



Enhancement-led institutional review

University of Dundee

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Report on the Enhancement-led institutional review University of Dundee

Introduction

1 This is the report of an 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.

ELIR method and report

2 The ELIR method was revised during 2007-08 following extensive consultation with the Scottish higher education sector. Full details of 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 printed form (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 ELIR team also received the report of the University's previous ELIR which took place in 2004.

5 Development of the RA was managed by an ELIR working group which included senior representatives of all four of the Colleges, Student and Academic Support Services (SASS) and Dundee University Students' Association. Consultation on the RA involved a wide range of staff and students across the University. The RA was considered by the University's Senate on 3 June 2009, with subsequent approval given by the Vice-Principal (Educational Development) and the Senior Management Team.

6 The ELIR team visited the University on two occasions: the Part 1 visit took place on 7 to 8 October 2009, and the Part 2 visit took place in the week beginning 16 November 2009.

7 The ELIR team comprised Ms Kari Arbouin, Professor Malcolm Cook, Ms Helen Crosby, Professor Paddy Maher, Mr Norman McBreen and Professor Simon van Heyningen. The review was managed on behalf of QAA by Ms Stella Heath, Assistant Director, QAA Scotland.

Background information about the institution

8 The University of Dundee became an independent university in 1967 and over the past 15 years it has doubled its student numbers, mainly as a result of mergers with the former Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art in 1994, the former Fife College of Health Studies and Tayside College of Nursing in 1996, and the Dundee Campus of the former Northern College in 2001. In 2008-09 the University had a total of 17,796 registered students and over 3,000 staff. The University has a city centre campus in Dundee, a second campus, focusing on medicine provision, located at Ninewells Hospital in Dundee, and a campus in Kirkcaldy which provides a base for nursing provision. In 2006 the University undertook a programme of academic restructuring to form four colleges comprising 16 schools focused on professional areas or cognate disciplinary fields of study.

Institution's strategy for quality enhancement

9 The University has recently reviewed its Quality Assurance Framework with the aim of strengthening the links between its assurance and enhancement processes. The University identifies enhancement as a key feature of programme review procedures which aim to foster a reflective approach to taught provision. The University also takes the view that significant responsibility for quality and enhancement should be devolved to school and college level.

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

10 In 2008-09 the University had 17,796 students. The overall student population has remained steady in recent years, although the proportion of postgraduate students has increased to the current level of approximately 31 per cent taught and 5 per cent research students. Around two-thirds of the undergraduates are female, and most undergraduates are white and Scottish. Postgraduate students are more mixed in terms of gender and nationality. There is a significant population of part-time and distance-learning students (18 per cent and 20 per cent of the total student population respectively); 12 per cent of the student population are international, originating from 80 different countries.

11 The University has a comprehensive management information system in which matriculation and assessment data are held on the Student Information Technology Services database which is integrated with the University's virtual learning environment (VLE). The University is working to ensure that all staff are able to access the management information system, and is encouraged to progress this (see paragraph 46).

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

12 The University has developed a strong relationship with Dundee University Students' Association (DUSA) which is based on a partnership approach. For example there is a Joint Statement on Student Representation; the Students Matter publication, which provides information to both students and staff about student representation at Dundee; and there is a joint approach to involving students in quality assurance processes and securing student representation on University committees. The University and DUSA work closely together to develop their services in a complementary way. The Library and Learning Centre was developed in consultation with students, and a catering facility within the refurbished facility is run by DUSA. A key benefit of this collaborative approach is that student representation is starting to be better embedded within the student body, with an increase in the numbers of those standing as student representatives within both the University and DUSA.

13 The University has developed an interactive and collaborative approach to student induction through the Personal Learning for University Success (*PLUS@Dundee*) project which was introduced in January 2009. This collaborative initiative brings together the cultural, social and academic aspects of university life through a partnership between the University's support services, academic schools and DUSA. It is designed to help new students engage fully with the challenges of university life and to encourage and support their commitment to successful study (see paragraph 25). Prior to enrolment new students are offered access to the University's virtual learning environment which provides study skills advice and some subject-specific material. Although at a relatively early stage of implementation, it is already clear that this initiative represents good practice.

14 The Academic Achievement Teaching Unit coordinates a number of initiatives designed to encourage engagement and provide support for students throughout their academic careers (see paragraph 27). These initiatives are available to all students and include the provision of pre-entry information; the Just Write and Write Right initiatives, which support the development of academic writing; skills development activities; and support for dissertation and thesis writing. Staff and students gave very positive feedback about this range of support.

15 The University takes active steps to engage students in providing feedback, although it is acknowledged that challenges remain in ensuring the adequate engagement of certain groups, notably distance learners and part-time students. The University obtains feedback in a number of ways including through the use of online surveys, which are supported by the Survey Service within the Library and Learning Centre. The University also participates in the National Student Survey, the outcomes of which indicate that, in general, students are satisfied with the services provided. The University is keen to respond to issues raised through student feedback, for example in response to concerns raised initially through student feedback to the DUSA Executive, the accessibility of pastoral services was improved through the creation, in 2007, of a one-stop shop located within the DUSA building.

16 Overall, the University provides a structured environment which encourages all students to develop to their full potential. The University recognises the importance of maintaining and developing the relationship between students and those delivering teaching and support services, and students and staff commented on the supportive nature of the learning environment.

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

17 The University is aware that some of its degree programmes have higher rates of graduate employment than others, and has introduced a range of developments to support graduate attributes and employability. These developments are coordinated via the University's Employability Strategy and include initiatives such as a graduate skills award; group activities to support enterprise awareness; a one-stop shop for employment placements; and activities to support the acquisition of advanced transferable skills by postgraduate research students and others in research roles. In particular, the Generic Skills Dundee initiative directed towards postgraduate research students is highly regarded and enjoys a high rate of engagement from research students.

18 The University uses personal development planning (PDP) to enhance the student learning experience and support the development of graduate attributes. PDP is used in a variety of ways throughout the University with different schools developing the process to suit the particular needs of their students. Students expressed a range of views about their perceptions of the value of PDP but, overall, it is clear that PDP is being used flexibly and is available to students who wish to use it or who have a particular requirement to use it, such as medical students.

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

19 The University's main city campus has been substantially developed in recent years with new and refurbished learning and teaching space, research laboratories, residential, sports and social facilities and a 'green-heart' at the centre of the campus. Following a review of facilities, the central library building was developed to create a new Library and Learning Centre (LLC). The establishment of the LLC, with the bringing together of related services and the development of synergistic relationships, has led to a successful enhancement to the learning experience of students, particularly, but not exclusively, for those based at the main campus with ready access to the new Centre (see paragraph 27).

20 The development of the city campus has received positive feedback from the University community, and there has been an increase in the use of facilities, notably in the new LLC, with students stating that the developments have created a more accessible and attractive study space. A new LLC strategy is currently being developed to promote the continuous improvement of the services offered to students and staff.

21 The University has developed a range of modern, flexible teaching spaces that promote student and staff engagement in learning and teaching. These and other developments in the learning environment receive positive feedback from students. The University is aware that some of its estate is in need of refurbishment and, in some cases, more radical redevelopment. The University is encouraged to continue to implement its Estate Strategy with particular reference to the Kirkcaldy and Ninewells campuses in partnership with the relevant National Health Service Trusts.

22 The University provides Information and Communications Technology support within the student learning environment, hosting wireless internet throughout the main campus and making PCs widely available in all central facilities. The University's VLE is a key aspect of the learning environment for all students. Staff are encouraged to engage with the VLE, using it as a central repository for course, module and University information, although the extent of this use varies between schools. Students expressed high levels of satisfaction with the VLE which is being developed further to encourage the use of online learning technologies, such as blogs and wikis.

23 Student feedback on the learning opportunities provided by the University is very positive, with the use of online technologies and the provision of high quality learning facilities being emphasised.

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

24 The University is committed to recruiting a diverse student community and providing a positive and high quality experience of higher education for all. Its current Widening Participation Strategy was approved in 2009 and is managed by the Admissions and Student Recruitment Service. This Service offers a wide range of activities including taster days, Access summer schools and a part-time online Access course.

25 All teaching staff are expected to complete an online module in Equality and Diversity in Learning and Teaching to raise their awareness of relevant issues. From 2010, new students will be offered the opportunity to complete a similar module as part of the *PLUS@Dundee* project (see paragraph 13).

26 The Disability Service, its network of officers in schools, and the regional ACCESS Centre with modern facilities for evaluating the needs of individual students, provide support to students across the University. Students provided positive feedback on the work of the Service, indicating that it was thorough and supportive.

27 Oversight of student retention at university level is achieved through the *PLUS@Dundee* coordination group. An extra teaching week has been introduced into the first semester, allowing schools to decide how best to use that time to promote retention and progression. The University is encouraged to continue with this potentially valuable initiative. The Academic Achievement Teaching Unit (see paragraph 14) and the Library and Learning Centre (see paragraph 19) provide help with key skills such as numeracy and literacy. Students commented positively on this provision, and noted that they consider the University provides a supportive environment in which they would know where to go to for help.

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

28 Staff development activities are undertaken at university, college and school level. The Academic Professional Development Unit, within the Educational Development Division of the Library and Learning Centre, supports and organises a wide selection of activities including a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Teaching which is delivered both face-to-face and online; a series of conferences related to learning and teaching; and the coordination of the University's actions relating to the national Enhancement Themes, which have often been the subject of the learning and teaching conferences.

29 College and school responsibility for staff development activity includes mentoring new staff and peer support for teaching as well as interaction with Higher Education Academy (HEA) subject centres. Around 30 per cent of academic staff are fellows of the HEA, and there is a good amount of interaction between schools and the HEA subject centres.

30 All new academic staff not previously qualified elsewhere are required to complete a module of the postgraduate certificate in higher education teaching taught by the Educational Development Division and others, and a number of staff undertake the complete award. Most staff considered the module to have been useful.

31 The University has a number of awards for high quality teaching: the Honorary Graduates' Award for Innovative Teaching, a Senate Award for Excellence in Teaching, and the Chancellor's Award for Lifetime Contributions to Teaching. Staff indicated that they are familiar with the awards and winners are celebrated within the University. Work is also in progress to introduce new, college-specific awards. The variety of awards available is positive, particularly the ability to recognise long-term contributions and their impact on the academic community.

32 The University distinguishes in its academic appointments between those primarily appointed for teaching and those for research or scholarship, although there is some overlap. Most promotions are a matter for the colleges. Contribution to teaching and learning is a criterion for promotion to senior lecturer or professor. It is also possible to be promoted to these grades for teaching and scholarship alone and there is evidence of a number of individuals who have achieved this. Further work is being undertaken to develop the current promotion criteria to ensure they adequately reflect excellence in teaching.

33 The University has a strong research focus and offers students the opportunity to interact with current research through teaching. Students from a wide range of disciplines are encouraged to study in a research-based way, and both undergraduate and postgraduate students were enthusiastic about the links they had experienced between research and teaching.

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

34 The University has only one formal collaborative arrangement involving a validated degree, the BA (Hons) in Animation at Ballyfermot College of Further Education in Ireland. Most of the University's other collaborative activities are either articulation or student exchange arrangements, and the University has plans to expand this area.

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

35 The University outlined the key features of its approach to monitoring and review, including student participation on internal review panels and the inclusion of external subject

specialists in programme review. Annual programme monitoring reports are prepared by directors of programmes and, although each school board ultimately sees the annual programme monitoring form for each of its programmes, there is flexibility for schools to adopt different committee structures and reporting processes (see paragraph 54)

36 Taught postgraduate and all flexible and distance-learning provision is monitored by schools and colleges using the arrangements that apply to undergraduate provision. The University has a Code of Practice for Supervised Postgraduate Research and all schools have established a scheme for monitoring both the progress of research students and the quality of their research supervision. All schools also have thesis monitoring committees which provide an opportunity for the independent assessment of a student's progress and give students a forum to express any difficulties in the student-supervisor relationship.

37 The University's Quality Assurance Framework sets out the manner in which the institution assures the quality and standards of its provision. The Framework is comprehensive and well-managed and provides a good foundation for quality enhancement. The way in which the review processes, in particular, promote a self-reflective culture represents a model of good practice. The Framework was reviewed in 2008, following the restructuring of the University into four colleges. The underlying elements of annual monitoring were not changed in the revised structure, with annual monitoring reports continuing to inform the five-yearly periodic review of programmes which, in turn, continue to inform the school and college learning and teaching strategies.

38 Following the 2008 review there have been a number of enhancements to the Quality Assurance Framework: each college now has a director of quality assurance, or equivalent, one of whose tasks is to coordinate and convene programme reviews; a representative of the Admissions and Student Recruitment Service now acts as a member of the review board, allowing discussion about demand and currency of programmes; and two additional documents, a programme evaluation summary and a programme development plan, have been refined to encourage reflection and enhancement. There are new job descriptions, agreed between the University and Dundee University Students' Association (DUSA), for the DUSA members of the review panel, so that such activity is now formally part of the sabbatical officers' duties.

39 Overall, the University's monitoring and review processes adhere closely to external expectations, in particular the Scottish Funding Council guidelines and the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, published by QAA.

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

40 Student feedback and issues arising in staff-student liaison meetings are considered as part of the annual monitoring arrangements at module and programme level. Students are members of programme review boards and are also interviewed as part of the review process. Training for DUSA sabbatical officers who serve on programme review boards is carried out jointly by the national development service, Student Participation in Quality Scotland (sparqs), and the University. Students described the way in which they had been trained to take part in reviews, and were positive about their experiences of being panel members.

41 It is evident that the views of the student body as a whole are taken into account in the University's monitoring and review arrangements, and students are encouraged to engage with the processes at school, college and university level.

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

42 The University's Quality Assurance Framework allows significant devolution of responsibility to colleges and schools and this has prompted considerable reflection on the

development of quality assurance processes. One example of this is the 2009 review of the BA in Social Work which adopted a project management approach. The success of this experience led to other schools adopting the approach, and an article describing the review process was published in the University 'Highlighter' magazine as an example of good practice. Staff spoke positively about their experience of participating in reviews and identified particular benefits that had arisen for their respective schools. It was highlighted that the review process provides a productive opportunity for reflection and renewal.

43 The University has a Code of Practice for Supervised Postgraduate Research and a Code of Practice for Taught Postgraduate Programmes which are mapped against the *Code of practice* published by QAA. The University Codes are comprehensive documents that define the responsibilities and expectations of students and staff. Postgraduate students were familiar with the University Codes and were aware of them being implemented.

44 In addition to programme reviews carried out according to the University's standard protocol, a 'partnership board' approach to professional body accreditation has been adopted for taught programmes validated by the Royal Town Planning Institute within the School of Environmental and Social Sciences. In place of five-yearly accreditation visits there is now a partnership board which convenes annually to accredit the teaching provision. The board comprises external members from other universities and the Institute. Although this approach is positive in enabling teaching staff to work more closely with the Institute and the profession, there is currently no student representation on the partnership board and, as a further enhancement, the University is encouraged to work with the Institute to engage students in the future.

45 As part of its preparations for ELIR the University mapped QAA's *Code of practice* to its Quality Assurance Framework and other University policies and procedures, which demonstrated that the revised Framework continues to meet sector-wide expectations. Programme approval and review procedures routinely reference subject benchmark statements, as well as the *Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework* in relation to the volume and level of teaching. The Higher Education Academy's Employability Profiles and the United Kingdom (UK) Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning are also used. Overall, there is evidence that the University's approval and review processes make extensive use of external reference points.

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

46 The University has an Information Management Strategy in place which sets out a framework of principles, priorities and actions concerning the management, storage and dissemination of information throughout the institution. The Strategy also seeks to ensure that the University's information resources are reliable and readily accessible to those who need them. The Management Information Working Group was established in 2008 to ensure that school and college needs for management information would be fully recognised and that appropriate reporting mechanisms were put in place. It is clear that extensive analysis of the accessibility of management information has been undertaken and the University is responding in a number of ways, for example by exploring the possibility of developing a simpler, more intuitive system interface. This is likely to be a positive development because some staff have reported difficulty in accessing information from the management information database, although the information is accessible to trained users (see paragraph 11). The Management Information Working Group is monitoring the effectiveness of work in this area.

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

47 The University introduced its Assessment Policy for Taught Provision in 2006 and this was revised in 2008. The Policy requires schools to ensure that appropriate and timely feedback is

provided to students on all their assessed work. The general principles for online assessment are set out in the Online Assessment Policy which has been in place since 2007. Although there is much good practice in relation to assessment and feedback, there is also some variability of practice in relation to the volume of feedback provided to students and also in the time taken to return submitted work. The University monitors student opinion in this area through an analysis of the National Student Survey (NSS) outcomes which demonstrate improved satisfaction ratings between 2007 and 2009.

48 The University pays particular attention to the role of external examiners in the maintenance of academic standards. There is published guidance on external examining and the process is described fully in the Quality Assurance Framework. In addition, many programmes are accredited by professional bodies which typically place a strong emphasis on assessment. The University adheres to the precepts of the sections of QAA's *Code of practice* relating to external examining and assessment of students. External examiner reports are largely positive, with evidence of issues that have been raised being addressed at school, college and university level. In the small number of instances where reports required particular attention, the Academic Secretary asked the deans in the relevant subject areas to address matters of concern, and the outcomes were reported to the Learning and Teaching Committee. The University's management of the external examiner system, including the careful consideration of their reports, constitutes a robust system for safeguarding academic standards across the institution.

The 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

49 The University considers its website to be its primary medium for publishing information. The website provides detailed information about the University's courses and services, and includes the undergraduate and postgraduate prospectuses. Much of the University's information about quality and academic standards is available on open access through the website, although some sections of the University's Quality Assurance Archive, which contains past documentation relating to quality assurance and enhancement of learning and teaching, are password protected. In common with other higher education institutions, the University provides information on NSS results, destinations, admissions and student composition via the Unistats website. In general, the University has an effective approach to providing public information about quality and academic standards.

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

50 A significant aim of the 2008 review of the Quality Assurance Framework was to improve the links between the University's assurance and enhancement processes. The analyses of the outcomes of reviews, which are discussed at the Academic Quality Sub-Committee, Learning and Teaching Committee, and Senate, confirm this aim has been achieved and that the University is able to identify elements of good practice that apply at institutional level.

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

51 The University has only one formal collaborative arrangement involving a validated award, the BA (Hons) in Animation at Ballyfermot College of Further Education in Ireland. The processes for monitoring and reviewing collaborative activity reflect those for all other University provision. The review of the BA Animation programme in 2008 resulted in an action plan being prepared, and the final outcome was approval of the programme for a further five years. It is evident that the University has an effective and robust system in place for monitoring and reviewing its collaborative activity.

Strategic approach to quality enhancement

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

52 The University's strategic approach to enhancement of the student learning experience is embedded in its Learning and Teaching Strategy, which has clear links with the well-established institutional Quality Assurance Framework. One of the aims of the University Learning and Teaching Strategy for 2006 to 2010 is to 'enhance the quality of educational provision continuously, through careful monitoring of provision and standards and through the evaluations of students and staff, learning from the University's own diversity of approaches to learning, teaching, assessment and curriculum development as well as from good practice in other comparable institutions, and maintaining a culture that values high quality learning and teaching and equality of opportunity'. Associated with this aim are clearly articulated objectives and an action plan.

53 The development of the University Learning and Teaching Strategy (ULTS) involved wide consultation with staff and students and its implementation is monitored by the Learning and Teaching Committee, which reports to the Senate, and includes in its membership the heads of learning and teaching from the four colleges. The ULTS is closely aligned with the University's Strategic Framework to 2012. One aim of the Framework is to provide the best student experience and the associated objectives include a specific reference to enhancing the quality and range of teaching through the continuous review, development and, where necessary, curtailment of programmes. There are also commitments to respond to the 2004 ELIR outcomes and to implement the ULTS. The University's Quality Assurance Framework, which was revised in 2008, is also aligned with the Strategic Framework and the ULTS in seeking to support the provision of the best student experience by facilitating a continuing process of enhancing teaching and the learning environment.

54 The ULTS was developed at the same time as the University was beginning to implement its new academic structure of schools and colleges. It was developed with the recognition that the University's strategic approach to learning and teaching should be aligned with the delegated responsibility for learning and teaching strategies and plans at school and college level. The original intention to facilitate alignment through the development by colleges of learning and teaching development plans was changed during the Quality Assurance Framework review to avoid unhelpful duplication between school and college planning processes. Consequently, in 2008-09, college learning and teaching development plans were replaced by college learning and teaching strategies (CLTSs), and responsibility for planning was devolved to schools, which were required to produce school learning and teaching development plans (SLTDPs). This was intended to simplify reporting and integrate annual and periodic review of programmes with strategy and planning at school, college and university levels. There was a suggested structure for CLTSs and SLTDPs but, in the spirit of devolved responsibility, schools and colleges had flexibility to concentrate, within the range of the University's overall strategic aims, on those areas which were of most importance to them. Similarly, devolution had allowed colleges to develop committee and management structures for enhancement of learning and teaching, again within certain limits, that were most appropriate to their needs and allowed schools to identify and concentrate on those parts of the ULTS that were most specific to their disciplines (see paragraph 35).

55 The implementation of the new planning process was aided by a round of meetings in May 2009 in which an advisory group, led by the Vice-Principal, Educational Development, met representatives of each college when the draft CLTSs and SLTDPs were reviewed and major themes and issues arising from them were identified. The Learning and Teaching Committee received a report of the reviews and their outcomes through the Vice-Principal's Annual Commentary on Learning and Teaching 2009. The Annual Commentary confirmed that all colleges and schools had completed strategies and plans respectively. The Commentary also

indicated that, while variable, the strategies and plans had in general fulfilled a number of functions including taking account of the relevant contexts; identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; drawing on the monitoring and review process, in the case of school plans; and incorporating action plans. The commentary also identified a number of areas where school and college objectives may require action at university level in order to be effective. These included support for technology-enhanced learning; better access to management information; help with marketing and international recruitment; difficulties in balancing teaching and research activity; pastoral support for international and graduate students; retention issues on professionally accredited programmes; and the need to share good practice in strategic planning.

56 At the time of the current ELIR, it was too early to reach a firm view of the full effectiveness of the revised procedures, given that there has been one recently completed cycle, and the new process was still bedding in. However, there were positive indications of progress, for example, the formulation of plans, while time consuming, had been regarded as a generally helpful mechanism for including a range of staff in the process of reflecting on activity and setting schools' development agendas. In some cases this had revealed areas of interdisciplinarity that could be exploited. It had also enabled the identification of a range of significant areas for action and provided colleges with an overarching summary of key issues. The process could be expected to mature and provide additional enhancement benefits in further iterations of the planning cycle when the revision of existing plans should be less onerous than their original formulation. Overall, the University has been successful in ensuring the participation of all schools and colleges in the new and ambitious process of strategic and planning alignment. The careful monitoring and helpful support provided by the college-based review meetings, and the reflective and comprehensive Vice-Principal's Annual Commentary, are particularly positive features.

57 The University's current Learning and Teaching Strategy is due to be reviewed and updated in 2010 and it is intended that the review should take account of the outcomes of the current ELIR and reflect the new school and college planning arrangements. In a very recent development a Strategic Review, initiated by the incoming Principal, was being formulated at the time of the current ELIR visit. One aim of the Strategic Review would be to define, calibrate and support excellence in teaching, and develop the current criteria against which it could be evaluated and rewarded. Despite the early stages of thinking about the Strategic Review, it is very likely that there will be linkages with the Learning and Teaching Strategy. Given the importance of strengthening links with the new planning processes and the University's desire to refresh its enhancement agenda, the University is encouraged to proceed with its planned review of the ULTS, while recognising that the Strategy will also need to take account of the wider Strategic Review.

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

58 The Vice-Principal's Annual Commentary on Learning and Teaching 2009 reviewed the implementation of the ULTS action plan and concluded that the majority of institutional actions had been initiated. In relation to targets specifically associated with the enhancement aim of the ULTS, there had been significant progress in a number of areas including a review of student representation; participation in student surveys; changes to policy and practice in quality assurance; engagement with the national Enhancement Themes; introduction and review of the Assessment Policy for Taught Provision; the introduction of new teaching awards; and reviews of the Centre for Learning and Teaching (2006) and the Library and Learning Centre (2007).

59 The 2008 review of the University's Quality Assurance Framework and the subsequent stronger interlinking of assurance and enhancement processes clearly demonstrate achievement of the ULTS objective relating to engagement with the Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework. The University considers its programme review method to be one of its primary enhancement

instruments. There are examples of reflective, evaluative, inclusive and well-managed review processes leading to a range of enhancements in programme design, delivery and management, and which link to the school learning and teaching development plans.

60 The University's strategic approach in restructuring into schools and colleges against a background of an already modularised curriculum was expected to facilitate greater cooperation and reconfiguration of programmes. This process has been slower than hoped for and the school/college balance is still evolving. Nonetheless, it is evident that bringing together previously separate areas of activity has promoted renewed interest in innovation in learning and teaching and sharing good practice. In some cases, it has facilitated interdisciplinarity or provided 'unusual' connections that have fostered creativity and distinctiveness. These interactions have been facilitated by bringing together staff to reflect on current, and possible future, programmes and to produce SLTDPs and CLTSs, a process that has also helped to disseminate good practice. Further opportunities to share experience and reflect on practice have been provided through the University's series of ELIR workshops (see paragraph 66). There is also evidence that the new college structures have provided additional opportunities to promote quality enhancement. The college heads of learning and teaching play important representational and networking roles across the University, and specific colleges have adopted innovative approaches to sharing good practice, for example, in the College of Art, Science and Engineering there is a Learning and Teaching Retreat, and there are meetings prior to the College's Learning and Teaching Committee consisting of short presentations on learning and teaching-related matters. These approaches are themselves considered to be good practice.

61 The University has made significant advances in its promotion of quality enhancement since the previous ELIR through the development and implementation of the ULTS and of the revised Quality Assurance Framework, with particular reference to the strong enhancement focus of programme review.

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

62 At university level a range of external reference points is used, including specific benchmarking against other UK universities. A range of external reference points is used at school and college level in supporting enhancement, including external examiner reports; professional, statutory and regulatory body engagement; student surveys allowing comparisons at national and international levels; involvement in the national Enhancement Themes; external representation in, and benchmarking of, programme reviews; sharing comparative data with other institutions; and engagement with the Higher Education Academy and other external bodies. The development of the SLTDPs and CLTSs is informed by external reference points.

63 The University participates actively in the national Enhancement Themes and there are University representatives on a number of the Enhancement Theme Steering Committees. The University has indicated that links between teaching activity and significant national projects, such as the Enhancement Themes, can be challenging to manage and that, in a devolved culture, involvement relies on good communication and encouragement. The Educational Development Directorate (EDD) leads and coordinates the University's engagement with the Enhancement Themes across the institution. There is substantial evidence that this leadership is effective, for example through the development of an annual institutional Quality Enhancement Conference which focuses on significant developments at national, sectoral and institutional level; and through EDD participation in national Enhancement Theme working groups. Through SLTDP guidance notes, schools are prompted about activities such as benchmarking and engagement with the Enhancement Themes, and Enhancement Theme funding is directed towards school projects.

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

64 The 2004 ELIR report identified that the dissemination of good practice was a developing area and encouraged the University to explore ways of enhancing this. The University has identified this as a continuing challenge, noting reluctance on the part of individual staff and schools to identify and self-nominate examples of good practice. However, there are a number of ways in which the effective dissemination of good practice has been enhanced. The programme review process encourages reflection and enhancement through the production of a programme evaluation summary and a programme development plan. Good practice in programme review is also disseminated by a number of mechanisms including colleagues acting as external panel members; through discussion at the University Academic Quality Sub-Committee; and through the wider dissemination of the Annual Institutional Statement on Internal Subject Review.

65 The University magazine 'Highlighter' is a joint publication of the Educational Development and Quality Assurance Directorates and is produced four times a year. It was introduced in 2008 as a method of communicating issues and agendas in teaching quality enhancement and educational development. The content of each edition has a general theme, such as employability, and includes articles on a range of topics, for example an introduction to staff and their departments; information on new and continuing initiatives; innovative practices in other institutions; recognition of teaching excellence; and information on the national Enhancement Themes. Many staff identified it as a valuable information source and it is clearly an effective vehicle for the dissemination of good practice, both internally and externally.

66 As part of the University's preparations for ELIR, a number of institutional workshops were held to discuss key issues in relation to the Reflective Analysis. Feedback indicated that as well as providing an excellent opportunity to disseminate information to staff and students about ELIR, staff had also found the workshops provided valuable opportunities for networking and sharing information and good practice (see paragraph 60). It is positive that the University's preparations for ELIR, and notably the ELIR workshops, have themselves been a vehicle for enhancement.

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

67 In 2007 the University formed an Internationalisation Strategy Steering Group and it developed an Internationalisation Action Plan which has as an objective the development and maintenance of key international collaborations. An example of one such collaboration is with Tianjin University in China in the area of Biomedical Engineering. This appears to be a well-planned strategic partnership which is enhancing internationalisation through, for example, staff and student exchanges. The University intends that, in the future, this and other similar collaborations will provide research linkage opportunities. The University has ensured that the risks associated with these types of collaborations are minimised by careful targeting of partner institutions, the development of link coordinator positions, regular contact with the partner organisation, and maintaining an effective quality framework.

Conclusion

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

68 The University provides comprehensive learning support which is accessible and well-understood by students and staff. In particular, students highlight the use of online technologies and the provision of other high quality learning facilities including new teaching spaces. Overall, students are positive about their experience indicating that the University provides a supportive environment in which they are encouraged to develop to their full potential.

69 The University has a well-developed relationship with Dundee University Students' Association and, through this partnership, takes a joint approach to involving students in quality assurance processes and securing student representation on University committees. The University is also working with the Students' Association to embed student representation across the institution.

70 The University's main campus has undergone significant development in recent years and has received positive feedback from staff and students. In particular, the establishment of the new Library and Learning Centre has supported the enhancement of the student learning experience. The University has also developed a range of modern, flexible teaching spaces which receive positive feedback from students. The University is encouraged to continue to implement its Estate Strategy with particular reference to the Kirkcaldy and Ninewells campuses in partnership with the relevant National Health Service Trusts.

71 A wide range of staff development activities relating to learning and teaching is provided, including a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Teaching. The University's focus on learning and teaching is emphasised further through a number of opportunities for recognising and rewarding staff.

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

72 The University has effective and systematic processes in place to assure quality and secure academic standards, notably through its annual programme monitoring and periodic review processes which include extensive use of external reference points. The monitoring and review processes sit within the University's Quality Assurance Framework which is comprehensive and well-managed. The way in which the review processes, in particular, promote a self-reflective culture represents a model of good practice, and the Framework as a whole provides a good foundation for quality enhancement.

73 Although the University currently has only one formal collaborative arrangement involving a validated award, it is evident that an effective and robust system is in place for monitoring and reviewing this activity.

74 The University is aware that some staff have reported difficulty in accessing information from the management information system, although the information is accessible to trained users. The University is responding in a number of ways, and is encouraged to continue to address this matter.

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

75 The University has made significant advances in its promotion and embedding of quality enhancement since the previous ELIR through the development and implementation of the University Learning and Teaching Strategy for 2006 to 2010 and the revision of the University's Quality Assurance Framework. Implementation of the revised Framework has emphasised stronger interlinkages of assurance and enhancement processes, and these are particularly notable in programme review. The formation, through academic restructuring, of colleges and schools and their involvement in the recently established production of college learning and teaching strategies and school learning and teaching development plans, are showing encouraging signs of the alignment of strategic planning at different institutional levels. There are also signs of synergistic activity within and between units that should lead to further enhancement. These trends should be strengthened both by a further round of planning activities and through the anticipated emphasis on excellence in teaching and scholarship which is likely to arise through the University's upcoming strategic review. It is very likely that there will be links between the strategic review and the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy. While

recognising this, the University is encouraged to proceed with its review of the Strategy, given the recognised importance of strengthening links between learning and teaching and the new planning processes.

76 The 2004 ELIR report encouraged the University to explore ways of enhancing the dissemination of good practice and there is evidence at all levels of improvement in the way in which good practice is disseminated across the University. A notable example of an effective dissemination vehicle is the University magazine 'Highlighter', which is identified by many staff as a valuable information source and is an effective tool for disseminating good practice both internally and externally. It is also positive that the University's preparations for ELIR, and notably the ELIR workshops, have themselves been a vehicle for enhancement.

77 The University participates actively in the national Enhancement Themes and there are University representatives on a number of the Enhancement Theme Steering Committees. Schools are prompted, through the planning process, to address elements of the Academic Infrastructure, such as subject benchmark statements and other external initiatives including the national Enhancement Themes.

78 The University currently has only one formal collaborative arrangement involving a validated degree, although it does engage in a range of other collaborative activities which are predominantly articulation or student exchange arrangements. The University has plans to expand its international collaborative activities with the aim of enhancing the student learning experience and has developed an Internationalisation Action Plan to support the effective planning for the future management of such activity.

Overarching confidence judgement

79 The findings of the ELIR indicate that there can be **confidence** in the University's current, and likely future, management of the academic standards of its awards and the quality of the student learning experience it provides.

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