



University of the Highlands and Islands

Follow-up Report to the Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR)

May 2023

Preface

One year after publication of their ELIR Outcome and Technical Reports, institutions are asked to submit a Follow-up Report to QAA Scotland. These reports are also submitted to the Scottish Funding Council. Follow-up Reports are written in the institution's own words and require to be endorsed by the institution's Governing Body prior to publication on the QAA website. Guidance on the content and structure is provided by QAA Scotland.

Institutions are asked to focus on the action they have taken since the review and to include an indication of the effectiveness of that action. ELIR reports highlight positive practice as well as areas for development, and institutions are encouraged to comment on key areas of activity relating to good practice that they have prioritised since the ELIR.

Follow-up Reports are discussed with institutions as part of the ELIR annual discussion meetings.

Enhancement Led Institutional Review 2021/22

One year follow-up report

May 2023

Overview

This report summarises progress and current status of development or maturation in relation to the key outcomes arising from our QAA Scotland Enhancement Led Institutional Review in 2021/22, at the current stage of UHI being one year on from beginning to address the points and feedback in the ELIR Outcome Report and ELIR Technical Report, published by QAA Scotland in April 2022.

The university once again welcomed and found the ELIR process highly collegiate, constructive and helpful, both generally and also with the review coming at the outset of a considerable period of change for the university, key points related to which are addressed in this report.

The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC), Chaired by the Dean of Learning and Teaching, has formal responsibility for the oversight of ELIR follow-up actions, reporting progress to Academic Council. QAEC has identified accountable and operational leads for each recommendation. Operational leads are largely relevant members of the university's Senior Management Team responsible for leading and delivering on specific areas of functional activity or specific initiatives that were reviewed as part of ELIR and included in the outcome and technical reports, while accountable leads are relevant members of the Senior Executive Team.

This report has been produced under the remit of QAEC and in direct consultation with QAEC membership, including our Highlands and Islands Student Association (HISA) representatives, and the operational and accountable leads. This report was endorsed by Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee, HISA Management Board, and Academic Council, and approved by University Court.

Structure of report

The report provides context on recent developments at UHI and is subsequently organised into three main parts:

1. Areas of commendation and current status
2. Recommendations (areas for development) and current status
3. Additional priority areas identified in ELIR Technical Report

Recent and current developments at UHI

Since the visit and reporting stages of ELIR 2021/22 there have been significant changes underway at UHI. These have included the departure of the Principal and Vice-Chancellor who was in post at the time of the ELIR visit, and the construction of a new Senior Executive Team (SET) and a new Senior Management Team (SMT). The university has a new Interim Principal and Vice-Chancellor, appointed by University Court in October 2022, who is leading the institution and the new SET. Within the new SMT there have been a number of new roles created which are enhancement focused or otherwise directly relevant to the areas of work and activity covered by ELIR and how these will be taken forward. These new roles include: Dean of Learning and Teaching; Head of Academic Standards and

Enhancement; Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions; and Head of International Student Recruitment.

Furthermore, the university has also been progressing the restructure of Executive Office (EO), which was in early stages of progress during the ELIR visit. All of the departments and functional areas within EO have been included in the restructure, with initial restructuring taking place from March to October 2022. At this point a review of staffing and roles within EO commenced, concluding in February 2023 when decisions were reached regarding a reduction in roles across EO, with these changes coming into effect across April and June 2023.

Notable developments related to the restructure, which is entering its final stage at the time of submission of this report, include a restructuring and reorganisation of Academic Structures including two new Faculties and associated cognate subject groupings and research structures, and an integration of the Learning and Teaching Academy (LTA), Educational Development Unit (EDU) and Faculty and Academic Standards Team (FAST) that is designed to more closely align and integrate learning and teaching strategy and strategic initiatives, staff facing support including professional development, and our programme development and quality review processes. The new Academic Structures were approved by the university at the start of March 2023 and are being implemented from the 1st of August 2023. A proposed structure for the integrated learning and teaching department (to bring together the aforementioned LTA, EDU and FAST) was approved in principle by SET at the end of March 2023. There will now follow a brief period of consultation with Faculty colleagues and university Academic Partners (APs) to explore how the newly configured learning and teaching department will interface with the APs and the new Academic Structures. This consultation will conclude in May 2023, and the new learning and teaching department will be also implemented for the 1st of August in tandem with the Academic Structures.

Finally, attention is drawn to the UHI2024 programme of time-bound strategic initiatives that are currently being designed and implemented by the UHI partnership, with aims including reducing expenditure, increasing and diversifying income, and simplifying governing structures. For the purposes of ELIR the most relevant workstreams concern the Curriculum Review strand and the Strategy Development strand. The former strand will build upon existing curriculum review work in progress at the time of the ELIR visit, harnessing external expertise and a data driven approach to the refinement and strategic development of all taught UG and PG curricula. The latter strand includes work to develop a partnership-wide strategic direction that includes radical thinking and future scoping related to student expectations, modes and models of delivery, and pedagogies.

While it is accurate to say that restructure and related changes in EO over the last year have had a degree of impact on our progress against our ELIR actions, we have sought to mitigate against this wherever possible and, as will hopefully be evident in what follows, substantial progress against clear milestones in areas of commendation and recommendation has been achieved and is mapped out and in hand for the remainder of this academic year.

1. Updates on areas of commendation

1.1 Learning and Teaching Academy - *provides an engaging learning and teaching community hub, which is highly valued by staff and acts as an effective connection point across the University academic partner network for academic development and enhancement.*

Current status: We have continued to extend the range and reach of activities led by LTA, in alignment with the UHI Strategic Plan and the new Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy 2022/23 – 2026/27 (LTES). This was in development at the time of the ELIR visit, and was being developed through consultation with staff and students across the UHI partnership and in direct consultation with the Senior Management teams of each Academic Partner.

In December 2022, Academic Council approved the proposal to develop a new LTES which would provide a single, integrated and tertiary-focused LTES for the university including each of the Academic Partners. The development of a single, unified LTES for UHI serves the institution (a) as a natural evolution to the previous strategy which was designed to overarch and complement the learning and teaching strategies of the APs and (b) to directly address the recommendation from the previous (2015/16) ELIR that the university should seek build upon the previous strategy to develop a single unified LTES.

The new LTES was developed between January and the close of May 2022, in direct consultation with staff and students from across the university through activities including design and review webinars, workshops and other participative sessions with Subject Networks and Faculties, in the context of annual quality review events, and through an open survey to evaluate and then refine the final version of the LTES. The new LTES was also developed in direct consultation with the Principals and Senior Management Teams of each of the APs, to ensure fitness for purpose, applicability across the tertiary provision of the university, and to secure direct adoption of the LTES by each AP.

The new LTES comprises: a set of Learning and Teaching Enhancement Values which it has been agreed that all students should experience regardless of level of study, discipline or mode of study; a set of ‘enabling practices’ for staff to engage in to support dimensions of practice including evidence-based learning and teaching; exemplars; mapping to relevant external standards; and a detailed implementation plan that distributes ownership for the LTES across the UHI partnership.

The LTES was authored by a cross-partnership LTES Development Group, with representation from EO, Faculties, Professional Services, and HISA. Academic Council approved the LTES in June 2022.

Following approval, the LTES Development Group was concluded and replaced by an LTES Implementation Group, convened in October 2023 following the launch of the LTES across the university. Under the leadership of the Dean of Learning and Teaching, the LTES Development Group and the new learning and teaching department (integrating LTA, EDU and FAST) are progressing various actions to embed the new LTES in professional development, professional recognition, programme approval and reapproval, and other key areas of work.

The implementation of the LTES, and the related work of the LTA, EDU and FAST in supporting this, is being guided directly by the LTES Implementation Plan. This is a five year plan to ensure the effective embedding of the LTES and associated Learning and Teaching Enhancement Values across the university. The main objectives for the current year one implementation of the LTES include:

- Objective 1. Approval and initial operationalisation of implementation plan.
Including: Annual implementation budget; annual reporting and monitoring process (including risk register); five-year impact evaluation criteria; confirming reporting process.
- Objective 2. Establishing distributed responsibility for implementation of strategy
Including: Establish LTES Implementation Group to encourage effective collaboration and maximise the impact and synergy; revise and consolidate existing centrally provided guidance, policies and resources relating to learning, teaching and assessment to ensure the

LTE Values and Enabling Practices are aligned to/foregrounded in professional development events and opportunities, professional recognition, and staff facing resources; revise and update the taught undergraduate and postgraduate programme approval and re-approval processes in line with the strategy and LTE Values.

- Objective 3: Initiating dissemination of strategy to staff and students, and planning future engagement. Including: Initiate dissemination phase including the identification of engagement events (including Learning and Teaching Conference, HISA annual conference and events, Academic Partner events), and direct engagement with relevant internal and external groups, committees and agencies; creation of a suite of resources to support the implementation of the strategy including 'thematic' resources based on the LTE Values and Enabling Practices; slide decks for lecturer induction and stakeholder presentations.
- Objective 4: Establish evaluation process, criteria and progress reporting
Including: End of Year 1 evaluation of engagement and impact, with reporting to include a review of priorities for Year 2 implementation informed by UHI and AP pedagogic needs.

The sub-objectives above represent an illustrative selection of planned actions. All implementation objectives for Year 1 of the LTES are due to be completed by the end of August 2023.

1.2 Library Services - *deliver an integrated, helpful, and responsive team-based approach which operates effectively as a seamless single service across the University academic partner network and provides support to students across all locations. The service provides parity of provision to all students through its use of digital resources and the targeted support provided during COVID-19, including the free click and collect and postal service available to both staff and students.*

Current status: A new University Librarian commenced the role in March 2023, and the Library Practitioner Group continues to work on the successful implementation of the new Library Management System which provides better functionality and accessibility for students. This, coupled with changes to identity management to provide a seamless experience across all eResources, has improved experience and discoverability of resources. This has been evidenced by a large reduction in Servicedesk tickets regarding accessing eResources.

Innovative solutions brought in as a response to COVID-19 including the free click and collect and postal services continue as part of the core service offering. The Library Practitioner Group is now developing a University Library strategy to further develop the service for students, teaching staff and researchers.

The now outdated UHI Harvard referencing system will be replaced by Harvard Cite Them Right (12th edition) for academic year 2023/24. This will improve the guidance and support available to students and allow improved integration with other services such as Refworks and Microsoft Word. The popular library chat service will be improved through use of an out of hours chatbot, enhancing support for users during evenings, weekends, and holiday periods.

1.3 Personal Academic Tutors - *the Personal Academic Tutor system embedded across the University academic partner network provides an identified point of contact for students, an effective referral mechanism to other University services and results in the effective delivery of an accessible and personalised approach to student support. The system is highly valued by students, provides a fundamental support connection point and is viewed as being integral to their student experience.*

Current status: The Personal Academic Tutor (PAT) system continues to be a cornerstone in the support of our students. The ELIR team commended the system in terms of its value to students and

the delivery of an accessible and personalised approach to student support. It was also gratifying that the students the panel met were similarly positive about the value of their PATs.

Nevertheless, the university is keen to review the PAT system to ensure and enhance its continued efficacy. Variations in approach to the allocation of PAT responsibilities have developed in recent years at some Academic Partners to suit individual contexts. A formal review was planned at the start of the pandemic but was placed on hold given its strength and competing priorities.

Following the ELIR report, the previous Vice Principal Students looked at various ways in which the review could be resourced: including formally as a Service Review, by the university's Transformation Team, and by including it within the UHI24 workstreams currently underway. These options did not offer the capacity to undertake the comprehensive and resource intensive review envisaged, and the Dean of Student Experience has been tasked with identifying a suitable process for the review, to be planned and undertaken in academic year 2023/24.

1.4 Virtual Learning Environment transition - *the effective planning, communication and implementation of the virtual learning environment (VLE) project ensured that a smooth transition was effectively achieved by working collaboratively across the University academic partner network. In particular, the approach was well communicated, provided staff and student support, and retained a focus on the use of the VLE as a tool for learning and supporting the student experience.*

Current status: As part of the aforementioned LTES Implementation Plan, a review of the university's 'digital learning landscape' has been initiated which will evaluate current practice in relation to the VLE and associated technologies, and scope future needs in line with realising the scope and ambition of the new LTES. Reporting and recommendations to follow at the end of 2023.

Between April and close of July 2023, in tandem with the implementation of the new learning and teaching department, there will be a review, consolidation, and refining of remits for all groups that have a focus on/responsibility for the development of the VLE and associated technologies, for the design of technology-enabled campus spaces for learning and teaching, and for the determination of modes of delivery. While the exact shape of this is to be determined through the review to be undertaken, a single 'digital education development group' is the likely direction of travel.

1.5 Student mental health support - *the University's strategic approach to developing its student mental health provision has resulted in an effective, well utilised and highly valued set of resources embedded at both University and academic partner levels.*

Current status: The team supports the partnership by developing resources which can be disseminated and shared with a wide range of staff to ensure everyone is able to access information around mental health and wellbeing, and how to access support. This included PGR Mental Health Modules, a suite of Induction Resources, and the Concerned Parent Protocol. The team also revamped the university's Mental Health Toolkit, ensuring all information was correct and links were updated. Academic year 2021/22 had a number of highlights, including:

- the creation of the Regional Mental Health Coordinator role;
- achieving the Healthy Body Healthy Mind Bronze Award;
- featuring in a number of publications such as Suicide Safer Universities in Scotland: Reflections on Good Practice, and the Office for Students article Developing a Suicide Intervention Policy for a tertiary, multi-campus institution;

- NSS and PTES survey and learning outcome results, which demonstrate our institutional response to supporting students.

At the time of writing the SFC had not yet confirmed the funding allocations for Counselling to cover the remainder of 2022/23. More seriously no details have been provided on the proposed Scottish Government Mental Health Action Plan, nor if any funding will be allocated to its implementation. UHI students, as with the rest of the sector, face a cliff edge of funding for Counselling this summer at a time of record demand, with an existential threat to the current levels of counselling provision.

1.6 Approach to embedding the institutional quality framework - *the University has developed effective approaches to support the dissemination, implementation and embedding of the institutional quality framework across the network of 12 academic partners. The approaches include well defined institutional expectations, which are supported by clear and accessible information and guidance, are well understood, valued by staff and provide a model for the implementation and integration of other University initiatives.*

Current status: We have continued to promote and embed the quality framework across the partnership, and regularly review guidance, updates, and staff development opportunities. Since the ELIR visit and reporting we are taking forward further work on our institutional quality framework, focused on balancing compliance with sector requirements with a streamlining of processes that recognise (a) resource constraints and (b) the maturation of the university since we first developed many of our quality processes and associated policies and standards. See also 2.3 Institutional strategic approach to retention, 3.3 Programme reapproval, and 3.4 Subject Area Review for further related information and updates.

We are also considering how the potential introduction of the Tertiary Quality Framework within the Scottish sector, which would be embedded across UHI at FE and HE level, may affect the approach taken to this area of action arising from ELIR.

1.7 Approaches to assessment and feedback - *the University has taken positive steps since the 2016 ELIR to enhance its approaches to assessment and feedback, as demonstrated by the development of institution-wide policies on marking criteria, moderation, academic integrity, feedback and feedforward.*

Current status: We are progressing a number of actions in this area, including the already planned review of Assessment, Feedback and Feedforward Policy (and related policies) to bring these into alignment with new LTES values during 2022/23. A short-life working group has also been convened to review and update staff guidance on marking, second marking and moderation which will be agreed and in place prior to the next academic year.

In the above, we will be maintaining a focus on academic integrity and support for staff and students, including enhanced monitoring and analysis of incidences of academic misconduct and guidance for the use of AI by staff and students in relation to learning, teaching and assessment.

In the context of the current restructure of EO, the appointment in March 2023 of the university's new Head of Academic Standards and Enhancement (who will sit within the new learning and teaching department and work alongside the Dean of Learning and Teaching) is integral to taking forward in a timely manner, for the next academic year, the various planned updates to policies.

2. Response to recommendations

The following paragraphs provide an update on actions taken and planned in response to each of the ELIR recommendations.

2. 1 Articulation and embedding of institutional expectations - *building on the University's achievements of effectively and consistently embedding its quality framework and its Equivalence Policy, the institution should establish a systematic approach to articulating and embedding institutional expectations for other policy and practice across the University academic partner network to support integration and implementation of University initiatives. As part of this, the University is asked to increase the setting and monitoring of institutional expectations to ensure equivalency and to support the achievement of the University's ambitions and strategy*

Current status: This area for development has progressed on a number of fronts, including the 'One UHI' initiative for taking forward the university's Strategic Plan. One UHI was unanimously endorsed by University Court in March 2022, but has now been extended and will be largely operationalised within the aforementioned UHI2024 strategic programme. In addition, the aforementioned restructure of Executive Office will align directly with target-setting and monitoring through University Court, Senior Executive Team, and established and new committee structures.

The UHI2024 strategic programme comprises seven strands of activity approved by University Court, Academic Council, and Partnership Council as follows:

- Establish a partner-wide cohesive and cost-efficient tertiary curriculum which maximises student recruitment;
- Establish clear recommendations on which shared services should be established to run across the whole academic partnership;
- Establish a more focused Executive Office based on stakeholder need;
- Create more simplified governance structures, enhanced clarity of where accountability lies, enhanced clarity of where the points of decision are, and a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities;
- Enhance partnership working at governance level, improve transparency of decisions, and secure joined up decision making;
- Enhance the staff experience, and enhance a culture of partnership;
- Commence a review of vision and strategy for the partnership across a 5-year period.

UHI2024, the workstreams for which are being led by senior staff from across Executive Office and the Academic Partners, is providing the overarching framework and direction for articulating and embedding the overall environment around institutional expectations, with progress being reported directly to University Court.

With respect to articulating and embedding institutional expectations in relation to learning and teaching, and enhancement and quality assurance of learning and teaching provision, this is provided in the context of the new LTES, the activities of the LTES Implementation Group, and the new learning and teaching department in taking this forward.

As outlined under 1.1, the Dean of Learning and Teaching has been engaging directly with all APs at senior level in consultation on the new LTES, as previously noted. Each AP has agreed to directly adopt the new LTES, and the membership of the LTES Development Group is providing the means to

ensure both a direct engagement within each AP in taking the strategy forward, and a consistency of approach across the university in the implementation of strategy.

The Human Resources Practitioners Group will be exploring issues around teaching qualifications in our tertiary context, including gathering relevant data across different employees to agree next steps. There are related actions here, arising from the LTES and other internal quality enhancement processes, to explore and seek to establish equitable, cross-partner baselines for staff development.

Academic Council has approved next steps for implementation of the Curriculum Review, now as part of UHI2024, including rationalisation of HE programmes and modules/units, adopting collective planning of HE provision, and explicit alignment of the curriculum to target markets for effective planning and promotion. In addition, as previously noted, Academic Council and Partnership Council have approved the proposal to establish two tertiary Faculties encompassing FE and HE provision, and research and knowledge exchange, to facilitate greater tertiary collaboration and planning within existing partnership accountability and management arrangements.

The new Academic Structures will be in place for the 1st of August 2023, as will the new learning and teaching department, and their effectiveness and maturation will be monitored and evaluated across fora including Partnership Council, Academic Council and ultimately, for Academic Structures and UHI2024, University Court.

2.2 Collaborative provision - *improve oversight of collaborative activity, ensuring that effective arrangements are in place for identifying and addressing potential operational and strategic risks and concerns. In particular, within the current academic year, the University is asked to strengthen existing processes and develop guidance for the operational management of collaborative provision, along with the development of a review and monitoring process through which the University can more effectively maintain a systematic oversight of collaborative provision.*

Current status (see also recommendation 2.5 Student engagement and representation): The Head of Academic Standards and Enhancement, and Head of International Student Recruitment have undertaken a review of the current oversight and monitoring of collaborative activity. Initial focus has been on type 1 collaborative arrangements (currently comprising joint, double, and dual awards, and joint delivery) as the higher risk provision. Existing scrutiny and review activities (and the documentation associated with these) have been identified and immediate action has been taken to collate documentation centrally and create standardised document templates. Specific actions already completed/in progress include:

- Existing delivery arrangements documents (which are scrutinised as part of faculty-led approval events and outline practical details relating to delivery such as availability of facilities, technology, and staff development) have been collated in a central SharePoint space.
- Existing reports of review meetings (held between university and the partner provider representatives) which have taken place at 3, 6, and 12 months after approval have been collated in a central SharePoint space.
- Template documents for both delivery arrangements and review meetings have been created. (The review meetings template is based around key topics: reflections on learning and teaching, student enrolments, partnership communications, student feedback and representation, and future plans [including staff development]).

Further actions taking place between April and June 2023 focus on reviewing and updating current guidance in relation to these activities, and reviewing the extent to which these activities have taken place for all current type 1 provision. Specific actions to be completed in this period include:

- Full review and update of Collaborative Handbook
- Full audit of programme documentation to establish any gaps in delivery arrangements or review meeting documentation
- Scheduling of review meetings where required

In addition, there will be further revisions to the ongoing monitoring of collaborative provision with these actions taking place from June to August 2023:

- Refresh of Collaborations Register to flag up when 3- 6- and 12-month reviews are due and trigger reporting in to External Partnerships Steering Committee
- Refresh current monitoring arrangements for all collaborative provision by agreeing different review periods and levels of scrutiny proportionate to the risk scoring of each type of provision

2.3 Institutional strategic approach to retention - *recognising the University's diverse student population and that its student non-continuation data is above the institution benchmark, the University should make demonstrable progress, within the next academic year, to implement an institution-wide, strategic approach to managing retention. In addressing this, the University should consider steps beyond the planned introduction of student engagement indicators and its developments in learning analytics, in order to ensure a more consistent, managed and monitored approach to student non-continuation.*

Current status: The Head of Careers and Employability has commenced a pan-UHI project to maximise retention within HE programmes, with a project plan including design, scope and implementation. The project will run from March to September 2023, and in order to ensure robust input from across the partnership, and discussion and ratification of findings and recommendations, a working group with representation from each Academic Partner is being convened. While the scope of the project focuses on undergraduate and HNC/D curriculum, it is anticipated that outcomes and recommendations will contribute to broader tertiary retention discussions. Project objectives are:

1. Partnership approval of an institution wide HE Student Retention Strategy
2. Approval for development of monitoring framework

The imperative to improve the university's current retention profile is also linked to other key strategic drivers, and the project will seek to ensure alignment and clear reporting and communication channels with each area in line with business need. These other strategic drivers are:

1. Financial stability and organisational growth: with lower enrolment rates and increased competition increasing and maintaining a higher retention rate across all areas of the curriculum will have a direct impact on financial stability across the university
2. UHI2024: recognises retention (alongside recruitment) as one of the biggest challenges facing the university and as such a key priority
3. Highlands and Islands Regional Tertiary Outcome Agreement: achievement of core national measures (HE)
4. Student satisfaction and success: impact on positive NSS and Graduate Outcomes metrics

In other developments, the Student Engagement Group (SEG) has implemented a number of initiatives to further support work in this area, including:

- The university's social experience policy, reviewed and re-approved by SEG in late 2022. The policy states that Executive Office will collaborate with Academic Partners, and particularly HISA, to develop the social experience with a view to developing a sense of belonging within the student body (see below).
- The university is part funding the provision of a Sports Development Officer, employed by HISA. The new officer began employment in January 2023. The university's sports policy and action plan have been reviewed, and SEG is working with the officer to progress work through the Sports Development Group.
- The Student Development Officer (SDO) role continues to support students in university-managed residential halls through the halls experience project, which is targeted with enhancing the experience and providing a sense of community. This is a highly active area of work that is generating a very positive response from students.
- The SDO is also building student community through our green student engagement work including Green Week and the Green Champions Network. This is the single most popular area of engagement with the student body, well received by everyone interacting with it.

The social experience policy includes clubs and societies, induction and freshers events, social interaction, sport, charities, and volunteering, and is monitored by SEG. Within the policy the university has committed to:

- support HISA and Academic Partners to hold freshers' fayres and social events during induction periods;
- work towards the development of online versions of the above events to make information available across the partnership;
- support the provision of social experiences and opportunities for networking during the induction period;
- support HISA representatives to meet students during induction.

2.4 Enhancement and recognition of learning and teaching practice - *in support of the University's aspirations, and in the context of the academic partnership model, develop and articulate an institution-wide staff development approach which supports the enhancement of teaching practice, appropriately values and recognises teaching practice and ensures parity of esteem between teaching and research.*

Current status: We are continuing to enhance and extend the range and reach of activities led by LTA and EDU to support enhancement of learning and teaching, including professional recognition, and aligning with the UHI Strategic Plan and new LTES as described previously.

A key development in this area is the creation of the new learning and teaching department, integrating the work and functions of the LTA, EDU and FAST in a more impactful way, under the leadership of the Dean of Learning and Teaching and new Head of Academic Standards and Enhancement. The completion of the structuring of the new department will be integral to both the continued and the extended enhancement and recognition of learning and teaching practice. The completion of the new learning and teaching department will (subject to final approval in June 2023) see an expanded academic practice development team who will be AP and staff facing in nature, and

will increase the professional development offering through our annual programme of events, our professional recognition pathways, and the University Mentoring Scheme. A key development in the context of the new learning and teaching department will be the creation of an academic practice development plan to be agreed for the close of the calendar year 2023, and which will (a) support an increased professional development offering for learning and teaching enhancement across the university, (b) support the next stages of implementing the LTES going into the second year of the strategy, and (c) support the meeting of ELIR recommendation 2.4.

In March 2022, Academic Council approved a process for the recognition of five individual pathways to Professorial title for academic staff across the university to support career progression. These include a learning and teaching focussed route, and an academic leadership and management route.

2.5 Student engagement and representation - *work in partnership with the Highlands and Islands Student Association to ensure that there are appropriate mechanisms in place to monitor and address vacancies in student representative structures and to promote the value of the student representative role to students and staff across the University and with collaborative partners.*

Current status: The Student Voice Rep (SVR) system was reviewed during semester 1 2022/23, with a report presented to QAEC at its February 2023 meeting. The review found that current shortcomings go beyond gaps in provision, and that the system itself is no longer functioning effectively.

A number of approaches to the SVR system (formerly the class rep system) were developed over recent years in partnership with HISA, and with sparqs support, including: class rep training; ‘train the trainer’ courses run each summer for staff and student officers to train new intakes of reps; and enhancement of the rep system in 2019, with training for staff in supporting and working with reps, the introduction of a class rep survey, an online discussion area for class reps, and other developments. During this period, class reps were managed by Academic Partners (with the exception of UHI Moray, where the system was run by HISA), with overview by Student Engagement Group, and a Class Rep Group as a forum of practitioners to drive enhancement and cooperation between stakeholders.

ELIR noted that there were gaps in SVR provision, and that an accurate system to monitor reps was not in place. In 2020, HISA assumed ownership of the class rep system and a number of changes were made, including replacing the class rep tracking module that was developed in SITS with an alternative process to track and monitor reps. However the new tracking system had not been functioning, which led to the ELIR observations.

As a result of the SVR system review, QAEC (February, 2023) approved the following recommendations and actions to resolve these issues with the SVR system:

1. A data sharing agreement will be signed with HISA (action complete)
2. All Academic Partners and HISA will be instructed to return to using the SITS / METIS registration and reporting system, implemented through Quality Forum (instructions issued to Quality Forum, March 2023; to be implemented from start of 2023/24)
3. Creation of a three-year development plan alongside an annual operating plan for the SVR system (development to begin at the start of 2023/24)
4. Return to the use of the SVR annual action tracker (from start of 2023/24)
5. Return to standard processes for SVRs implemented across the partnership (from start of 2023/24)

6. SVR training, including online training, to be reinstated (from start of 2023/24)
7. Progress to be reported to Student Engagement Group and Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (ongoing)

2.6 Student surveys - *develop a process to consolidate and analyse the outcomes of all student surveys, so that this information can be used to support cross-network enhancements to the student learning experience. In support of a consolidated approach, the University is asked to ensure student survey outcomes are integrated, data made more accessible to staff, and the mechanisms for closing the feedback loop to students formalised.*

Current status:

Accessibility of survey data

There is a now single source of survey data for the full suite of annual student surveys (NSS, SSES and ESES) which is accessible to all staff on SharePoint. Dashboards present the data from each of the surveys in a similar format and staff are able to interrogate data by Academic Partner, programme, and level of study. In doing so, the dashboards meet the needs of a broad range of UHI staff including Programme and Module Leaders, Quality and Curriculum Managers at Academic Partners, the students' association, and university-wide support services.

Longer term, we are seeking both to deliver surveys using a common technology, and to create an integrated dashboard for all survey results, but these developments are dependent on the identification of resource to undertake this work.

Integration of survey outcomes

Whilst oversight for surveys still resides with different groups, there are plans to bring these groups in closer alignment: the new Head of Academic Standards and Enhancement has recently taken over as chair of the Quality Forum Survey Group (who deal with ESES and SSES) and is working to integrate this group with the Process Management Group that runs the NSS, PTES and PRES at regional level. It is anticipated that this merged group will be in place to oversee all surveys for 2023/24 academic year. This will provide a potential platform for the further integration and analysis of data from the various surveys at a meta level (although the resource to do so is not yet clear- this may sit within Learning and Teaching after restructure taking on some of the functions of the Evidence-Based Enhancement Lead).

Closing the feedback loop to students

For ESES and SSES, actions taken in response to surveys are communicated locally by Academic Partner academic and quality staff. For academic year 2023/24 we will raise the visibility of survey findings to students by reinstating the student-facing reporting of university-level NSS, ESES, SSES results that has happened in previous years (infographics produced by the Evidence-Based Enhancement Lead and disseminated by HISA and via UHI webpages).

2.7 Training for postgraduates who teach - *ensure that all current and future postgraduate research students undertaking teaching roles complete the University's standard training course prior to commencing teaching and that an appropriate monitoring mechanism is developed to ensure completion of this training is recorded and monitored to enable institutional oversight.*

Current status: We have appointed a new Head of Postgraduate Researcher Development, recognised as a crucial post in respect of training and development for PGR students and their supervisors, and recruited a new Graduate School Programme Officer (Training). With these two

developments, we are seeing a more consistent approach to (and timing of) the training for PGR students who teach. A one-day introductory workshop is now being delivered twice each semester, facilitated by the Dean of Learning and Teaching, which provides orientation to fundamental aspects of teaching practice, the UHI context including LTES, and pathways to further development. Additional provision in this area is also currently being explored for delivery next academic year. A programme of PGR supervisor training has been re-established, with the first session taking place in March 2023, focussing on training for staff new to research student supervision, including new members of staff with experience of research supervision at other institutions. A further session, focussing on the progress monitoring process, will be delivered in April 2023.

PGR Manager (software providing real-time management, dashboards, and analytics for postgraduate students, supervisors, and graduate schools) is in place and being launched in 2 phases. The first phase went live in early 2022 and covers a range of processes for student progress monitoring and reporting. Stage 2, which will launch later in 2022/23 following development work with suppliers, covers examinations processes and procedures. Training and development continue to be monitored routinely by our Graduate School Committee, which meets every 6 weeks, and the new online system allows for students and supervisors to keep more detailed and real-time information on a range of student progression matters, including students' participation in training. The programme for training for PGR students who teach, along with other student engagements with training, are being recorded in PGR Manager and monitored both by the Graduate School Office and the Graduate School Committee, on behalf of Research Degrees Committee.

3. Additional key areas identified in ELIR Technical Report

In addition to the areas of commendation and recommendation arising from the ELIR Outcome Report, the ELIR Technical Report for UHI led the university to identify additional key areas of institutional work and activity that it was agreed would be standing items for monitoring by QAEC both in relation to ongoing enhancement activity generally, and in the wider context of our ELIR review.

These areas are: careers and employability; Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy; programme reapproval; subject area review; student access to quality-related data; and use of data for enhancement. A brief current status update for each of these areas is offered below.

3.1 Careers and employability

Current status: Partnership working and joint development and delivery of careers and employability activity continues to be a priority for the Careers and Employability Centre (CEC), and whilst recent staff changes within HISA have delayed work it is anticipated that progress will speed up again in 2023/24.

The CEC team continue to work across and in partnership with professional and academic staff within the partnership. Referral systems continue to be a core element of joint practice. Due to structural issues affecting the implementation of cross partnership use of the FutureMe career management system this action has been put on hold for the time being and focus will shift to encouraging students to engage with profile updates to ensure targeted messages reach the right people at the right time, thereby extending reach across the student population.

The CEC will continue to support students who are experiencing difficulties sourcing placement opportunities. In addition, it will continue to discuss 'pipeline' opportunities with employers and encourage consideration of UHI specific placement opportunities to meet regional needs.

3.2 Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy

Current status: As evidenced within the numerous mentions of the LTES in above updates, the LTES and the embedding of it relates to extending or achieving a number of our ELIR commendations and recommendations. The implementation of the LTES will be taken forward over the next 5 years and, as noted, the LTES Implementation Group has now convened and is working on year one actions. As with all aspects of implementing the LTES across the APs and ensuring progress against our ELIR actions and recommendations, QAEC will continue to monitor and provide directive support, escalating to Academic Council for endorsement of wider strategic courses of action.

3.3 Programme reapproval

Current status: Mandatory reapproval of degree programmes was agreed and implemented from 2022/23, to strengthen periodic consideration of currency and coherence of programmes and to complement other internally led quality processes. A forward schedule of mandatory reapprovals of degree programmes has been created and communicated to relevant committees/fora.

3.4 Subject Area Review

Current status: A revised approach to subject area review is now operational. This includes a strengthened focus on quality enhancement, alignment of provision to institutional strategies including the LTES, and complementarity with other internally led quality processes. The name of the process has changed from subject review to subject area review, both to signal a step-change to the process, and to enable flexibility in determining the scope of the reviews (previously limited to subject networks). This provides the opportunity to vary the unit of review as appropriate, taking into account relevant internal organisational structures, external environment, and size and complexity of provision. We will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of arrangements in relation to further driving enhancement of learning and teaching practices, our programmes of study and related student support, and identifying and cascading more widely across the university effective, evidence-based approaches.

3.5 Student access to quality-related data

Current status: Our initial response in this area of activity was to devise a new central data team to coordinate the collection, management, and analysis of relevant data for use by a range of stakeholders including students. This was planned in the anticipation of the creation and additional resourcing of a new central data services team following establishment of the new directorates. This will now not happen due to financial constraints. The METIS reporting roles have moved to the Planning and Performance department, but no further restructure has yet been possible and we are currently recruiting for one of the two reporting posts we have due to a resignation.

Given that METIS reporting has only recently come into Planning and Performance and the limited resources which continue to be available for developments in this area, this action will be revisited to get a clearer understanding of what had been planned and the priorities in terms of students requirements.

3.6 Use of data for enhancement

Current status: In alignment with the comment offered under 3.5 (Student access to quality-related data), a better understanding of the requirement of data for enhancement and in particular the priorities which would have the most effective impact will be sought.

Next steps

While the ELIR one-year-on report for UHI comes at a transitional time for the university, it is also a period during which the structures that support our enhancement-focused activities are being further integrated and strengthened. At a strategic level, the work being undertaken to progress the university's Strategic Plan and wider associated initiatives (including UHI2024) will see the further development of shared institutional culture and objectives across the university partnership. Within this context, the continued implementation of the new Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy (within and beyond this first year of the LTES) and the establishment of both the new Academic Structures and the new learning and teaching department for August 2023 will create further momentum for enhancement and innovation in learning and teaching, curricula development, and the nature and quality of the student experience.

We look forward to exploring progress further during our upcoming Institutional Liaison Meeting in May 2023 and our Quality Enhancement and Standards Review in May 2024.

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With acknowledgement to members of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee and named ELIR Operational Leads for their contributions to this draft report.

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