University of Stirling

Year-on response to the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR)

July 2013

Preface

One year after publication of their ELIR report, QAA Scotland asks institutions to provide a year-on response to ELIR. These year-on responses are written in the institution's own words and are published on the QAA website. Guidance on the content and structure of the response is provided by QAA Scotland.

The responses should focus on the action the institution has taken following the review and should include consideration of the effectiveness of that action. It is also recognised that ELIR reports highlight good practice and institutions are encouraged to comment on key areas of activity relating to good practice that they have prioritised since the ELIR.

The year-on response provides a focus for the annual ELIR discussion that is held closest to the anniversary of the publication of the ELIR report. The responses also provide a key source of information to inform regular reporting to the Scottish Funding Council.

UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING

Enhancement-Led Institutional Review: follow-up report

1. Publication and consideration of the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) report

The final ELIR report was published in March 2012 and disseminated widely throughout the University: to senior management, heads of schools, directors of learning and teaching and the Students' Union as well as formally through the University's committee structure including the Quality Enhancement Committee, Academic Council and the University Court (the University's governing body). An action plan was prepared in March 2012 and was subsequently approved by the Quality Enhancement Committee. The ELIR report and action plan directly inform the current review of the Learning and Teaching Quality Enhancement Strategy (LTQES).

Endorsement of the follow-up report will be obtained retrospectively from the University Court at its meeting of 24 June 2013.

2. Response to ELIR recommendations

This paper sets out the recommendations arising from the ELIR report and the actions that have been taken forward or agreed by the relevant committees/officers. The recommendations are organised into the key areas as set out in the ELIR report.

2.1 MANAGEMENT OF THE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

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

Student Representation

ELIR recommendation (i): The University is encouraged to reflect on how the effectiveness of the annual meetings of the Quality Enhancement Committee and Students' Union Executive might be enhanced.
Action: Phase two of the review of committee structure took place following the ELIR visit, the appointment of two new Deputy Principals for Research and Education & Students and the establishment of the Stirling Graduate School. The pause between phases of the review provided an opportunity to reflect on the institutional priorities expressed in the Strategic Plan 2011-2016 and to ensure that the committee structure is configured in such a way to support the delivery of the plan.   Recommendations from phase two of the review of the committee structure were approved by University Court in October 2012 and proposed that the Quality Enhancement Committee (QEC) should be replaced by the Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC).   The effectiveness of the annual meetings of QEC and the Students' Union Executive was reviewed and a number of proposals to enhance the effectiveness of future meetings were approved by ESEC at its meeting in February 2012 as follows: • To introduce an open forum/ student assembly meeting at the start of semester two for all students. The forum would be chaired by the Deputy Principal (Education & Students) and set out priorities at a strategic level in relation to learning and teaching.   The first open forum meeting was held on 28 March 2013. In preparation for this meeting, the students' Union ran an 'ask John' campaign to raise awareness and encourage students to submit questions for discussion. At the meeting the Deputy Principal (Education & Students) set out proposals for changes to aspects of teaching and assessment arrangements and engaged in discussion with students on these proposals which include: the transition to 20 credit undergraduate modules; the increase in teaching period from 10 to 11 weeks each semester; proposals for condonement and compensation; changes to the grading scheme

and changes to the algorithm used for honours degree classification.

- To establish a sub-group of ESEC to engage in joint ESEC/ Students' Union meetings which would be scheduled to ensure maximum student representation. Meetings would be chaired alternately by a student and a director of learning and teaching.

ELIR Recommendation (ii): The University is encouraged to consider how to improve the effectiveness of SSCCs in informing students of the actions that have been taken in response to their feedback, including how the pilot of a school officer system might address this.

Action: The effectiveness of SSCCs is discussed at learning and teaching reviews with good practice disseminated through the university committee structure and directors of learning and teaching.

A working group, chaired by a director of learning and teaching was established in October 2012 to consider matters relating to student evaluation of teaching including the closing of the feedback loop through SSCCs and school officers. The working group is due to report to the Education and Student Experience Committee in May 2013 (see also 2.3 (a)).

ELIR Recommendation (iii): Once the School Officer pilot project has been evaluated, the University is encouraged to consider the benefits of establishing school officer posts in the other schools.

Action: Following a successful pilot of the School Officer project within the School of Arts and Humanities the Students' Union worked with the other schools to introduce school officers. During session 2012/13 the Schools of Arts and Humanities, Natural Sciences and Sport recruited school officers and found their introduction beneficial in facilitating the student voice at a more senior level within the schools. As part of their role, school officers undertook a review of assessment submission and feedback within one school and a consultation with students on joint degree programmes to review their experiences is in progress within another school.

The appointment of school officers has provided significant enhancements for student representation across the institution and the project has been rolled out to all schools for session 2013/14 and the recruitment process for school officers is now underway.

Student Feedback

ELIR Recommendation (i): The University recognises the importance of gathering valid information on the student experience and is encouraged in its intention to continue to explore how to improve return rates.

Action: A working group, chaired by a director of learning and teaching, was established in October 2012 to consider matters relating to student evaluation of teaching including the use of module evaluation questionnaires and other forms of gathering feedback on the student learning experience. The planned development of a code of practice on assessment feedback to students, which was an action from the LTQES, will be considered further within the remit of this group. The working group is due to report to the Education and Student Experience Committee in May 2013 (see also 2.3 (a)).

Good practice identified through learning and teaching review is disseminated through the university committee structure and by directors of learning and teaching within their schools.

ELIR Recommendation (ii): The University is encouraged to consider ways in which students could engage more with survey findings in order to contribute to action planning at the school level.

Action: The University has agreed that results and feedback from all student feedback surveys will come to the Deputy Principal (Education and Students) through the Policy, Planning and Governance Office. Schools will discuss survey results and any subsequent action to be taken at

the appropriate school committee where students are represented.

The University has a rich bank of student feedback data arising from its participation in a number of surveys including external student surveys (NSS, ISB, PTES and PRES), and is in the process of engaging a third party to undertake analysis of all survey data. The outcomes of this data analysis will inform priorities for a new Student Experience Strategy which is being developed to support the Learning and Teaching Quality Enhancement Strategy, Internationalisation Strategy and Employability Strategy.

Support for Learning

ELIR Recommendation (i): The University is encouraged to plan proactively for future student needs, in order to maintain the quality of the learning experience across different student groups.

Action: The University recognises that its planned growth in the number of international students, particularly in taught postgraduate programmes, will have implications for the management of the international student experience and also for the promotion of intercultural understanding among the student body as a whole.

In order to plan proactively for future student needs and to maintain the quality of the learning experience across different student groups the University has undertaken the following actions in relation to survey outcomes and future planning through the development of a Student Experience Strategy:

- NSS outcomes are considered by schools through the annual programme monitoring process. Where scores in 2012 had fallen below an overall satisfaction level of 90%, schools were asked to respond on the action to be taken to address an identified issue. Summary action plans are circulated to schools to facilitate sharing of good practice and the identification of collaborative approaches to specific problem areas.

- At postgraduate level the data and draft summary reports for both PTES and PRES will form the basis of the institutional report and action plan on the PTES and PRES outcomes in 2013. Proposals for enhancements to learning and teaching for postgraduate students are also under development by the University.

- The Student Experience Strategy, in conjunction with the LTQES, will set out a number of objectives that the University will look to achieve in order to ensure that students not only have access to the highest quality academic programmes, but that they are delivered in ways that enrich the learning experience.

Research Student Experience

ELIR Recommendation (i): The establishment of the Stirling Graduate School provides an opportunity to promote awareness of the University's guidelines for the support of postgraduate research students.

Action: The Stirling Graduate School (SGS) has established a web presence which aims to provide information or signpost sources of information for Stirling's postgraduate community. The biannual induction days and the skills development programme are promoted via email and the website, with emphasis on the support available to students in terms of their development needs.

Registry and Governance Services is currently working with SGS to review postgraduate regulations. The outcome of this process will involve the publication of updated regulations and the promotion of awareness amongst students and staff. It is anticipated that the updated regulations will be in place for session 2013/14.

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

ELIR Recommendation (i): There would be benefit in the University considering ways of increasing student awareness of the student leadership programme and the opportunities that it provides for the development of employability-related competencies.

Action: In the period since ELIR the University has established an Employability Strategy which was approved by University Court on 22 October 2012. The development of the Employability Strategy included a review of relevant employability literature (with a particular focus on the briefings and reports located on the Higher Education Academy resource site) and a consultation process on existing good practice within the University and the views of a variety of key stakeholders (students, staff and employers). A review of employability activities and best practice at other institutions was also completed.

The implementation plan is currently under development and within its remit the University will undertake to explore new ways of promoting the student leadership programme and enhance student awareness of the value of skills gained through volunteering through liaison with schools and the Careers Development Centre (CDC).

ELIR Recommendation (ii): The University is encouraged to continue to explore ways in which students' experience gained from voluntary work can be further linked to the curriculum.

Action: The following activities have been developed through the Careers Development Centre (CDC) since the ELIR visit:

- Links with the Volunteer Centre.
- Links with the Active learning (ALC) and the development of accredited partnership modules.
- Links with Third Sector Internships Scotland (TSIS)*:* this successful project funded by LTW2 has created many paid opportunities in the volunteer sector for students.
- Involvement in the Making the Most of Masters (MMM) project.
- Coach development Programme: the CDC, School of Sport and the local Sports provider 'Active Stirling' have developed a progressive and sustainable volunteer coaching programme.

The following activities were in place at the time of the ELIR visit and are ongoing:

- The CDC vacancy system: this is open to all students and regularly advertises volunteering opportunities to students.
- Career management skills modules (accredited): the volunteer centre and volunteer organisations contribute to teaching on these modules.
- The CDC runs an 'Insight into teaching' volunteer programme**:** following competitive application, this programme places students in schools for six weeks for one half day a week.

The Employability Strategy aims to ensure that students are encouraged to undertake volunteering as follows:

- To create a student employability pathway which maps the student employability journey throughout their academic experience (incorporating opportunities for volunteering).
- To increase the number of work-related and work-based opportunities (to include the volunteer sector) for students in the curriculum, co-curriculum and extra curriculum. It is anticipated that this will be articulated in a skills award which will in turn link to the HEAR (see also (iii)).

ELIR Recommendation (iii): The University is encouraged to reflect further on the ways in which the co-curriculum may be used as a vehicle for the development of graduate attributes through mechanisms such as the Student Leadership programme.

Action: Work is underway by the Director of CAPL and the CDC to consider the development of an award which uses extra and co-curricular activities, linked with reflection in order that students can demonstrate achievement of graduate attributes. It is anticipated that a proposal will be developed by the end of academic year 2012/13.

ELIR Recommendation (iv): The University is encouraged to complement its strong focus on employability by considering how curricular and co-curricular activities can be used to promote and embed a wider framework for all graduate attributes.

Action: The University Employability Strategy was approved by University Court on 22 October 2012 and identifies as a key component the delivery of University of Stirling graduate attributes in the curriculum and co-curriculum. To equip all graduates with these attributes is integrated as an objective within the implementation plan and will be considered going forward.

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

ELIR Recommendation (i): The University is encouraged to consider how it might adapt the model used by Information Services for consultation and communicating with the student body when undertaking other projects to enhance the student experience.

Action: The good practice identified in relation to effective consultation and communication with the student body as part of the Library redevelopment project has been shared with service areas and schools through the committee structure and utilised in other significant University projects, for example in the residences redevelopment project in which the majority of campus accommodation will be redeveloped. The governance for this project is led by the Residences Programme Board (RPB) which includes the Students' Union President.

Good practice is implemented by schools on an ongoing basis through their quality enhancement activities such as module evaluation and feedback to students.

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

General approach to equality of opportunities

ELIR Recommendation (i): In the Single Equality Scheme (SES) annual report for 2010, the University identified a priority action point to improve communication with the Students' Union. The institution is encouraged to pursue this intention.

Action: Since the ELIR visit the University has established an Equality Steering Group (ESG) which includes the Students' Union President as a member. Increased communication with the Students' Union continues to be of importance to the ESG. Students are always involved in consultations and policy developments relating to equality, for example:

- Consultation with the Students' Union on the development of the Equality Outcomes 2013-2017.
- Equality and Diversity survey which was made available to students both online and by hard copy, distributed around various locations of the University, including the Students' Union office.
- The Students' Union President is a full member of the Equality Steering Group as well as being a named equality contact for the Students' Union.
- Under-representation in the student population will be addressed if found to arise.

A record of Students' Union inclusion in committees, working groups and consultations is maintained by the Policy, Planning and Governance Office.

ELIR Recommendation (ii): There would be benefit in the University considering how the outcomes of the pilot project, on the development of an inclusive curriculum, can contribute to the consideration of equality and diversity matters in programme approval and review processes.

Action: A review of the programme approval process has taken place and an enhanced process launched in January 2013. Attention was given to equality as part of the revised process and we will continue to review this as the process is embedded. Registry and Governance Services Business Partners will work with schools to consider equality when developing new academic programmes.

Widening Access

ELIR Recommendation (i): Consider induction arrangements in relation to students entering programmes of study as part of an articulation agreement.

Action: The University has introduced a two-day induction event embedded into the induction programme run jointly by the Widening Participation Manager in Student Recruitment, Admissions & International Affairs (SRAIS) and Student Learning Services (SLS within CAPL). This event is specifically targeted at mature students and college students on HNC/HND programmes and runs in the two days prior to the main induction programme. Attendance at this event is currently voluntary. However, as formal articulation agreements are drawn up it is the intention to make this element a compulsory part of the transition for college students. In addition, SRAIS and SLS have also worked with academic schools to draw up tailored induction and support mechanisms within each school which will be kept under review.

The University was successful in gaining additional funded places through the SFC incentive scheme and policy officer posts will be appointed to support the delivery of the additional funded places for articulation and widening access.

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

ELIR Recommendation (i): The University is encouraged to consider whether the PG Certificate in Academic Practice should be made compulsory for new members of academic staff.

Action: A review of the status of the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice is underway and discussions are on-going between the Director of CAPL and Deputy Principal (Education and Students).

ELIR Recommendation (ii): The University should ensure that induction arrangements are sufficiently consistent to provide all members of academic staff with an effective orientation to their professional role as educators and that appropriate support systems are in place within each school to provide guidance to new staff members.

Action: A guidance document was developed by CAPL in discussion with heads of schools and is now in place. This provides a checklist for all new academic staff to ensure an effective orientation to their role.

ELIR Recommendation (iii): The University is encouraged to develop clear guidance relating to the Achieving Success programme and its use as a mechanism for staff development.

Action: Achieving Success is a process that gives every member of staff the opportunity to discuss their role, development needs, and every day contributions to their school or department strategic objectives.

A review of the Achieving Success programme was launched in Autumn 2012 and the first stage of the review, a survey to all staff, has now closed. Analysis of the responses received is currently underway. Stage two of the review is scheduled to commence following the analysis of responses and will include focus groups to provide recommendations for the enhancement of the programme including its mechanism for staff development. It is anticipated that the review will be concluded by summer 2013.

ELIR Recommendation (iv): The University is encouraged to reflect upon the capacity requirements of CAPL in view of the strategic role that the Centre plays in the professional

development of its staff and on the development of its students.

Action: The University is taking forward this action in a number of ways. The review of the LTQES is informed by the clear direction of the University's strategic plan 2011-2016 which was newly published at the time of the ELIR visit (see also 2.3 (a)). The intention is that the LTQES will have a more focused set of actions to be able to make the most effective use of our staff resource across the University including CAPL. Prioritisation of activities has been a theme addressed in the CAPL plan and the wider Deputy Secretary's Office plan (the service area in which CAPL is based). Consideration is also being given to the links in activity between CAPL and other related service areas. In the last year, the roles of directors of learning and teaching in leading university-wide initiatives have been further developed, with a director of learning and teaching leading working groups on cross-university matters (see also section 2.3 (a)). Although CAPL staff have played an active role, this has assisted in embedding ownership of developments within schools.

ELIR Recommendation (v): The University is encouraged to take steps to ensure that processes such as staff induction and performance management are implemented with sufficient consistency at school level.

Action: A review of the staff induction process has commenced which will follow the same format as the review of the Achieving Success programme. A budget has been ring fenced for enhancements to the on-line service in this area.

The consistent implementation of processes at school level is achieved through the on-going development of the following resources:

- A dedicated staff induction web page containing information on regulatory and other matters.

- The operation of a partner model whereby HR 'partners' work with schools and service areas directly on a range of HR matters including bespoke induction plans and performance management training.

- The Management Development Programme: in 2012/13 a number of new modules were added to the programme. The programme will be reviewed prior to the start of session 2013/14.

2.2 INSTITUTION-LED MONITORING AND REVIEW OF QUALITY AND STANDARDS

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

Learning and Teaching Review

ELIR Recommendation (i): There would be benefit in the University reflecting on ways in which greater student reviewer capacity could be developed to support the learning and teaching review process.

Action: The operation of learning and teaching reviews is reflected upon following each review and at the end of each academic year. The student reviewer is fully involved in all aspects of the learning and teaching review and in the development of the review report. Currently student reviewers are sabbatical officers and discussion is on-going with the Student's Union to consider the inclusion of a wider pool of Students' Union officers in the review process.

2.3 STRATEGIC APPROACH TO QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

(a) Key features of the institutions strategic approach to quality enhancement

ELIR Recommendation (i): There would be benefit in the University reflecting on how the LTQES and its action plan might achieve a clearer focus on quality enhancement, and also make clear the linkages between quality assurance and enhancement activities in the strategy.

Action: In October 2012 the Deputy Principal (Education & Students) established a LTQES review group chaired by a director of learning and teaching. The purpose of which was to review the current LTQES in order to incorporate areas of development in the internal and external environment. The revised LTQES will incorporate outcomes from the QAA enhancement themes and be guided by the University Strategic Plan 2011-2016.

Working groups were also established in October 2012 to consider the following areas: *Internationalisation of the Curriculum*; *Student Evaluation of Teaching* and *Students at Risk*. The working groups, chaired by directors of learning and teaching, are due to report to the Education and Student Experience Committee in May 2013 and will inform the revision of the LTQES which is due to be completed in summer 2013.

ELIR Recommendation (ii): Explore further ways in which the outcomes of enhancement activity within schools can be disseminated more widely across the university, to ensure the sharing of good practice. The University is also asked to monitor and evaluate the operation of the new role of school director of learning and teaching. This will help to ensure that the role remains focused on supporting enhancement.

Action: The establishment of LTQES review group and its working groups (see (i) above), chaired by school directors of learning and teaching has allowed enhancement activity in schools to be shared across the University. Examples of good practice will be incorporated into the reports from the working groups and in the revised LTQES.

A role descriptor for school directors of learning and teaching was approved in October 2012. Their appointment as chairs of the working groups directly supports the University's enhancement agenda. The role of the school director of learning will be kept under review by the University.

ELIR Recommendation (iii): The University is encouraged to keep under review the cohesion of institutional level strategies in order to ensure co-ordinated operational planning.

Action: The review of the LTQES will be guided by the University Strategic Plan 2011-2016 and make reference to relevant institutional strategies including the Employability Strategy, Internationalisation Strategy and Student Experience Strategy as appropriate (see also point (i) above).

3   OTHER CONCLUSIONS IN THE ELIR REPORT

The University was very pleased to note the range of positive comments on its provision, standards and strategy for enhancement, including:

- The effectiveness of the relationship between the Students' Union and the University through representation of the Students' Union on University committees and academic policy working groups.

    The review of committee structure ensured appropriate representation from the Students' Union on University committees and student representatives continue to be included on academic working groups. Since the ELIR visit a number of groups have been established which include Students' Union representatives: for example, the LTQES Review Group, Internationalisation of the Curriculum, Student Evaluation of Teaching and Students at Risk working groups.

- The use of student feedback by Information Services (IS) to inform the enhancement of services to student.

  Work is currently underway by IS using Succeed to release examination question scores to students. This project is being piloted by the School of Arts and Humanities in Spring semester 2013.

- The positive impact on support for students from the integration of student support services and the enhancement of the Disability Service for students.

  The Disability Service has continued to develop its services to disabled students, aiming to support institutional good practice and enhance the student experience. As an example of innovative practice in the past year the Disability Service has developed, in conjunction with the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Health, a new process to support students requiring reasonable adjustments on placement. In the course of annual reapplication for validation to needs assess disabled students under the Toolkit for Quality Indicators process, the University received particular commendation for this work.

- The progress achieved in embedding employability into the curriculum and the role of the Career Development Centre in supporting this activity.

  Since the ELIR visit one of the most significant developments has been the introduction of three partnership work-based learning modules in sport, law and journalism. These involve students undertaking a work placement along with a number of classes and workshops to support learning. Feedback on the experience and its impact from students, academics and placement providers has been extremely positive. Students are gaining skills, knowledge, insight, confidence as well as practical skills that enable them to define their career direction and enhance their employability.

- The monitoring of collaborative provision where the University takes active steps to monitor the achievements of overseas students in comparison to the institution's student population as a whole.

  The University recognises the importance of monitoring the achievements of overseas students alongside the institutions student population as a whole in order to ensure that standards across the university are maintained and that there are no equality and diversity issues arising.

- The comprehensive processes in place for monitoring and reviewing the quality of programmes and the appropriate use of external reference points.

  The University continues to actively monitor and review the quality of its programmes through annual programme review and internal subject area learning and teaching reviews.

- The Management Information Project being undertaken by the University to improve its management of information on the student population, which has the clear potential to support the delivery of the University's enhancement agenda.

  Since the ELIR visit the Management Information Project has moved forward. Many staff are trained in using the tool and more areas of information have been added to it. At each step business need and technical specifications are assessed in order to deliver planned outcomes and support the university needs in taking forward our aims and objectives.

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