphasising the role of the Centre for Academic Practice (CAP) in its delivery. The University's approach to supporting and developing its staff is based on engagement at school level through the school operational plans, support for staff development provided by CAP and institutional-level monitoring by the Educational Policy Committee.

School engagement

48   All schools identify staff development needs within their operational plans, as well as strategies to support them. In line with the University's aspirations in relation to the Research Assessment Exercise and its broader commitment to encourage staff engagement with research, all plans include a strong focus on research and publication. However, schools also identified other areas including commercialisation training and the development of staff information technology skills to support teaching.

49   Staff are positive about the development support they receive from the schools, particularly in relation to research and publications, and the contribution these make to teaching. It is evident that much staff development takes place within schools and that a variety of formal and informal support systems are in place to support individual colleagues, particularly those seeking to develop their research profile.

The role of the Centre for Academic Practice in supporting staff development

50   School-level provision for staff development is complemented at University level by the work of the Centre for Academic Practice (CAP). CAP works closely with Human Resources, with staff and students across the institution, and with collaborative partners. CAP therefore plays a major part in supporting and developing staff. It provides a range of activities to support academic staff including: the use of the VLE and the virtual classroom in the delivery of taught programmes; a short course in learning, teaching and assessment for new staff; an open workshop programme; and continuing professional development delivered to overseas collaborative partners.

51   CAP seeks to provide a comprehensive and effective service to staff, and this is widely valued. In particular, staff are positive about the support provided for colleagues new to a teaching role, including postgraduate research students, and the willingness of CAP staff to tailor programmes to the needs of individual schools and programmes. Staff especially valued collaboration with CAP in the context of the validation and review of programmes, and programme teams are strongly encouraged to work with CAP to prepare the documentation required.

52   CAP has a web presence, including a 'good practice' website which acts as an electronic forum for the sharing and dissemination of good practice across the institution and with collaborative partners. Staff are aware of the existence of the 'good practice' website as a useful source of information to support them in their teaching; however, this resource is not necessarily widely used, despite the wealth of information and advice it has to offer. Similarly, staff registration on the open workshop programme indicates greater staff participation in research-focused events than in those concerned with teaching and learning.

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

53　The University seeks to ensure parity and consistency of the student learning experience for all students irrespective of their place of study. The principal means to achieve this are the application of the same quality assurance processes for validation, review, external examining and annual monitoring. Additionally in the context of collaborative provision, the approval process includes consideration of the extent to which the partner is able to provide an appropriate learning environment. For this purpose, the validation event is normally undertaken at the partner's premises.

54　Operationally, responsibility for the management of the student learning experience is devolved to partners and the nature of those responsibilities is set out in formal terms in the Memorandum of Agreement. Thus, for example, partners are responsible for putting in place a Personal Academic Tutor system, or equivalent. Similarly, partners are expected to provide support for students with learning disabilities and to provide other forms of academic support such as academic skills development, English language support, and careers advice.

55　The University recognises that there will be qualitative differences between the forms of support for the student learning experience offered by partners and those available within the University. However, the University seeks to support its collaborative partners in a number of ways, with the aim of ensuring that the partner can provide an equivalent, if not identical, level of support for students. In terms of the management of the student experience, the most highly developed forms of support for collaborative partners include:

- the role of the Academic Link Person and the School Office Contact, who provide the key points of contact between the University and the partner institution on all matters relating to the delivery and development of the programme of study

- the role of the joint boards of study, which are chaired by the relevant Academic Link Person and report to the school academic boards

- the role of CAP in providing staff development, both at the University and within the partner institution

- the role of the Quality Enhancement Unit in providing support to partners in understanding the University's quality assurance procedures

- the role of the Collaborations Forum (see paragraph 102)

- advice provided through Student Services and the Effective Learning Service websites.

56　CAP provides ongoing staff development support for UK and overseas collaborative partners, both on an open basis through the Collaborations Forum, and through customised staff development workshops and short courses delivered at the partner's premises. These activities have the potential to be of great value to both collaborative partners and to the University. Currently, the University determines the extent of ongoing and routine staff development support for collaborative partners by the type of collaborative activity, and validated provision is less systematically supported than franchised provision. Some collaborative partners require greater levels of staff development support than others, and there would be benefit in the continuing nature of such support being determined by the capability and experience of the partner institution, in addition to the type of collaborative activity itself.

57　On the whole, there is evidence that, collectively, the arrangements in place to manage the student learning experience in collaborative partner institutions have the capacity to ensure an equivalence of student learning experience comparable with that available to University campus-based students, and that these provide a strong foundation for the development of existing partnerships.

Institution-led monitoring and review of quality and standards

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

58   The University's approach to institution-led monitoring and review is based on it being a self-reflective and self-evaluating institution that seeks to continuously improve its academic quality and services. The University states that it operates within a mature and well-defined framework which is aligned with the Academic Infrastructure within Scotland and the UK. The University also states that the incremental development of proven and well-understood policies and procedures provides the basis for a secure environment for quality assurance and enhancement. The University's main processes are programme validation, annual monitoring and programme review.

59   The Education Policy Committee (EPC) has responsibility, delegated from the Senate, for the maintenance and assurance of academic standards and quality. In practice, EPC formally approves validation, review and monitoring outcomes. The Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC), which reports to EPC, is responsible for ensuring that procedures for programme validation, monitoring and review are carried out correctly.

Validation and review

60   Guidance for staff on validation and review is provided through the Quality Enhancement Unit's website. The University has developed checklists for use by both programme teams and review panels to ensure that all requirements are satisfactorily addressed. The consolidated checklists are used as part of the documentation of the validation/review event and provide an effective record and auditable trail. Programme validation and review are peer-scrutiny processes, involving both internal and external panel members. Validation reports are considered by the University's AQSC, to confirm adherence with University procedures, and are formally approved by the EPC. The guidance provided by the University to programme teams and to validation or review panels is comprehensive and contributes to the effectiveness of the processes.

61   Validation and review processes are well understood by staff. Staff are positive about the University's expectation that all staff will become involved in validation and review, and the inclusion of a less experienced staff member in panels is identified as a valuable form of staff development which also helps to develop a shared understanding across the institution. Staff are confident in the robustness of internal procedures for setting and maintaining academic standards. Staff also identify the very significant numbers of programmes which are accredited by external professional and statutory bodies, which they believe ensures comparability with similar provision elsewhere.

62   It is the University's intention to involve students in validation and review processes as review panel members. At the time of the ELIR visits, ten students had undertaken reviewer training, jointly delivered by the Quality Enhancement Unit, the Students' Union and the Student Participation in Quality Scotland (sparqs) service. These students will participate in reviews from April 2009 onwards. The University should consider the diversity of the student population when selecting students to participate in reviews. The steps taken to include students on review panels are positive, and the University is encouraged to pursue its implementation of student review panel membership.

Annual monitoring

63   Annual monitoring within the schools is a three-tier process comprising a programme report prepared by the programme leader and programme team; a composite report written by the subject head for consideration by the school academic board; and a composite school report written by the dean. Action plans are set at each of three stages within the school and provide an opportunity to report issues for referral to the school academic board or Educational Policy

Committee, as well as for action to be taken at the programme level. The outcomes of the consideration of these reports within schools are reported to the AQSC, and to the EPC.

64   Overall, the annual monitoring undertaken by the schools ia thorough and rigorous. The University has identified variations in the level of detail and approach by the schools, and a new template for school composite reports (including an action plan), has been introduced to address this. As part of the annual monitoring report, a progress report on actions taken in the previous year is provided. The University acknowledges that there are some concerns about the mechanisms and timing for 'closing the loop' on the annual monitoring process, and a review of annual monitoring processes is scheduled to take place in 2010-11.

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

65   The University's approach to including consideration of all students in monitoring and review processes encompasses a number of well-established activities, including: student module evaluation; and Student-Staff Consultative Committee and programme committee representation, all of which contribute to annual monitoring and review processes. Monitoring and review processes require programme teams to provide evidence of student involvement, and to record the actions taken in response to such feedback. Additionally, review panels are required to consider whether there is sufficient evidence of student involvement in the review process.

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

66   The University considers its quality framework to be closely aligned with relevant external reference points, including the Academic Infrastructure, the *Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework*, and the requirements of professional bodies. There is good evidence of the use of external reference points in the programme validation and review processes. During 2006-07, the University reviewed the effectiveness of its validation and review processes, informed by revisions to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, published by QAA. The review involved a rigorous self-evaluation, including benchmarking against other Scottish universities, and internal surveys. The overall outcome was to confirm that the University's validation and review arrangements were robust and fit for purpose. In addition, a five-year rolling programme of review of policies, regulations and procedures is in place, to ensure their continued currency and effectiveness.

67   There is evidence of effective self-evaluation at programme and school levels, and some positive initiatives at an institutional level. However, the workings of the AQSC and EPC meetings suggest that these committees tend to receive and consider information in a procedural manner, rather than evaluating and utilising that information to formulate policy or promote enhancement. For example, evidence from the annual monitoring process demonstrates that, while there is substantial evidence of extensive self-refection at school level through the annual monitoring process, this is not reflected at institutional level in the deliberations of the AQSC.

68   The University's reflective analysis (RA), submitted for the ELIR process, was informative in terms of setting out significant developments within the University, and descriptions of its quality arrangements and key services in support of learning and teaching. However, the balance of emphasis in the RA was towards description and the RA would have benefitted from more explicit reflection and analysis. In this respect, the University may have missed an opportunity to demonstrate fully its capacity for critical self-reflection.

69   The evidence of the ELIR indicates that institution-level reflection and evaluation is not systematically carried out. The University is encouraged to develop its capacity to undertake more systematic reflection and evaluation at the institutional level, drawing on all the information sources available to it.

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

70   The University's monitoring and review processes are designed to encourage reflection on information gathered from a wide range of sources. In annual programme monitoring, pertinent information from the Student Record System is made available to programme teams, including data on student admission, progression and achievement. Data to inform this exercise is used to populate relevant sections and appendices of the annual programme monitoring reports. Annual programme monitoring reports also include commentaries on equality and diversity issues. Overall, programme teams make effective use of management information relating to the student population at the programme level.

71   Annual programme monitoring reports are drawn together in an annual composite report which provides a school-level view of applications, progression, retention and student performance. These reports provide opportunities for schools to report to the University on responses to the needs of individual student groups, such as mature students or students with disabilities. School-level reporting provides a useful opportunity for schools to gain a greater understanding of, and to reflect on, the key features of the student population. For example, the curriculum redesign undertaken by the School of Business, Enterprise and Management in 2007-08 , was informed, in part, by consideration of the needs of specific student groups, such as direct entry students, among others.

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

72   The University states that its regulations, policies and procedures governing the management of academic standards are developed with close regard to the Academic Infrastructure, and that the incremental development of proven and well-understood policies and procedures provides the basis for a secure environment for quality assurance. The processes for setting and maintaining academic standards identified by the University include validation and review, annual monitoring, external examiner reports, and the use professional body recognition as an external reference point. In securing and maintaining academic standards, the University takes cognisance of external activities such as revisions to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*. For example, revisions to the *Code, Section 6: Assessment of students* prompted the University in 2006-07 to review its assessment regulations governing taught undergraduate and postgraduate provision.

Assessment and external examining

73   Ultimate authority for conferring student awards rests with the Senate. The Senate devolves responsibility to the EPC for the development of the assessment policy, and monitoring and reviewing its implementation. The University's Assessment Regulations clearly articulate responsibilities for the conduct and management of the assessment process. The University conducted an impact analysis of the revisions to its regulations made in 2006-07, based upon a statistical analysis of assessment outcomes, an analysis of external examiner reports, and interviews with staff. The impact assessment concluded that the revisions to the regulations had not resulted in any significant or unforeseen impact on student or staff experience. The conduct of the impact assessment constitutes good practice.

74   Assessment strategies are established through the validation process, and any changes between validation and review are approved by the relevant school academic board. The assessment instruments and marking criteria are agreed annually by the programme staff in consultation with the external examiner. External examiners' reports are copied to the relevant dean, and programme teams provide responses to the reports which are approved by the dean of the school. External examiners' reports are further considered through the annual monitoring

process. An annual institutional audit of external examiners' reports is conducted and reported to AQSC. Overall, the procedures for assessment and external examining are secure and effective.

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

75   The University's Quality Enhancement Unit has responsibility for ensuring that pubic information about quality and academic standards, including its quality framework, is accurate and up to date. Following validation, programme specifications are published on the University's public website. The University's website also contains information on: the monitoring and review processes; the results of the University student survey; the outcomes of the annual audit of external examiners' reports; the annual statement on institution-led review to the Scottish Funding Council; and an annual report the action plan arising from the Quality Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Assessment (QELTA) Strategy.

76   The publication of information about quality in relation to collaborative provision is governed by collaborative agreements. The University's Operational Manual for collaborative provision specifies that the University must approve all marketing and publicity materials which utilise its logo. The University exercises effective control over the information published by its partners by requiring that any new material is submitted to the relevant Academic Link Person, for onward approval by the University's marketing department.

77   All new students to the University are provided with a copy of the Student Diary and Handbook, which includes information on the Student Code of Conduct, student regulations on assessment, complaints and appeals, and other key information about studying at the University. The Handbook is also available on the University's website for continuing students, and in this way is also made available to students studying at collaborative organisations.

78   Overall, the University provides appropriate public information on quality and academic standards, and its approach to the management of this information is effective.

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

79   The University considers that it has made significant progress in incorporating enhancement into its annual monitoring and periodic review processes. For example, the design of annual monitoring and review processes requires programme teams to identify how they are engaging with the goals of the QELTA strategy, and the annual programme monitoring template provides opportunities for identifying activities over the year in relation to both QELTA and to the national Enhancement Themes. However, the annual monitoring and review processes place an emphasis on reflecting on activity that has already taken place, and this does not fully promote the identification of action for future enhancement. In some cases, the action plans arising from annual monitoring describe routine or ongoing activities, and do not make clear what the intended outcomes of the actions might be. In promoting enhancement, the University is encouraged to consider the benefit of articulating more clearly the expected enhancements arising from activities identified in the action plans.

80   Good practice and innovation is reported at all three stages of annual monitoring, and the University has developed a website to make available examples of good practice identified through validation, monitoring and review. However, it is not clear how the identified examples of good practice became adopted and embedded within and across schools or how examples of good practice are actively shared between schools. The University is encouraged to consider how to further promote the dissemination of good practice identified through its monitoring and review processes.

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

81   The University currently works with some 22 collaborative partners, both within the UK and overseas, to deliver award-bearing programmes and short programmes for academic credit of the University. A variety of arrangements for collaborative provision operates, including: franchised provision; validated provision; dual and joint awards; and articulation agreements which provide for entry with advanced standing or direct entry to higher levels of the University's awards delivered at the main campus.

82   In 2004-05 the University convened a working group to take forward the recommendations on collaborative provision arising from an internal audit by the (then) Quality Assurance Committee, and from the 2004 ELIR report. The outcome from this was the approval, in 2005, of an institutional policy on collaboration and the production of an Operational Manual for the management of collaborative provision.

83   A key principle of the University's arrangements for collaborative partnerships is that the quality and academic standards of its collaborative awards must be the same as those delivered wholly by the University. The Operational Manual, which was updated in 2008, is a comprehensive document, providing a detailed description of all of the processes for collaborative arrangements from the point of first proposal onwards. The collaborative programmes are subject to all the same quality assurance processes as those based on the University's campus, with the addition of a Joint Board of Studies. The Joint Board is the key forum for liaison between the partner institution and the University. Routine matters are dealt with through the Joint Board of Studies; serious matters, or those requiring involvement at an institutional level are referred to senior University staff and/or senior University committees.

84   The University operates a collaborative partnership with Athens Metropolitan College (AMC) in Greece, and validates a programme in BSc (Hons) Logopaedics. The University has been frank in acknowledging a number of problematic matters in its partnership with AMC, in relation to the delivery of this programme. The programme had been re-validated in 2006-07, following a period during which approval had been withdrawn by the University for a number of reasons, including recurring quality issues. During 2007-08, a number of concerns relating to quality and academic standards were identified by University staff who visited AMC, and were also highlighted in the external examiner's report. These issues included teaching and assessment of some components in Greek rather than English, as had been agreed. At the time of the ELIR visits, the University had put in place an action plan to address these concerns, and implementation of the plan was being monitored by the relevant school academic board, with reporting upwards to AQSC. In addition, it had been agreed that University staff would provide AMC colleagues with support at the subject level, and that intensive staff development would be provided by the Centre for Academic Practice.

85   The University believes that, through its quality assurance arrangements identifying deficiencies in the BSc (Hons) Logopaedics programme, and in taking a number of remedial actions, the effectiveness of its procedures for maintaining quality and academic standards are demonstrated. Senior staff also indicated that the QELTA goal of 'maximising potential through learning' could be used to rationalise higher risk activity in relation to collaborative provision. While the University's quality assurance arrangements identified and addressed concerns, the University should consider developing more pro-active approaches that are likely to anticipate, and enable it to manage, potential future risks.

86   The University's collaborative arrangements for franchised and validated provision involve different processes for setting and moderating assessment. On franchised programmes, cross-moderation of assessments takes place, and a single external examiner is appointed for the programme, or there is discussion between the group of external examiners for the programme. There is also close, and regular, working between University staff and colleagues in partner institutions. For UK-based validated programmes, the nature of the professional engagement and the physical proximity leads to more frequent contact and close working between the University and collaborative partner staff. In validated programmes, it is normal University practice for University staff to moderate a sample of students' work only in the early years of the partnership, typically in the first year. After that, module coordinators in the partner institution communicate directly with the external examiner in setting assessments and marking criteria. In doing so, the University may be placing very heavy reliance upon its external examiners in the assurance of academic standards for its awards. The University should consider reviewing its arrangements for setting and moderating of assessment in validated provision.

87   For the BSc (Hons) Logopaedics programme at AMC, where University staff are involved in the moderation of assessment in the first year of operation of the programme, they are provided with translations of the student work, as elements of assessment are conducted in Greek. The University does not have in place a formal process for the quality assurance of these translations and uses an internal, native Greek speaker from another subject area to verify the translations. The University recognises the difficulty of finding suitably qualified external examiners who are also fluent in both Greek and English.

88   The University also validates two programmes at IEK-AKMI in Greece: the BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy and BA Performing Arts. In the BSc (Hons) Physiotherapy students are taught and assessed in Greek for the first two years, taught in Greek and assessed in English in the third year, and taught and assessed in English in the final year. In the BA Performing Arts, students are taught and assessed in Greek. These arrangements had been agreed at the time of validation largely for considerations of students' future employability. The University's collaborations policy is clear and unambiguous regarding provision in a language other than English, considering it would only do so in exceptional circumstances. The University should review the operation of its overseas validated provision in relation to the requirements of its collaborations policy. It should also review the alignment of this provision with regard to sections 2 and 6 of the *Code of practice*.

Strategic approach to quality enhancement

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

89   The University's strategic approach to quality enhancement is set out in its Quality Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Assessment (QELTA) Strategy. QELTA is a part of the University's quality enhancement framework which comprises: the academic committee structure; published policies, procedures and guidelines; mechanisms established within the four schools; staff development activities through the Centre for Academic Practice (CAP) and Human Resources (HR); the strategic use of benchmark information and other external reference points; programme management arrangements; and central managerial and administrative support.

90   QELTA is structured around three high-level primary goals: 'maximising potential through learning'; the University as a 'community of learners', and 'quality assurance and audit'. A set of action areas is associated with each goal, and these form the structure for action planning, target-setting and review. QELTA was first developed in 2003 and therefore was at an early stage of implementation during the 2004 ELIR. Over the period 2003-08, QELTA's key purposes have been: to promote the development of a quality enhancement culture; and to align two key strategic developments: first, University title, and second, the campus relocation. The University considers that the QELTA Strategy has become embedded as a part of its quality framework; that it has proved sufficiently flexible to incorporate both internal needs and external policy

developments; and that it has promoted integration of both assurance and enhancement of the student learning experience.

91   The University is reviewing the QELTA Strategy, along with all of its institution-level strategies, recognising that there now exists a new baseline following completion of the two major projects, and also learning from the experience of implementing the Strategy. Staff express a preference for continuity, with little change to the QELTA Strategy, while also expressing willingness to learn from the current ELIR.

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

92   The Educational Policy Committee (EPC) has prime responsibility for the development, promotion and monitoring of the QELTA strategy, and key tasks for the period 2003-08 were to embed QELTA in institutional processes including strategic and operational planning; programme validation and review; annual programme monitoring; and staff development and career progression. The EPC considers QELTA targets for each academic year, and these form the basis for implementation of actions and monitoring achievements. The QELTA targets identify a significant number of action points, typically around 40, for each academic year, and these are allocated to support services, committees, and schools as appropriate. A number of the actions are identified for implementation through processes, in particular validation, review and annual monitoring. Actions also include the involvement of collaborative partners where relevant. Action points range from discrete, relatively small scale activities, through to larger, more complex topics which can be carried forward as ongoing activities.

93   All school planning statements include references to the QELTA strategy, including cross-references to annual monitoring. Some school academic boards explicitly consider the institution-level QELTA targets; others address QELTA through specific processes, in particular planning and annual monitoring. The University is aware of the variable extent and nature of explicit linkages to QELTA across and within schools, and plans to address this through its review of QELTA and the work of school academic boards.

94   In its planned review of QELTA, the University should consider the extent of detail in the institution-level targets, and how they are prioritised. For example, students are enthusiastic about the facilities of the new campus, but identify challenges in how the campus is used, in particular timetabling and access to staff (see paragraphs 25; 41). While timetabling featured in QELTA targets for both 2007-08 and 2008-09, the significance for students was not highlighted. The University should consider how it could focus and prioritise enhancement effort and resources, in particular on issues that are priorities for students.

95   The QELTA strategy is explicitly linked to the University's validation and review processes (see paragraphs 60-62); QELTA is cited as an internal reference point, and is included in validation and review checklists. The review document prepared by programme teams incorporates enhancement, first by requiring summaries of responses and changes over the past period, and second, expecting the programme team to highlight any changes it wishes to make to the programme for the future. University staff are clear about how QELTA has been significant in reviews, in particular supporting evaluation and action planning by the programme team. The University's annual monitoring process includes an explicit commentary on action taken to address the QELTA Strategy (see paragraphs 63-64; 79).

96   The University considers that both the Quality Enhancement Unit (QEU) and the Centre for Academic Practice (CAP) play a critical role in implementing the QELTA Strategy. Both services are committed to supporting implementation of the Strategy and actively engage with schools and with collaborative partners, including through systematic linkages to the validation and review processes. The focus and agenda of CAP's activities directly reflect the QELTA Strategy. University staff are appreciative of the support from QEU and CAP, finding them very responsive.

97   The QELTA Strategy includes the goal of the University as a 'community of learners' (see paragraph 90). The University's QELTA strategy does not currently explicitly include students as part of this community. Staff and students express varying interpretations about the extent to which students are included, or whether the community is primarily a staff construct. While some staff consider students to be part of the community, others are less clear. Not all students are conversant with the 'community of learners' concept. Some students, for example, postgraduate research students, identify themselves as part of the academic community with staff. Other students more readily identify with the concept of an online community or network, supported through the facilities provided by the Learning Resource Centre. In its planned review of QELTA, the University is encouraged to consider its conceptualisation of the 'community of learners', and the ways in which this may facilitate wider considerations of student engagement with their learning experience.

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

98   The University identifies the significance of external reference points for QELTA targets. There is explicit alignment between QELTA targets and external reference points, including the national Enhancement Themes and Scottish Funding Council policy. The University considers that past engagement with the Enhancement Themes had been less strategic and coordinated than desirable, and recent actions by CAP and EPC have sought to address this. The Director of CAP has identified a series of recommended actions designed to encourage wider engagement and sharing of information relating to current and future Enhancement Themes, including opportunities presented by the new, theme 'Graduates for the 21st Century'. There is evidence that systematic engagement with the Enhancement Themes is increasing. The University's aim to engage with the Themes in a more strategic and holistic manner is a positive development, and is to be encouraged. In doing this, it should draw on the capabilities of the Centre for Academic Practice, implementing the approach outlined in CAP's recent recommendations.

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

99   The University states that consideration of good practice is embedded in all internal procedures, and that school academic boards have specific roles to progress the sharing of good practice through a range of their activities. The identification of good practice is a required heading within the annual monitoring reports, but there is considerable variation in the ways and extent to which good practice is reported at programme, subject and school levels. (see paragraph 80) The working of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee and Educational Policy Committee indicates that the University recognises this, and it is encouraged to continue to consider how best to manage reporting of good practice within and across schools.

100   The University identifies the key role of the Centre for Academic Practice in promoting good practice, including through explicit support for QELTA implementation, the good practice website, the Good Practice Forum, and the Collaborations Forum. Many staff identify the relocation to a single campus as already having a very significant impact on sharing good practice, and building a staff community of practice, through routine interactions, ease of meeting colleagues, and greater potential for cross-school working.

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

101   The University considers that its management of collaborative provision is an area in which it has made significant progress since its 2004 ELIR. These include development of a collaborations policy and an operational manual for collaborations (see paragraph 82), and introduction of a Collaborations Forum. The University has highlighted application of the QELTA

principles to collaborative provision as: maximising potential through learning by offering learning opportunities in new areas; creating a community of learners by sharing practice with partners; and quality assurance and audit by maintaining quality and standards. The University also identifies its engagement (in 2008) with QAA's Overseas audit of aspects of its franchised provision in India as having been a positive development experience for the University.

102   For much of the University's collaborative provision, in particular its franchised provision, and validated provision with local partners, the University employs an effective combination of quality assurance and enhancement. Academic staff from the University maintain close working links with the partners, through partner visits and joint teaching. Institutional support includes the Centre for Academic Practice engaging directly with partners, and the operation of the Collaborations Forum. Established in 2005, the Collaborations Forum's purpose is to encourage staff from the University and partner institutions to exchange experience and effective practice. The Forum meets at least yearly, and includes thematic discussions on a range of learning and teaching matters. Minutes from the Collaborative Forum are published on dedicated partners' pages on the University's website, as a further means of enhancing information exchange. Collectively, these arrangements make a positive contribution to the enhancement of collaborative provision, and are to be encouraged. In relation to collaborative validated provision with a partner in Greece (see paragraph 84), the University has taken a number of steps to enhance the quality of the provision, including two staff development visits by the Director of CAP, undertaken during 2008-09. Building on good practice in other collaborative arrangements, there would be benefit in the greater involvement of staff from both institutions undertaking a range of joint activities.

103   In considering its future approach to enhancement of collaborations the University should continue to encourage and support interactions between staff from the University, both in schools and from QEU and CAP, and its collaborative partners. It should also consider the balance between quality assurance and quality enhancement, considering context and risks, in doing so, establishing the starting point for enhancement. The University should draw on its own experience in doing this, utilising examples of good practice from within its own collaborative activities.

Conclusion

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

104   Overall, students are positive about the ways in which the University seeks to engage them in their learning, and the range of opportunities they have for providing feedback on their experience. Students view these arrangements as effective, and can identify ways in which they have led to change. The University has recently extended its formal feedback arrangements to include student representation on school academic boards. This is a welcome development and, in embedding these arrangements across the schools, the University is encouraged to consider establishing a common policy for the election of student representatives. At the institutional level, students, through the Students' Union, are represented on a number of key committees, and more informally through a recently-established Students' Union Advisory Board. The University is encouraged to continue to consider the ways in which students' views are sought at a strategic level, on matters which impact upon the student experience.

105   The University's Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) system is considered to be a central element of student support at the institution. The PAT system is a positive approach to supporting students in their learning. Many students find the PAT system helpful, though there is variability in the student experience. The University is encouraged to monitor implementation of PAT, and to identify and disseminate good practice. The University has a well-established policy framework for promoting equality of opportunity and effective learning for all of its students. The University's arrangements for supporting students with disabilities include support by central Student Services, the Effective Learning Service, and academic departments, and these

departments and services link in a number of ways which provide an effective service for students. Students are generally positive about the ongoing support available for students with disabilities, and the University is responsive to student demand.

106   The relocation of the University to a new purpose-built campus has been a significant development in a number of respects. The relocation has necessitated a recognised process of readjustment, for both staff and students, as they establish new ways of working and communicating with each other. Students on the whole are very positive about the new campus, especially the new learning environment and technologies of the Learning Resource Centre, and the highly accessible location of Student Services, including the Effective Learning Service. These facilities and services for students are a strength of the University. The University has recognised a number of challenges inherent in the relocation project, including maintaining effective communications with the student body in relation to key developments. As the campus continues to become established, the University is encouraged to continue to reflect on how to consult and communicate with students most effectively.

107   The University has a strong record of promoting support for graduate employability, both within the curriculum, and through a range of other activities, including the work of Student Support Services and the Centre for Academic Practice. The University is currently undertaking two significant areas of work, in support of student employability: curriculum revision; and the use of identified graduate attributes as a key reference point in programme design, and in planned revisions to the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. In relation to personal development planning, the University has identified a need for a more systematic approach to the dissemination and sharing of good practice across the institution, and is encouraged to pursue its plans. Overall, the University undertakes a wide range of activities designed to promote the development of graduate attributes, including those relating to employability, in all of its students. Many of these activities are effective within the schools, and this effectiveness could be strengthened at the institutional level through more systematic implementation across the institution.

108   Much effective work is currently undertaken at school level to support and develop staff in enhancing the student learning experience. There is a wide range of activity in the areas of research and publications, knowledge transfer and commercialisation, as well as in learning and teaching. Of particular note is the engagement at school level with staff development needs and the support provided, as set out in the school operational plans. The Centre for Academic Practice (CAP) plays a pivotal role, and makes a major contribution to staff development in learning and teaching. The cooperation between schools and CAP is a strength of the University's support for staff development initiatives. There would be benefit in the University considering the ways in which staff can be encouraged to take greater advantage of the generic support for learning and teaching available through CAP's 'good practice' website and its Open Workshop Programme.

109   The University's approach to managing information about its student population is effective at school level, and the recent introduction of institutional- level analysis of management information on the student population will build on these foundations and will provide a useful evidence base for future policy formulation and implementation. The University seeks to ensure parity and consistency of the student learning experience for all of its students, irrespective of their study location. There is clear evidence that, overall, the arrangements in place to manage the student learning experience in collaborative partner institutions are effective and have the capacity to ensure that parity of experience.

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

110   The University's quality assurance processes for monitoring and review are designed to encourage reflection on information gathered from a wide variety of sources, and good use of management information is made by programme staff. The processes also make extensive use of external reference points, including the activity of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies in their engagements with the University. The guidance and support provided to programme teams and panel members is clear and helpful, and processes are widely understood by staff. Annual monitoring by schools is thorough and rigorous. A review of the annual monitoring process is scheduled for 2010-11, which will be an opportunity for the University to address minor areas for improvement of the processes that it has previously identified. The University intends to systematically involve students in review as panel members from 2008-09 onwards, and the University is encouraged to pursue its implementation of student review panel membership. Overall, the University's arrangements for monitoring and review are comprehensive and effective.

111   The University's regulations, policies and procedures which govern the management of academic standards are developed with close regard to the Academic Infrastructure, and other external reference points. This framework for academic standards is well understood by academic staff. The University ensures that the effectiveness of procedures and regulations is reviewed on a regular basis, and that they continue to be aligned with appropriate external reference points. The University's impact assessment of recent revisions to regulations is an example of good practice. On the whole, the University's approach to setting and maintaining academic standards, including the management of assessment, is effective.

112   There is clear evidence of effective self-evaluation at the programme and school level within the University, and some good initiatives at the institutional level. The University is encouraged to continue to develop its capacity to undertake more systematic reflection and evaluation at the institutional level.

113   The University has taken significant steps to harness its monitoring and review processes to enhance its provision. The University is encouraged to continue to consider the balance of emphasis between quality assurance and enhancement in its validation, review and monitoring arrangements, in order to further emphasise the enhancement elements of its action plans, and also to assist in the identification and dissemination of good practice.

114   In relation to collaborative provision, there is evidence of effective management of the quality and academic standards of UK-based validated provision, and franchise partnerships. The University is currently addressing a number of concerns in relation to the delivery of a validated programme at an overseas partner institution. The University should consider developing a more proactive approach to the quality assurance of international validated programmes, which enable it to anticipate and manage potential future risk. The University's arrangements for setting and moderating assessment in collaborative validated programmes devolve significant autonomy to staff at the partner institution. In doing so, the University may be placing very high reliance upon its external examiners in the assurance of the academic standards of these programmes, and its awards. There are a small number of overseas validated programmes where elements of the programme are taught and assessed in a language other than English. The University should review the operation of its overseas validated provision in relation to the requirements of its collaborations policy, and the relevant sections of the *Code of Practice*.

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

115   The University's strategic approach to quality enhancement is set out in its Quality Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Assessment (QELTA) Strategy, and the Strategy is a key part of the University's quality enhancement infrastructure. Staff demonstrate a clear commitment to the broad goals and principles of the current QELTA Strategy, and they value it as a strategic reference point. The University plans to review its QELTA Strategy in 2009, recognising that there is now a new baseline, following the achievement of University title, and relocation to the new campus. In undertaking the review, the University should consider the extent to which students are included within the QELTA concept of a 'community of learners'.

116   The QELTA Strategy sets out three 'primary' or high level goals, and each of these generates a significant number of annual action points. The University should consider the extent of detail within the goals, and actions, and also consider how these should be focused and prioritised. In doing so, it should take into account contextual matters, including those issues that are particularly significant to students.

117   The University is aware of variation in the nature and extent of explicit linkages by schools to QELTA through school level implementation of annual planning and monitoring processes. It also recognises that there is considerable variation in the extent to which schools report and share good practice. The University's plans to address these matters are to be encouraged, and have the potential to further embed an enhancement approach within the University.

118   On the whole, the University employs an appropriate combination of quality assurance and quality enhancement in relation to its collaborative provision, and also employs a range of effective activities to promote enhancement activity in this area. In relation to a validated programme with a partner institution in Greece, the University has relatively recently taken a number of steps to enhance the quality of the provision. The University should consider the potential benefits of greater joint activity between University and partner staff, in doing so drawing on its own good practices within its other collaborative activities.

Overarching confidence statement

119   Based on the overall effective operation of its quality assurance systems and processes, **confidence** can be placed in the University's current and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards, and the quality of the student experience it provides. In respect of the University's collaborative provision, this level of confidence is contingent on the University reviewing its approach to assuring the academic standards and quality of its international validated provision. This review should include the effectiveness of the implementation of existing procedures; the proactive identification and management of risk; and the moderation of assessment.

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