Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Dundee

Outcome Report
November 2018

Contents

About the Enhancement-led Institutional Review method

The QAA website explains the method for [Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR)](#) and has links to the ELIR handbook and other informative documents.[1] You can also find out more about the [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)](#).[2]

Further details about ELIR can be found in an accompanying [brief guide](#),[3] including an overview of the review method, information about review teams, and explanations of follow-up action.

About this review

This is the Outcome Report of the ELIR conducted by QAA at the University of Dundee. The review took place as follows: Planning Visit on 19 September 2018 and Review Visit on 19-23 November 2018. The review was conducted by a team of five reviewers:

- Bobi Archer (Student Reviewer)
- Dr Frank Haddleton (Academic Reviewer)
- Professor Clare Peddie (Academic Reviewer)
- Veronica Strachan (Academic Reviewer)
- Peter Watson (Coordinating Reviewer).

This report sets out the threshold judgement formed by the ELIR team on:

- the current and likely future effectiveness of the institution's arrangements for managing academic standards and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience.

The threshold judgement for this report can be found on page 3, followed by commendations and recommendations.

A more detailed [Technical Report](#) is also available for this review.[4] The Technical Report sets out the team's findings under each heading in the ELIR 4 method.

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[1] About ELIR:
www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/en/reviewing-higher-education-in-scotland/enhancement-led-institutional-review
[2] About QAA: www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland
[3] Brief Guide to ELIR: www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/reports/brief-guide-to-elir-method.pdf
[4] Technical Report: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/quality-assurance-reports/University-of-Dundee

About the University of Dundee

The University of Dundee became an independent university in 1967, having been founded in 1881 and been a constituent college of the University of St Andrews since 1897. The University expanded between 1994 and 2001 as a result of mergers with Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, Tayside College of Nursing and Midwifery, Fife College of Health Studies, and the Dundee Campus of the Northern College of Education. In 2015, the University engaged in a programme of restructuring moving from four colleges to nine schools.

The University's current five-year strategy (to 2022) is part of its 25-year vision to be recognised as Scotland's leading university and focuses on the theme of transformation. The Strategy to 2022 has four interdisciplinary themes: understanding and improving health and wellbeing; life enhancing creativity and design; innovating technological solutions to tomorrow's problems; and promoting social change to enhance diversity, justice and socio-economic prosperity.

In 2016-17, the University had a total of 15,390 full person equivalent (FPE) students with 11,800 FPE students studying at one of the three campuses: the vast majority at the City Campus in Dundee with others at the Medical School in Ninewells Hospital on the outskirts of Dundee and a proportion of Nursing students based in Kirkcaldy. Also in 2016-17, some 3,600 FPE students were studying by distance learning. The student population comprises 10,590 undergraduates, 4,210 taught postgraduate and 590 postgraduate research students.

Threshold judgement about the University of Dundee

The University of Dundee has **effective** arrangements for managing academic standards and the student learning experience. In order to secure the effectiveness of its arrangements for collaborative activity, as a matter of priority the University is asked to improve its academic oversight at institutional level.

This is a positive judgement, which means that, overall, the University meets sector expectations in securing the academic standards of its awards and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience it provides, currently and into the future. The University is asked to take action to demonstrate it meets sector expectations for managing the provision it delivers in collaboration with its partners. This judgement confirms there can be public confidence in the University's awards and in the quality of the learning experience it provides for its students.

Commendations

1   The University is commended for the following areas of good practice.

2   **Student partnership** - the University and Dundee University Students' Association (DUSA) have a productive and collaborative relationship bringing a wide range of benefits to the student experience, for example there is a well-established Student Partnership Agreement in place which the University and DUSA monitor through mutually-agreed key performance indicators (KPIs) and, through SRC online, students can provide feedback anonymously with examples of feedback topics being considered and actioned by the University.

3   **Postgraduate research student experience** - there is an excellent postgraduate research student experience provided across the University including monitoring which takes place at least twice-yearly through thesis monitoring committees, independent of the student's supervisor, and includes both academic progress and pastoral support needs. In addition, a range of imaginative support is available to students such as the Thesis Bootcamp.

4   **Institutional oversight and enhancement** - the University has brought about greater institutional oversight and opportunities for systematic enhancement through the introduction of the pivotal associate dean role. Associate deans enhance communication within and between schools, for example through their membership of school committees, bringing greater consistency in the student experience. Together they form an effective cross-school community which serves to enhance learning and teaching and share good practice across the University.

5   **Prioritising learning and teaching** - since the previous ELIR in 2013, the University has introduced a number of measures which prioritise learning and teaching across the institution. Staff are recognised for the delivery of high-quality learning and teaching, for example through the promotions policy, and are supported through opportunities to develop their practice provided by the Academic Skills Centre and the Organisational and Professional Development team. The University now has in place a wide variety of systematic approaches for identifying and sharing good practice including those linked to its regular quality processes, supplemented by innovative practice such as the presentations by Teaching Award winners at Discovery days.

6   **Assessment and feedback** - the University has embedded the use of the Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment (TESTA) approach across all

of its academic schools, integrating the use of TESTA with the institution's periodic programme review method. This has had a positive impact on assessment design and the experience of students.

7   **Staff and student development provided by the Academic Skills Centre** - the University's Academic Skills Centre (ASC) is a centre of excellence with a wide-ranging, innovative, responsive and proactive portfolio for students and staff. In addition to the Academic Induction Programme, the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice in Higher Education and a shorter Learning to Teach in Higher Education programme, the ASC provision includes liaison staff dedicated to schools. For students, ASC offers a comprehensive selection of academic skills support and also works with the Centre for Technology and Innovation in Learning to provide bespoke training in response to topics identified by the schools.

Recommendations

8   The University is asked to consider the following recommendations.

9   **Institutional oversight of collaborative activity** - the University should, as a matter of priority, improve its oversight of collaborative activity to ensure it has effective arrangements in place for identifying and mitigating academic risks. There would be considerable benefit in reviewing the location of responsibility at institutional level for the academic standards and quality of collaborative provision to ensure adequate oversight of key academic quality processes including approval and follow up. There would also be benefit in providing greater clarification of the associate deans' roles in overseeing collaborative provision within schools.

10   **Online distance learning** - progress its work aimed at improving student engagement, representation and support for distance learning students. The University is also asked to develop guidance for programme teams on expected good practice for the design and use of its virtual learning environment in order to provide greater equivalence of experience across programmes and schools.

11   **Widening participation and flexible entry** - take an overview of the wide range of very positive initiatives the University has in place to support fair access and flexible entry routes. This would enable the University to form a clear view of the approaches that are most effective in helping students to enter from different academic backgrounds. It would also ensure students have an equivalent experience of key stages such as welcome and induction.

What happens next?

12   QAA Scotland will continue to engage with the institution through the annual discussion visits which, among other matters, consider the ways in which institutions respond to the ELIR outcomes.

13   One year after publication of the ELIR Outcome and Technical Reports, institutions are asked to provide a Follow-up Report to indicate how they are responding to the outcomes of ELIR. The final version of the institution's Follow-up Report is published on the QAA website. Institutions also engage in a range of enhancement and development activities including Focus On projects where institutions work collaboratively to improve policy and practice relating to topics that are frequently occurring in ELIR outcomes.

Further information

14   A more detailed Technical Report is also available for this review. The Technical Report sets out the team's findings under each heading in the ELIR 4 method.

15   This review and its findings relate to the institution as a whole and do not provide information about individual programmes of study or subjects. For further information about those, contact the institution or visit its website.

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

17   Further information about QAA Scotland and the enhancement-led approach, including the ELIR method, can be found on the QAA website.

18   For further information about the Scottish Funding Council see www.sfc.ac.uk.