Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) 3: Summary and Key Points for Consideration

1. Background

‘The main focus of the ELIR method is to review an institution’s approach to improving the student learning experience. It also examines an institution's ability to secure the academic standards of its awards and to manage the quality of the learning opportunities it provides for its students’.

The full 3rd edition of the ELIR handbook can be accessed at http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/ELIR_Handbook_3.pdf. It is expected that further, more detailed operational guidance will be provided by QAA Scotland in due course.

There are some important differences between the format of ELIR 2 and ELIR 3, and certain key points are highlighted below. It should be noted that, as part of ELIR 3, QAA Scotland is asking Institutions to identify what they would like to get out of their involvement in the ELIR. We are asked to set this out as part of the RA. In relation to this, QAA Scotland has asked us if there are any characteristics that we would like to see represented in our ELIR Team (see below, and footnote 1), and whether there is anyone who we would like to nominate as the International reviewer.

2. Timing

The University of Dundee will be reviewed by an ELIR review panel (the ‘ELIR team’) in the autumn of 2013. There will be two visits by the ELIR team, the first of which will take place on the 16th and 17th Oct 2013, and the second of which will take place during the week of 18th Nov (duration to be confirmed following the part 1 visit). In advance of the ELIR team visits, we are required to provide an ‘advance information set’ and a reflective analysis (RA) that is supported by one or more case studies. The documentation is required to be submitted to QAA Scotland by 16th Aug 2013. A substantive, almost final draft of the RA will, therefore, need to be reported to the last meeting of Senate in May 2013. A draft time-line of events and actions is shown in the appendix.

3. Advance Information Set

This provides the ELIR Team with direct access to information about our key processes for securing academic standards and assuring quality at an early stage. The information to be included will be agreed between QAA Scotland and ourselves, and is likely to include the following:

- a mapping of our policies and processes to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education
- full reports of institution-led quality reviews (programme reviews) for the preceding 12 month period
- SFC annual returns for the period since the previous ELIR
- a sample of annual monitoring reports
- an analysis of the external examiner comments for the preceding 12 months
- an analysis of student feedback for the preceding 12 months.

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1 ELIR Teams comprise six per reviewers: a student reviewer, three UK-based senior academic reviewers, an international reviewer and a coordinating reviewer. Of the three senior academic reviewers, one is drawn from the Scottish higher education sector and one from outside Scotland.
4. The Reflective Analysis

The ELIR 3 handbook advises that the RA should be structured around the headings of the Technical Report that the ELIR Team will provide post-review. These are as follows:

Institutional context and strategic framework

I. Key features of the institution's context and mission
II. Strategic approach to enhancing learning and teaching
III. Effectiveness of the approach to implementing strategies.

Enhancing the student learning experience

I. Composition and key trends in the student population, including typical routes into and through the institution
II. Supporting equality and diversity in the student population
III. Engaging and supporting students in their learning
   Approaches to promoting the development of graduate attributes including employability
IV. Effectiveness of the approach to enhancing the student learning experience.

Enhancement in learning and teaching

I. Approaches to identifying and sharing good practice
II. Impact of the national Enhancement Themes and related activity
III. Engaging and supporting staff
IV. Effectiveness of the approach to promoting good practice in learning and teaching.

Academic standards

I. Approach to setting, maintaining and reviewing academic standards
II. Management of assessment
III. Use of external reference points in managing academic standards
IV. Effectiveness of the arrangements for securing academic standards.

Self-evaluation and management of information

I. Key features of the institution's approach
II. Commentary on the advance information set
III. Use of external reference points in self-evaluation
IV. Management of public information
V. Effectiveness of the approach to self-evaluation and management of information.

Collaborative activity

I. Key features of the institution's strategic approach
II. Securing academic standards of collaborative provision
III. Enhancing the student learning experience on collaborative programmes
IV. Effectiveness of the approach to managing collaborative activity.

The preparation of the RA should involve staff and students. It should identify:
- how it was prepared and approved
- how students were involved and the impact of that student engagement
- brief background information about the size and scale of the institution
- the institution’s overarching strategic priorities
- what the institution is seeking to achieve from its engagement with the ELIR, and whether there are any particular matters it would wish the ELIR team to consider.

In the context of each of the Technical Report headings, the RA should indicate:

- what is distinctive and what is typical about the institution
- what the key areas of strength and challenge are
- how the institution has evaluated its policy and practice
- how the institution intends to build on good practice or address areas for development.

Institutions are strongly encouraged to be open and honest in the RA.

Where there are areas for development, the ELIR team will explore:

- the extent to which quality or academic standards are potentially at risk
- the extent to which the institution has identified the issue(s) in advance
- the plan for addressing the issue, including any wider development work planned and the anticipated timeframe for its completion
- the likelihood of the issue recurring in future.

Where there are areas of strength, the ELIR team will explore:

- the extent to which all of the institution’s students can benefit
- the arrangements for disseminating the good practice
- the plans for evaluating and promoting the good practice.

5. Judgements and Reporting

The 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.

Effectiveness indicates there is evidence that overall:

- the institution has rigorous arrangements, in line with sector expectations, for assuring and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience and for securing the academic standards of its awards, and is using these arrangements systematically, and
- the institution has the capacity and commitment to identify and address situations that have the potential to threaten the academic standards of its awards or the quality of the student learning experience, and
- the institution is meeting sector expectations in having a clearly identified, strategic approach to enhancing the student learning experience which it is implementing systematically, drawing on student views and external reference points to inform strategy formulation, implementation and evaluation.
Limited effectiveness indicates there is evidence that:

- the institution’s arrangements for managing the quality of the student learning experience and/or securing the academic standards of its awards are limited currently or are likely to become limited in the future, such that the quality of the student learning experience and/or the academic standards would be placed at risk if the institution did not take action, and/or
- the institution’s capacity and/or commitment to identify and address potential risks to the quality of the student learning experience or the academic standards of its awards is limited, or is likely to become limited in the future. The limitation may relate to the identification of weaknesses in the institution’s procedures or in the implementation of the procedures, and/or
- the institution is not meeting the full range of sector expectations in relation to having a clearly identified strategic approach to enhancing the student learning experience, and/or the arrangements in place for implementing its strategic approach are not fully systematic such that the institution’s capacity
- or commitment to enhance the quality of the student learning experience is limited.

Not effective indicates there is evidence that:

- there are serious and fundamental weaknesses in the institution's arrangements for managing the quality of the student learning experience and/or securing the academic standards of its awards such that quality and/or academic standards are at immediate risk, and/or
- the institution does not have the capacity and/or the commitment to identify and address risks to the quality of the student learning experience or the academic standards of its awards. There are likely to be serious absences or flaws in the institution's procedures themselves and/or serious weaknesses in their implementation, and/or
- the institution does not meet sector expectations in relation to having a clearly identified strategic approach to enhancing the student learning experience, and/or does not have systematic arrangements in place for implementing its strategic approach such that the institution does not have the capacity or commitment to enhance the quality of the student learning experience.

Where there is an overarching judgement in the effective category, it will be possible for the ELIR Team to identify priority action which it considers the institution should take. This will be identified alongside the judgment itself.

There will be four main types of reports produced in the ELIR 3 cycle:

Outcome Reports

These will be the main reports in the ELIR method. They will be concise, and aimed at an informed lay audience such as lay members of governing bodies and student representatives. They will:

- set out the overarching judgement
- set out the main findings of the review in terms of positive practice and areas for development
• provide outline information about the nature of the institution.

Technical Reports

A Technical Report will be produced for each ELIR to set out the evidence underpinning the Outcome Report. Technical Reports will be written in the style of structured notes, rather than narrative prose. They will primarily be written for the institution that was reviewed, and they may also be of interest to quality assurance contacts at other institutions and key agencies within the sector. The technical reports:

• are structured around the main areas of enquiry within ELIR
• include a statement of the ELIR team’s view in relation to each area, accompanied by an indication of the main supporting evidence for that view
• highlight positive practice and areas in which the institution is being asked to take action; in doing so there will be explicit acknowledgement of action the institution has identified for itself
• set out the overarching judgement.

Follow-up Reports

One year after publication of the ELIR Outcome and Technical Reports, the institution will be asked to submit a Follow-up Report. This report will be written by the institution (with the involvement of student representatives) and agreed for web publication by QAA Scotland.

Follow-up Reports will indicate the actions taken (or in progress) by the institution to address the outcomes of the ELIR, and will require endorsement by the institution’s governing body.

Thematic Reports

QAA Scotland will continue to draw on the content of individual ELIR reports to inform thematic or sector-wide reports. In particular, QAA will produce Thematic Reports annually to focus on specific topics within ELIR, such as management of assessment or approaches to sharing good practice. This is intended to promote the sharing of information that is obtained through the ELIR process, and to promote links with the national Enhancement Themes.
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<td>PGLA Team meeting</td>
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<td>17 Sep L&amp;T QF</td>
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<td><strong>OCTOBER</strong></td>
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<td>15 Oct- Steering Group 2</td>
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<td>22 Oct- Court</td>
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<td>Identify and develop potential Case Studies</td>
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<td>29 Oct-WG Meeting 1-Intro to Process and Outline Plan</td>
<td>29 Oct- L&amp;T QF</td>
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<td>31 Oct- Steering Group 3</td>
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<td><strong>NOVEMBER</strong></td>
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<td>Identify and develop potential Case Studies</td>
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<td>8 Nov- Steering Group 4</td>
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<td>4 Dec-WG Meeting 2-, Plans for the RA, Workshops and Meetings</td>
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<td>17 Dec- Steering Group 7</td>
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<td>ELIR Preparations among Participating Institutions- Discussions-hosted by UoD (date to be confirmed)</td>
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<td>WG meeting 3-Outcomes of Workshop 1 (date to be confirmed)</td>
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| **FEBRUARY** | ELIR Workshop 2  
Quality Enhancement  
*(date to be confirmed)* | *6 Feb- Senate*  
Consultation on Outline:  
11 Feb Academic Council to  
comment on RA outline  
12 Feb LTQF- to consider RA outline  
18 Feb- Court |
|---|---|---|
| Consultation on outline and  
completion of first draft | 12 Feb- WG Meeting 4  
Outcomes of Workshop 2 | |

**HIGHLIGHTER-ELIR UPDATE**

| **MARCH** | ELIR Workshop 3  
Academic Standards  
and Quality Assessment  
*(date to be confirmed)* | *1 Mar Senior Staff Workshop*  
comment on RA outline  
*11 Mar L&T to consider RA outline*  
*11-13 March College Boards to consider RA outline* |
|---|---|---|
| Consultation on outline and  
completion of first draft | WG Meeting 5  
Outcomes of Workshop 3  
Shredding of RA drafts  
*(date to be confirmed)* | *27 March Senate report* |

**APRIL**

| Major detailed writing of RA | 29 Apr-WG Meeting 6  
Shredding of RA drafts | *22 April Court report* |
|---|---|---|

**MAY**

| WG Meeting 7  
Shredding of RA drafts  
*(date to be confirmed)* | **Consideration of RA Draft:**  
13-15 May College Boards  
14 May L&T  
17 May-Senior Staff Workshop | |
|---|---|---|
| Near final version of RA  
available for Senate | *29 May Senate*  
to discuss and approve final version. Vacation powers given to DC |

**JUNE-AUGUST**

| ELIR Workshop 4-  
Refining the Reflective Analysis  
*(date to be confirmed)* | *10 June -Court* |
|---|---|
| Jun-Aug WG Meetings  
to make final alterations to RA | |
| **16 Aug SUBMISSION OF RA** | |

| **16-17 Oct Part 1 Visit**  
Oct/Nov WG Meetings to discuss ELIR teams meeting/info requests  
18-22 Nov Part 2 Visit (all or part of week, tbc after Visit 1)  
30 Jan Draft Report to UoD  
14 March Final Report published | |
|---|---|

PLUS Regular updates to SMT and School Sec Forum