

Section 5. Conclusion

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1. The process of preparing the Reflective Analysis (RA) has been very helpful to the University in reflecting on its progress and evaluating the impact of the range of strategic initiatives over the last five years. This is particularly timely in light of the current work to develop our strategic plan for the years 2010–2014. It has extended and broadened the work undertaken as part of the mid-term review of the L&T strategy and reporting on the R&KT and PGR strategies' progress, and has integrated this reflection with our ongoing work on quality assurance process and policy development, thus facilitating cross University learning. It has also focused our attention on priorities for enhancement in the short term and in the years ahead.
- 5.1.2. A range of staff and the SRC have been involved in this exercise which has promoted reflection, development and partnership working. The development of the RA has increased our awareness of the effectiveness of our policies, processes and communications systems, and caused us to take stock to identify where improvements could be made.
- 5.1.3. We are confident that this RA provides a good appraisal of our current position. We believe that we have an embedded enhancement agenda that is built on robust quality assurance principles and processes. However, we are not complacent, and recognise that there is much on which we can and will improve.
- 5.1.4. The summary sections below outline the areas we have identified broadly for further enhancement and development.

5.2 *The effectiveness of the University's management of the student learning experience (Section 2).*

- 5.2.1 In response to our reflection and the issues raised in Section 2, the University has highlighted the following enhancement priorities relating to the management of the student learning experience.
- *Embed 'Campus Solutions' as the Student Information System:* this will enhance our student centred approach to support, and provide quality information to the whole community in a user-friendly and robust manner.
 - *Student support:* we will implement recommendations from student advising needs report linked to implementation of 'Campus Solutions' (see above) in order to enhance the learning experience of students. Feedback on student service provision will be improved through the development of more sophisticated user feedback mechanisms. It is expected that Student Services will seek accreditation against an appropriate recognised quality standard to ensure commitment to continuous quality improvement
 - *Implement Retention Action Plan:* our institutional research has indicated key factors contributing to student 'drop-out' in the University. Using Year 1 continuation rates as an indicator and our range of student surveys, we will monitor progress as we seek to enhance student retention and success.
 - *Student feedback:* we will continue to promote partnership approach to improving student feedback in particular through implementing and monitoring the use of the University's standard student feedback questionnaire. There will be continuing work with staff to enhance the effectiveness of staff: student liaison committees and using the outcomes of the sparqs (student participation in quality Scotland) project on the involvement international students in the enhancement of learning and teaching to enhance our approaches where necessary.
 - *Assessment and feedback:* our students have responded well to our work to provide more effective feedback to them about the actions we are taking as a consequence of their input to policy and practice development. We will continue work to improve feedback to students on assessed work and develop an institutional assessment policy (See below). We will develop the Student Voice website further.

- *Employability*: we will articulate agreed high level graduate attributes and work to embed graduate attributes in curriculum review and design linking these to our developing assessment policy and practice. We will seek to promote increased student participation in enterprise and entrepreneurship activity, and develop University policy to guide promotion of work-related learning. We will introduce international placements for students via Club 21.
- *Enhance Learning infrastructure (formal and informal)*: we will review the availability of social /informal learning spaces for students and Improve IT infrastructure further to support the use of technology in learning, teaching and assessment.
- *Embed equality and diversity practices*: we will increase the use of our impact assessment process to monitor progress of our equality action plans, supported by enhanced staff development and training.
- *Staff Development*: we will increase teaching-related CPD opportunities and promote staff development related to the use of new and developing technologies to allow staff to make informed choices on the potential value of using technologies in their disciplines.
- *Collaborative provision*: review the feasibility of including student representatives on the Re/Validation panels for associated institutions; undertake an audit of our current practice in relation to the management of the student experience in our validated institutions.

5.3 The effectiveness of the University's arrangements for institution-led monitoring and review of quality and academic standards of awards, however and wherever delivered (Section 3).

5.3.1. In response to our reflection and the issues raised in Section 3, the University has highlighted the following enhancement priorities relating to quality and academic standards to maintain our continuous cycle of improvement.

- *Course and Programme Design and Approval*: we will monitor the roll-out of the Programme Information Project to all faculties and work to link this system seamlessly with 'Campus Solutions'.
- *Annual Monitoring*: we will improve further the consistency of the annual monitoring process, particularly in relation to postgraduate taught provision, to promote enhancement, and complete the review of postgraduate research (PGR) annual progress arrangements.
- *Periodic Review*: we will continue to work with departments on adopting a reflective and evaluative approach to writing the Self-Evaluation Report for Departmental Programmes of Teaching, Learning & Assessment (DPTLA) reviews to enhance reflection. We will monitor and evaluate the roll-out and operation of Graduate School Reviews.
- *Management Information*: we will ensure that the management information function of 'Campus Solutions' has the capacity to provide an enhanced quality of information for monitoring and review purposes.
- *Setting and maintaining academic standards*: we will undertake a process review of the External Examiner system to make greater use of technology and improve working methods and efficiency, and explore the development of an induction event and briefings. We will further streamline undergraduate degree regulations, e.g., to investigate opportunities for more commonality of practice in progress regulations and other aspects of degree regulations. We will consider the development of a generic PGR Masters Regulation, develop and implement an assessment policy (see above) and review the policy on the use of plagiarism software.
- *Linking monitoring and review processes to enhancement arrangement*: as part of a wider approach to disseminating good practice and innovation, we will develop a mechanism to track the uptake of best/ good practice including that identified and disseminated from the annual monitoring and DPTLA review processes. We will continue to develop mechanisms to feedback to students on the actions taken in response to the outcomes of internal monitoring and periodic review processes and student feedback.
- *Collaborative provision*: we will use and enhance existing web-based material to develop a Code of Practice for Collaborative Provision; produce a comprehensive set of guidelines and

procedures to facilitate the administration and approval of proposals for collaboration; and update the Code of Practice for Validated Provision.

5.4 The effectiveness of the University's implementation of its strategic approach to quality enhancement (Section 4).

5.4.1. In response to our reflection as outlined in Section 4, the University has highlighted the enhancement priorities relating to our strategic approach to quality enhancement outlined below to maintain our continuous cycle of improvement. There will be a new University Strategy developed in 2009-10 for the next five years. This will provide a further opportunity to review and refresh the current approaches to L&T and the PGR student experience.

- *Key features of our approach:* we will continue to reflect on and revise the integration of bottom-up and top-down approaches to implementing our approach to enhancement, drawing in students as key partners in our development. This will be supported by review and revision as appropriate of processes and committee structures and remits.
- *Integration of top-down and bottom up approaches:* we will continue to develop and embed faculty Learning and Teaching Plans, so that these are integrated with the University enhancement approaches and promote sharing of good practice.
- *Monitoring impact of strategies adopted:* We will continue to use performance indicators and gather qualitative evidence of the effectiveness of our implementation of the objectives of the current L&T, R&KT and PGR Strategies and will review these measures as we develop our new strategies.
- *Dissemination of good practice:* we will review and revise as appropriate our approaches to disseminating good practice and seek methods to evaluate its impact.
- *Role development:* we will further develop the role of the Faculty Quality Assurance and Enhancement Officers to promote greater 'knitting together' of quality management processes and, through that, greater promotion of quality enhancement and embedding of our quality culture.
- *Staff Engagement with Enhancement themes:* we will develop a variety of approaches to promote staff engagement with the Enhancement Themes.
- *Collaborative provision:* we will develop a more pro-active and consistent approach to the development of and self-evaluation of the University's collaborative activity and consider the scope for further articulation of the links between monitoring and review arrangements in strategic contexts.

5.5 Summary

5.5.1 The priorities outlined in this section will be integrated into the enhancement objectives outlined in the new University Strategic Plan currently under development and which will be presented to Senate and Court in spring 2010.

5.5.2 We consider that significant progress has been made by the University since the last ELIR, and building on this, that we will deliver the outcomes above during the next ELIR cycle.