



Outcomes from institutional audit Institutions' frameworks for managing quality and academic standards

Second series



Sharing good practice

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Summary

Overall, the 59 institutional audit reports published between December 2004 and August 2006 find that institutions' frameworks for managing quality and standards are sound. Not uncommonly, existing frameworks had not long been in place or new frameworks were in the course of being implemented. The reports take account of this developmental context.

Many of the audit reports cite features of good practice. Strengths are most often associated with such areas as: documentary guidance on quality assurance and assessment procedures; the role of administrative and academic bodies and officers in disseminating quality assurance policies and procedures; and institutional oversight of assessment arrangements, with particular reference to assuring consistency. Other areas in which features of good practice are identified include: cohesion between the centre and other parts of the institution in managing quality and standards; support for and involvement of students; collaborative arrangements and initiatives; and aspects of externality, including those cases where institutions treat the advice of peers in the same institution as a form of 'internal externality'.

Concerns (expressed in two-thirds of the reports) encompass: the effectiveness with which quality and standards are monitored at institutional level, especially where institutions operate devolved arrangements; the specification of responsibilities in quality management; the appropriateness of responsibilities in quality management; committee structures and their rationales; parity of student experience, particularly in assessment and awards regimes; and oversight of collaborative provision. In many institutions, the quality of the linkage between the centre and faculties, schools and departments is a key to success in managing quality and standards.

Generally, the audit reports confirm positive engagement with the Academic Infrastructure and its embedding in quality and standards frameworks. The areas of institutions' arrangements most noted as having been informed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's (QAA's) *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)* are assessment of students and collaborative provision. Some reports express concerns about institutions' capacity to manage 'substantial' or 'rapid' expansion of their collaborative provision. A number of reports identify good practice in strategies adopted by institutions to ensure effective cohesion between central and local (operational) responsibilities and local embedding of centrally derived initiatives. Other reports, however, have explicit concerns about arrangements in which significant responsibility has been delegated from the centre to faculties, schools or departments, or where departments have preserved much of their autonomy.

A recurrent concern of the audit reports is complexity and lack of clarity in deliberative arrangements for managing quality and standards, with some committees having ill-defined responsibilities. Many recommendations arise from this concern. For example, concerns about the assignment of responsibilities in managing quality and standards relate to potential conflicts of interest within the terms of reference of post-holders or committees, and to the relationship between deliberative and executive responsibilities.

Some audit reports note greater harmonisation of assessment policy and practices. However, many recommend that institutions address variability in assessment and classification processes, as this has implications for the comparability of standards and fair treatment of students. The value of clear guidance on quality procedures and assessment regulations is widely confirmed by the reports.

Preface

An objective of institutional audit is 'to contribute, in conjunction with other mechanisms, to the promotion and enhancement of high quality in teaching and learning'. To provide institutions and other stakeholders with access to timely information on the findings of its institutional audits, QAA produces short working papers that describe features of good practice and summarise recommendations from the audit reports. Since 2005 these have been published under the generic title *Outcomes from institutional audit* (hereafter, *Outcomes...*). The first series of these papers drew on the findings of audit reports published between 2003 and November 2004. This paper is based on the findings of institutional audit reports published between December 2004 and August 2006.

A feature of good practice in institutional audit is considered to be a process, a practice, or a way of handling matters which, in the context of the particular institution, is improving, or leading to the improvement of, the management of quality and/or academic standards, and learning and teaching. *Outcomes...* papers are intended to provide readers with pointers to where features of good practice relating to particular topics can be located in the published audit reports. Each *Outcomes...* paper therefore identifies the features of good practice in individual reports associated with the particular topic and their location in the Main report. Although all features of good practice are listed, in the interests of brevity not all are discussed in this paper. In the initial listing in paragraph 6, the first reference is to the numbered or bulleted lists of features of good practice at the end of each institutional audit report, the second to the relevant paragraphs in Section 2 of the Main report.

Throughout the body of this paper, references to features of good practice in the institutional audit reports give the institution's name and the paragraph number from Section 2 of the Main report. So that readers can readily refer to the relevant audit report, the name of the institution used when identifying references is the name that appears on the relevant audit report on QAA's website. For those institutions where a change of name has subsequently taken place, this is noted in Appendix 1 (page 23), and is the correct name at the time of publication of this paper.

It should be emphasised that the features of good practice mentioned in this paper should be considered in their proper institutional context, and that each is perhaps best viewed as a stimulus to reflection and further development rather than as a model for emulation. A note on the topics identified for this second series of *Outcomes...* papers can be found at Appendix 3 (page 27).

As noted above, this second series of *Outcomes...* papers is based on the 59 institutional audit reports published by August 2006, and the titles of papers are in most cases the same as their counterparts in the first series of *Outcomes...* Like the first series of *Outcomes...* papers, those in the second series are perhaps best seen as 'work in progress'. Although QAA retains copyright in the contents of the *Outcomes...* papers, they can be freely downloaded from the QAA website and cited, with acknowledgement for educational and research purposes.

Introduction and general overview

1 This paper is based on a review of the outcomes of the 59 institutional audit reports published between December 2004 and August 2006 (see Appendix 1, page 23). A note on the methodology used to produce this and other papers in this second *Outcomes...* series can be found at Appendix 4 (page 29).

2 The *Handbook for institutional audit: England (2002)* described audit inquiries as falling into three main areas. One of these was to establish and analyse 'the effectiveness of an institution's internal quality assurance structures and mechanisms, in the light of the...*Code of practice*, and the way in which the quality of [the institution's] programmes and the standards of its awards are regularly reviewed and the resulting recommendations implemented' (*Handbook*, paragraph 11, page 3).

3 The second area for inquiry was to establish the accuracy, completeness and reliability of the information published by an institution about the quality of its programmes and the standards of its awards. The third area was the consideration of 'several examples of the institution's internal quality assurance processes at work at the level of the programme...or across the institution as a whole...in order to demonstrate the validity and reliability of the information being generated by [the institution's] internal processes' (*Handbook*, paragraph 11, page 3).

4 Like its predecessor in the first series of *Outcomes...*, this paper focuses on institutions' frameworks for managing quality and the academic standards of awards as seen through the institutional audit reports. Consideration of the audit reports shows several different approaches to addressing the prompts that QAA provided for its audit teams. These prompts invited them to report on the following:

- the institution's committee and executive structures
- how authority was distributed between the centre and faculties/departments
- how procedures were documented and whether there was something equivalent to a handbook or manual
- the institution's framework for managing the academic standards of awards, including student assessment and how that was documented
- the use made of QAA's *Code of practice*
- the institution's approach to managing the collaborative provision with which it was associated.

The prompts also invited audit teams to provide a clear indication as to whether the framework adopted by the institution enabled it to manage quality and academic standards in a manner appropriate to its responsibilities.

5 As the corresponding paper in the first series of *Outcomes...* noted, this particular section of the audit report (within Section 2) provided an overview of the institution's arrangements for managing quality and academic standards. Necessarily, therefore, the material contained in this section tended to be wide-ranging, and its analysis and synthesis tended to refer to matters dealt with in greater detail elsewhere in the audit report, where evidence was more properly located. This was particularly the case where such evidence derived from inquiries undertaken in the course of the discipline

audit trails. These provided helpful information on many matters, especially where conversations with staff and students at programme level offered insights into how institutional strategies and policies were given effect at operational level. For these reasons, this *Outcomes...* paper is both longer and more wide-ranging than most others in the series.

Features of good practice

6 Consideration of the 59 institutional audit reports published between December 2004 and August 2006 shows the following features of good practice relating to institutional frameworks for managing quality and standards:

Relations between the centre and other parts of the institution

- the institutional framework for the assurance of quality and standards which defines central control and the devolution of authority and responsibility and includes appropriate checks and balances [City University, paragraph 320 i; paragraphs 29-46]
- the articulation of the University College's strategic direction and its management of change [University College Winchester, paragraph 257 i; paragraphs 36-7]
- the maintenance, during a period of considerable institutional expansion, of a strong, collegiate environment across the campuses and partner colleges [Canterbury Christ Church University College, paragraph 242 i; paragraph 42]
- the University's demonstrable commitment to, and achievement of, an embedded quality culture [University of Ulster, paragraph 215 i; paragraph 29]
- the implementation of a unitary model linking all levels of the University in a common quality management structure based on and promoting a close working partnership between academic and support staff [Staffordshire University, paragraph 251 ii; paragraphs 44 and 61]
- the openness of senior managers in their engagements with staff and students [University of East London, paragraph 256 i; paragraph 39].

How the introduction of new frameworks for quality and academic standards has been managed

- the inclusive and collaborative approach to the development of the [Conservatoire's] quality framework [Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, paragraph 134 i; paragraph 26]
- the well-planned and effective transition from school to faculty-based [Quality and Standards Management and Enhancement] systems and the clear and continuing engagement of staff in that process [Sheffield Hallam University, paragraph 202 i; paragraph 34].

Administrative and deliberative support for the management of quality and academic standards

- the proactive way in which faculty assistant registrars support the academic management of faculty activity, and their contribution to quality enhancement across the College [Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, paragraph 215 i; paragraph 35]

- [External and Internal Student Administration Division's] proactive role in the enhancement of the External System's processes and procedures [University of London External System, paragraph 145, bullet 1; paragraph 29]
- the initiatives of the [Quality Affairs Office] in developing the College's quality agenda, including staff development initiatives in collaboration with partner institutions [Goldsmiths College, paragraph 213 i; paragraphs 32 and 118]
- the commitment and proactive contribution of members of institutional and departmental support staff to the enhancement of the student experience [Goldsmiths College, paragraph 213 ii; paragraph 33]
- the sharing of good practice via regular meetings of the departmental administrators with representatives of the [Quality Affairs Office] and the Registry [Goldsmiths College, paragraph 213 iii; paragraph 33]
- the role of the Academic Audit Committee in evaluating the effectiveness of the implementation of University procedures, and identifying matters needing action [University of Newcastle upon Tyne, paragraph 269 i; paragraph 36]
- the identification of, and staff development provided for, personnel who have a key role to play in supporting the devolution of the quality assurance and enhancement agenda as quality leaders, and as leaders in learning and teaching [University of East London, paragraph 256 ii; paragraph 38]
- the engagement of schools and central departments in sharing good practice across the institution, especially the work of the Enhancement Groups [University of Northumbria at Newcastle, paragraph 254 ii; paragraphs 33-4].

Support for students, including research students

- the responsive approach to student representation which promotes active student involvement in University processes at all levels in the institution [University of Nottingham, paragraph 302 i; paragraph 29]
- the University's student support mechanisms, especially with respect to its policies and strategies for cultural and religious diversity [University of Westminster, paragraph 241 i; paragraph 29]
- the work of the [Research and Knowledge Transfer] Centre, especially in its support for postgraduate research students and in the enhancement of a postgraduate research culture [University College Winchester, paragraph 257 ii; paragraph 42].

Documentation and electronic support arrangements

- the clear, comprehensive yet concise nature of the QA Handbook [Queen Mary, University of London, paragraph 245, bullet 1; paragraph 41]
- the accessibility of information to staff and students through student handbooks and the Quality Handbook [University of Hull, paragraph 216 i; paragraph 27]
- the clarity, thoroughness, interrelatedness, management and presentation of documentation that supports the deliberative processes of the University College [Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College, paragraph 238 i; paragraph 29]
- the responsiveness to staff development needs and the high quality of support documentation for staff, in particular the Programme Leader's Handbook [University of Derby, paragraph 294, bullet 1; paragraphs 34 and 136]

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- the processes involving committee minutes and action plans which assist communication across the University and close quality loops [Staffordshire University, paragraph 251 i; paragraph 44]
- the comprehensiveness of the web-based Quality Assurance Manual and associated documents and the guidance given to staff on implementing the procedures that these contain [University of Bolton, paragraph 196, bullet 1; paragraph 22]
- implementation of the University's Assessment Process Handbook [University of Bolton, paragraph 196, bullet 2; paragraph 32].

Assessment arrangements

- the introduction of Assessment Standing Panels...across the institution [University of Gloucestershire, paragraph 316 i; paragraph 51]
- the work of the Assessment Regimes Working Party in the development and documentation of assessment practice [Henley Management College, paragraph 213 i; paragraph 33]
- the effective use of curriculum mapping to ensure the integrity of programme learning outcomes within a modular scheme [Harper Adams University College, paragraph 189 i; paragraph 32]
- the careful use of assignment briefs, moderation and marking criteria to assist in measuring the attainment of standards and providing effective feedback to students [Harper Adams University College, paragraph 189 ii; paragraph 34]
- the use of post-examination board module reviews to enhance the link between learning outcomes, assessment and student achievement [University of Worcester, paragraph 250 vi; paragraph 36]
- the fully articulated linkage of module-level and award learning outcomes and assessment strategies mapping to external reference points [Staffordshire University, paragraph 251 iii; paragraph 46]
- innovations in student-centred assessment and learning [University of Northumbria at Newcastle, paragraph 254 i; paragraph 32].

Externality

- the developing role of the Research Degrees Committee in providing a collective view of quality assurance arrangements for research degrees as evidenced by the detailed examination of each precept in the revised *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes* [University of London, paragraph 165 i; paragraphs 45 and 76]
- the role and use of professional advisers, and links with employers and professional bodies [Harper Adams University College, paragraph 189 iii; paragraphs 36, 56 and 61].

Collaborative arrangements and institutional cooperation

- the comprehensive quality assurance process that supports collaborative provision [University of Surrey, paragraph 221, bullet 1; paragraphs 32 and 120-6]

- the approach to the establishment of the Hull York Medical School, in particular the establishment of effective and innovative collaborative policies and procedures [University of Hull, paragraph 216 ii; paragraph 29]
- the joint venture with Kingston University which allows transfer of good practice in quality assurance through joint membership of committees and shared procedures and practice [St George's Hospital Medical School, paragraph 188 i; paragraph 33]
- the close and productive working relationships with collaborative partners, which are closely integrated into the quality and standards infrastructure at institutional and departmental level [University of Worcester, paragraph 250 v; paragraphs 128 and 204].

Themes

7 From the institutional audit reports it is possible to identify a group of overlapping themes, or factors, which determine the adequacy or otherwise of institutional frameworks for managing quality and academic standards.

These factors/themes include:

- the centre's links with and overview of local operations
- local ownership of policy and procedure
- the clarity and appropriateness of responsibilities
- the effectiveness of committee structures
- consistency and parity in student experience
- externality and external reference points
- development and evaluation of quality management systems.

8 The following sections in this paper make some separation of the above factors or themes, while reflecting their connections. Hence they address:

- strategies and frameworks, further subdivided to cover
 - vertical links
 - horizontal links
 - review and evaluation
- structures and responsibilities, further subdivided to cover
 - committees
 - posts
 - deliberative and executive responsibilities
- managing academic standards
- guidance and support arrangements
- externality
- collaborative provision.

Strategies and frameworks

9 As described in the audit reports, institutional self-evaluation documents (self-evaluations) generally reflected a view of quality management as a compact between the deliverers of learning and the institution, with the latter being responsible for regulatory scrutiny. Many self-evaluations were stated in the relevant audit reports to refer to devolution (or delegation) of operational responsibilities in quality management from central to local bodies, and some to increasing devolution. One was cited as speaking of devolution as 'an incremental and continuing process'. Self-evaluations might identify this approach with aims of strengthening local and individual ownership and a collegial spirit. On the other hand, a range of institutions in which subject departments had some freedoms in managing matters of academic quality and standards had enhanced the purview of central regulation to bring about greater uniformity in practices and criteria. In either case, a common focus of self-evaluations was the balance to be struck between the scope given to local responsibility and the central monitoring oversight of the conduct of that responsibility in assuring quality and standards institution-wide.

10 A substantial majority of audit reports reached the judgement that, overall, institutional frameworks were sound and fit for purpose. However, this did not preclude them from giving advice on particular elements needing attention within these frameworks. Positive judgements emerged from a number of key findings relating to:

- balance and cohesion in the relationship between central and local responsibilities
- transparency of the institutional framework for managing quality and standards
- the clarity and effectiveness of central oversight of quality management across the institution
- consistency in assessment and classification methods
- the general consistency of faculty/school arrangements with institutional guidelines and requirements
- the dissemination and embedding of good practice in the assurance of quality and standards.

The prevalence of devolved or delegated responsibilities supplied a regular context for these findings.

11 One report identified as a feature of good practice 'the implementation of a unitary model linking all levels of the University in a common quality management structure based on and promoting a close working partnership between academic and support staff' [Staffordshire University, paragraph 61]. Another concluded that 'the framework represented good practice in its definition of central control and the devolution of authority and responsibility and the inclusion of appropriate checks and balances' [City University, paragraph 46]. Yet another indicated that the institution's committee structure supported its devolved approach to quality management 'with strong lines of vertical responsibility [which had] the capacity to strike an appropriate and effective balance between local autonomy and central oversight'.

12 In a further example, an institutional framework was judged to be 'clear and comprehensive, with clear terms of reference available to committees and a generally good understanding of roles and responsibilities in evidence at all levels'. Another report concluded that an institutional framework was 'well designed and generally enabled the [institution] to maintain "firm central control" in the monitoring of quality and standards'; similar comments could be found in several other reports. A further report commented on how a framework was effective 'particularly in securing the institutional overview of quality and standards'. One institution's 'inclusive and collaborative approach' to the development of its quality framework was a feature of good practice [Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, paragraph 26]. In another institution, the restructuring of schools into faculties had been accompanied by effective transition of the systems for managing quality and standards. The process, in which there had been 'clear and continuing engagement of staff', also represented good practice [Sheffield Hallam University, paragraph 34].

13 From the audit reports, instances of dissemination and embedding of good practice in the management of quality and standards included evidence that one institutional framework was 'engaging a significant number of staff in quality processes that resulted in a commitment to, and achievement of, a strong quality culture across the University' [University of Ulster, paragraph 29]. In another case, support for the role of school quality leaders both within and beyond their schools in 'disseminating good practice across the University' was noted as a feature of good practice in itself [University of East London, paragraph 38].

14 One institution's 'responsive approach to student representation', which was viewed as having promoted 'active student involvement in University processes at all levels in the institution', including quality management and the development of quality assurance policy, was noted as a feature of good practice [University of Nottingham, paragraph 29].

15 Concerns in audit reports about institutional frameworks focused on:

- the need for improved central oversight of the management of quality and standards, with particular reference to devolved arrangements and the assurance of consistency
- the specification of responsibilities in quality management
- the appropriateness of responsibilities in quality management
- committee systems and their rationales.

16 Regarding oversight and consistency, for example, one institution was recommended to 'promote a more effective central oversight of the operation of the [institution's] devolved framework for academic quality and academic standards, thereby allowing the [institution] to be assured that any variability in the application of the relevant policies and procedures is within defined boundaries'. Another was recommended to 'review and develop the institutional oversight of quality and standards so that [it] can assure itself that the framework is fit for purpose, that it operates effectively and is implemented consistently across the institution'. Meanwhile, one report which noted that faculties exercised 'considerable flexibility'

in dealing with the quality management processes delegated to them judged that such flexibility presented a challenge to institutional oversight and the commitment to ensuring a comparable student experience across the institution. The report recommended the institution to keep the balance between conformity and flexibility in quality management under continuing review.

17 In the context of the assessment of students, one audit report recommended the relevant institution to 'review its assessment policies and procedures to ensure clarity and consistency of application'. Another recommended the institution to 'expedite the implementation of its common awards framework', and 'ensure consistency in assessment practices for students'. In another case, the report recommended the institution to ensure that there was 'central oversight and assurance in the operation of its assessment boards'. For further consideration of assessment and awards frameworks, see paragraph 38 below.

18 A number of audit reports linked the need for clearer definition of responsibilities in quality management with matters to do with the deliberative system, executive authority and roles of post-holders at both institutional and local levels. In some instances, the need to review the appropriateness of responsibilities was linked with seemingly incompatible combinations of role within a deliberative body or post, or with imbalances between deliberative and executive functions. Responsibilities in quality management, and the responsibilities of committees and committee systems, are discussed in paragraphs 26-32 below.

Vertical links

19 The corresponding paper in Series 1 of *Outcomes...* noted the critical role played in frameworks by the strength of vertical links (see paragraphs 11-18 of that paper). The audit reports published between November 2004 and August 2006 also contained numerous references to 'mirroring' of institutional deliberative structures at faculty and school level. In addition, some referred to mirroring of management structures. More widely, a number of reports considered the integrative role in quality management frameworks of deans, associate deans or other senior post-holders with quality remits in faculties and/or schools.

20 Two separate audit reports commented that the respective institutions had provided for each school committee responsible for maintaining quality and standards to be chaired by an associate dean, who was also a member of the equivalent institutional committee. In this context, one of the reports noted that associate deans 'provide important vertical links between school and [institutional] committees'; the other remarked that they 'work very closely with central academic quality staff', ensuring 'a shared approach to quality assurance across the [institution]'. Similarly, other reports commented on provision for cross-membership of institutional and faculty or school quality committees, or on the conferring of membership of the institution-level committee on post-holders with operational responsibilities for quality and standards in faculties or schools. One report noted the developing quality management role of faculties at the interface between the centre and departments. Others commented on vertical linkages in executive responsibilities for quality management extending down from institutional to departmental levels, and between faculty and central managers with these responsibilities.

21 Some audit reports, reviewing the effectiveness of vertical links, gave instances of breaks or frailties in their operation. One, for example, found that the lack of a formal link between institutional bodies and school committees had diminished the effectiveness of the central quality committee's coordinating role. The concern of another report was with the ability of deans to fulfil their responsibility for overseeing quality when departments had 'reporting lines...directly to central committees', including the institutional quality committee, of which deans were not necessarily members. In this instance, the report recommended reviewing the nature of the relationship between the roles of deans and heads of department, and how well the institution's reporting structures assisted deans in the exercise of their responsibilities.

22 Again referring to vertical links, another audit report raised the question of deans' formal responsibilities for quality assurance as against the de facto role that heads of department played in managing quality and standards. In this case, the formal responsibilities of heads of departments for quality and standards were unstated, but they had regular meetings concerning quality management with link members of the institutional executive. Two reports noted the absence of formal reporting arrangements between faculty boards and the centre. One was concerned about the weakening of central oversight of quality assurance by the length of the 'chain of delegation' through a series of links.

Horizontal links

23 Many of the audit reports commented on the support given to hierarchical structures by horizontal or networking initiatives involving academic and administrative staff, both separately and in combination. Thus, academic staff - particularly those assigned quality management responsibilities in their schools or faculties - might meet (with varying degrees of formality) in cross-institutional groups, or act as 'external' members of each other's quality committees or panels. Several reports noted cross-membership of institutional quality committees and learning and teaching committees as a liaison device. One identified good practice in a collaboration between two institutions, which 'allowed transfer of good practice in quality assurance through joint membership of committees and shared procedures' [St George's Hospital Medical School, paragraph 33].

24 Faculty or school administrative staff with quality management responsibilities also commonly met cross-institutionally, as well as with central quality administrators. One report commented on the linkage of administrative and academic staff, at institutional and local levels, in coordinating quality management and disseminating good practice [University of Northumbria at Newcastle, paragraphs 33-4].

Review and evaluation

25 As shown by the above examples, audit reports might recommend that institutions review overall systems or frameworks, particularly in cases where the system or framework had recently been introduced. Institutions might be recommended to review mechanisms in the light of structural change or, more generally, to evaluate their quality management strategies and arrangements. One report noted an institution undertaking 'regular reviews of the effectiveness of its

governance structures', such as one then being conducted on the 'effectiveness and consistency of arrangements in the faculties'. Another noted that an institution had established an academic audit committee 'to act as an independent committee in order to audit all University mechanisms and processes that contribute to the quality of the student learning experience and the standard of awards'. The report found the committee: 'a valuable addition to the University's quality management structure, which enabled it to evaluate the effectiveness of implementation of its procedures and identify action points for [institutional] consideration' [University of Newcastle upon Tyne, paragraph 36].

Structures and responsibilities

Committees

26 Features of institutional frameworks commonly singled out for concern in the audit reports included undue complexity and lack of transparency in the committee structure, with ill-defined responsibilities, making for inefficient and ineffective processes. In many cases, such concern was associated with recommendations. For example, one institution's committee structure was noted as being too complex, to involve substantial duplication in membership, and to lack clarity about committees' relationships, responsibilities and lines of accountability. The audit report recommended that the academic board's responsibilities for academic strategy, quality assurance and academic standards be more clearly stated. In another instance, the respective roles of an academic board and its quality committee needed clearer definition regarding both quality assurance and more generally. The same institution operated a complex structure of sub-committees within which relationships were stated to be elusive. Overall, the audit report recommended the institution to redefine the responsibilities and reporting lines of its committees and other deliberative bodies.

27 One audit report noted evidence of duplication of reporting among committees and a slow procedural tempo. It recommended that the institution 'streamline' its committee system in the interests of the effective and efficient conduct of its business. In another institution, discrepancies in institutional versions of its committee structure and reporting arrangements, as well as overlap in the composition of committees, led to a recommendation in the audit report that the structure be rationalised to ensure its effective operation, 'with clear lines of communication'. Some reports commented on the need for more systematic recording of action taken by committees in response to issues, monitoring of action taken, and evidence of its effectiveness. In this connection, one report identified good practice in 'the processes involving committee minutes and action plans which assist communication across the University and close quality loops' [Staffordshire University, paragraph 44].

28 Several audit reports commented on duplication and confusion of responsibilities between the remits of substantive committees and ad hoc working groups. Noting the potential for duplication, overlaps or misplacement of responsibilities, one report recommended to the institution concerned that it review the structure of committees and working groups, with a view to efficiency and to ensuring that 'key aspects of quality and standards [are] not being placed inappropriately with working groups of limited membership'. Another report considered that an institution's framework for the management of quality and standards would be enhanced if it were to 'clarify and codify the relationship between informal working groups and formal deliberative bodies'.

29 In some cases, risks to the fulfilment of responsibilities for quality and standards, whether by institutional or local committees, were linked with the volume of work being undertaken by a small core of staff. One audit report recommended that a review of the institution's committee structure was needed to ensure that the structure fulfilled its regulatory and deliberative functions in an effective, economical way and took account of the perceived working difficulties of the central quality committee as the arrangements stood. Another institution, in the process of delegating a series of quality assurance functions to school boards, was recommended to monitor its school committee structure and, in particular, the volume of work of the school boards, to ensure their ability to fulfil these quality functions.

30 The matter of variability in committee arrangements below institutional level was discussed in many audit reports. In relation to devolved systems, a number of reports discussed the allowance within institutional frameworks of some local flexibilities in structures and procedures, which might be linked with subject needs or the disposition of programmes. Others indicated that the flexibilities permitted were too considerable to safeguard comparability in student experience, and recommended more effective central oversight of local practices.

Posts

31 Arrangements for leadership of institutional quality management gave rise to a number of recommendations as well as advice. In terms of federal institutions with several constituent members, some reports drew attention to the lack of any clearly designated staff member with overall responsibility for developing and overseeing quality assurance systems. One such report recommended that, 'to ensure the effective and secure management of the framework' the institution should 'clarify the leadership and managerial responsibilities of all senior academic and administrative staff'. Another report noted that maintaining quality and standards in the institution was 'a matter of partnership between deans and heads [of department]', and that 'no single office-holder' held delegated responsibility for overall management of the applicable procedures. Elsewhere, another report commented on the need for clarification of the 'respective lines of responsibility' of two senior post-holders, each with wide quality management remits.

32 In two instances, audit reports indicated an undue concentration of functions, particularly chairing of key institutional committees, in the post responsible for quality and standards. One commented that such a concentration 'narrowed the area of executive accountability' and had the potential to weaken broader ownership. A third report recommended reconsideration of an arrangement in which responsibility for quality assurance, quality enhancement and the development of undergraduate and postgraduate schemes was combined in a single post-holder and a committee chaired by that post-holder. In this case, the report noted the potential conflict of interest between the regulatory and developmental responsibilities of the particular post, with evidence that the institutional priority being given to enhancement and development was coupled with a 'lack of rigour' regarding management of the standards of awards. Finally, noting an institution's policy of electing the chair of its quality assurance committee, another report proposed that consideration be given to appointment from a senior substantive post, since it was 'particularly important for the chair to have the necessary authority and independence' to ensure the committee's effectiveness.

Deliberative and executive responsibilities

33 The *Outcomes...* paper on institutional frameworks in the first series, which considered the 70 institutional audit reports published between 2003 and November 2004, found that the relationship between deliberative and executive responsibilities in the context of quality management raised issues largely for specialist institutions (see paragraph 32 of that paper). In the 59 audit reports published from December 2004 to August 2006, issues were raised almost entirely in respect of large general institutions.

34 Several of the audit reports published between December 2004 and August 2006 included recommendations regarding apparent imbalances or confusions in deliberative and executive responsibilities. Thus, upward reporting lines in one institution mostly converged on executive bodies at both institutional and faculty levels, even while deriving from academic committees or processes. In particular, the academic board's link with quality management appeared tenuous, and the report expressed uncertainty 'as to the extent that the [academic board] is in a position to be assured that the standards and quality of awards made in its name reach minimum threshold standards or better'. The institution concerned was recommended to review the reporting line to the academic board. It was also recommended to review 'the balance of roles of deliberative and executive arrangements' in developing its committee and management frameworks, while strengthening the role of the academic board and its sub-committees, especially as this concerned representation of the wider academic community's views on academic matters.

35 Another audit report found that the distinction between executive and deliberative functions inscribed in the institution's articles of government was 'incompletely maintained in...practice'. In this case, an imbalance between executive and deliberative roles in quality management was linked with a lack of clarity about the formal standing within the executive or deliberative structures of key groups reporting on academic standards and quality matters through the executive route. The report recommended the institution to consider whether these groups were sufficiently independent of management to ensure the maintenance of standards on behalf of the institution's senior deliberative body. It also observed the confined and confining terms of reference of the central institutional committee for quality assurance, and that much of that committee's remit was duplicated by various ad hoc working groups. The report recommended that the institution review and monitor the structure of committees and working groups to provide clear terms of reference and lines of reporting which could be understood by staff at all levels.

36 Other audit reports also addressed the need for reappraisal or clarification of the systemic relationship between executive and deliberative roles in quality management. This applied particularly to the relationship between the senior executive body and the academic board in cases where the latter's overview of quality and standards was open to question.

37 A number of audit reports commented on institutional rationales for - and the working of - the interface between executive and deliberative responsibilities. Some noted institutional policies of appointing senior executive members to chair key

deliberative bodies as an integrating measure. One report referred to the executive constituency within an academic board, which served as one of the means of linking the two arms. Another report noted an institution's establishment of an 'academic directorate' composed of academic and administrative staff and including members of the senior executive. One reason for this arrangement (as set out in the directorate's remit) was to link the executive and deliberative roles, including in strategic matters.

Managing academic standards

38 A key consideration for the audit reports when addressing the institutional management of academic standards was the consistency of assessment and classification methods obtained through undergraduate and postgraduate regulatory frameworks and their application. Many audit reports observed a process of review and change in assessment policy leading to greater harmonisation of practices and thus greater equity in student experience. Such reviews were often specifically associated with input from the Academic Infrastructure.

39 One audit report, for example, considered revision of a regulatory framework to have brought about a 'higher level of consistency and equity of treatment in student progression and achievement'. New academic regulations in another institution were said by the relevant audit report to meet such aims as equitable treatment of students and rigorous control of assessment and academic standards, while also encouraging progression and achievement.

40 A review of the assessment regulations in another institution had sought to establish an appropriate relationship between consistency and flexibility, and a framework 'within which faculties [could] determine local practice'. In a further institution, an extensive review undertaken in the light of a previous QAA audit report and the Academic Infrastructure had led, among other things, to the introduction of a unified assessment regime and generic grading criteria onto which subject criteria could be mapped. Advances made by institutions in the employment of assessment criteria, particularly generic criteria, were the subject of positive comments in a number of reports.

41 Several audit reports commented on the valuable role of institutional handbooks in codifying assessment regulations and procedures and disseminating them in a clear form to students. In one example, the institution's handbook provided guidance on such activities as moderation, marking and feedback to students 'within a framework suitable to the different subject areas', and its implementation represented good practice [University of Bolton, paragraph 32]. Another institution's well-established policy on assessment information for students dealt with such aspects as assessment methods, course components, submission deadlines, feedback on assessed work, and the requirements governing progression and final awards. In both these cases, the evidence from discipline audit trails revealed student satisfaction with assessment procedures, including feedback. Another report noted the institution's use of an assessment handbook as one of the prime means of assuring consistency in assessment.

42 The careful use by one institution of assignment briefs, moderation and marking criteria to assist in measuring standards and providing effective feedback to students was a feature of good practice, as was its mapping of module learning outcomes on

to programme outcomes, thereby ensuring 'the integrity of programme learning outcomes within a modular scheme' [Harper Adams University College, paragraphs 32 and 34]. Another institution's 'fully articulated linkage of module-level and award learning outcomes and assessment strategies mapping to external reference points' was also judged to be a feature of good practice [Staffordshire University, paragraph 46].

43 Several reports noted as good practice institutional initiatives designed to provide an effective overview of the assurance of academic standards in the conduct of assessment. One institution employed a system of post-examination board module reviews, carried out by departmental or subject groups, to 'assist in the application of consistent standards' and 'enhance the link between learning outcomes, assessment and student achievement' [University of Worcester, paragraph 36]. Another had established assessment standing panels to scrutinise the academic appropriateness of examination papers in such aspects as intended learning outcomes and validated module descriptors. The audit report concluded that these panels provided the institution with a useful means of enhancing the consistency with which its assessment processes were conducted across the faculties [University of Gloucestershire, paragraphs 51-2].

44 One institution had employed a cross-institutional working group with the remit of providing guidance on assessment practice for the academic board, the board of examiners and staff as a whole, the work of which was seen as good practice [Henley Management College, paragraph 33]. In another case, institutional arrangements for annual review of the operation of assessment processes and regulations, and linked innovations in assessment and learning, were seen as representing good practice [University of Northumbria at Newcastle, paragraph 32].

45 Despite such evidence of a wide range of harmonising initiatives, the audit reports contained numerous recommendations to address continuing variability in assessment and classification processes, and the implications of this variability for comparability of standards and the equitable treatment of students. The continuing institutional employment of a plurality of awards frameworks and classificatory systems was found to involve variability in such matters as classification borderlines, pass/fail boundaries, year weightings, progression rules, and the use of academic discretion. In such cases, recommendations were directed to the need both to establish a common awards framework and to monitor consistency in the application of classification systems revised in the interests of commonality.

46 In some audit reports, the development of more unified frameworks was seen to have left continuing scope for inconsistencies in rules for progression and classification, and in the use of academic discretion by boards of examiners. Some reports recommended institutional monitoring of the exercise of discretion in progression and classification outcomes. One recommended the development of institutional guidelines to 'structure and confine' the exercise of discretion in such matters as interpreting plagiarism regulations, extenuating circumstances and assessing candidates with disabilities, as well as the introduction of a unified penalty system in the case of reassessment.

47 Other aspects of assessment practices linked with variability and giving rise to recommendations or advice included:

- the articulation of links between learning outcomes and assessment modes and criteria
- the alignment of assessment criteria and learning outcomes with the level of study
- the lack of generic guidelines on assessment criteria
- the management of late submissions
- the management of compensation
- information provided to students, including handbooks and programme specifications
- the internal moderation of assessment results
- the quality and timeliness of assessment feedback.

48 Some reports contained recommendations on the definition and exercise of responsibility for academic standards by institutional bodies. One institution was recommended to strengthen the terms of reference of its learning and teaching committee by making 'specific references to the committee's responsibility and authority for safeguarding academic standards', and by explicit indications of the ways in which it discharged this responsibility and exercised this authority. Another report noted 'considerable variation' in the arrangements for chairing assessment boards and concluded that they were 'insufficiently robust' to allow the academic board full oversight and assurance in the operation of the institution's assessment boards.

49 A further audit report raised a series of concerns about institutional treatment of the role of external examiners. These included: arrangements for external examiners' access to assessment evidence (on which judgement of student achievement depended); and institutional oversight of and support for the processing of external examiners' reports, including the provision of 'adequate and complete responses' to those reports. In the case of a federal institution, a series of recommendations addressed the centre's accountability for the use made of its degree-awarding powers and the discharge by constituent colleges of their collective responsibility for the quality and standards of the institution's awards.

50 In the context of international student admissions in particular, one report noted the 'marked variation' in entry qualifications, which it linked with variable student achievement. The report recommended that to safeguard academic standards, the institution would need to put in place more extensive and comprehensive learning support resources. Another institution was recommended to analyse student performance, progression and attrition in relation to entry profiles, and to reflect on its analyses in 'ongoing management' of policies and procedures for student admissions.

Guidance and support arrangements

51 In the audit reports, documentation and administrative arrangements supporting the management of quality and standards emerged as key strengths in institutional frameworks. Features of good practice exceeded recommendations in this area, and the reports described much other sound and enterprising activity in this area.

52 The value of full, clear, written guidance on quality procedures and assessment regulations was widely confirmed in the audit reports. Guidance was normally available in both hard copy and on-line, one report noting that the web contained 'the most up to date version of the procedures', and another noting an institution's object of maintaining currency via the on-line version. Institutions varied in their approaches to the presentation mode for guidance on procedures. Some preferred to contain material within a single handbook or manual, others assigned separate handbooks to quality management and academic regulations, while others published suites of documents on different facets of the oversight of quality or the regulation of awards.

53 One audit report noted an institution's replacement of a single handbook 'covering all [its] quality processes' with a series of guides providing 'concise statements' on particular aspects of quality assurance such as validation and approval or new provision. It commented that the guides offered 'a comprehensive and user-friendly introduction to the [institution's] quality assurance arrangements'. Conversely, in the environment of a devolved management model, another report - noting the lack of 'a single quality manual or equivalent' and the provision instead of 'a series of documents' - recommended that the institution consider the production of 'a single information source equivalent to a quality manual', to ensure the development of a shared understanding by staff of central quality assurance processes.

54 Endorsement of quality handbooks was accompanied in several audit reports by reference to their accessibility and usefulness to staff. One report, for example, noted an institution's finding that its guides had been well received by external members of review panels. Another observed that an institution's revised quality and standards handbook, which provided 'comprehensive advice and guidance', was the outcome of cooperative work by faculty staff, incorporating established good practice. In some cases, audit reports recommended better communication and awareness of quality management information, to guide local practice and ensure consistency. One institution conducted a periodic audit, monitoring the extent to which schools understood and complied with the provisions of the quality manual.

55 Two reports commented in particular on the regular review of quality and standards handbooks, which in each case had the object of ensuring either clarity and fitness for purpose or 'full compatibility with the *Code of practice*...and other elements of the external academic framework'. Several other reports noted the alignment of quality and standards handbooks with QAA's *Code of practice* and other aspects of the Academic Infrastructure.

56 The work of central support units in coordinating and monitoring quality management processes was widely noted in the audit reports. In several instances, such work was endorsed as good practice. A number of reports commented, for example, on the developmental role of quality units. One commended 'the

initiatives of the [Quality Affairs Office] in developing the College's quality agenda' [Goldsmiths College, paragraphs 32 and 118], and another 'the proactive role of [the External and Internal Student Administration Division] in the evolution of the External System processes and procedures' [University of London External System, paragraph 29]. In other examples, an academic registry had a key role in developing and monitoring the institution's academic quality processes, while in another institution an academic office played a central part in developing, maintaining and implementing the systems for managing academic quality and standards.

57 In numerous instances, central support units knitted together the institutional and local levels of quality management. Some institutions had established robust networking arrangements involving central and faculty/school staff. In several institutions, good practice and oversight were shared through regular meetings of departmental administrators with representatives of central quality offices and registries [Goldsmiths College, University of London, paragraph 33]. In another example, proactive networking by faculty assistant registrars, who provided 'a bank of expertise' and by working together were able to 'share insights and spread good practice' through the College, was considered a feature of good practice [Royal Holloway and Bedford College, paragraph 35]. A further report noted the monitoring, facilitating and integrating activity of a quality administrators' network. In two institutions which had engaged in significant structural change, the audit reports found that the central support unit for academic policy had managed an effective balance between central requirements and local responsibility, and had mitigated the risks inherent in implementing such change.

58 Although there were few concerns in this area, two audit reports questioned the nature of central support arrangements for quality management. One considered that the presence of two central quality units, where the distinction between their roles was not transparent, might 'lead to confusion and misunderstanding'. In the other, the disbanding of a central quality assurance unit which, in the report's view, had been effective in developing quality and standards procedures and systems, and its replacement with deliberative (committee) structures, gave rise to a concern that the unit's 'specialist and responsive quality and standards perspective' might be lost.

Externality

59 Generally, the audit reports confirmed positive engagement with the various elements of the Academic Infrastructure and their embedding in quality and standards frameworks. Reports frequently observed that internal procedures and regulations had been linked with QAA's *Code of practice* and/or *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) [Staffordshire University, paragraph 46]. The reports also contained numerous references to the role of subject benchmarks and programme specifications, sometimes linked with validation and review requirements.

60 The most widespread evidence of consultation and incorporation of the *Code of practice* into institutional policy and practice related to assessment (Section 6). The other area commonly noted as being informed by the *Code of practice* was collaborative provision (Section 2).

61 Some reports observed a gap between engaging with the Academic Infrastructure and ensuring the implementation of associated institutional procedures. Examples were given of variable approaches at local levels to the FHEQ, programme specifications and the *Code of practice*. One institution was recommended to expedite the alignment of its awards structure with the FHEQ.

62 Several audit reports commented on institutions' arrangements to review procedures as indicated by developments in QAA's *Code of practice* and elsewhere. In such cases, regulatory frameworks and guidelines were said to be evaluated and updated on a regular basis in the light of these external reference points. One report noted that an institution's object in reviewing the *Code* was to identify both established good practice and matters for improvement. Other reports commented on the role of the *Code* in informing the development of institutional processes and procedures, and its embedding in quality manuals. One report indicated that mechanisms to monitor developing institutional practices in the context of periodic revision to the *Code* were not fully in place, and that there was little evidence of regular mapping.

63 Several reports discussed where responsibility lay in institutions for overseeing consideration of and response to the Academic Infrastructure. This responsibility was generally associated with the academic board or the central quality and standards committee. It might also be located with other appropriate committees or with central administration. Oversight of a federal institution's response to Section 1 of the *Code of practice* by its research degrees committee had provided a 'collective view of quality assurance arrangements for research degrees as evidenced by the detailed examination of each precept in the revised *Code*, Section 1...'. The report identified this as constituting good practice [University of London, paragraphs 45 and 76]. In another case, however, an institution was recommended to clarify the locus of responsibility for ensuring consistent engagement with the Academic Infrastructure and its periodic revision.

64 Comments in audit reports on the influence of external reference points also noted the role of former or current validating institutions and of inputs from external examiners and professional advisers [Harper Adams University College, paragraphs 36, 56 and 61]. Some reports acknowledged the useful role played by internal academic audit committees in providing 'independent' evaluation and advice, thereby facilitating improvements in quality management [University of Newcastle, paragraph 36]. One such report suggested, however, a need to avoid blurring the distinction between the roles of audit and assurance.

Collaborative provision

65 Many of the audit reports which included collaborative provision tended to confine their accounts of it to the section dedicated to this topic. Those reports which contained references to collaborative provision in the section on institutional frameworks generally adopted a summarising, descriptive approach. For the most part, they excluded mention of any features of good practice or recommendations.

66 Of those audit reports which incorporated collaborative provision within the institutional frameworks section, a number commented on institutional application of standard internal quality management arrangements to collaborative partnerships.

In several cases, reports alluded to additional measures employed by institutions in recognition of the greater challenges that might be posed, especially by provision overseas. These further safeguards might involve processes for initial scrutiny of intended partners and their site resources, ongoing management review visits, or intensified programme monitoring by faculties. In one case, an institution was recommended to ensure that it had in place systems for managing quality and standards which would be adequate to handle a 'substantial' planned growth in the collaborative activity in which it had just begun to engage.

67 In another instance, regarding a projected expansion of overseas campuses, the institution in question was recommended to keep under review the continuing appropriateness of its policies and procedures for managing the quality and standards of its awards offered through such arrangements. A further report expressed concerns about the rigour of the deliberative arrangements for overseeing an 'ambitious' and 'rapid' development agenda embracing collaborative provision.

68 Some audit reports noted the establishment of sub-committees of the principal institutional academic committee to have charge of the assurance of quality and standards in collaborative provision. Others referred to institutional frameworks governing the conduct of collaborative arrangements, whether as part of an overall framework for managing quality and standards or as a discrete structure.

One institution's framework of arrangements to support collaborative provision represented good practice [University of Surrey, paragraphs 32 and 120-126]. Several reports commented positively on documentary aspects of institutional frameworks. Nonetheless, one report noted a need to clarify the quality management responsibilities of a committee and a working group where these appeared to overlap and the group lacked formal terms of reference. In another instance, the lack of a contractual agreement meant that arrangements to meet the remaining needs of continuing students where a partnership had been terminated were not in place.

69 Various audit reports mentioned the use of quality assurance handbooks and/or the mapping of procedures against QAA's *Code of practice* in connection with collaborative arrangements. There was also some reference to the support for such arrangements provided by institutions' central administrations and by link tutors. One report noted that an institution's standard validation procedures were not equipped to consider the implications of the approval of a collaborative programme for delivery by distance learning methods. Another noted continuing concerns regarding the assurance of academic standards and the security of assessment processes.

70 The development of relationships with partner institutions received positive comment in several audit reports. One noted staff development initiatives in collaboration with partner institutions [Goldsmiths College, paragraphs 32 and 118]. Another cited good practice in the 'close and productive working relationships with collaborative partners, which are closely integrated into the quality and standards infrastructure at institutional and departmental level' [University of Worcester, paragraphs 128 and 204]. Elsewhere, the cooperation between two institutions in developing a joint school and award, in particular the establishment of effective and innovative collaborative policies and procedures, was also considered good practice [University of Hull, paragraph 29].

71 Collaborative provision where it is considered in the institutional audit reports is addressed at greater length in a separate *Outcomes...* paper. A later series of papers will focus on the outcomes from the collaborative provision audits undertaken by QAA between 2005 and 2007.

Conclusions

72 A substantial majority of the audit reports conclude that overall institutional frameworks for managing quality and standards are sound, although concerns about frameworks or aspects of them are also widely distributed. Advice on the need for review of frameworks is given for both established structures and procedures and those still in the first stages of implementation. The principal areas of concern associated with frameworks are: institutional oversight of quality and standards, with particular reference to devolved arrangements and the assurance of consistency; the specification and appropriateness of responsibilities in quality management; parity of student experience, with particular reference to assessment and awards regimes; and oversight of collaborative provision. This list is consistent with concerns identified in the corresponding *Outcomes...* paper on institutional frameworks covering the first set of institutional audit reports published between 2003 and November 2004.

73 Features of good practice are most widely linked with: documentary guidance on quality assurance and assessment procedures; administrative and deliberative support for disseminating and implementing quality assurance policies and procedures; and institutional oversight of assessment arrangements, with particular reference to the assurance of consistency. While the first two items corroborate the findings of the earlier *Outcomes...* paper, references to good practice in overseeing assessment have increased. The earlier paper recorded various instances of initiatives taken by institutions to harmonise practices and enhance parity, whether or not these were identified as features of good practice. The findings of the audit reports published between December 2004 and August 2006 would appear to show these initiatives continuing and developing, as the profile of features of good practice indicates. There remains, however, much evidence of residual variability in assessment practices.

Appendix 1 - The institutional audit reports

Note

In the period covered by these papers a number of institutions underwent a variety of scrutiny procedures for taught degree-awarding powers, university title and research degree-awarding powers. Reports of the individual scrutiny processes were provided to QAA's Advisory Committee on Degree-Awarding Powers, and its Board of Directors, and formed the basis for advice to the Privy Council on the applications made by the respective institutions.

In most cases the scrutiny processes also provided information which, in the form of a bespoke report, QAA accepted as the equivalent of an institutional audit report. Only those reports which conform to the general pattern of the institutional audit reports are included in the list below.

2004-05

City University

Cranfield University

University of Hull

University of Leicester

University of Newcastle upon Tyne

University of Nottingham

The Queen's University Belfast

University of Surrey

University of Ulster

Goldsmiths College, University of London

Queen Mary, University of London

Royal Holloway and Bedford New College (Royal Holloway, University of London)

University of London

University College London

Birkbeck College, University of London

Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine (Imperial College London)

St George's Hospital Medical School

University of Derby

De Montfort University

University of Gloucestershire

University of Hertfordshire
Sheffield Hallam University
University of Huddersfield
Kingston University
London Metropolitan University
Leeds Metropolitan University
Liverpool John Moores University
University of Luton¹
University of Northumbria at Newcastle
Oxford Brookes University
University of Plymouth
Staffordshire University
London South Bank University
University of Sunderland
University of Teesside
University of East London
University of the West of England, Bristol
University of Westminster
Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College²
Canterbury Christ Church University College³
University of Chester
Liverpool Hope University
University College Winchester⁴
Henley Management College
Harper Adams University College
Conservatoire for Dance and Drama
American InterContinental University - London

¹ Now the University of Bedfordshire

² Now Buckinghamshire New University

³ Now Canterbury Christ Church University

⁴ Now the University of Winchester

2005-06

University of Manchester

Courtauld Institute of Art

Heythrop College

University of London External System

London School of Economics and Political Science

University of Bolton

Thames Valley University

University of Central England in Birmingham⁵

University of Worcester

Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies

Dartington College of Arts

The Arts Institute at Bournemouth

⁵ Now Birmingham City University

Appendix 2 - Reports on specialist institutions

2004-05

Birkbeck College, University of London

Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine (Imperial College London)

St George's Hospital Medical School

Henley Management College

Harper Adams University College

Conservatoire for Dance and Drama

American InterContinental University - London

2005-06

Courtauld Institute of Art

Heythrop College

University of London External System

London School of Economics and Political Science

Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies

Dartington College of Arts

The Arts Institute at Bournemouth

Appendix 3 - Titles of *Outcomes from institutional audit papers, Series 2*

In most cases, *Outcomes...* papers will be no longer than 20 sides of A4. Projected titles of *Outcomes...* papers in the second series are listed below in provisional order of publication.

The first series of papers can be found on QAA's website at www.qaa.ac.uk/enhancement

Titles

Institutions' frameworks for managing quality and academic standards

Progression and completion statistics

Learning support resources (including virtual learning environments)

Assessment of students

Work-based and placement learning, and employability

Programme monitoring arrangements

Arrangements for international students

Institutions' work with employers and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies

Recruitment and admission of students

External examiners and their reports

Collaborative provision in the institutional audit reports

Institutions' arrangements to support widening participation and access to higher education

Institutions' support for e-learning

Specialist institutions

Student representation and feedback

Academic guidance, support and supervision, and personal support and guidance

Staff support and development arrangements

Subject benchmark statements

The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Programme specifications

Arrangements for combined, joint and multidisciplinary honours degrees programmes

The adoption and use of learning outcomes

Validation and approval of new provision, and its periodic review

The self-evaluation document in institutional audit

The contribution of the student written submission to institutional audit

Institutions' intentions for enhancement

Series 2: concluding overview

Appendix 4 - Methodology

The analysis of the institutional audit reports uses the headings set out in Annex H of the *Handbook for institutional audit: England (2002)* to subdivide the Summary, Main report and Findings sections of the audit reports into broad areas. An example from the Main report is 'The institution's framework for managing quality and standards, including collaborative provision'.

For each published report, the text is taken from the report published on QAA's website and converted to plain text format. The resulting files are checked for accuracy and coded into sections following the template used to construct the institutional audit reports. In addition, the text of each report is tagged with information providing the date the report was published and some basic characteristics of the institution ('base data'). The reports are then introduced into a qualitative research software package, QSR N6®. The software provides a wide range of tools to support indexing and searching and allows features of interest to be coded for further investigation.

An audit team's judgements, its identification of features of good practice, and its recommendations appear at two points in an institutional audit report: the Summary and at the end of the Findings. It is only in the latter, however, that cross references to the paragraphs in the Main report are to be found, and it is here that the grounds for identifying a feature of good practice, offering a recommendation and making a judgement are set out. These cross references are used to locate features of good practice and recommendations to the particular sections of the report to which they refer.

Individual *Outcomes...* papers are compiled by QAA staff and experienced institutional auditors. To assist in compiling the papers, reports produced by QSR N6® are made available to authors to provide a broad picture of the overall distribution of features of good practice and recommendations in particular areas, as seen by the audit teams.

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