



QAA

**Outcomes from institutional audit
Institutions' support for students
with disabilities 2002-06
Special study**



Sharing good practice

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Summary

Consideration of the 129 institutional audit reports published between 2003 and 2006 indicates that institutions have, overall, established suitable arrangements for the support of students with disabilities.

Although students are central to the principal focuses of institutional audit and to the audit process itself, there is no requirement to report separately on arrangements made for the support of students with disabilities. The fact, however, that references to students with disabilities occur in nearly 95 per cent of the audit reports and that, in most cases, those references occur in the section devoted to the personal support and guidance of students, indicates the interest of audit teams in the arrangements made for their support. Although there are relatively few specific references to students with disabilities, in several reports, arrangements for their support contributed to the identification of features of good practice in the general area of student support and guidance, and in other reports, audit teams singled out for approval particular aspects of the support provided for students with disabilities. It is significant that there are very few recommendations in the reports for action that relate to support for students with disabilities.

The reports indicate that, overall, institutions are addressing the precepts and guidance contained in the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice) Section 3: Students with disabilities*, published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). Section 3 is used as a point of reference when strategies and policies are developed and when arrangements for the support of students with disabilities are reviewed. Actions taken by institutions following consideration of Section 3 are frequently linked in the reports with arrangements made to comply with the requirements of the *Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001 (SENDA)*. Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) funding for initiatives to improve provision for disabled students has proved helpful to institutions, especially small specialist ones, in engaging with Section 3 of the *Code of practice* and complying with the requirements of SENDA.

The reports also describe ways in which institutions are attempting to meet the needs of students with disabilities in the various aspects of learning and teaching. Students are encouraged to disclose disabilities before or on entry so that appropriate arrangements can be made to help them reach their full potential. In line with precepts in Section 3 of the *Code of practice*, programme specifications are scrutinised to ensure that they include no unnecessary barriers to access by disabled students, and that assessment practices and procedures take into account the need to enable disabled students the same opportunity as their peers to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes. Designated members of staff in faculties, schools and departments act as the first point of contact for students with disabilities and liaise on behalf of students with central support services to ensure that students receive appropriate advice and specialist support. The reports indicate that, in general, staff are made aware of the implications of disability for the learning experience of students, and training and support is made available to staff working with disabled students.

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The reports contain a considerable amount of material on the ways in which additional specialist support is provided for students with disabilities from the point of disclosure to graduation. Of particular note are the arrangements made to support dyslexic students. Students who met audit teams were generally appreciative of the specialist support offered to students with disabilities.

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, describing features of good practice and summarising recommendations from the audit reports. Since 2005 these have been 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 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.

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 for reflection and further development rather than as a model for emulation. A note on the topics identified for the first and second series of *Outcomes...* papers can be found at Appendix 3 (page 23).

This *Outcomes...* paper is based on the 129 institutional audit reports published by August 2006. Although QAA retains copyright of the contents of the *Outcomes...* papers they can be freely downloaded from QAA's website and cited, with acknowledgement.

Introduction and general overview

1 This paper is based on a detailed consideration of the 129 institutional audit reports published between 2003 and 2006 (see Appendix 1, page 15). A note of the methodology used to produce this and other papers in the *Outcomes...* series can be found in Appendix 4 (page 25).

2 Although students are central to the principal focuses of institutional audit and to the audit process itself, there is no requirement for audit teams to report separately on arrangements made for the support of students with disabilities. This may explain why there are few specific references to students with disabilities in the features of good practice identified in the audit reports or in the recommendations for action made by audit teams.

3 Nevertheless, the fact that references to students with disabilities occur in nearly 95 per cent of the reports and that, in most cases, those references occur in the section devoted to the personal support and guidance of students, indicates the interest of audit teams in the arrangements made for their support. In several reports it is clear that those arrangements contributed to the identification of features of good practice in the general area of arrangements for student support. In other reports, audit teams singled out for approval particular aspects of support for students with disabilities. It is significant that there are very few recommendations for action that relate to support for students with disabilities in the reports.

4 Audit teams are required to report on the use made by institutions of external reference points, including the *Code of practice Section 3: Students with disabilities*. This was published by QAA in October 1999 and, although audit teams were not seeking evidence of compliance with its advice, institutions were expected to indicate that they had considered the purpose of Section 3, had reflected on their own practices, and had taken, or were taking, any necessary steps to ensure that appropriate changes were introduced.

5 There are frequent references in the reports, usually in association with Section 3 of the *Code of practice*, to the *Special Educational Needs and Disability Act 2001* (SENDA), which came into force in September 2002, incorporating amendments to Part 4 of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1995*, which deals with education. The principle behind this legislation, which placed new duties on providers of post-16 education, is that disabled people should have the same opportunities as non-disabled people to benefit wherever possible from whatever education is available. There are also frequent references in the reports to the ways in which institutions have used the funding provided by HEFCE from 1995 to improve provision for disabled students.

Features of good practice

6 Consideration of the published institutional audit reports shows the following features of good practice relating to arrangements for the support of students with disabilities:

- the support given to students with special needs by the [Learning and Teaching Unit] and the library [School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, paragraph 299 (iv); paragraph 122]
- the concern to support students with a disability [Royal Northern College of Music, paragraph 120 (ii); paragraph 79]
- the approach to support for students with disabilities, which includes measures to raise awareness across the College and to promote dissemination of good practice [College of St Mark and St John, paragraph 189 (iv); paragraph 107]
- many features of the University's support for its students including...the special measures taken to support students with disabilities and additional needs [Aston University, paragraph 253 (ii); paragraph 122]
- the coordinated support for students with special needs [Brunel University, paragraph 216 (v); paragraphs 129 and 201]
- the targeted support available to particular categories of students, such as disabled...students [University of Hull paragraph 216 (v); paragraphs 108, 112, 115 and 118]
- the priority given by the University to the quality of the student experience, particularly...students with disabilities... [University of Northumbria at Newcastle, paragraph 254 (v); paragraphs 132 and 198]
- range and quality of support for students with special needs (physical or educational challenges) linked to the University's strategic view of diversity [University of Sunderland, paragraph 206 (iv); paragraphs 110 and 162]
- the support provided for students in the context of the University's culture of equality and diversity [University of East London, paragraph 256 (vii); paragraphs 126, 129 and 136]
- the effectiveness of the disability project in raising disability awareness in staff at all levels within the affiliates [Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, paragraph 134 (v); paragraph 80].

7 The number of features of good practice in the arrangements for the support of students with disabilities needs to be put in the wider context of the numerous reports which, while not explicitly identifying features of good practice, noted with approval aspects of provision where the institution's arrangements were more than adequate:

- the effective integration of identification of the needs of individual students with the delivery of support mechanisms to meet those needs [University of Lincoln, paragraph 130]
- the sophisticated and clearly understood systems to identify dyslexia early and support students throughout the delivery and assessment of courses [Norwich School of Art and Design, paragraph 86]

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- the particular efforts made to meet the needs of students with disabilities [University of Bradford, paragraph 119]
- the academic and personal support services provided to students with disabilities by the Roehampton Educational Development Centre [University of Surrey, Roehampton, paragraph 85]
- the excellent support provided by specialist dyslexia support tutors [Writtle College, paragraph 113]
- the vigorous and proactive addressing of issues arising from the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act [King's College London, paragraph 131]
- the effective way in which the University Disability Action Plan had been developed [University of Nottingham, paragraph 112]
- the well developed and effective protocols and arrangements established to assist students with disabilities [University of Ulster, paragraph 116]
- the work of the Learning Support Unit in promoting inclusiveness and accessibility [London South Bank University, paragraph 104]
- the range of initiatives being undertaken to promote inclusiveness for disabled students [University of the West of England, Bristol, paragraph 120]
- the identification and counselling of international students with disabilities [University of Bolton, paragraph 122]
- dealing with the needs of students on an individual basis, including those of students with disabilities, when organising placement activities [Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies, paragraph 137].

Themes

8 This part of the paper focuses on themes emerging from references relating to students with disabilities in the reports of the institutional audits undertaken between 2002 and 2006. These can be grouped into the following broad areas:

- the *Code of practice* (published by QAA) and SENDA
- learning and teaching support for students with disabilities
- specialist support for students with disabilities.

The Code of practice and SENDA

9 Specific references in nearly half of the institutional audit reports to Section 3 of the *Code of practice* and to SENDA indicate that, overall, institutions are addressing the precepts and guidance contained in Section 3 and are aware of the need to comply with legal requirements in relation to students with disabilities. Only one institution was recommended to give further attention to the section of the *Code of practice* dealing with students with disabilities in the context of the changing legislation relating to equality and diversity. The report noted that it was not clear that the institution had established a clear strategy to address the impact of the new legislation on areas such as estate development, the design and delivery of programmes, and student support and staff development.

Code of practice Section 3: Students with disabilities

10 The audit reports indicate that institutions have engaged with Section 3 in a variety of ways. In several institutions, consideration of the precepts and guidance in Section 3 had led to a review of support for students with disabilities. In one institution, a disabilities steering group had been set up following the publication of Section 3 and this had resulted in modifications to the services provided for students with disabilities. In another, a gap analysis of the institution's responses to the *Code of practice* had led to a review of procedures for supporting students with disabilities. In a third, consideration of Section 3 had identified areas for action in relation to the quality of the learning experience for students with disabilities. One institution was reported to have aligned the range of services provided for students with disabilities with the suggestions set out in the *Code of practice* as an aspect of its targeted support for particular categories of student, which was identified as a feature of good practice [University of Hull, paragraph 108].

11 Several institutions were reported to have found Section 3 a useful reference point when developing, updating or revising policy statements or internal codes of practice. In one institution, Section 3 had informed a policy statement on students with disabilities; in another, mapping of practice to Section 3 had resulted in a policy on equal opportunities in teaching and learning; the development of a disabled student strategy in another institution was reported to have taken into account the guidance in the *Code of practice*. Another audit report noted that, although Section 3 had been overtaken by legislative developments since its publication, it had been used as a reference point when the institution's learning, teaching and assessment policy for students with disabilities had been developed. The completion of another institution's review of Section 3 had been delayed due to subsequent legislation imposing other obligations, but an action plan had been drawn up to enable the institution to deal with outstanding issues under the direction of a disability working group.

12 Many other institutions were reported to have followed the guidance of Section 3 in addressing the needs of students with disabilities by means of strategies and policies, and to have monitored and reviewed the impact of such policies, with a view to continuous improvement. There are several references in the reports to institutional disability strategies, statements and action plans. The disability support offered by one institution was reported to have been driven by objectives set out in the institution's disability strategy. Another report noted the effective way in which the institution's disability plan had been developed, with full student involvement, and the care that had been taken to ensure that it was fully compliant with external standards and requirements. One institution intended to integrate its strategy of disability and dyslexia support with its learning and teaching strategy, and another had recast its disability statement in a more accessible form as 'Information for Students with Disabilities and Additional Learning Needs'. One institution evaluated support regularly through a disability coordinators group and another was found to be evaluating its existing support against provision at other selected institutions. Following an external review, one institution had developed an action plan for enhancing the experience of students with disabilities, and had established a disabled student's advisory group to monitor the plan to ensure compliance with SENDA and the *Code of practice*.

13 The audit reports confirm that many institutions were also following the guidance in Section 3 on incorporating the views of disabled students in the development and review of provision. There are references to student representation on disability advisory and working groups and several institutions had established disability forums or focus groups. In one institution, a library disabilities special interest group was said to have made a valuable contribution to the provision of learning resources for students with disabilities; in another, the audit report noted that the work of the disability forum was clearly effective in ensuring that the needs of students with disabilities were properly addressed at all levels; and in a third, effective student representation was said to have made an assessment policy for students with disabilities particularly inclusive.

14 In the light of the advice offered in Section 3, the audit reports note that several institutions had carried out or commissioned audits of support for students with disabilities. An audit of support mechanisms in one institution by SKILL (National Bureau for Students with Disabilities) had indicated that the disabled students' support team provided an excellent service and that the institution had a strong commitment to providing access and equality of opportunity for students with disabilities. SKILL had been invited to undertake a disability needs analysis in another institution in order to address the guidance contained in Section 3. One institution had carried out an academic audit of policies, procedures and practices in relation to Section 3, and another had commissioned an external audit of disability policy, practice and procedures. An audit of teaching and learning support in relation to Section 3 had been commissioned in one institution, with a review in the following year of progress on matters raised.

SENDA

15 Actions taken following consideration of Section 3 are sometimes linked in the audit reports with those relating to the requirements of SENDA, but there is a stronger element of compliance involved with the latter because of its legislative nature. It is noted in one report, for example, that disability coordinators had been identified in schools to be responsible for ensuring that the requirements of SENDA were met and that the advice of Section 3 was heeded.

16 A disability project had been established specifically in one institution to address both Section 3 and the requirements of legislation. Another institution reported that it had assessed and enhanced its current practices in the light of Section 3, and was in the process of working through an action plan to ensure that all its practices were compliant with SENDA and that all staff were aware of their legal responsibilities.

17 In one audit report, it was noted that challenges arising as a result of SENDA were being vigorously addressed with significant investment in staff and infrastructure, and another report described how a learning support unit had produced a well-designed framework for implementing the requirements of SENDA. In one institution, a disabled student support team was coordinating the implementation of SENDA, and in another, a working party had been set up to examine the implications of SENDA and training put in place to support implementation of the requirements of the Act. One institution was reported to have

engaged with SENDA at senior management level and another had undertaken an investigation into learner support to aid compliance with SENDA.

18 Several institutions were reported to have reviewed or enhanced their support services in order to comply with the requirements of SENDA. Other institutions had reviewed and revised their disability statements in the light of the Act, while one institution's equality and diversity statement was noted to include operational codes and procedures to take account of changes in legislation, as well as internal requirements.

Use of HEFCE funding

19 It is clear from the audit reports that HEFCE funding for initiatives to improve provision for disabled students has proved particularly helpful to some small, specialist institutions, both in terms of engaging with Section 3 and also in complying with the requirements of SENDA. Funded projects noted in the audit reports include the appointment of a welfare manager to address the outcomes of a SKILL analysis; the appointment of a disability officer; and increased support for dyslexic students. In another institution, the funding had enabled the appointment of a learning support tutor and the commissioning of a SKILL audit, and this concern to support students with a disability was identified as a feature of good practice [Royal Northern College of Music, Paragraph 79]. Ensuring access to the physical environment in which disabled students study, learn and live appears from the reports to have posed a particular challenge for some institutions, especially those occupying listed buildings. In several cases it was noted that HEFCE funding had helped the institution carry out improvements to its physical estate.

Learning and teaching support for students with disabilities

20 Only a small number of the institutional audit reports specifically identified features of good practice in the area of meeting the needs of students with disabilities in aspects of learning and teaching, but there is considerable evidence in the reports that institutions have considered the relevant precepts and guidance in Section 3 in their quality assurance and enhancement procedures.

Admissions and induction

21 Comments in the audit reports suggest that most institutions collect statistics on the number of students who have declared a disability, with figures cited in the reports ranging from four per cent to 15 per cent of an institution's student population. There is only one instance in the audit reports of a recommendation to an institution to prioritise the collection and analysis of data relating to students with disabilities in order to inform the development of its equal opportunities agenda. Elsewhere, one institution had developed guidelines for dealing with applications from students with disabilities, and in another institution, a disability assist service was involved in student recruitment and disability assessment.

22 Several audit reports noted that institutions specifically encourage students to disclose a disability so that appropriate adjustments can be made to help them reach their full potential. In one institution, students who declared a disability were

supported from the application stage; in another, the disability support unit made contact with applicants who declared a disability to make a preliminary assessment of needs and to offer support in the event of admission; in another, a special needs coordinator contacted all applicants who declared a disability to seek early clarification of support needs. One institution was found to operate universal screening for specific learning difficulties during induction, followed by a voluntary second screening and a full diagnostic test on request, and another invited all students to complete a health and disability questionnaire to help it identify special needs and provide coordinated support.

23 Students with disabilities in one institution were assessed at point of entry, and a student support plan agreed, which was used to notify appropriate staff and was reviewed with the student each year. In another institution the needs of applicants declaring a disability were assessed before entry and progress reviewed at the end of each year in case the student's needs had changed.

24 A few audit reports describe the arrangements made for induction for students with disabilities. In one institution, departments were reminded to make appropriate preparations to welcome students with disabilities, and another institution delivered bespoke induction programmes for students with identified disabilities. As well as providing an opportunity to identify or reassess the support needs of disabled entrants, induction was noted in one audit report to be an opportunity for making students with disabilities aware of the range of support available to them [College of St Mark and St John, paragraph 107]. Several other reports noted that students with disabilities were provided with additional information on practical matters in the form of handbooks or newsletters or, increasingly, on the institution's intranet.

Programme design and assessment

25 Taken together, the audit reports indicate that institutions have sought to address the precept of Section 3 that specifications for a programme should include no unnecessary barriers to access by disabled students. It was noted in the report on a discipline audit trail in one institution that the programme specification had a section relating to policy towards students with disabilities. In another case, the school's responsibilities in giving preliminary consideration to new programme proposals included taking account of legal requirements. In one institution, procedures for approval of programmes were found to ensure that programme specifications referred to the *Code of practice* and SENDA; in another institution proposals for new programmes were scrutinised in terms of the availability of, and access to, any specialist facilities; and in a third, approval panels were required to check that due attention had been paid to the needs of students with disabilities.

26 Another precept of Section 3 advises that institutions' assessment and examination policies, practices and procedures should provide disabled students with the same opportunity as their peers to demonstrate the achievement of learning outcomes. In line with this advice, the audit reports show that several institutions had devised internal codes of practice for the assessment of students with disabilities, or had included guidelines on special or alternative assessment methods for students with disabilities in assessment handbooks or assessment policy statements. In one report it was noted that a special examinations panel considered requests for

alternative examination arrangements for students with disabilities. In another institution, the report noted evidence of sensitive and careful handling of individual cases to ensure equality of opportunity, particularly in devising appropriate assessment arrangements. Another audit report recommended that an institution's 'case-by-case' approach to the assessment of students with disabilities would benefit from the development of guidelines to ensure clarity and consistency.

Learning support resources

27 There are several examples in the audit reports of the ways in which institutions consider the needs of students with disabilities in the provision of learning support resources. In some institutions, specialist facilities such as assistive technology for disability support were housed in learning resource centres. In one institution, adaptive technology resource centres within learning resource centres on each campus were reserved for the sole use of students with disabilities, including those with dyslexia. Other institutions provided specialist support in libraries, including dedicated booths for disabled students; designated rooms available to students in need of special help; extended loan periods and postal loan services; and help with the use of adaptive technologies.

Academic advice and guidance

28 A common pattern that emerges from the audit reports is the appointment of named disability tutors or coordinators in faculties, schools, departments or programmes to act as the first point of contact for students with disabilities. These designated members of academic staff typically ensure that students receive appropriate advice and support, liaise on behalf of students with central support services and also provide a channel of communication with departments for specialist disability units.

29 The audit report for one institution noted that a network of school disability liaison officers was well supported and functioning effectively. In another institution, the report noted evidence, uncovered in the course of a discipline audit trail, that the careful planning and delivery of support for students with disabilities reflected a high level of expertise and experience in supporting individual learning needs. It was noted in another report that school disability advisers assisted in identifying students with particular requirements and liaised with the office of the disability coordinator so that appropriate specialist help and support could be made available.

30 In the audit reports, the discipline audit trails provided plentiful evidence of practice at local level. For example, the working partnership between school-based learning support coordinators and the institutional disability adviser in helping dyslexic, partially-sighted or blind students was considered to merit specific mention in one report. The networks established between the staff who worked in the central support services and between them and academic staff, such as senior tutors and departmental disability representatives, contributed to the identification in one report of the coordinated support provided for students with special needs as a feature of good practice [Brunel University, paragraph 129].

Staff support and development

31 Effective academic guidance and support for students with disabilities requires staff who are well supported by specialists and also aware of the implications of disability for the learning experience of students. The audit reports indicate that institutions have taken into consideration the advice of another precept of Section 3, that disability training should be provided for all staff. References in the reports to staff development in relation to disability matters range from sessions on working with disabled students during the induction of new staff to a mandatory programme on disability awareness for all staff.

32 One institution, in which the priority given to the quality of the student experience, particularly for students with disabilities, was identified as a feature of good practice, was reported to have paid special attention to the pedagogical needs of disabled students by bringing to the attention of teaching staff the barriers to learning that many disabled students encounter [University of Northumbria at Newcastle, paragraph 132]. In another institution, staff met by the audit team were unanimous in their appreciation of disability awareness training, and the effectiveness of a HEFCE-funded project in raising disability awareness in staff at all levels was identified as a feature of good practice [Conservatoire of Dance and Drama, paragraph 80].

33 Training on disability was provided for library staff in another institution in which the support given to students with special needs by the learning and teaching unit and the library was identified as a feature of good practice [School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraph 122]. Other aspects of training in disability issues mentioned in the reports include: workshops to raise awareness among academic and support staff of the need to make reasonable adjustments for disabled students; sessions on disability issues in staff conferences; the involvement of disability support officers in staff development sessions; and the provision of formal training in disability issues by learning support units or disability advisory groups.

Specialist support for students with disabilities

34 Section 3 of the *Code of practice* advises institutions to ensure that there are sufficient designated members of staff with appropriate skills and experience to provide specialist advice and support to disabled applicants and students, and to the staff who work with them. There is a considerable amount of material in the audit reports relating to the additional specialist support provided by institutions for students with disabilities, ranging from single disability officers or coordinators to disability offices or learning support units or centres, some with external accreditation [University of East London, paragraph 136]. The responsibilities of specialist staff noted in the reports include providing a central focal point for students with disabilities; identifying individual needs of applicants and entrant students; providing a range of services from recruitment to graduation; developing plans to enable students with disabilities to learn independently; identifying international students with disabilities and counselling them about cultural differences that might prevent them seeking help; offering assistance in completing applications for Disabled Students' Allowances and arranging learner support, such as scribing and note taking; and working with the careers service to support disabled students seeking employment.

35 In addition to identifying the needs of individual students and delivering support mechanisms to help meet those needs, disability officers and units are also recorded in the audit reports to be raising awareness and developing policies in respect of mental health issues; coordinating the implementation of SENDA; delivering staff training; providing information and support for networks of school-based disability coordinators; collaborating and exchanging information with other higher education institutions; and championing and disseminating good practice. The disability and additional needs unit in an institution where the special measures taken to support students with disabilities and additional needs was identified as a feature of good practice provided a wide range of services, including the coordination of support for students with physical, sensory or hidden disabilities; mental health or specific learning difficulties; advising on policies and procedures and gathering information to promote good practice; offering advice to students on matters relating to disability and to staff teaching or supporting students with disabilities; and acting as a broker on behalf of individual students to arrange a wide range of study support services [Aston University, paragraph 122].

36 Where references to students with disabilities in the student written submissions prepared for audits are mentioned in the audit reports, they are, almost without exception, complimentary, particularly about the work of specialist support services. One student written submission is reported to have commented that the support offered by a recently-appointed disability and learning support officer had made a tangible difference by creating a focal point for students with disabilities, where help had previously been fragmented and variable. Elsewhere in the reports, particularly in the accounts of discipline audit trails, the praise of students for the effective specialist guidance and support provided for students with disabilities, especially for those with dyslexia, is often noted.

Dyslexic students

37 It is clear from the audit reports that dyslexia is the most common disability identified among higher education students and that support for dyslexic students is the fastest growing area of work for disability officers and units. Of the 900 students who had declared a disability in one institution, over 500 were dyslexic; in another institution, over three-quarters of the students who had declared themselves as disabled had been diagnosed as dyslexic; and in a third, smaller, institution over half of the 200 students supported by a disability advisory and support service were dyslexic. In a number of cases audit reports describe institutions responses through the appointment of dyslexia advisers or by establishing dedicated dyslexia support units. In one institution the audit team was particularly impressed by the arrangements for students with dyslexia, with each student offered a diagnostic assessment and support from specialist tutors, and in another the audit team regarded the sophisticated and clearly understood systems in place to identify dyslexia early and support students throughout the delivery and assessment of courses as an area of good practice.

Conclusion

38 The evidence of the 129 institutional audit reports published between 2003 and 2006 suggests that, overall, institutions have engaged with the precepts and guidance on students with disabilities contained in Section 3 of the *Code of practice* and are also aware of the need to comply with legal requirements in relation to students with disabilities. Although there are few features of good practice specifically identified in the audit reports in the area of learning and teaching support for students with disabilities, there is evidence that institutions have taken into consideration the precepts and guidance in the *Code of practice* in the development of their quality assurance and enhancement procedures. Students are encouraged to disclose disabilities so that appropriate arrangements can be made to help them reach their full potential, and they are offered academic guidance and support by staff who have been made aware of the implications of disability for the learning experience of students. Considerable specialist support, particularly in the area of dyslexia, is available for students with identified disabilities, and the effectiveness of this support was recognised and appreciated by students.

Appendix 1: The institutional audit reports

Series 1

2002-03

University College Chichester, February 2003¹

The Royal Veterinary College, February 2003

Cumbria Institute of the Arts, March 2003²

Institute of Education, University of London, March 2003

London School of Hygiene & 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 2003³

University of Lincoln, May 2003

London Business School, May 2003

Newman College of Higher Education, May 2003⁴

Norwich School of Art and Design, May 2003⁵

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 2003⁶

The Surrey Institute of Art & Design, University College, May 2003⁷

¹ Now the University of Chichester

² Now the University of Cumbria

³ Now Bath Spa University

⁴ Now Newman University College, Birmingham

⁵ Now Norwich University College of the Arts

⁶ Now University College Plymouth St Mark and St John

⁷ Now the University for the Creative Arts

Trinity and All Saints College, May 2003⁸

Trinity College of Music, May 2003⁹

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 2003¹⁰

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 2003¹¹

University of Surrey, Roehampton, December 2003¹²

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

⁸ Now Leeds Trinity and All Saints

⁹ Now Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance

¹⁰ Now the University of Manchester

¹¹ Now the University of Cumbria

¹² Now Roehampton University

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 2004¹³
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 2004¹⁴
University of Greenwich, June 2004
King's College London, June 2004
University of Lancaster, June 2004
The Manchester Metropolitan University, June 2004

¹³ Now Anglia Ruskin University

¹⁴ Now the University of the Arts, London

Series 2

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, was accepted by QAA as the equivalent of an institutional audit report. These reports have not been included in the list below.

2004-05

City University

Cranfield University

University of Hull

University of Leicester

University of Newcastle

University of Nottingham

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

University of London

University College London

Birkbeck College, University of London

Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine 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 Luton¹⁵
University of Northumbria at Newcastle
Oxford Brookes University
University of Plymouth
Staffordshire University
South Bank University
University of Sunderland
University of Teesside
University of East London
University of the West of England, Bristol
University of Westminster
Buckingham Chilterns University College¹⁶
Canterbury Christ Church University College¹⁷
University of Chester
Liverpool Hope University
University of Winchester¹⁸
Henley Management College¹⁹
Harper Adams University College
Conservatoire for Dance and Drama
American InterContinental University, London

¹⁵ Now the University of Bedfordshire

¹⁶ Now Buckinghamshire New University

¹⁷ Now Canterbury Christ Church University

¹⁸ Now the University of Winchester

¹⁹ Now merged with the University of Reading

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 Birmingham²⁰

University of Worcester

Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies

Dartington College of Arts²¹

The Arts Institute at Bournemouth

²⁰ Now Birmingham City University

²¹ Now part of the University College Falmouth

Appendix 2: Reports on specialist institutions

Series 1

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

Series 2

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

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 in Series 1 and 2

Initial overview

External examiners and their reports

Programme specifications

Staff support and development arrangements

Student representation and feedback

Programme monitoring arrangements

Assessment of students

Learning support resources (including virtual learning environments)

Validation and approval of new provision, and its periodic review

Work-based and placement learning, and employability

Arrangements for international students

Progression and completion statistics

Collaborative provision in the institutional audit reports

Specialist institutions

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

Subject benchmark statements

Arrangements for combined, joint and multidisciplinary honours degree programmes

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

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

Institutions' support for e-learning

Institutions' frameworks for managing quality and academic standards

Institutions' support for widening participation and access to higher education²²

The contribution of the student written submission to institutional audit

The adoption and use of learning outcomes

The self-evaluation document in institutional audit

²² Title amended to *Institutions' arrangements to support widening participation and access to higher education* in Series 2

Recruitment and admission of students (Series 2 only)

Institutions' intentions for enhancement (Series 2 only)

Closing overview

Summaries

Outcomes... papers currently available can be found on QAA's website at www.qaa.ac.uk/enhancement

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 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 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 have been 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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