



**Analysis of institutional annual statements on Institution-led
Review from the Higher Education sector: session 2019-20**

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Analysis of institutional annual statements on Institution-led Review from the Higher Education sector: session 2019-20

Executive summary

1. Despite the pandemic, it is evident from the annual statements that Institution-led Review (ILR) activities in Scotland continue to be thorough, providing institutions with assurance that academic standards are being achieved and that the quality of the student experience is high and continues to be enhanced.
2. Thirty of 106 ILRs were re-scheduled because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Forty-eight reviews took place prior to the pandemic restrictions coming into place in March 2020. For the 28 reviews that took place post lockdown, institutions moved quickly to alter processes, sometimes in a matter of days. The main adaptation was accommodating online meetings although other changes were also implemented (see paragraphs 8 and 9).
3. Six institutions have reported a number of reviews scheduled beyond the six-year rule: University of Dundee (eight); University of Glasgow (three); Glasgow Caledonian University (four); Heriot Watt University (two); Queen Margaret University (one); University of St Andrews (one). There were no risks identified by institutions across the review activity that were not mitigated. The re-scheduling of reviews that fall outwith the six-year cycle has been subject to SFC and QAA Scotland discussion and approval.
4. While some negative consequences of the pandemic on ILR were reported, such as bunching of review schedules in following years, some unexpected benefits were also emphasised, particularly linked to enhanced student engagement in the process.
5. From the analysis of the ILR annual statements submitted by the sector, three areas were reported as predominantly positive practice; commitment of staff, student support, and learning and teaching practices.
6. Two areas, staff and physical resources and assessment and feedback to students were identified as an area predominantly for development. The former has been reported in this way across the last six consecutive academic sessions. The latter, in 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18 was reported on as being an area of both positive practice and requiring further development but predominantly for development in 2018-19.
7. Ten areas comprised a mix of positive practice and areas for development: student skills; programme provision and curriculum structures; student voice; sense of community; institution-led review documentation and processes; employability and links with industry; professional services collaboration; equality and diversity; organisation and management; and staff development.

8. There were nine thematic reviews planned across seven institutions. Five went ahead, three were moved to session 2020-21 and one was put on hold for non-Covid-19 related reasons. Other types of review activity have been reported by institutions such as internal audits, independent external reviews, and academic partnership reviews.
9. There were 124 professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) engagements, a volume comparable to the previous session. Eighteen PSRB engagements were postponed.
10. Institutions have also reported on Covid-19 related changes to quality processes, policy and regulations and learning and teaching delivery. Amendments made to the annual monitoring process were reported by ten institutions.

About this report

1. This is an analysis of the annual statements on Institution-led Review (ILR) submitted to the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) by each Scottish Higher Education Institution (HEI). The **SFC Guidance**¹ asks institutions to cover a range of topics in their statements: ILR outcomes, review of support services, student engagement in ILR, relevant contextual information and key messages derived from monitoring and analysis of data including feedback from students. This paper summarises the key information arising from the annual statements with particular emphasis on the ILR and related outcomes.
2. For session 2019-20, reports were supplemented with additional information requested by the SFC to help understand the impact of Covid19 (see annex). The impact of Covid-19 on Scottish higher education has been significant affecting provision delivered in Scotland, the rest of the UK and internationally. The HEI annual returns showed that institutions have responded positively and rapidly, implementing changes to learning, teaching and assessment, quality processes, regulations and policy. We acknowledge the enormous efforts of staff and students in managing this period of ongoing challenge and uncertainty.
3. The analysis provides an overview of the themes emerging through ILR processes across the Scottish sector and over time. It is not an exact measure of what is good or more challenging in the sector for several reasons. In line with the enhancement-led approach, institutions use their own review schedules and have flexibility to establish different methods for conducting ILR including having different units of review (paragraph 4). Nonetheless, there is value in reflecting on the themes arising from the institution reviews as a collection. This analysis also shares a range of practice identified within the institutions which we encourage colleagues in the sector to consider in reflecting on their own practice.

Points of important context when reading this analysis

4. The SFC guidance to HEIs on quality states that the primary mechanism by which institutions assure and enhance the quality of provision is through processes of institution-led evaluation and review, referred to as 'Institution-led Review' (ILR) and it is a matter for each institution to determine how it organises its internal processes for reviewing and evaluating provision, provided it follows the SFC guidance and the UK Quality Code. All aspects of the provision are expected to be reviewed systematically and rigorously on a cycle of not more than six years. This means that:
 - the duration of ILR schedules adopted by HEIs will vary to support their individual academic structures
 - the unit of review used by institutions will vary, for example some may use programme-level, others subject/discipline-level or possibly school/faculty- level, to

¹ SFC guidance: http://www.sfc.ac.uk/web/FILES/guidance_sfcgd112017/SFCGD112017-SFC-guidance-HE-institutions-quality.pdf

support their academic structures. Organisational re-structuring will often have an impact on both the ILR schedule and unit of review being used by an HEI

- ILRs and their outcomes relate to particular subject areas or provision and not the whole institution – it is therefore possible that positive practice and areas for development can be identified at the same institution in the same year
 - topics are summarised and, by definition, the full background is not included here.
5. This paper includes the names of institutions where good practice and development points arising from ILR are identified in the reports submitted to SFC. It is equally possible that development points can be picked up in one year when all other provision exhibits positive practice for the same topic. Nonetheless, we believe that by including institutions' names, this report becomes more useful for sector colleagues as it assists with sharing practice.

The impact of Covid-19 on ILR and other periodic review activity

6. In session 2019-20, all 19 Scottish institutions had scheduled institution-led reviews; 106 reviews were planned and 76 of these took place within the session. Thirty reviews were re-scheduled and in three cases this was due to factors that were not related to the Covid-19 pandemic (departmental re-structure, industrial action, curriculum changes related to PSRB requirements). All 30 reviews have been re-scheduled to take place in session 2020-21. Six institutions have reported a number of reviews scheduled beyond the six-year rule: University of Dundee (eight); University of Glasgow (three); Glasgow Caledonian University (four); Heriot Watt University (two); Queen Margaret University (one); University of St Andrews (one). Where reviews have been re-scheduled, including those that exceed the six-year rule, no HEIs have reported risks that will not be mitigated by the monitoring of provision under usual academic quality processes, for example through programme review or annual monitoring. All scheduling changes have been agreed by the SFC and QAA Scotland. The University of Dundee reported that re-scheduling has resulted in bunching of the 2020-21 review schedule and the Quality and Academic Standards Team is working closely with Schools to ensure no negative impact. Five HEIs (University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Napier University, University of Glasgow, Heriot-Watt University and University of Strathclyde) have reported that the re-scheduling of 2019-20 reviews has a knock-on effect beyond session 2020-21 review scheduling.
7. The underlying principles of ILR have been maintained with changes focused on re-scheduling visits and rapidly adapting processes to ensure that review visits undertaken post-lockdown were conducted online. A priority in moving online has been ensuring continued student participation. Institutions have been sharing learning from adapting processes so the sector can benefit collectively. There have been discussions at SHEEC meetings and exchange of ideas through the Teaching Quality Forum. For example, Edinburgh Napier University has published on its website practical guidance on its adoption of online reviews. Process changes reported by institutions include:

- ensuring all participants received technological assistance prior to the review to support their participation; setting-up alternative methods of participation to mitigate any technological issues; arranging appropriate alternate panel members who are fully briefed on the content of the review in case of illness or absence (University of Stirling)
 - where reviews have been re-scheduled and documentation already produced, staff have been given the opportunity to provide supplementary information about delivery since review postponement (University of Strathclyde, University of Dundee, University of the Highlands and Islands).
8. While some negative effects on process have been reported, a greater number of positive consequences have also been shared:
- encouraged more creative ways of working (University of the West of Scotland)
 - the additional time, afforded by fewer reviews being undertaken in session 2020-21 academic session, being used to enhance the preparation support for reviews taking place in session 2021-22 that embed a new ILR process (Edinburgh Napier University)
 - introduced an opportunity for the programme team to provide written feedback to preliminary review panel questions to highlight, and with a view to addressing in advance, straightforward or simple factual points, allowing for a stronger enhancement focus at the event (Queen Margaret University). A similar, existing approach at the University of the West of Scotland, facilitated time for focused in-depth discussions on topics that could not be addressed through earlier correspondence with the review panel
 - increased student engagement and participation (Glasgow School of Art, the University of Stirling, University of the West of Scotland). University of Stirling is considering its approach to future reviews and how virtual participation could add value in the longer-term. Queen Margaret University accommodated student contribution by developing questions for written response and, in some cases, students were also given the option to have an individual or group conversation with the review convener, at a time convenient to them
 - the University of Strathclyde decided not to implement TESTA (Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment) as part of its 2019-20 reviews. In 2020-21 TESTA will be used but amended to suit current circumstances
 - the move to online reviews has resulted in additional work in terms of event organisation, preparation and management which has primarily affected the University of Dundee's Quality Enhancement Support Team and the Chair of each review; this is being monitored as the institution prepares for the seven reviews scheduled for session 2020-21.
9. There were nine thematic reviews planned across seven institutions. Five went ahead, three were moved to session 2020-21 and one was put on hold for non-Covid-19 related reasons and will take place in 2020-21. Other types of review

activity have been reported by institutions such as internal audits, independent external reviews, and academic partnership reviews. Although Heriot-Watt University was not included in the QAA's Transnational Education review of Malaysia, it did contribute a case study to that work. The case study set out the approach adopted by the University in managing its academic provision, focusing on its global academic management structure and approaches to management of quality and standards, incorporating an enhancement approach.

Summary of key points

Overview

10. Despite the challenging circumstances, it is evident from the annual statements that ILR activities in Scotland continue to be thorough, providing institutions with assurance that academic standards are being achieved and that the quality of the student experience is high and continues to be enhanced. This view concurs with the outcomes from Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR). The annual statements show students are engaged with both ILR and enhancement activities. It is also clear that institutions use the ILR outcomes, as well as other information sources such as student feedback from institutional and national surveys, external examiner feedback, and outcomes from professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) activity to improve provision at both programme/subject level and institutional level.
11. This analysis notes an inevitable fluctuation in the volume of ILR activity between reporting years. This variation simply reflects the fact that each HEI has developed and manages its own review schedule to support its academic structures and unit of review (paragraph 4). In 2019-20, 106 reviews were planned with 76 reviews undertaken (compared to 95 undertaken in 2018-19, 130 in 2017-18 and 94 in 2016-17).
12. There were 124 PSRB engagements (compared to 120 in 2018-19, 140 in 2017-18 and 117 in 2016-17) accrediting over 329 programmes (compared to 287 in 2018-19, 319 in 2017-18 and 458 programmes in 2016-17). The PSRB figures also reflect the cyclical nature of these engagements, and no particular conclusions should be drawn from this change in number. Eighteen engagements scheduled to take place in session 2019-20 were postponed. Changes were primarily due to the pandemic but in one case this was due to pending the development of an accreditation framework. In addition to re-scheduling accreditation events, institutions have also consulted with PSRBs regarding learning, teaching, assessment and regulatory changes in response to the pandemic.

Summary of outcomes

13. Many of the ILR outcomes are specific to the provision being reviewed but trends or themes can be seen across the individual reports. Reviewing the analysis reports that have been produced by QAA Scotland over the last four years shows the majority of the themes identified by HEIs through their ILR processes have remained relatively constant although a number of new themes were identified for session 2019-20. The reports indicate some themes continue to evolve and illustrate where topics emerge

for consideration for the first time (for example 'student skills' in paragraphs 27 and 28). Also, each year, some of the topics identified have shifted slightly in terms of being cited as predominantly positive practice, as areas predominantly for development or as a combination of both. Some of this change can be attributed to the different mix of disciplines being reviewed each year. Thematic change within the sector as a whole is more likely to be identified within the ELIR process, although some commonality of broad themes can be seen between the ILR and the ELIR outcomes. In relation to development points, it is important to note that many of these ask institutions to build on existing practice or to bring about greater consistency in their practice.

14. **Predominantly positive practice** was identified in three areas:

- **commitment of staff** - was also identified as an area of predominantly positive practice across the sector in 2018-19, 2017-18 and 2016-17
- **student support** – was identified as a topic having aspects of positive practice and areas for development in 2018-19, 2017-18 and 2016-17 and as predominately positive practice in 2015-16 and 2014-15
- **learning and teaching practices** – was identified as an area of positive practice both 2015-16 and 2016-17. In 2018-19 and in 2017-18 positive practice and aspects and areas for development were noted.

15. The vast majority of **predominantly for development** points are about building on existing or ensuring consistent practice. Two areas were identified:

- **staff and physical resources** – which has now been identified as an area predominantly for development in the last six consecutive academic sessions (reported on since 2014-15)
- **assessment and feedback to students** - in 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18 this theme was reported on as being an area of both positive practice and requiring further development but predominantly for development in 2018-19.

16. A number of **themes** emerge in each year's analysis which are identified by institutions as being positive practice in some ILRs and as areas for development in others. It is important to remember (see paragraph 4) that ILRs and their outcomes relate to particular subject areas or provision and not the whole institution and as a result it is therefore possible that positive practice and areas for development can be identified at the same institution in the same year. Areas for development are usually about building on existing or ensuring consistent practice. In session 2019-20, there were ten themes, five reported in previous years and five emerging as new themes:

- **student skills** – new theme
- **programme provision and curriculum structures** – reported under learning and teaching practices and curriculum design with both positive practice and areas for development in 2018-19 and 2017-18 and as an area of positive practice in 2016-17
- **communication with students** – new theme
- **sense of community** – in 2018-19 this area was identified as predominantly

positive

- **institution-led review documentation and processes** – reported as an area of positive practice in 2017-18
- **employability and links with industry** – was reported on both positively and as an area for development in 2018-19, 2017-18 and 2016-17 and as an area of predominantly positive practice across the sector in 2015-16 and 2014-15
- **professional services collaboration** – new theme
- **equality and diversity** – new theme
- **organisation and management** – new theme
- **staff development** – reported as an area predominantly for development in 2017-18 but in 2016-17 and 2018-19 as an area with both positive practice and development points.

Detailed outcomes of institution-led review in 2019-20

17. The detail included in this section draws on the information provided in the institutional annual statements². It is possible that additional examples of practice could be found from wider engagement with the institutions.

Areas highlighted as predominantly positive practice

Commitment of staff

18. As noted in previous years, this session sees institutions continuing to report on the dedication and commitment, enthusiasm and approachability, of staff, with eight HEIs viewing this as an area of positive practice³. The reports indicate these qualities create learning environments that are professional, collegiate, warm and welcoming.

Student support

19. The sector-wide commitment in providing high-quality student support noted in 2018-19 continues this year and was referenced in 13 reports⁴. Three sub-themes were noted. One was the support provided for specific student characteristics, such as: widening access students (University of Aberdeen and Open University) and those with a disability (Open University); first year and exchange students (University of Strathclyde); and students joining through international partnerships (University of Dundee). The nurturing of a mutually supportive approach across different staff groups was noted to have a positive impact on student support at the University of Edinburgh and the University of Aberdeen. Specific staff role functions were highlighted: Academic Support Officer (University of St Andrews); Personal Tutors (University of Edinburgh); Personal Development Adviser (University of Strathclyde); a Health and Wellbeing lead to support the development of strategies to support staff and student health and

² Outcomes reported by the Open University in Scotland and University of Strathclyde are for review events that took place in session 2018-19.

³ University of Aberdeen, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, Heriot-Watt University, Open University, Robert Gordon University, University of St Andrews, University of Stirling.

⁴ University of Aberdeen, University of Dundee, Glasgow Caledonian University, Heriot-Watt University, University of the Highlands and Islands, Open University, Queen Margaret University, Robert Gordon University, University of St Andrews, University of Strathclyde, University of Edinburgh, University of Stirling, University of the West of Scotland.

wellbeing (Glasgow Caledonian University). The important contribution of professional support staff from outwith academic departments was also noted at the University of the West of Scotland and University of St Andrews (see paragraphs 41-43 on collaboration with professional support services).

20. Two interesting initiatives were reported by the University of Edinburgh and the University of Strathclyde. In the former, a questionnaire on expectations at induction is completed by both supervisors and students. The results are exchanged so both groups can see the differences. This initiative has helped establish clear expectations between students and supervisors. In the latter, first year students are invited to participate in Academic Family meetings, which allows them to form links with students in the years above and below (see also paragraph 36). Similarly, the positive impact of the introduction of peer support at every level of study on the overall student learning experience was noted at the University of Stirling.

Learning and teaching practices

21. Eleven HEIs⁵ made specific reference to this area of positive practice. 'Innovation' was specifically used to describe learning and teaching practices at: University of Glasgow, Heriot-Watt University, Open University, Queen Margaret University, University of St Andrews, University of Strathclyde and Robert Gordon University. Opportunities for inter-professional learning and approaches to placement learning were highlighted as positive practices at Queen Margaret University. Positive practice around different approaches were identified and include the following:

- reflective, evidence-based approach (Open University)
- the variety of teaching provided to students, which enabled them to produce conscientious and confident graduates with great pride in their work (University of Aberdeen)
- greater use of blended learning and teaching approaches were being adopted, with lecture capture technology being utilised to 'flip the classroom' to offer more active learning approaches (Edinburgh Napier University)
- use of 'microteaching', which supported students in the development of their skills, whilst also providing them with significant confidence in their classroom practice and approach to student-led teaching and the benefits students received from learning and teaching conducted by their peers (University of Stirling)
- a model of inter-professional learning (Robert Gordon University).

Areas highlighted predominantly for development or enhancement

22. Two areas were identified from the annual statements by HEIs. They suggest that depending on institutional structures and arrangements for managing review outcomes, institutions use a variety of arrangements to address development points.

⁵ University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, Heriot-Watt University, Open University, Queen Margaret University, University of St Andrews, University of Strathclyde, University of Stirling, University of Aberdeen, Edinburgh Napier University, Robert Gordon University.

The majority of institutions tend to separate discipline or school specific matters from those areas requiring consideration at institutional level.

Staff and physical resources

23. This is the sixth consecutive academic session that the management of staffing resource and/or physical resources has emerged as an area for development, identified in session 2019-20 across six reports⁶. As was the case in the 2018-19 and 2017-18 reports, the main staffing challenge this session relates to using staff effectively, while ensuring equity of workloads⁷.
24. Aspects of development relating to physical resource were fewer this session with only two relating to buildings and space (Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh). With regard to the University of Edinburgh, the lack of space for tutors and demonstrators to carry out marking and meet with students was noted, with the pressures on the estate also impacting on building a sense of community. Comments that related specifically to the Open University (OU) were about other infrastructure matters: faster production systems to enable updating and correction of materials; specialist software needs in the delivery and marking of assessment; and functionality of OU programmes on some platforms.

Assessment and feedback on assessment

25. There were no themes arising across the development points reported by institutions. Marking practices, standardisation and timeliness of feedback, anonymous submission/marketing, quality control for exam production, use of originality checking software, format of feedback, reducing assessment loading and formative assessment were the development points reported by seven HEIs⁸. While the majority of points were for development, the timely manner and depth and detail of student feedback were commended at the University of Stirling. A positive point reported by Edinburgh Napier University was its greater use of rubrics in providing meaningful and consistent feedback.

Additional themes

26. The ten themes highlighted in paragraph 17 are reported in detail below.

Student skills

27. Across nine institutions⁹ several positive points were reported around; the focus on employability; workplace and professional preparation; and embedding skills and graduate attributes into programmes. The contribution of professional support services to this work was noted in reports for the University of Edinburgh and Edinburgh Napier

⁶ University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, Edinburgh Napier University, Open University, University of Stirling, University of Edinburgh.

⁷ Edinburgh Napier University, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, Open University, University of Stirling.

⁸ University of Aberdeen, Abertay University, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, University of the Highlands and Islands, Scotland's Rural College, University of St Andrews.

⁹ University of Aberdeen, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Napier University, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow School of Art, University of St Andrews, University of Stirling, University of the West of Scotland.

University. Glasgow School of Art reported on tutors' acute awareness of the changing nature of skills required by students in the industry and employment. Other points noted in reports were University of St Andrews' skills training workshops for students and the University of Stirling's focus on leadership in its professional programmes.

28. Seven institutions¹⁰ reported on points for development, which were mainly focused on clearer embedding of skills in the core curriculum, clearer articulation and awareness-raising among students of employability/transferable skills. Specific reference to development points on digital literacy were in reports for the University of Stirling, Edinburgh Napier University and the University of the West of Scotland. One reference to a greater focus on the embedding of specific practical skills (production and film) was reported by the University of Stirling.

Programme provision and curriculum structures

29. This area was reported in a positive way by nine¹¹ institutions. Curriculum management that takes account of students' needs and draws on employer expertise was a theme noted in reports for University of Dundee, Open University, Queen Margaret University, University of St Andrews and University of Stirling. Curriculum quality, content, structure, philosophy, diversification and flexibility were reported as positive aspects by, respectively, the Open University, University of Stirling, University of Aberdeen, Queen Margaret University, University of Edinburgh and Glasgow Caledonian University.

30. Curriculum structure was seen to facilitate the sharing of good practice at the University of the Highlands and Islands. The University of Edinburgh reported staff commitment to teaching and curriculum development was evidenced by the sharing of good practice. Subject area cohesion and its ability to draw together a diverse group of specialisms was reported by the University of Stirling.

31. Areas for development were reported by eight institutions¹². In four reports programme or curriculum review was recommended to:

- allow students to specialise earlier and ensure an even spread of work and clear progression between each academic year (University of Aberdeen)
- reduce the volume and prescriptive style of intended learning outcomes (Glasgow School of Art)
- address the shape and balance of the undergraduate curriculum (University of St Andrews)

¹⁰ University of Dundee, Edinburgh Napier University, University of Edinburgh, Glasgow Caledonian University, University of the Highlands and Islands, University of Stirling, University of the West of Scotland.

¹¹ University of Aberdeen, University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, Glasgow Caledonian University, University of the Highlands and Islands, Open University in Scotland, Queen Margaret University, University of St Andrews, University of Stirling.

¹² University of Aberdeen, University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow School of Art, University of the Highlands and Islands, Open University, University of Strathclyde.

- ensure its undergraduate and postgraduate offerings are distinctive and to ensure that non-engineering aspects (such as Vertically Integrated Projects) are adequately highlighted (University of Strathclyde).

32. Other areas of development were encouraging the continued dissemination of findings from the many quality 'test and learn' projects underway (Open University) and supporting staff collaborations across school boundaries to maximise potential for interdisciplinary working and curriculum development (University of Dundee). A Subject Network at the University of the Highlands and Islands was encouraged to develop a vision for the next five years, to facilitate planning decisions around curriculum developments.

Communication with students

33. What information is communicated, and how it is communicated, were the two development themes arising in seven¹³ HEI reports. Recommendations were made on improving communications to students on: programme changes and transition to new programmes; student support services; action taken in response to feedback; the School's sustainability agenda. Other recommendations on student communication processes were on: avoiding over-surveying; lack of opportunities for student feedback; maximising the use of technology to share/communicate with students in a timely manner and establishing clear escalation routes for progressing concerns. In one institution access to, and awareness of, student representative training was a development point.

34. Positive practice was recorded by nine¹⁴ institutions and highlighted aspects such as: responsiveness to student feedback; closing the feedback loop effectively; listening to students; and effective student representation systems. Examples of commended practice included: Edinburgh Napier University's production of poster visuals presenting 'you said – we did' messages, confirming how stakeholder feedback had influenced the redesign of the programme; and the University of Glasgow's effective use of Student Staff Consultative Committees.

Community building

35. Five HEIs¹⁵ reported development points on building learning communities. In some instances development points suggested specific action, for example, building peer-to-peer support (mentor/buddy systems). Other points suggested a focus on community building for specific student groups including postgraduate, online, mature, part-time, and different delivery modes.

¹³ Edinburgh Napier University, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow School of Art, Heriot-Watt University, University of Stirling, University of the West of Scotland.

¹⁴ University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow School of Art, Queen Margaret University, University of St Andrews, University of Stirling, University of the West of Scotland.

¹⁵ University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, Scotland's Rural College, University of Stirling, University of the West of Scotland.

36. Good practice was reported in five¹⁶ institutions with a variety of practice highlighted that was viewed as helping to foster a sense of identity and community:

- Edinburgh Napier University's re-organisation of teaching groups into smaller personal development tutor groupings
- University of Stirling's use of technologies such as video-conferencing were commended for allowing part-time distance postgraduate students to engage with on-campus activity
- University of Edinburgh's varied developments including 'Social Space', which provides a high-quality communal area and is used by all groups within the School of Chemistry. 'Chemunity', which fosters mental health awareness. Academic Families, which connect students across years. 'ChemSoc' and the Social Policy Student societies and a school choir established to break down barriers between subject areas.

Institution-led review process

37. Five¹⁷ institutions reported positive practice regarding the review process itself. Positive comments were on the reflective, evidence-rich, comprehensive documentation produced for reviews, in addition to effective stakeholder engagement. Evidence of an authentic student voice in the documentation produced was highlighted by Scotland's Rural College. The University of the Highlands and Islands reported on the inclusive approach taken by the Subject Network in preparing for the review, particularly the use of student focus groups, which could be shared as a good practice 'toolkit' for use by other Subject Networks.

38. The majority of development points, reported by five¹⁸ institutions, related to programme documentation accuracy and clarity, for example, making learning outcomes more explicit and incorporating unique and interesting programme features. A development point for one institution was ensuring progress made from the last ILR was communicated with staff across the re-organised structure.

Employer and industry links

39. Six HEIs¹⁹ reported development points on employer and industry links. Points were focused on continuing to develop activities in this area, such as: building and strengthening employer links; signposting internships, jobs, and volunteering opportunities and involving a broader range of external stakeholders in curriculum design and development – all aimed at maximising graduate employability.

40. Positive practice in engaging with employers and other professional institutions that enhanced employability and career development featured in seven HEI²⁰ reports.

¹⁶ University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Napier University, Glasgow School of Art, Heriot-Watt University, University of Stirling.

¹⁷ University of Dundee, Edinburgh Napier University, Queen Margaret University, Scotland's Rural College, University of the Highlands and Islands.

¹⁸ Abertay University, University of Dundee, Edinburgh Napier University, University of Glasgow, Queen Margaret University.

¹⁹ University of Dundee, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian university, University of the Highlands and Islands, Scotland's Rural College, University of Stirling.

²⁰ University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow School of Art, University of the Highlands

Robert Gordon University reported on the value it places on the service users and carers that are fundamental to social work selection, recruitment and curricula.

Professional services collaboration

41. Six HEIs²¹ reported positive practice on the topic of professional services collaboration. Comments were mainly about interactions facilitating student support and promoting effective learning. Examples included:

- the collaborative approach taken to enhancing the learning experience of both staff and students, by developing a close working relationship between Learning Technologists and other staff in curriculum development and staff upskilling (University of Edinburgh)
- the excellent working relationships with Professional Support colleagues, specifically Student Enhancement Developer, Academic Skills Advisor, Education Guidance Advisor, Library, School Digital Learning Technologist, Disability Advisor and the School support staff. There was recognition of the positive and proactive role played by these colleagues to support the subject area and enhance the student experience, noting their positivity, evident networks and well-established working relationships. It was felt this was clearly an example of effective partnership working and demonstrated clear connectedness between the academic and support departments (University of the West of Scotland).

42. Scotland's Rural College reported on the positive impact of subject staff engaging with its Centre for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching staff in its review process.

43. For the two institutions reporting development points, action was focused on: continuing to build on collaboration between academic subject areas and professional support departments (University of Glasgow); and for Edinburgh Napier University, a greater focus on effective working between programme teams and the University's Student Futures team.

Equality and diversity

44. Positive practice was highlighted by Robert Gordon University and Edinburgh Napier University, Glasgow School of Art, and University of Edinburgh. Approaches and general awareness were commended in the latter two institutions and specific examples of practice were:

- dedicated staff time to having a Widening Participation Coordinator role and low differentials seen in the School's degree results when these are broken down by gender and ethnic origin (University of Edinburgh)
- the valuable outreach work undertaken to encourage diversity of applicant, including those from MD20 backgrounds (Robert Gordon University).

and Islands, Robert Gordon University, University of Stirling, University of the West of Scotland.

²¹ UWS, SRUC, Glasgow, Napier, Edinburgh, Aberdeen.

45. Development points were reported by six institutions²². A common theme for three HEIs was about staff and student diversification, with gender equality (University of Stirling) and gender imbalance (Edinburgh Napier University) featuring in comments. Exploring opportunities for further inclusivity and decolonisation of the curriculum was a development point for the University of the West of Scotland. A development point reported by Glasgow Caledonian University was on monitoring the effectiveness of the inclusive approach to induction and transition, particularly in relation to care experienced students and those disclosing mental health challenges.

Organisation and Management

46. The development points reported by five HEIs were distinctive and were on: reviewing governance structures (University of Glasgow); defining subject area identity (University of Stirling), developing a School Strategy for sustainable development of provision (University of the West of Scotland); and developing a more effective ownership and management structure to better address cultural differences within a joint programme delivered by two departments (University of Strathclyde) and timetabling and roll out of the Departmental Student Experience Action Plan (Glasgow Caledonian University).

47. A variety of aspects of positive practice were reported across five²³ institutions and again, there were no common themes. Broad points were on; effective and inclusive School management (University of St Andrews) and inclusive and reflective approach to strategic planning with strong commitment to reflection and bottom up approach to developing priorities (University of Glasgow). A specific point for Scotland's Rural College was strengthening Schools' engagement by increasing delivery at Ayr and Elmwood Campuses.

Staff development

48. Four institutions (Glasgow Caledonian University, University of Edinburgh, Open University, University of St Andrews) reported development points on staff development but there were no common themes across the points raised.

49. Six institutions reported positive practice (University of Aberdeen, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Napier University, University of Glasgow, Open University, University of the West of Scotland). The good practice related to staff commitment to development and also institutional support of staff. For example, the University of the West of Scotland's UWS Academy's support for staff undertaking the PgC Academic Practice, and the University of Edinburgh's investment in leadership training for academic and professional services staff.

²² Edinburgh Napier University, Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow School of Art, Scotland's Rural College, University of Stirling, University of the West of Scotland.

²³ Edinburgh Napier University, University of Glasgow, Open University, Scotland's Rural College, University of St Andrews.

What do the institutional statements tell us about the nature of review in the university sector?

50. Despite the pandemic, it is evident from the annual statements that ILR activities in Scotland continue to be thorough, providing institutions with assurance that academic standards are being achieved and that the quality of the student experience is high and is being enhanced. The statements show students are engaged with both ILR and enhancement activities. It is also clear institutions use the ILR outcomes, as well as other information sources such as student feedback from institutional and national surveys, annual monitoring reporting and external examiners' reports, to improve provision at both programme/subject level and institutional level.

51. **Methods of review** – the following changes reported by HEIs relate to planned developmental changes rather than changes responding to Covid-19:

- the University of Glasgow piloted a new method for Periodic Subject Review. The revised approach aims to reduce the burden on the School while at the same time providing it with an opportunity to be more reflective and for the review outcome to be more enhancement focused. The production of a Reflective Analysis was introduced and the format of the outcome report amended to reduce narrative and include the addition of an action plan to monitor progress against the recommendations as well as detailing more explicitly the associated responsibilities of University professional support services
- Heriot-Watt University introduced changes to the Academic Review (Malaysia) process in order to address a number of challenges experienced whilst undertaking reviews in 2018-19 and enhance the process and further align it with approaches on other campuses. Revisions included an Enhancement Workshop as part of the Academic Review process and a change in the composition of the Review Team
- at Edinburgh Napier University, reviews completed towards the end of the academic session incorporated more elements of a revised procedure recommended through ELIR activity. The change in approach aimed to: enhance and make more transparent the evidence-base used to underpin the reviews; broaden out the unit of review to consider full programme suites/subject areas; provide greater institutional oversight of the process and consistency in considering outcomes including ensuring appropriate action is taken at institutional level
- the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland used, for the first time, its Preparatory Review event stage for each of the programmes that will undergo review in 2020-21. This voluntary event aims to help prepare the Programme Design Teams in advance of the full review event, especially where those teams may include inexperienced individuals for whom it is their first periodic review
- Scotland's Rural College implemented two key amendments to its ILR process:
 - the leads from the previous year's ILRs act as mentors for current self-evaluation teams
 - separating subject review from programme re-validation allows reflection on subject review activity to inform programme development.

52. **Student engagement in review** - student engagement in ILR and other learning and teaching and quality processes continues to be a strong feature within the reports. In 2018-19 all HEIs confirmed student representation on the panel. Thirteen²⁴ institutions confirmed that review panel composition included a student member in session 2019-20. The difference is viewed as an omission in reporting rather than a change in process.
53. Institutions reported on other ways that students are involved in review processes: contributing to review preparation; meeting with the review panel and engaging with review outcomes/development plans. Four institutions (Edinburgh Napier University, Glasgow School of Art, Queen Margaret University, University of Stirling) made positive comments about student engagement with review panels where events had been moved online. Glasgow School of Art reported that its forum method of contribution 'felt less intimidating and formal' to students. Edinburgh Napier University and Queen Margaret University reported that students who were more geographically distant could be more readily engaged. University of Stirling and Queen Margaret University had also taken a flexible approach to scheduling panel discussions with students to take account of caring commitments. Seven institutions reported on the training/briefing provided to student review panel members (University of Aberdeen, University of Dundee, Heriot-Watt University, Open University, Queen Margaret University, Robert Gordon University, University of Stirling). The University of Edinburgh provides wider student briefing on student engagement with reviews and resulting action plans.
54. The SFC annual returns provide many examples of the ways in which students are involved in other quality and related processes including programme development, annual course review, ELIR and PSRB accreditations, and planning activities. The following examples highlight some of the HEI developments aimed at strengthening student voice and representation:
- University of Glasgow - a mapping exercise of current postgraduate research student representation in each Graduate School, highlighting good practice, which will inform the development of a new representative structure
 - Heriot-Watt University - the new Academic Co-ordinator role (staff position) in effecting a more integrated approach to student representation across all locations; revised student representation structures at the Scottish campuses, including the introduction of a Student Parliament, and a pilot of a new form of Student-Staff Liaison Committee
 - University of Dundee - a number of Schools have piloted student 'Welfare Champions' who work with the student representative teams to highlight and signpost welfare and academic support services to students
 - Open University - a new evaluation framework is being put in place that intends to ensure there is more emphasis on the impact of the University's student voice

²⁴ University of Aberdeen, Abertay University, University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Napier University, Glasgow Caledonian University, University of the Highlands and Islands, Open University, Queen Margaret University, Robert Gordon University, Scotland's Rural College, University of Strathclyde, University of the West of Scotland.

initiatives by: including both some high level indicators, for example those drawn from student surveys, and support for individual teams and units in evaluating their own student voice activities

- University of Stirling - has taken an enhanced focus on the gathering, and inclusion of, improved sources of student-orientated data and reflection as a significant priority to enhance the student voice in plans for its reformed Annual Programme Review process
- University of Edinburgh - initial feedback on the programme representative system (replaced the 2018/19 class representation system) is more efficient and effective, in terms of the number of students who are acting as representatives and the escalation of issues.

55. Four HEIs reported on improved NSS scores for student voice (Heriot-Watt University, Glasgow Caledonian University, University of Stirling, University of the Highlands and Islands). See paragraphs 34 and 35 for further discussion on communication with students in the context of subject review. Seven²⁵ HEIs made reference to their Student Partnership Agreement (SPA) and the Open University highlighted the importance of its Student Charter. A development reported by the University of Dundee was a move to a three-year SPA and introduction of distinct branding to help highlight SPA outcomes.

56. **Thematic/professional services review** - review of professional services is undertaken in a variety of ways, as part of annual monitoring/review, as part of institution-led review and through planned thematic reviews. Institutions determine the approaches that work most effectively for them and the timescales on which these methods operate. Two institutions commented on professional services review as an element of institution-led review. In the University of Aberdeen's most recent Internal Teaching Review, the extent and high quality of professional services interactions with the school and its students was noted. The University of the West of Scotland (UWS) reported that outcomes from institution-led review continue to indicate UWS Professional Services operate in effective partnership with Schools and programme teams to deliver appropriate and timely services to students. Comments reported by institutions on collaboration with professional services as part of ILR are covered more fully in paragraphs 41 to 43 of this report.

57. Four institutions reported on the outcomes of distinct thematic/professional services review activity:

- Queen Margaret University undertook a review of its Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) provision. Other developments arising from professional services review included the launch of a combined campus and commercial services helpdesk in November 2019, with the helpdesk being adapted to a blended service model as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic

²⁵ University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, Glasgow School of Art, Heriot-Watt University, University of the Highlands and Islands, Robert Gordon University, University of St Andrews.

- Robert Gordon University undertook a review titled 'Enabling Effective Academic Transitions'. A review event did not take place but a methodology to ensure students were engaged in a meaningful way in evidence-based discussions was adopted. The review commended the University for its successful development, over a prolonged period, of support to enable effective transitions amongst its diverse student community as well as the work with partners - particularly Scottish colleges - to understand, implement and strengthen support for effective transitions
- Edinburgh Napier University undertook two thematic reviews focusing on professional support services for online students and on the University's 'fit to sit' and extenuating circumstances processes. The former review confirmed that a high level of professional service support is available to Edinburgh Napier students regardless of location of study and is typically available to online students on request. The review identified examples of good practice where resources and support are specifically available for online students
- The University of Stirling's support services review focused on systems infrastructure to support efficiency in learning and teaching activity and the student experience. Continuing previous work the new placements administration system (InPlace) was implemented, with the first phase of implementation being within the Faculty of Health Sciences and Sport. The University procured a new curriculum management system to underpin and support its processes on module and programme development and approval and ensure a single-source of curriculum information and student access to current and past curriculum information.

58. Although no Student Support Thematic Reviews were undertaken at the University of Edinburgh in 2020, a holistic overview of the outcomes of the thematic reviews to date was undertaken, to understand the impact and wider value of such reviews. The main findings from the review were: student engagement is essential and has been very positive; thematic review provides the opportunity and space to explore issues; and the University has adopted an agile methodology but it is resource intensive to operate. The University agreed thematic reviews would continue to be undertaken but would be reserved for 'significant issues' requiring in-depth exploration that often cannot be achieved through Internal Periodic Reviews or the Student Support Services Annual Review.

59. Sharing practice in institutional evaluation and dissemination of positive practice
 – within institutions there are systematic approaches to identifying and sharing good practice formally through the consideration of review outcomes in a range of senior institutional committees. Committee structures are commonly used to share practice across core quality activities (review and annual monitoring) using both institutional and school/departmental structures. Eight²⁶ institutions set up specific meetings/events to help share practice. The academic development departments of four HEIs were reported on as playing a key role in sharing practice (Abertay University, University of Edinburgh, Robert Gordon University, University of the West of Scotland). The University of Edinburgh and the University of the Highlands and Islands highlighted internal publications as important, for example, the University of Edinburgh has a

²⁶ University of Aberdeen, University of Dundee, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Napier University, University of the Highlands and Islands, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, University of Strathclyde, University of the West of Scotland

Teaching Matters blog.

60. **Annual programme monitoring** – alongside ILR, annual monitoring is one of the foundations of institutions' quality processes. Ten HEIs²⁷ reported adjusting procedures in response to the pandemic. The alterations were focused on timings of key activities including meetings of specific groups involved in the process and reducing reporting requirements or changing reporting emphasis.
61. At sector level, the Teaching Quality Forum (TQF) continues to be an effective mechanism for sharing good practice and discussing developments in the sector. A Yammer discussion form was established in 2020 and has been valuable in supporting HEIs share their learning around responding to the pandemic. During 2019-20, topics for discussion at TQF meetings have included: Characteristics Statement on Higher Education Apprenticeships and quality arrangements for Graduate Apprenticeships; Degree Outcome Statements; UUK work on degree algorithms; and ELIR4 outcomes.

Institutional comments on context and data analysis

62. SFC guidance asks institutions to report on matters beyond the ILR outcomes including institutional context and key messages arising from analysis of performance indicators and student surveys. In addition to reporting on Covid-19 in relation to subject review (see paragraphs 6-9), all institutional reports have provided information on their wider Covid-response in relation to learning and teaching and other quality arrangements. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, and a period of industrial action, HEIs have been engaged in considerable development activities in 2019-20, with Covid-19 pausing some but accelerating and prompting others.
63. The 2019-20 annual statements continue to show a sector that is ever evolving and dynamic in its response to external pressures and opportunities. The volume of change remains high alongside HEI ambitions and aspirations. Institutions have reported many successes and seven²⁸ have commented on league table rankings. The examples of changes taking place across the sector reflect the broad areas referenced in the 2018-19 report: strategy and policy development; senior leadership and organisational restructure; curriculum content and innovations in learning, teaching, assessment and feedback practices; and strategic investment in infrastructure including digital and student facing services. There is a strong emphasis on equality and diversity with eight²⁹ HEIs highlighting activity and achievements. This was a topic that emerged as a Theme within 2019-20 institution-led review activity (see paragraphs 44 and 45).
64. The institutional reports show the refreshing and renewing of strategies was a significant activity across the sector. Ten HEIs³⁰ were engaged in institutional strategy

²⁷ University of Edinburgh, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, Heriot-Watt University, University of the Highlands and Islands, Queen Margaret University, Robert Gordon University, University of St Andrews, University of Strathclyde, University of the West of Scotland.

²⁸ University of Aberdeen, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, Heriot-Watt University, Robert Gordon University, University of St Andrews, University of the West of Scotland.

²⁹ University of Edinburgh, Glasgow Caledonian University, University of the Highlands and Islands, Queen Margaret University, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Robert Gordon University, University of St Andrews, University of the West of Scotland.

³⁰ University of Aberdeen, Abertay University, University of Edinburgh, Heriot-Watt University, University of Glasgow, Open University, Queen Margaret University, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, St Andrews

development or strategic developments that support learning, teaching and assessment.

65. Session 2019-20 was the third year of the current ELIR 4 cycle. All institutions commented on either the planning activities associated with their next review, participating in their review during session 2019-20, or follow up activities, reported in response to their ELIR outcomes or re-scheduling activity due to Covid-19. The Open University reported on its preparations for Quality Enhancement Review, with a visit due to take place in March 2021.
66. The Evidence for Enhancement Theme has been drawing to a close in 2020. Eight institutions³¹ reported on Theme activities. Statements and observations about impact are informing the overarching evaluation report which is drawing on information across the range of institutional, collaborative cluster and sector level activities.
67. The annual statements confirm that institutions have systems in place to support monitoring, analysing and sharing key performance indicators (KPIs). Thirteen³² institutions specifically outlined their approach. In session 2019-20, fewer (five compared to seven in session 2018-19) institutions reported on aspects of dashboard use and development (University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh Napier University, University of the Highlands and Islands, Open University, University of Strathclyde, University of the West of Scotland). Four institutions report on their learning analytics work (Heriot-Watt University, University of the Highlands and Islands, University of Stirling and University of Strathclyde). The Robert Gordon University and the University of Stirling highlighted the Evidence for Enhancement Theme in relation to their dashboard and learning analytics developments, respectively. Beyond data dashboard and learning analytics developments, there are examples in every HEI report of the increasing focus on evidence and developments to make more effective use of evidence through: staff and student upskilling; improved data presentation and accuracy; and increasing the systematic use of evidence.
68. There is variation in the data sets used by institutions, but they typically include information linked to: admissions; student achievement, progression and retention and awards; the outcomes of key internal and external surveys; and external examiner observations. This year's analysis suggests there is continuing emphasis of subject areas, and programmes/course teams routinely and explicitly being expected to, use evidence to support their reflective processes and support action and change.
69. The annual reports confirm institutions across the sector are actively engaged in the analysis of key external surveys including the National Student Survey (NSS) (commented on by 18 institutions), the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) (commented on by seven institutions), and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) (commented on by five institutions). The University of

University, University of the West of Scotland.

³¹ Abertay University, Glasgow Caledonian University, University of Glasgow, University of the Highlands and Islands, Open University, Robert Gordon University, Queen Margaret University, University of Strathclyde.

³² Abertay University, University of Aberdeen, Glasgow School of Art, Heriot-Watt University, University of the Highlands and Islands, Open University, Queen Margaret University, Robert Gordon University, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, University of St Andrews, University of Stirling, University of Strathclyde, University of the West of Scotland.

Dundee reported taking part in the International Student Barometer and the University of Aberdeen indicated that it participated in the Higher Education Academy's United Kingdom Engagement Survey (UKSE). Six³³ institutions reported on survey practices changes as a result of the pandemic. Glasgow Caledonian University, Heriot-Watt University, Robert Gordon University and University of St Andrews reported using additional surveys to specifically measure the impact of the pivot to online learning and teaching.

70. While nine HEIs³⁴ reported on increased overall satisfaction scores in the NSS, the narrative in reports was on a continued focus on addressing areas with lower scores. Although there are improvements reported in assessment and feedback and organisation and management scores, they continue to be an enhancement priority, as does responding to student voice.

71. As well as engaging with the feedback from external surveys, nine³⁵ institutions reported using internal student satisfaction surveys. Other approaches to gathering student feedback include student focus groups and student/staff liaison committees. Other interesting practice and development includes:

- Scotland's Rural College appointing a Student Journey Officer who will conduct a root and branch review of the College's student voice activities
- the University of Dundee's use of Student Voice Support Officers
- the University of Stirling's introduction of early module feedback facilitated through its virtual learning environment
- the University of Edinburgh's production of a student guide on giving feedback, which explains the various student voice mechanisms available to students and staff.

72. Across the annual statements, institutions took the opportunity to comment on their analysis of other data sets, such as:

- recruitment, particularly data linked to widening access/participation (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 20/40 backgrounds)
- academic performance - progression, retention and attainment, completion rates, Graduate Outcomes data. It was interesting to note, that the Robert Gordon University took the decision to develop and implement a destination of leavers survey, six months post-graduation to ensure the University continues to have robust and useful data between the cessation of the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) and implementation of Graduate Outcomes data collection tools

³³ Glasgow Caledonian University, Glasgow School of Art, Heriot-Watt University, Robert Gordon University, University of St Andrews, University of Strathclyde.

³⁴ Abertay University, University of Glasgow, Glasgow Caledonian University, Heriot-Watt University, Queen Margaret University Royal Conservatoire of Scotland, Robert Gordon University, University of Stirling, University of the West of Scotland.

³⁵ University of Aberdeen, University of Glasgow University of the Highlands and Islands, Open University, Queen Margaret University, Robert Gordon University, University of St Andrews, Scotland's Rural College, University of Strathclyde.

- insights HEIs are gaining from their own internal survey and student feedback mechanisms
- feedback from external examiners.

How is this information followed up?

73. This analysis is discussed in a range of sector forums including SHEEC, TLG and TQF. It informs development and enhancement activity in the sector, allowing examples of practice to be picked up and shared in greater detail as part of the Enhancement Theme, Focus On projects or by individual institutions.

74. In 2019-20 QAA Scotland delivered the Focus On project: Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL) in response to TEL being a recurring theme in ELIR 3 Outcome Reports and in early ELIR 4 cycle reviews. This proved to be a timely activity as it supported the sector through its pivot to emergency online learning. Along with an online event on the 1 April, QAA Scotland published an extensive Resource Hub full of practice and tips on using technology in learning and teaching. The hub featured a number of recent Enhancement Theme activities and resources, for example:

- [Developing graduate support in Scotland](#) (collaborative cluster)
- [Distance and sense of belonging](#) collaborative cluster.

The Resource hub is available at the following url:

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/scotland/focus-on/technology-enhanced-learning>

75. In October 2020 a follow-on online event was delivered with an emphasis on hybrid delivery. A blog from that activity will be published soon.

76. In addition to the above, QAA developed an extensive [suite of guidance](#) and provided other support such as webinars, to help the sector respond to the pandemic.

QAA Scotland
November 2020

Institutions included in this report

University of Aberdeen
Abertay University
University of Dundee
University of Edinburgh
Edinburgh Napier University
University of Glasgow
Glasgow Caledonian University
Glasgow School of Art
Heriot-Watt University
University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI)
Open University (Open University in Scotland) (OUiS)*
Queen Margaret University Robert Gordon University
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland
Scotland's Rural College (SRUC)
University of St Andrews
University of Stirling
University of Strathclyde
University of the West of Scotland

*the OUiS is not reviewed in the ELIR method (engages with Quality Enhancement Review) but does participate in Enhancement Themes activity and provides an annual report to the SFC

SFC annual statements on quality

Each statement is endorsed by the relevant governing body. Institutions also share these statements with QAA Scotland officers to inform the ELIR annual discussion meetings. In addition, the statements form part of the Advance Information Set (AIS) submitted to Enhancement-Led Institutional Review (ELIR) teams before each review.

The SFC guidance asks HEIs to cover the following areas:

- providing a summary of the ILR outcomes from the preceding academic year (AY) including main themes, recommendations and/or commendations
- indicate the ways in which support services were reviewed or included in review processes, with regard to their impact on teaching, learning and the quality of the student experience
- indicate the role and nature of student engagement in ILR including at the self-evaluation stage during the AY
- provide a reflective overview, which highlights key findings from the reviews in the preceding year, comments on 'distance travelled' and identified any significant outcomes or actions relating to development needs or to good practice resulting from ILR processes
- relevant contextual information and key messages derived from monitoring and analysis of performance indicators, benchmarks and other collected data, particularly those relating to retention, progression, completion, attainment and achievement, and graduate destinations
- the key messages from qualitative and quantitative analysis of feedback from students (including the National Student Survey and external surveys of postgraduate students) and actions taken/planned as a result.

Reports for session 2019-20 were supplemented with the following information:

- the extent to which you were able to complete your ILR schedule.
- where you have not been able to complete subject reviews, identify and outline any perceived risks and how you plan to mitigate for these
- your plans, as far as you are able to outline at this time, to ensure that the provision is reviewed going forward
- reflections on how Covid-19 is impacting on your ability to carry out subject reviews more generally and any plans you have in place or are developing to manage reviews, for example, if you have made adjustments to your annual monitoring arrangements.