

# **Outcomes from institutional audit Arrangements for joint, combined and multidisciplinary honours degree programmes**



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## Summary

References to the provision of joint, combined or multidisciplinary honours degree programmes occur in about half of the 70 institutional audit reports published by November 2004. Comments on arrangements affecting this provision also appear in about half of the sections of the Main report, and are most generally found in the entries on discipline audit trails, although matters of assessment and classification are concentrated in the section on institutional frameworks for managing quality and standards.

Features of good practice were linked with joint programmes in respect of periodic review, progression and completion statistics and student representation. Recommendations were linked with joint programmes, particularly in respect of assessment and classification, but also of periodic review, progression and completion statistics and external reference points.

Arrangements for personal tutorial support of students following joint or combined degree programmes were considered in a number of audit reports. They indicated the variety of approaches taken by institutions to the allocation of personal tutors in a context involving two departments, where either one of the departments or both might take responsibility. Concerns were identified in relation to the operation of tutorial systems for joint students and to the quality of communication between contributing departments. Some reports commented also on the provision of student handbooks, and one referred also to the development of induction for joint honours students.

The assessment and classification of awards gave rise to about half of the recommendations associated with joint, combined and multidisciplinary degrees. The recurrent issue, one of parity in the treatment of students, derived from the lack of common assessment practices in many institutions, and the variations between departments. Students following joint or similar programmes were judged by some audit reports to be at particular risk of inequitable treatment as a result of the use of different assessment practices or systems. There was comment in some reports on the extent to which institutions were engaging in analysis of the performance of joint and combined honours students, in comparison to those on single honours programmes.

References to subject benchmark statements and *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) in programme specifications for joint, combined or multidisciplinary degrees are the subject of comment in numerous audit reports. Whereas in some cases the reference to subject benchmark statements was found to incorporate all the subject provision within the degree programme, in others reference extended only to the subject deemed to have primacy in the combination. Some reports confirmed alignment of standards between the awards concerned and the FHEQ as well as reference to it in the specifications. Several reports observed problems in distinguishing, in programme specifications, between joint and single honours degree awards.

Some audit reports commented on the treatment of joint degree or similar programmes in the conduct of approval, monitoring and review processes and of annual reporting by external examiners. The quality of arrangements was found

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generally to depend upon the explicitness of the focus on joint programmes and the needs of students undertaking them. Examples were given of good practice in incorporating joint programmes within quality assurance systems, as well as others where an explicit focus on joint programmes was deemed to be less evident. Variable practice was also noted in institutional approaches to the representation of students undertaking such programmes.

## 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 were not published until spring 2006, *Learning from institutional audit* is unlikely to be published in the same year. 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 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 7, the first paragraph 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 Sections 2 and 3 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 those sections of the Main report.

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 the first series of *Outcomes...* papers, which are being published throughout 2005-06, can be found at Appendix 3 (page 15).

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 2004-06 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.

### **Joint, combined and multidisciplinary honours degree programmes: introduction and general overview**

1 This paper is based on a review of the outcomes of the first 70 institutional audits published by 5 November 2004 (see Appendix 1, pages 12-13). A note on the methodology used to produce this and other papers in the *Outcomes...* series can be found in Appendix 4 (page 16).

2 No section of the institutional audit report structure deals specifically with arrangements for joint, combined and multidisciplinary honours degree programmes. This paper therefore draws on references, made in various sections of the institutional audit reports, to the impact of a range of key procedural, managerial and regulatory arrangements on the experience of students undertaking joint, combined or multidisciplinary honours degree awards.

3 For the entry on 'student support and departmental arrangements', material was taken from five thematic sections of the Main report as well as, substantially, from the sections on discipline audit trails (DATs). The entry on 'assessment and classification of undergraduate degrees' drew on seven sections of the Main report, and notably on that concerned with institutional frameworks for managing quality and standards, and only marginally on DATs material. The entry on 'external reference points and programme specifications' derived extensively from DATs material, and also from two other sections including 'external reference points'. The entry on 'approval, monitoring and review' used evidence mainly from the corresponding section in the audit reports, and also from DATs material.

4 Numbers of joint, combined and multidisciplinary awards vary considerably between institutions. In some institutions there is a small number of such awards, while in others, especially where module frameworks are in place, the number of such awards can be substantial.

5 It should be noted that this paper is principally concerned to comment on joint, combined and multidisciplinary awards within a single institution. Reference to awards provided by separate higher education institutions on a joint basis is restricted to the section in this paper on collaborative provision. QAA does, however, provide information derived from its symposia on this subject on its website [www.qaa.ac.uk/international/jointdegrees/](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/international/jointdegrees/)

### **Themes**

6 References made in audit reports to joint, combined or multidisciplinary honours degree awards, including their linkage with features of good practice and recommendations, may be grouped into the following broad themes:

- student support and departmental arrangements; including
  - student handbooks and induction
- assessment and classification of undergraduate degrees
- external reference points and programme specifications

- approval, monitoring and review; including
  - programme monitoring
  - external examiners' reports
  - periodic review
  - student representation
- collaborative provision.

### Features of good practice

7 Although joint, combined or multidisciplinary honours degree programmes were not in themselves the focus of any particular section in the institutional audit reports published by November 2004, they were associated with the various features of good practice listed below:

- the development of new roles, and organisational structures, which assist quality assurance and enhancement and the security of standards within the University [University of Portsmouth, paragraph 258 i; paragraph 88]
- the University's commitment to widening participation and to catering for the needs of a diverse student body [University of Bradford, paragraph 250 v; paragraph 153]
- the detailed and analytical process adopted in the development of programme specifications [University of Durham, paragraph 212 third bullet point; paragraph 134].

### Student support and departmental arrangements

8 Arrangements for personal tutorial support of students following joint or combined degree programmes are considered in a number of institutional audit reports. These show the adoption of a variety of ways of assigning students to tutors. In one institution, responsibility for placing combined honours students lies with a central unit, the system permitting transfer between personal tutors (and subjects). Several institutions allocate tutors on the basis of which subject is deemed to have primacy in the combination. This might be decided on the basis that the subject is the first named in the combination or that it falls within the department of registration or the parent school responsible for monitoring the student's overall progress. Other institutions allocate tutors from both departments concerned in the joint programme.

9 Aspects of the above arrangements and their conduct gave rise to a number of concerns for joint degree students and auditors, which were reflected in accounts of DATs. Thus student experience in one institution indicated marked variations between departments in personal tutor support provision and responsiveness to feedback. In another institution, students following joint programmes reported that their links with the individual departments and tutors within them were 'less clear than for students based in one department'. In a further case, where learning support was described as 'generally very effective', and the school concerned was found to be aware of the particular circumstances and needs of joint honours students, the audit report nonetheless added that there might be 'scope for the school to reassure itself further that such students enjoy robust arrangements for personal tutoring'.

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10 Questions arose in the case both of allocation of personal tutors from two departments and of allocation from only one. In one institution, both departments concerned assigned a tutor, but no mention was made in the report of arrangements to bring the tutors together to discuss the students' progress. The audit report 'wondered whether this could provide sufficiently holistic support and overview of progress'. In the case of only the first-named subject assigning a tutor, the audit report's concern, on the basis of staff and student views, was that the emphasis on the relationship with the host school of the first-named subject 'could work to the detriment of the students' ability to resolve difficulties that related to the second school or crossed school boundaries'. There was a system of combined honours advisers within each school, whose role was to make contact, on behalf of students, with their counterparts in other schools and resolve issues concerning the second subject. This was, however, perceived by the audit report as offering only 'an indirect route into the second school' rather than 'an independent channel for resolving cross-school difficulties'. In other cases, combined honours students indicated that communications between contributing departments 'did sometimes break down' or 'expressed some concern about communication between contributing departments'.

11 Some audit reports noted initiatives supportive of co-ordination of joint programmes and interdisciplinary work. One institution had modified its faculty structure in part to encourage greater interdisciplinary activity, a development said to provide a 'common approach' to joint honours programmes. Overall responsibility for joint honours students was assigned to a central unit working in partnership with schools. At another institution, a division of external and combined studies was responsible for cross-school oversight of the management of combined honours degree programmes (see also paragraph 12). Elsewhere, a school with a range of multidisciplinary and joint work had appointed a joint honours programme director and undertaken other initiatives to support students (see paragraph 12).

### Student handbooks and induction

12 Some audit reports included comment on provision of handbooks for joint honours students, whether this was of a handbook for each department or of a dedicated joint honours programme handbook. In the case of a joint honours programme involving a collaborative partnership, the report suggested, in place of the separate handbooks distributed by the partners, the potential benefit to students of a single integrated handbook whose production might also show up aspects of procedures and support needing to be addressed. In one instance, a report noted provision of a dedicated induction for new joint honours students.

### Assessment and classification of undergraduate degrees

13 A number of audit reports commented on the diverse methods being used within institutions to assess and classify undergraduate degrees, and their bearing on the equitable treatment of students. Within this context, several reports also considered the particular difficulties that might be experienced by students following joint, combined or multidisciplinary honours degree programmes, many of whom encounter different departmental systems.



14 One audit report noted, in the case of an institution employing two separate methods for classifying degrees, that the use by departments of different marking scales and award classification systems was a cause of particular confusion to dual degree students who found themselves subject to these different arrangements. Further, the system of primary and secondary determinants of classification applied to dual degree programmes appeared to be variably implemented by departments. Also, where both methods were employed, it could happen that different classes were indicated by their application, and the decision as to which class should be awarded was determined not by institutional regulation but on a discretionary basis by boards of examiners. The audit report recommended the introduction of assessment and classification processes which were 'transparent, fair and consistent' across all programmes.

15 In another institution, the development of a new joint degree by faculties employing different assessment conventions would entail the negotiation of new rules specific to that award. The audit report concerned cited a case where students following a joint honours programme were 'significantly less likely to achieve a First class honours degree' than students taking one of the subjects alone. Noting the work on harmonisation of assessment regulations and conventions that had been undertaken since the preceding continuation audit, the report recommended that inconsistencies still remaining be addressed.

16 In another example, the audit report found that students studying in more than one department were particularly liable to experience 'the side-effects of the variation in departmental practices' of an institutional system in which responsibility for programmes was delegated 'unambiguously' to departments and regulation of academic standards was essentially a departmental matter. In this case, overall responsibility for joint and combined honours students rested with a single named department, but students were exposed to variations in procedures concerned, for example, with the provision of feedback on marked work, and the timing of assessments and their return, which had 'the potential to affect the learning experience of joint and combined honours students detrimentally'.

17 One audit report commented on the role of an institutional centre for joint honours which, liaising with schools, had overall responsibility for joint honours students and their support. An external assessor, appointed for each of the centre's three divisions, attends meetings of examination boards to ensure equitable treatment in the classification of joint honours students and to comment on the classification process and joint honours provision generally.

18 Cross-school oversight of the management of combined honours degree programmes at another institution was provided by its division of external and combined studies. Following its continuation audit, the institution had undertaken an internal audit of the work of the then combined studies progression and award board. The report of this internal audit had led the institution to introduce measures to ensure that the decisions of the board were consistent with assessment regulations approved by the institution. Nonetheless, the audit report found that assessment policies presented an 'area of complexity' to combined honours students, noting that where their programmes crossed schools, students were required to handle two assessment policies.

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19 In this case the audit also found evidence from staff and students that the emphasis on the relationship with the host school of the first-named subject for combined honours students could 'work to the detriment of the students' ability to resolve difficulties that related to the second school or crossed school boundaries'. These difficulties could extend to the outcomes of classification decisions. The audit report recommended that the institution strengthen arrangements for ensuring parity of treatment for combined honours students whose programmes crossed schools with those whose programmes operated within a single school, given the scope for variation in school policies.

20 Another audit report found that the institution concerned had paid careful attention to problems in workload management and the classification of their awards being experienced by combined honours students, which had been identified by external examiners. In this case, the institution had undertaken an inquiry into the equity of treatment for students on single and combined honours programmes, an initiative encouraged in the recommendations of the audit report.

21 Two audit reports commented on the analysis of progression and completion in respect of joint and combined honours students. One, noting an institution's developing analysis of progression and completion statistics, observed its ability to compare the performance of single and combined honours students in common units, and thereby assess the fitness for purpose of the units for different programmes [University of Portsmouth, paragraph 88]. This development was associated with others assisting quality assurance and enhancement and the security of standards within the institution [University of Portsmouth, paragraph 258 i].

22 Another audit report, also commenting on developments in the use of statistics at programme level, observed, however, the limited consideration of comparative performance data across different subject areas or between single and combined honours awards. In one subject area examined, statistical analysis had failed to identify the causes of low progression rates for combined honours students. The report recommended continued development of mechanisms for the oversight of comparative progression, retention and attainment statistics across the institution.

### External reference points and programme specifications

23 A number of audit reports considered reference in programme specifications for joint programmes to subject benchmark statements and the FHEQ. Comment on this was to be found largely in sections concerned with DATs. Some reports noted that specifications for joint programmes referred to both relevant subject benchmark statements, others that reference extended only to one of these (that for the subject with primacy in the combination).

24 Audit reports commented, in contexts which included joint honours programmes, on whether or not programme specifications referred to the FHEQ. Some reports went on to confirm alignment of standards between degree awards and the FHEQ. In one case it appeared that whereas the programme specification for a joint honours degree programme referred to the FHEQ, the programme specification for the corresponding single honours programme, in which the details of the leading

subject in the joint programme were given, did not. Another report quoted an institutional teaching committee's recognition that 'combined degrees, comprising elements of two single subject programmes, presented particular difficulties in relation to the FHEQ'.

25 A further audit report noted, of a four-year joint honours degree in which one subject occupied the first two years and the other the final two, that the first subject did not contain any honours level study, and therefore concluded that the programme diverged from the FHEQ. The report recommended that the institution review its approach to qualifications titles for programmes of study involving more than one discipline, in the context of the guidance in the FHEQ, to ensure that such titles represented accurately the balance of the components in both level and volume of study.

26 Several audit reports observed the difficulties encountered by institutions in distinguishing, in their programme specifications, between single and joint honours degree programmes. Thus 'the use of a single specification to describe one single honours and 10 joint honours degrees is by nature complex and less than ideal so far as the latter are concerned'. Another report commented: 'The programme specifications were brief and did not distinguish between the learning outcomes for the joint honours and single honours undergraduate programmes'. A third report noted variability in how programme specifications, contained in subject handbooks, differentiated between single and joint honours programmes.

### **Approval, monitoring and review**

27 Some reports commented on the treatment of joint degree programmes in the context of initial approval, annual monitoring reports, external examiners' reports, periodic review, or programme withdrawal. One report noted an institutional requirement that proposals for joint programmes be approved by the school teaching committees of all participating schools. Another report noted that proposals for joint programmes were debarred from fast-tracking authorisation at the planning approval stage in view of the logistical complexity of the linkages involved. With respect to programme withdrawal, one report noted that the institutional procedure for the withdrawal of joint programmes stipulated that all contributing departments agree to the proposed course of action.

### **Programme monitoring**

28 Comments in audit reports on annual programme monitoring for joint, combined and multidisciplinary programmes included reference in one report to institutional guidance that departments should pay particular attention to combined degrees and include reports from the chairs of relevant combined executive committees. Another report commented on the tendency of departments to conduct annual review on an overall departmental basis or by grouping programmes rather than considering them individually. As most departments operated only unit and not programme annual questionnaires, student evaluation was concentrated at departmental rather than programme level. The audit report inquired whether the approach to the specific experiences of students on joint degree programmes might be better served if the annual review process were to require explicit consideration of

the particular features of each programme, as well as those common across the department. The report also noted that departments collaborating in joint programme delivery conducted separate annual reviews of the programme concerned. In one instance observed by another report, a department had introduced joint honours programmes for which, at the time of the audit, annual review arrangements had not been established.

### External examiners' reports

29 Some audit reports identified contexts in which external examiners, through their annual reports, had contributed significantly to institutional discussion of matters affecting joint honours programmes. In one case, external examiner input to consideration of the subject balance in a joint programme had stimulated both internal debate and monitoring of the issue. In another, external examiners' comments regarding equity of treatment in assessment between students on single and combined honours programmes had been referred to the relevant institutional committee and to boards of studies and also incorporated into a broader review of diversity in assessment within the institution's modular framework.

30 Another audit report noted the concern of one subject department contributing to joint programmes undertaken with a department in another school. The subject department in question was concerned about the lack of regularised contact with external examiners responsible for the other subject and the lack of routine access to their annual reports.

### Periodic review

31 In two audit reports there were explicit references to the constructive inclusion of joint programmes within the periodic review procedures. In one example, they had featured in a department's development and appraisal, within review, of its programme specifications [University of Durham, paragraph 134]. In the other, a procedure modelled on subject review included consideration of combined degrees and interdisciplinary programmes. Departments concerned in these programmes were enabled to comment on the report drawn up by the institutional review panel and contribute to its action plan. Review panels included external assessors, who also submitted an independent report. Those reports seen by the audit team were 'complimentary but also constructively critical' regarding, inter alia, the management of combined degrees.

32 Another audit report noted the responsibility of the lead department for overseeing the review of joint honours programmes in a system where programmes might be reviewed either singly or in groups. Two reports found that joint programmes were not being systematically included in periodic review. In one case, the report observed that systematic arrangements would assist in the identification of those areas where variations in practices between departments had the potential to impair the learning experience of joint and combined honours students (see paragraph 16). In the other, the institution was invited to clarify how joint programmes would be addressed within periodic review, especially as they were available in subject combinations involving more than one school. The points made in these two reports were linked with recommendations in the findings.

### Student representation

33 Two audit reports noted lack of, or variability in, provision for students on joint programmes to be represented in that capacity on departmental staff-student committees. One report suggested that the arrangements for representation would benefit from clarification to ensure that consideration was given to the views of joint students. On the other hand, student representatives on a programme board of studies at another institution gave as an example of change that they had been able to stimulate an expansion of module choices for joint honours students. Elsewhere, in the context of a multidisciplinary programme, the evidence of responsiveness to students, and their involvement in the enhancement of their own learning experience, was associated with a feature of good practice [University of Bradford, paragraphs 152 and 153].

### Collaborative provision

34 Some audit reports alluded to single honours degree programmes (undergraduate or postgraduate) in which two UK institutions collaborated, and which were referred to as joint degrees. Variable arrangements were in place for shared use of modules, assessment regulations and quality assurance procedures.

### Conclusion

35 References in institutional audit reports to joint, combined or multidisciplinary degree programmes addressed, in particular, concerns about parity of treatment for students undertaking related awards. Such concerns were most widely linked with two areas, namely: student support and departmental arrangements, and assessment and classification of undergraduate degrees. Similar concerns also arose with respect to programme monitoring, periodic review and student representation. In all areas, however, evidence was found of institutional or more localised initiatives in support of students engaged in cross-disciplinary programmes.

## **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  
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	Publishing date (provisional)
Initial overview	April 2005
External examiners and their reports	April 2005
Programme specifications	April 2005
Staff support and development arrangements	October 2005
Student representation and feedback arrangements	November 2005
Programme monitoring arrangements	January 2006
Assessment of students	January 2006
Learning support resources, including virtual learning environment	January 2006
Validation and approval of new provision and periodic review	January 2006
Work-based and placement learning, and employability	March 2006
Arrangements for international students	March 2006
Progression and completion statistics	March 2006
Collaborative provision in the institutional audit reports	March 2006
Specialist institutions	July 2006
The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland	July 2006
Subject benchmark statements	September 2006
Arrangements for combined, joint and multidisciplinary honours degree programmes	October 2006
Institutions' work with employers and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies	October 2006
Institutions' support for e-learning	October 2006
Academic guidance, support and supervision, and personal support and guidance	October 2006
Institutions' arrangements for the management of quality and academic standards	tbc
Learning outcomes	tbc

## 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<sup>®</sup>. 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 compiled by QAA staff and experienced institutional auditors. To assist in compiling the papers, reports produced by QSR N6<sup>®</sup> 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.

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