Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Glasgow

Outcome Report
March 2019

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 University of Glasgow. The review took place as follows: Planning Visit on 22 January 2019 and Review Visit on 18-22 March 2019. The review was conducted by a team of six reviewers:

- Professor Jeremy Bradshaw (Academic Reviewer)
- Professor Hilary Grainger (Academic Reviewer)
- Ms Nichola Kett (Coordinating Reviewer)
- Associate Professor Åsa Kettis (Academic Reviewer)
- Mr Alex Muir (Student Reviewer)
- Dr Gillian Thomson (Academic 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.

[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-Glasgow

About the University of Glasgow

The University of Glasgow was founded in 1451 and is one of Scotland's four ancient universities. The University describes itself as a research-intensive, broad-based, civic university with global reach, and local roots. Students come from around 140 countries, as well as from the West of Scotland.

In 2010, the current academic structure was introduced which comprises four colleges (Arts; Science and Engineering; Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences; and Social Sciences) - within and across those colleges, there are 33 schools and research institutes, including a graduate school in each college. The colleges are highly autonomous in relation to resource allocation, learning and teaching, and research activity.

The University's vision is to be a world-class, world-changing university by focusing on three core elements: people, place and purpose. These elements are underpinned by specific action areas which include: attracting the best staff and students; connecting with the world through internationalisation; developing a transformative campus; streamlining processes, policies, systems and student support; and undertaking outstanding teaching and world-class research that has societal and economic impact. The current five-year strategy (to 2020), *Inspiring People*, is intended to support the vision by providing a framework within which schools, colleges and services are empowered to implement policy and practice appropriate to their own circumstances to the benefit of their staff and students.

Threshold judgement about University of Glasgow

The University of Glasgow has **effective** arrangements for managing academic standards and the student learning experience.

This is a positive judgement, which means that 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. This judgement confirms that 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 engagement and partnership** - a strong and productive relationship with the Students' Representative Council is evident, and the University has taken positive steps to engage the wider student body, both on formal committees and in the range of strategic projects underway. Students are clear that their contributions are valued and acted upon.

3   **Strategic approach to widening access** - the University has a long-established strategic approach to widening access which it continues to develop through its engagement with a wide variety of stakeholders. Data and sector benchmarks are used effectively to underpin and inform the University's work in this area, which is helping students to succeed. Through its research-informed approach, the University is influencing the wider sector, for example, the University's 2016 Impact for Access Report includes findings which have informed Scottish Funding Council policy.

4   **Approach to promoting equality and diversity** - in collaboration with the Students' Representative Council, the University has a pro-active approach to supporting the diverse needs of its student body. Equality Champions, recruited from the University's Senior Management Group, work effectively in conjunction with the Students' Representative Council and the Equality and Diversity Unit. Good progress is being made with equality outcomes across the University, in particular in the areas of mental health, LGBT and student parents and carers.

5   **Academic Writing Skills Programme** - building on an initiative from a Learning and Teaching Development Fund project, the University has developed a mandatory institution-wide course which aims to improve the academic writing skills of all taught students. In addition to the benefits expected from the programme itself, its implementation has led to increased student engagement with other academic support provided by the Learning Enhancement and Academic Development Service.

6   **Progress towards parity of esteem between teaching and research** - demonstrable progress has been made since the previous ELIR in reviewing and revising the University's career development pathways and promotions criteria for academic staff on its Learning, Teaching and Scholarship career track. In addition, this work has resulted in strengthening the learning and teaching component of its Research and Teaching career track. Through this activity, the University has made considerable progress in promoting the role of teaching and establishing parity of esteem between groups of staff.

7   **Periodic Subject Review survey** - linked to its periodic subject review process, the University has introduced an anonymised survey for all staff within the area being reviewed. The survey allows staff to provide feedback on their experience of teaching, support for

teaching, cultural values associated with teaching and other activities undertaken in the area under review. The staff views are anonymised and communicated directly to the review panel as part of the preparation for the review. The survey draws on practice adopted in an international university network and has been welcomed as a positive initiative by staff and students alike.

Recommendations

8   The University of Glasgow is asked to consider the following recommendations.

9   **Feedback on assessment** - ensure that staff communicate consistently to students where the stated institutional policy expectations relating to marking turnaround time will not be met. This is in the context of the University carrying out a range of positive work to improve its assessment practice.

10   **Advising for postgraduate taught students** - in view of differing models operating across the colleges, make certain that arrangements in place for advising postgraduate taught students are communicated clearly to students, in particular, identifying each student's designated advisor/advisory team at an early stage, as well as outlining the adviser role and responsibilities.

11   **Annual monitoring of the postgraduate research student experience** - ensure that the postgraduate research student experience is monitored systematically and on a regular basis, in a manner comparable to the University's taught provision. This should enable the University to have an overview of the totality of the postgraduate research student experience including student progression, student feedback, and student engagement with training and research skills provision.

12   **Review of student-facing professional services** - establish a systematic and timely mechanism to review the contribution of the professional support services to the quality of the student experience.

13   **External examiner reports** - make external examiners' reports accessible to students in order to give them the opportunity to engage in discussion and consideration of this element of the assessment process.

14   **Analysis of exam board decisions on discretion** - develop a systematic way of monitoring and analysing the use of discretion by examination boards in order to have a clear view of the effectiveness of these arrangements, and to have clearer and more detailed information about the consistency with which this aspect of the assessment regulations is applied across the University.

What happens next?

15   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.

16   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

17	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.

18	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.

19	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.

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

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