Analysis of institutional annual statements on Institution-led Review from the Higher Education sector

Session 2022-23

December 2023

Contents

About this report

1   This is an analysis of the session 2022-23 annual statements on Institution-led Review (ILR) submitted by each Scottish Higher Education (HEI) as required by the Scottish Funding Council (SFC). ILR is one of five components of the [Quality Enhancement Framework](#) that higher education institutions (HEIs) are partners in and operate under. In its [Guidance on Quality](#)[1], SFC asks HEIs to ensure that their ILR processes operate over a six-yearly cycle, reviewing all their credit bearing provision and the contribution of the Professional Services to enhancing the student experience during this period. SFC's guidance asks HEIs to report annually on their ILR activity, asking institutions to cover a range of topics in their statements: ILR outcomes; student engagement in ILR; review of support services; professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRB) activity; relevant contextual information; and key messages derived from monitoring and analysis of data, including feedback from students. QAA Scotland (QAAS) is commissioned by SFC, as part of its Outcome Agreement, to complete an analysis of the 19 annual ILR reports submitted by institutions to SFC. This report provides QAA Scotland's (QAAS) analysis of, and insights on, these HEI annual reports. QAAS uses this analysis, along with other sources of intelligence, to support its Statement of Assurance to SFC (our annual consideration of the effectiveness of the arrangements for managing academic standards and enhancing the quality of the student learning experience).

2   This report follows the same structure as the 2021-22 report, following positive feedback by both the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC) and the SFC. A section of the report covers each of the SFC topics listed in paragraph 1, and at the top of each section is the relevant extract from the SFC guidance. The report then covers key findings and recommendations. Additionally, readers are encouraged to review the section relating to methods and caveats prior to engaging with the report.

3   In compiling this report, QAAS has reflected constructively on: the current SFC guidance to institutions for producing their ILR annual report; the reporting itself; and QAAS's thematic analyses carried out during the ELIR 4 cycle. The methodological reflections and recommendations in this report are offered to support development of future guidance, reporting and analysis approaches in a tertiary landscape. In the spirit of openness, which underpins the Scottish approach to quality enhancement in higher education, QAAS has retained reference to institutions to support the continued sharing of practice and learning from one another.

4   This analysis is discussed in a range of sector forums including SHEEC and The Quality Forum (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 sector enhancement activity or by individual institutions.

5   During session 2022-23 the sector has had particular focus on the SFC tertiary enhancement topic, *the future of learning and teaching: defining and delivering an effective and inclusive digital/blended offering.* To support this work, the 2022-23 HEI SFC annual returns have been reviewed for references to relevant keywords to identify HEI activity on this topic. This analysis will inform future work on the tertiary enhancement topic.

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[1] SFC Guidance on Quality 2022-23 and 2023-24: [SFC Guidance to Colleges and Universities on Quality for AY 2022-23 and AY 2023-24 (sfc.ac.uk)](#)

Key findings and recommendations

6   This section describes key findings and makes recommendations arising from those findings. These are split between findings and recommendations on the SFC guidance, reporting and analysis and those that are about practice within the sector.

Guidance, reporting and analysis

7   Institutions' reports reflect the way SFC guidance is interpreted leading to a range of report sizes and content. While variability allows the individual context of HEIs to be highlighted, the extent of variability does tend to act to hinder the analysis and interpretation underpinning this report and, in some instances, prevents conclusions being drawn about institutional achievement. Certain of the recommendations made by QAA to SFC in the 2021-22 report remain relevant in 2022-23. Data regarding PSRB accreditation may be offered as an additional area in which greater consistency at the point of collection would result in more reliable analysis: institutions provide this in a range of formats and in differing levels of detail. We **recommend** to **SFC** that consideration be given to whether a template or online form might be provided to institutions for the collection of PSRB data.

Practice within the sector

8   There is evidence of much good practice across the sector: in particular, the commitment of student-facing staff is to be commended, and employability remains a relative strength. However, it is clear that long-standing issues such as feedback on assessment and the postgraduate student experience remain areas of challenge, along with professional service review, which emerged as an area for development during the ELIR 4 cycle. We **recommend** that **institutions** engage proactively with QAA resources designed to support enhancement in these areas, such as those produced as part of previous Focus On projects.

9   Institutions are identified throughout this report to enable sharing of learning on both positive practice and areas for development. As was the case with the 2021-22 report, we **recommend** that **institutions** use the report to support benchmarking their practice and networking with sector colleagues on aspects of mutual interest.

Method and caveats

10   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). 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.' Since 2003, ILR has been one of the five key elements of the Quality Enhancement Framework (the enhancement-led approach to quality in Scottish higher education). SFC guidance also states that 'All aspects of 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 vary to support their individual academic structures.

- The unit of review used by institutions varies: for example, some may conduct programme-level review, while others may use subject/discipline-level or school/faculty review, to support their academic structures. Organisational re-structuring may have an impact on both the ILR schedule and unit of review being used by an HEI. ILR activity may also be used to reflect a

pan-institutional approach, focusing on a theme of particular interest relevant to a broader range of provision within an institution: one example in 2022-23 was a thematic review of work-based learning, which was also subject to thematic review in 2021-22.

- 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 on the same topic.

11   The flexibility afforded by ILR supports our diverse sector by giving each institution a process it can tailor to its own needs. The following analysis shares a range of practice identified within the institutions, and we encourage colleagues in the sector to consider reflecting on these in their own practice. QAAS believe that by including institutions' names, this report becomes more useful for sector colleagues as it facilitates the sharing of positive practice.

12   The findings of this report are based on the information provided in each institutional report and on what each institution has chosen to report on. The contextual information provided in reports varies between different institutions; therefore, examples of practice cited in this report may not be exhaustive. It is possible that additional examples of practice could be found from wider engagement with the institutions.

Summary of ILR outcomes and reflective overview

SFC guidance: provide a summary of the ILR outcomes from the preceding academic year including main themes, recommendations and/or commendations.

SFC guidance: 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.

Introduction

13   The volume of planned ILR activity in session 2022-23 was similar to that planned in previous sessions. There was only one postponement out of 98 planned activities. By comparison, in session 2021-22, five ILR activities were postponed and in session 2020-21, 23 of 99 planned ILR activities were postponed.

14   Although variability in the approaches adopted by different institutions in the manner of reporting ILR outcomes impacts on consistent analysis, it is possible to discern a number of common themes and features arising from ILR outcomes across the sector and from the additional contextual text provided in institutions' reports.

15   In order to give emphasis to key areas, we have focused on the ten aspects of provision which gave rise to the greatest volume of ILR outcomes in session 2021-22, as shown in Table 1, and have tracked these aspects through the 2022-23 reports; as can be seen, the instances are broadly similar in volume across the two years. As a guide to the volume of ILR outcomes in respect of instances of positive practice and of areas for development identified in institutions' reports, the table shows the number of instances of each, and the number of institutions reporting in each case. QAAS note, however, that in some institutions these instances relate to individual ILRs, while in others they arise from the institution's summarised outcome from all of its ILRs. In addition to reviewing the relative volume of positive practice and areas for development, QAAS has also scrutinised the nature of those outcomes, finding that while there are numerous instances of developmental recommendations there is no indication of more fundamental systemic issues.

Table 1: ILR outcomes, positive practice and areas for development (equivalents from 2021-22 in brackets)

Topic	Number of instances of positive practice	Number of institutions identifying positive practice	Number of areas for development	Number of institutions identifying areas for development
Student support	19 (25)	14 (13)	20 (10)	9 (7)
Programme provision and curriculum structures	18 (19)	6 (11)	11 (16)	7 (9)
Learning and teaching	38 (22)	15 (9)	19 (16)	9 (9)
Communication with students, student voice, student representation	20 (13)	12 (7)	31 (27)	13 (11)
Sense of community	18 (17)	11 (12)	10 (10)	(6) (6)
Employability and links with industry	38 (16)	14 (9)	11 (10)	(6) (6)
Equality and diversity	12 (12)	8 (6)	8 (6)	4 (6)
Assessment and feedback to students	24 (4)	11 (3)	29 (15)	15 (8)
Academic and staff development	12 (10)	8 (4)	10 (22)	8 (12)
Placements, work-based learning	11 (5)	6 (5)	7 (5)	6 (5)

16   In previous reporting years QAAS have categorised topics as 'positive', 'area for development' or 'mixed' based on the balance of instances of positive practice and areas for development and number of institutions involved. Recognising the inherent subjectivity in this approach, we moved away from these terms in for session 2021-22 topics. For completeness, we show the trends identified in reports from 2017-18 to 2020-21 in Annex 3.

Post-pandemic reviews

17   In session 2021-22, most institutions (11 of 19) did not report on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the operation of their processes for ILR, suggesting that any ongoing impact was not noteworthy. In session 2022-23, no institutions have reported on any ongoing impact of the pandemic on the operation of ILR, though two institutions[1] noted that the backlog caused by the pandemic meant that there was a heavier load than would be usual. As reported in session 2021-22, some institutions are reporting that they have continued with practices introduced during the pandemic, for example holding meetings online.

Student support

18   Reports from 14 institutions[2] draw attention to findings of positive practice in relation to support for students, while at nine institutions[3] there are recommendations for strengthening practice. Positive practice included: a flexible approach to students switching between full- and part-time study; support targeted at particular groups, such as international students and graduate apprentices; mechanisms to address mental wellbeing; a 'Final Countdown' initiative to support final year students; and an initiative to match students to alumni for support. Comments suggesting areas for development tended to be more general in nature, with a key theme being improving communication with students about the help available, but there were again comments about particular groups of students such as postgraduate research students and those with disabilities. Other themes included the use of data and dashboards to allow staff to target student support.

Programme provision and curriculum structures

19   A total of six reports[4] identify positive comments in respect of programme and curricular structures arising from ILRs, while seven[5] identify areas for development. Examples of positive practice included clear research-teaching linkages and guest contributors from industry, as well as the embedding of skills development activity within the curriculum. Block teaching, and the flexibility to allow students to change programme, were also praised. Many of the comments suggesting areas for development were quite technical in nature (for example, recommendations relating to prerequisites, credit values and grades) but a broader theme emerged of ensuring that curricula were structured in a way that allowed for interdisciplinarity. The needs of postgraduate research students were also raised.

Learning and teaching

20   Aspects of provision relating to learning and teaching draw a total of 38 positive comments in ILR reports from fifteen institutions;[6] areas for development are identified in nine institutions.[7] The examples of positive practice are wide-ranging and overlap with some of the other themes under discussion here, encompassing: the use of an online collaborative model to provide staff and students with intercultural experiences; research-teaching linkages and guest contributors from industry; student support; a student-centred approach; flexibility and the ability to adapt to students' needs; programme development; certain instances of blended or hybrid learning; learning and teaching facilities; a focus on employability within the curriculum; and innovative approaches to pedagogy. Areas for development also overlap with other themes (for example, the impact of curriculum design), but there were also recommendations relating to the learning experience of postgraduate taught and research students as well as the use of blended or hybrid provision.

Communication with students, student voice, student representation

21   While reports from 12 institutions[8] identify positive features in relation to this aspect of provision, there are also a total of 31 developmental outcomes across 13 institutions.[9] When looking specifically at communication with students, there are only two instances of positive practice and 16 areas for development, with the majority of the latter being focused on ensuring that information was up-to-date, consistent and (where appropriate) targeted; the management of students' expectations also emerged as a theme here. In terms of the student voice and student representation more broadly, examples of good practice included a VLE-based repository of External Examiner Reports and Staff-Student Liaison Committee minutes called 'Action on Feedback' and, more generally, reports that the student voice was at the heart of decision-making and evidence that it was being acted upon. Remaining areas for development included the review of staff-student groups and committees to make them more effective, addressing low survey response rates, and closing feedback loops.

Sense of community

22   This remains a relatively positive area of activity, with 11 institutions[10] reporting positive findings from ILRs. Given that the postgraduate research student experience remains an area that requires development in some respects, it is reassuring to note that two ILRs found evidence of strong communities among PGR students. Good practice elsewhere included initiatives aimed at developing a sense of community among online learners, and support for a subject-based student society. At six institutions,[11] the outcomes of ILRs include the identification of areas for development in relation to learning communities. Perhaps inevitably this included a recognition of the need to develop community amongst postgraduate taught and research students. Other recommendations included developing sense of belonging for students based at a London campus. One ILR surfaced the difficulty of building a sense of community/belonging through on-campus, in-person events when students were needing to be convinced of the 'value-added reason' for being on campus.

Employability and links with industry

23   This remains a strength of the sector. Outcomes of ILRs at 14 institutions[12] include the identification of positive features in relation to links between the institution and employers or relevant industries. These include: the embedding of employability in curriculum design; opportunities for students to gain work experience and to engage in work-based learning (see below); seminars and other sessions led by those in industry; industry-linked group projects; and the availability of professional accreditation. There is still room for further enhancement. Six reports[13] identify areas for development, including the need for greater support for students with widening participation characteristics and using 'contemporary approaches' to assessment.

Equality and diversity

24   Positive practices in relation to equality and diversity are identified in ILR reports at eight institutions.[14] For the most part these include broad statements to the effect that it is clear that equality and diversity are high on institutional agendas. More specific examples include the appointment of an Associate Dean of EDI, development of anti-racist curricula, and an increase in female student recruitment in one Division. At four institutions,[15] ILR reports include recommendations relating to equality and diversity: these included recommendations around enhanced use of data to identify where support is most needed, and addressing disparities different student groups.

Assessment and feedback to students

25   Positive practice in relation to assessment was identified at 11 institutions[16] and included: a successful pilot of the Transforming the Experience of Students Through Assessment (TESTA) methodology; specific strategies aimed at engaging first year students; diversity of assessment modes; a system for tracking requests for reasonable adjustments to help identify where assessments may need to be redesigned for inclusivity. At 15 institutions,[17] ILR reports have resulted in a total of 29 recommendations concerning assessment policy and practice. Common themes include: greater diversity of authentic assessments; adherence to stated turnaround times; and improving quality of feedback and ensuring that it is consistent and standardised across the institution. Academic integrity is emerging as an important sub-theme, likely due to the rise of generative AI. It is clear that institutions are revising academic integrity policies, and there were some recommendations around the development of these policies and how they are communicated to students.

Academic and staff development

26   At eight institutions,[18] ILR reports identify positive practice relating to academic and staff development. Themes included: development opportunities for specific staff groups such as supervisors or associate lecturers; support for staff undertaking PhDs; support for Graduate Teaching Assistants; and general availability of symposia, workshops and funding for staff development. Subject- or discipline-specific staff development was noted in two institutions. At a further eight institutions,[19] there are recommendations from ILRs relating on this topic. Support for postgraduates who teach remains an issue; one institution noted a theme emerging around assessment, noting a need to support staff in managing the impact of emerging technologies on assessment, again touching upon the issue of academic integrity. One institution noted a specific need for greater support for programme leaders.

Placements and work based learning

27   Approaches to the provision of industrial placements or other forms of work-based learning, either at institutional or at programme level, attract attention in six reports.[20] One institution has placement options for all undergraduate students, including remote/virtual placements, which were

commended. Another institution saw a commendation for its approach to tailoring placements to individual students in order to ensure a meaningful learning experience. There are ILR recommendations on this topic in a further six institutions,[21] mainly around the theme of needing to secure further placement opportunities or strengthen existing ones; one institution noted that restrictions during the pandemic had had an impact on the availability of placements. In one institution the issue of oversight of placements (to ensure duty of care for students) had been noted as an area for development.

Student engagement in ILR

SFC guidance: indicate the role and nature of student engagement in ILR including at the self-evaluation stage during the academic year.

28   A total of 17 institutions[22] describe the means by which students participate in their ILR processes. As in session 2021-22, this is generally by means of student membership of review teams, with institutions working alongside their students' associations to ensure that student reviewers are trained and prepared. Students may also be involved through specific meetings with the review team, making contributions to a self-assessment document, or being given the opportunity to participate in surveys that then form part of the dataset for the review team.

29   Some institutions identify particularly positive features in relation to encouraging and supporting student engagement in reviews. These include the introduction of a Student Quality Panel Member Scheme in one institution (providing formal recognition of the professional nature of this role), and student reviewers being invited to share their views on quality processes including ILR.

Review of professional support services

SFC guidance: 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.

30   All institutions except for one[23] report on the ways in which professional support services are reviewed, and show a range of approaches are adopted to meet guidance from SFC in relation to the internal review of professional support services. This is in keeping with intelligence from previous quality activity (for example, the 2021-22 edition of this report, and a thematic analysis of ELIR 4 outcomes) which illustrate the different approaches to this aspect of review. The most common approaches remain either targeted (where an institution focuses review activity on one or more specific professional service(s), department(s) or unit(s) or integrated where professional services are represented or considered to varying extents in the ILR of a subject area or cognate group of programmes).

31   Since review of professional support services emerged as an area for development during the ELIR 4 cycle, it is not surprising to see institutions reporting that this issue has been subject to reflection. Ten institutions[24] report that they have recently introduced new methods for reviewing professional support services, have reviewed and changed existing methods, or are in the process of such a review.

32   There are also several examples of cross-institution thematic reviews, including professional support services, having taken place. Themes for 2022-23 include support for disabled students, mental health provision, and online support for the learner journey; a further institution reported on follow-up from a thematic review in 2021-22 on the experiences of Black and minority ethnic

students who engaged with support services.

Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies activity

SFC guidance: describe scope, nature and outcomes of PSRBs activities

33   All 19 institutions reported on outcomes of PSRB accreditations during 2022-23, as shown in Table 3. The data indicate that there continues to be widespread and positive engagement across the sector with relevant external bodies leading to continuing and new accreditation of programmes in a wide range of disciplines. Due to variability in how institutions have presented their data, it is not clear precisely how many engagements with PSRBs took place during the session, though the volume would appear to be in line with previous years.

Table 3: PSRB Accreditations (equivalents from 2021-22 in brackets)

	Number of accrediting bodies	Number of accreditations approved	Number of accreditations with outcomes not yet known
Abertay University	0 (5)	0 (5)	0 (0)
University of Aberdeen	8 (10)	4 (4)	4 (6)
University of Dundee	2 (12)	2 (10)	0 (0)
University of Edinburgh	7 (9)	7 (9)	0 (0)
Edinburgh Napier University	7 (4)	7 (4)	0 (0)
University of Glasgow	8 (5)	7 (4)	1 (1)
Glasgow Caledonian University	15 (10)	8 (6)	7 (4)
Glasgow School of Art	3 (3)	3 (2)	0 (1)
Heriot-Watt University	36 (10)	?* (10)	?* (0)
University of the Highlands and Islands	2 (3)	0 (3)	0 (0)
Open University in Scotland	6 (7)	4 (5)	2 (2)
Queen Margaret University	1 (3)	1 (1)	0 (2)
Royal Conservatoire of Scotland	2 (1)	2 (1)	0 (0)
Robert Gordon University	13 (8)	9 (8)	4 (0)
University of St Andrews	2 (3)	2 (2)	0 (1)
Scotland's Rural College	1 (1)	1 (1)	0 (0)
University of Stirling	6 (4)	0 (4)	0 (0)
University of Strathclyde	2 (9)	0 (9)	0 (0)
University of the West of Scotland	11 (12)	10 (11)	1 (1)

* Data not supplied.

Contextual information and key messages from PI data

SFC guidance: 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

Annual monitoring

34   Institutional reports generally include descriptions of the HEI's arrangements for annual monitoring of its academic provision. As might be expected, there was less focus than in previous reports on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on annual monitoring arrangements, though one institution reported that they had made some modifications to these arrangements permanent in

response to positive feedback.[25] Annual monitoring processes are actively under review in one institution[26] and have recently been reviewed in another.[27]

35   Where institutions report key findings of, or themes arising from, their cycle of annual monitoring, these usually cover both areas of positive practice and areas for development. Examples of areas highlighted as positive practice include: innovative practice in assessment and feedback; initiatives relating to equality, diversity and inclusion; online engagement and assessment; student support and induction; and employability and strengthening ties with industry. Areas identified for development include: recruitment; retention; student engagement; assessment and feedback; infrastructure for learning and teaching, particularly in relation to the digital estate; changes in student attitudes and behaviour since the pandemic; and staff and student wellbeing. Two reports present findings from annual monitoring thematically, rather than separating them into positive and challenging aspects, reflecting that where there is good practice this is often directly related to efforts to address challenges.

Strategic Priorities

36   Reports generally include contextual information about the institution's current strategic priorities and activities intended to address those priorities. While some reporting is merely descriptive of current practice, institutional priorities include: increasing opportunities for work-based learning; preparing students for global employment; curriculum transformation / enhancement; moving towards digitally enhanced blended learning; and retention and progression. Institutional strategies are typically supported by more focused strategies on learning and teaching, student engagement, and digital provision. One institution reported the development of a strategy relating to student mental health and wellbeing.[28]

Feedback from students

SFC guidance: reflection and 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.

37   All reports describe outcomes of and responses to the National Student Survey, surveys of postgraduate students, and to internal surveys.

National Student Survey

38   Reports from 17 institutions[29] include summaries of outcomes of the NSS, in most cases offering an overall view of the level of student satisfaction as shown by these outcomes relative to the previous year and/or to the outcomes of other institutions seen as comparable. Of the 17 institutions, ten express a generally positive view about their outcomes,[30] four express a negative view,[31] and three express a neutral view.[32] Where areas for action are identified, the most frequent being linked to assessment and feedback (in five cases[33]) and to organisation and management (in six cases[34]). These were also the two most frequent areas for action identified in the 2022 results. Organisation and management appears to have become a more widespread concern, having only been noted at two institutions in 2022. While NSS results on assessment and feedback is a long-standing challenge, two institutions report strong performance in this area.[35]

39   Several institutions note that changes made to the NSS in 2023 make direct comparison with previous years more difficult. One institution reported that due to an error it did not receive overall satisfaction scores for its programmes and therefore had gaps in its data.[36]

Postgraduate students

40   Institutional participation in surveys of postgraduate students are reported by nine institutions.[37] Of these, all report that the institution has participated in the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), seven report participation in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES),[38] and others report internal surveys of postgraduate students. Few institutions detail findings of these surveys, but the theme of Community, Resources and Progression is reported by two institutions as an area for development arising from PRES,[39] and one institution reported that sense of belonging had emerged as an area for development in PTES.[40]

Other surveys

41   Institutions also report on various internal surveys of the student body as a whole or of particular student groups, as well as participation in the HESA Graduate Outcomes survey, JISC Digital Insights Survey, and the International Student Barometer.

Findings relevant to the Tertiary Enhancement Topic (Defining and delivering an effective and inclusive digital and blended offering)

42   It is clear that all institutions are continuing to address the place of blended learning in the post-pandemic world and how best to support this. All institutional reports make reference to digital, online, blended, or hybrid provision (though it should be noted that these terms are not currently used consistently across the sector).

43   There is evidence of widespread positive practice in relation to blended learning, including: strategic approaches based on tried and tested curriculum development methods; an emphasis on inclusivity; engagement with the JISC Digital Insights survey to better understand learners' skills and behaviour; innovative use of technologies to support blended learning; provision of lecture recordings and other asynchronous learning materials; Digital Champions and Digital Accessibility Champions; training postgraduate students to teach both in person and in an online context; and, in one institution, an innovative narrative approach to capturing the student voice with regard to the blended learning experience.

44   There is also evidence that there are common areas of development, some of which overlap with areas of positive practice: ILR recommendations include calls for more strategic approaches, greater consistency, and ongoing consideration of the balance between online and on-campus provision. On-campus attendance in particular seems to be a common challenge. Access to both physical space and online resources/support was raised in two institutions.[41] The management of such spaces and resources likely requires quite different approaches from those that were in place pre-pandemic, and this transition appears to be a work in progress. One institution reported a recommendation around building cohort cohesion[42] and another reported specific challenges for articulating students.[43]

Annex 1: Institutions included in this report

45   The institutions included in this report and the abbreviated forms of their titles, as used in identifying them in the endnote of the report, are as shown in the following list.

ABD   University of Aberdeen

ABT   Abertay University

DUN   University of Dundee

EDI   University of Edinburgh

ENU   Edinburgh Napier University

CAL   Glasgow Caledonian University

GSA   Glasgow School of Art

GLA   University of Glasgow

HWU   Heriot-Watt University

OUiS   Open University (Open University in Scotland)[2]

QMU   Queen Margaret University

RGU   Robert Gordon University

RCS   Royal Conservatoire of Scotland

SRC   Scotland's Rural College

StA   University of St Andrews

STI   University of Stirling

STR   University of Strathclyde

UHI   University of the Highlands and Islands

UWS   University of the West of Scotland

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[2] 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 ILR report to the SFC.

Annex 2: SFC annual statements on quality

46   Each statement is endorsed by the relevant governing body. Institutions also share these statements with QAA Scotland officers to inform the review Institutional Liaison Meetings.

47   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

- Reflection and 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.

Session	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Equality and diversity			Mix	Mix
Employability and links with industry	Mix	Mix	Mix	Mix
Postgraduate student experience	Dev	Mix		
Engagement with review processes	Pos			
Institution-led review documentation and processes			Mix	
Academic and staff development	Dev	Mix	Mix	Mix
Student support	Mix	Mix	Pos	Mix
Assessment and feedback to students	Mix	Dev	Dev	Dev
Communication with students			Mix	Dev
Use of technology to support learning and	Pos	Mix		
Professional services collaboration			Mix	Mix
Staff and physical resources	Dev	Dev	Dev	Dev
Quality and commitment of staff	Pos	Pos	Pos	Pos
Research teaching linkages	Pos			
Programme marketing and student	Dev			
Learning and teaching practices and curriculum design	Mix	Mix	Pos	Pos
Sense of community	Pos	Mix	Pos	
Programme provision and curriculum structures			Mix	
Organisation and management			Mix	

Table key: 'Pos' denotes positive practice, 'Dev' denotes an area for development, 'Mix' denotes a mix of positive practice and area for development, blank denotes topics which appear as being significant.

Endnotes (references to institutions)

[1] EDI, HWU

[2] ABT, DUN, EDI, GCU, GSA, HWU, OUiS, QMU, RGU, SRC, StA, STI, STR, UWS

[3] ABD, ABT, DUN, GCU, HWU, OUiS, QMU, StA, STI

[4] ABT, DUN, ENU, GCU, STI, STR

[5] ABT, DUN, QMU, RCS, RGU, STI, UHI

[6] ABD, ABT, DUN, EDI, ENU, GCU, GLA, GSA, HWU, QMU, RCS, RGU, STI, STR, UWS

[7] ABD, ABT, DUN, GCU, QMU, RCS, RGU, STI, UWS

[8] ABD, ABT, EDI, GCU, GLA, HWU, OUiS, QMU, RCS, StA, STI, STR

[9] ABD, ABT, DUN, ENU, GCU, GLA, GSA, HWU, QMU, StA, STI, STR, UWS

[10] ABT, ENU, GCU, GLA, GSA, HWU, QMU, RGU, StA, STI, STR

[11] ABD, ABT, GCU, StA, STI, STR

[12] ABD, ABT, DUN, ENU, GCU, GLA, HWU, QMU, RGU, SRC, StA, STI, STR, UWS

[13] ABT, DUN, GCU, SRC, StA, STI

[14] ABD, ABT, DUN, GCU, GSA, QMU, STR, UWS

[15] ABT, RGU, STI, STR

[16] ABD, ABT, DUN, GCU, GLA, HWU, OUiS, QMU, StA, STI, STR

[17] ABD, ABT, DUN, EDI, ENU, GCU, GLA, GSA, HWU, OUiS, QMU, RCS, SRC, STI, UWS

[18] ABD, ABT, GCU, GLA, HWU, OUiS, StA, STR

[19] ABT, EDI, GCU, SRC, StA, STI, UHI, UWS

[20] ABD, ABT, GCU, GLA, STI, UWS

[21] ABD, ABT, DUN, HWU, StA, STI

[22] ABD, ABT, DUN, EDI, ENU, GCU, GLA, HWU, QMU, RCS, RGU, SRC, StA, STI, STR, UHI, UWS

[23] OUiS

[24] ABT, ENU, GLA, GSA, HWU, QMU, RGU, StA, STI, UWS

[25] HWU

[26] GCU

[27] GLA

[28] SRC

[29] ABD, ABT, DUN, EDI, ENU, GCU, GLA, GSA, HWU, OUiS, QMU, RGU, SRC, StA, STI, UHI, UWS

[30] ABD, ABT, ENU, GSA, QMU, RGU, SRC, StA, UHI, UWS

[31] DUN, EDI, HWU, STI

[32] GCU, GLA, OUiS

[33] ABD, EDI, GCU, QMU, SRC

[34] EDI, GCU, GSA, QMU, SRC, UWS

[35] OUiS, RGU

[36] GCU

[37] ABD, DUN, EDI, ENU, HWU, OUiS, StA, STI, STR

[38] ABD, DUN, EDI, HWU, StA, STI, STR

[39] DUN, EDI

[40] OUiS

[41] EDI, HWU

[42] ABT

[43] HWU