Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Glasgow School of Art

Technical Report

May 2014

Contents

About the Enhancement-led Institutional Review method

A dedicated page of the QAA website explains the method for Enhancement-led Institutional Review of higher education institutions in Scotland and has links to the ELIR handbook and other informative documents.[1] You can also find more information about QAA and its mission.[2]

Further details about the enhancement-led approach can be found in an accompanying ELIR information document,[3] including an overview of the review method, definitions of the judgement categories, and explanations of follow-up action. It also contains information on the Scottish Funding Council's response to ELIR judgements.

About this review

This is the Technical Report of the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Glasgow School of Art (GSA). The review took place as follows: Part 1 visit on 2-3 April 2014 and Part 2 visit on 6-9 May 2014. The review was conducted by a team of six reviewers:

- Professor Jeremy Bradshaw (academic reviewer)
- Miss Rachael Brimley (student reviewer)
- Mr Lars Ebert (international reviewer)
- Professor Mark Hunt (academic reviewer)
- Mr Paul Probyn (coordinating reviewer)
- Professor Andrew Walker (academic reviewer).

In advance of the review visits, GSA submitted a self-evaluative document (the Reflective Analysis) and an advance information set, comprising a range of materials about the institution's arrangements for managing quality and academic standards. In addition, GSA submitted two case studies: the Recognising Teaching Excellence (ReTe) Project, and Enhancing the Curriculum and Curriculum Development in fine Art.

About this report

In this report, the ELIR team:

- delivers 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.

The overarching judgement can be found on page 3, followed by the detailed findings of the review given in numbered paragraphs.

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

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[1] Further information about the ELIR method: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education/enhancement-led-institutional-review
[2] Further information about QAA: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus
[3] ELIR information document: www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/ELIR-information.pdf

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

[4] Outcome Report: www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/provider?UKPRN=10002681#.U_xUq3hwY-I

Overarching judgement about Glasgow School of Art

Glasgow School of Art has **effective** arrangements for managing academic standards and the student learning experience. These arrangements are likely to continue to be effective in the future.

This is a positive judgement, which means Glasgow School of Art has robust arrangements for securing academic standards and for enhancing the quality of the student experience.

1   Institutional context and strategic framework

1.1   Key features of the institution's context and mission

1   Glasgow School of Art was founded in 1845 and was one the first Government Schools of Design, promoting good design for the manufacturing industries. It is an accredited institution of the University of Glasgow, which has validated GSA undergraduate and postgraduate programmes since 1992.

2   GSA's stated ethos is to foster the conditions for creativity in order to promote critical thinking, experimentation, discovery and innovation. GSA seeks to be exceptional but not exclusive, and aspirational but accessible.

3   The academic structure comprises the School of Fine Art; the School of Design; the Mackintosh School of Architecture; the Digital Design Studio; and the Graduate School; as well as the Forum for Critical Inquiry (FoCI). FoCI provides historical, cultural and critical studies courses for the School of Design and the School of Fine Art, as well as offering cross-GSA electives. The Mackintosh School of Architecture provides its own, in-house historical, cultural and critical studies courses.

4   The main GSA campus is located in the Garnethill district of Glasgow and comprises the world renowned Mackintosh Building as well as the recently completed Reid Building, which opened in April 2014 and represents a £50 million investment by the Scottish Funding Council. GSA also has a second location in Glasgow, the Hub at Pacific Quay. The Glasgow School of Art in Singapore is currently located in three specialist design studios on the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) campus of Temasek Polytechnic, and will move to purpose-built accommodation in 2014.

5   The GSA management structure consists of a Directorate and the Executive Group. The Directorate comprises the Director, Deputy Director and Director of Academic Development, and the Director of Finance and Resources, and is responsible for GSA's day-to-day management, policy, and development and delivery of the strategic plan. The membership of the Executive Group includes the Directorate as well as the Heads of School, the Director of the Digital Design Studio, the Head of Research, the Registrar, and the Director of Marketing, Communication and Strategic Planning. The Executive Group is responsible for developing strategies and leading the operations of GSA within the framework set by the Directorate.

6   The ELIR took place at a time of change for GSA with the recent appointment of both a new Director and new Chair of the Board of Governors. These new appointments have prompted a reconsideration of the current strategic plan and a period of consultation through a series of themed student and discipline workshops that commenced in January 2014. Key drivers for the revised strategy include financial viability, effective quality assurance and enhancement, and thriving intellectually. It is anticipated that a new version of the strategic plan for 2014-17 will be published in August 2014.

7   In line with the ELIR method, GSA identified areas that it would like the ELIR team to focus on during the review. These included providing feedback on a number of projects and initiatives introduced since the 2010 ELIR, in particular progress with the annual monitoring and institution-led review processes (see paragraphs 54-57).

1.2   Strategic approach to enhancing learning and teaching

8   GSA sets out its strategic level commitment to high quality learning and teaching in its strategic plan. This is articulated in more detail in the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy (LTES) which has five strategic aims to: support the capacity for students and graduates to live adaptively in a changing world; put GSA values into practice by providing enhanced learning experiences for students; provide an adaptable framework for the improvement of professional learning and teaching practice; achieve a genuine and successful partnership between students and staff, built on shared notions of learning and teaching enhancement; and identify and share the benefits and lessons of enhancement, within and beyond the School of Art.

9   Specific reference to each of the five strategic aims of the LTES is included in the Programme Monitoring and Annual Reporting (PMAR) annual report template and programme leaders are asked to reflect on alignment with, or adjustment to, the LTES in their annual programme reports. Annual Programme Reports are considered at a special meeting of the School Board of Studies. School/Board Annual Summary Reports, in which comment on the School alignment with the LTES is included, are considered annually at a special meeting of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Committee, the membership of which comprises staff from across GSA.

10   A review of the LTES is due to take place in 2014. The current LTES aims to provide a framework for reflecting on GSA's enhancement activity, whereas the new strategy, to run from 2014-15 to 2017-18, will take as its focus GSA's vision 'to become a global leader in studio based education and research'. Although GSA stated that a first phase consultation process with staff and students about revising the LTES had begun, academic staff who met with the ELIR team seemed to be unfamiliar with this process.

11   In 2013 GSA established a consolidated fund for enhancement to support projects relating to learning and teaching and the student experience. There are currently a number of enhancement projects being supported by this fund, including a series of workshops developed by staff in the School of Design aimed at improving the design and implementation of final year projects, and a project in the School of Fine Art which aims to strengthen students' capabilities to present and critique their work. Institutional oversight of enhancement initiatives, including work undertaken through this fund, is through the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Committee.

12   It is not clear how these projects link to the strategic aims of the revised LTES however, and staff who met the ELIR team were unable to give examples of how the projects have impacted on teaching practice and were also unclear about how to assess the success of a project. In order to achieve the full benefit of its enhancement activities, GSA should ensure that projects have clear objectives, that their effectiveness is measured, and that the outcomes are acted upon.

1.3   Effectiveness of the approach to implementing strategies

13   GSA has an effective approach to implementing strategies, and there is a clear link between institutional strategy and operational planning at school level. GSA's senior planning Group comprises the Executive Group and the President of the Students'

Association, with additional staff co-opted as appropriate. The group meets annually to set the annual operational plan and risk register. This provides the framework for the development of local operational plans which respond to the strategic plan.

14   GSA's strategic plan was developed through an extensive process of discussion and review, largely shaped by senior management, but with a strong emphasis on incorporating the reflections and views of staff and students. A broad cross-section of staff and students wrote many of the consultation documents and led elements of the consultation exercises from which the strategic plan emerged. The result of this successful approach is that there is a strong enhancement focus running throughout the strategic plan and the attendant operational plans of academic and professional service departments.

15   The LTES (2011-2014) is scheduled for review and revision during 2014; it was therefore too early to determine the impact of the strategy at the time of the current ELIR. A first phase consultation process with staff and students has begun (see paragraph 10). As GSA progresses with the planned review and development of the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy, it should ensure that staff at all levels are aware of the strategy and that there are effective links with enhancement activity and initiatives at school and programme level.

2   Enhancing the student learning experience

2.1   Composition and key trends in the student population, including typical routes into and through the institution

16   In 2012-13 GSA had a total headcount of 1,945 students, of which 1,694 were undergraduate students, 219 postgraduate taught students and 32 postgraduate research students. There has been an increase in postgraduate student numbers of 5.6 per cent since 2008-09. Ninety-seven per cent of the student population is full-time, approximately 20 per cent of students have a declared disability and approximately 20 per cent of students are from under-represented groups.

17   GSA intends to grow its postgraduate student numbers, in order to achieve what it considers to be a better balance between undergraduate and postgraduate student populations. This will result in an increase in overall student numbers. GSA recognises that such growth will have implications for facilities and resources and is addressing this through the management and development of its estate. The newly opened Reid Building represents the first phase of the redevelopment of GSA's Garnethill Campus, and the next phase will involve the creation of a hub for postgraduate taught and research students.

18   Students who met the ELIR team described the admissions process as challenging and competitive, but understood and accepted the reasons for this, noting the level of excellence this type of entry facilitates. Admission to GSA is much more competitive at the undergraduate level, with an application to acceptance ratio of 11:1 for 2013-14 entry, compared with a ratio of 2:1 at the postgraduate level.

2.2   Supporting equality and diversity in the student population

19   GSA has an effective approach to supporting equality and diversity. This is embodied in the institution's equality statement which seeks to define equality and diversity in the context of GSA and which focuses on the development of an inclusive curriculum which is equally accessible to all students, regardless of individual characteristics.

Students with a disability

20   Around 20 per cent of the total student population has a declared disability. The specific needs of students with a disability are recorded on an individual requirements form (IRF), and tailored support is put in place by GSA. Students who met the ELIR team were positive about the effectiveness of the system for recording and communicating individual needs via the IRF, as well as the particular support that was put in place for individual students.

Part-time students

21   Three per cent of the total student population is studying on a part-time basis. This low proportion of part-time students is due to the fact that most undergraduate programmes comprise year-long, full-time studio courses. Following the appointment of a new Head of Professional and Continuing Education in 2012, the process of developing and implementing a coherent strategic approach to the development of part-time provision has been accelerated and a part-time Certificate of Higher Education is now available. Part-time students who met the ELIR team spoke of the difficulty of integration into the main student body and problems with communication, although they did comment that the virtual learning environment (VLE) was a helpful source of information.

Widening participation students

22   Widening participation is a strategic indicator for GSA and the institution is working to increase participation from groups currently under-represented in higher education. The proportion of students from National Statistics Socio-economic Classification (NS-SEC) classes 4, 5, 6 and 7 increased from 19 per cent in 2009-10 to 19.6 per cent in 2011-12. GSA is developing its approach to recruiting and supporting widening participation students. It is moving from a project-based approach to one where activities to support non-traditional entrants, such as a pre-sessional summer school, become embedded into its annual cycle of activities. GSA has also recently appointed a progression manager to support its strategy to increase the numbers of non-traditional students progressing into GSA from further education colleges.

2.3   Engaging and supporting students in their learning

23   Overall, support for students is viewed as effective and responsive. Apart from the difficulties expressed by part-time students (see paragraph 21), students who met the ELIR team were very positive about their experience at GSA. They attribute this to good relationships with staff and the small specialist nature of the institution. This approach may need to be reviewed if there were to be a significant increase in student numbers or diversity of the student body.

Student support

24   GSA provides a wide range of student services including the Student Support and Development Department which offers support services direct to students, and the Learning Resources Department, which comprises the Library, as well as the Archives and Collections Centre. There is also a Technical Support Department which supports students by providing workshop spaces and facilities staffed by specialist technicians. The services are accessible and well signposted, and are well regarded by students. Support services are subject to annual monitoring, periodic review and internal audit, as well as being benchmarked externally.

Student engagement and representation

25   GSA is committed to student engagement and there is an effective relationship between the GSA Executive and the Students' Association. There is also an effective relationship between the President of the Students' Association and student representatives, and there is good attendance at staff student consultative committees. Students and staff

who met with the ELIR team commented that student representation works well across the institution.

26   The President of the Students' Association is currently leading on the Review of Existing Student Representation and Engagement Structures (RES-RES). The aim of the Review is to try to obtain a clearer understanding of how student engagement works across the institution and to identify and disseminate any examples of good practice that currently exist across the schools. The project was initiated in March 2013 and it is due to report with recommendations to the May 2014 meeting of Academic Council.

27   The Students' Association currently has two sabbatical officers, although the President of the Student's Association is generally the only student representative on a large number of institutional committees. In recognition of the President's workload, GSA has recently created the role of Student Engagement Co-ordinator, to provide support to the President of the Students' Association. This post is funded by GSA but employed by the Students' Association, and is an effective mechanism in supporting the President of the Student's Association in developing new strategies for student engagement.

28   There are regular meetings between students and the Director and Deputy Director at the Director's Forum. Students set the agenda for the Forum and student representatives who met with the ELIR team commented that they found the Forum to be effective in enabling them to raise issues directly at the highest level of the institution. Notes of meetings of the Director's Forum indicate that it plays an effective role in the communication and dissemination of information.

Studio culture
29   Studio-based education is considered by GSA to be its signature pedagogy and students are very positive about their learning experience at the School. GSA prepares students for studio-based learning by encouraging prospective students to visit the campus before applying and attend open days and meet students in their studios. A combination of the critique and tutorial-based formative feedback is intended to provide support for studio culture by encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning. In addition, GSA has formal feedback and feed forward sessions, for which students are required to provide a reflective analysis of their own performance.

Virtual learning environment
30   The virtual learning environment (VLE) is used by students on a regular basis, although it is mainly used as a repository of information and is not yet utilised fully as a learning tool. Part-time postgraduate research students who met the ELIR team commented on how helpful they found the VLE to be, particularly in relation to the information provided about funding and employment opportunities.

Feedback to students on assessed work
31   Students who met the ELIR team explained that assessment and feedback varied from school to school and course to course. All students commented on how useful verbal feedback was, alongside written assessment feedback. GSA recognises that the timing of formative assessment and feedback affects the usefulness of that feedback, but does not currently have specific institution-wide regulations about the timing of feedback. Academic staff who met the ELIR team explained that formal feedback was supplemented by other forms of feedback that were a continuous feature of the studio culture, which meant that students sometimes did not recognise it as such. However, students who met the ELIR team stated that the usefulness of the feedback they received, in terms of understanding why they had achieved a particular grade, was variable (see paragraph 60). GSA should ensure that there is parity of feedback practice across the institution, so that all students receive timely, relevant and high quality feedback on their progress at key points during their programmes.

Student Exchange

32   The programme of student exchanges, involving a wide range of international partner institutions, is promoted effectively by GSA and is an integral part of the GSA student experience. Students from all undergraduate programmes and selected postgraduate programmes are eligible to take part in an exchange. Students noted that clear and accessible information about the opportunity to undertake a student exchange was embedded in GSA processes from interview onwards. They also commented positively on the high number of placement institutions to choose from. Incoming Exchange students have access to all support services at GSA during their study period, as well as access to the VLE.

33   Students were less positive about the organisation of assessment on student exchange programmes, being unclear as to whether credit would be given on the basis of work assessed by the exchange institution, or work assessed by GSA on return. GSA is aware of this lack of clarity and is addressing this by developing a Policy for Student Exchange, which will specifically address the issue of assessment for students studying abroad as well as for those on incoming exchange.

Postgraduate research students

34   Postgraduate research students who met the ELIR team commented that they received very little formal employability training, and they would value the opportunity to gain teaching experience. GSA confirmed that teaching opportunities are available for PhD students, however, in discussion with the ELIR team students indicated that they were unaware of these opportunities. In the context of planned growth in postgraduate research student numbers, GSA should ensure sufficient capacity for the support and enhancement of the research student experience.

2.4   Approaches to promoting the development of graduate attributes, including employability

35   GSA places great emphasis on preparing graduates for practice through the academic curriculum and the studio practice through which it is delivered, and the curriculum is underpinned by industry-led projects and live professional projects to support work-related learning. GSA did not take the approach of developing a list of Graduate Attributes as an outcome of the Graduates for the 21st Century Enhancement Theme, stating that graduate attributes are embedded into its practice-based curricula, which provides opportunities for students to develop the skills required for success in their discipline and for future employability.

36   Students who met the ELIR team, however, were not able to articulate the transferable skills they were developing as a result of the practice based curriculum. They stated that the careers service delivered some interesting talks and workshops about professional skills and preparation for employment, but that this was a generalised approach and they commented on the need to have enterprise and employability skills integrated into the curriculum.

37   In order to address this GSA is currently working collaboratively with Buckinghamshire New University on a Higher Education Academy (HEA) funded project, An Anatomy of Employability: articulating graduate capabilities for the creative arts. Initial outcomes from the project include a curriculum map enabling a comparison of approaches to the integration of employability skills in the curriculum across GSA. The final outputs from the project will be delivered during 2014, and it is envisaged that the project outcomes will lead to the articulation of a GSA employability strategy.

38   GSA has also recently appointed a Student Employability and Enterprise Manager whose remit is to consider employability and enterprise skills provision across the institution, and this appointment is likely to support the development of a strategic approach to employability. GSA should continue to develop, implement and embed a strategic approach to employability across the institution, ensuring that students can articulate a range of employability skills when they graduate.

2.5   Effectiveness of the approach to enhancing the student learning experience

39   GSA monitors the composition of its student body and has an effective approach to enhancing the student learning experience, although it should ensure that postgraduate research students who wish to gain teaching experience are aware of the opportunities to do so. Students are very positive about their experience of GSA, particularly in relation to studio based learning, and there is an effective partnership between GSA and the Students' Association. Students commented positively on the opportunity to undertake study abroad and the support provided by GSA for this.

3   Enhancement in learning and teaching

3.1   Approaches to identifying and sharing good practice

40   The need for a more structured approach to identifying and sharing good practice across the institution, noted in the 2010 ELIR report, is recognised in one of the five strategic aims of the 2011-14 Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy: 'Identify and share the benefits and lessons of enhancement, within and beyond the School of Art'. GSA has put in place systematic mechanisms to help achieve this aim, including the requirement for programmes and schools to identify and share good practice as an explicit part of the Programme Monitoring and Annual Reporting (PMAR) and Periodic Review processes.

41   Good practice is included in the quality enhancement action plans (QEAPs) that form part of PMAR. The plans are detailed, although they vary among programmes in the extent to which they focus on activities to enhance the student learning experience, as opposed to a wider range of proposals aimed at programme improvement more generally. A 'critical friend', who provides a perspective from a different school, reports to the dedicated Board of Studies' meeting at which the school's PMAR reports are discussed. The minutes of these Boards of Studies meetings show thoughtful contributions by the critical friends, which are valued by the programme leaders. Academic staff who met the ELIR team emphasised the value of the critical friends' contributions in aiding reflection and sharing good practice. GSA confirmed the Annual Programme Reports, which include the critical friends' comments and the programme leaders' response, are published on the VLE. There would be value in GSA considering developing a mechanism for the critical friends' reports to be considered collectively across the institution.

42   Staff development activities are an important means of sharing good practice. In 2012 the first annual Learning and Teaching event was held, with assessment as its theme. Student engagement was the topic of the 2013 event, reflecting GSA's recognition that enhancement of learning and teaching depends on the effectiveness of student engagement.

3.2 Impact of the national Enhancement Themes and related activity

43   The Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy emphasises the importance of the national Enhancement Themes in shaping GSA's enhancement agenda and one of the strategic aims of the LTES - *Support the capacity for students and graduates to live adaptively in a changing world* - was the outcome of GSA's engagement with the Graduates for the 21st Century Theme. GSA recognises the enhancement benefits of wide staff engagement with the Themes and in line with this the PMAR procedures require programme teams to show how they have engaged with the current Theme.

44   GSA has found the three most recent Themes (Research-Teaching Linkages, Graduates for the 21st Century, and Developing and Supporting the Curriculum) to be particularly relevant to its enhancement priorities. There is effective engagement with the Themes at institutional level, and tangible outcomes include the appointment of the Student Employability and Enterprise Manager following work on employability and entrepreneurship as part of the Graduates for the 21st Century Theme, and the Enhancing the Curriculum and Curriculum Development in Fine Art project as part of the Developing and Supporting the Curriculum Theme. The Research-Teaching Linkages Theme has also been important in terms of the relationship between research and practice at GSA, especially as many academic staff are part-time and also working as professional artists, designers and architects.

45   Although a wide range of academic and support staff have been involved as members of the institutional teams for the Themes, academic staff who met the ELIR team did not appear to be familiar with GSA's engagement with Themes, as much of the institution's work in these areas is embedded in enhancement initiatives that have not been overtly identified as part of the national Themes. In this context, GSA noted the value of the Developing and Supporting the Curriculum Theme (DSC) in raising the profile of the Themes by linking otherwise disparate activities under the DSC banner. The explicit reference to the Themes in PMAR is likely to help increase recognition and awareness.

3.3 Engaging and supporting staff

46   GSA has effective arrangements for engaging and supporting staff. Staff are positive about the range of professional development opportunities, which are placing a greater focus on learning and teaching.

47   GSA provides a wide range of professional development opportunities for all academic staff. These include the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching (Creative Practices), which was first run in September 2010, and the Postgraduate Certificate (Supervision), which was validated a number of years previously but had only run once since initial approval because there was insufficient staff time to deliver the programme. This situation has now been addressed and the programme has been running for two years. The Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching is mandatory for all new staff.

48   A continuing professional development (CPD) framework for all staff engaged in teaching and learning support has been developed by GSA, and is being submitted for accreditation by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) during 2013-14. The Academic Development and Promotion of Teaching (ADAPT) CPD Framework, which leads to Fellowship and Senior Fellowship of the HEA, was an outcome of the HEA's Change Programme for Recognising Teaching Excellence (ReTe). The ReTe Project took place

during 2013 and aimed to develop a system for recognising and rewarding staff contributions to teaching excellence and the enhancement of the learning experience.

49   GSA has put in place staff development to support the management of assessment. There has been an emphasis on assessment **for** learning as well as assessment **of** learning through a series of workshops and events, including in 2012 having assessment as the theme of the first of the annual Learning and Teaching event. In 2013, two further workshops on assessment for learning were held specifically for the Mackintosh School of Architecture and the Forum for Critical Inquiry. Useful guidance about how to design effective assessment and feedback, supported by a discussion paper, is provided on the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching pages of the VLE.

3.4   Effectiveness of the approach to promoting good practice in learning and teaching

50   GSA has developed a range of systematic mechanisms which facilitate the identification and sharing of good practice. Annual and periodic review processes include quality enhancement as a standard heading in report templates and take a critical friend approach to disseminating good practice across the schools. There is an annual learning and teaching event, and various enhancement projects, such as those associated with the national Enhancement Themes. The Consolidated Enhancement Fund provides support for individuals or groups to explore innovative opportunities for enhancement (see paragraph 11).

51   The value of the critical friends' reports and the associated programme/school responses could be optimised if there were reflection on them across and between programmes, in addition to the APR reports being published on the VLE. Similarly, the recognition of projects supported by the Consolidated Enhancement Fund and those related to the national Enhancement Themes would be enhanced if the outcomes were better publicised. GSA has recently created a new post of Head of Learning and Teaching which should help to support wider dissemination of good practice across the institution.

4   Academic standards

4.1   Approach to setting, maintaining and reviewing academic standards

52   GSA has systematic processes in place for setting, maintaining and reviewing academic standards. The 2010 ELIR report noted a number of areas for development, including strengthening the annual programme monitoring and institution-led review processes, undertaking further work to embed the Code of Assessment, and fully implementing the undergraduate Common Academic Framework (CAF).

53   The implementation of the Undergraduate CAF was completed for the 2010-11 academic session. All programmes and their constituent courses were credit rated, and programme and course specifications were written in a new standard format. Current and archived specifications are available on the GSA website.

54   The 2010 ELIR report recommended that the Annual Programme Monitoring process should be strengthened by establishing clearer links between its outcomes and GSA strategic planning. This was done in two stages, with the renamed Programme Monitoring and Annual Reporting (PMAR) process being approved in 2013. A school's annual programme reports are scrutinised by its Board of Studies, which submits an Annual Summary Report and the school's Quality Enhancement Action Plan to the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Committee (UPC). The Deputy Director and Director of Academic

Development reports on key issues raised by PMAR to Academic Council (AC) and to the Executive Group for consideration as part of the annual strategic planning process. The name change to Programme Monitoring and Annual Reporting reflects the expectation that while reporting is annual, monitoring, reflection and enhancement are ongoing activities.

55   Academic staff who met the ELIR team were positive about the revised procedures and regarded the sharing of good practice as the central purpose of PMAR, emphasising the value of the involvement of the critical friend (see paragraph 41). PMAR reports seen by the ELIR team were detailed and evaluative. The inclusion of views from the critical friend, and the programme leader's response to this, is a positive feature, as is the inclusion of the Quality Enhancement Action Plan as a live document to be updated by schools on a continuing basis. GSA's annual report to the University of Glasgow Senate, which is considered by the GSA-University Joint Liaison Committee, provides an additional level of reflection and scrutiny of GSA's management of academic standards.

56   As part of its revision of academic policies, GSA introduced a separate process for validation (programme approval) and incorporated revalidation within new periodic review procedures, in line with sector practice. Whereas previously review/revalidation was carried out on an individual programme basis, the new periodic review process is focused on the school and is closely aligned with the University of Glasgow's process. A team within the school to be reviewed completes a self-evaluation document (the periodic review pro-forma), which forms the core of the documentation submitted to a panel of internal and external members. The panel's report is submitted to the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Committee (UPC) and Academic Council (AC) for consideration and then forwarded to the school for action regarding conditions or recommendations. The school reports to UPC and AC on progress in addressing its action plan. The school's submissions, the panels' reports and the subsequent action plans and progress reports that were seen by the ELIR team were comprehensive and reflective.

57   Academic staff who met the ELIR team were positive about the opportunities for the revised periodic review process to enhance provision as a result of peer learning and the exchange of good practice through the involvement of all programme leaders in the area being reviewed, together with external panel members. Potential loss of detail at programme level was not considered to be an issue because this was covered in the PMAR reports that were part of the school's submission.

58   The programme approval (validation) process is comprehensive and robust, with scrutiny of proposals by a range of committees, comprising internal and external members. The relevant board of studies makes recommendations to UPC via the Programme Pre-Approval Group, and UPC makes approval recommendations to AC. The University of Glasgow is involved through initial consideration of a statement of intent and subsequently considers Programme Approval documentation.

59   The SCQF level 12 qualification descriptor is the central reference point for setting academic standards in relation to postgraduate research. GSA has augmented the generic requirements in the descriptor with detailed assessment criteria that are appropriate for different fields of research study. Supervision, external examining and the Annual Research Degrees Report are the primary means by which standards are maintained and reviewed. The Academic Coordinator (PGR) writes the Annual Research Degrees Report, which is informed by minutes of PGR staff student consultative committee meetings, student and supervisor annual reports, external and internal examiner feedback, and student and supervisory feedback from the research degrees training programme and the Postgraduate Certificate in Supervision. The report is considered by the Research Degrees Sub-Committee, which then reports to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee for information and further consideration.

4.2 Management of assessment

60   Since the 2010 ELIR, GSA has undertaken work to improve the management of assessment. There has been a particular emphasis on improving the alignment of assessment process and outcomes, so that students understand assessment and can use it to enhance their learning. However, despite significant staff development activity in relation to this (see paragraph 49), students who met the ELIR team remain unclear about how their work relates to learning outcomes, how assessment criteria are used to make judgements about the achievement of learning outcomes; and how feedback might help them to understand why they have achieved a particular grade (see paragraph 31). GSA should consider how the generic assessment scheme, which is based on the University of Glasgow's Code of Assessment, can be adapted to the context of GSA.

61   This and related information to make the assessment and feedback processes more transparent could usefully be included in Programme Handbooks. Currently, there is no GSA requirement to have such handbooks, but the need has been recognised and senior academic staff from each of the three schools have formed a group to specify the generic content of handbooks. GSA is encouraged to make progress with this so that students on all programmes have access to comprehensive and user-friendly information, in addition to programme specifications, about their programmes of study and other aspects of academic provision at GSA.

62   GSA has effective procedures in place for the assessment of postgraduate research students and those who met the ELIR team were satisfied with the effectiveness of these procedures. Progress is monitored, discussed and formally reported by means of meetings between each student and the supervisory team. At the end of each year, students must provide evidence of satisfactory completion of an agreed programme of work, and provide a verbal summary of their research for discussion with peers and supervisors at an Annual Progress Presentation. Examination of the thesis is in line with sector practice.

4.3 Use of external reference points in managing academic standards

63   GSA makes effective use of an appropriate range of external reference points in managing its academic standards. In revising the procedures for Programme Approval, Programme Monitoring and Annual Reporting, and Periodic Review, GSA took account of subject benchmark statements, the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and the Quality Enhancement Framework. There is an explicit requirement within PMAR and periodic review to show how programmes and schools have engaged with the current Enhancement Theme.

64   External examiners are appointed by the University of Glasgow on the recommendation of GSA's Academic Council. External examiner policy and practice meet the requirements of both GSA and the University of Glasgow (the latter as the degree-awarding body), and are in line with sector expectations. GSA provides central and school induction for external examiners on appointment, and school update sessions for established external examiners. With the exception of any separate confidential reports, external examiner reports are published on the VLE following PMAR.

65   External Examiner reports are considered by schools, programme leaders, staff student consultative committees and boards of studies at the start of the academic session. Programme leaders are required to report on any action taken as a result of external examiner feedback in the Annual Programme Report as part of PMAR. External examiner reports, and evidence of any action taken in response to issues raised in the reports for the

previous three sessions, form part of the documentation available to Periodic Review panels. The external examiner reports seen by the ELIR team were constructive and thorough, and were appropriately acted upon as part of programme management and review.

66   Periodic Review panels include one external subject specialist for each subject area covered by the review. External specialists also contribute to Programme Approval by providing an external perspective on the appropriateness of the curriculum at the statement of intent stage; by contributing in writing to the Board of Studies consideration of programme approval documentation; and by attending the appropriate UPC meeting.

67   GSA has formal relationships with a number of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs): the BArch and DipArch are accredited by the Royal Institute of British Architects and the Architects Registration Board, and the BEng/MEng Product Design Engineering are accredited by the Institute of Mechanical Engineers and the Institute of Engineering Designers. PSRB accreditation reports are taken into consideration in validation events and as part of PMAR and Periodic Review.

68   Postgraduate research provision is informed by a number of external reference points in addition to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and the SCQF. These include guidance from the appropriate Research Councils, Vitae and the UK Council for Graduate Education. Students are informed about this guidance through discussion at the Research Degrees Training Programme and its inclusion in the Handbook for Supervised Postgraduate Research.

4.4   Effectiveness of the arrangements for securing academic standards

69   GSA has effective arrangements for securing academic standards. The annual and periodic review processes have been strengthened and systematically encourage a reflective approach that supports enhancement.

5   Self-evaluation and management of information

5.1   Key features of the institution's approach

70   GSA has made considerable progress since the 2010 ELIR in developing its self-evaluative practices. The new Programme Monitoring and Annual Reporting process is central to the institution's approach to self-evaluation. A key feature of PMAR is the shift from intermittent (annual) to continual monitoring, and the central purpose of the new process is the identification and sharing of good practice.

71   The PMAR proforma includes questions about the identification of good practice and requests examples for dissemination. The PMAR process also includes the involvement of a 'critical friend', who is internal to the institution but external to the school. The PMAR report is written collectively, and the involvement of the critical friend in this process enhances the sharing of good practice.

72   Peer learning is a deliberate feature of periodic review, which since 2011 has been done on a school basis. This means that all programme leaders in a school work together to develop the school's self-evaluation report and other documentation. In addition, cross-institutional peer learning is encouraged through the inclusion on the review panel of a senior member of staff from the area next scheduled for review. Academic staff who met the ELIR team were very positive about the enhancement opportunities offered by these new procedures.

Management Information

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

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

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

5.2   Commentary on the advance information set

76   The information provided in the advance information set confirmed that GSA has systematic arrangements in place to secure academic standards and enhance the student learning experience.

77   The Institution-led quality review reports are thorough, with evidence of attention to standards and enhancement, and include discussion of how best to disseminate good practice across the Institution. External examiner reports include a useful summary report and provide evidence that schools have undertaken individual analyses of the reports.

5.3   Use of external reference points in self-evaluation

78   GSA uses a wide range of external reference points in its evaluative processes. Monitoring and review processes are informed by external examiners, the QAA Quality Code for Higher Education, the SCQF, subject benchmark statements, the Enhancement Themes and the UK Professional Standards Framework. There is also reference to PSRB requirements on the PMAR proforma.

79   GSA also uses external reference points to inform enhancement. For example there is a question about engagement with the current enhancement theme on the PMAR proforma. GSA sees itself as an 'international institution that happens to be in Glasgow' and makes use of its extensive network of international partners to undertake curriculum mapping to ensure international comparability.

5.4   Management of public information

80   There have been considerable advances since the 2010 ELIR in the management of public information, and a revised website was launched in October 2011.

81   Material formerly allocated to the Academic Handbook is now published on the GSA website, including academic policies relating to, for example, the PMAR process, Periodic Review and the Code of Procedure for Appeals, and these are all available to the general public.

82   Programme and Course specifications are published on the website by Academic Services and the quality assurance pages contain information for external examiners and information for programme leaders regarding the nomination process of new examiners.

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

84   The policy for collaborative arrangements details how GSA ensures effective control and monitoring of marketing and publicity to ensure the accuracy of information given to the public. All content on the SIT website relating to GSA or UoG or programmes or courses offered by them has to be first approved by the Head of School of Design, in conjunction with the department of Marketing and Communications. GSA ensures that students are made aware that their award is validated by the University of Glasgow.

5.5   Effectiveness of the approach to self-evaluation and management of information

85   Since the 2010 ELIR GSA has developed an increasingly self-evaluative culture, this has been supported by the extensive revision of quality assurance policies and procedures and a focus in committees and reporting at all levels to include explicit evidence of the enhancement that results from self-evaluation. Reconsideration of the annual review process has resulted in PMAR, which demonstrates enhanced self-evaluative processes. The quality of management information has improved, and there are effective systems in place to manage GSA's published information.

6   Collaborative activity

6.1   Key features of the institution's strategic approach

86   Strategic oversight of collaborative activity is provided by GSA's Executive Group. All proposed collaborative partnerships are assessed in terms of their strategic fit, risk assessment and formal due diligence. Proposals require submission of a business case and the outline of an academic rationale for scrutiny by the Executive Group, while a more detailed academic rationale is considered by Boards of Studies and Academic Council. In addition the Board of Governors will consider academic proposals that have strategic, legal, and financial or governance implications.

87   GSA is an accredited institution of the University of Glasgow and also works in partnership with Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT), which is an existing partner of the University of Glasgow. The SIT partnership involves the delivery of two GSA programmes in Singapore: the BA (Hons) Communication Design and the BA (Hons) Interior Design. Students enter the third year of one of these programmes through an advance standing articulation agreement between GSA and SIT. The first student intake to these programmes was in the 2012-13 academic year.

6.2   Securing academic standards of collaborative provision

88   GSA has effective arrangements in place for securing the standards of its collaborative provision.

89   The relationship with the University of Glasgow is governed by a memorandum of agreement which is scheduled for review during 2014-15, and the partnership with Singapore Institute of Technology is governed by a Collaboration Agreement which is scheduled for review in 2016-17. Collaborative provision is monitored through GSA's quality assurance system, including annual monitoring and periodic review processes as well as the external examiner system, to ensure a comparable student experience.

90   The SIT partnership is managed in Singapore by GSA's Director of GSA in Singapore and is overseen by the School of Design in Glasgow. In addition, an operations committee is held biannually between SIT and GSA. Curriculum design and quality assurance processes are owned and undertaken by GSA, and Academic Council makes external examiner recommendations to the University of Glasgow, which is responsible for making appointments. The validating institution and degree awarding body is the University of Glasgow.

6.3   Enhancing the student learning experience on collaborative programmes

91   GSA's partnership with SIT is effectively managed. There is a close working relationship between the two institutions, which includes regular visits from Glasgow-based lecturers to Singapore and vice versa. This arrangement helps to secure effective communication between GSA and SIT, ensuring that any issues are managed promptly and effectively, and also supports the enhancement of the student experience on GSA programmes delivered at SIT.

92   GSA runs an Overseas Immersion Programme in Glasgow which provides an opportunity for staff and students from both Glasgow and Singapore to work together collaboratively on a wide range of teaching, learning and assessment activities and to share good practice. The programme involves Singapore-based students spending three weeks in Glasgow and provides a comprehensive introduction to GSA's culture and practices.

6.4   Effectiveness of the approach to managing collaborative activity

93   GSA has an effective approach to the management of its collaborative activity. The revised Collaborative Provision Policy, which was recently developed at the time of the ELIR, has been widely consulted on and provides an effective framework for GSA to pursue its strategic intention to grow its international partnership activity.