The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Outcomes from institutional audit
Programme specifications

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Summary

Overall, the institutional audit reports show that the introduction and adoption of programme specifications is developing across institutions and that within some institutions their adoption is part of a wider developmental process.

Programme specifications are explicitly mentioned in 62 reports. Features of good practice are identified in four reports and there are recommendations associated with programme specifications in 10 reports. Programme specifications are discussed in some detail in a further 24 reports.

Some differences remain among institutions about the purpose of programme specifications, and their intended audience. Some see them as technical documents for the support of external and internal review; others, as serving a range of purposes including the provision of information for students. Many institutions are working on programme specifications which will meet both needs. Some have succeeded in producing authoritative 'technical' programme specifications linked to 'student friendly' versions. In several such cases reports have noted the importance of ensuring that any version produced for students and general readers remains fully aligned to the authoritative version of the document. Students appear generally to have welcomed their access to more detailed information on teaching, learning and assessment, including intended learning outcomes. Where several versions of essentially the same document can exist, the introduction of effective version control has been recommended.

Many reports describe how programme specifications have been embedded in institutional arrangements. Some institutions have adopted a uniform approach for all programmes. Others have developed a clear framework to be applied institution-wide and have sought for consistency of coverage without requiring uniformity of style. Audit reports have generally looked to the effectiveness of arrangements to introduce and use programme specifications, and have not advocated particular approaches. Many institutions see programme specifications as key documents for external examiners to use when checking and confirming academic standards.

Many institutions have encouraged the adoption of programme specifications by making their use a requirement in the approval of new programmes, programme monitoring and/or periodic review. In some, the use of standard forms has ensured that all elements of the Academic Infrastructure have been considered when new programmes are developed and existing programmes reviewed. Where periodic review is used as the chief means to check the currency and accuracy of programme specifications, reports have questioned whether the intervals between reviews might not be too long to ensure the programme specifications give staff and students access to up-to-date and reliable information about programmes.

Reports of the discipline audit trails show how subjects have worked with the programme specifications. In most cases, the programme specifications seen show that their authors have given careful consideration to the relevant subject benchmark statements, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) (and where relevant the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (*Code of practice*)). In only a few cases has evidence of such careful consideration been lacking.

Overall, many institutions have used the introduction of programme specifications to bring together information about individual programmes which would otherwise be dispersed. In some cases this has been coupled with developmental discussions about programme aims, teaching, learning and assessment and intended learning outcomes, including discussions with staff delivering collaborative provision in partner institutions.

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'. One of the ways in which this can be accomplished is through identifying features of good practice across the reports and areas where reports have commonly offered recommendations for improvement.

In due course, QAA intends to produce an extended reflection on institutional audit in the *Learning from audit* series, but since the final institutional audit reports in the present audit cycle will not be published until Spring 2006, *Learning from institutional audit* is unlikely to be published before late 2006. To give institutions and other stakeholders more timely information, QAA has therefore decided to produce a series of short working papers, describing features of good practice and summarising recommendations from the audit reports, to be published under the generic title *Outcomes from institutional audit* (hereafter, *Outcomes*...).

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. A note on the topics identified for the first series of *Outcomes*... papers, to be published throughout 2005, can be found at Appendix 3 (page 16). 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.

The first series of *Outcomes*... papers is based on the 70 institutional audit reports published by the end of November 2004. The second series will draw on institutional audit reports published following the 2004-05 audits, and it is likely that there will be some overlap in topics between the first and second series. Papers in each 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 QAA's website and cited, with acknowledgement.

Introduction

1 This paper is based on a detailed consideration of the 70 institutional audit reports published by 5 November 2004 (see Appendix 1, page 12). A note on the methodology used to produce this and other papers in the *Outcomes*... series can be found in Appendix 4 (page 17).

2 Of the published institutional audit reports, 62 explicitly mention programme specifications, and of these, four reports refer to the use and/or development of

programme specifications as a feature of good practice. Programme specifications are, however, discussed in greater or lesser detail in a further 24 audit reports, and where it is appropriate to do so, this paper also draws on material from these reports.

3 Features of good practice identified in the audit reports in connection with programme specifications include:

i the use being made of programme specifications to specify learning outcomes and criteria of assessment (University of Lincoln)

ii the value of the University's programme specifications in supporting course approval processes and in providing information for students (University of Bradford)

iii the detailed and analytical process adopted in the development of programme specifications (University of Durham), and

iv the University's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure (for example, the C*ode of practice*, FHEQ, subject benchmarks and programme specifications) at institutional and local levels (University of Southampton).

4 There are recommendations in 10 reports for further action or development with respect to programme specifications. Additionally, comments by institutions in their self-evaluation documents on programme specifications which have then been cited in the audit reports, and comments in the reports themselves, indicate that consideration of programme specifications can lead to the identification of deficiencies in areas to do with programme design and also with the internal communication of information. For example, two audit reports comment that the development of programme specifications by the respective institutions had highlighted discrepancies in the award of credits at master's level and pointed to the difficulties for institutions that the lack of a subject benchmark statement at that level might cause.

5 Two initial observations may be helpful. From the outset, the individual elements of the Academic Infrastructure (chiefly, the *Code of practice*, programme specifications, subject benchmark statements and the FHEQ) were intended to complement each other. For that reason, it is sometimes difficult to separate comments on how institutions have approached the Academic Infrastructure into specific aspects. This is particularly the case for programme specifications and subject benchmark statements where there are intrinsic links. A later paper in the *Outcomes*... series will address the use of subject benchmark statements and the FHEQ in institutions' internal quality and academic standards arrangements, and for that reason the present report has sought to focus wherever possible on programme specifications. In some circumstances, however, to treat the programme specifications in isolation would be inappropriate, and therefore some material cited in the present paper may also appear in other *Outcomes*... papers.

6 The introduction and use of programme specifications has been steadily developing since 2000. For many institutions the introduction of programme specifications into their internal arrangements is likely to continue to be a developmental activity, not least because of the substantial work required to develop

and adopt programme specifications for individual programmes within large portfolios of activity. Comments about the introduction of programme specifications in the published audit reports hint at the developing nature of the process. As institutions have become more familiar with the Academic Infrastructure, comments in the earlier audit reports, to do with how programme specifications might be introduced into institutions' quality management and academic standards arrangements, and how they might become better embedded in those arrangements, have become less common, whereas comments on the overall purpose and usefulness of programme specifications in practice have become more common.

Good practice and recommendations

7 This section of the paper expands on the broad patterns mentioned above in order to provide information to institutions which each can consider within its own context. Each area is supported by examples taken from the institutional audit reports. The areas considered in this paper include:

- the purpose of programme specifications; who they are for and how they should be published
- the usefulness of the programme specifications as perceived by institutions and audit teams
- embedding programme specifications within quality assurance and enhancement procedures and the provision of clear guidance to staff and students
- whether consistency of approach across an institution is necessary, and at what level
- links between programme specifications and other elements of the Academic Infrastructure
- external examining arrangements
- intended learning outcomes, teaching and assessment
- collaborative provision and distance learning.

The purpose of programme specifications; who they are for and how they should be published

8 One institutional audit report noted that the institution had commented in its self-evaluation document 'on the tensions in satisfying the *Dearing Report's* intent to produce documents that inform both (prospective) students and employers, and that provide text that describe academic requirements'. Consideration of the published reports overall shows that as institutions have worked to introduce programme specifications this tension has continued to be a preoccupation, and that in many cases it underlies on the ways in which institutions have tackled the introduction of programme specifications. In this particular instance, the team learnt that the institution had sought to address this difficulty by 'layering' the programme specifications, so that some parts could be extracted to be used in the prospectus. Following up this approach in its discussions with students, the audit team was told that the programme specifications and, in particular, the learning outcomes and the associated unit learning outcomes which were included, were considered to be 'very helpful in focusing their studies'.

9 The availability of programme specifications to students is considered in many reports, from which it seems that most institutions make programme specifications available to intending and/or existing students, either by publishing them in student handbooks or on the institution's intranet or website. An advantage of this latter approach is that it is seen as making the programme specifications available to the widest potential audience. In some cases, however, institutions have considered the particular format they have adopted for their programme specifications has rendered them unsuitable for use by a range of audiences. In this connection, one institution was stated to have 'expressed the view that it was unrealistic to suggest that programme specifications might be used for a variety of audiences'. The same report communicated the particular institution's view that 'those producing programme specifications should concentrate on providing clear descriptions of programmes with external and internal review purposes in mind'. in another case an institution had adopted the approach of using different versions of programme specifications for different audiences. In this particular case the institution was encouraged to think through the consequences of following this policy and the need to ensure that 'student-friendly' versions of programme specifications remained accurately aligned with the versions formally approved.

10 In some cases, however, the published audit reports have state that students may not be aware of the existence of programme specifications and, that even when published and when students have been aware of them, they may not find them useful. In one report, for example, students were said to have 'described the programme specifications as "useful" but "elaborate"' and to have found that 'individual module specifications provided a more useful link between detailed outcomes and related assessment details'. Other audit reports, have stated that students have found programme specifications to be a valuable source of information. In one such case, where the institution had identified the prime purpose of the programme specifications as 'to give succinct information to students', it had prescribed 'headlines' for the content, but had left the detail to be determined at subject level. In this particular case 'the students who met the team felt well-informed about their programmes and had received the relevant information in their programme handbooks'.

11 In one audit report it was noted that the relevant institution had been able to design a format for its programme specifications which had allowed them to support the institution's course approval process and at the same time to serve as a source of information for students. In this case the report observed through a discipline audit trail that the programme specifications 'had been placed on the department's web page. Students informed the audit team that they were not only aware of these programme specifications, but also valued them as an initial source of the information needed for module selection and as a means of determining programme outcomes and their future career prospects'. In this particular case the report was able to 'confirm the value of the University's programme specifications' for course approval and providing information to students.

12 In another institutional audit report it was stated that programme specifications were 'the basis for factual data for all programmes, and for the contents of student handbooks and other promotional materials. They are therefore key documents in

respect of validity and accuracy of published information'. Programme specifications which had been produced by another institution in connection with a programme of studies with a work-based learning element were said to have 'succeeded in rendering the complex, flexible framework for the provision understandable and accessible to learners at all stages of development'. In this case the report commented that the 'articulation of the programme specifications with the FHEQ is demonstrated in exemplary fashion, with the level and qualities which are defined in the FHEQ being used to enable individually negotiated outcomes to clearly be at levels which meet the needs of particular learners, especially those outcomes relating to graduate employability skills'.

13 The importance of ensuring that programme specifications which have been modified for particular purposes (for example, to be 'student-friendly') remain in alignment with any 'definitive' or 'master' institutional document has already been mentioned. A number of institutional audit reports describe arrangements by institutions to deal with this matter, whether the programme specifications are issued through the institutional website, student handbooks or other means. In this connection, several audit reports note the difficulties experienced by institutions in ensuring that the programme specifications are updated each time there is a minor modification to a programme. In some cases simple but apparently effective techniques have been adopted, such as providing all programme specifications with a date stamp. In others, where effective version control has not been maintained, reports have offered recommendations. In one such case, after noting that that when 'changes are made to the units that make up a programme of study, the impact on the programme specification(s) in which they appear is determined informally', the report offered the view 'that a more formal method for determining the impact of changing a particular unit would be more reliable, since a change in a unit may not propagate the appropriate changes to all of the necessary programme specifications'.

The usefulness of the programme specification as perceived by institutions and audit teams

14 From the published audit reports it is clear that several institutions have asserted the value of programme specifications in their self-evaluation documents. For example, one audit report noted that the relevant institution's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure as a whole, including programme specifications, was said to have 'led to a full and frank discussion across the [institution] about many issues that affect students' experience'. Other benefits said by institutions to have followed from the development of programme specifications have included their usefulness in bringing teaching teams together, and their value as a means of gathering and collating information about programmes that might not otherwise have been brought together. In one case, a self-evaluation document was stated in the audit report to have observed that the programme specifications had provided a focus for teaching teams to reconsider and revise programmes. The audit reports subsequently recorded that the audit team had seen examples 'of programme teams using programme specifications to reconsider and change their provision' and coupled this observation with the comment that this had been possible because, in this institution 'programme specifications were clearly and appropriately constructed' permitting, for example, a 'full engagement with subject benchmark statements and the FHEQ' and that the

programme specifications had assisted in the institution's 'consideration of postgraduate programme content and organisation'.

15 In some cases, institutional audit reports have suggested that programme specifications can assist institutions to secure academic standards across their provision, particularly where a standard template is used, and that they may also serve to assist the dissemination of good practice. One audit report noted good practice in the use and development of programme specifications in a particular area of an institution, and encouraged the institution to enhance its quality management and academic standards arrangements by ensuring that this good practice was shared across the institution.

16 There is a wide gamut of views among institutions about the usefulness of programme specifications. For example, one institution viewed programme specifications as representing 'the basis of the learning contract with the student' and considered that that it provided staff and students with one 'of the grounds for their engagement with internal and external review processes', while in another the view was that 'programme specifications should be seen as the "primary record" of approved courses'. In this latter case, the institution intended 'to amend the current template [for programme specifications] it makes available to staff to ensure that their use [did] not inhibit course development'.

Embedding programme specifications within quality assurance and enhancement procedures and the provision of clear guidance to staff and students

17 It appears that most institutions have embedded processes for the development of programme specifications into their quality assurance and enhancement procedures. Commonly, this has been through one or more of institutional processes for the initial approval and validation of new provision, for monitoring and for periodic review. When brought into institutional processes for the development of new provision, its validation and approval programme specifications appear to be seen as either a starting point (a document in order to get initial approval for a validation event, for example) or a conclusion (the outcome of a validation event). In one audit the self-evaluation document was stated to have observed that the particular institution's approach had been to develop a standard template and to integrate the production of the programme specifications into programme approval procedures. Overall, it seems that many institutions use a standard form, or template, for new programme proposals which provides prompts to ensure that subject benchmark statements, the FHEQ and the requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies are addressed in the validation and approval process and which subsequently form the basis for the programme specification.

18 In one case where programme specifications had been embedded in the institution's periodic review processes, the audit report sounded a note of caution, suggesting that it was not clear how the institution 'assured itself, outside of the periodic review process, that programme specifications were accurate in content and made explicit the expected outcomes of the programmes'. This implies that arrangements which confine the monitoring of programme specifications for currency and accuracy to periodic review may not be sufficient to ensure that they remain

accurate and up-to-date. In another case, however, the relevant institution had chosen to embed the consideration of programme specifications within its annual monitoring process, in this case to enable it to monitor the integration of skills into the curriculum.

Whether consistency of approach across an institution is necessary and at what level

19 Several audit reports have commented on variations within institutions on the approaches which have been taken to the development and implementation of programme specifications across the institution. Some reports have commented positively on approaches to the introduction and adoption of programme specifications which have led to a degree of consistency in their formats and coverage, particularly with respect to the presentation and description of intended learning outcomes.

20 Overall, what appears to be most generally welcomed in the audit reports is the development of programme specifications within a clear framework, applied institution-wide, together with what was described in one report as 'consistency of coverage rather than uniformity of style'. In one institution which had adopted such an approach, the relevant audit team was moved to comment that the introduction of programme specifications represented a good example of schools and the centre working together successfully within clear areas of responsibility. Another audit report noted, along similar lines, that the advice offered by the institution was that adherence to central guidance should not be at the expense of the ownership of the programme specification at course/programme level. In this instance, it was noted that senior committees had 'increasingly developed their role as critical friends in supporting departments to develop programme specifications that make clear to students what levels of attainment are expected of them'.

Links between programme specifications and other elements of the Academic Infrastructure

21 Institutional audit reports commonly state whether the programme specifications developed within individual institutions show evidence of having drawn on other elements of the Academic Infrastructure. Overall, the audit reports comment most frequently on links with subject benchmark statements. Comments on links having been made in the programme specifications with the FHEQ or the *Code of practice* are less common, although it should be noted in this context that such links may often be made through the alignment of regulations and procedures with the FHEQ and the *Code of practice* at institutional level. With regard to the FHEQ, where a programme does not link straightforwardly with an existing subject benchmark statement (as is often the case with taught master's programmes) there is some evidence in the audit reports to suggest that links to the FHEQ are made more explicitly.

22 Some audit reports have found that steps have been taken by institutions to ensure that the process of preparing programme specifications encourages staff to refer to all other relevant elements of the Academic Infrastructure. One report noted in this connection that neither 'programme specifications or [new programme] proposals can be approved unless reference has been made to the relevant external reference points in the Academic Infrastructure'. Where such an approach has been adopted, and has been successful, audit reports have commented that it can help to achieve a sharper focus on academic standards.

23 One audit report noted that programme specifications produced by the institution were generally informative and clear, and constructed in conformity with the standard document it had developed for this purpose. This observation was taken further when the audit team learned through a discipline audit trail that for 'BSc programmes, which share a common core, the department provides a core specification which includes a comprehensive mapping of learning outcomes for each module, a mapping against the subject benchmark statement...a statement of how the award matches the FHEQ specification for an honours-level award, and an account of assessment and learning and teaching strategies'. Additionally, each 'individual programme has its own programme specification to supplement the core specification'. The report observed that this was a helpful and interesting approach in the context of the subject (computing) and the particular institution.

24 In several cases, supporting evidence has permitted audit teams to infer the existence of links between programme specifications and other aspects of the Academic Infrastructure which were not explicit. In others, the absence of either explicit statements, or supporting evidence, has given rise to observations such as it 'was not clear...how [the institution had] made explicit the expected outcomes of programmes in relation to subject benchmark statements and the qualifications descriptors in the FHEQ'. In a similar vein, another report suggested that both 'the guidance for preparing programme specifications and the procedure for approving them would benefit from attention to the ways in which learning outcomes, and the assessment methods used to demonstrate their achievement, can be matched to qualification descriptors' and in another report the institution was encouraged to consider, 'ways in which fuller use of the FHEQ in describing award outcomes could increase the value of the programme specifications to the full range of intended audiences'.

25 Even in cases where the links between the programme specification and the subject benchmark statements have been made explicit, the manner in which this has been done has sometimes occasioned comment. In one report, for example, it was noted that while 'some of the programme specifications...showed that [the institution's expectation that evidence of a relationship between a benchmark statement and programme specifications was expected wherever possible] had been followed, most did not explain this relationship', suggesting, in turn, an expectation that there would have been meaningful consideration of the links to other elements of the Academic Infrastructure, rather than mere reference to them. Furthermore, the same institutional audit report noted that some 'postgraduate programme specifications...claimed that the FHEQ M-level descriptors had been taken into account, but…did not make clear to a non-specialist audience how that had been done'.

External examining arrangements

26 It is clear that in some institutions external examiners have been brought into the process of approving programme specifications, often in the context of arrangements to approve and review programmes. Such practices will be discussed more fully in a later paper in the *Outcomes* ... series (see below, Appendix 3, page 16). The audit reports suggest that in some institutions the programme specifications, together with other elements of the Academic Infrastructure, are expected to provide important evidence to enable external examiners to judge whether the academic standards set

for programmes are acceptable. In one institution, for example, external examiners are asked 'to verify that those standards are appropriate for the award with reference to national subject benchmarks, qualification frameworks and University programme specifications'. In the same institution the audit report noted that external examiners 'are asked to comment in their reports on the academic standards of awards with reference to subject benchmark statements, the FHEQ and the relevant University programme specifications'.

Intended learning outcomes, teaching and assessment

27 In those parts of the audit reports which deal with the discipline audit trails the development of clear and explicit links to intended learning outcomes in programme specifications is generally seen as worthwhile. For example in one report the audit team suggested that 'the programme specifications would benefit from a greater emphasis being placed upon the specification of intended learning outcomes to provide greater clarity to students'. Some reports identify instances in the sections which report on the discipline audit trails where subject areas have used the programme specifications to convey information to students, including information on intended learning outcomes. In this connection, one audit report noted that the programme specifications 'set out educational aims and learning outcomes, and link these clearly to teaching and learning styles, support and assessment that students undertaking the programmes would be expected to experience'.

28 The question of the attainment of consistency in the approach to programme specifications across institutions and the worth of maintaining a pragmatic approach to this matter has been discussed in paragraph 19, above. Where audit teams have observed differences in the approaches taken to the development and use of programme specifications from one discipline to another, within the same institution, they have suggested that the question of fairness to students may arise. In one instance, for example, an institution was invited to consider the desirability of, 'ensuring that its programme specifications contain a mapping of learning outcomes against assessment outcomes so that the students on different programmes have the same opportunity to understand the relevant linkages'.

29 Four recommendations in reports address the nature of the links between programme specifications, independent learning outcomes, teaching, and the assessment of students' work. Taken together, these recommendations suggest that programme specifications should include as precise a description of the intended learning outcomes, and the teaching and the assessment arrangements for the programme as the subject and the institution can achieve, and that constructive links should be made between the intended learning outcomes, the skills and competences expected of students and the learning and assessment methods that support them. In one case, the content of the programme specifications enabled the audit report to observe that all the student achievement and skills described in the programme specifications were not as yet assessed by appropriate means and to offer a specific recommendation.

30 In one institutional audit report it was noted that the institution's template for programme specifications, did not explicitly require an articulation 'of the way in which the curriculum promotes an organised progression year by year' and observed

that the 'difficulties this may cause is most apparent in terms of the expected progression between the second year (level 2) and the final year (level 3) of honours programmes'. Where a thoughtful approach to the design of programme specifications has been adopted audit reports have sometimes noted a link to quality enhancement. For example, one audit report stated that programme specifications 'had been constructed to clearly link the broad aims of the programmes to the overall University aims'.

Collaborative provision and distance learning

31 Collaborative provision is mentioned in 53 of the 70 institutional audit reports published by the end of 2004 and in several cases audit teams have commented on the use of programme specifications by awarding institutions when working with their partners. In one case an audit report was able to cite the way in which the awarding institution supported its partners through work undertaken with staff 'for example, with regard to programme specifications' as a positive measure. In another report the audit team noted that when compiling a programme specification for a programme with a distance learning element, the institution had required the programme team to provide additional information in the programme specification over and above that required where provision is to be delivered face-to-face.

Conclusion

32 The material quoted drawn on in this paper was most frequently to be found in the section of the Main audit report which describes and analyses how institutions work with 'external reference points'. Eight illustrations have been taken from the reports of various discipline audit trails, two from the section in the report which deals with external examiners and their reports and one each from the following sections: 'the institution's framework for managing quality and standards, including collaborative provision'; 'internal approval, monitoring and review processes'; 'assurance of the quality of teaching delivered through distributed and distance-learning methods and 'assurance of the quality of teaching staff through support and development'. The material on programme specifications which has been extracted from the sections of the audit reports which deal with the discipline audit trails hints at the possibility that in some institutions at the time of the audit the adoption and production of programme specifications might not have been uniformly achieved.

33 Lastly, it is important to stress both the developmental character of programme specifications and that their adoption across institutions is itself a developing process.

Appendix 1

The institutional audit reports

2002-03

University College Chichester, February 2003

The Royal Veterinary College, February 2003

Cumbria Institute of the Arts, March 2003

Institute of Education, University of London, March 2003

London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, March 2003

Middlesex University, March 2003

Royal Academy of Music, March 2003

Royal College of Art, March 2003

University of Cambridge, April 2003

School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, April 2003

Bath Spa University College, May 2003

University of Lincoln, May 2003

London Business School, May 2003

Newman College of Higher Education, May 2003

Norwich School of Art and Design, May 2003

Rose Bruford College, May 2003

Royal College of Music, May 2003

Royal Northern College of Music, May 2003

The School of Pharmacy, University of London, May 2003

College of St Mark and St John, May 2003

The Surrey Institute of Art & Design, University College, May 2003

Trinity and All Saints College, May 2003

Trinity College of Music, May 2003

Royal College of Nursing Institute, July 2003

2003-04

University of Bath, October 2003

University of Bradford, November 2003

University of Buckingham, November 2003

University of Essex, November 2003

University of Exeter, November 2003

University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology, November 2003
University of Sheffield, November 2003
Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, December 2003
Royal Agricultural College, December 2003
University of Southampton, December 2003
St Martin's College, Lancaster, December 2003
University of Surrey, Roehampton, December 2003
University of York, December 2003
University of East Anglia, January 2004
University of Durham, February 2004
University of Liverpool, February 2004
Writtle College, February 2004
Bournemouth University, March 2004
The Institute of Cancer Research, March 2004
University of Kent, March 2004
University of Leeds, March 2004
Loughborough University, March 2004
Open University, March 2004
University of Oxford, March 2004
University of Salford, March 2004
University of Warwick, March 2004
University of Wolverhampton, March 2004
Aston University, April 2004
University of Birmingham, April 2004
University of Bristol, April 2004
University of Central Lancashire, April 2004
Coventry University, April 2004
The London Institute, April 2004
University of Portsmouth, April 2004
Anglia Polytechnic University, May 2004
University of Brighton, May 2004
Brunel University, May 2004
University of Keele, May 2004

Appendix 1

The Nottingham Trent University, May 2004

University of Reading, May 2004

University of Sussex, May 2004

Wimbledon School of Art, May 2004

University of Greenwich, June 2004

King's College London, June 2004

University of Lancaster, June 2004

The Manchester Metropolitan University, June 2004

Appendix 2

Reports on specialist institutions

The Royal Veterinary College, February 2003

Cumbria Institute of the Arts, March 2003

Institute of Education, University of London, March 2003

London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, March 2003

Royal Academy of Music, March 2003

Royal College of Art, March 2003

School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, April 2003

London Business School, May 2003

Newman College of Higher Education, May 2003

Norwich School of Art and Design, May 2003

Rose Bruford College, May 2003

Royal College of Music, May 2003

Royal Northern College of Music, May 2003

The School of Pharmacy, University of London, May 2003

The Surrey Institute of Art & Design, University College, May 2003

Trinity and All Saints College, May 2003

Trinity College of Music, May 2003

Royal College of Nursing Institute, July 2003

Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, December 2003

Royal Agricultural College, December 2003

Writtle College, February 2004

The Institute of Cancer Research, March 2004

The London Institute, April 2004

Wimbledon School of Art, May 2004

Appendix 3

Projected titles of *Outcomes...* papers

In most cases, *Outcomes...* papers will be no longer than 15 sides of A4. QAA retains copyright in the *Outcomes...* papers, but as noted earlier they may be freely used, with acknowledgement.

Projected titles of *Outcomes...* papers in the first series are listed below.

Title	**To be published (dates are provisional)**
Overview	April 2005
The Academic Infrastructure - programme specifications	April 2005
External examiners and their reports	April 2005
The Academic Infrastructure - The framework for higher education qualifications (FHEQ)	April 2005
Academic guidance, support and supervision	May 2005
Student representation and feedback arrangements	May 2005
Staff support and development	May 2005
Validation and approval, annual monitoring, and periodic review	June 2005
Assessment and classification arrangements	June 2005
The Academic Infrastructure - subject benchmark statements	July 2005
Institutions' intentions for quality enhancement	July 2005
Collaborative provision in the institutional audit reports	August 2005
Progression and completion statistics and their use in quality and academic standards management	September 2005
Virtual learning environments (VLEs)	September 2005

Appendix 4

Methodology

The methodology followed in analysing the institutional audit reports uses the headings set out in Annex H of the *Handbook for institutional audit: England* to subdivide the Summary, Main Report and Findings sections of the institutional 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 was taken from the documents published on QAA's website and converted to plain text format. The resulting files were checked for accuracy and coded into sections following the template used to construct the institutional audit reports. In addition, the text of each report was tagged with information providing the date the report was published and some basic characteristics of the institution (base data). The reports were 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 have been used to locate features of good practice and recommendations to the particular sections of the report to which they refer.

Individual papers in the *Outcomes...* series are written by assistant directors with experience of institutional audit. To assist in compiling the papers, reports produced by QSR N6® have been made available 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.

Note on discipline audit trails (DATs)

There are 75 references in individual paragraphs to features of good practice in the DATs and, similarly, recommendations linked to 125 paragraphs. Features of good practice and recommendations in the DATs will be subject to further coding and analysis in summer 2005.

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