Enhancement-led institutional review

Glasgow Caledonian University

MARCH 2011

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Introduction

1   This is the report of an Enhancement-led institutional review (ELIR) of the Glasgow Caledonian University (the University) undertaken by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). QAA is grateful to the University for the willing cooperation provided to the ELIR team.

ELIR method and report

2   The ELIR method was revised during 2007-08 following extensive consultation with the Scottish higher education sector. Full detail on the method is set out in the *Enhancement-led institutional review handbook: Scotland (second edition) 2008*, which is available on the QAA website.

3   ELIR reports are structured around three main sections: the management of the student learning experience; institution-led monitoring and review of quality and academic standards; and the strategic approach to quality enhancement. Each of these three sections leads to a 'commentary' in which the views of the ELIR team are set out. The three commentaries, in turn, lead to the overarching judgement on the level of confidence which can be placed in the institution's management of academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience. A summary report is also available in printed form (from QAA) and from QAA's website.

Method of review

4   The University submitted a Reflective Analysis (RA), which provided the focus for the review. The RA was supported by a number of accompanying documents, including case studies on Moving Forward, a University-wide initiative to address issues associated with transition and progression; the Caledonian Scholars and Associates Scheme, which aims to support the implementation of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy; the International Strategy; and the role of academic development tutors in providing specific and contextualised learning support for students. The ELIR team also received the report of the University's previous ELIR, which took place in 2005.

5   Development of the RA was coordinated by a group led by the Pro Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning and including the Director of Quality, the Vice Dean of the School of Health, the Head of Widening Participation & College Liaison and Deputy Director of the Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning, the Head of Learning and Teaching in the School of Life Sciences, the Director of Library Services, and the President of the Students' Association. The group was supported by the Deputy Director of Quality. The RA was approved by the Senate in December 2010.

6   The ELIR team visited the University on two occasions: the Part 1 visit took place on 26 and 27 January 2011 and the Part 2 visit took place in the week beginning 7 March 2011.

7   The ELIR team comprised Professor Howard Colley, Mr David Devlin, Ms Tess Goodliffe, Dr Crichton Lang, Mr Chris McIntyre and Mrs Margaret Parratt. The review was managed on behalf of QAA by Ms Stella Heath, Assistant Director, QAA Scotland.

Background information about the institution

8   Glasgow Caledonian University was formed through a merger of Glasgow Polytechnic and the Queen's College Glasgow in 1993. The main University campus is based on a single site in

the centre of Glasgow and has had substantial investment in its buildings over the last 15 years. In 2010 the University opened a London-based campus, GCU London, which offers a range of postgraduate programmes. The University describes itself as providing a high-quality, inclusive and flexible learning environment, and contributing to the social and economic benefit of both its local and international communities. The University is currently undergoing restructuring and will move to a three school structure from September 2011. The three schools will be formed from a number of mergers: the Caledonian Business School with the School of Law and Social Sciences, the School of Health with the School of Life Sciences, and the School of Engineering and Computing with the School of the Built and Natural Environment.

Institution's strategy for quality enhancement

9   The University's Quality Enhancement Strategy aims to make the student experience more rewarding and to enhance graduate employability. The strategy is based on a number of key principles, including commitments to enhancing learning and teaching activity and encouraging innovation, responsiveness and self-reflection by students and staff. The strategy incorporates a range of activities and policies currently in place, including Enhancement-Led Internal Subject Review and the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. These components of the Quality Enhancement Strategy represent the University's deliberate steps to ensure continued improvement of the student learning experience.

Management of the student learning experience

Key features of the student population and the effectiveness of the institution's approach to managing information about its student population

10   In 2009-10 the University had 16,950 registered students. This population comprised 12,422 full time equivalent (FTE) undergraduate students, 1,513 FTE taught postgraduate students, 304 FTE postgraduate research students, 1,092 FTE international students and 429 FTE European Union students. Taught postgraduate student numbers have remained fairly constant over the last five years, with between 330 and 360 students each year. The most notable trend is that European Union and international undergraduate student numbers have grown from approximately three per cent of the total undergraduate student population in 2005-06 to approximately seven per cent in 2009-10.

11   The University has a distinctive student profile; 57 per cent of entrants to full-time undergraduate programmes are first generation students, over 30 per cent are aged 21 or over, and in 2008-09 30 per cent of full-time first degree students entered with a Higher National Certificate or Diploma as their highest qualification. In part, this profile derives from specific partnerships with colleges of further and higher education which are part of the Greater Glasgow Articulation Project and the articulation of these pathway students into the University's programmes. Additionally, individual schools have programme-specific articulation links across the college sector. The University sees widening participation and providing access to higher education for Scottish, UK and international students as being central to its identity and mission. This is clearly stated in the University's Widening Participation Policy.

12   Further development of all aspects of internationalisation is stated as a continuing key objective for the University, and international activity in both teaching and research is supported by a number of overseas partnerships. Some of these involve in-country delivery; others are inward articulation arrangements whereby students studying at overseas partner institutions complete years three and four of their degree programmes at the University. The University has also entered into a joint venture partnership with a pathway programme provider to increase opportunities for international students to study at the University.

13   The University is currently developing an integrated student information system (ISIS) with

modules covering the full range of student, curriculum and data management functions. The initial implementation of the core functions of ISIS was completed in December 2010; however, the University recognises that further work is required to ensure the system develops into a resilient and efficient corporate resource which will enable effective strategic management, long-term planning and timely and accurate reporting across all major institutional activities. It is envisaged that the new system will underpin an enhanced student experience enabled through online service provision and a range of self-service functions. It is also intended to support the recruitment of students and the timely tracking of their progression through all aspects of their study.

14   There is obvious clarity about the purpose of ISIS and what it will deliver, but there is also some residual lack of confidence in the reports currently being generated by the new system, resulting in data still being held locally at school, programme or module level and then checked against the ISIS reports. It is recognised that confidence in the new system will increase with time, and there is ongoing dialogue between the system's developers and staff about report formats and local data requirements. The University is encouraged to develop a sustainable approach, through provision of appropriate staffing and resource, to the maintenance and further development of the system.

The effectiveness of the institution's approach to engaging and supporting students in their learning

15   The University has a number of strategies in place designed to engage and support students throughout their learning experience. Examples include the Peer Assisted Study Support initiative, which aims to help students make successful transitions into and through University, and the Student Leaders Programme, a co-curricular leadership development programme run by the Students' Association and supported by the University, which focuses on the acquisition of employability skills. Students are aware of the range of learning opportunities available to them, and are very positive about their learning experience at the University.

16   The academic development tutor role is an academic support post and, based on the size of the school, there are one or two tutors in each school. The tutors provide additional support to students through pre and post-entry activities designed to improve student engagement, retention and progression across all levels of undergraduate programmes. The tutors work closely with the heads of learning, teaching and quality to provide individualised academic support for students as well as support for school strategies and activities related to improving student transition and progression. The role is recognised as an example of good practice in providing specific and contextualised learning support for students.

17   Students are represented at all levels of the formal committee structure of the University, and Students' Association officers sit on the University Court and the Senate, the Academic Policy Committee and the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee. In addition, the University also consults formally with the Students' Association through the Student Officers/University Liaison Group. Students involved with representation are provided with training by the Students' Association.

18   The views of all students are considered through staff-student consultative groups (SSCGs), module feedback questionnaires and through returns from the Student Barometer, the International Student Barometer and the National Student Survey. The results of these surveys are reviewed by programme boards as part of the annual monitoring process.

19   Students highlighted the SSCGs, which are student-led, as an effective mechanism for gathering feedback. Each programme is required to hold an SSCG meeting at least once per trimester in advance of programme board meetings, and programme boards are required to have at least one elected student representative from each level of the programme. Issues raised at the SSCGs are progressed through the committee structure, and action is taken and communicated back to students. For example, the institutional restructuring was raised in a number of SSCGs

and through the committee structure until it reached the University Court, where a decision was made to improve communication to students by creating a website to provide information and respond to questions about the proposed changes.

20   The University, in conjunction with the Students' Association, has introduced the role of school officer. The school officer sits on the school board and their remit is to represent all students in the school in relation to the learning experience on all programmes. Previously, engagement at the school board level was variable across the institution, but this has been significantly improved by the introduction of the paid school officer post. The role is appointed and managed by the Students' Association, but is funded by the University. Students are positive about the introduction of school officers, and note that they are a useful contact point for issues which programme-based student representatives are unable to resolve.

21   Overall, student engagement is effective and students feel they have adequate opportunities to express their views. There is an effective working relationship between the University and the Students' Association, and the school officer role is a significant development in promoting student representation at the school level.

22   Inconsistency of practice in relation to feedback on assessed work was raised in the 2005 ELIR report, and this continues to be an issue, despite the introduction of a policy on student performance feedback at the end of 2005-06. Students report a wide variety of experience, with some stating that the feedback they receive is minimal and too generic, while others say that they are given detailed and informative feedback on all submitted work.

23   The University carried out a thematic audit of student feedback in 2009-10 in response to the National Student Survey and other internal questionnaire results, which identified feedback on assessed work as an ongoing issue. The thematic audit suggested that, although schools were aware of the University policy on student performance feedback, practices in applying the policy remain inconsistent. As a consequence of the thematic audit a short-life working group on assessment and feedback was established. This has now resulted in a senior member of the Academic Policy Committee being commissioned to lead on developing consistency of practice and improving the overall feedback on academic work which students receive. The University is encouraged, as a matter of priority, to progress action to ensure consistency of practice across the institution.

The effectiveness of the institution's approach to promoting the development of graduate attributes, including those relating to employability, in all of its students

24   The Caledonian Academy is central to the University's aim to research and develop innovative forms of learning and teaching for a wide range of students. It plays an important role in supporting the student learning experience, particularly in relation to blended learning, employability and the development of graduate attributes. Working in partnership with the academic schools and external partners it is researching, developing and embedding innovative approaches to learning and teaching through strategic initiatives such as RealWoRLD (Realising Work-Related Learning Diffusion), which provides a central forum for coordinating, supporting and promoting the University's approach to employability.

25   RealWoRLD encourages academic staff in all schools to embed work-related learning activities into their programmes, promotes regular engagement with employers and raises awareness of the need for all students to develop their professional and employability skills throughout their studies. Real-life learning environments are also used to support the acquisition of such skills; for example, the optometry clinic in the School of Life Sciences is a fully functioning work environment which allows students to test their practical skills on patients under staff supervision.

26   Students are positive about the ways in which the curriculum supports the development of their professional and employability skills, and they are also aware of initiatives such as the Student Leaders Programme which provide co-curricular opportunities to acquire and develop

graduate attributes.

The effectiveness of the institution's approach to managing the learning environment

27   In its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (2008-15) the University states that it will provide a high-quality, inclusive and flexible learning and teaching environment which makes the best use of technology-enhanced learning, and that it is committed to building students' competencies in the skills demanded by employers in a global knowledge economy. Many modules and programmes incorporate flexible access to learning materials both on and off-campus through the use of the virtual learning environment (VLE) and a range of other learning technologies.

28   Many modules have handbooks and lecture notes on the VLE, and module pages are comprehensive and easy to navigate. Some modules also include more detailed week-by-week study plans and guidance for students, with links to specific support materials. Overall, there is a comprehensive set of support materials for lectures, tutorials, assignments and group work. There is also evidence of both formative and summative feedback being provided and ongoing communication from staff to class groups.

29   Students are positive about the ways in which the VLE and other technologies are being used to support their learning. The University provides a text message enquiry system which links to the online timetable, enabling students to locate available computers throughout the campus. Students identify some inconsistencies in the extent to which the VLE is utilised, noting that some module teams have not yet engaged with it, and there are technical barriers currently preventing full access to some resources for off-campus students. Overall, however, there is flexible access to learning materials both on and off-campus, and training and support in the use of the VLE and other information technology tools is effective and appropriate for a range of students with varying technical abilities.

30   The University has established a cross-university Blended Learning Implementation Group to provide an effective interface between the technical and pedagogical expertise within the University. This group comprises representatives from the schools, the Caledonian Academy, Information Services, Organisational Development, the Library, Learner Support, the Centre for Research into Lifelong Learning, and the Students' Association. The group responds to and informs research activity through the Caledonian Academy, takes a lead in developing new tools and uses for the VLE and promotes the piloting of these in schools. It also provides expert guidance and support to schools in relation to blended learning.

31   A significant development since the 2005 ELIR has been the completion of the Saltire Centre, which contains a 600-seat learning cafe, 1,800 internet-connected study spaces and the Base, a one-stop information hub. The Saltire Centre is extensively IT resourced and is a flexible and dynamic learning space which also houses traditional library facilities and quiet study space. In addition, it provides software and technology support for students with learning difficulties or disabilities.

32   Students are very positive about the Saltire Centre and highlighted that the Centre has developed in direct response to student feedback, resulting in changes to the ways in which the available space is utilised. Feedback about the Saltire Centre is gathered in a number of ways, including from the student officers who sit on the Library board (which meets monthly) and via regular student surveys. Particular examples of such changes include removing all PCs and changing the layout of one level of the Centre to create quiet and individual study areas, reviewing the opening hours, and changing the loan patterns for certain texts. From the start of the 2010-11 academic year, and in response to student demand, a new 24-hour access learning facility with appropriate computing facilities has opened in the Students' Association building. This helps to support the needs of, for example, part-time students fitting study around shift work.

33   Overall, the University is using innovative approaches to the learning environment to create a flexible learning experience for its diverse student body.

The effectiveness of the institution's approach to promoting equality of opportunity and effective learning for all of its students

34   Widening participation is key to the University's identity and mission, and it is a strategic goal of the institution to provide access for UK and international groups traditionally under-represented in higher education, and to review and change learning and teaching provision and support where necessary in order to support the engagement, progression and achievement of a diverse range of students. Students from all groups, including those entering the University through the Greater Glasgow Articulation Partnership and through the joint venture pathway programmes, indicated that the support and induction at their point of entry to the University, and also at the point of first enquiry, had been very good and contextualised to their specific needs.

35   Consideration of the needs of international students is informed by returns in the International Student Barometer, and the University uses the national Teachability Tool to ensure that the curriculum is accessible to students with disabilities, for example by considering the visual and auditory requirements of students with disabilities using IT software. The University has an Equality and Diversity Adviser, who works across the institution to ensure that the requirements of relevant legislation are met, and to disseminate good practice. The Disability Service provides information and advice for students and applicants and the University also has an Equality and Diversity Strategy through which it collects and monitors relevant data, embeds equality and diversity in governance, and develops approaches to training and development.

36   The University is taking active steps to ensure equality of opportunity for all students.

The effectiveness of the institution's approach to supporting and developing staff to promote effective learning for their students

37   The University's continuing professional development (CPD) policy aims to improve the quality of the student learning experience by encouraging staff with a teaching or learner support role to develop innovative approaches to learning and teaching throughout their careers. There is a range of structured development opportunities for staff, including the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education and the Caledonian Scholars and Associates Scheme, which supports staff in undertaking pedagogical research directly related to the stated goals of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. The Organisational Development section of the Human Resources Department also runs a number of larger-scale events, and at the time of the current ELIR these were themed around internationalisation of the curriculum and student support. Organisational Development also provides strategic training, for example in the use of the new ISIS system. In addition, each school runs local events, groups and seminars to promote and exchange best practice in teaching and learner support.

38   CPD opportunities are delivered by a number of departments, including the Caledonian Academy and the Centre for Research into Lifelong Learning. Organisational Development has overall responsibility for the strategic development and generic promotion of CPD opportunities, which are managed through a steering group including the heads of departments and schools, the Director of Organisational Development, the Head of Academic Research Development, the Head of the Caledonian Academy and the Head of the Caledonian Graduate Centre, thus ensuring that training and CPD opportunities align with curricular and strategic needs. Organisational Development also operates through an extensive network of learning and development coordinators located in all departments and schools.

39   Although staff are aware of the extensive range of staff development opportunities available, some have difficulty in securing as much time as they would like to engage with them. Workload planning for individual staff currently takes place at school level and there is no

overarching policy in terms of staff entitlement to time for CPD or curriculum development activities. The University recognises that this will need to be addressed, particularly to ensure adequate staff development to meet the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy goals. Monitoring of staff engagement with CPD forms part of the Performance and Development Annual Review process.

40   A key aim of the International Strategy is to embed internationalisation into the core activities of the University, including the development of an internationalised workforce. There are increasing opportunities for staff to engage with international activities, including staff undertaking visits to overseas partners.

The effectiveness of the institution's management of the student learning experience on collaborative programmes

41   The University works with a number of partners in the UK and abroad. In the UK there are specific partnerships with colleges of further and higher education (largely as part of the Greater Glasgow Articulation Project), and the University has also entered into a joint venture to provide University-approved pathway programmes in order to increase opportunities for international students to study at university.

42   The University has two formal collaborative partnerships: with the Caledonian College of Engineering in Oman, where approximately 2,500 students in any year are registered on programmes leading to University awards, and with the Institute of Health Sciences, Ministry of Health, Oman, which delivers a BSc Hons in Physiotherapy to a small number of students, currently around 10 per year.

43   The principle underlying the quality assurance of collaborations is that the arrangements at the partner institution must mirror those at the University as closely as possible, and these are laid out in a specific liaison handbook for each partner. The main focus for managing the student learning experience on collaborative programmes is at the programme and school level, where there are direct and ongoing relationships with the collaborative partners to enhance the student experience. These relationships include periodic visits to the partner institution for formal revalidation; annual visits for staff development and curriculum delivery; and the engagement of staff from collaborative partners in University CPD activities, including registration on the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. The University's collaborative agreements also include specific support for staff from partner institutions where necessary and, for example, staff from collaborative partners are eligible to register on the University's professional doctorate programme.

Institution-led monitoring and review of quality and standards

Key features of institution-led monitoring and review at the institution, and the extent to which these arrangements meet sector-wide expectations.

44   The University has a number of key procedures for monitoring and review: new programme approval; Enhancement-Led Internal Subject Review (ELISR), which includes the reapproval of programmes; and annual programme monitoring. Guidance for staff about these procedures and other information on quality and standards is provided in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE) Handbook. This comprehensive, carefully structured and well-written document sets out the University's Quality Enhancement Strategy and has sections devoted to all of the institution's quality assurance and enhancement procedures. Separate documents provide guidance on the quality and standards of research degrees: the Quality Manual for Research Degrees and the Research Student Handbook.

45   Staff regard the QAE Handbook as a useful resource. Staff also identify the school heads of learning, teaching and quality as having a key role in ensuring that the QAE Handbook is implemented by schools.

46   The University has an effective committee structure to consider monitoring and review, with programme and school committees reporting to the University's Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee and the Academic Policy Committee. Minutes of these committees evidence debate on key issues and include reference to progress on agreed actions.

47   The University identifies the programme approval process as the first step in ensuring that programmes meet quality and standards requirements. In 2010-11 the University modified its approval procedure by introducing an initial approval stage which has allowed it, through the Academic Policy Committee, to improve the management of its academic portfolio. This initial stage enables consideration of whether proposed programmes are in accord with the institution's strategic plans for academic development. The University anticipates that the move from six to three larger schools will aid the development of synergies and connections across disciplines during the approval and reapproval process. Later stages of the programme approval and reapproval process, which also incorporate module approval, are based on procedures common to the sector, although there is no formal student representation in new programme approval procedures.

48   The approval pro forma ensures that all new proposals address the University's key strategies and policies, such as those for equality and diversity. These documents also show that consideration of market demand is obtained through, for example, telephone conversations with a significant number of alumni. External stakeholder views are gathered informally or through formal consultation with industrial liaison groups or professional, statutory and regulatory body representatives. In addition to informal consultation with students on new programme proposals, there is an opportunity for students to comment formally when programme approval documentation is considered by programme and school committees. Overall, the procedures for new programme approval are rigorous, applied uniformly and in line with practice across the higher education sector.

49   Annual programme monitoring is required for all taught programmes, consistent with sector-wide practice. The main outcome of the annual monitoring process is the production or updating of a continuous quality improvement plan for the programme, ensuring that enhancement benefits are obtained from the quality assurance procedures. The findings of programme monitoring are consolidated into a school annual report, which is submitted to the Quality Office. The Director of Quality then produces an institution-wide overview report for consideration by the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee and the Academic Policy Committee.

50   Annual programme monitoring documentation indicates that this is a robust process which is implemented consistently. The annual monitoring pro forma encourages the school to reflect on the success of the process at programme level; however, there is no section which requires the school to reflect on school-level actions or proposals identified in the previous year's report. The University is encouraged to consider the benefits of modifying the school annual monitoring process to allow reporting back on school-level issues identified in the previous year's report.

51   Enhancement-Led Internal Subject Review (ELISR), which was introduced in 2003-04, is regarded by senior staff as a key element of the University's quality enhancement framework and strategy. ELISR operates on a five-year cycle and is currently in its second cycle. The ELISR process follows sector-wide convention with the provision of comprehensive documentation and a review panel which includes external reviewers. The panel, which includes student representation, is chaired by a member of senior staff from another school. ELISR reports identify follow-up actions, and in response schools produce an action plan. The plan, along with the review report, is considered for approval by the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee and the Academic Policy Committee.

52   Staff report that ELISR has aided enhancement because it reviews the subject in a school-wide context. This has led to sharing of good practice through interaction across disciplines. Staff also indicate that the ELISR approach has led to a better review of the support provided by

school and central administrative and technical staff. Previously, support departments carried out separate quality assurance audits, but this did not provide a strong contextual link to schools. Staff report that, as ELISR draws heavily on existing documentation, the process is not over-burdensome. The self-evaluation pro forma required by ELISR also means that schools are reviewing activities with specific reference to the University's strategic framework.

53   It is clear that ELISR is a thorough and effective process. In particular, the reapproval of programmes has a rigour comparable to that applied to new programmes. ELISR reports show that panels routinely stipulate conditions and make recommendations for the reapproval of programmes. The findings of the ELISR panels are carefully considered by the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee and the Academic Policy Committee.

54   The regulations and practices for research degree students were updated in 2009 and 2010 in order to comply with the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)* published by QAA, and with Research Council guidelines. In addition, the University's Quality Enhancement Strategy now requires ELISR to address the supervision of research students.

55   Overall, the University has an effective committee structure and its procedures for assuring quality and securing academic standards are appropriate and consistently applied.

The extent to which the institution's monitoring and review arrangements include consideration of all students

56   The ELISR process requires consideration of all students, and the self-evaluation pro forma includes specific reference to articulating students, students with disabilities and international students. Regular reporting on the progression and retention of undergraduate students is well established, and it is anticipated that the introduction of the integrated student information system will lead to improvements in the University's ability to monitor subsets of the overall student population (see paragraph 61). Formal consideration of the needs of research students is achieved primarily through the annual report on progress and supervision, with institutional overview achieved through the work of the Higher Degrees Committee.

57   Overall, the quality assurance arrangements include consideration of all students.

The effectiveness of the institution's approach to self-evaluation, including the use made of external reference points

58   The University formally adopted the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) in 2002 and guidance is provided for staff, particularly during the approval process, to ensure programmes articulate with the SCQF. The Quality Office carries out regular mapping of University policy and practice to the *Code of practice*, most recently in October 2010, and staff report close adherence to the *Code*. Research degree regulations and practices were updated in 2009-10 to ensure adherence with the *Code of practice* and Research Council guidelines.

59   All programmes being reapproved are required to evaluate the success of their previous enhancement plans, and the effectiveness of processes which operate on an institution-wide basis are evaluated using thematic audit (see paragraph 84). Programme specifications are required as part of the approval and reapproval process, and intended learning outcomes are mapped to appropriate subject benchmark statements. The programme specification template has been modified recently to include the University's identified graduate attributes. About 70 per cent of the University's programmes are accredited by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) and programme approval and reapproval events include consideration of PSRB requirements. Where possible, PSRB representatives sit on approval panels to ensure that the quality assurance requirements of the University and the PSRB are satisfied. If separate PSRB accreditation is needed, the accreditation report is considered by the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee. The annual monitoring procedures also require programmes to report on any in-year interactions with PSRBs.

60   Overall, the institution has a clear commitment to a self-evaluative approach to review, making effective use of external reference points.

The effectiveness of the institution's approach to the management of information to inform the operation and evaluation of its monitoring and review activity

61   The new integrated student information system (ISIS) became operational in 2010. The University regards ISIS as key to improving the tracking of student progression. This is a crucial issue for an institution with a large intake of mature students, students articulating from a large number of further education colleges and a significant proportion of students from non-traditional backgrounds. It is expected that ISIS reports will serve key groups engaged with recruitment and retention. Currently, the University is working to ensure consistency and comparability of monitoring information at different levels within the institution.

62   The new system is currently at a stage where school staff continue to verify from their own records the consistency of ISIS data (see paragraph 14). This was a particular issue for examination boards in 2010, when staff in schools spent considerable time verifying and correcting student examination records produced by ISIS. The development of ISIS should enable more effective management of information for monitoring and review, leading to improvements in the management of assessment and examinations.

The effectiveness of the institution's approach to setting and maintaining academic standards, including the management of assessment

63   The University's approval and review processes include peer review of assessment strategies and instruments. Responsibility for assessment lies with the Senate, which exercises this responsibility through the deans of school and the school boards which are responsible for the conduct of the assessment boards within each school. The University uses the term external assessors rather than external examiners. Appointment of external assessors is set out in Appendix 2 of the University Assessment Regulations and the role and responsibilities of external assessors match practice across the sector. The Quality Office provides a handbook for external assessors which is updated regularly. There is a robust system for reviewing the performance of external assessors and the Quality Office provides feedback if there are deficiencies in their practice. External assessors are usually appointed to review programmes, but modules with very large numbers of students normally have a dedicated external assessor.

64   Programme assessment boards are chaired by a senior manager within the school and training is provided for those new to the post. The programme assessment boards have wide discretion within their decision making powers. In order to monitor and advise on the discretionary powers, as well as to ensure general adherence to assessment regulations, a senior administrative officer from the Academic Registry attends the programme assessment board. Submission and consideration of reports from external assessors follows standard practice across the sector. An overview of the individual external assessor reports is prepared by the Director of Quality for the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee and the Academic Policy Committee. A key feature of the overview report is the identification and collation of good practice for subsequent dissemination across the University.

65   The Academic Registry officers, through close working relationships with the chairs of programme assessment boards, ensure the consistent application of the assessment regulations. Evidence from a number of recent external assessor reports indicates that programme assessment boards are conducted to the satisfaction of external assessors and in accordance with University regulations. These reports also refer to the careful work of school staff in ensuring the accuracy of student records presented to programme assessment boards, regardless of the difficulties arising from the introduction of the new integrated student information system.

66   Overall, the University is setting and maintaining appropriate academic standards and managing assessment effectively.

The effectiveness of the institution's approach to managing public information about quality and academic standards, including the linkage with the institution's monitoring and review arrangements

67   The Marketing and Communications Department has overall responsibility for ensuring the accuracy of information provided through prospectuses and the University's website. Schools and support departments including the Academic Registry, Admissions, the Quality Office, and the International Office review the existing content of prospectuses and supply new content. Academic departments have responsibility for confirming to Marketing and Communications that information about programmes in publicity material is consistent with approval and reapproval documentation. The web governance document sets out a careful and thorough approval process to be used by schools and departments to ensure the accuracy of information provided through the University website. The Marketing and Communications web team have an overall monitoring role for the website.

68   The University carries out focus group research annually in order to update and improve the prospectuses. Students confirmed that information they had received about provision at the University, both in prospectuses and on the website, was accurate and provided useful information about the student experience at the University.

The effectiveness of the institution's approach to linking its monitoring and review processes to its enhancement arrangements

69   As part of the annual monitoring process, staff produce a report on the monitoring, quality assurance and enhancement of programmes. These reports are considered by programme boards and an overview report is produced by the school Head of Learning and Teaching Quality (HLTQ). This, along with the Director of Quality's annual overview reports on monitoring and review activity, is the mechanism by which the University identifies good practice for dissemination through the good practice section of the Quality Office website. School quality enhancement committees are charged with the dissemination of good practice within schools. In approval and reapproval documentation, programme development boards must show how the programme engages with key enhancement strategies and policies such as internationalisation, employability and student performance feedback. At executive level, the Pro Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning, the Director of Quality and HLTQs meet regularly to consider enhancement developments and to identify examples of good practice.

70   The good practice section of the Quality Office website and the Director of Quality's overview reports on school annual monitoring, external assessors' reports and ELISR events provide an effective way to disseminate good practice arising from monitoring and review. The good practice section of the Quality Office website is particularly helpful for new staff, as this also includes good practice arising from initiatives of the Caledonian Academy, such as the RealWoRLD project (see paragraph 25). Staff confirmed that HLTQs play a particularly important role in disseminating good practice within and across schools.

71   Overall, enhancement arising from quality assurance is a significant feature of the University's procedures.

The effectiveness of the institution's approach to monitoring and reviewing its collaborative activity

72   Currently, the University has a limited amount of collaborative activity. All partnerships are subject to the University's quality assurance requirements and operational arrangements are set out in liaison handbooks. There is a long-standing link with the Caledonian College of Engineering in Oman, with over 2,500 students currently registered for University awards. In addition, the University has recently started to offer awards through the Institute of Health Sciences in Oman. Another recent collaboration is the joint venture partnership with a pathway programme provider to offer English language tuition and University-approved pathway

programmes for international students who do not meet, in full, the English language requirements for direct entry to a University programme.

73   Guidelines for collaborative arrangements are included in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook, with particular attention given to the approval process for new collaborative initiatives. The ongoing monitoring of collaborative arrangements is primarily managed at programme level. Academic standards are monitored by external assessors who attend sub-assessment boards prior to results being considered by assessment boards at the University. The International Liaison Officer, located in the Quality Office, sees all external assessor reports, programme board reports and annual programme analysis in relation to collaborative programmes. This post has an overarching monitoring role and provides a single channel for the flow of information relating to these programmes. The Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee considers the outcomes of all collaborative partnership approval events and gives formal approval which, where appropriate, also includes approval of teaching staff at the partner institution.

74   The University has articulation agreements with a large number of further education colleges, and these are managed by the schools. There is one significant articulation agreement with an overseas institution: the University of Jinan, China. This is a new venture for the University, with the first intake of students expected in September 2011. To ensure a consistent and sustainable approach to articulation, particularly with regard to targets for the admission of articulating students, the University introduced an Articulation Policy in September 2010. The policy provides for stronger central oversight of articulation, although schools continue to manage the operational aspects of articulation agreements.

75   It is clear that the University is effectively managing its collaborative arrangements.

Strategic approach to quality enhancement

Key features of the institution's strategic approach to quality enhancement

76   The Quality Enhancement Strategy relates directly to the mission and vision of the University, a key element of which is to provide a high-quality, accessible, inclusive and flexible learning and teaching environment. The strategy seeks to deliver outcomes related to enhancement of the student learning experience and the enhancement of graduate employability. It encompasses a range of activities and policies currently in place, including the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS).

77   A key aim of the LTAS is to assist students from diverse backgrounds and cultures to achieve their aspirations. The LTAS is framed around three goals: to equip students with the knowledge, skills and attributes to operate as flexible, independent lifelong learners; to build students' competencies in the skills demanded by employers in a global knowledge economy; and to develop and embed innovative and relevant learning and teaching based on sound research and scholarship. The University is delivering the LTAS goals through an innovative, student-centred curriculum, which is responsive to the needs of a diverse student body and is informed by the input of employers and professional bodies. Students and staff are aware of the LTAS goals and their significance in relation to the University's approach to quality enhancement.

78   The Pro Vice-Chancellor Teaching and Learning convenes a working group to ensure collaborative working by staff with quality-related roles. Membership of the group includes the Director of Quality, the heads of learning and teaching, staff from the Caledonian Academy and Support Services staff. This ensures a successful cross-institutional approach to quality enhancement, particularly in relation to the delivery of the LTAS goals.

79   Since the 2005 ELIR there have been a number of significant developments related to the University's strategic approach to quality enhancement, including the formation of the Caledonian Academy. The University regards the Caledonian Academy as central to its aim to

research and develop innovative forms of learning and teaching for its diverse range of students. The Academy is founded on contemporary thinking in educational development and uses action research to improve learning and teaching practice across the University.

80   The University has adopted a transformational change approach to support delivery of the LTAS goals and quality enhancement across the institution. The Caledonian Academy leads on a number of projects which adopt this approach, for example on feedback and assessment and internationalisation and pedagogy. Transformational change projects are facilitated by Caledonian Academy staff, who act as educational change agents and support programme teams in devising project implementation plans. These plans are carried out over an agreed period, followed by evaluation of the project before the outcomes are disseminated across the University. National higher education specialists from the sector are also involved in providing advice and support for specific projects.

81   Overall, staff are positive about the work of the Caledonian Academy and highlight its importance in supporting projects which deliver key elements of the Quality Enhancement Strategy.

The effectiveness of the institution's implementation of its strategies and policies for promoting quality enhancement across the institution

82   Enhancement is a key component of the University's monitoring and review processes. As already noted (see paragraph 49), the main outcome of the annual monitoring process is the production or updating of a continuous quality improvement plan, and all programmes being reapproved are required to evaluate the success of their previous enhancement plans. From 2011-12 all programme specifications will be required to include reference to the University's graduate attributes and show how these are being addressed within the programme.

83   External assessors contribute to enhancement through the identification of good practice and by making recommendations for improvement. The External Assessors' Handbook highlights their role in enhancement. At the end of their term of appointment external assessors provide an end-of-service summary, which enables the University to have a four-year perspective on the operation of the programme or module.

84   The University uses thematic audit as a tool for the enhancement of institution-wide processes. Thematic audit operates by taking an overview of how a process works across the institution, and identifying ways in which it can be improved. Thematic audits have recently been conducted in a number of areas, including student engagement with quality assurance and enhancement processes. The process is useful in evaluating the effectiveness of University procedures and in developing action plans to enhance practice. The thematic audit of student engagement looked at issues raised by students at a range of meetings and committees, such as staff-student consultative groups, programme boards and school boards, and considered the adequacy of the responses by staff and subsequent follow-up action.

The effectiveness of the institution's use of external reference points in its approach to quality enhancement, including the extent to which the institution's approach is informed by national and international practice

85   The University has invested a significant amount of work in relation to the national Enhancement Themes over the last five years, and has instigated a number of projects and initiatives related to these. The University has addressed outcomes from the First Year and Responding to Student Needs Themes through the introduction of academic development tutor posts in all schools. Although there are variations within this role to meet the particular needs of different schools and their students, all academic development tutors play an important role in the delivery of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy by supporting the University in its efforts to improve student engagement, progression and retention across all levels of

undergraduate programmes. They also have a particular focus on supporting and enhancing the first-year experience.

86 The Moving Forward initiative has also been developed in direct response to the First Year Enhancement Theme. Moving Forward is a coordinated strategy focused on a model of partnership working across the University, and includes the Caledonian Academy, the Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning, all six schools and the Students' Association. The initiative provides support for staff in developing local strategies to address issues associated with transition and progression, and funds both staff and students to develop ideas and activities to enhance the student experience of transition into and through the University.

87 The International Strategy includes objectives to increase the number of international students studying at the University and to internationalise the curriculum. Students are aware of opportunities to study abroad, and the International Office reports a significant recent increase in enquiries from students wishing to undertake international exchanges. Staff are also aware of the developing international agenda, and highlighted opportunities to undertake international exchange visits and to work with international partners. In addition, staff from overseas collaborative partner institutions are undertaking professional doctorates at the University. International perspectives are informing the curriculum; for example, student induction processes look at cultural impacts on learning, and the journalism programme considers cultural differences in relation to ethical approaches to taking photographs. Overall, the International Strategy and the University's work with international partners are providing opportunities for enhancing the home student experience in line with the Quality Enhancement Strategy.

88 The University makes use of an extensive set of external reference points in its approach to programme design and enhancement of the student experience, and is strongly engaged with the national Enhancement Themes.

The effectiveness of the institution's approach to identifying, disseminating and implementing good practice in the context of its strategic approach to enhancement

89 The heads of learning, teaching and quality are responsible for the dissemination of good practice at the programme and module level, and this process is supplemented by the academic development tutors, who play a cross-school role in the implementation of new policies. There are informal monthly meetings of the heads of learning, teaching and quality, which assist in the sharing of good practice. The heads of learning, teaching and quality and academic development tutors are key roles in relation to the dissemination of good practice and effective delivery of the Quality Enhancement Strategy.

90 Formal processes for the identification of good practice include Enhancement-Led Internal Subject Review, the programme approval and review process, the annual monitoring of programmes and modules, and the annual compilation of issues arising from external assessor reports. Good practice is reported and considered through the committee structure, firstly to the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee (LTSC) and then to the Academic Policy Committee (APC). Staff reported that the recent review of LTSC and APC had improved the effectiveness of these committees. In particular, it was noted by staff that APC had a clearer focus on strategic issues, and this was demonstrated in the minutes of more recent APC meetings with, for example, discussion about the new London campus and the University's Articulation Policy. The University's strategic approach to quality enhancement is implemented effectively through the committee structure, particularly in relation to APC and LTSC.

The effectiveness of the institution's approach to enhancing collaborative provision

91 The University stated that quality assurance of collaborative provision must mirror arrangements at the University as closely as possible. It ensures this by careful selection of

partners and recognises that, in order to deliver an equivalent experience for partnership students, practical engagement with the partner is required.

92   The Caledonian College of Engineering in Oman is the University's longest-standing partner, and part of the agreement is the provision of up to 80 days' teaching per academic session to be provided by University staff. Staff from the Caledonian College of Engineering also come to Glasgow to observe and participate in on-campus teaching. The University has an appropriate and effective approach to the enhancement of this provision.

Conclusion

Effectiveness of the institution's management of the student learning experience

93   The University is using innovative approaches to learning and teaching, including extensive use of the virtual learning environment, to create a flexible learning experience for its diverse student body. Students are very positive about their learning experience at the University.

94   The introduction of the school officer role has significantly improved student representation at school level. School officer posts are appointed and managed by the Students' Association, but funded by the University, and evidence the effective working relationship between the institution and the Students' Association.

95   The academic development tutor role, which has been introduced since the 2005 ELIR, provides individualised academic support to students as well as contributing to school strategies and activities related to improving student transition and progression. The tutors provide specific and contextualised learning support for students and, as such, the creation of the role represents good practice.

96   Other significant developments since the 2005 ELIR include completion of the Saltire Centre and the formation of the Caledonian Academy. The Saltire Centre provides an effective resource hub and has evolved in direct response to student feedback, resulting in changes to the way in which the available space is utilised. The Caledonian Academy plays an important role in supporting the student learning experience, particularly in relation to blended learning, employability and the development of graduate attributes.

97   The University is currently developing an integrated student information system, with initial implementation being completed in December 2010. However, a number of issues remain to be resolved in relation to staff confidence in the new system, and the University is encouraged to provide a sustainable approach to maintaining and developing it, as well as supporting users.

98   Inconsistency of practice in relation to feedback on students' assessed work was raised in the 2005 ELIR report and continues to be an issue. The University has now commissioned a senior member of the Academic Policy Committee to lead on resolving this matter, and the University is encouraged, as a matter of priority, to progress action to ensure consistency of practice across the institution.

Effectiveness of the institution's arrangements for institution-led monitoring and review of quality, and academic standards of awards

99   The University has an effective committee structure and its procedures for assuring quality and securing academic standards are appropriate and consistently applied. In particular, Enhancement-Led Internal Subject Review (ELISR) is a thorough and effective process. There is a robust annual monitoring process in place. However, the annual programme monitoring pro forma does not currently allow for reflection on school-level actions and proposals identified in the previous year's report, and the University is encouraged to consider the benefits of modifying the pro forma in this way.

100   There is student representation on ELISR panels, programme boards, the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee, Academic Policy Committee and the Senate. The views of all students are considered through staff-student consultative groups (SSCGs) and key issues raised in SSCG meetings are considered at programme and school board level. Overall, the quality assurance arrangements are addressing the needs of students.

101   The University has a clear commitment to a self-evaluative approach to review and makes extensive use of external reference points, including professional, statutory and regulatory body requirements. It also has in place mechanisms for the dissemination of good practice arising from monitoring and review, and the good practice section of the Quality Office website is an effective means for the publication and dissemination of good practice. The heads of learning, teaching and quality also fulfil an important role in disseminating good practice within and across schools.

102   The introduction of the new integrated student information system should enable the more effective management of information for monitoring and review, and, once staff confidence in the accuracy of data reporting increases, it should facilitate improvements in the management of assessment and examinations.

Effectiveness of the institution's implementation of its strategic approach to quality enhancement

103   The Quality Enhancement Strategy relates directly to the mission and vision of the University in seeking to provide a high-quality, accessible, inclusive and flexible learning and teaching environment. It encompasses a range of activities and policies currently in place, including the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. The University takes a cross-institutional approach to quality enhancement, particularly in relation to the delivery of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy goals.

104   Staff are positive about the Caledonian Academy and highlight its importance in supporting transformational change projects which deliver key elements of the Quality Enhancement Strategy. The University is effective in implementing its strategic approach to quality enhancement through the committee structure, particularly in relation to the Academic Policy Committee and the Learning and Teaching Sub-Committee, which now have a clearer focus on strategic issues.

105   The University makes extensive use of external reference points in its approach to enhancement, and is strongly engaged with the national Enhancement Themes. The role of academic development tutor was introduced as a result of this engagement, and this post is important in supporting the University's efforts to improve student engagement, progression and retention. The heads of learning, teaching and quality are responsible for disseminating good practice within their schools, and these, together with the academic development tutors, are key posts in the dissemination of good practice and the effective delivery of the Quality Enhancement Strategy. The International Strategy, together with the University's work with international partners, is informing developments in the curriculum and enhancing the home student experience in line with the Quality Enhancement Strategy.

Overarching confidence judgement

106   The findings of the ELIR indicate that there can be **confidence** in the University's current, and likely future, management of the academic standards of its awards and the quality of the student learning experience it provides.