



Thematic Report on the Outcomes of Enhancement-led Institutional Reviews (ELIRs) conducted in 2014 at Scotland's Rural College, University of Glasgow, University of Strathclyde and Glasgow School of Art

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Preface

As part of the ELIR 3 method, QAA Scotland produces regular Thematic reports to support the sector learning from the outcomes of individual ELIR reports. The purpose of the Thematic reports is to inform future development work in the sector and, in particular, to inform future QAA activity including work carried out in collaboration with the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC).

There are two main types of Thematic reports: first, those identifying topics across a number of individual institutions' ELIR Outcome reports; and second, those providing more detail on particular topics, drawing on the content of ELIR Technical reports.

Introduction

This report identifies the themes picked up in the ELIR Outcome reports for reviews of Scotland's Rural College (SRUC), University of Glasgow, University of Strathclyde, and Glasgow School of Art.

It includes the areas of positive practice as well as the areas for development as they relate to each of the four institutions. The areas are summarised under the heading 'What are we learning about the sector from ELIR reports?' The areas are set out in full in the subsequent sections of the report.

The annex to this report summarises the learning points identified in the Sector Overview report for 2013-14, which was submitted to the Scottish Funding Council in November 2014. The Sector Overview reports include QAA Scotland's engagement with the sector across ELIR and Enhancement Themes activity.

What are we learning about the sector from ELIR reports

Areas of positive practice

1 The following themes were identified as positive practice in at least two of the ELIR 2014 reports:

- Student engagement and representation
- Student support
- Support for student mobility
- Activities to promote widening participation
- Graduate attributes and employability skills
- Effective culture and practice of self-evaluation
- Dissemination of positive practice
- Institutional strategies and strategic frameworks
- Enhancing learning and teaching
- Academic and staff development
- Management of collaborative provision

2 The following theme was identified once in the ELIR 2014 reports:

- Research student experience

Areas for development

3 The following themes were identified as areas for development in at least two of the ELIR 2014 reports:

- Assessment and feedback policy and practice
- Management of information (monitoring and consistency)
- Postgraduate student experience
- Curriculum flexibility and design
- Management of enhancement and strategies

4 The following themes were identified once each in the ELIR 2014 reports:

- Academic leadership and practice
- Mapping to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education
- Staff induction and mentoring
- Institution-led quality review

Comparisons between the ELIR Thematic Outcome Reports for 2013 and 2014

5 This section compares the findings from the Thematic Outcome Report for ELIRs conducted in 2013 with the findings in this report.

6 The following common areas of positive practice have been identified in both reports:

- Student engagement and representation
- Student support
- Graduate attributes and employability skills
- Dissemination of positive practice
- Institutional strategies and strategic framework
- Academic and staff development
- Management of collaborative provision
- Activities to promote widening participation

7 The following common areas for development have been identified in both reports:

- Assessment and feedback policy and practice
- Management of information (monitoring and consistency)
- Postgraduate student experience (in the 2013 reports, the theme related to support for postgraduates who teach)
- Mapping to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education

Areas of positive practice identified in Outcome reports of ELIRs conducted in 2014

This section sets out the areas of positive practice included in the ELIR Outcome reports for: Glasgow School of Art, Scotland's Rural College, University of Glasgow and University of Strathclyde.

Student engagement and representation

Student engagement - Priority given to improving student representation and engagement - Scotland's Rural College has made positive progress in this area including developing a learner engagement strategy and identifying staff and structures to support its implementation. Priority has been given to the establishment of the student association and relationships at the most senior levels are positive, with evidence of student views being well received in the institution-level committees. A number of these developments are in the early stages and Scotland's Rural College is encouraged to retain an active oversight of their effectiveness as they embed, listening carefully to the views of the student representatives.¹ (Scotland's Rural College)

Student engagement - The University has a strong commitment to student engagement. There is a positive relationship with the Student Representative Council, and students are clear that their contributions are valued and acted upon. There are opportunities for student views to be considered at all levels of the institution, and formal student representation has been strengthened by the inclusion of 12 student members on the recently established Council of Senate.² (University of Glasgow)

Student engagement - There is a positive and effective relationship between the Students' Association and the Glasgow School of Art executive, which ensures that the student voice is heard at the highest levels of the institution. The appointment of the Student Engagement Coordinator (a post funded by Glasgow School of Art but employed by the Students' Association) is an effective mechanism for supporting the President of the Students' Association in developing new strategies for student engagement.³ (Glasgow School of Art)

Student support

Network of student support - there is a network of easily accessible and highly supportive campus-based and central learner and learning support services, as well as campus-level senior tutors. At the programme level, good practice from two former arrangements, advisers of study/course tutors, is being combined to develop a year tutors' arrangement, which is another positive example of Scotland's Rural College drawing on experience across the legacy institutions. This support network provides students with advice on curriculum content, personal tutoring and personal development planning. Students are positive about their experience, highlighting the accessibility and responsiveness of the academic staff.⁴ (Scotland's Rural College)

¹ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Scotland's Rural College [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p3

² Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Glasgow [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p3

³ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Glasgow School of Art [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p3

⁴ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Scotland's Rural College [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p3

Student support - Glasgow School of Art provides a wide range of support services which are accessible and well signposted, and which are well regarded by students. Support services are subject to annual monitoring, periodic review and internal audit, as well as being benchmarked externally. (Glasgow School of Art)

Support for student mobility

Student exchange - The programme of student exchanges, involving a wide range of international partner institutions, is promoted effectively by Glasgow School of Art and is an integral part of the Glasgow School of Art student experience. Exchange opportunities are open to all undergraduate students and students from selected postgraduate programmes. Students commented positively on the opportunity to undertake study abroad and the support provided by Glasgow School of Art for this.⁵ (Glasgow School of Art)

Support for student mobility - Priority is given to promoting and supporting student mobility. The University has evaluated students' experiences of study exchange, and has used the outcomes of this evaluation to enhance provision and identify ways of making mobility a more attractive, widely available and viable option for all of its students, including those with disabilities.⁶ (University of Strathclyde)

Activities to promote widening participation

Use of data to support student progress - The University undertakes detailed analysis of student data in relation to widening participation students. This enables it to identify those students who may need additional help, and to provide targeted support without such students being aware that they are being singled out in any way. The University now intends to expand this successful approach to supporting student progress to include its international students.⁷ (University of Glasgow)

Strategic approach to widening participation - The University has a successful track record in recruiting and supporting widening participation students and has in place a range of widening participation initiatives. In particular, students who had participated in the Top Up programme were very positive about the support they received. The programme helps secondary school pupils to develop academic skills in support of their transition to and retention in higher education. The University is now developing its strategic approach to widening participation by creating the MD40 group, which brings together academic and support staff from across the University to promote an integrated approach to supporting the success of widening participation students.⁸ (University of Glasgow)

Approach to widening participation - The University has a strong commitment to widening participation, as demonstrated by its proactive outreach strategies and collaborative initiatives which are specifically designed to support non-traditional students in accessing the University.⁹ (University of Strathclyde)

⁵ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Glasgow School of Art [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p3

⁶ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Strathclyde [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p3

⁷ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Glasgow [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p3

⁸ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Glasgow [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p3

⁹ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Strathclyde [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p3

Graduate attributes and employability skills

Holistic approach to developing employability skills - Students are supported to develop vocationally relevant skills and awareness of employability, drawing on staff consultancy, professional practice and research. Student employability is also promoted through the applied nature of the curricula and the provision of work experience opportunities.¹⁰ (Scotland's Rural College)

Employability - Since the 2010 ELIR Glasgow School of Art has made significant progress in bringing together a number of projects to embed employability across the institution. The recently appointed Student Employability and Enterprise Manager is likely to support the development of a strategic approach to employability.¹¹ (Glasgow School of Art)

Graduate attributes - The University's arrangements for delivering graduate attributes are systematic and the role of Graduate Attribute Champion in each college is an effective mechanism for ensuring that graduate attributes are embedded into the curriculum. There is effective monitoring of the embedding of graduate attributes through the use of standard templates in annual monitoring and periodic subject review processes.¹² (University of Glasgow)

Effective culture and practice of self-evaluation

Effective culture of self-evaluation - The University has an effective culture of self-evaluation which enables it to identify successful practice in one area and then adapt and mainstream this for the benefit of the wider student body. An example of this is academic writing skills support which began as a Learning and Teaching Development Fund project in the College of Arts. This was subsequently rolled out to other schools and then made available to all students through the formation of the Writing Centre.¹³ (University of Glasgow)

Peer review in annual quality reporting - The cross-faculty peer review feature of the University's annual monitoring and reporting processes has particular benefits in promoting the identification and sharing of good practice.¹⁴ (University of Strathclyde)

Data analysis and reporting of information from external examiners and student surveys - The outcomes of student surveys and external examiners' reports are systematically considered as part of the University's annual monitoring processes, and are used to enhance the student learning experience and inform institutional policy and practice.¹⁵ (University of Strathclyde)

Dissemination of positive practice

Dissemination of good practice - The University has a range of effective mechanisms in place for identifying and sharing good practice, including an annual learning and teaching conference, teaching excellence awards and the Learning and Teaching Development Fund. Each call for proposals for Learning and Teaching Development Fund projects is aligned with priorities identified in the University Learning and Teaching Strategy and the national

¹⁰ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Scotland's Rural College [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p3

¹¹ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Glasgow School of Art [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p3

¹² Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Glasgow [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p4

¹³ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Glasgow [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p3

¹⁴ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Strathclyde [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p4

¹⁵ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Strathclyde [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p4

Enhancement Themes, and there is also a requirement that Learning and Teaching Development Fund projects must be able to be mainstreamed and sustainable.¹⁶
(University of Glasgow)

Identifying and sharing good practice - Glasgow School of Art has developed a range of systematic mechanisms which facilitate the identification and sharing of good practice. These include an annual learning and teaching event, as well as the Programme Monitoring and Annual Review and Periodic Review processes which include quality enhancement as a standard heading in report templates and take a critical friend approach to disseminating good practice across the schools.¹⁷ (Glasgow School of Art)

Institutional strategy and strategic framework

Delivery of strategic objectives - Following restructuring the role of Dean of Learning and Teaching has been created at the college level, and the role of International Dean at the institutional level. These senior roles are playing an important part in delivering the University's strategic objectives in relation to learning and teaching and internationalisation and are also supporting the dissemination of good practice across the institution.¹⁸
(University of Glasgow)

Development and communication of a clear strategy and vision - The University has developed and communicated a clear strategy and vision, building on institution-wide self-evaluation and involving significant organisational change. The strategic leadership of the management team is evident, and the strategic goal to become an international technological university has been effectively communicated to staff and students.¹⁹
(University of Strathclyde)

Commitment and progress towards creating a tertiary institution - Scotland's Rural College has adopted an approach to creating a tertiary institution which is characterised by consultation with staff and a genuine willingness to listen and learn from good practice in each of the former institutions. Scotland's Rural College has developed four key education strategies which have the clear potential to integrate activities and educational opportunities across the institution. Scotland's Rural College has restructured to bring about integration of further and higher education provision through curriculum departments. There is improved communication and cross-working between the Education, Consultancy and Research divisions, and across campuses, which are benefitting students and staff.²⁰
(Scotland's Rural College)

Enhancing learning and teaching

Support for innovation in learning and teaching - The University has a culture of encouraging and supporting learning and teaching initiatives that enhance the student learning experience. This is underpinned by the University's use of innovative and active experiential learning environments which enable students to learn in live or simulated 'real-world' contexts.²¹ (University of Strathclyde)

¹⁶ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Glasgow [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p4

¹⁷ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Glasgow School of Art [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p3

¹⁸ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Glasgow [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p3

¹⁹ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Strathclyde [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p3

²⁰ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Scotland's Rural College [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p3

²¹ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Strathclyde [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p3

Enhancing learning and teaching - Students are very positive about their learning experience at the University. They recognise the benefits of being part of an increasingly international community, in particular the range of different learning perspectives brought by a growing diversity of nationalities. Students are also aware of the University's commitment to research-led teaching, and they spoke positively during the review about the way in which research-led teaching is helping them to develop their own research skills.²²
(University of Glasgow)

Academic and staff development

Professional development for academic staff - Glasgow School of Art provides a wide range of professional development opportunities for all academic staff. These include the Postgraduate Certificate programmes in Teaching and Learning and in Supervision, which are mandatory for new lecturers, and the Academic Development and Promotion of Teaching Continual Professional Development Framework, which leads to Fellowship and Senior Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. Staff are positive about these opportunities which are placing a greater focus on learning and teaching.²³
(Glasgow School of Art)

The Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice - The Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice (PGCAP) is an effective mechanism for enhancing the student learning experience. University teachers who participated in the programme were very positive about it, recognising its benefits in developing their learning and teaching capabilities and improving their understanding of the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy. The case study approach of the PGCAP supports the dissemination of good practice at the subject level and PGCAP participants were widely acknowledged by more experienced members of staff to be drivers of innovation in learning and teaching.²⁴ (University of Glasgow)

Management of collaborative provision

Collaborative provision policy - The Collaborative Provision Policy, which was recently developed at the time of the ELIR, has been widely consulted on and provides an effective framework for Glasgow School of Art to pursue its strategic intention to grow its international partnership activity.²⁵ (Glasgow School of Art)

Glasgow School of Art Singapore - Glasgow School of Art's partnership with the Singapore Institute of Technology, which delivers selected School of Design programmes in Singapore, is effectively managed. The Immersion Programme, which involves Singapore-based students spending three weeks in Glasgow, provides a comprehensive introduction to Glasgow School of Art's culture and practices.²⁶ (Glasgow School of Art)

²² Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Glasgow [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p3

²³ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Glasgow School of Art [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p3

²⁴ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Glasgow [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p4

²⁵ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Glasgow School of Art [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p4

²⁶ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Glasgow School of Art [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p4

The following area was identified once each in the group of ELIR reports.

Research student experience

Researcher Development Programme - The University's Researcher Development Programme, which has a compulsory credit-bearing element, supports the systematic development of a range of professional skills and attributes for all research students.²⁷ (University of Strathclyde)

²⁷ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Strathclyde [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p3

Areas for development identified in Outcome reports of ELIRs conducted in 2014

This section sets out the areas of development included in the ELIR outcome reports for: Glasgow School of Art, Scotland's Rural College, University of Glasgow and University of Strathclyde.

Assessment and feedback policy and practice

Assessment and feedback - Ensure students have a clear understanding of grading criteria and practices, and also consider how the generic assessment scheme can be adapted to the school and programme level. Glasgow School of Art should also ensure that there is parity of feedback practice across the institution, so that all students receive timely, relevant and high quality feedback on their progress at key points during their programmes. Although Glasgow School of Art has provided staff development in relation to assessment and feedback, students remain unclear about how their work relates to learning outcomes, how assessment criteria are used to make judgements about the achievement of learning outcomes, and how feedback might help in their understanding of why a particular grade has been awarded.²⁸ (Glasgow School of Art)

Assessment and feedback - Continue to progress work to enhance assessment and feedback policy and practice. The University is asked to place particular emphasis on the scheduling and sequencing of assessments and the related feedback, making the policy explicit to students.²⁹ (University of Strathclyde)

Assessment - As part of its planned work to improve assessment and feedback policy and practice, ensure there is greater consistency in the content and layout of programme handbooks and module descriptors, particularly with regard to the information provided on the nature and submission dates of assessments, and to ensure that all staff are familiar with and fully apply Scotland's Rural College's assessment practices.³⁰ (Scotland's Rural College)

Consistent application of assessment regulations in relation to exam boards - Ensure consistent application of the assessment regulations across all exam boards and continue to monitor the impact of the University's guidelines on the use of discretion by exam boards.³¹ (University of Glasgow)

Management of information (monitoring and consistency)

Management information - In the context of Glasgow School of Art's reliance on a large number of part-time teaching staff, the institution should further develop its processes for monitoring part-time staff on both permanent and temporary contracts.³² (Glasgow School of Art)

Consistency of information - Ensure consistency of the information provided to staff and students. The University has in place codes of practice for postgraduate research students at both the institutional and college levels, and there are some examples of conflicting advice

²⁸ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Glasgow School of Art [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p4

²⁹ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Strathclyde [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p4

³⁰ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Scotland's Rural College [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p4

³¹ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Glasgow [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p5

³² Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Glasgow School of Art [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p4

in the different codes, for example regarding extensions to period of study, and leave of absence.³³ (Glasgow School of Art)

Management of information - Ensure the data being collected is valid and reliable, following work to integrate legacy data management systems. Scotland's Rural College needs to ensure it can make comparisons between programmes and within programmes, and to disaggregate data relating to students studying on different modes, for example to identify any differences in progression and completion rates. In addition, Scotland's Rural College needs to use the information set for comparison against national norms and to inform decision-making, policy and practice at institutional, department and programme levels.³⁴ (Scotland's Rural College)

Postgraduate student experience

Provision for postgraduate research students - In the context of the planned growth in postgraduate research student numbers, ensure sufficient capacity for the support and enhancement of the research student experience.³⁵ (Glasgow School of Art)

Oversight of the postgraduate student experience - In the context of the different monitoring and review processes which are applied to postgraduate taught and research provision, the University should reflect on how the graduate schools maintain oversight of the totality of the postgraduate student experience.³⁶ (University of Glasgow)

Postgraduate research staff-student contact - Promote the equivalence of the postgraduate student experience across the institution by developing an approach to staff workload planning that recognises all aspects of learning and teaching, including research student supervision.³⁷ (University of Strathclyde)

Curriculum flexibility and design

Pedagogical development and assessment practice - Progress work to harmonise programmes delivered over multiple sites and to establish a college approach to curriculum design.³⁸ (Scotland's Rural College)

Curriculum flexibility - Continue to explore ways in which there can be increased flexibility to enable more students to engage in the types of innovative and active experiential learning that the University is providing.³⁹ (University of Strathclyde)

Embedding graduate attributes in curriculum design - Make more explicit reference to the University's redefined graduate attributes (the 4Es - engaged; enterprising; enquiring; ethically, culturally and globally aware) in the development of the new online Course and Class Approval Process. This would ensure that the graduate attributes are embedded in the curriculum and would promote student awareness of their importance in learning and teaching.⁴⁰ (University of Strathclyde)

³³ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Glasgow [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p4

³⁴ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Scotland's Rural College [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p4

³⁵ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Glasgow School of Art [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p4

³⁶ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Glasgow [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p5

³⁷ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Strathclyde [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p5

³⁸ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Scotland's Rural College [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p4

³⁹ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Strathclyde [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p4

⁴⁰ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Strathclyde [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p4

Management of enhancement strategy and activities

Management of enhancement projects - enable the School to achieve the full benefit of its enhancement activities by ensuring that projects have clear objectives, that their effectiveness is measured, and that the outcomes are acted upon.⁴¹ (Glasgow School of Art)

Learning and teaching enhancement strategy - progress with the planned review, development and delivery of the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Strategy, ensuring that staff at all levels are aware of the strategy and that there are effective links with enhancement activity and initiatives at school and programme level.⁴² (Glasgow School of Art)

Support for technology-enhanced learning - The University has identified e-learning as a focus for driving enhancement, and has recently published its e-learning strategy which sets out its ambitions for technology enhanced learning underpinned by a robust information technology (IT) infrastructure. Staff understand and support the vision for technology-enhanced learning, however, as the University recognises in its IT Services Review Report, it is important to communicate the implications of the strategy to all areas of the University so that the appropriate IT infrastructure is in place to support delivery. In taking forward the implementation of the e-learning strategy the University should also reflect on the need to put in place appropriate staff development, as well as considering the role and location of learning technologists within the University to ensure there is appropriate support across all areas.⁴³ (University of Glasgow)

The following areas were identified once each in the group of ELIR reports.

Academic leadership and practice

Institutional oversight and academic leadership - As a matter of priority, establish regular and systematic arrangements to ensure there is institutional oversight of the conduct and outcomes of key quality processes, such as annual programme monitoring, external examiner reports and student feedback. This should ensure that processes are carried out as intended, avoiding over-reliance on individuals, and that the outcomes of the processes are evaluated critically within programme, departmental and institutional level committees, drawing on the contributions of a wide range of academic staff and managers. Related to this, Scotland's Rural College should ensure there is strong academic leadership, particularly at the institutional level, and that academic dialogue and debate take place at all levels.⁴⁴ (Scotland's Rural College)

Mapping to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education

Mapping to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education - Complete the detailed mapping of policy and practice to the Quality Code, and progress with an action plan to address those areas in which Scotland's Rural College is not fully in alignment. This mapping should be overseen by an institution-level academic committee and used to inform and support developments across Scotland's Rural College, including the design and implementation of quality arrangements.⁴⁵ (Scotland's Rural College)

⁴¹ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Glasgow School of Art [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p3

⁴² Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Glasgow School of Art [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p3

⁴³ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Glasgow [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p4

⁴⁴ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Scotland's Rural College [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p4

⁴⁵ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Scotland's Rural College [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p3

Staff Induction and mentoring

Induction and mentoring - Progress plans to implement an institution-wide approach to staff induction and to mentoring.⁴⁶ (Scotland's Rural College)

Institution-led quality review

Institution-led quality review - Make demonstrable progress, within the next academic year, in revising the approach to periodic institution-led review to ensure that the revised process gives adequate scrutiny to learning and teaching across all parts of the institution. The University should consider the scope, focus, granularity and consistency of implementation across the institution. It should also consider the linkages with annual review and monitoring processes.⁴⁷ (University of Strathclyde)

⁴⁶ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Scotland's Rural College [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p4

⁴⁷ Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Strathclyde [Outcome Report](#) 2014, p2

Annex

What does QAA Scotland's work tell us about the university sector?

This annex is the summary from the 2013-14 Sector Overview report submitted to the Scottish Funding Council in November 2014. It should be noted that the Sector Overview reports have a wider data source including ELIR reports, annual discussions and the Enhancement Themes synoptic reports in addition to other learning from QAA Scotland engagement with the sector.

What is the Scottish University sector good at?

The outcomes from the ELIR reports, alongside a range of QAA Scotland's other work with the sector, demonstrate that there is positive practice in the following areas:

- Student engagement and representation
- Providing student support
- Activities to promote widening participation
- Graduate attributes and employability skills
- Dissemination of positive practice
- Clarity and implementation of institutional strategies and strategic frameworks
- Academic and staff development
- Evaluating practice at the discipline and institutional levels
- Influencing and learning from international practice
- Working in a collegial manner to share and evaluate practice across the sector
- Securing academic standards and the quality of the student experience

What are the challenging areas?

Development points in the following areas have been identified:

- Assessment and feedback policy and practice
- Management of information (monitoring and consistency in provision of information)
- Postgraduate student experience (specific points were highlighted for development across a number of ELIR reports)
- Mapping of policy and practice to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education
- Detailed implementation of the Enhancement Themes

How does the overview compare to last year?

There were changes in the topics identified in the 2013-14 ELIR reports, with additional areas of positive practice being identified. Areas for development tend to be more specific to the individual institutions, although a number of themes have also emerged.

QAA Scotland carried out work in the following areas (which were in our list of 'future work' last year):

- Curriculum for Excellence
- Identifying effective descriptors of enhancement
- Flexible curriculum and student transitions
- Postgraduate student experience

- Working with employers and, especially, activity to promote enterprise and entrepreneurship
- Recognising leadership in learning and teaching
- Online learning and MOOCs

QAA Scotland was not in a position to progress work on promoting a discipline focus to enhancement activity, primarily due to changes in Higher Education Academy funding.

Further information

Further information on the content of this report is available from Amanda Park (a.park@qaa.ac.uk) and Ailsa Crum (a.crum@qaa.ac.uk).

Further information about QAA Scotland and the enhancement-led approach, including the ELIR method, can be found on the [QAA website](#).

All ELIR reports are published on the [QAA website](#). A more detailed Technical report is available for each review.

Glasgow School of Art

[Outcome Report 2014](#)

[Technical Report 2014](#)

Scotland's Rural College

[Outcome Report 2014](#)

[Technical Report 2014](#)

University of Glasgow

[Outcome Report 2014](#)

[Technical Report 2014](#)

University of Strathclyde

[Outcome Report 2014](#)

[Technical Report 2014](#)

University sector institutions in Scotland also engage in systematic Enhancement Theme activity. Further information about that work, which has a sector-wide and institutional focus, can be found on the [Enhancement Themes website](#).

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