Enhancement-led Institutional Review of University of Strathclyde

Technical 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 Technical Report of the ELIR conducted by QAA at the University of Strathclyde. The review took place as follows: Planning Visit on 31 January 2019 and Review Visit on 11-15 March 2019. The review was conducted by a team of six reviewers:

- Mrs Pamela Calabrese (Coordinating Reviewer)
- Professor Stephen Doughty (International Reviewer)
- Professor David Lamburn (Academic Reviewer)
- Professor Ian Pirie (Academic Reviewer)
- Mr Edward Pollock (Student Reviewer)
- Professor John Sawkins (Academic Reviewer).

In advance of the review visits, the University submitted a self-evaluative document - the Reflective Analysis (RA) - and an advance information set, comprising a range of materials about the institution's arrangements for managing quality and academic standards.

About this report

In this report, the ELIR team:

- delivers a threshold judgement 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 can be found on page 2, followed by the detailed findings of the review given in numbered paragraphs.

Technical Reports set out the ELIR team's view under each of the report headings. Shorter Outcome Reports are provided that set out the main findings of the ELIR for a wider audience. The [Outcome Report](#) for this review is on the QAA website.[4]

ELIR Technical Reports are intended primarily for the institution reviewed, and to provide an information base for the production of thematic reports that identify findings across several institutions.

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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] Outcome Report: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/quality-assurance-reports/University-of-Strathclyde

Threshold judgement about the University of Strathclyde

The University of Strathclyde 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 there can be public confidence in the University's awards and in the quality of the learning experience it provides for its students.

1 Contextual information about the institution, student population and the review

1.1 Summary information about the institution

1   The University of Strathclyde can trace its roots to 1796 and was granted its Royal Charter in 1964. The University's vision is that of a leading international technological university which is socially progressive and makes a positive difference to the lives of its students, to society and to the world. It has a specific focus on developing a deep integration and relationship with industry through research and through industry's direct involvement with student learning. The University has a strong commitment to widening participation in higher education.

2   The University has a strategic approach to achieving its vision, articulated in its Strategic Plan 2015-20 and, at the time of the current ELIR, was planning the transition into the next five-year planning period. The Strategic Plan has three main themes: outstanding student experience; internationally-leading research; and world-leading innovation and impact. In turn, these are underpinned by two cross-cutting themes: global engagement and operational excellence. Progress towards achieving the goals is set out in the strategic plan and is monitored and evaluated through 16 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) where current performance is set out against targets. The strategy is embedded in the departmental, school, faculty and directorate annual planning round and progress is carefully monitored.

3   The University has four faculties: the Strathclyde Business School, the Faculty of Science, the Faculty of Engineering and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. Each faculty is led by an Associate Principal and Executive Dean and operate with different committee structures appropriate to their needs. Faculty structures and membership of key committees are permitted to change over time to enable focus on key priorities.

4   The institution-level management structures have been designed to enable the University to deliver its strategy. Its Executive Team is responsible for overall leadership, strategy, policy and management. The University Leadership Group brings together faculties and directorates to progress key institutional strategic themes. Institutional governance is provided by the University Court, the governing body, and the Senate, which is the academic governing body, both of which exercise their responsibilities through a range of sub-committees. The Senate Business Committee (SBC) reviews the agenda, approvals and matters for discussion, giving preliminary consideration to the recommendations to Senate on key proposals emerging from the reporting committees. Senate receives a report from SBC and discusses or confirms approvals accordingly, focusing on strategic matters in their Senate meeting. Recently established committees include the new Course Approval Subgroup, established in January 2017, which reports

directly to the Senate Business Committee and provides an out-of-cycle approval process for courses deemed to be of strategic importance. The newly established Student Experience Committee (SEC) is chaired by the Student President. Since the previous ELIR in 2014, a Directorate of Continuous Improvement has been established and has had a key role in leading culture change, planning, implementing and sustaining improvements aligned to the University strategy.

5   The University's commitment to its strategic aim to provide a range of high- quality, technology-rich learning spaces is reflected in the significant capital investment programme. This has been underway for the last 10 years and includes the new Learning and Teaching Building Project which, at the time of the ELIR, was under construction. The strategy has had a focus on student/staff wellbeing and the proactive reduction of the carbon footprint, as well as modernising and future-proofing facilities.

1.2   Composition and key trends in the student population

6   In 2017-18, the University had a student population of just over 20,000 full-time equivalent (FTE), of whom 70% were studying at undergraduate level, 22.5% were engaged in taught master's-level provision and 7.5% in postgraduate research. In the same year, 16% of the total student population were studying on a part-time basis however, a large proportion (46%) of these are taught postgraduate students. By headcount, 71% of the institution's students were from Scotland, 5% from the rest of the UK and the remaining 24% were international (including the European Union).

7   The University manages the demographic of the student population through target setting and alignment to its strategic priorities. It is committed to increase international students from 2,035 in 2015 to 2,650 by 2020 and to increase research intensity by growing the numbers of high-quality postgraduate research students. This ambition is supported through an enhanced researcher development training provision for research staff and students. Growth in the numbers of both postgraduate taught (PGT) and postgraduate research students (PGR) is part of the current strategy, with a target of 3,100 PGT and 1,750 PGR by 2020. The University has effective mechanisms to manage its student population and monitor trends (paragraphs 71-77).

8   Widening access aligns with the University's key strategic priority to diversify its student population. The characteristics of students in terms of gender, ethnicity, disability and educational and social backgrounds are monitored to assess progress and the University has taken a number of steps to help achieve this strategic priority.

9   The University recognises that its retention rates are slightly below the Scottish average and work continues to address this. It has appropriate means of monitoring pass, progression, completion, employability and Employment Performance Indicator (EPI) rates through a range of management information. The Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) monitors progression and completion rates on an annual basis. In the faculties, the Faculty Academic Committees, convened by the Vice-Deans Academic are responsible for implementing and evaluating agreed actions (paragraphs 74 and 76).

1.3   Commentary on the preparation for the ELIR

10   Preparations for the ELIR were overseen by a small core steering group of senior staff. More detailed work was undertaken by the ELIR Working Group, which was responsible for the preparation of the Reflective Analysis and accompanying documentation, and the consultation process. This wider group included formal

representation of students together with academic and administrative staff from committees and administrative units.

11   ELIR 4 was an agenda item on all the education committees and the increased emphasis on evidenced-based enhancement assisted in further developing and embedding a culture of enhancement across the university. Students were consulted through representative systems, including course and faculty representatives and those attending the annual Student Congress. These actions enabled the adoption of a structured and inclusive process.

12   The University asked the ELIR team to focus on three aspects of its context:

- widening access and participation
- student feedback (including student voice)
- online, digital and work-based learning.

13   The documentation provided by the institution and discussions with students and staff enabled the ELIR team to confirm that these themes reflect the University's current strategic priorities.

1.4   Summary of the institution's follow-up to the previous ELIR

14   Responsibility for progressing actions in response to the previous ELIR rested with the Education Strategy Committee (ESC) and its sub-committees: Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) and Learning Enhancement Committee (LEC). Follow-up to ELIR has been a standing item on each ESC agenda with actions being progressed through committees and working groups.

15   The 2014 ELIR identified five areas for development and nine areas for embedding positive practice. The key recommendation related to institution-led review which is considered later (paragraph 105). Overall, it was evident to the ELIR team that there was clear evidence of structured, systematic and substantive activity around the recommendations of the 2014 ELIR, leading, for example, to student involvement in developing solutions, structural alterations to the academic year, new policies and guidance being developed along with staff training and workload planning (paragraphs 113 to 116).

1.5   Impact of engaging students in ELIR preparations

16   The University and the Strathclyde Students' Union (Strath Union) worked collaboratively on the preparations for ELIR. This built on a long history of collaboration and partnership. Students are represented on all of the institutional education committees at which ELIR was discussed, as well as being members of the Senate and the University Court, and their membership and contributions are central to the work of those groups and committees. The partnership between students and the University was a prominent feature of ELIR preparations and development of the contextualised topics. The recently approved Student Partnership Agreement, which builds on student engagement in ELIR preparations, aims to encourage further student engagement, with clear priorities for enhancement. Inclusion of successive Strath Union Vice-Presidents in the wider ELIR Working Group is noted by the ELIR team as supporting the continuity of student involvement across the period of preparation for ELIR and for future developments.

2 Enhancing the student learning experience

2.1 Student representation and engagement

17 The University has a strong and effective relationship with Strath Union. The University and Strath Union work in partnership, offering challenge to one another as critical friends in determining areas of focus and undertaking initiatives to enhance the student experience. This mode of working is reflective of the University's ethos and was evident through the ELIR team's discussions with students and staff.

Student representation and engagement

18 The University has an extensive student representative system in place for most student groups which is mature and long-established. The institution recognised that in some areas, such as for off-site postgraduate and online learners, the representative arrangements were in development. Students at programme level select a class representative to attend Student-Staff Liaison Committees (SSLC) including undergraduate, postgraduate taught and research and Graduate Apprentices (GA). In turn, faculty representatives collate the views of the class representatives and feed into faculty-level committees and discussions. Students are full members on committees across the University, with a clear structure of how student and faculty representatives refer matters to the Vice-President of Education.

19 The representative system has evolved over time to incorporate new developments as appropriate. The ELIR team recognised the positive integration of a student representative structure for GAs, with each cohort nominating two to three apprentices to act as class representatives and attend SSLCs. This was noted by staff and students as positive practice in allowing GA student voices to be heard and enhancements to be made.

20 The University has a departmentally-based representation structure for PGRs. With the introduction of the Strathclyde Doctoral School, the Doctoral Researchers Group (DRG), an associated representative structure had not been finalised at the time of the current ELIR.

21 Training and development are provided to student representatives (including International Study Centre representatives) by Strath Union both through training sessions and skills development workshops as part of the Student Congress. In 2017-18, senior student leaders, such as sabbatical officers and faculty representatives, were offered Institute of Leadership and Management (ILM) Award in Leadership training, delivered by the University's Organisational and Staff Development Unit (OSDU), demonstrating enhanced support for student leaders. Representative training for online students and postgraduate researchers was not consistently provided, however, the University recognised these areas were under development. The University is, therefore, encouraged to implement training for online student representatives and PGR student representatives.

Student feedback

22 The University has a proactive approach to the collection and analysis of student views and data, with established methods used such as the National Student Survey (NSS), Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES), Strathclyde Undergraduate Satisfaction Survey (SUSS) and internal class evaluation survey. There are varying methods adopted for the use of class evaluation between departments and faculties with students outlining different practice for surveys and updates on actions from feedback. The ELIR team learned that a consistent

approach to class evaluation had been piloted in the Faculty of Engineering using an online evaluation system across the Faculty delivered to students in week six, with immediate feedback reported by week seven. Following on from the pilot, a central project was underway at the time of the current ELIR to introduce an institutional Student Module Feedback system which was aimed at providing greater consistency of feedback by the end of its three-year implementation period.

23   The practices around student representation and feedback were further formalised in the academic session 2017-18 with the initiation of the first Student Partnership Agreement (SPA). This written agreement was developed through existing strong relationships between senior managers and elected student leaders and through consultation with students. Students were consulted in a variety of ways: through a survey, social media and Student Congress. The resulting SPA outlines the formal representative structures and identifies priority areas for 2018-20 which are: student mental health, careers and employability, and ensuring effective feedback. The Senate endorsed the SPA in 2018 and the ELIR team recognised that this enhancement would provide additional support for partnership working and was welcomed by students and staff (paragraph 68).

24   The ELIR team learned that the rationale given for the timing of the SPA was to provide clarity, formalise the respective roles and responsibilities between students and staff, and to aid continuity between changing sabbatical officers. It was confirmed that the SPA will assist with the planning for strategic enhancements and builds upon a long history of partnership working between students and staff. Along with formalising the SPA, a Student Experience Committee (SEC) has been introduced and is chaired by the Student President, with committee management from Education Enhancement. SEC provides the student community with a formal and direct forum for proposing and informing developments and enhancement priorities. SEC also provides a forum for discussions between key staff and students in partnership on strategic issues. It reports to the Education Strategy Committee (ESC) and the Senate (see paragraphs 68). Students highlighted examples of matters having been considered in SEC and actioned by the University, such as the recent removal of graduation fees. The ELIR team recognised SEC and its operation as a commendable and visible aspect of the University's partnership with its students.

25   The ELIR team noted variability in the provision of feedback to students with regard to actions taken as a result of their suggestions. In some areas, student representatives were responsible for feeding back actions, in others SSLC minutes were circulated to all students, in others 'You Said, We Did' campaigns were in operation. While students generally articulated that their voice was heard, some noted that they did not know what action had been taken. The ELIR team would encourage the University to reflect on guidance or models for consistent practice in working in partnership to more clearly articulate the impact of the student voice.

Student interns

26   Through the Student Transitions Enhancement Theme, the University's approach to student partnership was demonstrated through the employment of 28 student interns to lead on projects across the University. For each, the staff-student partners determined the content, scope and management of the project, including facilitating gathering student feedback as part of the process. The ELIR team commends the use of student interns in enhancement projects and the opportunities it provides for students around employability (paragraphs 68, 81 and 84).

2.2 Recognising and responding to equality and diversity in the student population

27   The University recognises and celebrates the diversity of its student population and has effective arrangements to support this. As an institution committed to being socially progressive in culture and approach, it has a range of strategies in place to support the diverse needs and celebrate the diverse interests of its students. The strategic interventions include the development of University Equality Outcomes 2017-21 and the delivery of a Gender Action Plan which outline activities to address specific gender imbalances in student populations spread across five themed areas. The University holds a Bronze institutional Athena SWAN award with all departments and schools either holding or working towards individual Athena SWAN awards. The Athena SWAN process has been used to identify areas of gender equality improvement or underrepresentation within the student population, developing and implementing actions to address these.

28   More generally, there are a number of events which highlight and celebrate student diversity, and in which the University works in partnership with Strath Union, including International Women's Day, Black History Month and LGBT History Month. In summer 2018, the University launched new online training in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion for students. This complements provision for staff relating to unconscious bias and gender inclusivity.

29   The University uses information from annual student and staff equality monitoring reports, which characterise the staff and student profile by protected characteristics, to inform its Equality and Diversity Strategy and action plans. From 2018-19 Strath Union will be participating in a *sparqs* project monitoring the diversity of course representatives. Strath Union and the University have committed to sharing the outcomes of this work taking collective approaches to supporting diversity in the student population.

Widening participation

30   Widening access and participation are strategic priorities for the University. The institutional strategy is based on a learner journey model and builds in both widening participation and articulation interventions. These reflect the University's understanding of, and commitment to, the need for research, intervention and policy at all stages of the student journey to ensure that transitions are supported effectively. The University takes a nuanced approach which monitors students' progress and seeks to provide additional action where necessary but within a universal provision model that does not label, or assume deficits, on any learners. A range of initiatives are ongoing in this area. Taken together, strategy and implementation initiatives confirm a strong rationale for this being selected as a key feature of the University's context.

31   As part of its Scottish Funding Council (SFC) Outcome Agreement, target intakes for students from wider access backgrounds have been set. The University has, through a range of measures, increased the proportion of its intake from these backgrounds whilst also putting in place policies (for example, contextual admissions) and structures (for example, Engineering Academy) to support this uplift.

32   The University's strategic ambition in this area is effectively delivered via interlocking and mutually supportive policies, procedures and delivery mechanisms. Since 2014, the University has had a central team, working in partnership with the faculties, responsible for all aspects of widening access. The team report annually to ESC detailing both activities and the development of policy and practice.

33   The central team's work is wide-ranging, and includes the management of the Children's University partnership, pre-entry activities including Accelerate Challenges, a STEM Summer School, the Centre for Lifelong Learning's Pre-entry Access Course and the online transition course 'We are Strathclyde'. Under the auspices of the University's Widening Participation strategy (in place since 2015), the institution provided several examples of carefully crafted interventions, for example, students are given the opportunity to act as paid mentors or volunteer tutors as part of an accredited element of their degree programme. For students from a care background, the University has in place Strathclyde Cares, its Strathclyde Carers' Committee, and a Student Carers' Policy.

34   The University's Articulation Working Group was created in 2017-18 and includes academic and professional services stakeholders. A leading example of the University's work in articulation is the Engineering Academy, which reflects the University's commitment to working in partnership across the education sector to support wider national goals for efficient and flexible learner pathways in engineering.

35   The University's commitment to develop understanding of, and support for, particular student groups at key transition points is exemplified in an innovative project - 'Autism and Careers - ensuring positive transitions out of university for autistic students' - one of the 2016-17 Enhancement Theme ('Student Transitions') workstreams supported by a student intern. This activity typifies the University's endeavour to continually craft new, evidence-based interventions, supporting the delivery of positive outcomes for all.

36   The ELIR team learned that students are benefiting from innovations relating to curriculum content and delivery developed to support GA activity (see paragraphs 78 and 94). These have the potential to enhance the learning experience of all students, particularly those from a widening participation background who value flexibility or variety in the mode of delivery.

2.3   Supporting students in their learning at each stage of the learner journey

37   The University provides extensive support to its diverse population of students, with clear arrangements for particular groups (paragraphs 30-35), including international students (such as with financial support and scholarships), LGBTQ+ students (through a partnership with LGBT Youth Scotland), students of faith (through hosting religious events) and alumni (through access to the careers service for five years after graduation).

Induction

38   The University offers a layered approach to student induction with a range of support provided at the University, faculty and department level for new students, including an annual Student Inauguration event for each faculty, presided over by the Principal. Tailored induction activity is provided for PGRs, and pre-entry support offered to care-leavers, mature students and college entrants.

39   As part of the Student Transitions Enhancement Theme, and consistent with the University's digital strategy, a new online 'We are Strathclyde' induction module was introduced in August 2016 for first-year undergraduates to introduce students to the institution, culture and support services. This was reflected on positively by students and the ELIR team recognised the development as a positive example of the impact of the digital strategy (paragraphs 33 and 84).

Supporting students' learning

40   The ELIR team learned about the University's commitment to support student's mental health and wellbeing. The investment in new staff for the Wellbeing Service, introduction of new treatment options, offering of twilight counselling sessions, implementation of online e-learning support, and partnership with Strath Union on establishing a Student Minds peer support initiative, demonstrate significant enhancement to the student experience.

41   The University operates a Personal Development Advisor (PDA) system, with varied implementation across departments and faculties. The ELIR team recognised institutional guidance and resources (such as a Myplace page) exist, however, in discussions with the team, some students reflected a lack of clarity or engagement with the role. Students highlighted particular aspects of positive practice, for example, 'academic family' peer support networks and bespoke arrangements for GAs. It was clear that, despite variation in practice, students felt supported and would know who to go to for assistance if needed. The University is encouraged to continue enhancing its oversight and implementation of the PDA system across the institution.

Assessment and feedback

42   The arrangements for providing assessment information to students are effective and understood. Students identified that assessment expectations and submission guidance were made clear on Myplace or in classes. However, students who met the ELIR team indicated a lack of clarity in processes around turnaround time and late submission. At the time of the current ELIR, the Assessment and Feedback Working Group was revising a range of institutional policies which were due for approval during the current academic session. The proposed revisions to policies would provide greater consistency for students and the team would encourage the University to implement the revised policies expeditiously following approval.

43   Aligned with the University's strategy, students recognised a strong international outlook as part of their learning experience with a wide range of opportunities for study abroad, as well as experiencing a globalised curriculum. While undertaking a study abroad experience, students receive a range of support both from their academic departments, and the Recruitment and International Office (RIO) which students reflected was a positive contribution to their experience. The University has over 200 Erasmus (European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) or exchange partners internationally and offers international opportunities in a range of modes from full semester study to work experiences. The University regards an international outlook as an important component in the Strathclyde graduate attributes, with important links to employability. In its meetings with students, the ELIR team learned about particular projects such a funded summer school for widening access students. The ELIR team considered this activity was commendable, making an evident impact on the student experience in developing an international mindset and experience (paragraphs 46, 47, 70, 126-128).

Industry links

44   The University has a close relationship with industry which is deeply embedded in the activities of the institution and the student learning experience. The positive impact of these industry activities was evident from the ELIR team's discussions with students who highlighted examples of placements, industry projects for assessment, and summer projects. The development of GAs and opportunities for work-based learning further evidences this connection with industry. This area represented commendable practice (paragraph 70).

Employability

45   In addition to the industry links and placement opportunities, the University provides a range of careers guidance and support to prepare students for employment. Staff working in the careers service participate in Faculty Academic Committees to share information about the sector and initiatives being offered by the Careers Service. Students who met the ELIR team were confident that they were prepared for employment and, for example, were familiar with initiatives provided by the Strathclyde Entrepreneurial Network, such as the Enterprise Pathway programme which provides free, accredited training to students from all disciplines to help them set up their own business.

46   The University has evolved its approach to articulating the Strathclyde graduate attributes, encouraging students to be 'engaged, enterprising, enquiring and ethically, globally and culturally aware'. In 2015-16, the Education Strategy Committee initiated work to identify the key characteristics of the student experience, and developed metrics aligned with the strategic priorities (paragraphs 7, 71-74, 96). This project resulted in the development of the Learner Experience Framework (LEF). The LEF outlines six themes with key metrics including measures for internships, industry links, international opportunities, use of digital technologies, graduate attributes, and retention and progression.

47   The metrics were refined following exploration with staff and students, including student interns, running a series of focus groups. At the time of the current ELIR, the University was collating data to allow the use of the LEF as an effective tool for the monitoring and enhancement of the student experience and this, in turn, enhances the development of graduate attributes in our students. The Learner Experience Framework remains a priority activity for the Education Strategy Committee and aligns closely with the national Enhancement Theme, Evidence for Enhancement. The ELIR team recognised that the LEF demonstrates a strategic development which contributes to a positive student experience and a range of commendable practices such as the University's links with industry, provision of international opportunities and the use of data to inform decision-making (paragraph 74 and 119).

2.4   Postgraduate taught and research student experience

48   Institutionally, oversight of the quality of the postgraduate student experience is provided by the Faculty Academic Committees and their engagement with effective quality assurance and enhancement processes. Enhancement of the postgraduate student experience is supported both at institutional level and through the faculty structures.

49   Cross-institutional reflection on postgraduate student perspectives is facilitated through the University's Surveys and Metrics Working Group which draws on data from the annual PTES. In addition, schools and departments now incorporate review and reflection of PTES metrics within Learning and Teaching Improvement Plans. The Researcher Development Subcommittee of the University's Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee considers results of the counterpart Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) with involvement from faculties. In each case, the University deploys data, both quantitative and qualitative, to inform its strategic and operational deliberations (paragraphs 77, 117 and 123).

Postgraduate taught students

50   At the module level, faculties use feedback from students, external examiners, course and institution-led reviews to monitor and take any necessary action relating to PGT provision. A number of PGT courses run across departments or faculties.

51   The University has arrangements in place for PGT induction which cover academic elements (for example, assessment criteria), academic support and aspects of the wider student experience. It was evident from the RA and discussions with students that the employment-relevant, interdisciplinary and international nature of PGT degrees was valued by students.

52   The University has undertaken to grow the number of PGT students, primarily by increasing its online provision. Operational oversight of online course development follows a new process endorsed in September 2018 by the Strathclyde Online Learning (SOL) committee.

53   SOL provides an effective locus for promoting and implementing the University's digital strategy and extending digital pedagogies beyond online-only provision into other modes of delivery (paragraph 70 and 78). Thus, academic development work undertaken by staff, not only benefits students using online resources to support their learning but is increasingly influencing the development of curricula across all modes of delivery. Support for staff developing and delivering online programmes is offered through an online staff development programme, Teaching and Learning Online (TALON).

Postgraduate research students

54   The University has grown its postgraduate research community over recent years in line with its strategy. This growth has been supported through a range of mechanisms including Centres for Doctoral Training (CDTs); Faculty Graduate Schools; the Researcher Development Programme; and, from October 2018, the Strathclyde Doctoral School.

55   Since the 2014 ELIR, the University has taken positive steps to enhance the quality of the PGR student experience. These include amendments to the *Policy and Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Study*, strengthening the monitoring and progress reporting processes and the mandatory training requirement for first and second supervisors. These measures were aimed at promoting greater equivalence of student experience in PGR supervision. A PGR Policy and Code of Practice Working Group had recently been established to review existing arrangements in the context of the University establishing a new Strathclyde Doctoral School. Outcomes of this review were due to be considered for approval by the Senate in late 2018-19.

56   The recently established Strathclyde Doctoral School is an overarching university structure designed as a virtual hub to assist delivery of strategic and operational developments to enhance the PGR experience. Among its objectives, the School will seek to facilitate interdisciplinary engagement, interconnectivity and promote a sense of PGR community. Strategically, it provides a means of enhancing the PGR student experience in all disciplinary areas, most particularly those not covered by current CDT arrangements.

57   A number of workstreams associated with the development of the new Doctoral School were in progress at the time of the current ELIR. Among these, work was continuing on the development of the University's representation system for PGR students with current work seeking to explore ways in which the existing faculty and departmental

representative structures could articulate with new Doctoral School systems. There would be benefit in the University analysing the effectiveness of its current arrangements as it progresses the design of a harmonised university-wide system.

58   Monitoring PGR progression and supervision has been strengthened with formal reporting online providing a facility for tracking key reporting points. Monitoring is managed at faculty-level through the faculty committee with responsibility for PGR matters. Although differently named, the faculty committees carry out similar functions in this area. The University has two administrative systems in operation which are effectively tailored to disciplinary context and enable outcomes to be monitored.

59   The institutional Researcher Development Programme offers research students across the university a range of opportunities to continue their personal, professional and skills management development. All PGR students are expected to undergo induction and to undertake the Postgraduate Certificate in Researcher Professional Development. This expectation is well understood by the student body. With further PGR growth projected, the current challenges of capacity and choice within this provision require careful management to ensure all are given the opportunity to undertake training. At the time of the current ELIR, work with the Researcher Enhancement team was currently ongoing to look at ways to support associate fellowship of the Higher Education Academy through this programme.

60   Arrangements for postgraduate teaching assistant duties are covered in the University's Policy and Code of Practice. The Code suggests that paid work should be limited to a recommended maximum of seven hours per week on average. The ELIR team found that there was considerable variation in the experience of PGR students in relation to this section of the Code, both in terms of time commitments, in excess of the suggested maximum, and the range of duties factored into the hour count. The University is encouraged to monitor this aspect of the PGR experience and provide faculty oversight in this area.

61   The Code notes that it is the responsibility of the department/school for ensuring that discipline-specific support and training/induction is in place and undertaken by teaching assistants prior to the commencement of duties. The ELIR team found that this was not universally the case and that, in some instances, PGR students were involved in teaching and assessment duties without having undergone training. The ELIR team recommends that, from the start of 2019-20, the University should have in place processes to ensure that all PGR students have received formal training before commencing teaching or assessment duties and the University should have arrangements in place to monitor this (paragraph 69).

2.5   Learning environment, including the use of technology

62   The University has an effective, structured and systematic approach to developing its learning infrastructure with the Estates Strategy Committee exploring population changes, space utilisation requirements and Faculty Annual Reports (FARs) to shape enhancements. The institution has invested £900 million in infrastructure during the last decade and this demonstrates its ability to understand and deliver for the needs of an evolving university community.

63   The University is currently undertaking a significant strategic development with the £60 million Learning and Teaching Building Project. The project has involved extensive consultation with students and Strath Union (paragraph 68). Student representatives are members of the project management committee further demonstrating commendable partnership working with students. The project will enhance the student experience through the integration and extension of student services in the building and a new space for Strath

Union. In meetings with the ELIR team, staff and students spoke positively about the project. This capital project follows the successful development of the Strathclyde Sport building during which students were also consulted and engaged.

64   Aligned with the University's online and digital strategy the institution has invested in enhancements to technology to support learning and teaching. The virtual learning environment, Myplace, has been developed in response to student feedback. Students reflected positively on the effectiveness and experience of Myplace, citing it as essential to student life.

65   The introduction of the Strathclyde mobile app demonstrates the University's ambition to deliver on the student experience. Through actively responding to student feedback there has been a range of features introduced, such as personalised class timetables, exam results, library search, coursework deadlines, room bookings and PC availability. The app is widely used by students, and the ELIR team noted the positive feedback from students on its introduction. In addition, the University is piloting projects relating to the management of digital assessment and lecture capture. These initiatives emphasise the impact of the University's digital strategy and the institution's desire to provide an exceptional student experience (paragraph 70 and 78-79).

66   Through monitoring demand for space bookings and responding to feedback on the evolving needs of students, services such as the University Library have introduced enhancements including refurbishment of areas to create more group study space, and a library noise reporting feature and space booking through the app. The Library is undertaking Customer Service Excellence accreditation, underpinned by a Customer Charter and external benchmarking to help match service delivery to needs. This approach highlights the University's student-centred approach to service enhancement and increased impact of digital technology on the student experience.

67   Staff are supported in engaging and making effective use of the enhanced physical and virtual learning environment through mechanisms including the Strathclyde Teaching Excellence Programme (STEP) (paragraph 89 and 92), the TALON course (paragraph 78) and through staff engagement in learning and teaching technology development projects. Staff highlighted that these programmes are very important and emphasised to the ELIR team how the programmes continually develop and have connected peer support networks.

2.6   Effectiveness of the approach to enhancing the student learning experience

68   The University has an effective approach to enhancing the student learning experience. The University's commitment to partnership working with its students is pervasive. There is clear evidence of close partnership working between the University, the Strath Union and the wider student body on both strategic and operational matters. These include the newly-formed Student Experience Committee (SEC) which is chaired by the Student President, the student engagement in infrastructure projects; and the use of student interns. The University's relationship with Strath Union is mature, enabling support and constructive challenge to be harnessed for the benefit of students and staff.

69   Since the 2014 ELIR, the University has made a number of improvements to its PGR experience including the recent establishment of the Strathclyde Doctoral School.

Some further work remains, in particular, the University is asked to ensure all postgraduates who teach and assess undertake formal training before doing so.

70   There is a strong university commitment to work closely with industry to ensure that the student learning experience, curriculum development and pedagogy are industry-informed. The University identified that engagement with industry, internships and an international outlook are central to the Strathclyde education experience. Students are provided with a wide range of opportunities to study or work abroad. Engagement with international partners has been used to internationalise the curriculum and create a global student experience. The University's collaborative approach to digital education has transformed the way in which expertise and resources are shared throughout the University. Use of digital technologies and the development and delivery of online courses have permeated across the University's portfolio of provision.

3   Strategy and practice for enhancing learning and teaching

3.1   Strategic approach to enhancement

71   The University has effective systems, processes, reporting and evaluation structures in place for the strategic enhancement of learning and teaching. There is a clearly articulated vision for the nature and ambition of the student experience and for the type of education the University aims to provide. The strategies for education align with the strategic aims of the University and the priorities are evaluated annually against relevant KPIs and the progress made. An inclusive approach is adopted in both the formulation of priorities and the subsequent evaluation of progress and sharing of practice. Named individuals are responsible for leading enhancement initiatives and representing their faculty or department, and regular opportunities for cross-faculty and institution-wide dialogue is intended to ensure widespread understanding of current priorities and developments.

72   The University has a clear and effective set of core frameworks for enhancing learning and teaching and the wider student experience, for example, the Learner Experience Framework (LEF) (paragraph 74). The frameworks and focused initiatives are owned and embedded across all areas of the University. This has resulted in a dynamic environment throughout the University where the activities are actively used to drive cross-institution enhancement. These enhancements are evident in curricular development and the resulting student experience.

73   In addition to the frameworks, working groups focus on specific initiatives to pilot, develop and implement targeted enhancements. At the time of the current ELIR, these included the Assessment and Feedback Working Group and the Surveys and Metrics Working Group. The approach is well-established, clearly structured, inclusive, proactive and systematic in driving enhancement in learning and teaching and is led and supported by sub-committees of the ESC and overseen by the Senate.

74   The University has invested in a multi-strand project using the LEF as an evidence-based approach to enhancing the learner journey. The LEF draws together information from a number of sources into a range of indicators and enables the University to evaluate the balance and characteristics of each programme against a set of identified and desired learning opportunities. The resulting data informs the work of specific committees, and also forms part of the FARs. The retention and progression data derived from the LEF is available through the Strathclyde University Business Intelligence Reports and Dashboards (SUnBIRD) and is considered within the annual monitoring process (paragraph 118 and 119). The data collated, and its subsequent analysis, requires contributions and responses

from across the academic departments and professional services, and from the committees responsible for overseeing each framework. Staff who met the ELIR team indicated that the data available enables them to identify issues easily and highlights areas to focus on through the monitoring and review processes. The approach is effective in ensuring that all faculties are involved in progressing the University's strategic priorities.

75   Students are engaged through, for example, their representation on the Education Strategy Committee (ESC), Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), and the Learning Enhancement Committee (LEC) and their contribution is viewed as essential to the work of these committees. Students spoke positively regarding the nature of working in partnership with the University, confirming their proactive involvement in committee work.

76   The faculties have recently introduced learning enhancement committees. The ELIR team learned that there is a move to achieve greater consistency in the faculty committee structures to ensure that faculties mirror the institutional structures, where this is seen to be beneficial. The faculties are structurally represented and directly involved in the initiation and development of enhancement frameworks and the most appropriate individuals are nominated or selected for their relevant experience and expertise rather than by role title. The flow of information and consistency in communicating priorities between institutional and faculty levels is maintained through the Vice-Deans Academic (VDAs) who are members of ESC and are responsible for ensuring that faculty and departmental committees are well-informed.

Use of data

77   The effective use of data has increasingly become a priority to inform enhancement initiatives, as well as underpinning key decision-making (paragraph 103 and 112). The University has begun using NSS and Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DHLE) 'heatmaps' to assist with the rapid understanding and sharing of information through data visualisation. To enhance consistency across the University in certain key areas, a project has been established to develop a University-wide approach to gathering student views through the class evaluation arrangements. The new system will comprise a set of core questions and will include the facility for additional contextualised questions to be added. The ELIR team heard that the University intends for its approach to conducting class evaluation to become more consistent and harmonised across the institution over the next three years.

Digital education

78   Digital education has become a key strategic priority for the University (paragraph 39) and the experience of developing Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and subsequently the online delivery and support for Graduate Apprentices (GAs) and Degree Apprenticeships (DAs) has been recognised as an opportunity to accelerate expertise in this field to the potential benefit of the whole portfolio (paragraph 94 and 136). The Strathclyde Online Learning (SOL) Committee was introduced in 2017 as a new formal committee to take the strategic lead on digital education. SOL has a University-wide role in supporting and leading developments in digital and flexible education in response to internal and external drivers. A cross-university, collaborative approach has been adopted to designing and approving classes for online delivery to ensure a high-quality experience for learners. This team-based approach, using staff with specific skillsets, has transformed the way in which the online courses are now developed. Staff were very positive about the structured training received through the Teaching and Learning Online (TALON) staff

development programme which could also be formally incorporated into their PGCert (paragraph 92-93).

79   In developing its approach to digital education, the University has established a collaborative, cross-disciplinary way of working with resource and expertise shared between faculties and Student Experience and Enhancement Services. The ELIR team considered that the University has developed an ecosystem that allows the institution to benefit widely from its effective use of digital technologies and online resources (paragraph 96).

Assessment

80   The Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment (TESTA) methodology has been introduced and is used by each department one year prior to an Institution-led Review (ILR). The ELIR team learned that staff have welcomed this as a positive enhancement to the review process. The assessment audits undertaken to date have been successful in revealing insights around assessment and feedback practice that have been acted upon. Although the detailed outcomes of TESTA remain confidential to the department undergoing the audit, key generic issues and themes are used to inform the work of the Assessment and Feedback Working Group, and the Class and Course Approval Process. This provides students and staff with a clear view of assessment practice across the programme and University. Outcomes and next steps are discussed with the TESTA Steering Board and, as appropriate, recommendations for changes are submitted for approval to the faculty committee.

3.2   Impact of the national Enhancement Themes and related activity

81   The University uses the national Enhancement Theme as a key external reference point to manage enhancement initiatives within the institution. An inclusive approach is adopted with student interns playing a key and central role (paragraphs 26, 68 and 84).

82   The previous Enhancement Theme - 'Student Transitions' - aligned well with the University's strategic aims and enabled institution-wide engagement to explore novel approaches to supporting challenges and issues around student transition. Engagement strategies with industry and the community were developed with initiatives such as the Children's University, and the Primary Engineer and Engineering Academy, which involve industry mentorships, paid placements and articulation from FE colleges. These initiatives raise awareness of studying STEM subjects and enable clear transition to university.

83   Over 18 projects were funded as part of the Student Transitions Theme and directly involved students, academic and professional services staff from across the University. The outputs from the Theme are formally documented and shared internally and externally via the University's Sharing Practice in Effective Learning and Teaching website. The University was actively involved in the sector-wide, cross-institutional collaborations and has both contributed to, and benefited from, the sharing of practice.

84   Student interns were employed by the University to scope the 'Student Transitions' Theme and the report produced informed subsequent enhancement planning and setting of priorities. Having evaluated existing practices against the findings, a new set of principles and practices for engaging students was developed. The focus of this is on evidence-based enhancement and the input from students led directly to the development of the 'We Are Strathclyde' online course. This online course is designed to support first-year undergraduate students arriving at the institution to aid transition into university life. Staff and students who met the ELIR team spoke very positively about the value of student

interns and the approach has been adopted widely across the institution. It was clear to the team that using student interns has proven to be a very successful approach and has ensured that the student voice is routinely embedded at the outset of developing enhancement initiatives.

85   The University uses existing structures to manage its engagement with the Enhancement Themes and other enhancement activity. Sector-wide engagement and contribution is a standing item on key university and faculty committee agendas. FARs also consider and report upon developments in relation to the Enhancement Themes.

86   It was evident to the ELIR team that the University is proactively engaged with the current Theme - 'Evidence for Enhancement: Improving the Student Experience' - for example, as the lead institution for the Learning Analytics Collaborative Cluster.

3.3   Approaches to identifying and sharing good practice

87   The University has an effective and systematic approach to identifying and sharing good practice. A culture of enhancement was clearly evident and the staff who met the ELIR team spoke positively about the series of structured mechanisms for identifying, collating and sharing good practice. These include the FARs, an annual theme-based learning and teaching event (established in 2014) and a series of fora which directly inform Learning and Teaching Improvement Plans.

88   FARs are subject to peer review by staff outside the faculty prior to being submitted to a joint meeting of QAC and LEC. This process directly leads to highlighting practice that may then be selected to become a case study and made available on the University's dedicated website 'Sharing Practice in Effective Learning and Teaching'. Faculties review the case studies to identify where different and/or novel approaches could be adopted to enhance practice in their own area.

89   In recognition of the strategic importance of digital technology, the University has developed a 'Stepping Forward with Technology' (STEP:TECH) web resource. Staff who met the ELIR team confirmed this as a positive addition to the Strathclyde Teaching Excellence Programme. STEP:TECH supports and encourages staff to share practice and to promote a culture of continuous learning, in this instance specifically around the use of digital technologies in learning and teaching.

3.4   Engaging, developing and supporting staff

90   The University has effective arrangements in place for engaging and supporting staff in their continued development and for ensuring the ongoing enhancement of learning and teaching practice. In particular the staff development opportunities provided are aligned to the institutional strategy.

91   A 'Strathclyde People Strategy 2020' was introduced to support the delivery of the University Strategy 2015-20, and explicitly outlines the values and people-orientated culture to which the University aspires. The annual Accountability and Development Review (ADR) process is central to the staff support and development of the strategy. The ADR process, which contains both performance and development elements, is managed by the Organisational and Staff Development Unit (OSDU). OSDU is engaged in training staff across the University about the expectations of key institutional policies, providing and supporting a comprehensive range of formal and informal programmes, events and networks to engage, develop and support staff.

92   Staff who met the ELIR team spoke positively about the support, and the range and quality of development opportunities, provided by the University. The STEP provides a suite of practical opportunities for staff to enhance their skills across learning, teaching, assessment, feedback and the use of technology. Other initiatives include: peer support networks which are used to support leadership in learning and teaching, and encourage pedagogic-focused publication; and Strathclyde's Programme for Academic practice, Researcher development, and Knowledge exchange (SPARK) which enables staff to gain a PgCert/PgDip/MSc Learning and Teaching in Higher Education.

93   The Strathclyde Framework for Professional Recognition of Teaching is accredited by Advance HE and enables staff to gain Fellowship or Senior Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. The University encourages staff to gain Fellowship, as evidenced by a significant growth in the number of staff attaining Senior and Principal Fellow status since the 2014 ELIR.

94   Staff and student-facing professional services are represented on faculty committees and are directly involved in identifying emerging development needs. This enables them to deliver targeted training and support at the faculty level. The ELIR team learned how this collaborative approach has ensured a proactive development of provision for staff development, especially in the area of digital education (paragraphs 78-79).

95   The ELIR team noted the time-based support mechanism introduced by the Education Enhancement team to support academic staff who are developing courses for online delivery to ensure a consistent quality of programme design. In addition, the University supports the development and sharing of expertise in learning and teaching, project management and audio/video creation. This approach stems from the expertise the University gained in the development of MOOCs and has been applied to its development of the GAs and DA and Work-Based Learning modes of delivery (see paragraph 78).

3.5   Effectiveness of the approach to implementing institutional strategies and enhancing learning and teaching

96   It is evident that the University has a clearly articulated vision and takes a strategic and structured approach to enhancement, changes practices and policy accordingly and has been working towards developing a digital infrastructure that enables efficient evaluation and analysis of subsequent impact. The University has a systematic framework for the enhancement of education which explicitly sets out its strategic ambitions and the qualities it desires in its graduates. The strategic enhancement of learning and teaching is embedded throughout the school and departmental plans which are evaluated centrally at faculty and university levels.

97   The University has a wide range of staff development opportunities available which are closely aligned with the institutional strategy including in the area of digital technologies. The collaborative approach the University has adopted towards developments in digital education is commendable and has enabled these developments to become a catalyst for change across the institution and enhance the student learning experience.

4 Academic standards and quality processes

4.1 Key features of the institution's approach to managing quality and setting, maintaining, reviewing and assessing academic standards

98   The University has effective arrangements in place for managing quality and securing academic standards. Its procedures and regulations are clear and comprehensive and meet the expectations set out in the Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) and the guidance of the Scottish Funding Council to institutions on quality.

99   There is an established governance framework, with an inclusive structure to ensure representation from faculties, students and professional services. Overall responsibility for standards and quality rests with the Senate. All education committees report to the Senate and provide comprehensive written reports. The QAC has delegated authority from the Senate to assure academic standards on its behalf and works with a wide range of other education committees. Joint annual meetings with QAC and LEC review FARs on quality assurance and enhancement. In order to ensure appropriate oversight of class, course, general and university regulations, the remit, membership and title of the former Ordinances and Regulations Committee has been expanded and a new committee has been established, the Academic Regulations Review Group (ARRG), which reports to QAC.

100   Institutional committee structures are not directly mirrored at faculty level, however, the ELIR team was able to confirm that the structures in place were appropriate to ensure that they played a full role in the initial development of and amendments to courses, academic review and enhancement of good practice. The Senate reviews its own effectiveness biennially in line with the expectation in the 2017 Scottish Code of Good HE Governance. In addition, the main education committees also explicitly consider their effectiveness and make recommendations for improvements through their annual reports.

Programme approval

101   Institutional policies for course development and approval are aligned to sector expectations. There is a three-stage process, covering concept and strategic alignment, financial and marketing analysis and academic scrutiny, with external involvement at the academic scrutiny level. Academic Regulations Review Group (ARRG) provides institutional oversight of regulations and final approval is granted by Senate. An out-of-cycle approval process with scrutiny by the Course Approval Sub-Group enables courses to be approved having gone through all three stages but outside the Senate cycle. The ELIR team was able to confirm that the process was structured and systematic. The development of courses for online delivery is subject to operational oversight by the SOL Committee and ensures developments are aligned with existing academic approval processes. The University has an online Course and Class Approval Process to promote a consistent approach. It intends to amend and develop further the system to enable better sharing of information and data.

Monitoring and review

102   The University uses three processes to monitor and review academic standards: class evaluation, FARs and ILR. In addition, research student progress is monitored in line with the institution's *Policy and Code of Practice for PGR Study* which, the ELIR team learned, will be updated to reflect recent developments including the establishment of the Strathclyde Doctoral School (paragraphs 54-56).

103   Class evaluation is undertaken by a range of mechanisms which review quantitative and qualitative data including student feedback. Evaluations are reported at a department/school level and feed into annual reporting mechanisms. At the time of the current ELIR, the University was exploring mechanisms to implement a more consistent approach in the future (paragraph 22).

104   Annual course monitoring follows a more structured template, which reflects the University's commitment to enhancement through reflection. The process enables the identification of good practice alongside areas in need of development. The process links to the production of the FARs (paragraphs 87-88). Each FAR is reviewed by representatives of two other faculties and revised reports are considered by QAC and LEC. FARs are regarded by the institution as central to securing academic standards and a key mechanism for ensuring consistency, identifying and sharing good practice, as well as enhancement priorities. The University has evolved its approach since the 2014 ELIR to include a member of the Education Enhancement Team as part of the peer review meetings between faculties. The highly-structured FAR process was viewed positively by the ELIR team for its ability to facilitate university oversight and peer review.

105   The University's quinquennial internal review process (ILR) was the subject of detailed consideration in both the 2010 and 2014 ELIRs. The University has revised its policy, process and guidance on two occasions, an approach it regards as 'incremental', and a further revision was planned at the time of the current ELIR. The ELIR team considered documentation and discussed practices with staff and students, on the basis of which the team formed the view that the approach does ensure greater consistency, demonstrates an appropriate focus on learning and teaching within the holistic review framework and identifies areas for enhancement. In particular, the team welcomed the introduction of the TESTA assessment audit methodology to be used by each department one year before an ILR. The team concluded that the approach to ILR is robust, noting the University has taken steps to ensure that all of its courses are included in these reviews and the inclusion of TESTA is a positive development. However, the team also noted that the reporting formats differed in the reviews it considered and would encourage the University to reflect on the benefit in having a more consistent reporting template.

106   In relation to the review of student-facing services, the University has a continuous improvement model to deliver more efficient and enhanced services. This is embedded across several professional services directorates and has enabled the development of more effective updates to University Ordinances and Regulations, a redesign of the PGR process, a more streamlined and flexible timetabling process and improvements to Library services. In turn, this enables sector-wide expectations and requirements to be met. Nonetheless, the University intends to implement a process for reviewing professional services which contribute to the student experience, in line with the *Scottish Funding Council guidance to higher education institutions on quality from August 2017-2022*. The University planned to discuss this in the Senate during 2018-19. The ELIR team considered that the draft process proposed would meet the SFC guidance and the expectations of the Quality Code. The University is strongly encouraged to make demonstrable progress in implementing this process within the next academic year.

4.2   Use of external reference points in quality processes

107   The University has an effective approach to using external reference points in the management of its quality processes and in setting and maintaining academic standards. The University's quality framework is aligned to the Quality Code and is regularly reviewed. The institution regards the Quality Code as a key reference point in formulating, developing and reviewing its policies. The University's mapping of institutional policies and practices to the Quality Code provided clear evidence of areas where there was full alignment,

alongside aspects where procedures could be improved. The mapping enables a rolling programme of revisions and updates to its policies, procedures and guidance. It was clear to the ELIR team that the University is committed to reflecting on the Quality Code in ongoing review activities. For example, the QAC schedule of business is aligned to the Quality Code. An inclusive approach to the use of the Quality Code is adopted to ensure the engagement of faculty, professional services and students in the evaluation of practice and to promote enhancement.

External examining and professional accreditation

108   The University's external examining system is a key element of its quality framework. It has clear policies, procedures and guidance for the management of the process for both taught and research provision. External examiners submit their reports using a standard structured template and reports are considered and responded to at departmental or school levels. Analysis of reports takes place at the faculty level and then in detail by QAC, which ensures that appropriate action is taken. The University's analysis of reports confirms that external examiners are positive about the standards and quality of the courses.

109   The students who met the ELIR team had an uneven understanding of the operation of the external examining system. While some students had met external examiners, others, including class representatives, indicated limited awareness of the role external examiners played in assuring and enhancing the quality of their courses. Some of the students had no knowledge of how to access external examiners' reports and were not aware of the reports being shared through the Student-Staff Liaison Committee process. The team noted that the University, through its own mapping of institutional policies and practices to the Quality Code, was aware of inconsistencies in its practice in this area. To gain maximum benefit from the external examining system, the University should share the views of the external examiners with students and engage students in the changes that are made to enhance the educational provision as a result of external examiner comments. The University should, with effect from the start of 2019-20, share information with students about the work of external examiners including their role and the recommendations and commendations they make relating to programmes.

110   Notwithstanding this aspect of student engagement, the ELIR team considered that overall the University makes systematic and considered use of its external examiners.

111   The University has robust arrangements for considering the outcomes of professional body accreditations. These are considered in the relevant faculty academic committee and reported to QAC. Holding joint course approval/review and accreditation events with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRB) members sitting on university panels was viewed positively by the ELIR team.

112   Overall the ELIR team considered that the University makes good use of external feedback, including external stakeholders, sector good practice and data to enhance quality processes. External stakeholders participate in course approval processes and in review mechanisms. These include professional bodies, external academics and employers. The outcomes of PSRB accreditations are considered at faculty level and a summary of outcomes is reported to QAC. External examiners are asked in their annual reports to confirm that courses continue to meet the expectations of relevant subject benchmark statements, professional body requirements (where relevant) and alignment with the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The University participated actively in a sector-wide Focus On: Management of Collaborative Activity project which was instrumental in enhancing its arrangements relating to oversight of its collaborative provision. In addition, the University makes use of the increasing range of data and metrics

that can be used comparatively to inform policy and practice. Course documentation considered by the team was clearly aligned to sector reference points and staff the team met demonstrated an understanding of key institutional and regulatory requirements.

4.3   Commentary on action taken since ELIR 3

113   The University was asked to address five areas for development in the 2014 ELIR and the current ELIR team considered that the University has made significant progress in each area. The University welcomed the recommendations, prioritised them to maximise opportunities for enhancement and has systematically tracked and evaluated the impact of the changes made. Oversight of actions taken is the responsibility of ESC, with priority areas being devolved to QAC and LEC.

114   Of the areas for development, in addition to further developing the ILR method, the University has continued to progress work to enhance assessment and feedback policy and practice, principally through its Assessment and Feedback Working Group. It has a new policy on late submission of assignments and has developed new procedures and guidance. It has implemented changes to the shape of the academic year and examination scheduling. Curriculum flexibility has been enhanced through the changes to the academic year, which have also enabled greater engagement with periods of study abroad. Innovative, work-based and online delivery models and regulatory changes have enabled students to engage in different forms of learning.

115   The University has evolved its approach to embedding graduate attributes, principally through the development of its LEF and giving students enhanced opportunities to develop graduate attributes (paragraphs 46-47). The approach to promoting the equivalence of the postgraduate student experience has been developed through consistent allocations of supervision in workload models, through updates in the *Policy and the Code of Practice for PGR Study* and through the introduction of mandatory training for supervisors (paragraph 55).

116   The ELIR team noted substantial evidence of the ways in which the University has built upon, developed and embedded the areas of positive practice referred to in the 2014 ELIR. The University refers to this as 'a continuous process of self-reflection' which contributes to the enhancement of the student experience through learning and teaching and the opportunities provided.

4.4   Approach to using data to inform decision-making and evaluation

117   The University has an effective approach to the use of data to inform its decision-making and evaluation processes. Since the 2014 ELIR, it has developed its digital systems which continue to evolve to meet changing needs. There is clear evidence that the University uses data to support strategy development and monitoring, to enhance the student experience and to prioritise student services improvements.

118   SUnBIRD enables faculties to have regular datasets on, for example, degree outcomes and retention (paragraph 74). Sector Information Dashboards (SID) provide additional information relating to student satisfaction and the destination of leavers. The University also makes appropriate use of HESA, NSS data and analytics drawn from the Strathclyde mobile app to improve the delivery of services.

119   The development of the institution's digital capabilities has enabled the introduction of the LEF (paragraphs 49, 82 and 83), which encompasses a range of data indicators to enhance the student experience. The LEF uses data on internships,

international and industry engagement, retention and progression, and flexible learning to evaluate the characteristics of each programme. Overall, the LEF is used to inform the work of committees and reflections on the data form part of the FARs and the annual monitoring process. A Surveys and Metrics Working Group (reporting to the ESC) reports on student-related metrics and survey outcomes within the institution.

120   The analysis of the data enables reports, scrutiny and monitoring through QAC of performance including pass rates, progression and retention, completion rates for postgraduate courses, and degree outcomes. The data is provided to departments and schools, while faculties use it to compare their performances. This has enabled the University to take steps to ensure greater consistency in its approaches to degree classification, compensation and late submission while other aspects of policy on assessment and feedback are under review. The ELIR team confirmed that FARs, course and class evaluation all use data effectively, but it was noted that the University is progressing towards a more consistent approach to class evaluation and the use of monitoring data (paragraph 22, 77 and 103). Similarly, although faculties review data relating to PGR progress, the Strathclyde Doctoral School has commenced a review of the research student lifecycle (paragraphs 54-56).

121   The University recognises the benefits accruing from data-informed decision-making. It also recognises that staff need support in reflecting on the use of the data and that there will be differences of approach between disciplines. Overall, the ELIR team commends the way in which the University makes extensive suites of data available to academic and professional services staff which are widely and actively used to inform evaluation and decision-making.

4.5   Effectiveness of the arrangements for securing academic standards

122   The University has effective arrangements for securing academic standards. It has comprehensive policies, appropriate regulations and structured processes, all of which are reviewed regularly, publicly available and effectively disseminated. Its quality framework is aligned to the expectations of the Quality Code and other reference points. The University makes systematic use of its external examiners. To increase the benefit from the external examining system, the University should increase the student engagement with the process including information about the external examiner role and the comments they make relating to programmes.

4.6   Effectiveness of the institution's approach to self-evaluation, including the effective use of data to inform decision-making

123   The University has effective arrangements for self-evaluation including effective use of data to inform decision-making. It makes extensive suites of data available to staff and students which are widely and actively used to inform evaluation and decision-making. The Surveys and Metrics Working Group, which was established in 2016, has provided opportunities to reflect upon shifts in trends, the performance of comparator institutions and greater horizon-scanning.

124   It has a continuous improvement model and is developing processes, systems, structures and resources to enable the enhancement of the student experience. These systems enable the identification of good practice within and beyond the University. The University is encouraged to pursue its intention to implement a process for reviewing the professional services and to make progress during 2019-20.

125   There have been several developments since the 2014 ELIR including changes to ILR processes, the use of learning analytics and the Learner Experience Framework. These developments along with other initiatives demonstrate the ambition of the University to improve the student experience.

5   Collaborative provision

5.1   Key features of the institution's strategic approach

126   The University's Strategic Plan to 2020 outlines the University's intention to expand international partnerships and increase the diversity of the international staff and student population through the global engagement theme of the strategy. The University's approach to collaborative partnerships effectively aligns with the University's strategy. Collaborative provision at the University has a focus on widening participation partnerships, work-based partnership (such as GAs) and international collaborations.

127   The institutional oversight of strategic delivery in relation to collaborative provision rests primarily with the Collaborative Provision Agreement (CPA) Sub-Group of Senate Business Committee, chaired by the Vice-Principal. Within the terms of institutional oversight and the broader strategic approach, faculties are given autonomy to determine how to develop their portfolio of collaborative provision based on the needs of individual disciplines and relationships. The University has a strategic intention to encourage students to participate in opportunities to study or work abroad. Students, at all levels of provision, who met the ELIR team, confirmed that a variety of such opportunities were made available to them. A range of staff who met the team were able to articulate the arrangements for operationalising this strategic intention.

128   The University has a broad portfolio of collaborative provision, impacting all levels of study and engaging both national and international partners. At the time of the current ELIR, the University had over 420 active partnerships, including 170 Erasmus agreements, 55 student exchange agreements (including university-wide and faculty specific exchanges) and 48 Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs). Significant partnerships include those with the International Study Centre (for on-campus foundation-level provision), the Engineering Academy, GA work-based partnerships, off-site MBA teaching partnerships, and doctoral training centres.

129   International Study Centre (ISC) programmes are delivered on-campus by Study Group in partnership with the University. Nearly 500 students have articulated on to University programmes through this pathway. The ELIR team learned that students strongly identify as University of Strathclyde students while studying at ISC and that they have access to university resources. ISC students have a student representative system in place, with support and training provided by Strath Union.

130   The Engineering Academy provides links between the University and local colleges to offer routes in a variety of areas of engineering provision. Over 300 students have progressed to the University through this route since 2013, with around 100 places provided at the time of the current ELIR. While studying at partner colleges, students have contact with the University including link visits by staff and visits to the University campus, which involve using laboratory facilities as well as engaging with University staff.

131   GAs (and DAs) are fully funded programmes that enable employees to study up to degree/postgraduate-level while spending the majority of their time in the workplace. This provision of work-based learning and industry linkage is a strength of the University and the ELIR team considered examples where enhancements developed within this activity

had informed the enhancement of the University's other campus-based provision (paragraphs 78 and 95). The University is to be commended for the growth, continuing development and impact of this activity.

132   The majority of the University's teaching delivered outside the UK is provided by the Strathclyde Business School (SBS) and linked to its taught postgraduate provision. The MBA programme is delivered in eight countries worldwide. In the postgraduate research area, collaborative activity is largely delivered through centres for doctoral training, research pooling initiatives and industry partnerships.

133   The University manages a wide variety of different types of collaborative activities at all levels of study across all of its faculties. The University provides '2+2' degree courses, study abroad partnerships, dual degrees, and joint supervision of research, among other activities. The mechanism for reviewing collaborative partnership agreements follows a set cycle of three years and uses a harmonised reporting template, although the focus of reporting is on the formal agreement rather than the student outcomes/experience. In 2018, the University conducted a broader Collaborative Provision Review to provide oversight of its collaborative provision portfolio (excluding Erasmus, student exchanges and MoUs).

134   At the time of the current ELIR, data was not immediately available for the number of students on specific collaborative programmes, types of provision, or the number of programmes provided with collaborative provision. The ELIR team concluded that this data was not held or reviewed routinely at institutional level. Monitoring and review of the student experience and student outcomes relating to collaborative provision occurs during the individual partner reviews and ILR of the respective subject areas. However, the lack of an overarching database identifying individual programme linkages to partnerships (rather than the central database of partnerships itself) presents potential issues of disconnect within the review mechanisms. As a result, the University is encouraged to reflect on the information available to the CPA Sub Group about collaborative programmes and student numbers to better support its institution-level oversight of collaborative activity (paragraph 140).

135   Strategic oversight of the GA scheme is managed through a Graduate Apprenticeship and Degree Apprenticeship (GADA) Steering Group with membership from all four faculties and professional service areas, convened by the Deputy Associate Principal (Learning and Teaching). GADA Steering Group oversees and monitors progress of GAs development across the institution. Interaction with professional services in this Group ensures that planning is in place to support strategic developments, for example, to ensure staff development needs are met in advance (paragraph 90-91). The review of the GA programmes follows that of other undergraduate degrees with an end of delivery review being completed independently and the class team and student perspectives being gathered using an anonymous student questionnaire.

136   It was evident to the ELIR team that the University develops collaborative partnerships with the intention of enriching the cultural life of staff and students, stimulating teaching and research, and enhancing the international standing of the University. The team learned of positive impacts to on-campus teaching derived from off-site and collaborative teaching activities, especially from teaching reflection and enhancement arising from the GA model and student experience. In terms of work-based industry linkages, there was additional evidence of bi-directional benefits where the industry partner had benefited from the arrangement (for example, GA learners undertaking industry-specific projects related to their day-to-day work).

137   The University delivers other local collaborative activity that encourages widening participation. The University works with a range of schools, local authorities, colleges, universities, third sector organisations and industry partners. In addition to local partnerships, the University has a number of partners further afield. The University is a member of the Conference of European Schools for Advanced Engineering Education and Research (CESAER) and the University Principal is the current CESAER President. This has resulted in the University broadening partnerships across Europe.

138   The University has numerous opportunities for students to undertake a study abroad experience and this is encouraged and supported. Practical preparation for students engaging in an international exchange is provided through RIO. The academic department provides academic support for students in preparing for exchange. Use of the Mobility Online tool by multiple professional services for supporting students while on mobility is an excellent example of interdepartmental working to enhance the student experience. Students who transition between the University and a collaborative partner are supported before and during their engagement with the collaborative partner. Both ISC and the Engineering Academy have formal staff linkages. GA students have support through a workplace assessor who provides a support function.

139   Overall, students spoke positively of the student representation and feedback mechanisms offered while they are studying with collaborative partners. This was especially true for ISC, GA and some students studying online who articulated an established and effective feedback and representative mechanism. Students discussed the use of Myplace to communicate with course representatives as being useful for off-site as well as on-campus learners. However, the ELIR team learned that feedback and representation arrangements were less developed for postgraduate and online students and is therefore encouraged to reflect on these to ensure all students have effective and comparable mechanisms (paragraph 18). In particular, there would be value in extending Strath Union training for course representatives to all courses.

5.2   Effectiveness of the approach to managing collaborative provision

140   The University has an effective approach to managing collaborative provision. The University has a *Policy and Code of Practice on Collaborative Education Provision* which ensures consistency of approach to collaborative provision. There would be value in the University reflecting on the information available at institutional level, about its collaborative programmes and student numbers to further secure its detailed reflections on, and oversight of, collaborative activity.

141   The University has a strategic intention to encourage students to participate in opportunities to study or work abroad and it is evident that a wide range of opportunities are provided, with support in place to help students engage. In addition, there are positive examples of the University's collaborative links being used to inform its on-campus provision.