



Thematic Report on Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) Reports 2013-16: Employability and Graduate Attributes

Introduction

As part of the ELIR 3 method, QAA Scotland produces regular Thematic reports to support 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).

Scope and structure of this report

This report identifies material relating to employability and graduate attributes within the first fifteen reports published in the ELIR 3 cycle. The institutions included in this report are: the University of Aberdeen; the University of Dundee; the University of Edinburgh; Edinburgh Napier University; Glasgow Caledonian University; Glasgow School of Art; the University of Glasgow; Heriot-Watt University; Queen Margaret University; the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland; Scotland's Rural College (SRUC); the University of Stirling; the University of Strathclyde; the University of St Andrews and the University of the West of Scotland.

This report includes the areas of positive practice and the areas for development identified in the ELIR Outcome Reports. It goes on to summarise the more detailed findings included within the ELIR Technical Reports. Please note this report draws on the ELIR reports from these fifteen institutions only. It is possible that good practice or areas of development are present in other institutions. It is also possible that additional practice takes place in these fifteen institutions, but only those elements of practice included within the ELIR reports is included here. The paper also briefly outlines the next steps in the ELIR process, following the publication of the reports.

The annex includes references to employability and graduate attributes within the ELIR Technical Reports. The paragraph numbers used in the annex are taken directly from the reports.

Employability and graduate attributes: activity to promote good practice

This section identifies positive practice at the fifteen institutions as identified in the ELIR Technical Reports.

Policy and strategy: The ELIR reports recognise that many higher education institutions (HEIs) have developed policies and strategies on employability and graduate attributes. The University of Aberdeen has Employability Action Plans at school and discipline level, with course approval processes now requiring the explicit identification of graduate attributes. The University also has an Employability Framework in place which aligns with their Learning and Teaching Operational Plan. The University of Dundee has employability,

enterprise and entrepreneurship as one of the two cross-cutting themes in its University Strategy to 2017. Glasgow School of Art has recently appointed a Student Employability and Enterprise Manager, who is likely to support the development of a strategic approach to employability. At the University of Glasgow, their Learning and Teaching Plan includes graduate attributes as a high-level project and there is a reference to graduate attributes in each college's learning and teaching plan. SRUC has developed a Learner Engagement Strategy which aims to improve students' employability and to support the development of graduate attributes. As part of Edinburgh Napier University's Strategy 2020, it has committed resources to support students in developing entrepreneurial skills and graduate attributes relating to knowledge, learning, citizenship and the world of work. Glasgow Caledonian University has a strategic commitment to reviewing and developing the curriculum to place an emphasis on graduate attributes and employability. At the University of St Andrews, seven key strategic themes known as the Proctor's Priorities have been identified - one of them is improving employability.

Embedding graduate attributes: Most of the reviewed institutions are identified as having taken a proactive approach to embedding a clear set of graduate attributes in their curricula or within wider practice. The University of Aberdeen has developed 19 Aberdeen Graduate Attributes (AGAs), which staff receive training on, and all new programmes at the University have to demonstrate how they will aid the development of AGAs. The University of Dundee has developed workshops for support staff that provide information on graduate attributes. The University of Glasgow has a Graduate Attributes Champion in each college to ensure the attributes are embedded within the curriculum. Queen Margaret University encourages students to engage with placements and community activities to promote specific graduate attributes. The University of Strathclyde calls its graduate attributes the 4Es, which stands for engaged; enterprising; enquiring; and ethically, culturally and globally aware. The University of Edinburgh has its own Graduate Attributes Framework and graduate attributes in the curriculum are systematically considered through the course development and approval, annual monitoring and periodic review processes. SRUC and the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland have also made steps to embed graduate attributes into their curriculum. 'Standout' is the overarching brand used by Edinburgh Napier University to describe the programme of events, support and advice offered to students to support them in developing graduate attributes and employability skills, while the 'Bright Red Triangle' aims to give students experience of real-world business issues. Embedding graduate attributes was highlighted as an area of positive practice at Glasgow Caledonian University. Heriot-Watt University has re-developed its graduate attributes following a review which identified a lack of awareness among staff and students about graduate attributes. The University of Stirling has indicated that it is now focusing on embedding graduate attributes in the curriculum.

Employer engagement: Several institutions have innovative methods of engaging with employers that has been recognised in the ELIR reports. Queen Margaret University uses employers on programme review and validation panels. The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland enables students to participate in modules that involve collaboration with peers and professionals in other disciplines. In addition, where students in their third year of study have been offered employment in their chosen profession, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland has taken active steps to enable the students to complete their academic award. At SRUC, programme teams have close links with industry throughout the development of the curriculum and in its delivery. At the University of Aberdeen, employers are able to make a significant contribution to the development of the curriculum through their membership of programme approval boards. The University of Edinburgh has an external Employer Advisory Group which comprises senior employers from a range of backgrounds, and the requirements of relevant employers and industry bodies are considered when new programmes seek approval. Glasgow Caledonian University has a well established strategic partnership with industry and professional bodies aimed at developing employability and

graduate attributes. Students at Heriot-Watt University recognise that industry links developed by the University were effective and beneficial to the academic community. At the University of Strathclyde, students at the Business School develop marketing strategies for external clients (who are actual employers). The University also has one collaboration with an industrial partner to provide research degree programmes for the partner's employees through a combination of work-based learning and joint professional and academic research supervision. The University is discussing the initiation of similar programmes with other industrial partners.

Careers services: The University of Dundee is planning to establish a new employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship hub which will be a physical centre comprising the Careers Service, and aspects of Research and Innovation Services. The hub would also include Dundee's Enterprise Gym, an enterprise programme running at the University which brings students and successful business people together throughout the academic year. The SRUC report highlighted that it holds a successful annual careers convention for students. The Careers Service at the University of St Andrews offers support such as CV development, job search and support for placement and internships. At the University of Stirling, the Careers and Employability Service has developed a series of workshops, known as Lift Off, to provide students with a confidence toolkit to develop their lifelong employability skills.

Work-based learning opportunities: The ways in which the institutions facilitate placements and other work-based learning opportunities are recognised. The University of Dundee has a Placement Base, which is a 'one-stop-shop' for work experience. At the University of Glasgow, the development of a work placement policy was informed by successful initiatives in response to the Graduates for the 21st Century (G21C) Enhancement Theme, including a work placement initiative in the creative industries introduced by staff in one school. At Queen Margaret University, academic staff encourage students to engage with placements and community activities. Placements are also built into many of Queen Margaret University's programmes, with their careers service providing support for students applying. The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland treats its students as professional practitioners upon their arrival, and many of their programmes include work placements or similar opportunities. The University of Edinburgh has developed on-campus internships for students and appointed a Community Engagement Officer to develop outreach opportunities at scale for students. Edinburgh Napier University is developing online services, such as virtual internship fairs for the benefit of distance learning students. A range of internship opportunities are provided to students from the University of St Andrews, and around 57 per cent of undergraduates undertake some form of internship before graduating. The University of the West of Scotland's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2011-15 indicated that all students on award-bearing programmes would be given the opportunity to engage in assessed work-related learning.

Learning and teaching approaches: The University of Strathclyde promote Vertically Integrated Projects, which provide students at all levels of study with an opportunity to work with staff in multidisciplinary teams on research and development projects. The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland also offers opportunities for vertical learning as students from different years often perform alongside professional practitioners, for example as members of an orchestra. At Glasgow Caledonian University, classroom and technology-based approaches are combined to develop student workplace and life skills. The University of the West of Scotland has School Enhancement Developers who devise and implement initiatives to support progression, retention and employability within a school.

Co-curricular activities: The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland has recognised the value of providing guidance to help students in their selection of co-curricular activities to ensure they are able to gain as much benefit as possible from the rich variety of opportunities that are available. Students graduating from the University of Aberdeen from 2014 onwards will receive an Enhanced Graduate Transcript which will record their co-curricular achievements. The University of Edinburgh has implemented the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) to recognise students' co-curricular activities, alongside their own 'Edinburgh Award', which the ELIR team considered to be a particularly positive approach.

Postgraduate: The University of Edinburgh has targets and plans for increasing postgraduate student numbers, which include providing more sources of employment for postgraduate research students on campus as an incentive to potential applicants. At Heriot-Watt University, the Centre for Academic Leadership and Development provides a variety of skills and career development activities for research students. The University of Stirling introduced an interactive skills development and skills training system for its postgraduate research student community. The University of Stirling participated in the 'Making the Most of Masters' initiative which worked to provide the opportunity for work-based dissertations at master's level. The University of the West of Scotland has embedded graduate attributes for research students into the learning experience.

Student partnership: Glasgow Caledonian University's Students' Association has a leadership and employability award designed to develop the leadership, communication and teamwork skills of students. The ELIR report for Heriot-Watt University noted the partnership working between the University and the Student Union in carrying out work jointly on graduate attributes. It was also noted that the Student Union has taken the lead in training school officers on the new graduate attributes in order to engage the student body. At the University of St Andrews, the Students' Association has run a number of professional skills workshops and activities for students, which are recognised on the students' degree transcripts. There is also a St Andrews Award which is being reviewed by the Students Association to increase its flexibility and accessibility for a wider proportion of the student population.

Employability and graduate attributes: areas for development

This section sets out areas for development identified within the ELIR Technical Reports for the fifteen institutions.

Careers services: SRUC currently does not have a central careers guidance service and its ELIR report advised the institution to explore options for providing generic careers support to students and to keep this under review to ensure the effectiveness of arrangements for students on all campuses. At St Andrews, some students commented that the University's Careers Service could provide additional support for postgraduates and for students who were seeking employment in countries outside the UK.

Policy: Students at Glasgow School of Art were not able to articulate the transferable skills they were developing as a result of the practice-based curriculum. At the time of the ELIR, Glasgow School of Art was currently working with Buckinghamshire New University on a Higher Education Academy (HEA) funded project. It was intended that final outputs from the project would be delivered during 2014, and it was envisaged that the project outcomes would lead to the articulation of a Glasgow School of Art employability strategy.

Graduate attributes: While almost all institutions had made efforts to embed graduate attributes, a number of ELIR reports identified that students were not always aware of their institutions' graduate attributes. Glasgow School of Art, SRUC, Edinburgh Napier University,

the University of Strathclyde and the University of the West of Scotland have identified a need to raise awareness of graduate attributes and to further embed them within the curriculum. The identification of a more comprehensive graduate attributes framework at the University of St Andrews was still in progress at the time of the ELIR. At the University of Stirling, it was noted that, although work had begun, there could be a more comprehensive framework for the development of all graduate attributes through the University's curricular and co-curricular provision.

Postgraduate: Postgraduate students at Glasgow School of Art commented that they received very little employability training. The School was asked to ensure it has sufficient capacity for the support and enhancement of the research student experience and to provide sufficient opportunities for research students to gain teaching experience. Postgraduate students at St Andrews University said that it was difficult to engage with the wider elements of University life due to their academic workload, and a small number of research students said that the University focused more on developing them as researchers and preparing them for future roles in research and academia rather than for employment outside higher education. The St Andrews ELIR also recommended that the University should monitor the success of the targeted support for international students that the Careers Service provides.

Work-based learning opportunities: Students at Heriot-Watt University recognised that, in some subject areas and disciplines, work-related learning experiences were difficult to obtain. At the University of St Andrews, students studying on science programmes expressed a desire for greater engagement with industry. The University of the West of Scotland ELIR report indicated that it should facilitate more work-based learning opportunities for students in non-professional areas.

Co-curricular activities: It was noted that, at the University of St Andrews, mature students found it challenging to engage in co-curricular activities due to other life commitments; this was especially true if they lived a distance from University facilities.

Areas highlighted in the ELIR Outcome Reports

In ELIR 3, Outcome Reports identify areas of positive practice and areas for development.

Positive practice

Positive practice relating to employability and graduate attributes was identified in ten of the fifteen Outcome Reports. Specific points were:

University of Edinburgh

Systematic approach to promoting and embedding graduate attributes - the University has systematically embedded graduate attributes throughout the undergraduate and taught postgraduate curricula and has a proactive approach to providing imaginative opportunities for students to develop graduate attributes through the co-curriculum. In particular, the Edinburgh Award provides a flexible framework for all students to gain recognition for their achievements in a wide range of areas, including academic, sporting, volunteering and work-based activities. The Edinburgh Award is highly regarded by staff and students and is being taken up by increasing numbers of students.

Glasgow Caledonian University

Clear focus on employability - employability skills and graduate attributes are embedded in the University's Strategy for Learning curriculum design principles which drive curriculum development and delivery. The University has strong links with business and industry which benefit its students. The commitment to employability is supported by the GCU Personal,

Professional, Academically-informed, Consolidated, Transactional (PPACT) standard of academic advising. This standard ensures each student engages with employability skills and related opportunities that are appropriate to their study and career ambitions.

Glasgow School of Art

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.

Queen Margaret University

Employability: There is a strong commitment to promoting student employability. Work-related learning is embedded within the curriculum, and there is positive employer engagement. Support and opportunities for developing employment-related skills are provided by the Careers and the Student Employability services.

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

Graduate attributes and employability: Students are encouraged in the development of graduate attributes through the range of opportunities for them to engage in professional settings within and outside the formal programmes, and by being treated as professionals from their arrival at the institution. The Conservatoire is highly supportive of students who gain relevant employment during their study, adopting a variety of flexible approaches to ensure students can complete their intended awards.

SRUC

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.

University of St Andrews

Graduate identity and co-curriculum - staff and students share a strong sense of a St Andrews graduate identity. This is underpinned by a varied and imaginative set of co-curricular opportunities which are provided to students including internships, sports activities and engagement with the community.

University of Aberdeen

Promoting employability and graduate attributes: The arrangements for promoting employability and delivering the Aberdeen Graduate Attributes in the undergraduate curriculum are systematic and have brought about a range of enhancements to the student experience. Development of the Aberdeen Graduate Attributes was central to the new curriculum and it is evident that considerable thought has been given to their careful embedding. Support for this is provided through a range of measures, such as staff support provided by the Centre for Academic Development. A clear focus on employability is achieved through the systematic contribution of the programme advisory boards, through which employers can influence and engage with the graduate attributes and programme design and delivery.

University of Dundee

Employability: The University provides a comprehensive range of opportunities for students to develop their employability skills. During the review, students commented positively about the range and relevance of the initiatives provided, including the Enterprise Gym and the Placement Base.

University of Glasgow

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 annual monitoring and periodic subject review processes.

Areas for development

Development areas relating to employability and graduate attributes were identified in three of the fifteen reports. Specific points were:

Glasgow School of Art

Employability: Continue to develop, implement and embed a strategic approach to employability across the institution, ensuring that students can articulate a range of employability skills when they graduate.

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; and 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.

University of the West of Scotland

Implementing strategy for work-related learning - in order to make demonstrable progress with targets outlined in the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, include a wider variety of opportunities for assessed work-related learning for all students, especially those in non-professional areas, and make certain that students are aware of these opportunities.

Visibility of graduate attributes - progress its plans to ensure the visibility of graduate attributes to students both through its work on personal development planning and through the promotion and use of graduate attributes in module descriptors, programme specifications and learning outcomes.

What happens next?

QAA Scotland follows up the ELIR outcomes with institutions individually through annual discussion visits and each institution is required to produce a Follow-up Report indicating how they have addressed their own ELIR outcomes. QAA Scotland also promotes collaborative working between institutions to share good practice and to find collective solutions to common areas for development. Each institution is invited to participate in a Follow-up event to engage with the ways other institutions who were reviewed at around the same time have addressed their review outcomes.

In relation to employability and graduate attributes, the current QAA Enhancement Theme, Student Transitions, will allow institutions to carry out research and development work focused on enhancing the experience of students transitioning from higher education into employment. Further information on the Student Transitions Enhancement Theme can be found at the Enhancement Themes website - www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk

References to employability and graduate attributes in the ELIR Technical Reports

The paragraph numbers below refer to those in the original ELIR Technical Reports for each institution.

University of Aberdeen

8 The progressive and successful implementation of CREF [Curriculum Reform] has had a transformational effect on the design and delivery of undergraduate courses and programmes, and has driven a range of supplementary initiatives including the revised personal tutor scheme (see paragraphs 30-32) and the employability resources available through the ACHIEVE framework on the virtual learning environment, MyAberdeen (see paragraphs 42 & 45). The availability of distinctive enhanced study options, such as the 6th Century Courses (6CCs) and language courses, has expanded in response to student demand. Course approval forms and processes now require the explicit identification of graduate attributes. This emphasis on enhanced employability has resulted in the development of programme advisory boards and Employability Action Plans at school and discipline level. Good practice identified in the Employability Action Plans is disseminated through reports from school and college level to the Careers Service and to the University Committee on Teaching & Learning (UCTL).

36 The University's virtual learning environment (VLE), MyAberdeen, is used to enhance the student experience in a range of imaginative ways. Since 2011, the University has recruited student interns to support the enhancement and development of the VLE, ensuring that developments take student ideas and perspectives into account. The range of information and the form of its presentation is responsive to student opinion. It incorporates a variety of useful tools, such as the Peer Assessment Module and a Frequently Asked Questions section relating to points arising from the student survey. Student engagement with graduate attributes is promoted through the VLE with the inclusion of a class blog, reflective journal and e-portfolio which enable students to document and collate evidence of their self-evaluations, work experiences, and reflections on their learning from work. The School of Medical Sciences developed student retention support using the VLE, an approach which the ELIR team heard is now being rolled out across all schools. In discussion with the team, undergraduate students, in particular, were very positive about the range of material available through MyAberdeen and staff emphasised its benefits in support employability.

41 The University has placed considerable emphasis on employability through the Curriculum Reform activity and has a wide ranging and systematic approach to its promotion. The University has enhanced its student experience through the introduction of the Aberdeen Graduate Attributes (AGAs) which are a core element of the new undergraduate curriculum. The 19 AGAs are grouped into four main categories: academic excellence; critical thinking and effective communication; learning and personal development; and active citizenship. The review and revalidation of programmes during CREF involved explicit consideration of AGAs and all new programmes now have to demonstrate how they will aid the development of AGAs through the approval forms (SENAS) and related process. During ELIR, staff reported that review of the AGAs had become more thorough and detailed over time, a view which was confirmed by the supporting materials.

42 The explicit achievement of AGAs is not assessed but the University aims to assist students to articulate the skills and attributes they develop in addition to their academic awards, for example through the tools available on the VLE (see paragraph 36) and through discussion with their personal tutors. To support staff understanding, and therefore student development, the Centre for Academic Development embeds AGAs in all of its staff training. Students indicated that they found information on AGAs and the related area of the VLE, known as ACHIEVE, easily accessible. Students were particularly positive about the ACHIEVE resource. Some students indicated that they would appreciate more focus on AGAs in class time to support their reflection. The University provided examples of courses which explicitly support student reflection on the AGAs, such as the Learning to Work course provided by the School of Education and the Biotechnology course Working Out: Placement and Career Skills. The University also indicated that AGAs for postgraduate taught and research students have been developed and will be launched in 2014-15.

43 The University has an Employability Framework in place which aligns with the Learning & Teaching Operational Plan and AGAs. The Framework comprises five employability strands: AGAs, Curriculum Development, Employer Engagement, Co-curricular Activities, and Career Planning.

44 Employer engagement is a priority for the University and the development of the AGAs was underpinned by an analysis of employer views. A review of employer engagement across the institution led to the establishment, in 2011, of the Careers Service Employer Board, chaired by the Vice-Principal (Learning & Teaching) and a supporting network of programme advisory boards (PABs). The Board acts as a steering group for the Careers Service and a discussion forum for employer groups and University staff, as well as reviewing PAB work annually. PABs enable students, academic staff, alumni and employers to exchange ideas and experiences on employability-related topics. PABs, along with schools, are responsible for producing Employability Action Plans that highlight how schools are approaching employability and create action lists of how they can improve further.

45 Students are able to discuss matters relating to their employability with their personal tutors and have access to Student Employability Action Plans and other resources through ACHIEVE, available on the VLE. All students graduating from summer 2014 will receive an Enhanced Graduate Transcript which will record their co-curricular achievements.

51 Overall, the University's engagement with the national Enhancement Themes is broadly in line with sector expectations. There is good engagement with the Themes at institutional level with staff contributing to the Themes' development and the Themes being used to influence institutional activity. Engagement with the Themes at school level is more variable, although teaching staff did demonstrate awareness of topics such as graduate attributes, employability, responding to student needs, and assessment, while often being unaware that these related to national Enhancement Themes or that there was such an initiative. However, the ELIR team considered that this is because much of the school engagement with the Themes is embedded within the suite of CREF initiatives. These topics are part of normal business for staff in schools and, as such, that represents a positive approach.

53 The previous Enhancement Theme, Graduates for the 21st Century, aligns closely with the University's development of Aberdeen Graduate Attributes (see paragraph 41) and the University submitted four case studies for the Theme: The University of Aberdeen's Sixth Century Courses: The Natural World; The University of Aberdeen's Learning & Teaching Enhancement Programme; The University of Aberdeen's Sixth Century Courses: The Mind Machine; and The University of Aberdeen's Sixth Century Courses: Science and the Media. The University Centre for Academic Development (CAD) website has a database, Spotlight

on Good Practice, which categorises the examples using the Enhancement Theme headings.

77 The University's approach to the use of external reference points in self-evaluation has many positive and effective features, but there are also areas for potential improvements. The positive features include the extent to which the University considers the practice of its comparator institutions in the context of significant transformational projects, such as curriculum reform and the academic year restructure. Particularly positive is the University's use of external members on programme advisory boards (PABs). The University has a well-established record of working with employers who, through their membership of PABs, are able to make a significant contribution to the development of the curriculum, especially in relation to graduate attributes. External members of PABs act as 'critical friends' to programme areas and their contribution to programme design and development provides a valuable source of external advice and expertise on an ongoing basis.

University of Dundee

12 The University Strategy to 2017 is underpinned by nine component strategies, with three top-level categories (learning and teaching, research, and wider impact), two cross-cutting themes (internationalisation, and employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship) and four enabling elements. As noted in paragraph 9, the Metastrategy for Enhancement of the Student Experience is in the early stages of development.

50 Teaching provision at the University has a strong focus on the professions, with approximately half of students graduating with professionally accredited degrees. The percentage of the University's graduates in employment or further study has declined over the past five years, although the University outperforms the UK and Scottish averages. The University recognises this as a priority area and the University Strategy to 2017 includes employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship as one of the cross-cutting, enabling strategies, and the Learning and Teaching Strategy to 2017 details the importance of embedding graduate attributes into curricula.

51 Students are very positive about the Careers Service which provides support and advice on a range of employment and career related issues including: help with CV writing; finding placements and internships; volunteering through the Placement Base, which is a 'one-stop-shop' for work experience; and finding work through the Careers Service JobShop. Subject advisers located within the Careers Service provide an effective careers advisory service to each of the schools.

52 The University provides a range of employability initiatives including: postgraduate modules which contribute to the Scottish Internship Graduate Certificate (with a placement in Scotland) and the Global Internship Graduate Certificate (with a placement in India); the Dundee Graduate Skills Award, which provides recognition for extracurricular activities such as volunteering and student representation; employability modules; the Enterprise Gym, which helps students from all disciplines to develop their entrepreneurial skills; and the Greenhouse, a business pre-incubator facility for students and staff with ideas for business start-ups. The University is also planning to set up an employability, enterprise and entrepreneurship hub which will be a physical centre comprising the Careers Service, the Enterprise Gym and aspects of Research and Innovation Services.

63 The Library and Learning Centre (Educational Development) also organises the 'inspirED' educational development programme which comprises a range of workshops and lunchtime meetings to support staff in learning and teaching and academic practice. Topics include designing flexible curricula, employability and graduate attributes, and giving

effective feedback on assignments. The workshops provide continuing professional development opportunities for new and experienced academic staff, and facilitate networking and the sharing of good practice.

University of Edinburgh

22 The University's ambitious targets and plans for increasing postgraduate student numbers include: increasing the ratio of postgraduate research students to staff to at least 2.5:1 by the end of the Strategic Plan period in 2016 (from 1.5:1 in 2013-14); developing new master's programmes in areas where there is high demand, to be delivered both in Edinburgh and at a distance; developing new scholarship schemes to help increase applications; providing more sources of employment for postgraduate research students on campus, and bidding for more external funding to support and encourage postgraduate students to study at the University.

45 The introduction of peer support was a key aim of the Student Experience Project (see paragraph 7) with the aspiration of making peer support available to all students. All schools have peer support in place for at least one undergraduate year group; at the time of the current ELIR peer support initiatives were beginning to be implemented for taught postgraduate students. The University currently has around 40 peer support projects operating across its 22 schools, including: peer-assisted learning schemes; academic families; befriending initiatives; and mentoring and house systems. Training is provided by EUSA and the University for those involved in developing and leading peer support. Students who met the ELIR team commented positively about the benefits of peer support schemes, including the skills and graduate attributes developed by mentors through their involvement in the schemes and staff commitment to them. Mentors involved in the schemes were able to use their experience to fulfil the requirements of the Edinburgh Award (see paragraph 72). It was evident to the team that the University's promotion of peer-assisted schemes represents positive practice (see paragraph 77). The team would encourage the University to continue supporting staff and students in the embedding of peer-assisted learning and to continue working with EUSA to deliver appropriate training for peers.

67 The University has an effective approach to promoting the development of graduate attributes and employability skills. The 2011 ELIR report noted that the University had made good progress in this area and that continues to be the case. The University's Graduate Attributes Framework provides a key reference point for supporting students in the development of their graduate attributes through curricular and co-curricular opportunities. The work on graduate attributes is overseen by the Employability Strategy Group and guided by two sources: the internal Employability Consultancy and the external Employer Advisory Group, which comprises senior employers from a range of backgrounds who advise on the capabilities the University's graduates will need to enter the careers they wish to pursue.

68 The University has implemented the Higher Education Achievement Record, which it highlights as expanding the institution's capacity for recognising graduate attributes. All students (other than MBChB and research postgraduates) who have graduated from summer 2012 onwards receive an achievement report identifying a wide range of their activities while at the University.

69 Embedding graduate attributes in the curriculum is systematically considered through the course development and approval, annual monitoring and periodic review processes. In addition, the University has an expanding variety of ways for promoting, and supporting, the development of graduate attributes in the co-curriculum, including through the Edinburgh Award (see paragraph 72) and through a programme of pilot work aimed at

exploring the potential of a University experience to allow the development of graduate attributes. The pilot work includes the University's support service for student entrepreneurs (LAUNCH.ed), the development of on-campus internships, and the appointment of a Community Engagement Officer to develop outreach opportunities at scale for the students. The ELIR team learned that the LAUNCH.ed service engaged with 1,300 students during 2013-14, providing one-to-one advice for around 600 students, running 40 events and engaging in start-up support for 28 new companies.

70 The University has also been successful in embedding graduate attributes for taught postgraduate students. The 'Making the Most of Masters' scheme, which runs in partnership with Aberdeen and Stirling universities, allows students to choose to engage with employers for a work-based project in place of a more traditional master's dissertation. At the end of 2013-14, more than 700 work-based projects had been offered in the three universities (around 400 of those based in Edinburgh). During the current ELIR, it was evident that taught postgraduate students considered these work-based placements beneficial in developing their employability. The students who met the team also spoke positively about the extent to which graduate attributes were embedded in their curricula.

71 The ELIR team considered the Edinburgh Award to be a particularly positive approach for promoting graduate attributes and employability. By the end of 2013-14, more than 500 students had received an Edinburgh Award, exceeding the target set in the 2012-16 Strategic Plan for the end of the planning cycle. Students who met the team were unanimous in their praise for the range of ways they could engage with the Award process, and the support they received from Personal Tutors, award leaders and other staff in order to attain it. The Award recognises achievement in both curricular and co-curricular activities, and is flexible enough to allow new Award types to be created in the future for more areas of student activity. It already recognises activity in a wide range of arenas, including volunteering, Sports Union Club Management, part-time work experience, representing students, peer support and student media. The team learned that the Employability Consultancy and IAD planned to work together with individual course and programme leaders to develop further opportunities for students to gain an Edinburgh Award, and to develop the confidence of staff in embedding graduate attributes and employability skills more generally in all aspects of their teaching. Achievement of the Edinburgh Award appears on the Higher Education Achievement Report and is clearly held in high regard by staff and students.

101 New programmes must be approved in the first instance by the relevant school board of studies through arrangements determined by the relevant college, which has formal authority for approval. Colleges have detailed procedures for approval arrangements for programmes within their jurisdiction. School boards ensure that proposals conform in particular to relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, the requirements of relevant PSRBs, and meet the requirements of relevant employers and industry bodies. Programme specifications are prepared as part of the approval process, using a standard template, and describe concisely the aims, structures and key features of the programme; the learning, teaching and assessment strategies and methods; the programme outcomes in terms of knowledge and understanding, graduate attributes, and technical skills; and career opportunities. Programme proposals are accompanied by detailed comments from external experts and internal colleagues not directly associated with the preparation of the proposal. The ELIR team met staff with institutional level roles as well as staff based in schools, all of whom were clear about these arrangements. School boards of study, or the relevant Learning and Teaching Committee, have authority to agree revised/new courses for report to the relevant college committee according to college approval mechanisms, and the definitive record of all courses is held in the online Degree Regulations and Programmes of Study. The team reviewed detailed examples of the programme approval process from the College of Science and Engineering

and the College of Humanities and Social Science, and concluded that the University's arrangements for programme and course approval are effective.

129 In September 2014 the University had collaborative agreements with 64 international institutions and 20 UK institutions. Although the number of agreements has increased since the 2011 ELIR, the number of students studying with the University through collaborative arrangements has not increased significantly. The University's current collaborative, partnership and exchange activity includes jointly awarded postgraduate research degree programmes, which enable doctoral students to embark on jointly supervised research degrees aimed at enhancing their research experience and employment opportunities internationally. The benefits for students on these programmes include access to two research environments and cultures, as well as access to the training and facilities of two research-intensive universities.

Edinburgh Napier University

1 The University describes itself as an 'enterprising University' whose values are 'to be professional, ambitious, innovative and inclusive'. It has a broad portfolio of degrees with a professional focus that are linked to the workplace and to communities at home and abroad. It is committed to research that has impact; contributes to policy development and environmental, economic and social well-being; and is supportive of business innovation and growth. The University states that it is committed to widening access and to developing graduates who are highly valued by employers.

13 The Academic Strategy sets the direction of learning and teaching practices, which were also informed by the previous national Enhancement Theme, Developing and Supporting the Curriculum. The Academic Strategy is a development of the previous Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2010-15. While the previous Strategy placed high value on employability and emphasised the development of students as global citizens, the University recognised that broader skills and employability are developed in the way students study, learn and are assessed, as well as by what they learn. The Academic Strategy establishes a pedagogic framework that places students at the centre of an active learning and conceptual change model. It focuses on shaping the student learning experience, rather than on content delivery.

31 The University offers a range of pre-entry interventions to support students entering the University through a formal college articulation route, including drop-in lectures, team teaching with college staff, campus visits and the use of social media. A Coming from College resource can be accessed through the University's virtual learning environment (VLE) and is open for any student to self-enrol. This online support tool is designed to help college students negotiate the transition from college to university and provides additional signposting to relevant services, such as employer mentoring, study abroad, and study skills support.

33 There has been an increase in student numbers on part-time and distance learning modes of study across all student groups. The University acknowledged challenges in offering distance learners and part-time students comparable opportunities to engage in employability activities and network with local businesses. The University is developing online services, such as virtual internship fairs, to reach these student groups. The University invested in 12 fee-waivered places on the Postgraduate Certificate in Blended and Online Learning programme, aimed at developing staff to better support students on distance learning programmes. The University has identified use of technology-enhanced learning as one way of delivering a comparable student experience. Online and face-to-face workshops are provided to support staff engagement with technology-enhanced learning.

A dedicated Learning Technologist is embedded in each faculty to provide staff with hands-on support and one-to-one guidance. In light of the recent decision to disestablish the faculties and move to a school based structure, the ELIR team encourage the University to provide school level access to a Learning Technologist to support staff in their use of technology-enhanced learning to deliver an equitable and comparable experience for distance learners and part-time students.

52 Strategy 2020 identifies the development of enterprise and innovation skills for students as a priority, and the University has committed resources to support students in developing entrepreneurial skills and graduate attributes relating to knowledge, learning, citizenship and the world of work.

53 The ELIR team noted that, while not all students were familiar with the term 'graduate attributes', they were familiar with the attributes themselves and demonstrated active engagement with opportunities to enhance their academic, employability and personal development skills through their courses and extracurricular activities.

54 Standout is the overarching brand used by the University to describe the programme of events, support and advice offered to students to support them in developing graduate attributes and employability skills. Findings from a Student Closeness focus group indicated a high level of awareness of Standout. This was also confirmed when the ELIR team met students.

55 The ELIR team learned of a number of mechanisms aimed at developing graduate attributes and employability skills. Bright Red Triangle, the University's 'one-stop-shop for extracurricular student enterprise activities', aims to give students experience of real world business issues. Bright Red Triangle encapsulates a number of initiatives, including Bright Red Ventures and Bright Red IDEA, to coordinate student enterprise activities, create employment, generate economic growth and provide opportunities for enterprising students to work in partnership. The NSA's VBase initiative encourages student participation in volunteering activities and employs a part-time Employability and Volunteering Coach from the University's careers team. The University provided examples of programmes that explicitly support student reflection on graduate attributes, including work-based learning with Edinburgh TV and Personal Selling Skills modules.

56 Students who met the ELIR team commented positively on the range of opportunities that were available to them to develop transferable skills, and indicated that they were able to discuss matters relating to employability, and other study and personal development skills with their personal tutors. Staff confirmed their awareness of how graduate attributes are embedded in the curriculum.

[Glasgow Caledonian University](#)

9 The University's commitment to integrate and align policy and practice is evidenced by the alignment of Phase Two Portfolio Refresh with Strategy 2020. This involved reviewing and developing the curriculum to place an emphasis on graduate attributes and employability in accordance with the curriculum design principles defined in the SfL. The Student Experience Framework (SEF) defines the strategic direction for, and management of, the delivery of the GCU student experience. The Quality Enhancement and Assurance Handbook (QEAH) has been revised to support and underpin the implementation of the SfL and SEF, reflect new academic structures, and ensure quality enhancement processes remain fit for purpose as academic structures change.

28 The Caledonian Club was identified by students in discussion with the ELIR team as an important and effective dimension for engagement. It is a key widening participation and community engagement initiative which works with local communities in a structured way to address lower than average rates of progression to university. This approach provides an opportunity for the University's students, recruited from all schools, to take on the role of Caledonian Club student mentor. This role is linked to the University's Student Leadership Programme (SLP), the GCU Students' Association's leadership and employability award designed to develop leadership, communication and teamwork skills.

47 The University's approach to adopting technology to enhance learning, teaching and assessment is defined in the SfL and led by the blended learning team at GCU LEAD. Classroom and technology-based approaches are combined to develop student workplace and life skills, and include the use of blogs and wikis as formative coursework and to enhance communication with students on placement, and exploration of the impact of mobile technology for student feedback. The University has identified areas for further development such as e-assessment and e-submission policy development with related actions and targets defined in the Blended Learning Roadmap.

50 The academic advising process supports students in developing personal, academic and professional skills at the University. The University uses the PPACT (Personal, Professional, Academically informed, Consolidated, Transitional) standard of academic advising, developed in response to cross-university consultation. The model, introduced across the University in 2013, covers academic and social matters and seeks to develop a strong sense of belonging in all students. The PPACT standard provides staff with a clear set of guidance for advising students, ensuring parity of provision. The standard supports partnership working between students and staff by implementing a series of regular meetings between the student and their academic advisor to identify and review interventions and opportunities. Staff are positive about this model of academic advising, and recognise benefits of the formalised approach including ample training for advisors and positives in building relationships with students.

57 The SfL aims to develop attributes linked to employability and career development and places employability skills for global citizens as a core principle for curriculum design. This focus on employability is also reflected in the SEF, where employability at every level of study is a priority theme. This approach is reinforced by embedding employability within portfolio and curriculum design. The Real WoRLD (Realising work-related learning diffusion) project aims to enhance students' employability skills through giving them the opportunity to solve real-world problems during their studies.

58 The University's approach to embedding graduate attributes and employability within the student learning experience is highlighted as an area of positive practice. This was confirmed by staff and students during discussions with the ELIR team. The University's employment rate of 95 per cent, published in 2014, placed the University as the fourth top University in Scotland for employment of graduates.

59 The University has a well established strategic partnership with industry and professional bodies aimed at developing employability and graduate attributes as well as improving employment statistics. This approach is positively received by students and identified by staff as a key contributor to student success. Students highlighted examples including positive placement experiences and guest speakers from organisations engaging with students. This 'work-ready' dimension of the GCU learning experience is recognised and valued by staff and students, and cited as a reason many students choose to study at the University.

60 Support services also contribute to the development of employability attributes. Academic development tutors have a role through the academic advising standard PPACT to ensure students consider professional career planning and employability. While key to widening access, the Caledonian Club also plays a part in developing employability skills by appointing students as mentors and providing part-time job opportunities to engage with the community.

61 The University has engaged with sector work in the area of employability, including the national Enhancement Theme, Graduates for the 21st Century (see paragraph 76). This can be seen through the development of five key graduate attributes produced by the University in response to the Enhancement Theme, which set out the knowledge, capabilities and values that students develop during their time at University.

76 The University has a history of very positive engagement with the national Enhancement Themes. The concept of graduate attributes has had a significant impact across the institution resulting in graduate attributes being clearly identified and embedded in curriculum design. Employability is another topic which has become similarly embedded throughout the curriculum from level one upwards and plays a key role in bringing authentic learning opportunities to the student experience through site visits, engagement with employers, work-based learning opportunities and real-world examples. The previous Enhancement Theme, Developing and Supporting the Curriculum has had a particularly significant impact through its articulation with the development of the SfL which impacts across GGU. The current Theme, Student Transitions, which is still in its early stages, resonates with activity already underway, including approaches to employability and graduate attributes.

Glasgow School of Art

34 Postgraduate research students who met the ELIR team commented that they received very little formal employability training, and they would value the opportunity to gain teaching experience. GSA confirmed that teaching opportunities are available for PhD students, however, in discussion with the ELIR team students indicated that they were unaware of these opportunities. In the context of planned growth in postgraduate research student numbers, GSA should ensure sufficient capacity for the support and enhancement of the research student experience.

35 GSA places great emphasis on preparing graduates for practice through the academic curriculum and the studio practice through which it is delivered, and the curriculum is underpinned by industry-led projects and live professional projects to support work-related learning. GSA did not take the approach of developing a list of Graduate Attributes as an outcome of the Graduates for the 21st Century Enhancement Theme, stating that graduate attributes are embedded into its practice-based curricula, which provides opportunities for students to develop the skills required for success in their discipline and for future employability.

36 Students who met the ELIR team, however, were not able to articulate the transferable skills they were developing as a result of the practice based curriculum. They stated that the careers service delivered some interesting talks and workshops about professional skills and preparation for employment, but that this was a generalised approach and they commented on the need to have enterprise and employability skills integrated into the curriculum.

37 In order to address this GSA is currently working collaboratively with Buckinghamshire New University on a Higher Education Academy (HEA) funded project, An Anatomy of Employability: articulating graduate capabilities for the creative arts. Initial outcomes from the project include a curriculum map enabling a comparison of approaches to the integration of employability skills in the curriculum across GSA. The final outputs from the project will be delivered during 2014, and it is envisaged that the project outcomes will lead to the articulation of a GSA employability strategy.

38 GSA has also recently appointed a Student Employability and Enterprise Manager whose remit is to consider employability and enterprise skills provision across the institution, and this appointment is likely to support the development of a strategic approach to employability. GSA should continue to develop, implement and embed a strategic approach to employability across the institution, ensuring that students can articulate a range of employability skills when they graduate.

University of Glasgow

5 The strategic approach to learning and teaching is embodied in the University Learning and Teaching Strategy (2010-15) which is being delivered through an action plan comprising nine high-level projects: Assessment and Feedback; Graduate Attributes; Infrastructure; Campus Solutions; Retention; Equality and Diversity; Innovation in our Provision; Staff Development; and Process Improvement. Each learning and teaching project has been assigned to a senior member of staff and there are key performance indicators in place to test the delivery of the strategic objectives. Progress is monitored by the University's Education Policy and Strategy Committee, which reports to Senate.

34 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 routine monitoring in annual monitoring and periodic subject review processes.

35 Staff are aware of graduate attributes and understand how they are embedded in the curriculum. However, while the University recognises that there is a lack of awareness among students of the term graduate attributes in itself, students who met the ELIR team were able to talk about the associated skills they were developing through their courses and programmes and through co-curricular activities. The Graduate Attributes Student Handbook, which was developed as a result of a student-led project in 2010-11 and which has recently been updated, is designed to address this lack of awareness by providing an overview of how graduate attributes are developed within the context of the University. The handbook is to be supplemented by a student-produced video which is intended to provide an accessible overview of how students develop graduate attributes through their academic and co-curricular activities.

41 Engagement with the national Enhancement Themes has been significant in enabling the University to take forward aspects of its strategic vision, and this engagement has had a demonstrable impact on policy and practice. The University has had a longstanding and positive engagement with the Enhancement Themes, and the impact of activity carried out under the auspices of the Themes is recognised and acknowledged by staff. For example, the development of a University work placement policy was informed by successful initiatives in response to the Graduates for the 21st Century (G21C) Theme, including a work placement initiative in the creative industries introduced by staff in one school.

42 Since the 2010 ELIR the University's engagement with the G21C Theme has led to the development of a strategic approach to embedding graduate attributes across the institution. There is reference to graduate attributes in each college learning and teaching plan, and monitoring of graduate attributes is embedded within standard University processes (see paragraph 33). Staff who met the ELIR team stated that graduate attributes have had a major impact on the institution, although they would not necessarily be recognised as being linked to the Enhancement Themes.

Heriot-Watt University

36 The case study submitted by the University for the ELIR confirmed that students had been engaged in the development of the Learning and Teaching Strategy, and that this had facilitated a constructive and effective partnership between the University and the Student Union. This partnership is also illustrated by the work the University and the Student Union are carrying out jointly on graduate attributes (see paragraph 49); the development of representative systems in Dubai and Malaysia; and the Student Union Learning and Teaching Oscars and Graduate Teaching Awards, which recognise and reward good teaching by University staff.

41 Schools have responsibility for the quality of the research student learning experience, with central oversight achieved through the Postgraduate Studies Committee. In addition, the University Centre for Academic Leadership and Development, provides a variety of skills and career development activities for research students through the umbrella of its Research Futures Student Workshops Programme. In discussion with the ELIR team, research students indicated that, generally, there is a positive research culture within the schools, and spoke positively about the support provided for them to attend external events, including events overseas.

48 The University has re-developed its graduate attributes following a review undertaken since the previous ELIR. The review identified a lack of awareness among staff and students about University graduate attributes, which the University believes to have been caused by a lack of staff and student engagement at the development stage of the project.

49 The current Learning and Teaching Strategy prioritises the development of a distinctive set of University graduate attributes (Specialist, Creative, Professional, and Global) and the embedding of these within all taught programmes. This work is being overseen by the Curriculum Working Group. School-level learning and teaching strategies and operational, and Enhancement Plans are expected to drive and support the development and implementation of the graduate attributes across all programmes. The Student Union has taken the lead in training school officers on the new graduate attributes in order to engage the student body. The development stage had recently been completed at the time of the current ELIR, and schools had begun the process of mapping their skills provision to the new graduate attributes. The ELIR team considered that the pace of implementation was relatively slow, but recognised that the University was now making progress, and that the time taken to revise the attributes and gain staff and student engagement had the potential to deliver benefits.

50 In discussions during the ELIR, although students were not yet familiar with the revised graduate attributes, they were aware of employability skills that they were gaining from their experience at the University. The students considered that they were being well equipped to begin work and believed they were highly employable. Students commented positively on work-based learning and placement experiences, where these had been

available, although it was recognised that in some subject areas and disciplines work-related learning experiences were more difficult to obtain. Students indicated that the industry links developed by the University were effective and beneficial to the academic community, allowing them to gain a better understanding of their field of study.

51 The first destination statistics for the University's UK-based students are very positive. Higher Education Statistics Agency Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) statistics from 2012-13 indicate that 93.4 per cent of graduates were either working or in further study six months after graduation, and that 75.2 per cent of those were in graduate level employment (compared to the UK average of 69.5 per cent and the upper quartile of 74.5 per cent). This data does not include international campuses. However, the University conducts its own survey to track graduate destinations that follows the DLHE format. The current employment rate (January 2014) for Dubai campus graduates is 78.8 per cent, and the University has seen a 6.4 per cent raise from the previous year. The Careers Service is working to develop improved consistency of service to students across all locations, including those studying with ALPs.

99 The University revised its annual monitoring process in 2012, with the intention of: integrating assurance and enhancement; increasing interactivity by introducing discussion sessions; incorporating review of academic performance data (including retention, progression, student success, student feedback and employability data); and enabling ALPs to engage effectively. SAMR includes taught and research programmes at all campuses, and programmes delivered in conjunction with partners or as independent distance learning. SAMR involves the consideration of feedback received from external examiners, which provides an external reference point for assuring the standard, level and currency of the curriculum. Feedback from other stakeholders such as employers and PSRBs is also considered as part of the process, alongside academic performance data. Students are fully involved in the monitoring and review processes, and the Student Union provides training and support to those participating.

Queen Margaret University

37 Graduate attributes were introduced in 2008 and then developed further through the University's work around the Graduates for the 21st Century national Enhancement Theme. The Student Experience and QELTA strategies map the University's approach to embedding graduate attributes. Academic staff also encourage students to engage with placements and community activities to promote specific graduate attributes. The ELIR team found that students were aware of graduate attributes but terminology meant that students did not easily recognise their acquisition of the designated skills and attributes.

38 The University's portfolio of programmes demonstrates a strong commitment to vocational and work-based learning and employability appears as a theme in both the Student Experience and QELTA strategies. Approaches to the promotion of employability for all students include the use of employability champions; entrepreneurship modules; volunteering opportunities and the World of Work week. The Futurefocus website also provides information for students about employability and personal development. Placements are built into many of the University's programmes and CASES provides support for students applying for placements.

39 Programme teams work closely with Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) with a high proportion of the University's programmes having PSRB accreditation. There are also strong formal and informal links with employers for example through employer panels and the use of employers on programme review and validation panels. The Business Innovation Zone, operated in conjunction with East Lothian Council and

housing the Business Gateway, is located on the University's campus. It operates as a one-stop-shop for small businesses and individuals, including the University's graduates, and there are good examples of graduates using this facility effectively. The University is also collaborating with another local University to meet the needs of local employers as part of its response to the SFC's regionalisation agenda. The University is a lead partner in a SFC-funded project aimed at placing interns in community, voluntary and charitable organisations.

Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

16 Students typically leave the Conservatoire on completion of their undergraduate degree and move into employment as professional practitioners. On some programmes, most notably Modern Ballet, Drama, and Musical Theatre, where students in their third year of study have been offered employment in their chosen profession, the Conservatoire has taken active steps to enable the students to complete their academic award. A proportion of students, notably in Music, progress onto a postgraduate programme immediately after completing their undergraduate award.

22 A powerful learning experience is delivered through the use of 'vertical' learning opportunities in which students are provided with regular opportunities to learn and perform alongside professional practitioners and students from different levels of study. The new undergraduate curriculum has been successfully developed. The core specialist curriculum includes opportunities for students to make choices which develop interdisciplinary working. This broadens the student experience and provides opportunities for students to become co-creators of their own learning.

30 The Conservatoire emphasised the importance of Transition Tutors and Learning Contracts to the success of the new curriculum. These elements are likely to further strengthen the arrangements for identifying and meeting the support needs of all students. In discussions with staff and students, it appeared to the ELIR team that there was some lack of clarity about the extent to which Transition Tutors were intended to provide advice to students on their choice of modules in the undergraduate curriculum. The Conservatoire has introduced a structure in which Transitions Tutors receive training and support from Transitions Coordinators. There would be benefit in the Conservatoire ensuring that the purpose and role of Transitions Tutors is made clear to all staff and students. Related to this, there would be value in the Conservatoire providing guidance to help students in their selection of co-curricular activities to ensure they are able to gain as much benefit as possible from the rich variety of opportunities that are available.

31 The Conservatoire has an effective approach to the promotion of graduate attributes which is communicated clearly to students.

32 The majority of staff are actively engaged in relevant professions and significant numbers of visiting artists routinely work with the students. This, together with the highly vocational nature of the programmes, creates an environment in which students are treated as professional practitioners from their arrival at the Conservatoire. In addition, many programmes include work placements and the Conservatoire is highly supportive of students who gain relevant employment during their study. Students spoke positively to the ELIR team about this approach and the wider opportunities it gives them in terms of their outlook, learning experience and employability.

33 The Conservatoire has identified a set of graduate attributes which are embedded in the new undergraduate curriculum. Students take specific modules which are aimed at preparing them for their chosen profession, and spoke positively to the ELIR team about the practical benefits of this approach. The ELIR team recognised the clear positioning of research skills and practice-based research within the identified set of graduate attributes and in the learning outcomes which are set out in student handbooks. As the Conservatoire develops its research strategy, there would be benefit in considering how best to further develop research-teaching linkages.

34 Choice Modules in the new undergraduate curriculum provide a positive opportunity for students to develop their graduate attributes through collaboration with peers and professionals in other disciplines. As a further enhancement, the Conservatoire is encouraged to consider ways of enabling students to become aware of the attributes they are gaining in this particular context.

35 Senior staff indicated that the institution is engaged with other conservatoires in tracking student cohorts over a 10-15 year period, which has the potential to provide rich data in relation to graduate destinations. There would be benefit in the Conservatoire introducing additional approaches to student tracking, for example analysing student journeys within programmes and student selection of Choice Modules (see paragraph 64).

SRUC

29 Overall, SRUC has an effective approach to engaging and supporting students in their learning with a number of further developments planned or in progress. SRUC has developed a Learner Engagement Strategy which aims to be inclusive of all learners and covers all taught, distance learning and work-based provision offered by the College including all modes of delivery and courses offered on a commercial basis. The Strategy seeks to: proactively develop students as reflective learners which not only enhances their learning at SRUC but also beyond; improve students' employability; support the development of broader capacities and graduate attributes; and recognise and value the contribution learners can make to enhancing the quality of provision and to the broader life and work of SRUC.

37 Through the legacy colleges two systems operated for providing student support. The adviser of studies role operated at the former SAC and provided the interface between students and the pastoral support services. At the Barony, Elmwood and Oatridge campuses this role is known as course tutor. Regular meetings are held between students and these members of staff. As part of a personal development plan (PDP) project, a common agenda was developed for the meetings between students and their adviser of studies to encourage discussion on exploring progression opportunities, and provide curriculum and pastoral support collectively with the aim of embedding graduate attributes including employability. At the Barony, Elmwood and Oatridge campuses, PDPs are developed and monitored jointly by the course tutor and students. At those campuses, personal learning support plans are compiled by Learning Support staff to record additional support requirements, arrange support and monitor progress. During the ELIR visits, the ELIR team learned that benefits from the two legacy systems were being combined to produce a SRUC year tutor scheme. The team considered this was a positive example of the institution drawing on good practice across the legacy colleges to the benefit of students.

47 Employability is one of SRUC's five graduate attributes which were developed as an outcome of the former SAC's engagement with the Enhancement Theme, Graduates for the 21st Century. Since the formation of SRUC, these graduate attributes have been cascaded to staff and students across all campuses with the intention of raising awareness and

seeking feedback on their relevance to the new, merged organisation. The Reflective Analysis indicated that, based on staff and student focus groups during ELIR preparation, there is a general acceptance that the graduate attributes are fit-for-purpose across SRUC. SRUC has also identified the need to continue embedding the graduate attributes in the curriculum, for example explicitly referencing them in module descriptors and in the standard agenda for student meetings with their adviser of studies. In discussions during ELIR, students demonstrated limited awareness of the graduate attribute terminology but, once the underlying principles were explained, were able to identify examples of having engaged in activities and experiences that indicated the attributes were, in fact, forming part of the student experience. There would be benefit in SRUC developing with its students a common language for understanding and promoting the concept of graduate attributes.

48 The former SAC had an Employability Strategy which, the Reflective Analysis stated, is in the process of being revised as part of the development of the SRUC education strategies, policies and procedures. SRUC is continuing the SAC practice of holding an annual careers convention for students. The convention is evaluated carefully and, although the formal student feedback was mostly positive, a number of areas for development have been highlighted for future events, demonstrating responsiveness on the part of the institution.

49 SRUC does not have a central careers guidance service and acknowledged that current provision in this area varies across the different campuses. There would be benefit in SRUC continuing to explore options for providing generic careers support to students and keeping this under review to ensure the effectiveness of arrangements for students on all campuses.

50 SRUC emphasised its strong and specific vocational links, with significant employer engagement in the curriculum and wider activity including the work of the Consulting Division. Programme teams have close links with industry throughout the development of the curriculum and in delivery, for example through the involvement of guest lecturers who are based in industry. Staff are encouraged to maintain their industry knowledge and skills in a variety of ways including through the Return to Industry programme which is part of the staff development fund. Current practice (from the former SAC) is for a member of the programme team to take responsibility for industry liaison and providing career advice to students. In the new curriculum structure it is proposed to establish Curriculum Advisory Panels for each department with representation from industry and the further and higher education sectors. In addition, the procedures for annual programme review, institution-led subject review and revalidation provide systematic checks on professional relevance. It was evident from discussions during the ELIR that students are very aware of these industry and employer links, including through research and consultancy undertaken by staff who teach them.

53 Students are supported to develop vocationally relevant skills and understanding of their employability, drawing on staff consultancy, professional practice and research, applied curricula and the provision of work experience opportunities. This holistic approach to the development of employability skills is a positive feature of the SRUC arrangements.

67 SRUC has identified four priority areas: graduate attributes; assessment and feedback; support for transition or progression; and increasing engagement with quality enhancement and associated Enhancement Theme activity across the six campuses. Funding in 2013-14 has been directed at four pedagogic research projects linked to the Enhancement Themes, which is positive, but the ELIR team considered it was too early to evaluate the potential impact of this work.

University of St Andrews

11 Key strategic themes, known as Proctor's Priorities, have been identified for the period 2014-16. They were developed following consideration of staff and student feedback and approved by the LTC. There are seven identified priorities around topics including improving feedback to students, employability, student progression and streamlining processes. They are being progressed through a range of approaches including short-term working groups.

47 The Students' Association and CAPOD run a number of professional skills workshops and activities for students which students generally regard highly. The Proctor's Office runs a compulsory online module for all students, Training in Good Academic Practice, which is intended to support students to develop their academic literacy. The introduction of the module was viewed positively by the ELIR team and it was evident from discussion with staff and students that it has promoted a keen awareness of academic skills and misconduct. However, postgraduates and undergraduates in the later stages of their programme expressed strong views that the module was pitched at too low a level. There would be value in the University considering the student feedback and, potentially, reviewing the module.

55 The University and Students' Association offer a vast number of opportunities outside the curriculum for students to engage in curricular and extracurricular activities with over 230 student societies and sports teams. Students can participate in the St Andrews Award, which is being reviewed by the Students' Association to increase its flexibility and accessibility for a wider proportion of the student population. Students appreciate the breadth of opportunities available to both undergraduate and postgraduate students, although the postgraduates highlighted that it was difficult for them to engage in the wider elements of University life due to their academic workload. The ELIR team also heard that mature students found it challenging to engage in the co-curricular activities due to their other commitments, often having accommodation some distance from the University facilities, and some students referred to a lack of childcare at the institution.

56 CAPOD provides training for the students who have coordinating roles in the student societies and students were very positive about the support and encouragement they received. In partnership with the Students' Association, CAPOD has developed the Professional Skills Curriculum which comprises over 20 different professional skills topics delivered through a series of online workshops, lectures and practical skills sessions. Students who complete the Professional Skills Curriculum will have the achievement recognised on their degree transcript. Work has also been undertaken to review how curriculum and assessment can provide scope for the acquisition of skills that are directly relevant to the workplace. The University recognises this as an area for further activity in order to support students to identify these skills.

57 The Careers Centre offers support to students in an extensive range of ways aimed at supporting student employability, such as CV development, job search, and support for placement and internships. It is evident that the Careers Centre is well used by students and feedback is generally positive. In discussions with the ELIR team, some students reflected that there was not enough support for students who were seeking employment in other countries or for postgraduate students. Support targeted at international students has been enhanced recently with the appointment of an International Opportunities Manager and,

given student feedback about this aspect of the service, there would be benefit in the University monitoring its success in this area.

58 A range of internship opportunities are available to students within the University through work placements or research projects, as well as opportunities in industry. Around 57 per cent of undergraduate students undertake some form of internship before graduating and view these experiences as very valuable. Academic staff reflected on the challenges of finding enough suitable internships and highlighted the need to manage students' expectations in relation to their availability, as well as discussing with students the role placements fulfil as part of the overall learning experience.

59 The University has explored how curriculum and assessment can provide scope for acquiring skills that are relevant to the workplace, and it is recognised that further work could be carried out in this area. During the review visits, the ELIR team heard a range of views including that support for employability was very effective. A small number of postgraduate research students said the University focused more on developing them as researchers and preparing them for future roles in research and academia rather than for employment outside higher education.

60 Similarly, a small number of taught postgraduates reflected that there was a strong research orientation to their programmes, indicating that there were opportunities to embed more innovative approaches to employability in the curriculum, linking theory to examples of real world applications. Students studying on science programmes expressed a desire for greater engagement with industry. There would be benefit in the University reflecting on these opinions as it develops its work in this area.

[University of Stirling](#)

14 The current Strategic Plan includes as one of its stated values, 'One University: We are one team working to achieve shared goals.' The ELIR team learned that the University is seeking to develop consistency across the schools through a number of strategic developments, including a common marking scheme, shared graduate attributes, and an institution-wide Personal Tutor system. In discussion, senior staff told the team that the University was moving from a position of extreme school autonomy to a more balanced state.

51 Through the Graduate School, the University introduced the Research Compass, a web-based system for providing support, formal and informal progress monitoring, and an interactive skills development and skills training system for the postgraduate research student community. Students who met the ELIR team indicated that staff and student engagement with the Research Compass varied greatly, and students expressed mixed views about the utility of the online facility.

54 The 2011 ELIR report asked the University to consider developing a more comprehensive framework for the development of all graduate attributes through the University's curricular and co-curricular provision. The current ELIR team noted that, while the University has a range of approaches to promoting graduate attributes and, particularly, employability, work was still in progress in relation to identifying a more comprehensive framework.

55 In 2013-14, the University reviewed its graduate attributes, taking into consideration practice at a range of institutions, including those outside the UK. This resulted in the development of revised graduate attributes, reflecting a holistic approach to the student experience, including all aspects of co-curricular activities. The University indicated that the graduate attributes are embedded in the Learning and Teaching Quality Enhancement

Strategy and the Employability Strategy. The University also indicated that it was now focusing on embedding graduate attributes in the curriculum, raising student awareness of the attributes, and developing arrangements for monitoring the institution's progress. A short-life working group had been convened in summer 2015 to produce institutional guidance for schools on the implementation of the revised graduate attributes during 2015-16, with the intention that a comprehensive framework for the development of the attributes would be produced by 2016-17.

56 In discussion with the ELIR team, staff confirmed that they were aware of the ongoing work to enhance student employability and embed graduate attributes into academic programmes. Similarly, students who met the team were aware of the emphasis that the University placed on supporting and preparing them for their future pathways.

57 The Careers and Employability Service has developed a series of workshops (known as Lift Off) to provide students with a confidence toolkit to enable them to build their graduate attributes and to develop their lifelong employability skills. The Service has also worked in partnership with alumni to develop specific alumni mentoring programmes for schools. In addition to Lift Off, a number of joint University and Students' Union initiatives have been developed, such as the volunteering fair, and the Students' Active and Innovative Leadership programme. Students spoke positively to the ELIR team about their experience of volunteering opportunities and the range of workshops and personal development modules available to them. At postgraduate level the University is part of the Making the Most of Masters initiative (with Aberdeen and Edinburgh universities), which has worked successfully with staff, students and employers to provide the opportunity for work-based dissertations at master's level.

108 The University has responded fully to a number of the areas for development that were highlighted in the 2011 ELIR, including implementing the School Officer role across the institution, developing a policy on assessment feedback, and making improvements to the module evaluation arrangements. Other areas of development from the 2011 ELIR have been addressed in part, such as: the balance of mandatory and optional elements of staff induction and training; the introduction of greater consistency in the research student experience; and greater institutional coordination of the dissemination of good practice. The current ELIR team also noted that there were development areas remaining to be addressed: formal evaluation of the DLT role, and creating a more comprehensive framework for the development of all graduate attributes through the University's curricular and co-curricular provision. In relation to the final point about graduate attributes, the team noted that the University has begun to address this area but the new framework will not be implemented fully until 2016-17 (see paragraph 54).

114 The process for approving new programmes is operated within schools, and the documentation describing the process indicates there should be engagement with relevant external information (such as market research) and relevant professions or industry (such as future employers of the graduates from the new programme). The University acknowledges that the way this works in practice varies according to the type of programme. The documentation provided to the ELIR team did not clearly demonstrate how programme proposals use required external reference points, such as Subject Benchmarks Statements and Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework level criteria. The University should make it clearer in the programme proposal documentation how these required external reference points have been used in the development process.

University of Strathclyde

9 The University has clearly defined its vision to be a 'leading international technological university' through benchmarking work with international comparator universities. This vision underpins the University's approach to innovation in learning and teaching, and can be evidenced through initiatives like the development of the Technology and Innovation Centre (TIC). The aim of the Centre, which is currently being built, is to bring together research, education and knowledge exchange activity from all four faculties and allow students to work with leading global industry partners. A further example of this approach can be seen in the provision of Vertically Integrated Projects, which provide students at all levels with an opportunity to work with staff in multidisciplinary teams on research and development projects.

32 The University has a culture of encouraging and supporting 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. The ELIR team highlighted this as an area of positive practice. Experiential learning opportunities are embedded in the curriculum across all faculties, evidencing the University's aspiration to be a 'Place of Useful Learning' and illustrate the University's commitment to the graduate attributes it has developed. Examples of this approach include: Vertically Integrated Projects (see paragraph 9); the 'Dragons' Den' scheme, which offers a further opportunity for staff and students to pitch research and knowledge exchange ideas to a panel consisting of senior University staff, academics and external partners; and 'Interns@Strathclyde', which provides undergraduate students with research-based summer placements involving 'one-to-one' mentorship from academic staff.

48 The University has an effective approach to the promotion and development of graduate attributes, including employability, that could be enhanced further by better communication and promotion of the attributes to students.

49 The University calls its graduate attributes the 4Es, which stands for engaged; enterprising; enquiring; and ethically, culturally and globally aware. The University is now seeking to embed the 4Es in the curriculum. Graduate attributes are evidenced in the curriculum through a wide range of opportunities that allow students to be involved in 'real-life' projects, many with credit-bearing elements. One example is where students from the Business School develop marketing strategies for external clients (who are actual employers). It is important that all students have equal opportunity to develop these attributes and are able to access these opportunities (see also paragraphs 32-33).

50 Graduate attributes and employability skills are embedded in the delivery of postgraduate research student programmes, chiefly through the credit-bearing Research Development Programme. The success of the collaborative PhD model is evidenced by the number of Strathclyde's PhD students who gain employment outside academia following graduation.

51 The ELIR team's discussions with students indicated a lack of awareness with the 4E terminology, but students said that the concepts included in the graduate attributes resonated with their experience of being a student at the University.

52 The ELIR team considered that the University has been proactive and successful in providing opportunities for students to develop employability skills. The team also considered that the University could develop this further by making more explicit reference to graduate attributes in curriculum design, for example through the newly-introduced procedures and

online tools for its Course and Class Approval Process. This would ensure that graduate attributes are explicitly embedded in the curriculum and in course documentation. Communicating the graduate attributes clearly to students would also serve to underline the importance of the attributes themselves.

106 The University currently has one collaboration with an industrial partner to provide research degree programmes for the partner's employees through a combination of work-based learning and joint professional and academic research supervision. This collaboration currently has 29 employees of the partner plus 33 newly-recruited research students. The University is discussing the initiation of similar programmes with other industrial partners.

University of the West of Scotland

11 The responsibility for ongoing implementation of the LTAS/Education Enabling Plan lies with the Vice-Principal and Pro Vice-Chancellor (VP and PVC) (Education) with oversight by the Education Advisory Committee (previously the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Board). A key part of the vision for implementation and development is ownership, responsibility and accountability at the programme level and the provision of infrastructure, business information and support to achieve this. In discussion with the ELIR team, staff explained that school-based Education Forums have a remit encompassing all matters relating to programmes, the student experience and quality enhancement, including matters relating to employability, placements and professional practice. The forums play a key role in engaging staff in this kind of activity.

36 The role of School Enhancement Developers (SEDs) is to devise and implement initiatives to support progression, retention and employability by identifying and managing these activities from pre-enrolment through to graduation within their school. In doing so, SEDs work with the school leadership teams to develop enhancement activity and engage with colleagues across the school and the University to implement activity. At the start of academic session 2012-13, one SED was appointed for each of the three schools in the Faculty of Science and Technology. In a case study submitted for the current ELIR, the University provided evidence of the contribution of the SEDs including a series of progression data for 2012-13 which illustrates improvements in student retention and progression compared to the previous year. As a result of this data, the University intends to appoint SEDs in all schools.

41 In discussions during the current ELIR, postgraduate research students were positive about the level and quality of support provided in their schools and, centrally, by the University. One example of the support provided is the use of the Vitae Framework in the Graduate School to embed graduate attributes for research students into the learning experience. The University has also provided internal opportunities for postgraduate students to showcase and share research across schools.

50 One of the ways the University has demonstrated a commitment to employability is through its compulsory and well-established approach to PDP and the progress that it has made in embedding this into the student learning experience and supporting it through the Personal Tutor Scheme. The University has also articulated graduate attributes, drawing on the Enhancement Theme, 'Graduates for the 21st Century'. Following a review, a revised set of graduate attributes were approved by the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Board in 2014. The University recognises that there is a need to raise the profile and improve engagement with the graduate attributes among students. This is consistent with discussions during the ELIR when students indicated a lack of understanding of the terminology used around graduate attributes. However, students were much clearer and more positive about

their experience of developing employability skills, identifying the benefits of their participation in PDP and the skills they had gained. To promote greater awareness of graduate attributes, the University intends to use them in personal development plans, module descriptors, programme specifications and intended learning outcomes.

The University is encouraged to progress with these plans.

51 The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2011-15 indicates that all students on award-bearing programmes will be given the opportunity to engage in assessed work-related learning. In discussions during ELIR, it was clear that students considered that opportunities for work-related and work-based learning were more accessible in those areas where study was directly related to a profession. In order to make greater progress towards delivering its own target, the University is encouraged to facilitate opportunities for students in non-professional areas, to recognise the need for flexibility in order to reflect the demographics of the student population, and to ensure that students are aware of the opportunities available.

53 The University indicated that further improvements will occur as a consequence of reorganisation (see paragraph 2). It is anticipated that the focus on the school as the key academic unit will contribute to identifying improvements to the student experience and improve retention and progression by encouraging students to identify with their particular school and programme. In working towards further enhancing the student learning experience, the University would benefit from addressing a number of areas: enhancing student mobility (paragraphs 45-47), promoting graduate attributes (paragraph 50) and meeting its work-based learning targets (paragraph 51).

59 Two central units, the QEU and the Centre for Academic Practice and Learning Development (CAPLeD) play an important and effective role in quality assurance and enhancement and the dissemination of good practice. In particular, the ELIR team heard very positive feedback from staff on the support provided by CAPLeD, specifically in responding to and supporting skills development within the schools and with individuals.

77 Procedures relating to programme design and approval are delineated in the Quality Handbook and are designed to meet the expectations of the Quality Code. Programme development teams are expected to consult and engage with support services, employers, students and graduates, and, if appropriate, Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies. The QEU provides guidance and support in the development of programme proposals and prepares an annual report with a view to ensuring that approval event outcomes are collated and used to inform practice. The report is presented to the Education Advisory Committee, and its contents are shared with CAPLeD. In addition, programme teams developing a new programme are informed of any appropriate matters contained in the report.

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183 St Vincent Street, Glasgow G2 5QD
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel: 0141 572 3420
Web: www.qaa.ac.uk