

# Thematic Report on Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) Reports: Use of Institutional Data

## Introduction

As part of the ELIR 3 method (2013-16) QAA Scotland produces regular thematic reports to support learning from the outcomes of individual ELIR reports. The purpose of the thematic reports is to inform future development work in the sector and, in particular, to inform future QAA activity including work carried out in collaboration with the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC).

## Scope and structure of this report

This report identifies material relating to the use of institutional data within fifteen reports published in the ELIR 3 cycle. The institutions included in this report are: the University of Aberdeen; the University of Dundee; the University of Edinburgh; Edinburgh Napier University; Glasgow Caledonian University; the Glasgow School of Art; the University of Glasgow; Heriot-Watt University; Queen Margaret University; the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland; Scotland's Rural College; the University of St Andrews; the University of Stirling; the University of Strathclyde; and the University of the West of Scotland. In addition, this report contains relevant material from reports published under the ELIR 2 method relating to those institutions that, at the time of writing, had not been reviewed in the ELIR 3 method. These institutions are the University of Abertay Dundee, the Robert Gordon University, and the University of the Highlands and Islands.

This report highlights the areas of positive practice and the areas for development identified in the ELIR Technical and Outcome Reports. The positive practice identified in the individual reports highlights activity that allows a close linkage between data analysis and the institution's strategic policy, often underpinned by recent developments in available technology. Areas for development include strengthening the quality of data, evaluating the effectiveness of new technological and analytic approaches, and promoting the extent to which decision-making is underpinned by data analysis. While the positive practice and development points relate to specific institutions, they are areas that are likely to be worthy of consideration in all institutions. It is of course possible that additional practice takes place in the eighteen institutions, but only those elements of practice identified within the ELIR reports are included here.

The paper also briefly outlines the next steps in the ELIR process following the publication of the ELIR reports. Readers are asked to note that this report does not include information about action the individual institutions have taken following publication of their ELIR reports. That can be found in the Follow-up Reports, which are published on the QAA website alongside the ELIR Outcome and Technical Reports for each individual institution.

Annex A contains references to the use of institutional data within the ELIR 3 Technical Reports. The paragraph numbers used in the annex are taken directly from the reports. Annex B contains references to the use of institutional data within the ELIR 2 Reports for the University of Abertay Dundee, the Robert Gordon University, and the University of the Highlands and Islands.

## Use of institutional data: Evidence of good practice

This section identifies positive practice as identified in the ELIR 3 Technical Reports and, for three universities, the ELIR 2 full reports.

### Developments in institutional data management

The current ELIR cycle has seen many of our institutions investing in the technological infrastructure needed to manage data related to students. Examples include:

- the University of Aberdeen's OneSource, which will also replace other institutional systems (for example human resources, payroll and pensions)
- the University of Edinburgh's PATH system, which draws on a database of academic programmes in order to assist students in choosing their curriculum
- Edinburgh Napier University's development of dashboards and investment in staff training related to its information infrastructure
- the implementation of Glasgow Caledonian University's Integrated Student Information System, and the University of Glasgow's MyCampus
- planned improvements at Queen Margaret University
- the planned 'harmonisation of student data into a single management information system' at Scotland's Rural College
- the University of Stirling's Student Engagement Programme, proposed Enhanced Student Record, and Single Source of Course Information
- a number of projects being progressed at the University of Strathclyde - for example, the Corporate Management Information Project, the new Student Information and Management System, and a system allowing for real-time analysis of staff performance
- and the introduction of dashboards for the University of the West of Scotland's Performance Management Information System (PMIS), which allow staff to analyse and take ownership of data, leading to insights that can support and inform practical development.

ELIR 2 reports contain similar information regarding the new Business Information System and Course Information Database at the Robert Gordon University, and a Data Improvement Project at the University of the Highlands and Islands, which ran between 2007 and 2010. Some comparable initiatives are linked less explicitly to technology, such as the University of Edinburgh's Business Intelligence/Management Information improvement scheme, including a Student Systems Road Map project aimed at making a range of data more accessible. Improvements in management information at Glasgow School of Art have meant that data can more readily be supplied for programme review.

### Use of data in planning, decision-making and benchmarking

It is clear from ELIR reports that, across the sector, data are being used effectively to assist in planning and decision-making. Datasets such as the Key Information Set, which draws heavily on the National Student Survey and Destination of Leavers of Higher Education survey, and is published on the Unistats website, are usually disseminated internally. Decision-making processes vary between institutions, but are being enhanced by the technological developments described above, which are helping institutions to identify where better quality data (and/or staff development) are needed.

Data are also used extensively in benchmarking exercises. UK-wide surveys such as the NSS, PTES, PRES, and International Student Barometer, are commonly used as benchmarking tools; in some instances, institutions augment these surveys with their own (for example, Heriot-Watt University conducts a survey similar to DLHE in order to track the

journeys of those students who have graduated from its international campuses). Development of formal key performance indicator (KPI) sets at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, and the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI), were identified in ELIR reports as positive developments; in the case of UHI, the production of KPIs has been a direct result of the institutional Data Improvement Project, and an enabling factor in other projects such as the Retention and Continuation Project. At Glasgow Caledonian University, programme teams are required to reflect on KPIs as part of routine programme monitoring. Heriot-Watt University uses centrally-produced KPIs to monitor its students' learning experience, benchmarking against Scottish and UK higher education institutions (HEIs). At present, this is limited to the UK undergraduate experience, but there are plans to broaden the scope to other student groups. Heriot-Watt also uses data from HESA and the SFC for benchmarking. At the University of Edinburgh close attention is paid to ensuring that staff are aware of survey results, as well as the institutional expertise, which is available in terms of interpreting and acting on those results.

### **Use of data in initiatives concerned with retention, progression and completion**

The University of Aberdeen analyses data about full-time non-continuing students on an annual basis. At Edinburgh Napier the Retention Steering Group monitors data on student progression and achievement. Heriot-Watt University has made retention a priority area for the attention of its Learning and Teaching Board, a decision based on institutional data. The University of the Highlands and Islands has appointed three School Enhancement Developers in its Faculty of Science and Technology; data are being used both to evidence the impact of this initiative and to justify its extension into other faculties.

### **Use of data in initiatives concerned with Widening Participation and articulation**

The use of data to support widening participation initiatives is highlighted in several ELIR 3 reports, including: the University of Edinburgh, where contextual data have been used in admissions since 2004; Edinburgh Napier University, where there is a particular focus on retention; Glasgow Caledonian University, where data has provided insights about the numbers of hours of paid employment undertaken by its most disadvantaged students in addition to their studies; the University of Glasgow, the contextualised admissions model of which has been praised by the SFC, and where the MyCampus system is used to identify disadvantaged students who may need additional support; the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, where data regarding disadvantaged students were benchmarked against comparable institutions; and the University of Strathclyde, where contextualised admissions were introduced in session 2013-14.

Several institutions are using data as a key element in projects concerned with articulation. Edinburgh Napier is a member of the Edinburgh, Lothian, Fife and Borders Regional Articulation Hub (ELRAH); the ELRAH manages an articulation database that has improved statistical reporting on students taking this route through further and higher education. At Glasgow Caledonian University data are closely monitored to evidence the efficacy of routes into degrees from Higher National Certificate and Diploma (HNC/D) programmes. The Robert Gordon University's ELIR 2 report draws attention to the use of course-specific data in the monitoring and evaluation of its articulating programmes.

### **Use of data in initiatives concerned with Equality and Diversity**

Data relating to Equality and Diversity are considered at the highest levels of some institutions. The University of Aberdeen's Senate examines institutional data relating to Equality and Diversity on an annual basis in order to monitor progress towards institutional

goals in this area. At the Robert Gordon University data are considered on a similar basis by the Board of Governors. The Queen Margaret University has an Equality Action Plan, which is informed by annually-updated data relating to every stage of the student experience from application to award (including appeals and complaints). In terms of a specific Equality and Diversity constituency, the University of Dundee's Disability Services use data to ensure that their resources are allocated according to student need.

### **Use of data in initiatives concerned with monitoring, review and evaluation**

Across the sector, the ELIR reports indicate that data are being used effectively within the context of the monitoring, review and evaluation of academic programmes. Detailed student cohort analysis is built explicitly into processes at the Glasgow School of Art, Heriot-Watt University, the University of St Andrews, the Robert Gordon University and the University of the Highlands and Islands.

At the time of its ELIR, the University of St Andrews was piloting a fact sheet, based on what was described in the report as 'a comprehensive set of metrics', for use in internal review processes; at the University of Edinburgh, report templates for programme monitoring are pre-populated with data on student performance.

This use of data allows for fine-grained quantitative material to be considered alongside qualitative information, such as student feedback. At the University of Abertay, there is specific recognition that completion rates for student questionnaires are an area for development; at the time of its ELIR 2 review it was planning to introduce an online system for the collection and analysis of this data. The University of Edinburgh and the University of Glasgow are rolling out similar online feedback systems. Heriot-Watt University's method of collecting student feedback enables feedback from those studying with collaborative partners and alternative providers to be disaggregated.

There is also an understanding that these processes themselves generate valuable data, providing a picture of how academic programmes develop over time, and allowing for comparative and/or historical analysis. Programme monitoring data can be used to enhance the review processes themselves, for example at Edinburgh Napier University this understanding has led to more explicit incorporation of student feedback into module review.

### **Student-led initiatives**

The University of Strathclyde Students' Association produced a 'Best Practice Report' based on analysis of data from their Teaching Excellence Awards, a project praised by the ELIR panel as imaginative and valuable.

### **Use of institutional data: Areas for development**

This section sets out areas for development as identified within the ELIR 3 Technical Reports and, for three universities, the ELIR 2 full reports.

### **Challenges for small specialist institutions**

The small specialist institutions within the sector (namely Glasgow School of Art, the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, and Scotland's Rural College) face specific challenges with regard to the management and analysis of big data. While developments are underway, it is worth acknowledging that the benefits of the systematic use of data may be relative to the amount of data held by the institution, meaning that, for example, extensive investment in new IT equipment is harder to justify as an institutional priority in a small organisation.

## **Data integrity**

The quality of data appears to vary across the sector. This was particularly evident in the report on the University of the Highlands and Islands, where the Retention and Continuation Project highlighted anomalies - an example of how enhancement activities can not only be informed by data, but also help to improve it. The institution was also encouraged to develop data sets and systems by which different student groups could be disaggregated. Scotland's Rural College is still working towards a unified body of student data following the merger that brought it into existence; the systematic use of data at an institutional level will become evident over time. As cohort and class sizes are small, the identification of trends in progression, retention and completion will be a particularly challenging - and particularly important - element of this work.

## **Consistency in use of data within institutions**

The use of data across institutions, even for specific purposes, can be variable. This is evident most specifically at the University of Stirling, where the ELIR team noted a range of practice relating to how student outcomes and feedback were used in programme monitoring.

## **Building institutional expertise**

It is unclear whether expertise resides in all institutions to analyse big data in effective ways. Specifically, Queen Margaret University acknowledged the need to strengthen its capability in this area, but it is likely that other institutions will recognise a similar gap in expertise. The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland has been encouraged to complete its IT Strategy, and to use data and KPIs more systematically.

## **Student surveys**

Key UK-wide surveys are used as benchmarking tools within institutions, but the use of the data varies: Glasgow Caledonian University's report highlighted that data from the NSS were used more extensively than those from the postgraduate experience surveys. Queen Margaret University was encouraged to review its approach to the strategic management of surveys (including internal ones) in order to promote more consistent approaches and avoid 'survey fatigue', both of which are likely to have an effect on the reliability of the resulting data.

## **Areas highlighted in the ELIR Outcome Reports**

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

### **Positive practice**

Positive practice relating to the use of institutional data was identified in four of the Outcome Reports. Specific points were:

- the University of Glasgow's analysis of data relating to students from MD40 backgrounds, which results in better targeting of additional support
- the University of Edinburgh's integrated approach to the use of data, as seen in initiatives such as the PATH project, which is a student-led curriculum planning tool
- the University of Strathclyde's online system for staff development, which allows senior managers to analyse data on staff performance in order to better target resources for staff development

- the University of Strathclyde's systematic approach to using data from external examiners' reports and student surveys
- the University of the West of Scotland's approach to learning analytics, which makes data accessible to staff through dashboards.

In addition, from the ELIR 2 Summary Reports:

- the Robert Gordon University's use of its new Business Information System.

### **Areas for development**

Development areas relating to the use of institutional data were identified in three of the Outcome Reports. Specific points are as follows.

- The University of Aberdeen was encouraged to consider how its significant initiatives, such as the implementation of OneSource, might best be evaluated.
- The Royal Conservatoire of Scotland was encouraged to finalise its IT Strategy, further develop its Management Information System, and promote the active use of data to inform discussion and decision-making.
- Scotland's Rural College was encouraged to focus on enhancing the quality of its data (and the ability to disaggregate different student groups), with an aim of making the information suitable for benchmarking and decision-making.

In addition, from the ELIR 2 Summary Reports.

- The University of the Highlands and Islands was encouraged to continue planned improvements to its data management systems.

### **What happens next?**

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

## Annex A: References to the use of institutional data in the ELIR 3 Technical Reports

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

### University of Aberdeen

4 The University has engaged in two significant transformational projects: Curriculum Reform (CREF) which received strong endorsement in the 2010 ELIR report and the development of a single data and records management system, OneSource.

9 The project to develop a single data and records management system, OneSource, was at an early stage of implementation during the current ELIR. The ELIR team considered that clear plans were in place for the project, although the timescales appeared ambitious given the scale of the initiative (see paragraph 24).

22 The Strategic Plan 2011-15 sets a target of improving overall retention rates to four per cent better than the University's benchmark figure. Non-continuation data for the full-time undergraduate student population is analysed in detail annually and considered by the senior management team and the schools. This analysis includes the level of study, student domicile, incoming qualifications, and entry route (summer school, access, clearing). However, the University does not currently monitor non-continuation rates for part-time students. Senior staff indicated that this was because 'continuation' is more difficult to define for a part-time student, but acknowledged that this should become part of the annual data. The University is encouraged to progress these plans.

24 Management information relating to student recruitment, retention, progression and achievement is considered as part of the formal monitoring and review processes. The University has identified the need to improve its management information systems and is introducing an ambitious institution-wide project, OneSource, which will replace the current systems for: student records, admissions, research management, human resources, payroll and pensions, finance, and procurement. In the Case Study submitted for the current ELIR, the University set out the approach it will take to the Student Lifecycle Project, a major project in itself and the first to be undertaken within the context of OneSource. The timescale for implementing the online course selection system, MyCurriculum, a key element of the Student Lifecycle Project, has been determined by the implementation date for the restructured Academic Year, 2014-15. The implications of the short timescale and the risks for the student learning experience associated with slippage against the timescale are recognised and subject to careful monitoring by the University. In discussion with the ELIR team, staff displayed considerable confidence in the approach and their ability to secure successful implementation of these ambitious targets. Staff emphasised that the implementation of OneSource was building on the experience the University has gained with other major transformational initiatives, such as Curriculum Reform. It was also emphasised that the approach exemplified the way in which the University has evaluated and learned from its approach, and that continuous evaluation and review would be an ongoing part of the project's implementation. Staff and students were enthusiastic about the benefits the new arrangements are intended to bring.

26 The University developed a vision for equality and diversity in 2012. Since then it has conducted an annual critique of a wide range of data including student numbers, continuation rates and trends. The resulting paper is considered by the Senate. This detailed and reflective exercise provides key information which will enable the University to identify the progress it is making towards its equality and diversity goals.

## University of Dundee

21 The University uses key data sets effectively to monitor its performance in relation to its student population. Data in relation to admissions, retention and progression, award outcomes, student satisfaction and employment is considered through the University's committee structures and its quality assurance and enhancement processes such as annual monitoring and periodic review.

26 Students with disabilities are supported through Disability Services, whose staff work closely with schools and services across the University to ensure that support is coordinated effectively. Each school has a dedicated disability support officer whose role is to liaise with Disability Services and provide programme-specific advice to students who have disclosed a disability. Data is used effectively to target resources and annual reports of the effectiveness of the Service are published on the Disability Services website. Student feedback indicated a high level of satisfaction with the comprehensive and responsive nature of the services provided.

82 The University's approach to self-evaluation and the management of information meets sector expectations including the Scottish Funding Council guidance and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education. The University uses a range of data sets to inform planning at various levels, including the National Student Survey, the International Student Barometer and the Higher Education Academy Postgraduate Research Experience Survey. Student support services use key data sets to inform resource allocation and academic schools use relevant data to inform quality assurance and enhancement processes. The University uses KPIs to monitor progress towards the achievement of strategic initiatives.

83 The University has devolved much of its management of information to colleges and schools with oversight through the Information Management Committee, which reports to the Senior Management Team. The Student Information Technology Services - Student Management System (SITS-SMS) is managed by Student Services and provides all matriculation and assessment-related student data. The SITS-SMS database is integrated with the University's virtual learning environment (VLE) to allow easy access for students to VLE modules and course information. A comprehensive range of data sets is provided to schools to inform their self-evaluation. Progress has been made since the 2009 ELIR to provide more accessible and timely data sets to programme teams.

86 The University uses HESA data from other institutions to benchmark its performance, considers information published by ranking bodies to compare its performance to other universities, and uses the national Enhancement Themes to inform its strategic planning.

## University of Edinburgh

25 In 2013-14 the University had 1,469 entrants from a widening participation background (including those from the rest of the UK and Scotland-domiciled, based on a basket of measures), an increase of 18 per cent since 2012-13. In 2013-14, 69 per cent of these entrants were Scottish domiciled and 371 students came from Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 40 data zones. A further 367 students were entrants from Lothians Equal Access Programme for Schools (LEAPS). In 2014-15, the University admitted 446 students from LEAPS, twice as many as the other participating institutions. Other University-led projects to support widening participation include: Pathways to Professions, which provides advice and guidance to state school pupils interested in studying Medicine, Law, Veterinary Medicine and Architecture; and Educated Pass, which targets boys from under-represented groups through their local football club.

26 The University has been developing approaches to contextualised admissions and these were refined during 2015 to help identify those who have faced educational and socio-economic disadvantage, and to take into consideration the socio-economic context in which examination results have been achieved. The University emphasised that, since it had begun to use contextual data in 2004, retention rates and the proportion of students achieving First and 2:1 degrees had improved, reinforcing the institution's firm belief that use of contextual data alongside other information contained within the UCAS application had enabled it to identify those students who best demonstrate the academic ability, resilience and commitment to succeed at Edinburgh. The University's retention rate for widening participation students is the same as for the student cohort as a whole, and analysis of the data by the institution indicates that the University outperformed the Higher Education Statistics Agency Indicator, the Scottish sector average and the UK sector average on this measure.

105 The University reports that, as a research-intensive institution, a scholarly and evidence-based approach is central to its self-evaluation. The University demonstrates this approach through: the high level monitoring of its Strategic Plan and cross-institutional initiatives; evaluative practice apparent in annual monitoring and periodic review of programmes and student services; and the analysis of feedback from students. Enhancement of the University's self-evaluative arrangements is evident through an increasingly integrated approach to the collection of data and the use of management information, linked to the development of strategic projects aimed at enhancing the student learning experience (see paragraphs 119-121).

107 Annual course and programme monitoring contributes to the continuous oversight of academic standards and the student learning experiences. This function is devolved to schools, who have some flexibility in their arrangements but are expected to work within the University's annual monitoring expectations, which include programme oversight, external (to the programme) comment, arrangements for action and onward reporting of appropriate matters. Schools and discipline areas determine, with the agreement of the relevant college Quality Assurance Committee, the appropriate mechanisms for the regular monitoring of their courses and programmes using information sources such as feedback from students, course evaluation by staff, external examiner reports, PSRB reports, and data on student performance and achievement. Schools are expected to take appropriate action based on internal subject and external accreditation reviews, feedback from external examiners, and data on student performance and trends. Teaching staff who met the ELIR team confirmed their understanding of, and involvement in, the processes of course monitoring and their contribution to annual programme monitoring. Teaching staff, directors of learning and teaching and heads of school confirmed the value to the process of the report templates, pre-populated with relevant data on student performance.

108 Schools are required to produce an annual Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE) Report, which is considered by the college's Quality Assurance Committee. The purpose of the QAE Report is to provide a consistent framework for school-level reflection about the quality of the student experience, including that of postgraduate research students, and to identify and promote enhancement. Each college then produces an Annual College Quality Assurance Report in template form, which includes summaries of the key points emerging from the school reports, college data on student progression, progress updates on actions required from the previous annual report and most recent internal reports, themes and actions consequent on external examiner reports and a report on student engagement activities. These are considered at the Senate Quality Assurance Committee, which makes recommendations to the colleges.

115 Since the 2011 ELIR the University has been proactive in promoting greater consistency in gathering and reporting feedback information at course level. The University

has been piloting the use of electronic course evaluation software to provide a standardised approach to gathering and reporting course-level student feedback. The University acknowledges that the full benefits of using the software in delivering transparent and comparable course data at institutional level can only be delivered when the software is adopted by all schools. At the time of the current ELIR, the software was being used in 15 of the 22 schools, with the University estimating that the roll-out of the system would be complete by 2016-17. Discussion was ongoing about the merits of schools being able to introduce optional or alternative questions.

117 A mid-term evaluation of the Student Experience Project confirmed that 92 per cent of respondents to a staff survey said they knew who to contact for queries about survey data; 79 per cent said it was easier to access information; and 83 per cent confirmed that the results had helped them to be informed about factors affecting the student experience. Actions identified in relation to the survey results are discussed in a series of annual meetings between the Senior Vice-Principal Learning and Teaching and each head of school. Particular attention is focused on the schools with the lowest overall scores. In 2014-15 two schools in particular were visited by the Principal and a group of senior staff to discuss priority actions. Ongoing support is also provided to all schools that are below the Russell Group Upper Quartile benchmark. The Senior Vice-Principal, together with the relevant Head of College and College Dean, have in-depth discussions with schools to discuss the challenges and formulate an effective response.

118 A key recent development to support the University's self-evaluative processes has been the development, initiated by the University's Knowledge Strategy Committee, to improve and widen access to core data and information for a range of Business Intelligence/Management Information (BI/MI) purposes that support the student learning experience. Student data is a key element of the BI/MI data sets, which also include data sets on finance, estates, research and human resources. The University plans to make Key Information Sets data from all institutions available through the BI/MI scheme to support subject benchmarking and PSRB accreditation.

119 2013 saw the introduction of the first phase of the Student Systems Road Map project, a strand of the BI/MI initiative, focusing on the accessibility of data, including: admissions; assessment; Personal Tutor system statistics; and course and programme information. The aim of the Student Systems Road Map is to provide decision makers and external bodies with 'timely, accurate, joined-up and trusted information', focusing on data enhancement rather than merely data collection. The ELIR team would encourage the University to progress with this work, in particular developing the staff-facing 'Dashboard' project, which will be a key feature of the second phase of the Student Systems Road Map project to take place in the 2016-21 period. Sample documentation provided to the team included a screenshot of a prototype view of the range of data that would be accessible to staff involved with the various stages of the student journey, interactively displayed and presented flexibly for use at course, programme, school or college level. The prototype displayed data sets on applications and admissions, NSS outcomes, completion rates and exit awards. The team noted that some of the information displayed was subdivided to allow further interrogation by student group. Staff familiar with the work welcomed the initiative and expressed the clear benefits that could be gained by increasing the operational effectiveness of their course and programme monitoring, and confirmed that the Dashboard prototypes were being discussed in a wide range of fora to seek staff comment, and promote engagement.

120 An example of the effective use of data for decision-making is evident in the student-designed and developed PATH project. PATH is a user-friendly interface to which staff and students can contribute. It draws on existing information from the University's Programme and Course Information Management (PCIM) system to provide students with

the information and tools needed to make informed course selections within the context of an increasing breadth of course choice. Changes to courses or programmes made within the PCIM are automatically reflected in PATH. PATH also: allows students to hold informed discussions with Personal Tutors on course choices; allows easy generation of possible timetables; enables students to see the impact of potential choices on later years of their programme; and automatically validates choices against programme rules. The University intends to implement PATH across all courses and to make it available to students pre-registration as an aid to early course planning. The ELIR team viewed PATH positively, as an example of the integrated way that the University is making progress in using data to identify and implement enhancements to the student learning experience.

121 The University provided a considerable volume of advance material, as well as various sets of additional information, that allowed the ELIR team to develop a good understanding of the arrangements in place for quality assurance and enhancement, and provided reassurance that the institution is meeting sector expectations. In particular, the Advance Information Set provided detail on the balance between institution-wide guidelines and the devolved structures of the University. The information contained within the Advance Information Set demonstrated the University's reflective approach to self-evaluation, and its commitment to producing quantitative and qualitative data to enable enhancement to be a direct outcome of the various monitoring processes.

122 The University makes use of a wide range of external reference points to inform its self-evaluation processes. Monitoring and review processes at the programme level refer to the Quality Code (including Subject Benchmark Statements), the Scottish Funding Council Guidance on Quality, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, the results of external surveys, and comparative benchmarking data available through the Higher Education Statistics Agency. The University has been actively involved in past and present national Enhancement Themes, and has used the Theme to support developments in various aspects of the student experience, including assessment, graduate attributes and student transitions (see paragraphs 83 and 84).

126 The University's approach is both effective and forward-looking. It pays particular attention to the monitoring of student, programme and student services performance, it systematically reviews progress against its strategic and related plans, and, through the work of the Senate Quality Assurance Committee and the colleges, monitors the implementation of school and college action plans. The University makes effective use of the rich and increasing data sources it has available and aims not only to extend the amount of relevant data it gathers, but to make these and existing data available in a more useful way to staff. The University's approach to self-evaluation and reflection, its comprehensive quality monitoring and review arrangements, and its use of data to enhance the student learning experience all represent positive practice.

### **Edinburgh Napier University**

18 Effective implementation of Strategy 2020 depends on the continuing development of information management systems to inform analysis and planning. The University is investing in ongoing development and enhancement of information management systems to analyse and improve performance against targets and key performance indicators (KPIs). In 2011-12 the development of a new information management system was undertaken to improve the reporting of management information across students, staff, finance and estates. More recently, a suite of strategic dashboards and reports have been developed by the Planning and Business Intelligence Team to support both the measurement of the University's strategic KPIs and the provision of quantitative data to inform strategic decision-making. The University acknowledges that it could further develop its use to inform strategic planning.

23 The University has 240 formal articulation agreements with eight colleges in Scotland and 29 formal articulation routes with international partners from eight countries. In 2013 the Associate Student Scheme was established in collaboration with local colleges to strengthen the University's approach to articulation. The University is a member of the Edinburgh, Lothians, Fife and Borders Regional Articulation Hub (ELRAH). The ELRAH established a national articulation database and route finder search tool, which aims to improve the statistical reporting of students entering through an articulation arrangement to provide a regional and national context. In 2013-14, 887 new undergraduate entrants joined the University from Scottish colleges and, in 2014-15, 565 students entered the University with advanced standing.

24 Twelve per cent of the Scottish-domiciled full-time undergraduate students come from an MD20 background and 28 per cent come from an MD40 background. Entrants from MD20 postcodes have risen from 10.3 per cent in 2013-14 to 11.5 per cent in 2014-15 in accordance with 2014-17 Outcome Agreement targets. The University expects to meet its retention target of 90.5 per cent of full-time Scottish-domiciled students returning in year 2 by 2015-16. The University's Student Retention Steering Group has responsibility for overseeing data and activity in this area.

26 The University's management information system plays a key role in helping the University to understand its student community (see paragraph 18), making National Student Survey results more widely available and enabling staff to interrogate information, such as survey results, more effectively. Staff receive training on using the management information system's key data sets. These training sessions are also used to consult on system improvements, including: the potential to identify service use by students so that specific activities could be targeted at groups that were not taking up services; and identifying aspects that were working well so that good practice could be transferred to other areas and student groups. Student progression and achievement data is monitored by the Student Retention Steering Group.

27 The University has invested in the development of the management information system, but recognises that existing mechanisms for providing module and programme leaders with centrally produced quantitative data to inform monitoring activities require further development. Information is currently generated locally by programme teams using a bespoke platform designed to assist in monitoring students' progression and achievement. The University believes that information generated for academic standards purposes needs to be used consistently University-wide to better inform areas of good academic practice or where development is required to ensure standards remain secure. Consequently, the Planning and Business Intelligence Team is working with academic staff to develop module and programme dashboards within the management information system to realise this ambition.

71 The University's Enhancement Theme Team coordinates activities within the current Theme, Student Transitions. The University provided a clear indication of Theme work for 2014-15, using QAA funding to support case studies that will ultimately sit in the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Resource Bank. A research assistant is working with staff to support these pedagogic projects. One such project will explore the progress of articulating students, looking at progression, retention and achievement data.

110 The development of the advance information set was overseen by the QAMRC and coordinated by the Academic Quality team in liaison with faculty and school offices. The University indicated that the process of developing the advance information set had encouraged it to reflect on the way in which it gathers and reports on quality-related information, and also to consider how it uses the qualitative data collected during internal monitoring activities. As a result of this, the University indicated it would make a number of

adjustments, for example a sample of annual programme monitoring reports will undergo formal consideration by the QAMRC; the templates used for annual monitoring will be amended to encourage all module leaders to reference the sources of student feedback in providing their module reflections.

### Glasgow Caledonian University

11 A number of new frameworks, strategies and partnerships are in the process of being implemented and evaluated. Data from quality assurance mechanisms is used to measure the impact of change. Deans' Group meetings, which include the newly appointed Dean GCU London, will play a key role in the sharing of good practice and ensuring consistency of approach in implementing the University's strategies across the schools.

18 The University offers flexible routes into programmes and has seen a significant increase in the number of HNC and HND students articulating into years 2 and 3 of its undergraduate programmes, from 490 FTE in 2011-12 to 834 in 2012-13. The Scottish Funding Council awarded the University an additional 157 articulation places for the academic year 2013-14. These places are delivered in partnership with local colleges and support for transition provided through the University's College Connect Academy. Data suggests the University has increased the proportion of entrants from a disadvantaged background from 32 per cent of the total student population to 34 per cent in 2014.

19 The University highlighted that data indicates a trend of improvement across a range of Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) performance indicators, in particular, narrowing the gap in performance between students from the most disadvantaged backgrounds and the overall student population. The University has identified its student demographic and city centre location as key challenges with regard to student engagement: 26 per cent of the University's most deprived students (MD20 students) work more than 21 hours a week in addition to their studies. The University is increasingly using data on demographics as an analytical tool to identify and establish interventions, for example, the Outreach and Community Engagement department deliver a number of programmes including the Advanced Higher Hub to support transition from schools to higher education and the Caledonian Club which will be rolled-out to widen access to the London and New York campuses (see paragraph 28).

44 While there is evidence of effective use being made of National Student Survey (NSS) data, there is less evidence of the use of the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) and the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES). Postgraduate taught and research students were also less familiar with SSCGs and representative structures than those studying at undergraduate level.

63 The University demonstrates a positive and successful approach to promoting widening participation and supporting a wide variety of student transitions into the institution. This is demonstrated through its progression and retention data and by the University's wide range of activities, including implementation of its College Connect Strategy, designed to enhance and support students articulating from college to the University, and the Caledonian Club, which provides targeted community engagement as well as an opportunity for current University students to act as mentors for school pupils.

116 At programme and school level, opportunities for self-evaluation are built into the University's monitoring and review processes, for example, the production of a Self-Evaluation Document for ELISR which analyses and responds to a range of external and internal benchmarking data and the revised Annual Programme Monitoring process which requires programme teams to reflect on a range of KPIs provided by the Strategy and Planning Department and to comment on implementation of the SfL. Advice and guidance on self-reflection is incorporated into the Quality Enhancement and Assurance Handbook.

118 The University is working towards improving the production of, and access to, management information through the implementation of a business intelligence tool and a system of standardised and integrated reports across the student life cycle. This is supported by the Information Services Department. The University's current student information system, ISIS, was rolled out in June 2010; the RA noted that considerable effort by all parts of the institution has been made to ensure that the system is now fully functional, and this was reflected in discussions with staff. First line user support is provided through the Operational Business Support Unit (OBSU). In addition the University operates an ISIS Senior User Group and a number of user forums to support discussion and communication. The University is currently developing a series of online training modules and video-casts to support training in relation to the system. Staff confirmed that data utilised in the annual monitoring process is made available through the GCYou staff portal, that it is both much improved and is now 'trusted' as the single source of accurate data. The University confirmed that work is ongoing in relation to systems integration, facilitation of the extraction of specific data sets, paperless assessment boards and timetabling. The ELIR team encourages the University to continue making progress to improve the availability and accessibility of data and information to support its evaluative processes.

126 A team within the Strategy and Planning departments manages the Key Information Sets (KIS). The team works in collaboration with schools and other departments. Schools and the Senate receive a preview of KIS data and an analysis of the outcomes of KIS is disseminated. Annual 'roadshows' and training sessions are held to raise awareness of KIS and the roles and responsibilities of different departments in relation to KIS.

### [Glasgow School of Art](#)

73 Management information was identified as an area for development in the 2010 ELIR and the subsequent move towards a centralised student record system has led to improvements in the quality of student data. Staff who met the ELIR team confirmed that there have been fundamental changes in the quality of data since 2010, and that data for PMAR can now be sourced more easily.

74 Management information is reviewed at programme, school and institutional level and features explicitly in the PMAR process. The PMAR process requires the analysis of application, progression, degree classification and data on gender, age, disability and ethnicity, and compares any trends identified in the current year's data with the previous year. In response to the 2010 ELIR, GSA has appointed a Planning Officer who has played a significant role in improving the quality of data for student cohort analysis.

75 It was clear from the quality of the data supplied in response to a request for part-time staff numbers and from discussions with GSA's institutional contacts that the institution needs to further develop its processes for monitoring part-time staff, on both permanent and temporary contracts. This is particularly important given GSA's reliance on a large number of part-time teaching staff.

83 Effective arrangements are in place for ensuring the accuracy of information provided by GSA. Academic Services retains publication ownership for all Academic Council approved quality assurance and enhancement policy documentation, and the Marketing and Communication department is responsible for ensuring the accuracy of promotional material, and all promotional material is sent to the University of Glasgow Senate Office at draft stage. Key Information Set data are supplied by Academic Services and Registry is responsible for managing the reporting of data for HESA purposes.

## University of Glasgow

18 The University has a successful track record in recruiting and supporting widening participation students. The University's use of contextual data for admissions was highlighted as a model for the higher education sector by the Scottish Funding Council in 2011, and there are a range of initiatives in place to support the induction and aid the transition of widening participation students into the University. There is also a strong focus on supporting the success of such students once they have commenced their programme of study. In particular students who had participated in the Top Up programme, which helps secondary students to develop academic skills in support of their transition to and retention in higher education, were very positive about the support they had received.

20 The introduction of the MyCampus student information system has enabled detailed analysis of student data in relation to widening participation students. Progression data is employed to track student success and the University is using this data to identify MD40 students who may need additional help. The offer of academic support is emailed to identified students, but without them being aware that they are being singled out. This targeted intervention is effective in providing additional support for widening participation students without stigmatising them, and the University intends to expand this successful approach to include its international students.

33 Following a successful pilot the University is implementing software to enhance student feedback mechanisms. The new system will support the use of feedback questionnaires, tailored to meet the needs of the different schools. The implementation of the system is intended to facilitate the more systematic use of feedback to enhance the student learning experience, and the data will underpin annual monitoring and periodic review processes to enable comparison across the University.

36 The University has an effective approach to enhancing the student learning experience. The University is successful in supporting a diverse student population and is particularly effective in its approach to student engagement, the use of data to support student progress, and its strategic approach to supporting widening participation students.

67 Management information underpins the University's self-evaluative and reflective practices. The University uses data to measure the success and effectiveness of its institutional activities and key performance indicators including retention, the use of contextualised data for admissions and the use of progression data to track student success.

68 The University also engages with the National Student Survey (NSS) and is in the process of establishing a Central Surveys Unit to enable better analysis of student data and triangulation between the NSS results and the substantial data sets generated by feedback from other external reference points, such as the International Student Barometer, the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey.

74 The Planning and Business Intelligence Office took lead responsibility for developing the Key Information Sets and this process highlighted areas for development, such as the accuracy of information in course specifications and in relation to accreditation. The University has updated documentation in response to this process, which has led to improvements in the accuracy of data for a variety of purposes.

## Heriot-Watt University

14 The use of key performance indicators (KPIs) provides timely data to inform management and monitor progress of strategic objectives. The new academic management structure, although very recent, is working effectively to develop and monitor the

implementation of institutional strategies. Staff who met the ELIR team were clear about the strategic direction of the University and were able to speak positively about the implementation and impact of the objectives.

27 The University has plans to introduce an institutional Retention Strategy and incorporate this into the Learning and Teaching Strategy, having identified retention, through benchmarking data and institutional KPIs, to be a key priority area for the Learning and Teaching Board.

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

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

107 During the 2011 ELIR, the University was asked to undertake more detailed monitoring of students' learning experiences across different modes of study, through greater use of its new student management system. The University acknowledged that development of KPIs associated with the student population had focused primarily on UK undergraduate students to date, and that it plans to extend systematic management of data to all student groups. Learning and teaching KPIs are used to monitor student population data and academic performance at institutional, school and discipline levels. They are produced centrally to ensure consistency in data preparation and to facilitate early identification of issues, and are reviewed by both the University Executive and the Learning and Teaching Board. Decisions relating to action required are benchmarked nationally, enabling the University to evaluate its performance within a wider UK context.

110 The University has enhanced processes relating to statistical information, particularly around institutional KPIs (see also paragraph 107). The data is benchmarked against UK and Scottish higher education institutions, as well as a specific set of benchmark higher education institutions. The University uses the KPIs, and benchmark Higher Education Statistics Agency and Scottish Funding Council data, to determine and enhance its institutional priorities.

129 Student feedback is routinely obtained from ALPs and collaborative partners in the same way as for all registered students using the University's standard academic feedback

mechanisms. The data as collected can be disaggregated to indicate views from ALP and collaborative partnership students. In addition, the views of students engaged in collaborative activities are also explicitly sought. Student feedback is adequately managed and considered through school and University level processes, including the new Student Survey Framework (see paragraphs 39 and 115).

### Queen Margaret University

16 The University has an effective approach to supporting equality and diversity in the student population. The University's commitment is guided by its Single Equality Scheme which is overseen by the Equality and Diversity Committee (EDC). The Equality Action Plan is informed by data on applications, progression and retention, exam awards, academic appeals and complaints which are updated annually. The EDC also considers the embedding of equality and diversity within the curriculum and shares practice down to the subject level.

66 The composition of the SEC, which consists of members of academic and professional services units, allows the committee to develop an integrated view of the results of self-evaluative activities across organisational units and levels. Self-evaluation at programme and school level is considered later (see paragraphs 69-71). For professional services, the University has since 2010 carried out service area reviews and, at the time of the current ELIR, reviews had been conducted of library services, student services, and the international student experience.

67 Students are full members of review panels for programmes and support services. Students confirmed that they receive adequate training for their role, and are able to make a constructive contribution to the review process. The ELIR team heard that the large number of surveys in use may contribute to confusion amongst students with respect to the purpose of specific surveys and to survey fatigue. Accordingly, the University is encouraged to continue to review its strategic approach to the management of student surveys, in three respects: first, to provide for consistency in the approach to the external survey of the student experience; second, to review the number and scope of surveys with a view to their possible consolidation; and third to develop an effective system for the collation and synthesis of all student surveys into a coordinated framework of action planning.

68 The University recognises the need to strengthen its capability in the area of data analysis in order to support planning, monitoring and review activities, and has recently appointed a Head of Planning who will coordinate the work in this area. As part of this process, during 2010-11, the student records system was modified to make it possible to provide data on withdrawal and retention, especially for priority groups. The ELIR team endorses the measures that the University is taking to strengthen the functionality of its student records system in order to improve its understanding of the student profile and to enhance planning.

78 There is evidence at all levels of the University of a strong culture of self-reflection and action planning which promotes good practice and addresses areas in need of improvement. The University uses its governance and committee framework to support a process of systematic self-evaluation and has effective arrangements in place for the regular and systematic review of its academic programmes and professional services. The planned improvements to the management information system should make a significant contribution to the University's ability to provide focused data in planning, monitoring and review activities, and to aid it in understanding the needs of specific groups within its student population. While effective use is made of individual surveys, the University is encouraged to review its approach to the strategic management of surveys, so that a systematic framework is developed for incorporating survey results from all levels of study into action planning.

The University's policies and procedures for managing public information are generally effective.

### Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

7 To support the Strategic Plan, the Conservatoire is currently finalising its international and IT strategies, and senior staff expressed the intention to revise the research strategy in the near future. The ELIR team considers completion of this suite of strategies to be important for the successful delivery of the Strategic Plan. In particular, the Conservatoire should prioritise the completion of its IT Strategy to support the intended developments in data management (see paragraphs 65 & 66).

17 As discussed later in this report (see paragraph 65), the further development of appropriate performance indicator sets would enable the Conservatoire to analyse more fully its student demographics and the differential levels of performance as part of its strategic planning. There were instances of data being used in a comparative manner, for example the SIMD20/40 admissions data were benchmarked against other conservatoires, and some programme-level Monitoring, Evaluation and Review (MER) reports gave detailed consideration to employment data. There was less evidence of data being used systematically to inform strategy or to monitor the impact of initiatives.

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

58 Overall, the ELIR team considered that the Conservatoire's approaches to self-evaluation and the management of information do meet sector expectations including Scottish Funding Council guidance and the UK Quality Code. Many of the Conservatoire's arrangements represent planned, systematic and careful evaluation of key developments. The ELIR team considered that the majority of the evaluation was based on qualitative information and narrative views, which are important, but the team also considered that the processes would benefit from an increased use of data and target setting (see paragraphs 64 & 65). More systematic use of data and performance indicators would support the Conservatoire in its implementation of the new curriculum and in its ambition to achieve a 'One Conservatoire' approach.

64 The ELIR team considered that the Conservatoire's procedures made limited use of data in the form of performance indicators and the robust application of targets, thresholds or impact assessment. For example, within the Monitoring, Evaluation and Review (MER) reports the use of available data was limited overall and varied between MERs. There were instances of data being used at institutional level, such as comparing SIMD20/40 admissions with other conservatoires, and some MER reports gave detailed consideration to employment data. However, the team did not see evidence of data being systematically reviewed to inform strategy, monitor the impact of initiatives or to inform enhancement. The planned move from the MER process to annual programme reporting provides an opportunity for the Conservatoire to strengthen aspects of its data and performance indicator use at the programme level.

65 At the time of the current ELIR, the Conservatoire was developing formal KPI sets, which is positive. The Conservatoire should give careful consideration to the performance indicators that are most meaningful to fit the institutional context and priorities. This should ensure the KPIs selected will be recognised as useful by staff and that they will be systematically adopted to inform and evaluate developments as well as informing the regular quality processes such as the new annual programme reports.

69 From its consideration of the advance information set and related documentation, the ELIR team identified a number of areas for development, many of which have been addressed elsewhere in this report including: the value of making greater, systematic use of data and KPIs to inform decision-making at institutional and programme level (see paragraphs 64 & 65); and the importance of tracking agreed actions through the committee structure to ensure their timely completion (see paragraph 62).

77 The Conservatoire is encouraged to develop its arrangements in a number of ways as detailed elsewhere in this report, including: developing and using a full set of KPIs that fit the context of the institution; ensuring the wider availability and routine use of the MIS to programme teams; increasing the use of quantitative data within the monitoring and evaluation processes, together with the use of thresholds and targets to promote intended enhancements in the curriculum; and developing greater clarity around the roles, remits and accountabilities of academic committees and operational teams, including their relationships to each other.

### **Scotland's Rural College**

8 The ELIR team heard evidence of the positive impact of cross-divisional working on staff and student opportunities. Cross-membership of various institutional groups, including the Academic Board and Research Board, are likely to support research-teaching linkages. There are many positive examples of cross-divisional working, learning from previous practice and consulting with staff and students in the management of significant change. In relation to degree awarding powers, the ELIR team considered that SRUC is some time away from being able to demonstrate that it can meet the criteria. Key areas for development include: the implementation and embedding of institutional strategies, policies and processes; the effective management of data including that relating to student progression and achievement; and a clear demonstration that the institution is meeting all of the Expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code). Further details on each of these areas can be found throughout this report.

21 Since the merger, SRUC has been working towards strengthening the use of a consistent data set across its six campuses to inform review and planning, including benchmarking against internal and sector norms. The ELIR team learned that the harmonisation of student data into a single management information system was scheduled for completion later in 2014. The team considered that the oversight of student data, notably in relation to student success, could be strengthened. While student progression data was considered at individual programme level, there was limited evidence of consideration at institutional level to inform admissions, curriculum and student support arrangements (see paragraphs 58, 115 and 128).

22 SRUC has a number of informal arrangements in place for supporting equality and diversity. There would be benefit in ensuring that informal arrangements, for example, relating to small class sizes, are linked systematically to the formal monitoring and review arrangements. In addition, linked to wider efforts to improve data management, there would be considerable benefit in SRUC disaggregating data for different student groups to identify any differences in progression and completion rates.

25 While small class sizes mean that SRUC staff can provide personalised support to students, the ELIR team heard that there is work in progress to improve the consistency of support provided across campuses to specific student groups, particularly for those entering with a disability. SRUC also indicated that small cohort sizes can make it challenging to undertake meaningful statistical analyses of progression or achievement by student characteristics. The ELIR team noted that the annual quality enhancement plan template used in the legacy further education college campuses included a prompt to

consider how student characteristics had impacted on student success. In some curriculum areas, such as sport and tourism, students are able to study awards by different modes of attendance. This is a valuable feature of curriculum delivery, but the current annual review process is not capable of distinguishing between student data for different modes of study. As it develops an institution-wide approach to annual review, SRUC should ensure that systematic consideration is given to success and retention data to enable managers to identify relative success by different student characteristics, including disability and mode of study at every level.

58 While small class sizes mean that staff are generally aware of, and responsive to, the needs of individual students, SRUC should strengthen its institutional oversight of key student data, ensuring the data being collected is valid and reliable, following work to integrate the legacy data management systems. SRUC should also ensure it can make comparisons between and within programmes to disaggregate data relating to students studying on different modes and with different characteristics to identify any differences in, for example, progression and completion rates (see paragraphs 115 and 128).

88 A revised APR template was introduced for 2011-12 to focus the reports on the identification of outcomes, actions, enhancements and examples of good practice. SRUC has taken subsequent action to ensure APRs are more reflective and submitted earlier in the academic year. The ELIR team noted that the APRs from 2011 onwards were comprehensive and included sections on: employment; admissions; progression and achievement; feedback from students, staff, external examiners and verifiers, employers and industrial interests; the external environment; progress with the previous year's action plan; identification of good practice; a self-critical appraisal; and an action plan for the forthcoming year. However, the team considered that the supporting data on admissions, progression and achievement should be improved (see paragraphs 58, 115 and 128).

115 At the time of the current ELIR, SRUC was still in the process of establishing its approach to the management of information. The main locus of analysis of student progression and retention data in the former SAC was in Annual Programme Reviews. This differed from a more rigorous use of data in the Barony, Elmwood and Oatridge campuses. SRUC acknowledged that integration of its legacy systems was ongoing and intimated that a key aim is to refine the generation of data directly from the institution's education management information system. SRUC is encouraged to progress its intention to compile institutional summary data which can be used to set benchmarks against which programme and campus data can be compared (see paragraphs 21, 58 and 128).

128 Integration of the legacy college systems was ongoing at the time of the current ELIR. A key aim is to refine the generation of data arising from the institutional management information system. SRUC is encouraged to ensure that the data being collected is valid and reliable, and facilitates comparisons both between programmes and, through disaggregation, within programmes. In so doing, SRUC will be aided in its intention to compile institutional summary data which can be used to set benchmarks against which programme and campus data can be compared, and which should be used to inform decision-making, policy and practice.

## [University of St Andrews](#)

115 Currently, the AAM and URLT<sup>1</sup> reviews are informed by NSS results, external examiner reports, MEQs and internal reviews. With regard to the broader provision of data and information to support reviews and other self-evaluative procedures, the University has a range of sources including a central student records system and a teaching support system. Through these the University can generate information on staffing, research grants

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<sup>1</sup> Annual Academic Monitoring and University Review of Learning & Teaching respectively.

and budget monitoring. The teaching support system (MMS) provides information on data including student cohorts, marks and module numbers. At the time of the current ELIR, the University was about to pilot a learning and teaching fact sheet, produced on behalf of CAPOD and the Proctor's Office with the aim of improving the provision of information and data for the AAM and URLT processes. A provisional template seen by the ELIR team indicated that a comprehensive set of metrics would be presented. It was proposed that a traffic light system would indicate performance in certain areas, for example student surveys.

### University of Stirling

29 The collection and monitoring of student data was previously undertaken by the Admissions Progress and Awards Committee. Following the review of committees in 2012, this was delegated to staff within the Academic Registry and Governance Services, with direct reporting lines to the Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC) and schools. In March 2013 the Student Engagement Programme (SEP) was launched, with the aim of further developing the range of data, and quality of the electronic systems and processes, that support a range of student and applicant processes. Another objective of the SEP was the provision of a comprehensive catalogue of enhanced programme and module data to meet a range of internal and external reporting requirements, such as reporting on the University's collaborative arrangements and annual programme monitoring.

30 As part of the SEP, the University has identified a need to develop an Enhanced Student Record. The aim of the Enhanced Student Record will be to collate and present a wider range of student information centrally than is currently held in various locations around the University. This will be available to an agreed range of staff. The benefits will include better information sharing and the identification of student non-engagement at an earlier stage, as well as identifying students at risk of academic failure.

102 In its Reflective Analysis the University noted that its approach to self-evaluation and management of information is informed by a commitment to the delivery of its strategic objectives, and that this is supported by the effective use of data and the development of new technologies. The ELIR team found evidence of the University's approach in minutes of the Academic Council and Education and Student Experience Committee (ESEC), where it was clear that the University regularly reviews its academic policies and procedures. The University's approach to self-evaluation is also reflected in its Transforming the Student Experience project, a significant and extensive project that addresses the enhancement of a number of elements of the student experience, from revised regulatory frameworks to student support through the revised personal tutoring system and institution-wide engagement (including staff and students) with the development of the new Strategic Plan.

104 The University's annual monitoring and periodic review processes, which include module review, annual programme review and periodic learning and teaching review, provide opportunities for self-reflection. There have been enhancements to these processes since the 2011 ELIR, including the reporting of data for monitoring and review purposes. In discussions with the ELIR team staff confirmed that data is now easier to access, with large data sets produced centrally allowing school-specific data to be accessed, although the University also described the extraction of data for monitoring and review purposes as work in progress. The University is encouraged to continue enhancing this aspect of its activity.

106 Annual programme monitoring reports are produced to a standard template by programme directors and require commentary on, and analysis of, a number of areas, including student feedback, external examiner reports, curriculum and assessment methods, learning resources, the implementation of changes proposed in earlier monitoring reports and any future developments. Annual programme review reports are considered at school LTCs. Schools submit annual programme review reports to Academic Registry and

Governance Services. The examples seen by the ELIR team confirmed a generally thorough and evaluative approach, although there was variable use of data, such as that relating to student outcomes and feedback. Academic Registry and Governance Services produce institutional summary reports for undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes, which comment on good practice and areas for enhancement, and are considered by ESEC. Academic Registry and Governance Services also monitor the actions taken by schools as a result of the annual monitoring process; in doing so they provide systematic institutional oversight of the process.

109 The University's self-evaluation processes are underpinned by the use of management information. The Policy and Planning Team compiles and analyses data on the University and higher education generally, which is used by the University Court, senior management and other areas of the institution to devise policy and review performance. The University uses a number of KPIs, which are reviewed throughout the year by the Senior Management Team and the Court. KPIs also inform the University Plan for Academic Success and support the University planning process. School-level KPIs are considered within the schools as part of the annual planning process and schools are also expected to use the KPIs to inform their annual planning statement. The ELIR team considered this to be a thorough approach.

117 The schools are responsible for updating their course information and are responsible for the accuracy of course content. The web team checks and approves any content changes. Programme directors are responsible for checking the accuracy of publicity materials published by collaborative partners. The Policy and Planning Team coordinate the return of HESA's key information set (KIS) for use on the Unistats website. Course information is maintained by schools through the 'Single Source of Course Information' database, a recent development, and data submitted for KIS purposes is approved by the appropriate School Manager. The Policy and Planning Team audit course data to ensure accuracy prior to submission.

### [University of Strathclyde](#)

14 The extensive and rapid change described above has been carried out effectively, and staff and students have been consulted and engaged in the process. There is evidence of a continual process of strategic review, informed by changes in the external environment. There is clarity to the structural representation for each of the faculties and of cross-university roles and responsibilities to facilitate cohesion across subjects and disciplines. Significant emphasis is placed on the collation and analysis of statistical data to inform decisions and this is evident across a number of activities both academic and in professional services. Discussions with a broad range of staff during the ELIR indicated that the University has been successful in aligning people and structures to enable and manage the successful implementation of its new strategic direction.

19 The University has begun two significant IT projects since the last ELIR that it considers will improve data management in relation to its student population: the Corporate Management Information project which aims to make data on areas such as student intake more accessible and easier to analyse and the procurement of a new Student Information and Management System.

25 To ensure that the University's ambitious targets for widening participation are consistently met, from 2013-14 the institution is using contextual data in admissions. Such data include the applicant's postcode, their school to higher education progression rate, as well as their care background. This information is drawn both from application forms and publicly available datasets and is used to ensure that the context in which

qualifications were obtained is appropriately understood and considered throughout the admission process.

34 The University of Strathclyde Students' Association (USSA) conducted a detailed analysis of the data from their 'Teaching Excellence Awards' to produce a 'Best Practice Report' that outlines the characteristics and attributes in their teachers that students respond most positively towards. This was well received by the University and discussions are taking place between USSA and the University about whether this will become an annual piece of work. The ELIR team considered this was an imaginative and valuable addition to this initiative.

62 This approach is illustrated by the Accountability Development Review (ADR) process and the four pathways career structure (academic, research, teaching and knowledge exchange) for staff recruitment and development. These arrangements ensure that staff have a clear understanding of where their individual performance contributes to the achievement of University aims and objectives. Through the ADR process staff explicitly demonstrate their ongoing engagement with developments in learning and teaching and their personal contribution to enhancement through the setting of objectives. Enhancement activities aligned to strategic priorities are incentivised, encouraged and rewarded. The online system developed to support ADR also allows senior managers to analyse data on staff performance in 'real-time' for the purposes of identifying development needs, prioritising resources and forward planning.

82 The University's approach aligns strategy, the Performance Measurement Framework (PMF), committee structures, and internal review and monitoring processes. This approach is underpinned by a culture of external engagement which includes adherence to external legislation and use of external reference frameworks. The PMF is the University's working strategic document, linking vision, strategic themes, objectives, strategies and performance measures. Use of the PMF is accompanied by a revised approach to analysing and reporting management data, including quarterly Court Business Reports.

83 The University has recently implemented a new committee structure. Its strategic committees - Senate, Education Strategy Committee, Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) and Learning Enhancement Committee (LEC) play a key role in the management of information and data. The Education Strategy Committee, convened by the Vice-Principal, provides strategic direction, while QAC oversees the institutional quality framework and LEC focuses on enhancement of learning and teaching. Senate has overall responsibility for the quality and standards of University awards, and has delegated authority to QAC, which is chaired by an Associate Deputy Principal for education. QAC's business includes review of progression and awards (undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research) using data drawn from planning statistics to show key trends over a four-year period, discussion of National Student Survey results, issues arising from complaints and Senate discipline and appeals cases. The creation of LEC has provided an opportunity to establish a joint forum with the QAC to review annual faculty reports, enabling reflection on assurance and enhancement issues. This change has been effective in allowing the sharing of good practice and communication of issues. Senate receives minutes of Quality Assurance Committee meetings, which incorporate the outcomes of departmental review reports, highlighting any commendations and recommendations.

85 Restructuring of the Professional Services and underlying operational processes has included formation of the Strategy and Policy Directorate bringing together governance, planning and corporate management information activities, and this has helped the University use data more effectively to inform institutional policy and practice.

## University of the West of Scotland

12 To help facilitate ownership at the programme level, there is increasing use of data, online tools and systems to inform enhancements in learning and teaching and to encourage the sharing of good practice. Systematic processes are in place for reviewing comparative performance data across the University. Examples of this include: a recently developed 'toolkit' for the analysis of modules with low pass rates which helps staff to develop action plans; and the systems development work led by the Centre for Academic Practice and Learning Development (CAPLeD) for the early identification of students who need additional or specific types of learning support.

13 The University has adopted an online 'dashboard' and uses learner analytics to enable schools and programme teams to take ownership of, and engage directly with, the analysis of a variety of data including National Student Survey (NSS) results, individual module feedback, and other comparator data. In discussion with the ELIR team, staff expressed a positive appreciation of the availability and utility of having easy access to this data in a user-friendly form. The ELIR team regarded this detailed and effective use of data as positive practice.

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

80 Staff confirmed that the University's quality assurance arrangements remained the same throughout the period of re-organisation. The University considers these well-established assurance arrangements to be strong and effective and therefore has no plans for significant change to its core procedures. There is continuity in that staff previously responsible for helping to oversee quality assurance arrangements in the faculties have similar roles in the schools. At the same time, it is envisaged that some of the changes associated with re-organisation, in particular the creation of the Assistant Deans (Education) posts (see paragraph 15), will strengthen the arrangements. Staff indicated that they anticipate that the quality assurance systems will in future be leaner, faster and more responsive. One area under consideration at the time of the current ELIR was the possibility of module evaluation taking place at the end of the first diet of examinations with a view to addressing issues earlier. In a similar vein, it is envisaged that programme boards and the School Education Forum will play a significant role in the annual monitoring process and that the EAM process will be adjusted to provide a sharper focus on data analysis and school-based activity. In addition, given its stronger emphasis on the centrality of academic programmes, the University intends to reshape the SHR process during the current academic year to reflect changes in academic structures and in its portfolio.

89 Management information to support the review, monitoring and examination processes is provided through the Performance Management Information System (PMIS) which is now easily accessed by staff through a dashboard system. Data incorporates a learner analytics approach allowing staff to compare student performance on their programmes across the university's campus sites. Staff can also benchmark National Student Survey (NSS) returns in their subject areas to those in similar institutions across

the UK. School reports seen by the ELIR team demonstrate careful analysis of the NSS data, identification of key issues and appropriate action plans. The University's commitment to improving analysis of student data is also highlighted by the successful HEA-led workshop on enhancement using the NSS. Staff the team met spoke highly of the PMIS and the improved reliability and accuracy of data resulting from schools having link staff within the business intelligence unit. The ELIR team regard the provision and use of data to support quality assurance processes and maintenance of academic standards as an area of positive practice.

100 In its preparation for ELIR, the University had identified the continued improvement in the use of data for informing practice as an area for development. The ELIR team considered the University had made considerable progress in this area with, for example, the increased availability of learner analytic data through dashboards and the HEA-led workshop on enhancing the use of NSS data (see paragraph 89).

## **Annex B: References to the use of institutional data in the ELIR 2 Reports**

### **University of Abertay Dundee**

13 The University has an online management information system which provides a range of datasets on admissions, registrations, progression, destinations and withdrawals. Detailed reports are produced to support the work of particular committees as well as being used extensively for management information purposes. However, the University acknowledges that further work is needed to make the most effective use of its data, particularly in relation to the progression and retention of specific student populations (see paragraph 56).

16 Evaluation of student feedback is undertaken at both the module and programme level, and the use of questionnaires is required for every programme and module. The University has ongoing concerns that completion rates can be low and it is currently evaluating an online system for gathering student feedback with a view to improving response rates and enabling a more sophisticated analysis of the data. The University anticipates implementing the new system for the 2012-13 academic session.

56 While the quality management arrangements cover all the University's programmes, and thereby all students, the management information system does not currently support the differential analysis of progression for diverse student groups. The University acknowledges that the development of an enhanced database would enable it to undertake more sophisticated analyses of progression and attainment of its diverse student populations (see paragraph 13); however, a short term working group which was set up to address this issue is currently in abeyance, and the University is encouraged to progress the work of this group as a matter of priority.

60 The University's policy is that all management data required for quality processes is provided centrally by the Registry and follows a standardised template. The Senior Management Group and the Quality Assurance Committee receive a number of management reports on matters such as admissions, recruitment, progression and retention, the provision of formative feedback, and module-level adherence to moderation policies. Registry staff are willing to provide additional information on request, although such additional data is not available routinely. In general the University makes effective use of management information for programme monitoring and review purposes.

### **The Robert Gordon University**

17 Relatively recently, the University has introduced a new Business Information System (BIS) which operates in real-time and provides data on student applications and enrolment, student achievement, student feedback and evaluations, and first destination data. The University considers such information to be a key input and driver to all its processes, including strategic and operational planning, quality appraisal, review and enhancement activity, resource allocation, marketing, and recruitment. During the ELIR, it was evident that the BIS enables information on students to be analysed in detail, and that effective use is made of the extensive information available (see paragraphs 50, 77 to 80, 81 to 87 and 90 to 93).

24 The SEQ is an online questionnaire which asks questions about the effectiveness of learning and student engagement, and is issued to all taught students other than honours year undergraduates who complete the NSS. Quantitative and qualitative data from the SEQ can be linked to the Business Information System (see paragraph 17), enabling detailed analysis by a range of indicators (for example by school, course or stage), and by student

category (for example distance learning or overseas students). On completion of the SEQ, students are prompted to visit a webpage promoting the Student Led Teaching Awards (see paragraph 161), and the 'You Said, We Did' messages, the latter of which highlights key actions which have been taken in response to student feedback. The 'You Said, We Did' posters are also distributed in hard copy across the University.

49 The University stated that its approach to promoting equality of opportunity and effective learning for all of its students is to focus on the implications of an increasingly diverse student population for all of the institution's activities. This approach is set out in the University's Equality and Diversity Policy and is overseen by the Equality and Diversity Advisory Group (EDAG). The University has an annual Equality Action Plan and an Inclusivity Statement. The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee monitors equality and diversity data. An annual report, produced by EDAG, is submitted to the Board of Governors which reports on actions against the previous year's plan.

78 The Annual Appraisal process was refined in 2010 to make the primary focus on the course/award level and to introduce a finer-grained analysis of data. The process involves the completion of a template by course/programme teams for each course/programme and consideration of a prescribed set of information relating to the effectiveness of course delivery. The latter includes student intake and achievement; graduate employment; student evaluations; external examiners' reports; outcomes from any internal and external review events during the year; examples of good practice/innovation; and a risk assessment of future quality and standards. Annual Appraisal provides opportunities to identify and share good practice as well as matters raised by students, and to feed into the University's enhancement agenda. Students are formally involved with the Annual Appraisal process through student feedback mechanisms such as student experience questionnaires (see paragraphs 23 to 25) and staff-student liaison meetings (see paragraphs 21 to 22); additionally Student Union representatives sit on institutional-level committees where Annual Appraisal reports are considered. Since 2010-11 a meeting between the Deputy Principal, deans of faculty, Academic Registrar and faculty quality officers has been held early in the academic year to consider a high-level analysis of the Annual Appraisal data with the purpose of ensuring that prompt action is taken where necessary and to promote the effective implementation of the appraisal process within schools and faculties.

79 As part of the Annual Appraisal process, school academic boards are required to review the relevant course-level reports. This results in a school academic board appraisal report which includes confirmation of the effectiveness of the key analyses undertaken at course and programme level; identification of significant achievements or issues to be addressed at school level; analysis of equality and diversity data; and identification of potential risks to the quality and standards of the school's academic course portfolio. At faculty level, the dean reviews the school report and produces a dean of faculty appraisal report which is considered by the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee, with the relevant school academic board appraisal reports also being made available to committee members. This report to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee enables the dean to comment on the data and report actions, and also gives the Committee assurance regarding adherence to procedures.

96 Student feedback from both formal and informal mechanisms is systematically analysed at course and school level as part of the Annual Appraisal Process (see paragraphs 77 to 80). The process includes the analysis of issues raised through feedback from different groups of students including in relation to equality and diversity, collaborative activity, and articulation arrangements, and actions are targeted appropriately. Consideration of students on collaborative courses is embedded in the routine course appraisal and review processes, which include analyses of student achievement and student evaluations for these groups of students. Management of articulation arrangements

with colleges also involves consideration by partnership course teams of student data specifically associated with their course, and leads to enhancement actions.

101 The University's approach to monitoring and review encompasses extensive analysis and evaluation. Annual Appraisal involves analysis of a wide-ranging data set (see paragraphs 77 to 80) and makes systematic use of the external benchmarking of key information. Institution-Led Subject Review, Research Degree Internal Review and Student-Facing Services Review all include a Reflective Analysis or similar document. External experts are widely and consistently used by the University in its approval, monitoring and review processes. For example, Institution-Led Subject Review panels include significant external membership, including employer/professional perspectives (see paragraphs 81 to 87). The University considers external involvement to be a key part of its processes with staff benefiting from the engagement of, and critical conversations with, external experts. The University regards PSRB accreditation and review as primary external reference points. The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee receives an annual update of the outcomes of PSRB visits and the list of accredited courses appears on the Academic Affairs website. Students commented that they consider the professional accreditation of the University's courses as one of the institution's strengths (see paragraphs 30 and 37).

102 Overall, the University has a clear commitment to a self-evaluative approach to monitoring and review, and is making effective use of external reference points. The work of the main committees demonstrates an evaluative approach to the University's performance, a key feature of which is the use of a wide range of internally and externally generated data, external involvement and the use of external benchmarks.

103 All the University's monitoring and review processes for both academic provision and student-facing services have clearly defined expectations about information inputs and analyses and how these should be considered and reported. The University noted that its Business Information System (BIS) is a recent development which enables access to key information in real time (see paragraph 17). The BIS provides data on student applications, enrolment and achievement; student evaluations; and first destination data. Senior management is now able to take prompt action where necessary in response to the early indicators provided by the BIS. Staff consider the BIS to be a very positive tool to support decision-making about specific groups of students, such as open and distance learning students, and students on collaborative programmes. For example, data generated by the BIS has informed a revision to the entry-level requirements of international students enrolling on open and distance learning programmes, and a revised induction programme for students articulating onto accounting and finance programmes. A Steering Group has been formed to oversee the further development of the BIS interface, which acts as a gateway through which key information is made available to relevant staff.

104 The University's online Student Experience Questionnaire (SEQ) (see paragraphs 23 to 25) is linked with the BIS which enables analyses of students' evaluations by course, module and student category. Data from external student surveys, such as the National Student Survey and International Student Barometer, are fed into the main University committees, with a focus on the quality rather than the quantity of the feedback; the International Student Barometer data is considered by the Internationalisation Strategy and Planning Group.

105 Since the 2007 ELIR, the University's Course Information Database has been fully implemented. Information on courses is provided in course specifications generated from the Course Information Database, and in module descriptors generated from the Module Database, both of which are available online. The University noted that the Course

Information Database has been a long-running project, and that a milestone has recently been reached with the new format for course specifications, all of which are available online.

106 Overall the University has an effective approach to the generation and use of data to inform its monitoring and review activities.

174 As part of its approach to self-evaluation, the University makes use of a wide range of evidence and external reference points in its approval, monitoring and review processes. The University's new Business Information System has facilitated the analysis of data on different student groups, including those on open and distance learning programmes and collaborative provision, and the data is being used effectively in the University's monitoring and review processes. In addition, the University's approach to managing public information about the quality and academic standards of its provision is effective.

### University of the Highlands and Islands

15 UHI undertook a three-year Data Improvement Project starting in October 2007 which was prompted, in part, by the report of the 2007 taught degree awarding powers scrutiny. The project was managed by the Head of Student Records and had three distinct strands: data flow, data integrity and data use. The University indicated that, having completed the project, further development of data systems and processes will be ongoing, led by the UHI Student Records Office. Overall, there is evidence of significant improvement in the availability of data and their usage across UHI (see paragraphs 45 and 72 to 74). The University has invested in improved data systems to enable the provision of informed and targeted support to students with a number of different needs. An accessibility assessment management module, linked to the management information system, has been in place at one Academic Partner since 2010. At the time of the current ELIR, it was being piloted in five other Partners with the aim of it being extended across all of UHI. The University anticipates that this module will be particularly useful for local support staff whose students are enrolled or hosted elsewhere because it will enable closer monitoring of student needs by the relevant support services within and between partner colleges. Although the full benefits of the data improvements are still being realised, this is clearly a positive development for UHI and its students.

48 The overall aim of the Retention and Continuation Project is to increase retention rates by improving data collection processes and by addressing the underlying causes of student attrition. An early finding was that some apparent student withdrawal actually related to anomalies in data collection or reporting, therefore a focus on data integrity has been an important area of work. As part of the project, the University reviewed existing practices that were thought to have an impact on retention. These included: student induction, pre-entry information, withdrawal practices, and student adviser and study skills support. Following the conclusion of the review in February 2010, a Retention Working Group was established, chaired by the Dean of the Faculty of Science, Health and Education. It reports to the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee. The Group's remit is to ensure that consideration of student retention occurs in all learning and teaching activities and to provide strategic direction and engagement with the work of the Student Retention Lead Practitioner.

65 The University stated that to support the preparation of the annual quality monitoring SEDs, staff have access to analyses of the student profile and achievement on the modules and programmes which can be interrogated in terms of study mode (full or part-time) and gender. Some module SEDs provided during the ELIR included global progression data, but others did not include specific consideration of different student groupings, for example by gender or by location of study. The programme level SEDs provided during the ELIR included data regarding progression by level but again did

not consider performance of different student groups, for example across the different Academic Partners.

66 SEDs prepared by the Academic Partners included some overview data regarding mode of study and diversity in terms of student numbers, but at least one SED highlighted ongoing issues regarding the ability to identify the progression of different groups. As a consequence, the only progression data seen in some exemplars related to full-time students. The SEDs at Subject Network level provide programme and module progression data but do not always include consideration of different student groups.

67 As part of the subject review process the subject teams prepare a SED, and the University indicated that the subject review events focus more extensively on diversity and trend analysis of the changing student profile to ensure that the curriculum within the network is reviewed and updated in light of the changing student demographic or student needs. The SEDs provided for the ELIR included overviews of student enrolments by mode of study (for example, full or part-time) and some commentary on progression within individual programmes. The SEDs also reflected on learning support provision for the different student cohorts, including students following taught programmes and postgraduate research, but did not include significant consideration of statistics regarding progression by mode of study, Academic Partner or other demographic information. The panel for a recent subject review had recommended that the progression data should be recorded and managed in a more unified way.

68 Overall, although the University's monitoring and review arrangements are intended to include consideration of all students, the extent to which they can do so in practice is limited by the availability and use of data (see paragraphs 72 to 74).

70 Through its annual quality monitoring arrangements, the University encourages teaching and support staff to be reflective and to make data-informed decisions about enhancement. This is supported by the Quality Management Group (QMG) dialogues around the Academic Partner and Subject Network SEDs through which common themes are identified, with the LTQC taking an overview of matters raised. At the Academic Partner and Subject Network levels, therefore, it is evident that the University reflects on the outcomes of the quality assurance processes and uses the evaluations to enhance the student learning experience. At the module level, however, action points are not consistently identified and this limits the effectiveness of those SEDs as tools for enhancement.

72 Following completion of the Data Improvement Project (see paragraph 15), the University considers that its provision of student data has improved greatly, enabling the development of key performance indicators (KPIs) to underpin initiatives such as the Retention and Continuation Project. UHI has also introduced a system of weekly data verification procedures involving the Academic Partners. However, the University is also aware that work remains to be carried out.

73 The University stated that it is encouraging all staff to make more use of data in reviewing student management. The improvement in the quality and utility of available data was commented on positively by staff during the ELIR but there was also a recognition that there needs to be greater awareness among staff of the data that are available. In addition, a number of the SEDs and review reports provided during the ELIR highlighted ongoing issues of data integrity.

74 Overall, it is clear that the University has made significant improvements to its data management systems since the 2007 ELIR. The University has plans to continue improving the reliability and availability of data, which is positive. The University is encouraged to progress these plans and also to raise awareness among staff regarding the range of reports that are available through the UHI management information system.

95 The University's quality enhancement activities are intended to promote, and embed, a broad-based shift from a quality assurance to a quality enhancement mind-set in staff at all levels. Senior staff indicated that this had previously been somewhat constrained by the nature of the developing institution (the partnership, dependence on validation through third parties and the focus on gaining taught degree awarding powers and university title), which had resulted in a rather conservative attitude that did not readily identify problems or the need for change. The development of a quality enhancement approach has required the partnership to become much more open, transparent and trusting. The University considers that this has been fostered through institutional strategies and policies that have required the sharing of data and the acknowledgement of challenges as well as strengths across the whole partnership. These strategies and policies include the Data Improvement Project, the transition to centralised two-tier Examination Boards, the openness of dialogue in annual quality monitoring and in curriculum planning, and the widespread use of communities of practice in the form of practitioner and consultative groups.

122 The University is asked to continue progressing its planned improvements to data management. In particular, the self-evaluation documents produced for Annual Quality Monitoring would be improved by the University making systematic use of the facilities within its management information system to enable the evaluation of different student cohorts at each of module, programme and Academic Partner levels.

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