



Enhancement-led Institutional Review

Handbook

May 2012

Third edition

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Preface

Introduction

This is the third edition of the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) Handbook. It sets out the review method that will be applied to Scottish higher education institutions in the period 2012-16.

ELIR 3 builds on the previous iterations of the review method which has been running in Scotland since 2003. ELIR is a distinctive approach to institutional review, developed to address the particular context of the Scottish higher education sector. It also has points of tangency with review methods operating in other parts of the UK.

ELIR 3 has been developed by QAA Scotland with the support of an ELIR Steering Committee comprising members drawn from a variety of constituencies within the Scottish higher education sector including students, student participation in quality scotland (sparqs), Universities Scotland, the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), and a number of institutions.

The adjustments in the method have been based on regular monitoring and evaluation of ELIR. Specific proposals have been shared and explored with the Universities Quality Working Group, which is managed by SFC, with the Universities Scotland Teaching Quality Forum and with the Scottish institutions and reviewer community. QAA Scotland is grateful to all of these individuals and groups for their time and willing engagement.

Key developments from ELIR 2

The adjustments in the ELIR method for the third cycle are, collectively, intended to provide a sharper focus on enhancement within the individual reviews. This is the clear intention behind the proposal to provide ELIR teams with an advance information set, which should enable enquiries relating to quality assurance and the management of academic standards to be addressed earlier in the process than has been the case in the previous cycles. In turn, this will free up time during the review visits for exploration of institutional approaches to enhancing the student learning experience.

There are changes to the reporting styles. Two reports will be produced for each review: a short Outcome Report which is intended to be accessible to a wide audience, and a more detailed Technical Report which is primarily aimed at colleagues within the institution.

The Technical Report will facilitate the production of Thematic Reports, drawing on common themes from several institutions which will inform enhancement work within the sector.

There is more of an enhancement-orientated approach to the follow-up of ELIR. Institutions will continue to produce Follow-up Reports one year after the publication of the Outcome and Technical Reports. In addition, there will be a follow-up event at which institutions will share the approaches they have taken to addressing the outcomes from ELIR.

An established focus on student engagement is a distinguishing feature of the Scottish enhancement-led approach. In ELIR 3 there will be greater emphasis placed on student engagement during the annual discussions between QAA Scotland officers and each institution.

Quality Enhancement Framework

In addition to these areas of development, there are many elements of ELIR that remain consistent, including its place as one part of the overarching Quality Enhancement Framework in Scotland:

- the Enhancement Themes
- institution-led quality review
- the engagement of students in quality management
- public information
- Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR).

Operational Guidance

This Handbook will be accompanied by Operational Guidance to support institutions' and reviewers' participation with the method. The Guidance will be produced by QAA Scotland and made available from the QAA website (www.qaa.ac.uk).

Section 1: The enhancement-led approach

Defining enhancement

1 The Scottish sector has defined enhancement as **taking deliberate steps to bring about improvement in the effectiveness of the learning experiences of students.**

2 ELIR has a focus on the institution's strategic approach to enhancement, which will be implemented at multiple levels within the institution. The resulting enhancement may involve continuous improvement and/or more significant step-changes in policy and practice.

Enhancement includes assurance through self-evaluation

3 In order to take deliberate steps, it is expected that the institution will have a clear strategic vision of the enhancement it is seeking to bring about. It is also expected that the institution will evaluate its current strengths and areas for development. In doing so, the institution may make use of a framework of questions:

- Where are we now?
- Where do we want to be in the future?
- How are we going to get there?
- How will we know when we get there?

4 The approach the institution takes to self-evaluation will form a significant focus in ELIR. This is because considerable confidence can be derived from an institution that has systematic arrangements in place for evaluating its strengths and identifying and addressing potential risks to quality and academic standards. In an enhancement-led approach institutions also identify ways in which the student learning experience could be improved, whether or not threshold quality is at risk.

5 The institution prepares a specific evaluative document for ELIR: the Reflective Analysis (and this is covered in more detail in Section 2), but institutions also undertake evaluative activity on an ongoing basis, and careful attention will be paid to the range and overall effectiveness of those evaluative activities.

External reference points

6 As part of identifying its strategic approach to enhancement and evaluating its current policy and practice, the institution is expected to make use of a variety of external reference points. Some of these reference points will be common to all Scottish institutions, such as the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Some reference points will be UK-wide, such as the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code), and others will be international, such as those developed through the Bologna Process. It is important that institutions identify the external reference points that are relevant to their strategic vision and student population.

7 While institutions have flexibility to identify the suite of reference points they will use, there are a number of specific references that Scottish higher education institutions are expected to address. These include the Quality Code, subject

benchmark statements and the higher education qualifications framework which, in Scotland, is established within the SCQF. Institutions will also have regard to Part 1 of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (see Appendix 4), and to the UK Professional Standards Framework for Teaching and Supporting Learning. The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) publishes guidance on its expectations for the Scottish higher education institutions. In a number of cases, institutional adherence with that guidance is explored during ELIR, for example the extent to which the institution meets the SFC guidance on institution-led quality review.

8 One of the elements of the Quality Enhancement Framework is the programme of Enhancement Themes and related activities coordinated under the auspices of the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC). It is expected that the Scottish higher education institutions will engage with that work, and the precise way in which they engage is for each institution to determine. The Enhancement Themes have produced outcomes that are potentially valuable reference points and which have impacted on policy and practice across the sector. While there is no expectation that an institution should comply with specific outcomes, certain practices have become common across the sector. It is appropriate for an ELIR team to explore with an institution why it has, or has not, chosen to adopt a particular approach. This will be carried out in the context of ELIR seeking to support diversity across the sector.

9 It is recognised that higher education institutions operate in a dynamic environment in which the possible suite of reference points is evolving. The ELIR team will consider the extent to which the institution has systematic arrangements for:

- identifying the reference points that are most relevant to the institution's strategic direction and student population
- identifying changes in the Quality Code, SFC guidance and related key reference points and updating institutional policy and practice accordingly
- using these reference points in its evaluation and management of institutional policy and practice.

10 The ELIR team will recognise appropriate lead times for the institution to undertake this activity. Information on current expectations in the sector is available from QAA Scotland officers.

Enhancement, innovation and risk

11 Fundamental to enhancement is the management of change. Enhancement involves doing new things or doing established things in different ways. Both of these involve the need to manage a process of change from current to future activity. A key element for institutions will be the ability to identify and manage the risks associated with the change process. ELIR supports institutions adopting an ambitious approach to their enhancement activity and promotes managed risk taking.

Student engagement

12 Student engagement is one of the five elements of the Quality Enhancement Framework and the effectiveness of student engagement is a significant focus of ELIR. Since the inception of the enhancement-led approach, it has become increasingly

common practice that students should be partners in the formulation, operation and evaluation of the institution's approach to enhancement. The ELIR team will explore the extent and effectiveness of that partnership. The ELIR team will also be interested in the approach institutions take to engaging students in their own learning.

Internationalisation

13 ELIR has a strong international dimension, perhaps most visibly through the inclusion of an international reviewer on each team. The national Enhancement Themes and related activity draw extensively on international practice. Institutions increasingly make use of international reference points and networks in formulating and evaluating their strategies, policies and practices. The ELIR team will explore the institution's approach to internationalisation. The ELIR team will be interested in a number of dimensions of internationalisation including student recruitment, the student experience, and the curriculum.

Comparability of ELIR in the UK and internationally

14 Although the ELIR method is particular to the Scottish sector, it provides opportunities for comparability between methods and institutions. Comparability with the rest of the UK is provided through a range of mechanisms including:

- the use of UK-wide reference points
- reviewers being drawn from across the UK
- broad comparability of ELIR outcomes with those in review methods in other parts of the UK.

15 International comparability is provided through:

- institutions' use of international reference points in formulating and evaluating strategy and practice
- drawing on international practice through the national Enhancement Themes
- the inclusion of an international reviewer on each ELIR team.

Section 2: Nature and scope of ELIR

16 The ELIR method seeks to:

- be open and transparent, forward-looking and conducted in a collaborative spirit
- support the sector to secure academic standards and enhance the student learning experience
- relate to the wider Quality Enhancement Framework in Scotland.

Scope of ELIR

17 The scope of ELIR covers all of the institution's credit-bearing provision. ELIR is concerned with the learning experience of all the students on credit-bearing provision irrespective of their level, mode or location of study. This will include: undergraduate and postgraduate students; taught and research students; full-time and part-time students, including those involved in credit-bearing continuing professional development; and campus-based, work-based, and distance-learning students. It will include students entering the institution through the full variety of routes and pathways. It will include home, European and international students, irrespective of funding.

18 ELIR will consider how effectively the institution manages the equality and diversity of its student population. This will include the arrangements for identifying and responding to student needs.

19 The scope of ELIR will include collaborative provision wherever and however it is delivered, such as through a further education college or employer organisation. In cases where the delivering institution is itself a Scottish higher education institution, the delivering institution will receive an ELIR review in its own right. Responsibility for the academic standards of awards offered through such arrangements remains unambiguously with the awarding institution. Where provision is made in conjunction with an overseas partner, ELIR will relate to the arrangements in place in the Scottish institution for managing the quality of the student learning experience and the academic standards of the awards. Scottish institutions will continue to participate in overseas audits and related activity organised by QAA from time to time. The outcomes from that work will form useful reference points in ELIR.

20 ELIR has a focus on the student learning experience. This comprises two main aspects: the learning opportunities the institution provides for its students; and extent to which the students are engaged with the management of quality and are, therefore, able to act in partnership with the institution in its effective management of the student learning experience.

Section 3: ELIR method

21 The ELIR method has a number of interrelated elements.

Annual discussions

22 Annual discussions facilitate the review process and provide an important opportunity for information sharing between QAA Scotland and the institution. These annual meetings are held between a QAA Scotland officer and a small group of staff and student representatives from the institution. Following the meeting, the QAA officer writes to the institution to confirm any action points and outline the key topics explored.

23 For the third ELIR cycle, there will be an increased emphasis on student involvement in the annual discussions, including ensuring student representatives are present for the meetings and that the agendas include matters that are relevant to student interests.

24 Other than the year-on response to ELIR, the institution will not be expected to prepare bespoke material for the annual discussions. It is anticipated that the meetings will be supported by a set of existing material, such as:

- the definitive internal document(s) describing the approach taken to institution-led quality review, including information about the forward schedule of reviews
- the institution-led quality review reports for the previous 12 months
- any internal documents analysing the outcomes from institution-led quality reviews or evaluating the review method used
- information relating to changes in the institution's approach to quality enhancement
- information relating to developments in student engagement at the institution
- the most recent annual institutional report to the Scottish Funding Council relating to institution-led quality reviews.

Reflective analysis

25 The institution submits a Reflective Analysis (RA) in advance of the ELIR visit. The RA should act as a demonstration of the institution's capacity for self-reflection and critical evaluation. The evaluation will be evidence-based and the RA should include the evidence, or clear reference to the evidence, on which the analysis is based. It is expected that students will be involved in preparing the RA, and the institution is expected to identify the nature and impact of that involvement within the text of the RA itself.

26 The institution is asked to identify in the RA what it hopes to achieve from the ELIR. In particular, the institution has the opportunity to identify aspects of its strategic intentions (or their implementation) on which it would particularly welcome the ELIR team's view. The final selection of themes to be explored in the ELIR visits will continue to be determined by the ELIR team on the basis of the material submitted by the institution and the discussions held during the visits themselves.

27 More information on the content of the RA is set out in Annex 2.

Case studies

28 Case studies support the information base for the review. They provide the institution with an opportunity to identify self-contained examples that reflect the particular characteristics of the institution's strategic approach to enhancement. Institutions are also able to use the case study format to present the ELIR team with information on an area of current priority.

29 In order for case studies to be of value in ELIR, they should illustrate the institution's approach to self-evaluation and/or the effectiveness of its management of change. They are not intended to be simple illustrations of good practice. Case studies need not identify good practice at all but might illustrate the institution's approach to addressing a challenging area.

30 Institutions should submit one or more case study with their RA. There should be explicit links between the RA and the case studies. For each case study, the institution should indicate: why it was selected for inclusion with the RA and which aspect of the institution's strategic approach the case study material is intended to illustrate.

31 The case study should be reflective and evidence-based, addressing:

- what the institution was seeking to achieve
- why the institution selected the management approach it adopted
- how the institution has (or will) evaluate its approach, including an indication of the impact of the activity or intended future impact
- how the institution intends to adjust its approach in the future.

Advance information set

32 The institution submits an advance information set to accompany the RA. This provides the ELIR team with direct access to information about the institution's key processes for securing academic standards and assuring quality at an earlier stage in the review than was the case in other iterations of the ELIR method. This permits the ELIR team to identify specific areas for exploration with the institution and, consequently, allows more time during the review visits for discussions relating to quality enhancement.

33 The precise suite of information to be included in the set will be agreed between QAA Scotland and the institution. It is expected that the set will comprise the following kinds of information:

- a mapping of the institution's policies and processes to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)
- full reports of the institution-led quality reviews for the preceding 12 month period
- SFC annual returns for the period since the previous ELIR
- a sample of annual monitoring reports
- an analysis of the external examiner comments for the preceding 12 months
- an analysis of student feedback for the preceding 12 months.

Part 1 visit

34 The Part 1 visit involves the ELIR team meeting for a day to consider matters arising from the reviewers' reading of the RA, the case studies and the advance information set, followed by a two-day visit to the institution.

35 The programme of activities for the first morning at the institution will be determined by the institution. There is flexibility for the institution to devise a programme that it considers best illustrates its approach to enhancing quality and securing academic standards. There will be liaison between the QAA Scotland officer managing the review and the institution in advance to share information about the plans for the Part 1 visit. This will involve the institution sharing their programme and plans for the first morning. The QAA officer will provide an indication of the likely themes to be explored during the Part 1 visit, together with any particular queries the ELIR team has identified based on their early reading of the RA and related material.

36 The remainder of the Part 1 visit will involve a series of meetings to explore agendas developed by the ELIR team. There will be a working meeting with the main contact from the institution (who is likely to be the senior member of staff with responsibility for leading the institution's preparations for ELIR) to explore early questions arising from the ELIR team's reading of the RA, case studies and the advance information set. There will be one meeting with a group of subject-level staff and another with a group of student representatives.

37 At the end of the Part 1 visit, the ELIR team will share with the institution the themes to be explored during the Part 2 visit, together with a draft programme for that visit and a note of any further documentation the team would like to access.

Part 2 visit

38 The Part 2 visit will last between three and five days, depending on the themes emerging from the RA and the Part 1 visit. During the visit, the ELIR team will consider a range of the institution's documentation and hold meetings with staff and students. Although the ELIR team may pursue matters relating to assurance or the management of academic standards, the Part 2 visit is intended to be enhancement-led. The visit will include opportunities for the ELIR team and the main contact from the institution to clarify matters relating to the progress of the review.

39 On the final day of the visit, the ELIR team will meet with the QAA officer managing the review to agree its conclusions and to compile an outline of the draft Outcome Report.

40 Reviewers are expected to draft structured notes using a QAA template for the Technical Report as the Part 2 visit progresses. These notes will be shared with the QAA officer at the end of the visit to underpin discussions on the final day.

41 One week after the Part 2 visit, the QAA officer will send a 'key themes' letter to the institution summarising the conclusions of the ELIR. Further detail on reporting arrangements are given in Section 4.

Follow-up activity

42 The institution is asked to submit a Follow-up Report and the arrangements for this are set out in Section 4.

43 The institution will engage in a follow-up event to present the actions they have taken to address the outcomes of their ELIR report, including indicating how the areas of positive practice have developed. A small institutional team (which should comprise staff and student representatives) will present to one or more other institutions which were reviewed at a similar point in the cycle. It is intended that this will promote the enhancement-orientated nature of ELIR by contributing to the dissemination of information about the ELIR outcomes and sharing institutional practice.

44 The precise format for the event will be determined by QAA Scotland based on the number of institutions being reviewed at that point in the cycle. Participation by institutions will be a formal element of the method, so that over the course of the cycle all institutions will have engaged in one such event.

Section 4: Judgements and reporting

45 Each Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) will deliver an overarching judgement on the current and likely future effectiveness of the institution's arrangements for managing academic standards and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience.

46 There will be three levels of effectiveness identified in the overarching judgement which will indicate that the institution's arrangements are: effective; have limited effectiveness; or are not effective. It will be possible for the overarching judgement to be disaggregated so that, for example, one aspect may be identified as having limited effectiveness while the other aspects are identified as effective. For example, the management of academic standards may be effective but the effectiveness of the management of the student learning experience may be limited. Equally, the current management may be effective but the effectiveness of future management may be limited.

Definitions of judgement categories

47 The categories of judgement are defined as follows.

48 **Effectiveness** indicates there is evidence that overall:

- the institution has rigorous arrangements, in line with sector expectations, for assuring and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience and for securing the academic standards of its awards, and is using these arrangements systematically, and
- the institution has the capacity and commitment to identify and address situations that have the potential to threaten the academic standards of its awards or the quality of the student learning experience, and
- the institution is meeting sector expectations in having a clearly identified, strategic approach to enhancing the student learning experience which it is implementing systematically, drawing on student views and external reference points to inform strategy formulation, implementation and evaluation.

49 **Limited effectiveness** indicates there is evidence that:

- the institution's arrangements for managing the quality of the student learning experience and/or securing the academic standards of its awards are limited currently or are likely to become limited in the future, such that the quality of the student learning experience and/or the academic standards would be placed at risk if the institution did not take action, and/or
- the institution's capacity and/or commitment to identify and address potential risks to the quality of the student learning experience or the academic standards of its awards is limited, or is likely to become limited in the future. The limitation may relate to the identification of weaknesses in the institution's procedures or in the implementation of the procedures, and/or
- the institution is not meeting the full range of sector expectations in relation to having a clearly identified strategic approach to enhancing the student learning experience, and/or the arrangements in place for implementing its strategic approach are not fully systematic such that the institution's capacity

or commitment to enhance the quality of the student learning experience is limited.

50 **Not effective** indicates there is evidence that:

- there are serious and fundamental weaknesses in the institution's arrangements for managing the quality of the student learning experience and/or securing the academic standards of its awards such that quality and/or academic standards are at immediate risk, and/or
- the institution does not have the capacity and/or the commitment to identify and address risks to the quality of the student learning experience or the academic standards of its awards. There are likely to be serious absences or flaws in the institution's procedures themselves and/or serious weaknesses in their implementation, and/or
- the institution does not meet sector expectations in relation to having a clearly identified strategic approach to enhancing the student learning experience, and/or does not have systematic arrangements in place for implementing its strategic approach such that the institution does not have the capacity or commitment to enhance the quality of the student learning experience.

Priority action

51 Where there is an overarching judgement in the effective category, it will be possible for the ELIR team to identify priority action which it considers the institution should take. This will be identified alongside the judgement itself. In previous iterations of ELIR, this was known as adding a 'caveat' to the confidence judgement.

52 All ELIR reports will identify positive practice and areas for development; these will be set out in the reports, but will not be combined with the wording of the overarching judgement.

Nature of ELIR judgements

53 The overarching judgement is formed on the basis of the ELIR team:

- reading and considering the institution's Reflective Analysis, the advance information set and any related material
- discussing topics with staff and students during the review visits
- analysing and reflecting on those documents and discussions.

54 The judgements are based on the balance of probability, supported by the sample of information available to the ELIR team at the time of the review.

Report formats

55 There will be four main types of report produced in the ELIR 3 cycle: Outcome Reports; Technical Reports; Follow-up Reports; and Thematic Reports. All of these will be published on the QAA website.

Outcome Reports

56 Outcome Reports will be the main reports in the ELIR method. They will be concise, and aimed at an informed lay audience such as lay members of governing bodies and student representatives.

57 Outcome Reports:

- set out the overarching judgement
- set out the main findings of the review in terms of positive practice and areas for development
- provide outline information about the nature of the institution.

Technical Reports

58 A Technical Report will be produced for each ELIR to set out the evidence underpinning the Outcome Report. Technical Reports will be written in the style of structured notes, rather than narrative prose. They will primarily be written for the institution that was reviewed, and they may also be of interest to quality assurance contacts at other institutions and key agencies within the sector.

59 Technical Reports:

- are structured around the main areas of enquiry within ELIR
- include a statement of the ELIR team's view in relation to each area, accompanied by an indication of the main supporting evidence for that view
- highlight positive practice and areas in which the institution is being asked to take action; in doing so there will be explicit acknowledgement of action the institution has identified for itself
- set out the overarching judgement.

60 The headings to be covered by Technical Reports are set out in Annex 1.

Follow-up Reports

61 One year after publication of the ELIR Outcome and Technical Reports, the institution will submit a Follow-up Report. This report will be written by the institution (with the involvement of student representatives) and agreed for web publication by QAA Scotland.

62 Follow-up Reports will indicate the actions taken (or in progress) by the institution to address the outcomes of the ELIR, and will require endorsement by the institution's governing body.

Thematic Reports

63 QAA Scotland will continue to draw on the content of individual ELIR reports to inform thematic or sector-wide reports. In particular, QAA will produce Thematic Reports annually to focus on specific topics within ELIR, such as management of assessment or approaches to sharing good practice. This is intended to promote the

sharing of information that is obtained through the ELIR process, and to promote links with the national Enhancement Themes.

Complaints

64 The institution can make use of the QAA complaints and appeals procedures. Details of the current arrangements are available on the QAA website (www.qaa.ac.uk).

Section 5: ELIR team

65 ELIR teams comprise six peer reviewers: a student reviewer; three UK-based senior academic reviewers; an international reviewer; and a coordinating reviewer. Of the three senior academic reviewers, one is drawn from the Scottish higher education sector and one from outside Scotland.

66 While some reviewers may have specific responsibilities for gathering and analysing information during the review, the conclusions are evidence-based and represent the collective view of the ELIR team.

67 All reviewers have responsibility for:

- reading and analysing the Reflective Analysis (RA) and the advance information set provided by the institution
- participating in the review visits
- reaching conclusions on the basis of the information gathered during the review
- contributing to and commenting on the review reports.

68 The international reviewer brings an added external perspective to the ELIR team's consideration of the institution's approach to quality assurance and the enhancement of the student learning experience. International reviewers are expected to have a range of knowledge and experience that will benefit the institution, the ELIR process, and the wider Scottish higher education sector, including comparative international knowledge and experience. International reviewers are senior peers, selected from appropriate higher education institutions or related agencies. Their selection for inclusion in an ELIR team for the review of any particular institution is informed by their expertise and experience, with the aim of achieving a suitable match to the strategic approach and enhancement priorities of the institution.

69 The student reviewer brings a learner perspective to the review. Their responsibilities during the review are likely to focus on lines of enquiry relating to the institution's management of the student learning experience, including the learner journey and student engagement.

70 The coordinating reviewer has responsibility for maintaining an overview of the review progress and its outcomes. They have particular responsibility for proactively managing the review and the ELIR team. This will involve:

- liaising with QAA Scotland throughout the review and with the institution during the review visits
- facilitating the ELIR team's identification and evaluation of the key themes to be explored during the review
- ensuring alignment between the key themes and the Technical Report headings (these are set out in Annex 1)
- ensuring the ELIR team has access to appropriate documentation during the visits
- maintaining a record of the ELIR team's decisions, and its discussions with staff and students

- supporting the ELIR team in identifying the evidence on which its views and conclusions are based.

71 The coordinating reviewer maintains an ongoing record of the ELIR team's emerging conclusions and supporting evidence. At the end of the review visit, the coordinating reviewer uses the ongoing record to support the ELIR team and the QAA officer in preparing an outline draft of the Outcome Report and identifying the team views and main evidence to be included in the Technical Report.

72 The other reviewers have responsibility for preparing draft text to cover particular sections of the Technical Report. All reviewers have responsibility for supporting the QAA officer in editing the review reports, providing additional information and evidence as necessary.

73 Each ELIR is managed by a senior QAA officer who will provide advice to the institution on its preparations for the review and will support the ELIR team in its initial analysis of documentation. The QAA officer will accompany the ELIR team during the Part 1 visit and for elements of the Part 2 visit, providing advice as appropriate. The QAA officer, supported by the coordinating reviewer, is responsible for testing that the ELIR team's findings are based on adequate and identifiable evidence, and for editing the ELIR reports.

Selection criteria for reviewers

74 All members of ELIR teams are selected by QAA Scotland according to the criteria identified in Annex 3 and having regard to the timetable for reviews in Scotland.

75 QAA Scotland seeks student reviewer nominations from student representative bodies and Scottish higher education institutions. Student reviewers are eligible to undertake reviews for as long as they continue to meet the selection criteria, in particular provided it is not more than three years since they undertook study in a Scottish higher education institution.

76 International reviewers are drawn from outside the UK. Scottish higher education institutions are invited to nominate one or more international reviewers to the reviewer pool. In addition, QAA Scotland seeks nominations through its contact with institutions and relevant organisations in other countries.

77 QAA Scotland considers nominations from all UK higher education institutions for senior academic reviewers and coordinating reviewers. Every Scottish higher education institution is encouraged to nominate at least one candidate for each role. Individuals who are existing reviewers or review secretaries in other QAA review methods may be eligible to become ELIR reviewers and can apply using an abbreviated form.

Allocating reviewers to teams

78 QAA Scotland allocates reviewers to ELIR teams. Reviewers are not allocated to the ELIR team for their own institution. Institutions have an opportunity to comment on the composition of their ELIR team, and every effort is made to select an appropriate team for the institution being reviewed.

ELIR reviewer training

79 All ELIR reviewers, including those trained in other QAA review methods, are required to undertake ELIR training. Reviewers are also expected to participate in continuing development and reviewer events as appropriate. Training and continuing development may be targeted at specific groups of reviewers, such as students or coordinating reviewers. ELIR training and/or development activities are provided regularly in order to enhance reviewers' effectiveness by minimising the gap between training and reviews taking place.

80 Prior to attending full ELIR training, student reviewers are required to attend a one-day briefing event. This is intended to help student reviewers to contextualise ELIR in the wider Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework and introduce them to key reviewing skills.

81 To support international reviewers, 'orientation' materials are provided in advance of training. These include: information on the characteristics of the Scottish higher education sector, the Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework, and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code). In addition, there is an induction meeting for international reviewers with QAA Scotland officers immediately prior to ELIR training.

Continuing development and reviewer events

82 In order to share experience of the ELIR method and to maintain the knowledge of experienced reviewers, annual development events will be held. All reviewers who have participated in an ELIR team during the cycle, together with those allocated to teams for the following year, will be invited to attend.

Section 6: Monitoring and evaluation

Purpose and principles of monitoring and evaluation

83 QAA Scotland will monitor the operation of ELIR on an ongoing basis, and will undertake regular evaluation of the effectiveness of the method. This is intended to:

- support QAA Scotland in delivering the ELIR methodology effectively
- inform the ongoing development of ELIR in the wider context of the Quality Enhancement Framework.

84 Monitoring and evaluation activity should:

- be regular and timely
- ensure higher education institutions and reviewers can provide structured feedback
- support the training and continuing development of reviewers
- encourage active reflection and dialogue on the design and development of ELIR to ensure it continues to be fit for purpose.

Monitoring

85 Monitoring activities will encompass all stages of the ELIR process as follows:

- annual discussions
- preparation for ELIR
- both review visits
- judgement and reporting arrangements
- Follow-up Reports and related activities.

86 All those engaging in ELIR will be involved in the monitoring process: the institution, reviewers, and the QAA officer responsible for managing the review. Feedback will be sought through monitoring questionnaires, which all participants in ELIR will be asked to complete. The questionnaires will seek comment on operational aspects of the review as well as broader questions relating to the effectiveness of the method. Information gathered through the monitoring questionnaires will be accumulated to inform the wider process of evaluation.

Evaluation

87 Building on the monitoring activity, QAA Scotland will evaluate the effectiveness of ELIR in achieving its objectives as an enhancement-led review method within the wider perspective of the Quality Enhancement Framework. Reviewers and institutions will be invited to participate in evaluation events. These events will provide an opportunity for reviewers and institutions to reflect on the effectiveness of the ELIR approach, and to share information on the outcomes of QAA Scotland's monitoring and evaluation.

88 The findings from monitoring and evaluation activity will help to inform the training and development provided for ELIR reviewers to ensure that they are

effectively prepared and supported in undertaking their roles. It will also inform the future development of the Quality Enhancement Framework, including the Enhancement Themes and related activity.

Annexes

- Annex 1 - Content of the Technical Report
- Annex 2 - Content of the Reflective Analysis
- Annex 3 - Criteria for the selection of reviewers
- Annex 4 - European standards and guidelines

Annex 1 - Content of the Technical Report

The Technical Report will set out the overarching judgement and should:

- place a demonstrable emphasis on enhancement
- provide a sense of the student learning experience
- include all groups of students, irrespective of mode, level or location of study, as appropriate to the demography of the student body and the institution's strategic intentions
- indicate the ELIR team's view in relation to each report section.

Technical Reports will be structured around the following headings.

1 Institutional context and strategic framework

- i Key features of the institution's context and mission
- ii Strategic approach to enhancing learning and teaching
- iii Effectiveness of the approach to implementing strategies.

2 Enhancing the student learning experience

- i Composition and key trends in the student population, including typical routes into and through the institution
- ii Supporting equality and diversity in the student population
- iii Engaging and supporting students in their learning
- iv Approaches to promoting the development of graduate attributes including employability
- v Effectiveness of the approach to enhancing the student learning experience.

3 Enhancement in learning and teaching

- i Approaches to identifying and sharing good practice
- ii Impact of the national Enhancement Themes and related activity
- iii Engaging and supporting staff
- iv Effectiveness of the approach to promoting good practice in learning and teaching.

4 Academic standards

- i Approach to setting, maintaining and reviewing academic standards
- ii Management of assessment
- iii Use of external reference points in managing academic standards
- iv Effectiveness of the arrangements for securing academic standards.

5 Self-evaluation and management of information

- i Key features of the institution's approach
- ii Commentary on the advance information set
- iii Use of external reference points in self-evaluation
- iv Management of public information

v Effectiveness of the approach to self-evaluation and management of information.

6 Collaborative activity

- i Key features of the institution's strategic approach
- ii Securing academic standards of collaborative provision
- iii Enhancing the student learning experience on collaborative programmes
- iv Effectiveness of the approach to managing collaborative activity.

Annex 2 - Content of the Reflective Analysis

1 The Reflective Analysis (RA) should be structured around the headings of the Technical Report. Its preparation should involve staff and students. The RA should identify:

- how it was prepared and approved
- how students were involved and the impact of that student engagement
- brief background information about the size and scale of the institution
- the institution's overarching strategic priorities
- what the institution is seeking to achieve from its engagement with the ELIR, and whether there are any particular matters it would wish the ELIR team to consider.

2 In the context of each of the Technical Report headings, the RA should indicate:

- what is distinctive and what is typical about the institution
- what the key areas of strength and challenge are
- how the institution has evaluated its policy and practice
- how the institution intends to build on good practice or address areas for development.

3 Institutions are strongly encouraged to be open and honest in the RA.

4 Where there are areas for development, the ELIR team will explore:

- the extent to which quality or academic standards are potentially at risk
- the extent to which the institution has identified the issue(s) in advance
- the plan for addressing the issue, including any wider development work planned and the anticipated timeframe for its completion
- the likelihood of the issue recurring in future.

5 Where there are areas of strength, the ELIR team will explore:

- the extent to which all of the institution's students can benefit
- the arrangements for disseminating the good practice
- the plans for evaluating and promoting the good practice.

Annex 3 - Criteria for the selection of reviewers

Introduction

1 All ELIR reviewers are selected by QAA Scotland on the basis of the criteria set out below. Nominations are welcomed from institutions across the UK, with every Scottish institution encouraged to make at least one nomination to each reviewer role. Student reviewers may be nominated by Scottish student representative bodies, or Scottish higher education institutions. International reviewers are selected on the basis of nominations from the Scottish higher education institutions and from QAA Scotland's contacts with relevant institutions and agencies in other countries.

2 The qualities required in ELIR reviewers are detailed below. Student reviewers are required to have current or recent direct experience of study at a Scottish higher education institution. International reviewers are recruited for the wider external perspective they bring to ELIR. Coordinating reviewers and UK-based senior academic reviewers are drawn from across the UK. Every attempt is made to ensure that the total pool of ELIR reviewers reflects the characteristics of the Scottish higher education sector, including taking account of equality and diversity strands.

3 All reviewers are given training by QAA Scotland to ensure that they are familiar with the ELIR method and the wider enhancement-led approach.

Qualities required in all reviewers

4 All reviewers are expected to demonstrate the ability to:

- understand a range of perspectives
- relate to a range of individuals including students and senior managers
- lead discussions about strategic and operational approaches to the management of quality and academic standards in general, and the enhancement of the student learning experience in particular
- assimilate a large amount of disparate information and analyse it to form reliable, evidence-based conclusions
- communicate clearly, orally and in writing
- work productively and cooperatively in small teams delivering to tight deadlines
- maintain the confidentiality of sensitive matters.

Additional qualities required in UK-based senior academic reviewers

5 In addition to the qualities required in all reviewers, UK-based senior academic reviewers are expected to demonstrate:

- current or recent (within three years) wide experience of academic management at the institutional level in the UK, preferably relating to quality assurance and enhancement of the student learning experience
- personal and professional credibility with staff, including senior managers, heads of institutions, and staff currently engaged in learning and teaching

- knowledge and understanding of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) and other key reference points, including the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework and the Enhancement Themes
- awareness of the distinctive features of the Scottish higher education system in general, and the enhancement-led approach in particular (ELIR training will seek to emphasise this but some initial awareness is highly desirable).

Additional qualities required in international reviewers

6 In addition to the qualities required in all reviewers, international reviewers are expected to demonstrate a number of the following attributes:

- current or recent (within three years) wide experience of academic management at the institutional level outside the UK, preferably relating to quality assurance and enhancement of the student learning experience
- current or recent (within three years) experience of external review of higher education institutions outside the UK, either as a panel member or through senior involvement with a quality assurance or enhancement organisation
- peer-acknowledged expertise in the development of good practice in learning and teaching, and the wider student experience (it will be highly desirable to have such recognition at an international level)
- knowledge and experience of practice in a minimum of one country in addition to the UK (it will be highly desirable to have wide-ranging international comparative knowledge and experience)
- an awareness of the distinctive features of the Scottish higher education system in general, and the enhancement-led approach in particular (ELIR training will emphasise this but some initial awareness is highly desirable).

Additional qualities required in student reviewers

7 QAA Scotland actively encourages applications from students from all backgrounds and with experience of a wide variety of study modes and levels.

8 In addition to the qualities required in all reviewers, student reviewers are expected to demonstrate:

- current or recent (within three years) experience of study at a Scottish higher education institution, equivalent to a minimum of one year's full-time education
- experience of representing students' interests at institutional (including faculty or school) level
- general awareness of the diversity of the Scottish higher education sector beyond their 'home' institution, and awareness of the arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement in Scotland (ELIR training will provide further information on this and QAA Scotland is looking for applicants who have the ability to build on their existing experience).

Additional qualities required in coordinating reviewers

9 In addition to the qualities required in all reviewers, coordinating reviewers are expected to demonstrate:

- current or recent (within three years) experience of senior academic administration at institutional (including faculty or school) level in UK higher education
- wide experience of working with senior committees in UK higher education
- awareness of the distinctive features of the Scottish higher education system in general, and the enhancement-led approach in particular (ELIR training will seek to emphasise this but some initial awareness is highly desirable)
- ability to retain an effective overview of complex tasks, and to proactively support and manage a small team in achieving those tasks
- ability to keep a reliable record of discussions, summarise the key outcomes, and produce coherent text in a specified format to tight deadlines
- experience of drafting, collating and editing complex reports.

Annex 4: European standards and guidelines

The standards and guidelines for quality assurance in the European higher education area (EHEA) comprise three parts, of which Parts 1 and 2 are the most relevant to the ELIR process:

- Part 1: European standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions
- Part 2: European standards and guidelines for the external quality assurance of higher education.

The following text is an extract from the 2007 edition of the Standards and Guidelines, and the numbering of the headings is as contained in the original document.

2.3 Part 1: European standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance within higher education institutions

2.3.1 Policy and procedures for quality assurance

Standard:

Institutions should have a policy and associated procedures for the assurance of the quality and standards of their programmes and awards. They should also commit themselves explicitly to the development of a culture which recognises the importance of quality, and quality assurance, in their work. To achieve this, institutions should develop and implement a strategy for the continuous enhancement of quality.

The strategy, policy and procedures should have a formal status and be publicly available. They should also include a role for students and other stakeholders.

Guidelines:

Formal policies and procedures provide a framework within which higher education institutions can develop and monitor the effectiveness of their quality assurance systems. They also help to provide public confidence in institutional autonomy. Policies contain the statements of intentions and the principal means by which these will be achieved. Procedural guidance can give more detailed information about the ways in which the policy is implemented and provides a useful reference point for those who need to know about the practical aspects of carrying out the procedures.

The policy statement is expected to include:

- the relationship between teaching and research in the institution
- the institution's strategy for quality and standards
- the organisation of the quality assurance system
- the responsibilities of departments, schools, faculties and other organisational units and individuals for the assurance of quality
- the involvement of students in quality assurance
- the ways in which the policy is implemented, monitored and revised.

The realisation of the EHEA depends crucially on a commitment at all levels of an institution to ensuring that its programmes have clear and explicit intended outcomes; that its staff are ready, willing and able to provide teaching and learner support that will help its students achieve those outcomes; and that there is full, timely and tangible recognition of the contribution to its work by those of its staff who demonstrate particular excellence, expertise and dedication. All higher education institutions should aspire to improve and enhance the education they offer their students.

2.3.2 Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards

Standard:

Institutions should have formal mechanisms for the approval, periodic review and monitoring of their programmes and awards.

Guidelines:

The confidence of students and other stakeholders in higher education is more likely to be established and maintained through effective quality assurance activities which ensure that programmes are well designed, regularly monitored and periodically reviewed, thereby securing their continuing relevance and currency. The quality assurance of programmes and awards are expected to include:

- development and publication of explicit intended learning outcomes
- careful attention to curriculum and programme design and content
- specific needs of different modes of delivery (for example full-time, part-time, distance-learning, e-learning) and types of higher education (for example academic, vocational, professional)
- availability of appropriate learning resources
- formal programme approval procedures by a body other than that teaching the programme
- monitoring of the progress and achievements of students
- regular periodic reviews of programmes (including external panel members)
- regular feedback from employers, labour market representatives and other relevant organisations
- participation of students in quality assurance activities.

2.3.3 Assessment of students

Standard:

Students should be assessed using published criteria, regulations and procedures which are applied consistently.

Guidelines:

The assessment of students is one of the most important elements of higher education. The outcomes of assessment have a profound effect on students' future careers. It is

therefore important that assessment is carried out professionally at all times and takes into account the extensive knowledge which exists about testing and examination processes. Assessment also provides valuable information for institutions about the effectiveness of teaching and learners' support.

Student assessment procedures are expected to:

- be designed to measure the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and other programme objectives
- be appropriate for their purpose, whether diagnostic, formative or summative
- have clear and published criteria for marking
- be undertaken by people who understand the role of assessment in the progression of students towards the achievement of the knowledge and skills associated with their intended qualification
- where possible, not rely on the judgements of single examiners
- take account of all the possible consequences of examination regulations
- have clear regulations covering student absence, illness and other mitigating circumstances
- ensure that assessments are conducted securely in accordance with the institution's stated procedures
- be subject to administrative verification checks to ensure the accuracy of the procedures.

In addition, students should be clearly informed about the assessment strategy being used for their programme, what examinations or other assessment methods they will be subject to, what will be expected of them, and the criteria that will be applied to the assessment of their performance.

2.3.4 Quality assurance of teaching staff

Standard:

Institutions should have ways of satisfying themselves that staff involved with the teaching of students are qualified and competent to do so. They should be available to those undertaking external reviews, and commented upon in reports.

Guidelines:

Teachers are the single most important learning resource available to most students. It is important that those who teach have a full knowledge and understanding of the subject they are teaching, have the necessary skills and experience to transmit their knowledge and understanding effectively to students in a range of teaching contexts, and can access feedback on their own performance. Institutions should ensure that their staff recruitment and appointment procedures include a means of making certain that all new staff have at least the minimum necessary level of competence.

Teaching staff should be given opportunities to develop and extend their teaching capacity and should be encouraged to value their skills. Institutions should provide poor teachers with opportunities to improve their skills to an acceptable level and should have the means to remove them from their teaching duties if they continue to be demonstrably ineffective.

2.3.5 Learning resources and student support

Standard:

Institutions should ensure that the resources available for the support of student learning are adequate and appropriate for each programme offered.

Guidelines:

In addition to their teachers, students rely on a range of resources to assist their learning. These vary from physical resources such as libraries or computing facilities to human support in the form of tutors, counsellors, and other advisers. Learning resources and other support mechanisms should be readily accessible to students, designed with their needs in mind and responsive to feedback from those who use the services provided. Institutions should routinely monitor, review and improve the effectiveness of the support services available to their students.

2.3.6 Information systems

Standard:

Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes of study and other activities.

Guidelines:

Institutional self-knowledge is the starting point for effective quality assurance. It is important that institutions have the means of collecting and analysing information about their own activities. Without this, they will not know what is working well and what needs attention, or the results of innovative practices.

The quality-related information systems required by individual institutions will depend to some extent on local circumstances, but it is at least expected to cover:

- student progression and success rates
- employability of graduates
- students' satisfaction with their programmes
- effectiveness of teachers
- profile of the student population
- learning resources available and their costs
- the institution's own key performance indicators.

There is also value in institutions comparing themselves with other similar organisations within the EHEA and beyond. This allows them to extend the range of their self-knowledge and to access possible ways of improving their own performance.

2.3.7 Public information

Standard:

Institutions should regularly publish up to date, impartial and objective information, both quantitative and qualitative, about the programmes and awards they are offering.

Guidelines:

In fulfilment of their public role, higher education institutions have a responsibility to provide information about the programmes they are offering, the intended learning outcomes of these, the qualifications they award, the teaching, learning and assessment procedures used, and the learning opportunities available to their students. Published information might also include the views and employment destinations of past students and the profile of the current student population. This information should be accurate, impartial, objective and readily accessible and should not be used simply as a marketing opportunity. The institution should verify that it meets its own expectations in respect of impartiality and objectivity.

2.4 Part 2: European standards and guidelines for the external quality assurance of higher education

2.4.1 Use of internal quality assurance procedures

Standard:

External quality assurance procedures should take into account the effectiveness of the internal quality assurance processes described in Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines.

Guidelines:

The standards for internal quality assurance contained in Part 1 provide a valuable basis for the external quality assessment process. It is important that the institutions' own internal policies and procedures are carefully evaluated in the course of external procedures, to determine the extent to which the standards are being met. If higher education institutions are to be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of their own internal quality assurance processes, and if those processes properly assure quality and standards, then external processes might be less intensive than otherwise.

2.4.2 Development of external quality assurance processes

Standard:

The aims and objectives of quality assurance processes should be determined, before the processes themselves are developed, by all those responsible (including higher education institutions), and should be published with a description of the procedures to be used.

Guidelines:

In order to ensure clarity of purpose and transparency of procedures, external quality assurance methods should be designed and developed through a process involving key stakeholders, including higher education institutions. The procedures that are finally agreed should be published and should contain explicit statements of the aims and objectives of the processes as well as a description of the procedures to be used.

As external quality assurance makes demands on the institutions involved, a preliminary impact assessment should be undertaken to ensure that the procedures to be adopted are appropriate and do not interfere more than necessary with the normal work of higher education institutions.

2.4.3 Criteria for decisions

Standard:

Any formal decisions made as a result of an external quality assurance activity should be based on explicit published criteria that are applied consistently.

Guidelines:

Formal decisions made by quality assurance agencies have a significant impact on the institutions and programmes that are judged. In the interests of equity and reliability, decisions should be based on published criteria and interpreted in a consistent manner. Conclusions should be based on recorded evidence and agencies should have in place ways of moderating conclusions, if necessary.

2.4.4 Processes fit for purpose

Standard:

All external quality assurance processes should be designed specifically to ensure their fitness to achieve the aims and objectives set for them.

Guidelines:

Quality assurance agencies within the EHEA undertake different external processes for different purposes and in different ways. It is of the first importance that agencies should operate procedures which are fit for their own defined and published purposes. Experience has shown, however, that there are some widely-used elements of external review processes which not only help to ensure their validity, reliability and usefulness, but also provide a basis for the European dimension to quality assurance.

Among these elements the following are particularly noteworthy:

- insistence that the experts undertaking the external quality assurance activity have appropriate skills and are competent to perform their task
- the exercise of care in the selection of experts
- the provision of appropriate briefing or training for experts
- the use of international experts

- participation of students
- ensuring that the review procedures used are sufficient to provide adequate evidence to support the findings and conclusions reached
- the use of the self-evaluation/site visit/draft report/published report/follow-up model of review
- recognition of the importance of institutional improvement and enhancement policies as a fundamental element in the assurance of quality.

2.4.5 Reporting

Standard:

Reports should be published and should be written in a style which is clear and readily accessible to its intended readership. Any decisions, commendations or recommendations contained in reports should be easy for a reader to find.

Guidelines:

In order to ensure maximum benefit from external quality assurance processes, it is important that reports should meet the identified needs of the intended readership. Reports are sometimes intended for different readership groups and this will require careful attention to structure, content, style and tone. In general, reports should be structured to cover description, analysis (including relevant evidence), conclusions, commendations, and recommendations. There should be sufficient preliminary explanation to enable a lay reader to understand the purposes of the review, its form, and the criteria used in making decisions. Key findings, conclusions and recommendations should be easily locatable by readers. Reports should be published in a readily accessible form and there should be opportunities for readers and users of the reports (both within the relevant institution and outside it) to comment on their usefulness.

2.4.6 Follow-up procedures

Standard:

Quality assurance processes which contain recommendations for action or which require a subsequent action plan, should have a predetermined follow-up procedure which is implemented consistently.

Guidelines:

Quality assurance is not principally about individual external scrutiny events: it should be about continuously trying to do a better job. External quality assurance does not end with the publication of the report and should include a structured follow-up procedure to ensure that recommendations are dealt with appropriately and any required action plans drawn up and implemented. This may involve further meetings with institutional or programme representatives. The objective is to ensure that areas identified for improvement are dealt with speedily and that further enhancement is encouraged.

2.4.7 Periodic reviews

Standard:

External quality assurance of institutions and/or programmes should be undertaken on a cyclical basis. The length of the cycle and the review procedures to be used should be clearly defined and published in advance.

Guidelines:

Quality assurance is not a static but a dynamic process. It should be continuous and not 'once in a lifetime'. It does not end with the first review or with the completion of the formal follow-up procedure. It has to be periodically renewed. Subsequent external reviews should take into account progress that has been made since the previous event. The process to be used in all external reviews should be clearly defined by the external quality assurance agency and its demands on institutions should not be greater than are necessary for the achievement of its objectives.

2.4.8 System-wide analyses

Standard:

Quality assurance agencies should produce from time to time summary reports describing and analysing the general findings of their reviews, evaluations, assessments and so on.

Guidelines:

All external quality assurance agencies collect a wealth of information about individual programmes and/or institutions and this provides material for structured analyses across whole higher education systems. Such analyses can provide very useful information about developments, trends, emerging good practice and areas of persistent difficulty or weakness and can become useful tools for policy development and quality enhancement. Agencies should consider including a research and development function within their activities, to help them extract maximum benefit from their work.

QAA 473 06/12

QAA Scotland

183 St Vincent Street
Glasgow
G2 5QD

Tel 0141 572 3420
Fax 0141 572 3421
Email comms@qaa.ac.uk
Web www.qaa.ac.uk

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2012

ISBN 978 1 84979 562 3

All QAA's publications are available on our website www.qaa.ac.uk

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786