TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

Please find attached the agenda and papers for the TLAC meeting which will be held on Wednesday 3 October 2012 at 2pm in Parliament Hall.

Nicola Milton
Executive Officer to the Proctor
(ext 2131; email: nam6)

AGENDA

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| 4. Teaching & Learning Priorities | • Activities for 2012-13 | Paper B |
| 5. Teaching & Learning Quality | • Outcomes from Annual Academic Monitoring [September]  
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| 6. Next meeting: Wednesday 21 November 2012, 2pm: Parliament Hall | Agenda items  
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• Revised School Presidents Policy  
• Principal’s Teaching Award  
• Deans’ List Criteria  
• Supervision of UG Dissertations | |
University of St Andrews

TEACHING LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

Wednesday 2 May 2012 at 2pm
in Parliament Hall

Present
Professor L Milne (Proctor, Convener); Professor N Beech; Professor I Davidson; Professor M MacLeod; Dr A Aitken; Dr C Allison; Dr R Anderson; Dr G Bell; Mr M Dowling; Professor W Fowler; Mr S Fowles; Dr J C Gomez; Dr F Gray; Professor S Guild; Dr W Heitler; Dr L Jones; Dr G Kirby; Dr L Lasselle; Dr J McMullin; Ms A Malcolm-Smith; Dr T Normand; Dr P Parry; Dr M Quick; Dr B Sinclair; Dr S Tyre; Dr C Warren.

In attendance
Mr P Brown; Mr D Farrell (for item 4); Mr M Johnson; Mr E McCubbin; Dr L Meishke; Mrs N Milton; Mrs C Morris; Mrs E Ruskuc.

Apologies
Mr K Donachie; Dr P Macmillan; Mrs D McGoldrick; Dr F Muller; Ms H Patrick; Dr C Peddie; Dr S Prosser; Ms J Ramsay; Professor N Richardson; Ms L Thirkell; Professor A Torrance.

Action

1. Presentation
The TLAC received a presentation from Sam Lister (Registry) on new developments and opportunities relating to outbound study abroad.

2. Apologies
Apologies for absence were recorded as above. It was noted that the Provost, some Directors of Teaching and Pro Deans would be stepping down from their posts with effect from next year. Particular thanks were extended to Dr Graham Bell (Pro Dean Advising Science), and Dr Simon Prosser (Pro Dean Undergraduate), whose contributions have been highly valued and appreciated by both Faculties.

3. Minutes of 28 March 2012
The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a correct record.

4. Place/Rank in Class
TLAC discussed a draft paper proposing the introduction individual ‘grade ranks’ or ‘grade bands’ to contextualise the performance of individual students at final assessment. Following discussion about the use of the proposed ranking system it was agreed that its introduction be postponed. Thanks were extended to Registry for all the work which had been put into the proposal.

5. Matters Arising
Enhancement Theme: it was noted the Institutional team would be inviting staff to submit funding proposals for small projects that support the new Enhancement Theme (further information available at https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/staff/academic/teaching/monitoring/enhancement/).

Module Evaluation Working Group: thanks were extended to everyone who contributed to last month’s workshop – a report from the event would now be considered by the Proctor.
Key Information Sets Working Group: further discussion about KIS would take place with Schools at the forthcoming Strategic Planning meetings. A further KIS briefing would be held on Wednesday 13 June 2012.

TLAC Open Forum: the Dean of Arts gave an oral update from the recent Open Forum. Further details of the presentations can be found at: https://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/staff/policy/committees/

Annual Academic Monitoring: information about this year’s process would be circulated to Schools within the next couple of days. Registry data to be provided to Schools in July with the annual dialogue with a selection of Schools taking place during the week commencing 24 September 2012.

NSS: noted that all Schools had now met the reporting threshold. The results would be made available in July/August. Thanks were extended to all colleagues who had helped to secure the required response rates.

Student Awards: TLAC noted the recipients of this year’s URIP, Carnegie and Cross Trust awards. It was hoped that next year more Arts students would apply for URIPs. Names of recipients to be published on the URIP website.

6. Common Reporting Scale
TLAC considered a draft new statement on the Common Reporting Scale. Following discussion, the following was agreed:

- **Nomenclature**: support for the new definitions for Classification, Grades and Marks.
- **GPA**: further consideration to be given to the use of ‘Grade Point average’ terminology.

Mark Descriptors: required further discussion with Schools. The Proctor to set up workshop discussions over the summer or early next year to help reach a clear understanding on the use of the Common Reporting Scale in relation to marking.

7. Honours Entry
The TLAC considered a paper proposing some changes to the procedures for Honours Entry. Following discussion, it was agreed that the majority of Schools would support the unconditional entry statement (subject to minor amendments). A revised statement would be circulated to Schools for further comment. There was limited support for the conditional entry proposal. It was agreed that the use of the terminology ‘conditional’ and ‘unconditional’ honours entry should not be used by Schools at this stage.

8. Policy and Regulation Updates

**Academic Alert**: TLAC considered and approved amendments to the Academic Alert policy subject to further discussion with ELT regarding referrals of students to the In-Sessional English Language Support Service (IELSSS). This paper to be submitted to Academic Council in May 2012 for approval.

**Deans’ List**: TLAC considered and approved amendments to the criteria for nomination to the Deans’ List subject to clarification of whether or not students with S coded modules would be included or excluded.

**External Examining**: TLAC considered and approved amendments to this policy subject to the removal of text relating to making External Examiners’ reports available to students. This paper to be submitted to Academic Council in May 2012 for approval.

**Student Representation**: TLAC considered amendments to this paper and agreed that further consideration should be given to some of the procedures in particular the timescales for the Class Representation elections. It was agreed that clarification would be sought on this and Schools notified of the arrangements in sufficient time before the start of next session.
**Postgraduate Policies:** TLAC considered and approved amendments to this policy. This paper to be submitted to Academic Council in May 2012 for approval.

**Senate Regulations:** TLAC considered and approved amendments to the Senate Regulations. This paper to be submitted to Academic Council in May 2012 for approval.

9. **Review of the TLAC**
   Members were asked to submit comments on the effectiveness of TLAC following its first year of operational following the Senate Efficiency Review. The TLAC Business Committee would consider comments at the next meeting.

10. **Teaching Awards**
    Congratulations were extended to several colleagues who had recently been awarded Fellowship of, or been awarded grants from, the Higher Education Academy. Recipients of FILTA and SELF awards were also congratulated as were colleagues who had been nominated for the SRC Teaching Awards.

11. **Date of Next Meeting**
    Wednesday 3 October 2012, 2pm (Parliament Hall)

12. **Papers for Information**
    Circulated and noted.
University of St Andrews

Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee

Update on Matters Arising from meeting held 2 May 2012

**Common Reporting Scale**

**Action**

Mark Descriptors Workshop held on 13 June 2012 with Directors of Teaching. Discussed presentation of the 20-point marking scale and possible move to marking only in whole numbers for individual items/questions marked directly on the 20-point scale.

**GPA:** discussed at TLAC Business Committee – agreed to keep current terminology.

**Honours Entry**

New procedures now available on the web at:-

http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/staff/policy/tlac/honours/

Template outcome letters and guidance from Deans has been circulated to Heads of Schools.

**Policy Updates**

All policies submitted to May Academic Council were approved.

**Academic Alerts:** Revised policy now on web and handbooks updated; PGR students informed.

**External Examining:** updated policy now on web and Externals advised. Nomination forms for appointments have been updated. Annual report forms currently being updated: new form to be circulated to DoTs for comment.

**PG Policies & Senate Regulations:** updated policies and Regulations on web.

Nicola Milton
Executive Officer to the Proctor

19 September 2012
University of St Andrews

Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee

Teaching & Learning Priorities

For information and planning, this paper lists topics of particular interest to the Proctor’s Office for the academic session 2012-13.

- Strategies to identify and reward excellent teaching
- Research-teaching linkages & their relation to employability
- Supporting independent learning from pre-sessional induction to Honours dissertations & projects
- Fostering students’ confidence and ambition
- Professionalisation and co-curricular skills
- Enhancement Theme
- Quality Enhancement Strategy
- Teaching infrastructure

The list is not exhaustive, and some items will demand more detailed attention than others. However, it is intended that these topics should be used to prioritise Learning and Teaching activities for this year. Formal discussions will be held on some of these issues at TLAC and Academic Monitoring; others will be taken forward by working groups outside TLAC with input from Directors of Teaching on behalf of Schools. These formal arrangements may be supplemented by informal consultations throughout the year.

Members of TLAC are asked to:

- note the contents of this list;
- align School priorities with those given above wherever this might aid discussion and development of teaching, learning and assessment;
- be ready to contribute to the development of these priority areas throughout the year.

Professor Lorna Milne
Vice-Principal (Proctor)

19 September 2012
The purpose of this circular is to inform higher education institutions of the Council’s updated guidance on quality which will apply from the beginning of the next cycle in August 2012.

FAO: Principals and directors of Scotland’s universities

Contact: Lesley Sutherland, Assistant Director, Learning, Governance & Sustainability, Tel: 0131 313 6681, email: lsutherland@sfc.ac.uk
Recent SFC documents

10 August 2012
SFC/13/2012
Council guidance to colleges on quality from August 2012

27 July 2012
SFC/12/2012
Education maintenance allowance AY 2012-13

6 July 2012
SFC/11/2012
Fee anomalies grant for universities in academic year 2012-13

29 June 2012
SFC/10/2012
HEI fee waiver scheme for part-time students in academic year 2012-13

15 June 2012
SFC/09/2012
Confirmation of student support funding for AY 2012-13

28 May 2012
SFC/08/2012
College sector bursary fund, discretionary fund, FE and HE childcare funds and fee waiver grant policies: 2012-13

20 April 2012
SFC/07/2012
2012-13 student activity data guidance for colleges

3 April 2012
SFC/06/2012
Innovation Centres: call for proposals

30 March 2012
SFC/05/2012
Updated funding allocations to universities for academic year 2012-13
Council guidance to higher education institutions on quality from August 2012

Purpose

1 This circular letter is to inform Scotland’s higher education institutions (HEIs) of the Council’s updated guidance on quality which will apply from the beginning of the next cycle in August 2012.

Background to guidance

2 In September 2010 the Council’s Quality, Equalities & General Purposes Committee (QEGPC) agreed that the quality arrangements in both the college and university sectors should be reviewed and updated as necessary to ensure continuing fitness for purpose for the next cycle, beginning on 1 August 2012.

3 Since there was a general consensus that the arrangements were broadly still appropriate and this was confirmed by the evidence from the Quality Assurance Agency’s (QAA’s) engagement with HEIs and Enhancement-led Institutional Reviews (ELIRs), as well as from the external evaluation undertaken by CSET/Lancaster University in 2008-10 and in the previous cycle, it was agreed that the focus should be on improving and updating aspects of the arrangements to ensure continuing fitness for purpose in the next cycle. With the agreement of the QEGPC, the Universities Quality Working Group (UQWG), which comprises all the key partners, undertook to consider the existing arrangements, and to make recommendations to the Committee.

4 Over a period of months, the UQWG discussed various elements, taking on board the priorities of the Council, and members undertook consultations with their respective organisations and interests. The recommendations and views of the Group, together with those of the Colleges Quality Working Group informed the preparation of a report and recommendations for updating arrangements which the QEGPC endorsed at its meeting in October 2011.

5 The QEGPC agreement to the updating changes coincided with the Scottish Government launching its consultation on Putting Learners at the Centre: Delivering Our Ambitions for Post-16 Education. The Council has subsequently been charged with the development of the regionalisation agenda and of outcome agreements with all institutions which it funds. Quality assurance and enhancement will continue to be fundamental to the learning provision which the Council funds the institutions to
offer. We will therefore seek to align and/or integrate this guidance with any relevant requirements emerging from outcome agreements.

6 The Council has considered this changing context and believes that the updated quality arrangements have sufficient scope for flexibility and proportionality to make them fit for purpose for the next period whilst allowing the Council to discharge its statutory duties effectively.

7 We will therefore introduce the updated arrangements, as planned, with effect from 1 August 2012; the guidance which follows applies from the same date. In due course, and in consultation with key partners, we will consider when might be an appropriate time to undertake a review of the arrangements and the Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF) as a whole for the following cycle, and the potential scope and scale of that review.

Main features of updated guidance

Key principles

8 The guidance reaffirms the three key principles of high quality learning, student engagement and quality culture, and continues to endorse the centrality of the institution’s responsibility for quality.

Proportionality

9 The principles and practices of using a proportionate approach have underpinned the QEF since its inception in 2003. ELIR is designed to be flexible to take account of institutional mission, scale and complexity of provision. It also takes into account the institution’s previous engagement with external quality review as well as the effectiveness of institutional self-evaluation. In determining the nature and timing of the ELIR visit, QAA Scotland will, in conjunction with the Council, consider factors such as risk, the outcomes of the previous ELIR and the ways in which the institution has responded to institution-led and external review. The nature and duration of the ELIR visit itself can be varied in response to the need to explore areas requiring development at the institution and, importantly in an enhancement-led approach, to ensure there are opportunities for the identification and dissemination of excellent practice.

10 QAA Scotland has also established a Protocol for managing potential risks to quality and academic standards. This Protocol sets out the ways in which QAA Scotland will respond to a range of exceptional circumstances including where concerns may be raised by students or staff.
Summary of main updating changes

11 The following highlights the main changes to the arrangements to update them for the cycle beginning August 2012. Where appropriate, we also draw attention to these changes or additions in the text of the guidance.

12 The QEGPC had emphasised the importance of clarity, transparency and ease of understanding of the judgements, while stressing the need for differentiation. As a result there is a change in the language of judgements and in the style of reporting by QAA Scotland.

13 In order to support fitness for purpose and greater proportionality, QAA has undertaken a review of the ELIR method through the ELIR Steering Committee, and has published a revised and updated version of the ELIR Handbook (ELIR 3). In so doing QAA has also considered where it can improve or enhance processes with regard to documentation and review preparation. In addition to the current reports which QAA provides to the Council, it will now provide a short annual report in relation to each institution. This is not covered in detail in the guidance below as this guidance is addressed to HEIs; further information on this and other requirements which QAA needs to fulfil are contained in the Service Level Agreement, jointly agreed by QAA, Universities Scotland and the Council.

14 Student engagement continues as a key principle and as a fundamental dimension of quality. The Council’s guidance has been updated to reflect the shift from encouraging institutions with regard to student engagement to setting out expectations and, where appropriate, further requirements in this regard.

15 The guidance on public information on quality has been updated to reflect the changes in the UK website – Unistats – and the decision of QEGPC to continue participation in that website, as a consequence of which institutions are expected to participate in the Key Information Sets.

16 The profile of governance and the importance the Scottish Government attaches to this has continued to be high on the agenda, most recently through the Report of the Review of Higher Education Governance in Scotland. In the cycle ending July 2012, the Council received annual reports from institutions, endorsed by the governing body. The updated guidance strengthens the reporting requirements, with specific reference to institutional monitoring and use of data, and provides a template statement for the new requirement for HEIs to provide a statement of assurance.
Guidance to HEIs on quality from August 2012

17 The guidance, which is attached as an Annex is set out under the following headings:

- Introduction to guidance;
- Section A: Institutional responsibility for quality;
- Section B: Engagement and involvement of students in quality;
- Section C: Public information about quality; and
- Section D: Institutional reporting on quality.

Further information

18 For further information, please contact Lesley Sutherland, Assistant Director, Learning, Governance & Sustainability, Tel: 0131 313 6681, email: lsutherland@sfc.ac.uk

MTS Batho
Chief Executive
Council guidance to higher education institutions on quality from August 2012

Introduction to guidance

1 This guidance applies for the four-year cycle beginning on 1 August 2012. It is set out under the following headings:

- Section A: Institutional responsibility for quality;
- Section B: Engagement and involvement of students in quality;
- Section C: Public information about quality; and
- Section D: Institutional reporting on quality.

2 The guidance supersedes SFC/30/2008 *Council guidance to higher education institutions on quality*, 6 June 2008. However, it retains many of the main features of that guidance to apply from August 2012.

3 Each Section starts with the context to that particular aspect of guidance, and then there is a brief summary of the updating changes. The guidance itself then follows.

**Key principles of quality**

4 The Joint Quality Review Group which reported to Council in 2007 confirmed the three key principles which inform and underpin quality assurance and enhancement. These principles are:

- high quality learning;
- student engagement; and
- quality culture.

5 These three key principles remain fit for purpose and are increasingly embedded in the quality arrangements for the sector as a whole. There is therefore no need for change and we endorse these as fundamental to the Quality Enhancement Framework (QEF).

**External assessment and reporting on quality**

6 The Council contracts with the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Scotland to carry out external review, known as Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).
QAA publishes the outcomes of the external reviews on its website\(^3\). In addition, QAA carries out Annual Discussions, and gives support for the national Enhancement Theme activity through the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee. QAA also provides a range of reports to the Council and provides it with professional advice on quality. The detail of the services QAA provides to the Council is contained in the Service Level Agreement which is jointly agreed with Universities Scotland, and will be available on the Council’s website – [http://www.sfc.ac.uk](http://www.sfc.ac.uk).

7 In addition to the Council’s guidance therefore, the QAA publishes the *Enhancement-led Institutional Review: Handbook* (third edition)\(^4\) which contains the detail of the arrangements and specific guidance on external review.

8 As this Council guidance is addressed to HEIs, setting out requirements and expectations which institutions should meet, we have not included detail on the updated arrangements for external review, judgements and reporting which QAA will carry out. However, for ease of reference and clarity we have attached some outline information on these updated arrangements in Appendix 1 to this guidance.

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\(^3\) [http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/default.aspx)

\(^4\) [http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/ELIR-handbook-3.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/ELIR-handbook-3.aspx)
Section A: Institutional responsibility for quality

Context to guidance

9 It is institutions, and not the Council, which bear primary responsibility for, and ownership of, the quality of educational provision. The Council however has responsibilities to ensure that quality is being maintained and enhanced across the sector, and that good practice is being shared.

10 The Council continues to expect institutions to have a clearly articulated, strategic approach to quality assurance and enhancement. The primary mechanism by which institutions assure and enhance the quality of provision is through processes of institution-led evaluation and review. For universities, these processes are referred to generically as ‘institution-led review’ although individual institutions may describe them in different ways. The scope of the processes is intended to include a range of functions. Institutions have considerable flexibility in how they organise and run these processes but there are clear expectations that all aspects of provision will be reviewed systematically and rigorously over a defined schedule.

11 Institution-led review processes are themselves subject to scrutiny through periodic ELIR conducted by the QAA. There is clear evidence from the outcomes of ELIR (and indeed from previous rounds of QAA reviews) that quality and academic standards of provision continue to be secure, that institution-led review is robust and effective, and that institutions use these processes effectively to manage and enhance the quality of provision.

12 The purpose of revising the guidance at this time is not to propose any major change to the principles or operation of the current approach, but to further enhance the benefits of the current model. It is appropriate to set out the key features of this guidance as it applies from August 2012, in the context of a changing environment in the sector in Scotland, in the UK and beyond.

13 It is important to note that the guidance remains generic with regard to the scope and nature of institution-led review. The guidance sets out the broad principles to which all institutions should adhere, including the need to periodically review all provision and to include consideration of support services (information and guidance, learning resources, ICT, recruitment, student finance and so on) in determining the overall quality of the student experience.
Updating changes

14 The main updating change to this section of the guidance is to specify that institutions should include in their annual report a section on their monitoring and analysis of feedback, performance indicators, National Student Survey results, and other data, and assess the impact of their consequent activities in improving quality. (See paragraphs 32-33 and also changes to institutional reporting at Section D, paragraph 77.)

Guidance on nature and scope of institution-led quality

15 Institution-led review is an important mechanism in assuring and enhancing the quality of students’ educational experience in Scottish HEIs. This is wholly consistent with the Council’s recognition that quality is owned by institutions. It is a matter for each institution to determine how precisely it organises its internal processes for reviewing and evaluating provision. However, the Council has responsibilities for ensuring that institution-led review is comprehensive and rigorous, and considers the full range of issues which may have a bearing on quality. It is therefore appropriate that the Council should issue broad generic guidance on how such processes should be conducted.

Key characteristics of institution-led review

16 Institution-led quality reviews should include the following characteristics.

All provision should be reviewed on a cycle of not more than six years

17 It is a matter for each institution to decide how to schedule and aggregate its provision for review. However, good practice would be to ensure that programmes and subjects are aggregated in ways which provide coherence (for example reviewing all programmes in a subject at the same time; reviewing all programmes within a department at the same time). Excessive aggregation would mean that the process cannot examine the 'fine structure' of provision and may not be able to identify specific issues affecting particular programmes; large groupings may also become unwieldy.

18 Although the primary focus of institution-led review is likely to be on undergraduate degree programmes, we expect institutions to include within the review programme all credit-bearing provision, including postgraduate awards, CPD, collaborative and overseas provision, supervision of research students, online and distance learning and provision (such as extra-mural courses) which provide only small amounts of credit. It will be a matter for institutions to decide how to
aggregate such provision (for example by subject, mode of delivery, or level).

19 The role of support services (guidance, learning resources, ICT, recruitment, student finance and so on) is of crucial importance in determining the overall quality of the student learning experience. Institutions should satisfy themselves that there are appropriate mechanisms in place to facilitate periodic review of the strategic and operational role of support services in relation to their impact on the student experience. It is a matter for each institution to determine how this should be done. Whatever the approach taken, the evidence should be such as to allow the institution to reflect on the contribution of support services to the ‘quality culture’ within the institution, the ways in which the services engage with students to monitor and improve the quality of services, and the ways in which the services promote high quality learning and continuous quality enhancement.

20 The timescale of six years was originally intended to provide continuity with the schedule which had been set in 1999. There continues to be flexibility for aggregation. However, it remains our view that it would not be good practice to compress reviews into (say) a period of three years, followed by three further years of inactivity. We expect that institution-led review will inevitably identify a range of developmental issues and there is benefit to the institution from generating such insights on an on-going basis. We therefore consider that, however the timetable is constructed, there should normally be some form of institution-led review activity taking place within each academic session. As the six-year time frame seems to still be appropriate it will continue unchanged.

Institution-led reviews should take full account of benchmarks and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education

21 QAA launched the UK Code for Higher Education\(^5\) in December 2011 as a restructuring of the existing Academic Infrastructure. The Quality Code contains a section on programme design and approval (Chapter B1). ELIR reviewers will look for evidence that this Code has been embedded in institutional systems. More generally, the Code contains helpful guidance on a wide range of institutional functions, and institution-led review processes should be designed in such a way as to effectively monitor the implementation of the Code at the programme or subject level.

22 Benchmark statements provide a useful guide to national expectations about the characteristics of programmes in different subjects. We accept

\(^5\) \url{http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/quality-code/Pages/default.aspx}
that benchmarks may be less helpful in considering curricula and learning outcomes in interdisciplinary programmes and in modular structures which offer wide choice between options. Institution-led review processes should be designed in such a way as to establish that providers have engaged with relevant benchmarks and are able to demonstrate that programme design and learning outcomes are consistent with relevant benchmarks.

23 Significant amounts of provision in Scottish HEIs are accredited by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). We would encourage institutions to engage with PSRBs to explore appropriate ways in which the burden of audit might be further reduced, for example through the use of common documentation, or through joint processes which meet the needs of both institution-led review and external accreditation. We would also look to institutions to reflect on the outcomes of relevant PSRB accreditations within institution-led reviews.

24 At a wider level, we would encourage institutions to take full advantage of activities such as the national Enhancement Themes, the work of the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC), the work of the HE Academy, advice from Student participation in quality Scotland (Sparqs) and reference points such as the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) which provide opportunities for reflection on their performance and how it might be usefully compared with that of others.

**Institution-led reviews should continue to embed and develop the use of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework**

25 The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) is a key strategic element in Scotland’s education system, and the university sector has been highly influential in its development. We look to institutions to actively engage with the framework and with the work of the SCQF Partnership. The opportunities which the SCQF offers will be even more important in the light of the Scottish Government’s policies in relation to post-16 education, encouraging greater flexibility and mobility, and also with the development of outcome agreements between the Council and the institutions.

26 Institution-led review should be designed in order to promote scrutiny and discussion of the institution's approach to SCQF, with an expectation that institutions will have adopted a proactive approach aimed at exploiting the flexibility which the SCQF facilitates. This should include consideration of strategies for the recognition of prior learning, for example through:
• articulation arrangements with college providers and/or general statements about criteria for entry with advanced standing;
• consistency in the allocation of credit and level;
• approach to credit-rating of flexible learning components, for example work placement; and
• flexible pathways to awards.

**Institution-led reviews should provide an objective review of provision based on an understanding of national and international good practice. Each review team should include at least one external member with a relevant background.**

27 It will be a matter for institutions to determine the composition of review teams and hence to select appropriate external member(s). Institutions will wish to select members who are able to appreciate the specific context in which programmes are presented. However, good practice would be to ensure that review teams are able to bring a range of experience to the process and hence are able to act as 'critical friends' to the institution. Team size and composition must also take account of the range and volume of provision to be reviewed. We expect institutions to make extensive use of external members, taking into consideration involvement by staff from inside and outside Scotland, as well as individuals with experience of relevant professions.

28 We do not expect institution-led review teams to routinely include members from outside the UK (although, where this can be achieved, it may be valuable and we encourage institutions to actively consider the scope for this option). However, review processes should be designed to include some element of reflection on international good practice, such as a reflective statement from the provider on how their provision compares with similar practice in some other countries. Institutions may wish to consider how they can support such informal 'benchmarking' at a central level.

**Institution-led processes should fully engage students in quality arrangements**

29 We expect all institutions to engage students appropriately in institution-led arrangements for quality. All institutions should therefore have ongoing processes for obtaining student feedback. Institutional processes for student feedback will be explicitly considered as part of institutional review. Institution-led review should be designed in order to explore the ways in which feedback from students has been generated, considered
and acted on in the design and operation of the programmes and the organisation of students’ learning environment. We also expect, as a separate measure, that each institution-led review process should gather additional specific information from students as part of the evidence base for reviews. An appropriate methodology would be one which:

- generated holistic evidence about student views of provision and of their learning experience;
- differentiated between the views of different categories of students where these are likely to be significant (for example part-time and full-time, students from different levels of programme, entrants from school and entrants from further education (FE), etc.);
- allowed identification of distinctive characteristics of major subsets of provision; and
- took account of the views of graduates on the relevance of provision for their careers.

30 Each ELIR review team has since academic year (AY) 2003-04 included a student or recent graduate and this has been a successful and distinctive element of the Scottish quality framework. We require institutions to develop and deploy mechanisms to directly involve students in processes of institution-led quality review (that is, student representatives should contribute directly to the review of evidence and to the deliberation of institution-led review teams) and to continue to build on these foundations, further embedding and extending student engagement and participation in quality.

31 Institution-led quality processes should also take account of the increasing diversity of the student body, in terms of race, gender, sexuality, faith, age or whether they are disabled, or other protected characteristic (as set out in the Equality Act 2010 and associated legislation), and of the range of modes and location of delivery. This does not mean that multiple parallel processes of review need be carried out, each addressing distinct groups of students. Rather, it is primarily intended to ensure that institution-led review processes do not exclude or impede categories of students from engaging with review because of the way in which the review is defined or operated. More positively, there is scope to reflect on the opportunities which diversity provides for enriching the learning experience. It is up to each institution to decide how to address these issues, taking account of the specific demographics and characteristics of its own provision.
Institution-led reviews should consider the effectiveness of annual monitoring arrangements and follow-up action for programmes covered by the review

32 We expect each institution to operate systems of annual monitoring across the full range of provision; this is likely to include not only student survey data, but also performance data on recruitment, progression and achievement. Good practice in such monitoring would be to include mechanisms which allow some benchmarking of provision against other areas of the institution's activities, as well as equivalent provision elsewhere. Institutions should also make appropriate use of external reference points including external examiners' reports. A key element of quality assurance and enhancement is the extent to which the outcomes of such monitoring are scrutinised and acted on in order to address shortcomings and spread good practice. Institution-led review processes should be designed in a way which allows reflection on the effectiveness of monitoring and follow-up, on a periodic basis, for example taking the opportunity to reflect across a number of years' annual monitoring outcomes in the relevant subject area(s) and considering the trends in, and responses to, feedback and performance data.

33 As indicated at paragraph 77, institutions will be expected to comment on the above monitoring in their annual reporting to the Council.

34 The Council expects institutions to reflect, at the institutional level, on strategic issues arising from regular monitoring, and to make use of this information in its strategic approach to quality. This will be explicitly considered during institutional review; however, institutions may wish to consider how they can best design institution-led review processes in order to facilitate institution-level reflection on the outcomes of monitoring. Good practice would be to have reporting procedures at the programme, subject or department level which passed on relevant issues for consideration at institutional level. Institution-led review processes should be designed to allow constructive reflection on the effectiveness of these procedures.

Assurance and enhancement

35 The primary purpose of institution-led reviews is to provide assurances about the quality and standards of provision. It is vital that institution-led reviews provide robust, comprehensive and credible evidence that academic standards and quality of provision in Scottish HEIs are being maintained. However, the Council's approach continues
to give a central role to quality enhancement, and we therefore encourage institutions to develop institution-led review processes which also:

- promote dialogue on areas in which quality might be improved;
- identify good practice for dissemination within the institution and beyond (such as engagement in the national quality Enhancement Themes); and
- encourage and support critical reflection on practice.
Section B: Engagement and involvement of students in quality

Context to guidance

36 In circular SFC/30/2008, we referred to earlier guidance on involving students in quality, dating from 2003. This set expectations that students would be involved in all processes relating to quality assurance and enhancement, and that students should be represented as widely as possible in each institution’s consultative and decision-making forums. While this and the core of that guidance remain valid, there has been significant development since then. We therefore re-state the most significant aspects of guidance on student engagement, updated for the cycle beginning August 2012.

37 It is also helpful to acknowledge more recent thinking about the meaning of ‘student engagement’. The scope of such engagement may range from formal engagement and representation in institutional structures and processes, to the individual student engaging in self-reflection on the quality and nature of her/his learning – the learner as active participant in or as ‘co-creator’ of learning. This is an area where there is scope to share and embed good practice; we note the significant and often innovative approaches which institutions have developed with their students since the QEF was first introduced.

38 The updated guidance is intended to support the widening of the scope and understanding of student engagement in quality and to signal a shift from encouragement to setting firm expectations.

Updating changes

39 The change in the updated guidance is therefore primarily one of emphasis, moving from encouragement to expectation, and where appropriate, to requirement. The following text presents the Council’s guidance on this matter.

Guidance to HE institutions on student engagement and representation in quality processes

40 The Council regards effective student engagement in quality processes, including representation on appropriate institutional bodies as extremely important. The Council recognises and welcomes the fact that effective systems of representation are widespread and well-established. The Council also recognises that institutions vary widely in structure and organisation, and that individual institutions are best placed to determine which structures and processes for representation are most effective.
It is not appropriate therefore for the Council to issue detailed guidance on this issue but we believe it would be helpful to outline our expectations in broad terms.

The Council believes that the involvement of students in quality processes is essential to maximise the effectiveness and enhance the quality of the student learning experience. In particular, the Council requires that institutions should have a clear policy and strategy for enhancing student engagement with quality structures and processes and to involve students in all processes relating to quality assurance and enhancement.

The Council takes the view that students should be represented as widely as possible within an institution. We therefore start from the presumption that students should normally be included on all appropriate institutional bodies including institutional governing bodies such as Court and Senate.

Similarly, students should be represented on relevant institution-wide policy committees and on course and departmental committees; and on any other institutional committees or structures which have an influence on the quality of educational provision and the student experience. This should include, where appropriate, both formal and informal ways of feeding student views into decision-making structures.

The student body in Scotland’s HEIs is very diverse, and we recognise that some categories of student may find it harder than others to engage with representative, consultative and decision-making structures. It is therefore important to ensure that the student voice is amplified so that it encompasses that diversity and is fully representative of the whole student body. We look to institutions, working with their students and student associations, to reflect on this and to consider whether and how there is scope to be more proactive in addressing issues of diversity and equality in their engagement with students on quality issues.

Sparqs has been in operation for some years with the purpose of assisting and supporting students, student associations and institutions to improve the effectiveness and engagement in quality assurance and enhancement across Scotland. More recently its focus has been on assisting institutions and student associations to fully engage students as equal partners in creating a learner-centred experience. In addition to supporting the development of effective student representation, Sparqs seeks to facilitate opportunities for all students to participate, and to promote institutional learning from, and sharing with, others.
Institutions should continue to work on student participation, with support from Sparqs as it develops this agenda of student engagement and the concept of partnership in working with and supporting students, student representatives and institutions to deliver on all the priorities set out in the preceding paragraphs.

The Council invites each institution to reflect further on its current procedures and to consider whether there are any amendments they might make to ensure that there is a coherent and effective strategy in place for student representation and engagement in quality processes.
Section C: Public information about quality

Context to guidance

49 Public information is one of the five key elements of the QEF and the Council issued guidance in 2003 and 2004 on public information about quality. This guidance invited institutions to reflect on the information needs of different user groups, and stressed the importance of supporting learners in making informed choices.

50 Following consultation with the sector and the key partners, the Council confirmed Scottish sector participation in the UK website, originally called the Teaching Quality Information website, and which was then and continues to be jointly funded by the four funding bodies. Council issued further guidance in January 2005, specifying the data sets. There have since been several revisions to the structure and content of the website, now called Unistats. At the time when the National Student Survey began the decision was not to participate on a sectoral level. However, institutions could opt to do so individually with the result that by the end of the cycle 2008-12 almost all institutions were taking part.

51 The Unistats website has been developed with the introduction of Key Information Sets from autumn 2012. Following consideration at the UQWG and consultation with the sector the recommendation which the Council’s QEGPC endorsed was that the Scottish sector should continue to participate in the UK website as part of the requirements on public information, and should consequently implement the Key Information Sets.

52 As a substantial part of the Key Information Sets is derived from data generated through the National Student Survey there is a clear implication that in joining Key Information Sets, institutions will participate in the National Student Survey. This is consistent with the direction of travel in the sector. (In advance of the initial deadline for implementation of September 2012, all institutions were either preparing for implementation of Key Information Sets or, with the agreement of Council, are committed to doing so from autumn 2013).

Updating changes

53 In the circular letter SFC/30/2008, the guidance on the main principles of public information referred back to previous guidance, issued in 2003. Notwithstanding subsequent changes these principles are still valid and are briefly re-stated below, for reference. The guidance also covers the general specification of information, the users of information and other generic issues.
We have updated the guidance to reflect recent developments, most importantly the changes to the UK website – Unistats – and the decision of the QEGPC that Scottish HEIs should continue to participate in the UK website with the consequent requirement to provide the Key Information Sets. There are consequential changes with regard to the National Student Survey; there are also some associated changes in reporting to Council.

**Guidance to HEIs on public information on quality**

**Key principles of public information**

55 The Council takes the view that public information about the quality of educational provision should:

- provide assurances about the quality and standards of provision;
- provide information to inform student choice, and to assist employers and other stakeholders to clearly understand the nature of Scottish university sector;
- provide information which helps current students to understand, engage with and make best use of institutional systems for quality improvement; and
- provide information about the institution’s educational processes which stimulates reflection on academic practice and the sharing of good practice within the institution and more widely.

56 The Council recognises and supports the diversity of the Scottish university sector, and also recognises the diversity of user groups who will make use of public information about quality. We look to each institution to interpret this guidance in the light of its own institution-led processes and the needs of its students and other stakeholders.

**Specification of information: specific**

57 We have set a specific expectation with regard to participation in the UK website, currently called Unistats, and in the publication of Key Information Sets. In the cycle beginning August 2012, HEIs should continue to participate in the Unistats website and therefore are now also expected to implement the Key Information Sets.

58 As the National Student Survey contributes significant items to the Key Information Sets, and consistent with the trend in the sector, institutions will further be expected, as a consequence of implementing the Key
Information Sets, to participate in the National Student Survey from AY 2012-13.

Specification of information: generic

59 It is important to note that public information on quality extends beyond the specifics of Unistats and Key Information Sets. The earlier guidance set out in some detail the specification and expectations with regard to public information more generally. However, we believe that these have largely been incorporated into institutional practice and therefore the guidance which follows does not seek to repeat that level of detail.

60 We believe that when it comes to information published by institutions themselves, it is more appropriate to focus on the needs of users, and to allow institutions to develop their own approaches to the presentation of information which meets these needs, in ways which recognise the diversity of the sector. This is an area where there is much scope to identify, develop and disseminate good practice.

Who are the users of public information about quality?

61 We believe that the best way to approach the issue of public information is to recognise that different groups of stakeholders need different sorts of information. There are many stakeholders with an interest in the quality of Scottish higher education, but it is important to define a common list to be considered. We believe that the following categories will encompass most, if not all, such stakeholders:

- prospective students (recognising that different sorts of applicant may have different information needs – for example – considering the distinctive needs of applications from Scotland, rest of the UK, and overseas; applicants who are seeking advanced standing because of a previous award such as HNC/D; and applicants with no personal or family experience of higher education); in some cases, other people such as parents, guidance teachers or college tutors, may act as proxies for applicants;
- current students (again, with appropriate distinctions to reflect needs and context – for example – full-time and part-time, undergraduate and postgraduate, campus-based and distance learning);
- employers and employer organisations;
- professional, statutory and regulatory bodies; and
- the Council, QAA, the National Union of Students, and other interested bodies or agencies, as proxies for Ministers, taxpayers, and the general public.
What needs do different users have for information about quality?

62 The range of needs is diverse and we do not expect institutions to produce information in a form which specifically responds to each of these needs in turn. Rather, we suggest that institutions will wish to review their existing range of institutional sources of information (prospectus, website, intranet, student handbooks, leaflets, and so on) in order to ensure that, taken as a whole, institutions provide appropriate information, in relevant formats, which address these needs.

Generic issues relevant for all information users

63 As indicated above, it is a matter for each institution to review its full range of information sources and assess the extent to which it adequately and appropriately addresses these needs. It may be helpful to identify some generic characteristics of information about educational provision, in order to stimulate discussion and innovation about good practice in the presentation of such information. We believe that information should be:

- accurate and honest;
- accessible to the intended user;
- updateable on appropriate timescales (which may vary from annually to daily in different contexts);
- reusable, that is, ideally information should be entered once and used in a range of contexts; and
- customised, that is, tailored and presented to match the needs of the intended user.

64 We would encourage each institution to consider how best to interpret this guidance in its own context. The QAA’s process of ELIR will provide an opportunity for engaging with each institution on the effectiveness of its strategy for the presentation of public information about quality.

65 We will monitor the development of the UK website and the implementation of Key Information Sets over the first year of the cycle. We will also invite the UQWG to offer advice on the potential development of a wider Information Set for the Scottish sector.
Section D: Institutional reporting on quality

Context to guidance

66 The Council has responsibilities to ensure that quality is being maintained and enhanced across the sector, and recognises the primary role of regular institution-led processes in achieving this. The Council wishes both to understand the ways in which institutions manage these processes and how they address the outcomes and to receive regular assurance in this regard. To this end the Council asks institutions to provide an annual report on institution-led review and enhancement activities, signed off by the governing body.

67 The relevant Council Committee will receive an analysis of these reports and we will ask QAA to draw on these reports as part of the evidence base for its annual reporting to Council.

68 With the exception of institution reports on responses to the outcomes of QAA review (see paragraphs 82-83), the Council does not intend to publish these annual reports, although under the terms of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 we may be obliged to consider releasing information in response to a valid request.

69 It will be important to ensure that the interface between institutional reporting on quality and the monitoring and reporting on outcome agreements is appropriate and clearly articulated. The Council will therefore seek to ensure that reporting on quality is aligned with other institutional reporting for the purposes of monitoring outcome agreements and to avoid unnecessary duplication or added burden in reporting.

70 At Appendix 2, we have also listed the reports which institutions and QAA respectively are expected to provide, for reference.

Updating changes

71 The Council also wishes to receive assurance that institutions are appropriately gathering, analysing and using student feedback, performance indicators and other data, such as National Student Survey results, to improve the quality of the learning experience. To that end, a requirement to comment on this aspect is included in the updated guidance.

72 In addition to providing an analysis of these reports which will be considered by the relevant Council committee and an annual overview report to Council on quality assurance and enhancement in the sector,
we will ask QAA to provide an annual, brief statement of assurance on quality for each institution (see Appendix 2); this will incorporate how the institution monitors and uses information and feedback.

73 Another new item is the requirement that institutions should provide an annual statement of assurance to complement the annual report which the governing body endorses. The guidance below provides the template for this statement of assurance (see paragraph 81).

Guidance on institutional reporting to Council

Content and scope of annual report on institution-led review

74 As in the previous cycle, we ask that each institution should provide an annual report, endorsed by the governing body, which describes the scope, nature and outcomes of institution-led quality review activities, as well as of reviews by PSRBs, which have taken place in the previous academic year, including commentary on actions taken to address issues identified, as well as highlighting good practice identified for dissemination.

75 The format of the annual report is a matter for each institution to determine. However, it is strongly emphasised that this should be a concise overview report, highlighting outcomes, impact and responses.

76 In any given year, we anticipate that each institution will engage in some form of institution-led, strategic review of quality, drawing on evidence from a range of self-evaluation processes. Institutions may also be subject to external review by awarding bodies, quality agencies and/or PSRBs. The annual statement should include consideration of all such activities taking place in the previous academic year. The particular case of responding, one year on, to QAA ELIR is addressed in paragraphs 82-83.

77 The following guidance applies for the provision of annual statements on institution-led review from the first year of the cycle beginning August 2012. Therefore the first report to be returned will be for AY 2012-13. We envisage that the annual, progress report will be of the order of five to six pages long, and in no case longer than 10 pages. It should cover all learning provision for the subjects/programmes/functions included and should contain:

- a summary of the outcomes of the principal quality assurance and enhancement activities, including self-evaluation processes, which were undertaken during the immediately preceding AY;
• a list of subject/programme areas which were reviewed by other bodies, for example, by PSRBs, during the AY;

• an indication of the ways in which support services (such as libraries, IT services and guidance services) were included in review processes, for example by consideration of their impact on teaching, learning and the quality of the student experience in particular subjects, and/or by separate processes by which support services were reviewed;

• the key messages deriving from monitoring and analysis of performance indicators and other collected data, particularly those relating to retention, progression, completion, attainment and achievement, from analysis of feedback from students (including National Student Survey) and other key stakeholders, and actions taken as a result;

• any significant issues relating either to development needs or to good practice which the institution has identified as a result of these institution-led review processes;

• the role and nature of student involvement in these institution-led self-evaluation review processes and in student engagement more broadly;

• a reflective overview which highlights key findings from the previous year’s reviews, including comments on areas of strength and issues for further development, across the institution as a whole or in identified areas or aspects of provision, and comments on ‘distance travelled’ and the impact of previous enhancement measures; and

• an indication of the institution’s plan for institution-led reviews for the forthcoming AY.

It is emphasised that institutions are not required to provide a comprehensive, detailed statement of their review activities but to give a high level, concise analysis and account of activities, highlighting the key messages, institution actions and the impacts of these, sufficient to provide assurance to the Council that it is effectively managing and delivering on quality assurance and enhancement.

In addition to providing us with this report and participating in annual discussions with QAA, we would encourage institutions to consider ways in which they could share information about current issues not only in the annual statement, but also, where appropriate, through ad hoc briefings on a ‘no surprises’ basis. This might be particularly helpful where there is follow-up action to address any issues arising from an institution-
led/PSRB review, but might also deal with other issues which may emerge from time to time.

Return of annual report on institution-led review

80 Institutions should send the first annual report, endorsed by the governing body, based on this updated guidance to the Council by 30 September 2013, and thereafter annually on the same date.

Guidance on governing body provision of annual statement of assurance

81 In addition to the annual report as set out in the preceding paragraphs, the governing body should return an annual statement of assurance to the Council by the same deadline of 30 September. The Chair of the governing body should sign off the statement of assurance and indicate when it was endorsed. The template for the statement of assurance statement is:

On behalf of the governing body of [name of institution], I confirm that we have considered the institution’s arrangements for the management of academic standards and the quality of the learning experience for AY [year just elapsed], including the scope and impact of these. I further confirm that we are satisfied that the institution has effective arrangements to maintain standards and to assure and enhance the quality of its provision. We can therefore provide assurance to the Council that the academic standards and the quality of the learning provision at this institution continue to meet the requirements set by the Council.

Reporting on the institution’s response to outcomes of QAA ELIR

82 As in previous years, each institution will engage with the QAA one year after publication of the institution’s ELIR review report, to consider actions taken to address issues raised and to highlight good practice identified by the review. Institutions have an opportunity to prepare a written account of these actions, and as is now established practice this Follow-up report will be published on the QAA’s website. The ELIR handbook provides information on this too.

83 The Council also wishes to continue to receive a report from each institution on its response to the ELIR review, endorsed by the governing body. To minimise the burden on institutions, we propose that the Follow-up report prepared for publication on the QAA website should also be used for this purpose. The institution should return the report directly to the Council; the Council will give prior notice of the timing for the return of the report, aligning with QAA’s engagement.
Exceptionally, where external review identifies issues of significant concern, the Council will, as at present, require institutions to prepare a detailed action plan to address deficiencies, and to take urgent action, as necessary. Given the importance of governance and accountability in these cases, any such action plan should include commentary on how the governing body will be involved in the implementation and monitoring of the plan.
Updated arrangements for external review and judgements


The following briefly sets out the arrangements for judgements and the Council’s response to these.

Judgements in the updated arrangements

Each ELIR will deliver an overarching judgement on the current and likely future effectiveness of the institution's arrangements for managing academic standards and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience.

There will be three levels of effectiveness identified in the overarching judgement which will indicate that the institution's arrangements:

- are effective;
- have limited effectiveness; or
- are not effective.

It will be possible for the overarching judgement to be disaggregated so that, for example, one aspect may be identified as having limited effectiveness while the other aspects are identified as effective. For example, the management of academic standards may be effective but the effectiveness of the management of the student learning experience may be limited. Equally, the current management may be effective but the effectiveness of future management may be limited.

Scottish Funding Council response to judgements

If the overarching judgement is effective, the Council will expect the institution to engage with the QAA as appropriate, and, one year after the publication of the review reports to provide a report, endorsed by its governing body (see paragraphs 82-83 of the guidance) setting out its response to the review.

If the overarching judgement is of limited effectiveness or is not effective (see paragraph 84 of guidance), the Council will require the institution to

\(^6\) [http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/ELIR-handbook-3.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/ELIR-handbook-3.aspx)
prepare and fulfil an action plan to address the shortcomings identified. QAA will provide advice to the Council on the adequacy of the action plan and on how it is being implemented. The Council, taking in to account any advice from QAA, will normally require a formal follow-up review at an appropriate time, usually within no more than two years.
Appendix 2

Further information on reporting to Council

The Council requires institutions and QAA to return reports relating to quality. These are briefly set out below.

Institutional reporting

Institutions should provide the following two items annually:

- An annual report, endorsed by the governing body, on institution-led quality review in the preceding academic year (see paragraphs 74-78 of guidance); and
- The governing body’s annual statement of assurance on quality relating to the preceding academic year (see paragraph 81 of guidance).

Institutions should return both of these to Council no later than **30 September** each year (see paragraphs 80 and 81 of guidance).

One year after an institution has undergone external review (ELIR), it should provide the Council with a report, endorsed by the governing body, setting out its response to the review (see paragraphs 82-83 of guidance). The Council will normally write a reminder to the institution in advance of the date for return.

QAA reporting

In the updated arrangements QAA will provide the Council with an annual statement of assurance for each institution, drawing upon a range of evidence (see paragraph 72 of guidance). QAA will therefore provide Council with the following annual reports:

- Annual overview report of quality assurance and enhancement in the university sector in the preceding academic year;
- Overview and analysis of institutional annual reports on institution-led review in the preceding academic year; and
- Annual statement of assurance for each institution, based on the range of evidence accrued during the academic year.

QAA will normally present these reports to the Council or to the relevant Council Committee as set out in the Service Level Agreement or as otherwise agreed.

QAA will report by exception on any matter it deems appropriate to the Council.
The QAA (Scotland) has recently published the third edition of the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) Handbook which sets out the review method that will be applied to Scottish higher education institutions in the period 2012-16. ELIR 3 builds on the previous iterations of the review method which has been running in Scotland since 2003. ELIR 3 was developed by QAA Scotland with the support of an ELIR Steering Committee comprising members including Universities Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council (SFC).

This paper outlines the key changes and developments being introduced with ELIR3. The key development to note is that there is no ‘year of reflection’ between ELIR cycles as there was before our next ELIR will happen one year earlier. The Proctor will advise the Principal’s Office, Heads of Schools and through TLAC, Directors of Teaching and Heads of student-facing service units.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Developments</th>
<th>Comment</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ELIR Cycle: no ‘year of reflection’</strong></td>
<td>ELIR linked to length of degree programmes). Not adopting the English ‘risk-based’ approach to institutional review.</td>
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<tr>
<td>The 2nd ELIR cycle ended in 2011-12. The new version, ELIR3, will be introduced from the start of 2012-13. It will continue to run on a four year cycle but there is no ‘year of reflection’ between ELIR cycles as there was before so our next ELIR will happen one year earlier, (ie 2014-15 rather than 2015-16).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Less focus on Assurance and more on Enhancement</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>ELIR teams to be provided with advance information set to enable enquiries relating to QA and management of standards to be dealt with earlier on in process. Should free up time during review to explore institutional approaches to enhancing student learning experience.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Advance Information Set</strong> to accompany the RA and will include:</td>
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<td>- mapping of institution’s policies &amp; processes to UK Quality Code;</td>
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<td>- ILRT reports for preceding 12 months;</td>
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<td>- SFC annual returns;</td>
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<td>- sample annual monitoring reports;</td>
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<td>- analysis of External Examiners’ comments for preceding 12 months;</td>
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<tr>
<td>- analysis of student feedback for preceding 12 months.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Institutional context and strategic framework:</strong> to come at beginning (not end) of the RA.</td>
<td>May still be duplication of material in RA: no changes to structure.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Greater emphasis on student engagement</strong> in preparation of Reflective Analysis, actual visit and in particular the annual discussions between QAA and University (ensuring that student reps are present for meeting and that agendas include matters that are ‘relevant to students’ interests).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Collaborations:</strong> now one separate section within the RA and outcome report rather than referred through throughout.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Management of Public Information</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Requested clearer guidance in relation to KIS, Wider Information Sets etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Case Studies:</strong> will still be included.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Part 1 Visit:</strong> ELIR team meet for one day to consider RA and advance information set, then two day visit to institution.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ELIR team not to be used as ‘consultants’ by the home institution.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Part 2 visit:</strong> Tailoring of Part 2 visit- meeting more of institutions’ needs. Enhancement focussed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training issue for reviewers.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Meetings with students</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Asked for guidance about securing representative views of students.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Institutional Reviewer:</strong> will continue to be part of ELIR review teams.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institution will be encouraged to flag up particular issues it wishes to raise with reviewer.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Change to reporting style – two reports.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Short <strong>Outcome</strong> report for wide audience (including lay members of Court and student reps)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Detailed Technical report for institution (structured notes rather than narrative prose.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Thematic</strong> ‘outcome’ reports will continue to be issued by QAA.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Judgements:</strong> ‘Effectiveness’ replaces ‘Confidence’ as the basis of judgements.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Follow-up Event:</strong> new follow-up event in which institutions will share the approaches they have taken to addressing the outcomes from ELIR. (Small institutional team which will comprise staff and student reps).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Consideration to be given to which institutions attend these events.</td>
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University of St Andrews
Teaching, Learning & Assessment Committee
ELIR Year–on Report

The attached paper contains the draft year-on report that the University is required to return to the SFC 12 months after receipt of the report on our Enhancement-Led Institutional Review.

The report must be signed off by Court before submission to the SFC. For this reason, the text anticipates Court approval in the first paragraph but it should be stressed that this is a draft and there is therefore still room for discussion and amendment if necessary.

Prior to submission to Court, the report will be considered by Academic Council and the Audit & Risk Committee.

Professor Lorna MILNE
Vice-Principal (Proctor)

19 September 2012
University of St Andrews
Teaching, Learning & Assessment Committee
ELIR Year–on Report

[University Court

This report was considered and endorsed by the University of St Andrews University Court at its meeting on 19 October, 2012.]

ELIR Process and Outcome

The University of St Andrews took part in Enhancement-Led Institutional Review in the spring of 2011; the part 1 visit was held on 16-17 February; the part 2 visit on 21-25 March. Prior to the visits, the University submitted its Reflective Analysis and supporting materials to the QAA on 23 December, 2010. The University received the main and summary reports on 19 May 2011.

The positive outcome reported by the review team was that there was ‘confidence in the University’s current, and likely future, management of the academic standards of its awards and the quality of the student learning experience it provides’.

Presentation of the ELIR Report to the University

The ELIR report was received by the University Court on 9 September and by Academic Council on 21 September. It was considered by the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee (TLAC) on 12 October 2011. There has been continual reference to the report over the last year. Evaluation of areas for development and monitoring of progress on actions is directed by the Proctor’s Office, working in close liaison with the Deans and the University’s Learning and Teaching Quality Officer.

Positive aspects highlighted by ELIR:

- Student representation, particularly the introduction of School Student Presidents, a joint initiative between the Students’ Association and the University;
- Systematic mechanisms for encouraging students to perform well academically and to engage in co-curricular activity, e.g. the Deans’ List, St Andrews Award;
- Good practice in linking research and teaching to encourage curiosity in students;
- A variety of valuable student exchange and study abroad opportunities;
- Comprehensive arrangements to support international students and meet their academic and pastoral needs;
- The thorough approach to the induction and training provided for postgraduate research students, covering generic and discipline-specific skills development;
- A range of mechanisms for supporting innovation in learning and teaching, including the Centre for Higher Education Research;
- Careful implementation of quality monitoring and review processes;
• Promotion of a wide range of assessment methods aligned with intended learning outcomes;
• Active engagement with the national enhancement theme agenda reflected in improvements to the student experience and in the creation of a quality enhancement culture;
• The University’s success in creating a quality enhancement culture.

The University continues actively to improve on achievements in these areas, for example by using internal grants to encourage teaching and assessment innovation; holding Open Fora on employability and the current Enhancement Theme; pursuing new study abroad opportunities; and supporting student initiatives to round out their personal development in co-curricular activities like Employability Week, the Forward Thinking conference and a new programme of Professional Skills workshops designed in conjunction with students and delivered by our Centre for Professional, Academic and Organisational Development (CAPOD).

Areas for development and progress on action:

1. Ensure key University policies are implemented consistently by all schools to provide greater equivalence in the student experience across the institution.

   • There has been a wide consultation, led by the Dean of Science, about the rules surrounding entry to Honours programmes, found by ELIR to be inconsistent across the University. A paper aiming at greater standardisation was first submitted to TLAC in March: as a result, a new procedure was circulated for further consultation over the summer, ready for implementation in 2012-13. The paper provides for a common practice organised into a series of sequential stages: in the first instance, Schools will sign up to as many of the initial steps as are appropriate for their circumstances, giving a basis of uniformity and, consequently, clarity. The process will be kept under review with the expectation that wider standardisation may follow in the next few years; however, as each School has different needs and strengths, it is unlikely that we shall require absolute homogeneity of procedure. New templates for communications with students about Honours entry are also being developed and will come into use in 2012-13.

   • The Common Reporting Scale (CRS), found by ELIR to be poorly understood by students, external observers and even some staff, was investigated by a Working Group of TLAC whose first report was discussed at TLAC on 22 February. This provided the basis for a clearer explanation of the CRS, and for a series of policy adjustments to ensure that it will be both used and understood more consistently in future. From 2012-13, the explanatory statement will be referenced in all School marking criteria.

   • To assist Schools in dealing consistently with other TLA policies such as use of External Examiners, ‘S’ coding of module grades affected by special circumstances, academic misconduct and the production of descriptors for the Course Catalogue, centrally-organised briefing/training meetings have been held at regular intervals. Attendance has been good and colleagues have appreciated this extra support. The effects of this training are being monitored and a more systematic programme of briefings for School officers will be considered by CAPOD.
Student use of, and satisfaction with, feedback continues to preoccupy us. An Open Forum on the topic is planned for 2012-13, with a more practical focus than the previous one, in 2009.

*Module Evaluation Questionnaires* continue to be discussed in a Working Group. After a rushed introduction and consequent teething troubles with a new automated system two years ago, the questionnaires were delivered smoothly this year and analysis was made available in a timely fashion. Having dealt with the mechanics of the system, the Working Group is turning its attention to the content of the questionnaires. A workshop with Directors of Teaching has been held to establish appropriate question sets. Further work on questionnaire content, and on the uses to which questionnaires are put, will continue in 2012-13.

2. Continue implementing the identified improvements to the learning environment, particularly the Library, and promote the effective use of the VLE across Schools.

- Phase 1 improvements to the Main Library were completed as part of a £7m project in the summer of 2011; phase 2 during the summer of 2012 provides a total of 230 extra study places in a greater variety of spaces, a coffee shop, improved printing and scanning services, more accessible computer terminals, upgraded Help facilities and bookable rooms for student groups.
- A collaborative project has been set up, led by the MMS team and CAPOD’s Learning Technology Consultant, to identify good practice and training needs in Schools in relation to the University’s VLE and Module Management System. Their brief is to provide a concrete plan for improved use of these systems across the board.

3. Continue to review existing policies and action plans relating to equal opportunities to ensure they meet legislative requirements and are in line with good practice in the sector.

- Our on-going programme of policy revision (and action plans) will include attention to equal opportunities in consultation with the University’s Equality and Diversity Officer, and is benchmarked with practice in the sector.
- A Study Abroad Working Group was set up in 2011-12 to review study abroad opportunities; a scholarship fund has been established to assist students with the costs of participation in exchange and study abroad programmes.

4. Promote the effectiveness of the annual academic monitoring process by clarifying the information to be provided by schools in relation to enhancement; to include in the data information on the progression of students from different backgrounds.

- The AAM process has been thoroughly overhauled in the course of 2011-12, to align strategic planning, the Teaching Learning & Assessment agenda, and Academic Monitoring. The reforms make these processes now complement one another in a more meaningful way, allowing enhancement to be considered more holistically.
- During revision of this process extensive discussion has taken place between the Academic Monitoring Group and the University’s Academic Data Manager. This has defined an all-encompassing data set which will inform both academic monitoring and strategic planning.
5. Clarify the role of the internal examiner in research degrees during annual progress meetings with postgraduate research students.

- The issue picked up in the ELIR review was relevant to only a small number of Science Schools. However, the University is taking the opportunity to review policy relating to the conduct of research degree examinations across the board, and will consider proposals for a new, uniform set of practices in the 2012-13 academic year.

6. Ensure consistency and clarity in the arrangements for mapping students’ marks to grades.

- See 1 above. We have developed a clear statement about our use of the scale, and briefing sessions have addressed this issue.

7. Review the effectiveness of the collaborative agreement with the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland giving particular consideration to the effectiveness of the reporting links between the two institutions.

- The annual meeting with RCS held in September 2011 included review of the effectiveness of the collaborative agreement and confirmed key contacts in each institution. Following minor amendments to the Memorandum of Agreement and re-confirmation of reporting links, both institutions are satisfied that the arrangement is working smoothly and transparently.

8. Develop the Quality Enhancement Strategy so that it provides clearer direction to the Schools on the University’s enhancement priorities.

- The Quality Enhancement Strategy was entirely rewritten through a consultative process in 2011-12, with a TLAC discussion on 22 February and subsequent adoption by Academic Council. The new statement, which is very much shorter and clearer, identifies stakeholders and their responsibilities in the process of enhancing learning and teaching in a general way as appropriate to our operations at St Andrews, as well as in line with national Enhancement initiatives. The strategy was referenced explicitly as a basis for discussion during Schools’ annual Learning & Teaching strategic planning meetings with the Master, Proctor and Dean, reminding all that Schools should align their own objectives to institutional strategy.

9. Ensure that communication and reporting links in place are used more consistently in practice to maximise their full enhancement potential.

- In 2012-13, a more consultative approach has been adopted to policy development via TLAC, with the aim of developing communication. Improved, widely accessible web pages display all information relating to the committee, its activities, sub-groups and working parties. TLAC members and the wider community are actively invited to contribute thoughts and ideas.
While TLAC membership has been curtailed by cutting out ‘duplicate’ members to make the committee more manageable, a new seat has been offered to a PG student representative, with the aim of better communicating with this community.

The newly-established Proctor’s Office (Proctor, Deans, Executive and Administrative staff) systematically invites discussion and handles enquiries in a consistent, collaborative way.

The newly-created links between Academic Monitoring, Strategic Planning and TLAC are expected to contribute to better communication and more ‘joined-up’ reporting.

A new event in the Teaching and Learning calendar, a collective workshop in October each year to follow up issues arising from the Academic Monitoring exercise, is designed to allow Schools to share information.

A large programme of IT projects based in Registry has been launched, designed to improve communication of academic matters with and about students. Admissions, the Course Catalogue, curriculum development, student records and services to students (such as self-service printing of transcripts and HEARs) will all be vastly improved by the completion of these projects. Some functions have already gone live; others will follow in progressive stages with completion expected in late 2014.

How action and its effectiveness is being monitored

A wide variety of perspectives on action and its effectiveness will ensure that we receive and act on feedback.

- The programme of ELIR actions is a central part of the agendas for the better-connected L&T strategy meetings, Academic Monitoring and TLAC. Members of the two latter bodies (both of which have student members) were invited to provide feedback on how the 2011-12 year and its reforms were perceived, as a result of which some minor adjustments to practice will be introduced in 2012-13 (chiefly, provision of more information about TLAC Working Groups; faster processing of decisions after TLAC meetings; more streamlined processing of the Academic Monitoring agenda).

- A new Academic Assurance Group, consisting of the Proctor and a lay Court Member, with the L&T Quality Officer in attendance, has been separated from the Annual Academic Monitoring Group, and will provide the annual AM report to Court. This new arrangement provides greater externality to the process.

- The newly-reconfigured Academic Monitoring Group has recruited a distinguished member from Edinburgh University, attending three times annually, to provide an external perspective and to monitor our processes.

- Our continued programme of Internal Reviews of Learning and Teaching will incorporate all recent changes into its agendas, checking that they are well understood and applied at School level, and to receive feedback about possible further improvements.

Conclusion

The University remains committed to its mission to provide its graduates with an academic experience that promotes the highest standards of critical thinking, creativity and independence. To this end, we shall continue to work on actions arising from the ELIR process, actively measuring our progress during the on-going programme of operational and strategic review.
University of St Andrews
Teaching, Learning & Assessment Committee

QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education - Consultation Schedule: 2012-13

Introduction

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) sets out the expectations that all UK higher education providers reviewed by QAA are required to meet. It is the nationally agreed, definitive point of reference for all those involved in delivering higher education programmes which lead to an award from, or are validated by, a UK higher education awarding body. All higher education providers reviewed by QAA must sign up and adhere to the Quality Code.

The QAA is currently revising all the Chapters within the UK Quality Code. The timetable for consultation and publication of each Chapter is detailed below. As an institution we need to ensure that we input into the consultations; that our policies meeting the ‘Expectations’ outlined in the UK Quality Code (the ‘Expectations’ being what institutions are judged against at their ELIR); and consider whether any changes need to be made to our existing practices and/or policies. More information about the Code is available at http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/Quality%20Code%20General%20Introduction%20Dec11.pdf

Consultation Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Code Chapter</th>
<th>Consultation period</th>
<th>Publication of revised Chapter</th>
<th>To be consulted</th>
<th>Lead for implementation</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter B7: External Examining</td>
<td>Revision</td>
<td>May-Aug 2011</td>
<td>Oct 2011</td>
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<td>B5: Student Engagement</td>
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<td>Feb-Apr 2012</td>
<td>Jun 2012</td>
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<td>B3: Learning &amp; Teaching</td>
<td>New and revision</td>
<td>May-Jul 2012</td>
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<td>B10: Management of Collaborative Arrangements</td>
<td>Revision</td>
<td>Aug-Oct 2012</td>
<td>Dec 2012</td>
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<td>Part A: Setting and maintaining Threshold Academic Standards</td>
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<td>Mar 2013</td>
<td>Student facing Units</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chapter B1: Programme Design and Approval; and Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review</td>
<td>Revision</td>
<td>May-Jun 2013</td>
<td>Sept 2013</td>
<td>TLAC Daniel Farrell</td>
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Nicola Milton
Executive Officer to the Proctor