

# Enhancement-led Institutional Review of Queen Margaret University

## Outcome Report

April 2018

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## About the Enhancement-led Institutional Review method

The QAA website explains the method for [Enhancement-led Institutional Review \(ELIR\)](#) and has links to the ELIR handbook and other informative documents.<sup>1</sup> You can also find out more about the [Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education \(QAA\)](#).<sup>2</sup>

Further details about ELIR can be found in an accompanying [brief guide](#),<sup>3</sup> including an overview of the review method, information about review teams, and explanations of follow-up action.

## About this review

This is the Outcome Report of the ELIR conducted by QAA at Queen Margaret University. The review took place as follows: Planning Visit on 27 February 2018 and Review Visit from 16 to 20 April 2018. The review was conducted by a team of five reviewers:

- Mr Matt Adie (Student Reviewer)
- Mr Mark Charters (Academic Reviewer)
- Dr Frank Haddleton (Academic Reviewer)
- Professor Ian Pirie (Academic Reviewer)
- Ms Rhiannon Tinsley (Coordinating Reviewer).

This report sets out the threshold judgement formed by the ELIR team 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 threshold judgement for this report can be found on page 3, followed by commendations and recommendations.

A more detailed [Technical Report](#) is also available for this review.<sup>4</sup> The Technical Report sets out the team's findings under each heading in the ELIR 4 method.

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<sup>1</sup> About ELIR: [www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/en/reviewing-higher-education-in-scotland/enhancement-led-institutional-review](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/en/reviewing-higher-education-in-scotland/enhancement-led-institutional-review).

<sup>2</sup> About QAA: [www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland).

<sup>3</sup> Brief Guide to ELIR: [www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/reports/brief-guide-to-elir-method.pdf](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/reports/brief-guide-to-elir-method.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Technical Report: [www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/quality-assurance-reports/Queen-Margaret-University-Edinburgh](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/quality-assurance-reports/Queen-Margaret-University-Edinburgh)

## About Queen Margaret University

Queen Margaret University has around 460 staff and 5,900 (full-time equivalent) students. The University's flagship areas are health and rehabilitation, sustainable business (including hospitality, food and drink) and culture and creativity. It was granted University title in 2007 and, in the same year, relocated to a modern purpose-built campus, east of Edinburgh city centre, in Musselburgh. The University has several UK and international collaborative partners in Greece, Egypt, India, Nepal and Singapore with approximately one third of its students studying with these partners.

## Threshold judgement about Queen Margaret University

Queen Margaret University has **effective** arrangements for managing academic standards and the student learning experience.

This is a positive judgement, which means that the University meets sector expectations in securing the academic standards of its awards and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience it provides, currently and into the future. This judgement confirms there can be public confidence in the University's awards and in the quality of the learning experience it provides for its students.

### Commendations

- 1 The University is commended for the following areas of good practice.
- 2 **Institutional strategy and student partnership** - The University has developed and implemented a strategy which is dynamic, iterative and embedded in the student experience. The way in which the University has engaged in a partnership with its student body to continue developing the strategic approach is particularly positive.
- 3 **Widening participation** - The University's holistic and student-centred approach to widening participation represents excellent practice. Students are supported at each stage of their learner journey and the University's commitment both to widening participation and ensuring students succeed is demonstrated through the broad range of outreach activities it has in place. These include hosting the Children's University and working with schools, colleges, community groups, the third sector and voluntary agencies.
- 4 **Employability** - The extent to which programmes and staff are focused on preparing students for employment including providing work-related learning experiences such as placements, live projects and community engagement, as well as staff helping students to reflect and describe the personal and professional skills they are developing.
- 5 **Graduate School** - The University has made significant enhancements to the role and operation of its Graduate School since the previous ELIR, including strengthening the research environment and attracting positive student feedback.
- 6 **Enhancement in learning and teaching** - The Centre for Academic Practice (CAP) provides a leadership role in the enhancement of learning and teaching policy and practice, providing a wide range of staff development opportunities which are responsive to the needs of staff and the University's strategic direction.
- 7 **Engagement with the Enhancement Themes** - The University has successfully embedded learning from the national Enhancement Themes, enabling Theme priorities to be realised in a wide range of institutional policy and practice.
- 8 **Training and support for staff and students on validation and review panels** - The training and support provided to students and staff who have less experience of validation or review is excellent. The training is compulsory for students and is evaluated, with results being used to further enhance future practice.
- 9 **Responsive annual monitoring arrangements** - Following a period of reflection and the operation of a successful pilot, the University has implemented a two-stage annual monitoring process across its taught provision. The process makes effective and detailed

use of a range of data, enabling programme teams to implement enhancements for the start of the next academic year.

10 **Oversight of collaborative provision** - The University has effective oversight of its collaborative provision through the operation of Joint Boards of Study, which provide a holistic overview of programme operation and support a shared sense of community. In addition, the University uses its Partner Organisation Student Survey (POSS) systematically as a tool to gather independent feedback from students studying with each of its collaborative partners.

## Recommendations

11 The University is asked to consider the following recommendations.

12 **Personal tutor system** - The University should progress its plans to review and revise the Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) system, working with students to agree the minimum, or core, expectations that will be offered to all students irrespective of other variations in approach that might be desirable, for example, to meet particular programme or discipline requirements.

13 **Recognising and recording student skills and achievement** - Continue reflecting on the ways the University can recognise and record the skills and activities students gain outside the formal curriculum.

14 **Feedback on assessment** - While recognising the University has made a range of improvements in its policy and practice relating to feedback on assessment, it is asked to continue working with students to address the improvements they would like to see around consistency in the quality of the feedback provided.

15 **Support for Graduate Teaching Assistants** - Consider the benefit of implementing a centralised system for monitoring Graduate Teaching Assistants' completion of the skills development course provided to support them in their teaching.

16 **Use of evidence to enhance the student experience** - The University has made significant progress in the availability and use of data to support decision-making. As it continues to make more data available at the subject level, it is encouraged to support staff in using that evidence to understand the extent to which there is potential variation in the student experience across disciplines.

17 **Link between language entry requirements and availability of learning resources** - Where programmes are delivered in Greek, ensure students are able to make effective use of academic literature throughout their programme of study, for example by revising the English language entry requirements or by increasing the availability of learning resources in Greek.

18 **Collaborative Partner Review** - Extend the use of periodic review across all collaborative partners, recognising proportionality in the approach adopted. This would ensure that the quality of the student learning experience is included as part of the University's ongoing approach to due diligence.

## What happens next?

19 QAA Scotland will continue to engage with the institution through the annual discussion visits which, among other matters, consider the ways in which institutions respond to ELIR outcomes.

20 One year after publication of the ELIR Outcome and Technical Reports, institutions are asked to provide a Follow-up Report to indicate how they are responding to the outcomes of ELIR. The final version of the institution's Follow-up Report is published on the QAA website. Institutions also engage in a range of enhancement and development activities including Focus On projects where institutions work collaboratively to improve policy and practice relating to topics that are frequently occurring in ELIR outcomes.

## Further information

21 A more detailed [Technical Report](#) is also available for this review. The Technical Report sets out the ELIR team's findings under each heading in the ELIR 4 method.

22 This review and its findings relate to the institution as a whole and do not provide information about individual programmes of study or subjects. For further information about those, contact the institution or visit its [website](#).

23 University sector institutions in Scotland also engage in systematic Enhancement Theme activity. Further information about that work, which has a sector-wide and institutional focus, can be found on the [Enhancement Themes website](#).

24 Further information about QAA Scotland and the enhancement-led approach, including the ELIR method, can be found on the [QAA website](#).

25 For further information about the Scottish Funding Council see [www.sfc.ac.uk](http://www.sfc.ac.uk).

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