QAA

Outcomes from Institutional audit: 2007-09

Student engagement and support

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Preface

One of the objectives of Institutional audit is to 'contribute, in conjunction with other mechanisms and agencies in higher education, to the promotion and enhancement of quality in teaching, learning and assessment'. To support this objective, QAA publishes short working papers, each focused on a key topic addressed within the audit process. These papers, which are published under the general title *Outcomes from Institutional audit*, are based on analysis of the individual audit reports (for full details of the methodology used, see Appendix C).

Two series of papers, covering audits which took place between 2003 and 2006, have already appeared, together with two related series, *Outcomes from Collaborative provision audit* and *Outcomes from Institutional review in Wales*. The present series will cover the cycle of audits taking place between 2007 and 2011.[1] Some structural changes have been made to the papers for this series: in particular, rather than considering the audit process in isolation, they will place the findings from audit in the context of policy developments and other evidence, for example from the National Student Survey, and key research findings where appropriate.

The papers seek to identify the main themes relating to the topic in question to be found in the audit reports, drawing in particular on the features of good practice and recommendations identified by audit teams. Both features of good practice and recommendations discussed in the paper are cross-referenced to paragraphs in the technical annex of individual audit reports, so that interested readers may follow them up in more detail. A full list of features of good practice and recommendations relating to each topic is given in Appendices A and B.

It should be remembered that a feature of good practice is a process or practice that the audit team considers to make a particularly positive contribution to the institution's approach to the management of the security of academic standards and/or the quality of provision **in the context of the institution**. Thus the features of good practice mentioned in this paper should be considered in their proper institutional context, and each is perhaps best viewed as a stimulus to reflection and further development rather than as a model for emulation. Similarly, recommendations are made where audit teams identify specific matters where the institution should consider taking action; they rarely indicate major deficiencies in existing practice. *Outcomes* papers seek to highlight themes which emerge when recommendations across a number of Institutional audit reports are considered as a whole.

Outcomes papers are written primarily for policy makers and managers within the higher education community with immediate responsibility for and interest in quality assurance, although specific topics may be of interest to other groups of readers. While QAA retains copyright in the content of the *Outcomes* papers, they may be freely downloaded from QAA's website and cited with acknowledgement.

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[1] For further information about Institutional audit, see www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/Pages/Institutional-audit.aspx .

Summary

It is clear from the reports of the 76 Institutional audits carried out between February 2007 and June 2009 that, overall, institutions were strongly committed to facilitating and encouraging student participation in quality assurance and enhancement. The role of the students' union, normally working in close collaboration with the institution, was often central in providing representation at institutional level, liaising with senior staff and supporting representatives at programme level. Arrangements for student representation at institutional and local level were generally well established, comprehensive and effective. The audit reports identified 27 features of good practice associated with student representation compared to just 17 recommendations.

Where student representation was considered to be particularly effective it was typically based on a strong, collaborative and constructive partnership in which students felt that their views were valued and acted upon. The response to the growing emphasis on student engagement was underpinned in many institutions by the establishment of committees with a specific remit to facilitate wider student participation and enable the student voice to be heard. The audit reports provide evidence that arrangements for student representation were generally effective at programme level, although some recommendations related to variability in the operation of processes across institutions.

The challenge of engaging and sustaining the enthusiasm of sufficient numbers of student representatives was an issue for some institutions and students' unions. This led in many cases to the provision of training and guidance materials for representatives, and sometimes the appointment of staff and students to roles that supported the process.

The audit reports describe the extensive processes that institutions had developed for gathering and responding to student feedback. The National Student Survey (NSS) was introduced in 2005, and it was clear from the reports of audits carried out later in the period 2007-09 that institutions had begun to fully appreciate its significance and had implemented robust processes for responding to it. The audit reports demonstrated that, in addition to the NSS, institutions made effective use of a wide range of other questionnaires, including those carried out at module level and in relation to support services. These were sometimes supplemented by other mechanisms for gathering feedback such as focus groups. Although it was evident that institutions were generally making good use of student feedback, a number of audit reports commented on the potential for its more systematic use in annual monitoring. A number of other reports also noted that the processes by which students were informed of the outcomes arising from their feedback could have been more effective.

The presence in the audit reports of 79 features of good practice and only 27 recommendations relating to student support shows that this area continues to be a strength in institutions' provision. It is apparent that students are generally provided with an impressive range of academic and pastoral support at both institutional and local level. The audit reports indicated that in many cases access to central support services was being focused through a physical or virtual 'one-stop shop'. The quality of support for disabled students and those with additional learning needs was highlighted in many institutions.

The audit reports showed a growing emphasis on developing students' employability skills. However, there was also evidence of the variable and sometimes low uptake of personal development planning opportunities. The main area where audit reports identified the potential for improvement was variability in access to personal tutor support within institutions.

Context

1   This paper is based on a review of the outcomes of the reports of the 76 Institutional audits carried out between February 2007 and June 2009 (see Appendix D, page 39). A note on the methodology used to produce this and other papers in this third *Outcomes* series can be found in Appendix C (page 38).

2   The audit reports analysed in this paper result from the requirements of the Institutional audit process described in the *Handbook for Institutional Audit: England and Northern Ireland* (2006).[2] As emphasised in papers in the first two series of *Outcomes*, the student experience and the role of students in quality assurance and enhancement is considered to be an important focus of the audit process. Consequently, audit reports contained sections about the role of students in quality assurance (student representation), the opportunities for students to provide feedback to their institution, and the arrangements for providing student support. Findings in all these areas contributed to the judgement made about the quality of students' learning opportunities. These sections of the audit reports have largely provided the evidence analysed in this paper. However, much relevant information was also found in other sections of the reports, including those related to quality enhancement and arrangements for postgraduate research students. In total, 106 features of good practice and 60 recommendations were identified as relating to the themes of this paper.

3   Institutional audit considers how institutions have engaged with the reference points of the Academic Infrastructure.[3] Of particular relevance to the topic of this paper are parts of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, *Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes* (2004), *Section 3: Students with disabilities* (1999, revised 2010) and *Section 8: Career education, information, advice and guidance* (2001, revised 2010). In addition, one way in which students participate in the audit process is through providing a student written submission. One of the questions students are asked to address in their submission is 'Do you have a voice in the institution and is it listened to?'.

4   This *Outcomes* paper has been divided into two sections, the first covering student engagement and the second considering arrangements for student support.

5   Several other themes related to the topic of this paper will be addressed in separate papers in this series of *Outcomes*. These topics include the provision of feedback to students on their assessment (flagged in some reports as a consequence of low scores in this section of the National Student Survey) and the quality of published material such as handbooks and prospectuses. The paper does not consider issues related specifically to students studying through collaborative arrangements.

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[2] www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Handbook-for-Institutional-audit-2006.aspx
[3] www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/Pages/AcademicInfrastructure.aspx

Student engagement

Themes

6   The following main themes relating to student participation emerged from analysis of the audit reports and will be discussed in this paper:

- Student engagement: general
  - Institutional commitment to student representation and feedback
  - Frameworks for student participation
  - Collaboration with students' unions

- Student representation
  - Senior committees
  - Access to senior staff
  - Other opportunities for representation at institutional level
  - Representation of specific groups of students
  - Representation at programme level
  - Support for student representatives

- Student feedback
  - The National Student Survey
  - Institutional student experience surveys
  - Module evaluation
  - Other opportunities for feedback: central services and specific groups
  - Responsiveness to feedback
  - 'Closing the loop': feedback to students on actions taken.

Student engagement: general

Institutional commitment to student representation and feedback

7   All the Institutional audit reports analysed in this paper described the opportunities for student representation and feedback which institutions had in place as part of their procedures for assuring and enhancing the quality of their provision. It was apparent from the reports that most institutions were seeking to facilitate active participation and that they valued the contribution that students had to make. The description in many reports was characterised by a sense of partnership embedded in the culture of the institution. Fifteen audit reports identified features of good practice which commended, in broad terms, the institution's approach to working with students,[4] while others referred to more specific aspects of representation and feedback, which are discussed further below.

8   The identified features of good practice highlighted the characteristics of the most successful relationships: a deliberate and systematic approach, a high level of institutional commitment, the value placed on student involvement, working in partnership with students, and responsiveness to their input. In many other audit reports there was evidence of the

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[4] Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, paragraph 84; Royal College of Art, paragraph 107; London Business School, paragraphs 71 and 90; Loughborough University, paragraphs 103, 110, 128, 135, 142 and 145; University of Bradford, paragraph 128; University of Buckingham, paragraph 73; University of Southampton, paragraph 70; University of York, paragraphs 99 and 150; Aston University, paragraph 79; City University London, paragraph 61; De Montfort University, paragraph 87; Goldsmiths' College, paragraphs 50, 54 and 56; University of Bath, paragraph 147; University of the West of England, Bristol, paragraph 72; University of Wolverhampton, paragraphs 63, 64, 102 and 112

positive approach taken by institutions, although this was not specifically identified as a feature of good practice. For example, in one institution it was clear that a 'deliberate and systematic involvement of undergraduate students in multiple aspects of its academic activities' had enabled students to contribute to decision making,[5] while in another, 'more systematic approaches to obtaining student feedback' were accompanied by 'frank dialogue between staff and students' which was facilitated by the 'wholly postgraduate population'.[6]

9   The level of commitment to student participation was exemplified in one report by an institution's 'prioritisation of students in the institutional culture' and the way in which it 'supports and values a wide range of representation in its management and planning for enhancement of learning opportunities'.[7] In another report, the audit team 'noted the high level of student involvement in the University's deliberative and consultative processes' which resulted in 'the effective engagement of students in the development of policy and practice'.[8]

10   There were examples of institutions that had developed strong, collaborative relationships with students. These included a case where the report confirmed that, in response to a recommendation from a previous audit, the university had succeeded in establishing 'a partnership approach to quality management and enhancement with the Students' Union' which was considered to be a feature of good practice.[9] Another audit report identified the 'excellent working relationships with university staff at all levels, enabling students to make an input to quality assurance processes' and leading to improvements to the student experience.[10]

11   However, in one case, although a well-established system for student representation was reported to be in place, discussions with students had highlighted a disparity between the institution's expectations for this structured system and the degree to which it was providing an overview of students' views. Consequently, the broader student body felt that the university was not as effective as it might be in listening and responding to their views, resulting in a perception that 'specific student-led campaigns were the most effective way of securing action on particular issues'.[11]

Frameworks for student participation

12   The audit reports identified a variety of ways in which the expectations and arrangements for student representation and feedback were established in institutional strategies, policies and procedures. These included incorporation in strategy documents, quality manuals and handbooks; specific codes of practice and policies; and student charters. Although it was not specifically noted as a feature of good practice, one audit report considered that the importance placed on the 'student voice' in one institution was evident in both the Academic and Quality Enhancement Strategy and the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, as well as in the Student Voice Strategy itself.[12] Another example of an approach adopted by institutions was a code of practice for student representation, which set out the joint commitment of the university and students' union 'to implement an effective and coherent system of student representation at all levels in the institution'.[13] In another report it was noted that an institution was in the process of introducing a student

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[5] Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, paragraph 84
[6] London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, paragraph 60
[7] Loughborough University, paragraph 110
[8] University of the West of England, Bristol, paragraph 72
[9] University of Bradford, paragraph 128
[10] University of Southampton, paragraph 70
[11] University of Sussex, paragraph 76
[12] University of Hertfordshire, paragraphs 62 and 63
[13] University of Hull, paragraph 60

representation and feedback policy.[14] It was clear from one audit report that the introduction of a student charter and a code of practice on student representation and student-staff liaison had contributed significantly to the identification of 'the specification and application of the framework for student involvement in quality assurance throughout the University, which affords significant opportunities for students to express their views to the University' as a feature of good practice. The institution's commitment to student representation was embodied in the student charter in the 'guiding principle that students are to be active partners in their own education and in the academic development of the University'.[15]

13   The audit reports identified that in many institutions there were committees and groups which had the specific function of facilitating student participation and enabling the student voice to be heard. The titles of these bodies varied between institutions but frequently included either 'student affairs' or the 'student experience'. There was also a range of different reporting lines for these groups, which often included senior academic and executive committees. The role of the Student Affairs Committee in one institution was considered by the audit team as a feature of good practice which had helped to invigorate the dialogue with students. In this case, the committee was seen to be active in receiving and responding to student concerns, such as the negative impact of over-running building work, as well as monitoring the university's response to student feedback. The committee, which reported to the Executive Committee, Senate and Council, was chaired by the Dean of Students and was described in the audit report as having 'teeth'.[16] In a second example, also identified as good practice, the audit team learned from students that the Student Experience Strategy Group had 'proved very effective in identifying and moving issues forward at institutional level', an example being the introduction of a new Student Service Centre. In this case the group was chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning), and attended by sabbatical officers from the students' union and key service staff.[17] The active engagement of students in these committees was exemplified in another report by the responsibility given to students for setting the agenda of the Student Affairs Committee, chaired by a member of the governing body: this was also considered to be a feature of good practice.[18]

Collaboration with students' unions

14   In the majority of institutions, the students' union or an equivalent body represents students at institutional level, normally through elected sabbatical officers. However, in the 76 audit reports considered in this paper, one institution did not have a students' union or sabbatical officers, and a further four did not have sabbatical officers.[19] It is notable that all these cases involved small and specialist institutions, and that four of the five reports contained recommendations that related to the potential to improve student participation, while the fourth identified the collaborative culture and active engagement of students as a feature of good practice. In one example, although students were represented on the Academic Board and Academic Quality and Standards Committee, the absence of sabbatical officers may have contributed to difficulties in attendance, as did the scheduling of some meetings outside undergraduate term times. It was also noted that students were not represented on other senior academic committees: the Teaching and Learning Assessment Committee and the Research Committee.[20] In a second case the audit report was more

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[14] University of Sunderland, paragraph 63
[15] University of East Anglia, paragraphs 68 and 74
[16] City University London, paragraphs 60 and 61
[17] University of Bath, paragraph 104
[18] University of Brighton, paragraph 103
[19] Royal Agricultural College, paragraph 62; London Business School, paragraph 71; Leeds Trinity and All SaintsLeeds Trinity and All Saints, paragraphs 44 and 71; Liverpool Institute for the Performing Arts, paragraphs 89 and 91; Rose Bruford College, paragraph 104
[20] Royal Agricultural College, paragraph 62

explicit, identifying the need for a students' union sabbatical officer, an issue which had also been raised in the institution's previous audit. The report made it clear that the time pressures on students' union officers were exacerbated by the absence of a sabbatical officer, although laudable efforts were being made by the institution to involve students more, for instance through the establishment of a student feedback forum. [21] It is important to note that these recommendations reflect the challenges faced by small and specialist institutions, and place the responsibility for addressing them on the institution and not the students or their union. The findings of one audit report, however, confirm that difficulties in student representation are not inevitable in the absence of sabbatical officers. In this instance, the report noted the good relationship between the institution and the Students' Association, the 'supportive and rigorous academic climate in which students play a full part' and 'the active engagement of students in its feedback processes'.[22]

Student representation

Senior committees

15   All the audit reports analysed in this paper identified that students were represented to at least some extent on senior committees within institutions, with the majority involving student participants at institutional and school/faculty level or equivalent. The committees where students were represented included boards of governors, senates and academic boards, and various committees focusing on quality, standards, learning and teaching, research and central services. It was noted in one report that the student representatives on the Academic Board were only observers, but this was an exception within the institution, and there was evidence that they were actively involved in a sub-committee, the Joint Committee of Academic Board and Students, where the membership was split evenly between staff and students.[23]

16   A number of audit reports identified factors that were considered to have contributed to the effectiveness of student representation on institutional committees. In one report it was noted that 'students are provided with full opportunities to express their views throughout the deliberative structure and the approach taken by the Director and Principal is widely felt to affirm this process'; consequently, the opportunities for student representation were identified as a feature of good practice.[24] Another report highlighted 'a high level of input to the various College quality assurance processes' and the effectiveness with which the institution was listening to the student voice and acting upon it to enhance the student experience. The report also noted the commitment of the student body to engaging with the arrangements for representation.[25] More specifically, one institution was commended for the way in which pre-meetings between committee chairs and students, to brief representatives on forthcoming agenda items, contributed to the informed participation of students.[26] In another report, it was noted that student representatives felt that 'they had made significant contributions' and that their voice was listened to at committee meetings, and this had contributed to good levels of attendance.[27] In another example students confirmed that 'representatives were able to articulate their views effectively at committee' and they felt welcomed and valued in their role as representatives.[28]

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[21] Rose Bruford College, paragraph 104
[22] London Business School, paragraph 71
[23] School of Pharmacy, paragraph 100
[24] School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraphs 14, 15 and 113
[25] Royal Veterinary College, paragraphs 110 and 112
[26] University College for the Creative Arts, paragraph 91
[27] Institute of Cancer Research, paragraph 68
[28] Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, paragraphs 73 and 75

17   A few of the audit reports identified issues relating to the effectiveness of representation arrangements, often arising from the distinctive nature of the particular institutions. In one instance, although it did not result in a recommendation, the audit team concluded that the presence of student representatives at committee meetings was tokenistic and students confirmed that they were 'not necessarily briefed and inducted for the role'. The institution acknowledged that it had some way to go in using the student voice in more 'strategic contexts'.[29] In another report, the institution was recommended to 'continue to take steps to improve the effectiveness of student representation'. In this case, students were represented on a number of committees, but there was little evidence of their participation. Students met by the audit team suggested that this might be because student representatives did not feel able to raise issues themselves, as opposed to responding to questions from the committee. Another factor in reducing the effectiveness of representation was considered to be the difficulties experienced by student representatives in actually identifying the views of the student body in an environment where students met together infrequently.[30] Students at another institution reported that they had a good relationship with the University but that 'they did not feel fully informed or involved in decision-making processes', with some students being unaware of the opportunities for this. They also expressed the view that 'they were only involved on committees that looked at issues after decisions had effectively been taken' and that agendas and papers were not always available in time for effective consultation and representation. This led the audit team to conclude that 'the University may wish to build more direct and active student participation into review and decision making processes' and to recommend 'that the University be more pro-active in enabling, supporting and training students for engagement with the full range of University committees, including programme committees'.[31]

Access to senior staff

18   It is indicative of the importance that institutions place on listening to the student voice that almost half the audit reports describe formal and informal opportunities that students have to meet with senior staff. In most cases these consisted of regular meetings between officers of the students' union or equivalent and a range of key staff, including vice chancellors, pro vice chancellors, deans and registrars. It is clear from the audit reports that the opportunities for dialogue that such access affords are important in creating a culture of partnership. For example, in one institution the students' union, in addition to regular, termly meetings with the vice chancellor, was provided with open access to them or a relevant pro vice chancellor when necessary.[32] In another case the effectiveness of the regular meetings between the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Education) and the students' union officers was confirmed in the student written submission, which stated that 'nine times out of ten, by the end of the meeting a plan is actioned to resolve the issue'.[33] Other opportunities for interaction with senior staff included the attendance of deputy deans for education at formal meetings with school-wide groups of students,[34] and the reciprocal attendance of senior staff at two students' union committees with a close interest in the quality of the student experience.[35] Another innovative approach was for students' union sabbatical officers to be linked with a member of the office of the vice chancellor in 'a two-way mentoring process focussed on strategic and developmental issues', which at the time of the audit had been implemented too recently for its effectiveness to be assessed.[36]

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[29] Central School of Speech and Drama, paragraph 82
[30] Royal College of Music, paragraphs 90 and 92
[31] Open University, paragraphs 98 and 100
[32] Liverpool Hope University, paragraph 90
[33] University of Southampton, paragraph 67
[34] Bournemouth University, paragraph 45
[35] University of Kent, paragraph 59
[36] University of Hertfordshire, paragraph 64

Other opportunities for representation at institutional level

19   It is apparent from the audit reports that many institutions were proactive in enabling students to participate in quality management in their institutions through mechanisms such as working groups and the processes of course approval and review. Working groups were often ad hoc and were convened to review strategies, policies, procedures and develop specific projects. Examples included the development of a virtual learning environment where the students' views were 'seen as important in decision making',[37] and a Leadership Action Team reviewing student retention patterns, which was reported to be 'collaborative and analytical' and which had resulted in 'an action plan being put in place across the University'.[38] In addition to approval and periodic review panels meeting with students, many institutions included student membership on the panels themselves. In some cases these representatives were on the course under review, while in others they were drawn from other schools or departments or the students' union. Most audit reports described the contribution of students to the panels as valuable, with only a few reports noting some inconsistencies in attendance or effectiveness. In one report an audit team identified the potential for the wider involvement of students in course design and recommended that the institution consider 'the benefits of increasing student participation in the monitoring and review of taught provision'.[39]

Representation of specific groups of students

20   One report described the opportunities for postgraduate research student representation on committees as particularly comprehensive, [40] while another report identified good practice in the institution's 'commitment to ensuring the research students' voice is heard through its student representation mechanisms'.[41] The audit reports, however, generally suggested that there were particular challenges with the representation of students studying through collaborative partners and on part-time and distance-learning programmes.[42] One report referred to the difficulties experienced by postgraduate students in identifying and engaging with their fellow students[43] and, in another case, the institution had realised that the voice of postgraduate research students was not captured well, but that the 'planned Doctoral School would represent an opportunity to address this'.[44] It was clear, nevertheless, that institutions were endeavouring to improve the participation of these groups by, for example, developing online opportunities for 'virtual' representation.[45]

Representation at programme level

21   More than 85 per cent of the audit reports described opportunities for students to be represented at programme level, either through liaison or consultative committees convened for that particular purpose or through formal committees with a wider brief such as boards of study or programme management committees. In one institution the student written submission stated that 'reports from course representatives were frequently the primary driver for the agenda of staff-student liaison committees' and that 'course representatives were greatly encouraged by the evident value being placed on their contribution'.[46] In a

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[37] University of Leeds, paragraph 123
[38] Coventry University, paragraph 95
[39] Institute of Cancer Research, paragraph 71
[40] University of Durham, paragraphs 75 and 76
[41] Royal College of Art, paragraph 107
[42] Bath Spa University, paragraph 84; Coventry University, paragraph 92;
Rose Bruford College, paragraph 101; Southampton Solent University, paragraph 146
[43] School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraph 116
[44] University of Sussex, paragraph 74
[45] London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, paragraph 57; University of Bath, paragraph 107
[46] University of Southampton, paragraph 62

second institution, programme monitoring committees had been renamed as staff/student forums 'to promote awareness of a change in emphasis from problem reporting to a staff and student conversation about programme development'; the audit team considered this to be a feature of good practice.[47] Two audit reports gave examples where student-staff liaison committees were chaired by students.[48]

22   However, audit teams made a number of recommendations about the effectiveness of student representation at this level.[49] These largely related to the inconsistency of processes and variability of student engagement. For example, in one case the audit team encouraged the institution to take 'steps to ensure that every school meets the University's published requirements for the [staff-student consultative committee] system'[50] and in another the audit report recommended that the institution 'consider more formal and consistent arrangements to ensure student engagement in quality assurance at subject level'.[51]

Support for student representatives

23   Given the challenge of engaging sufficient numbers of students as effective representatives, the audit reports illustrate that institutions and students' unions had identified a number of strategies for providing support. Most audit reports described the induction and training offered to student representatives, delivered by the students' union, the institution or in collaboration between the two. The absence of such training gave rise to recommendations in two audit reports.[52] However, views of the effectiveness of training were mixed, with examples of limited uptake by students contrasting with endorsement by students that their training had been helpful. In addition, many audit reports provided examples of other methods of support for representatives, including handbooks, job specifications, pre-meeting briefings and online materials. One audit report identified an institution's 'student representation framework including the staff-student liaison committee (SSLC) system, the support for, and training of, student representatives, and the SSLC portal and handbook' as a feature of good practice.[53]

24   Some audit reports also identified institutional and/or students' union roles with a specific brief to support student representation. For example, in one institution two students and two staff were appointed as university-wide staff-student liaison committee coordinators,[54] and in another the students' union had established 'a network of student democracy assistants and a dedicated post in the Union office to support the student representation system'.[55] In a number of audit reports such appointments were identified as features of good practice, with one instance where an institution had funded two students' union representation coordinators, who had 'increased the participation and effectiveness of students in representative roles'.[56] In another case, where student liaison representatives in schools were given an honorarium to 'enhance representation' and 'involve themselves in ad hoc Students' Union and University initiatives', the audit team noted that this had extended and increased 'the effectiveness of the constructive engagement of students in the quality

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[47] Goldsmiths' College, paragraph 50
[48] Keele University, paragraph 93; University of Exeter, paragraph 110
[49] Royal College of Music, paragraph 92; Bath Spa University, paragraph 85; Leeds Metropolitan University, paragraphs 69 and 119; Leeds Trinity and All SaintsLeeds Trinity and All Saints, paragraphs 43 , 44 and 71; Liverpool Hope University, paragraphs 93 and 94; Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, paragraphs 88 and 91
[50] Queens University Belfast, paragraph 122
[51] Bath Spa University, paragraph 85
[52] Liverpool Hope University, paragraphs 93 and 94; Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, paragraphs 89 and 91
[53] University of Warwick, paragraphs 93 and 162
[54] University of Warwick, paragraph 91
[55] University of the Arts London, paragraph 74
[56] Anglia Ruskin University, paragraph 92

assurance process and quality enhancement'.[57] In one audit report, however, while acknowledging the valuable role played by student liaison officers, questions were raised about their role on staff-student liaison committees, given that they were employees of the institution. The audit report recommended that the institution 'establish a role for current students at faculty level through direct representation at relevant faculty committees, as distinct from the role of student liaison officer employed as a member of staff by the University'.[58]

Student feedback

25   In addition to arrangements for student representation, the audit reports identified a range of other opportunities for students to provide feedback to their institutions. These consisted predominantly of questionnaires designed to gather data at a variety of levels, from the whole institution down to individual modules (units/courses), or from particular groups of students including undergraduate, postgraduate taught, research and international students. The information obtained from questionnaires covered many areas of the student experience, including the quality of teaching and the effectiveness of central services, such as libraries and information technology resources, for full-time, part-time and distance-learning students. The audit reports discuss the steps taken to encourage student participation, the ways in which the data was analysed and disseminated, the effectiveness of institutional responses to the issues identified and the mechanisms for informing students of any outcomes.

The National Student Survey

26   The National Student Survey (NSS) was still in its infancy at the time of the audits the reports of which are analysed in this paper, having been introduced in 2005. However, it is clear from the audit reports that institutions were already taking the NSS seriously. For example, one audit report noted the way in which the 'University uses National Student Survey information as key evidence of its performance'[59] and in another the University was noted to regard the NSS 'outcomes as a critical key performance indicator'.[60] Most audit reports described the ways in which institutions analysed the results of the NSS and disseminated them to an extensive range of committees for consideration. In one case, where the processes were well developed, the report noted the 'assiduous attention given to the National Student Survey by programme teams, faculty and appropriate central committees, boards and departments'.[61] Some audit reports identified the effective use made of the NSS data to benchmark internally across the institution, in comparison to previous years' results, and externally against the wider higher education sector.[62] In one example significant discrepancies between the institution's internal survey results and those of the NSS revealed weaknesses in the former that the institution was recommended to address.[63]

27   The availability and analysis of NSS data was noted in one report to have 'prompted more institutional interest in quantifiable data' and the subsequent introduction of a range of internal surveys.[64] Most audit reports contained evidence that institutions had taken effective

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[57] University of Salford, paragraph 61

[58] University of Central Lancashire, paragraph 98

[59] University of Exeter, paragraph 101

[60] University of Surrey, paragraph 103

[61] De Montfort University, paragraph 73

[62] University of Salford, paragraph 57; Leeds Trinity and All SaintsLeeds Trinity and All Saints, paragraph 36; University of Bath, paragraph 102; University of Central Lancashire, paragraph 87; University of Hertfordshire, paragraph 59

[63] Leeds College of Music, paragraph 83

[64] Central School of Speech and Drama, paragraph 78

actions in response to their analyses of the NSS data. These were generally aimed at addressing areas with poor scores, although in a few cases audit reports noted the efforts made by institutions to identify and disseminate good practice.[65] A few audit reports provided a number of examples where institutions had sought to gain a better understanding of the issues raised in the NSS by establishing task groups, focus groups of students or undertaking supplementary questionnaires.[66] Some audit reports described the processes by which institutions made students aware of the outcomes of the NSS and the actions taken as a result,[67] including publication on the student portal,[68] publication of a leaflet[69] and through various committees. However, in a few cases audit reports commented on the lack of awareness of the NSS among students.[70] In two instances the effective use of the NSS was cited as a feature of good practice. In the first case, emphasis was placed on the 'systematic response to the outcomes of the National Student Survey'[71] and in the second on the 'development of mechanisms across the University for the consideration and publicising of responses to National Student Survey results'.[72] In contrast, in another report the institution was recommended to 'take more effective action to address concerns evident in the results of the National Student Survey'.[73]

Institutional student experience surveys

28   The audit reports indicate that most institutions carried out a variety of student experience surveys in addition to the NSS, which provided data at a range of different levels, including institutional, faculty, school and programme. These were typically annual surveys of first and second-year students. In a few reports these surveys were based upon the NSS,[74] while in others they were more detailed or had a broader focus.[75] In one audit report the University's 'willingness to invest in a bespoke survey which complements the National Student Survey and provides more sophisticated data on student satisfaction' was identified as a feature of good practice.[76] In a few reports specific reference was made to orientation or first impressions surveys targeted at students who had just joined the institution.[77]

Module evaluation

29   In almost all the audit reports it was noted that institutions expected feedback to be gathered from students at module or equivalent level.[78] In two instances where this was not an institutional requirement it was nevertheless noted that evaluation of some modules was taking place.[79] The extent to which the process of module evaluation was standardised

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[65] University of Exeter, paragraph 101; University of Salford, paragraph 57; University of the Arts London, paragraph 71
[66] Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, paragraph 68; University of Chichester, paragraph 87; University of Sussex, paragraph 67; Leeds Metropolitan University, paragraph 60; Open University, paragraph 92
[67] Loughborough University, paragraph 101; Roehampton University, paragraph 57; University of Leeds, paragraph 113; University of Lincoln, paragraph 111; University of Sheffield, paragraph 64; University College London, paragraph 121
[68] University of Kent, paragraph 57
[69] University of Surrey, paragraph 103
[70] University College Falmouth, paragraph 73; Leeds College of Music, paragraph 84
[71] University of Lincoln, paragraphs 111 and 135
[72] University of Leeds, paragraphs 117 and 142
[73] Leeds College of Music, paragraph 91
[74] School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraph 101; Central School of Speech and Drama, paragraph 78; University of Exeter, paragraph 100; University of Sheffield, paragraph 63
[75] Keele University, paragraph 88; Nottingham Trent University, paragraph 72
[76] Keele University, paragraph 88
[77] Roehampton University, paragraph 58; University of Sheffield, paragraph 62; Rose Bruford College, paragraph 94; University of Hertfordshire, paragraph 59
[78] Exceptions include Royal College of Art, paragraphs 93-98; School of Pharmacy, paragraph 94; University of Brighton, paragraph 101
[79] Central School of Speech and Drama, paragraph 78; Nottingham Trent University, paragraph 74

across the institution ranged from the use of a standard questionnaire, through the provision of exemplar templates and guidance on areas to be covered, to complete discretion on the methods used. In most cases modules were reviewed by questionnaire on an annual basis, although there were a few examples where evaluation was less frequent or employed an alternative approach such as discussions with students. In one example a questionnaire was used every two years, with focus groups in the alternate years.[80]

30   Several audit reports provided examples of how students were made aware of the actions taken in response to module evaluation. These included a statement in the module handbook of any changes which had been made,[81] consolidated feedback to students by email,[82] and the provision of a summary on the virtual learning environment.[83] In one report the use of a variety of styles of module evaluation questionnaire was noted to be valued by students and to be an effective means of 'combating questionnaire fatigue'.[84] In two audit reports explicit reference was made to links being drawn between module evaluation or the annual student survey and staff appraisal/review.[85]

31   In contrast, the audit reports identified a number of factors which limited the effectiveness of module evaluation. In two cases the audit report made recommendations relating to the use of module evaluations as part of the annual monitoring and review process. In one report this was because the emphasis in the monitoring process was on the 'methods by which feedback is collected, rather than on its content',[86] and in another 'the varied use made of module evaluation data at subject level did not lead to a consistently comprehensive approach'.[87] Inconsistencies in the module evaluation process were identified in a few other audit reports, with one report noting that there was 'considerable inconsistency in the way in which module feedback was gathered, used and reported on across the University'.[88] In another case, the report identified examples of module evaluations that should have been completed but were not.[89] In a further example, the institution was recommended to 'review the procedures for module evaluation by students based upon good practice in the institution' in order to deal with variability between schools.[90]

32   A small number of reports highlighted cases where students were not made aware of the outcomes of module evaluation.[91] In one report it was suggested that this was a contributory factor in the low response rates to the questionnaires.[92] Another institution had run focus groups in order to identify the reasons for low response rates and was subsequently considering the use of alternative survey tools based on the virtual learning environment.[93] In one instance, the report noted that because the information in course evaluations was regarded by one department as confidential it was 'unlikely that this mechanism will ever provide comprehensive information to the student body of the detailed response to its course-level evaluation nor demonstrate to students that their views have been taken into account in the enhancement of courses'.[94]

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[80] University of Sunderland, paragraph 57
[81] University of Chichester, paragraph 89; University of Winchester, paragraph 52
[82] University of Durham, paragraph 70
[83] University of Hertfordshire, paragraph 59
[84] University of Cambridge, paragraph 88
[85] London Business School, paragraph 72; University of Hertfordshire, paragraph 58
[86] University College Falmouth, paragraph 70
[87] Bath Spa University, paragraph 74
[88] Leeds Metropolitan University, paragraph 61
[89] University of Central Lancashire, paragraph 86
[90] University of Birmingham, paragraph 83
[91] Aston University, paragraph 74; Goldsmiths' College, paragraph 49
[92] Southampton Solent University, paragraph 149
[93] Bournemouth University, paragraph 41
[94] School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraph 107

Other opportunities for feedback: central services and specific groups

33   More than a quarter of the audit reports contained examples of surveys conducted by institutions to monitor the impact of central services on the student experience. These focused on various aspects of provision, such as the library, careers service, catering, information technology and the virtual learning environment, and were either ad hoc or conducted at different intervals, ranging from monthly library surveys through to biennial surveys.

34   Some institutions were reported to subscribe to the International Student Barometer, which offered opportunities to benchmark the experience of international students, and one third of institutions were reported to be active in soliciting feedback from research students, either using their own surveys or the Higher Education Academy Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). In one example postgraduate research students were surveyed six months, two years and three years into their time at the institution.[95] In another report, the institution was recommended to 'give further consideration to the provision for research students to provide feedback at local level within research centres and institutes'.[96] Fewer audit reports identified use of the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), but it appeared that in many cases feedback from taught postgraduate students was being collected through the same processes as for undergraduates. However, it was recommended in one report that the university 'extend the development of appropriate data collection and analysis processes relating to postgraduate taught students in the context of plans to develop postgraduate taught provision'.[97]

35   Only a few audit reports made reference to the arrangements made by institutions to gather feedback from flexible or distance-learning, part-time and work-based learning students. When they were mentioned it was generally in the context of the difficulties that had arisen in collecting feedback from students who do not necessarily attend the institution on a regular basis and the steps that institutions had taken to meet this challenge.[98]

36   Similarly, only a few audit reports mentioned processes for obtaining feedback from recent graduates.[99] In one case, a survey of former students was carried out annually by the registry and feedback was being used to inform plans to extend continuing professional development activities to former students.[100] In another instance, it was noted that the careers service and alumni office were gathering feedback from graduates but that this information had not previously been systematically transmitted to faculties and departments. To rectify this, the head of the careers service had begun to attend faculty and department meetings to discuss the data.[101]

Responsiveness to feedback

37   Most audit reports noted evidence that institutions were taking action in response to student feedback, and reported that their processes for this were considered to be effective. Such evidence normally arose from the consideration of feedback data by a variety of

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[95] Institute of Cancer Research, paragraph 60
[96] University of Wolverhampton, 166
[97] University of Salford, paragraph 42
[98] Anglia Ruskin University, paragraphs 85 and 86; University of Bradford, paragraphs 112 and 115; De Montfort University, paragraph 73; Rose Bruford College, paragraphs 93, 95 and 97; University of Portsmouth, paragraph 100
[99] School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraph 107; Royal Academy of Music, paragraph 61; Royal Veterinary College, paragraph 105
[100] Royal Academy of Music, paragraph 61
[101] School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraph 109

committees and analysis as part of annual monitoring and periodic review. In one example, it was reported that an institution had established a 'systematic and effective means of gathering students' views to raise college-wide issues', and the analysis of the resulting management information at programme and institutional level was identified as a feature of good practice'.[102] In another instance the institution's 'extensive arrangements for gathering and disseminating feedback from students' were noted to be 'effective in identifying generic and specific issues for the University and its departments' and identified as a feature of good practice.[103] In a few reports criticisms were made of either the extent or the consistency with which feedback data had been used in the annual monitoring process,[104] or broader issues were identified regarding the systematic use of management information.[105]

'Closing the loop': feedback to students on actions taken

38   The importance of 'closing the loop' on student feedback by letting students know what action has been taken is widely reflected in the reports. Examples of the ways in which this had been successfully achieved by institutions included the use of leaflets and websites. The 'What we have done' leaflet published by one institution was considered to 'demonstrate a powerful commitment to delivering and developing dissemination',[106] while students at another institution 'appreciated the College's efforts to report the results [of the end-of-year questionnaire] back to them' in the form of a summary report, although they did feel that this should happen more quickly.[107] A few reports noted that actions taken in response to feedback were not being disseminated effectively and the institutions were recommended to address this.[108]

Student support

Themes

39   The following main themes relating to student support emerged from analysis of the 76 audit reports and will be discussed in this paper:

- Personal tutorial support
- Central support services
- Student induction and transition into higher education
- Personal development planning
- Careers and employability
- Specialist student support: disabled students and additional learning needs
- International student support
- Postgraduate research student support.

40   The audit reports provide much information about the effectiveness of the academic and pastoral support available to students at a variety of levels, from programme level through to the central services of the institution and those provided by the students' union. The support available focused on various key stages in the life cycle of the students: pre-entry, their transition into higher education, their period of study, time spent in

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[102] Rose Bruford College, paragraph 97
[103] University of Oxford, paragraph 98
[104] University of Bradford, paragraph 114; Goldsmiths' College, paragraph 49
[105] Anglia Ruskin University, paragraphs 80, 86-88, 122, 136 and 137; Royal Veterinary College, paragraphs 86, 103 and 108
[106] Lancaster University, paragraph 49
[107] Royal College of Music, paragraph 94
[108] School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraphs 100-110; Open University, paragraph 94; University of Hull, paragraph 56

work-based placements and eventually their move onward into employment or further study. The support included personal development planning, the development of employability skills and careers guidance, particularly in the latter stages. It was also often targeted at particular groups of students, such as those with specific learning needs, disabled students, mature students, part-time and distance learners, international students and postgraduates, including those undertaking research.

Personal tutorial support

41   The audit reports indicate that the allocation of a personal tutor or equivalent is a key aspect of student support in more than three-quarters of the institutions. Examples of alternative arrangements included course and module leaders taking responsibility for both academic and pastoral support, and the provision of academic support directly through modules and programmes, with welfare support provided through separate tutors. In a few institutions, the choice of mechanism for providing academic and pastoral support was left up to individual faculties or departments. In two reports where this was the case, the variation was not considered by students to be an issue,[109] while in a third the student written submission indicated some dissatisfaction with the variability of arrangements and sought clarification of the institutional policy.[110] Many reports noted the existence of guidelines and codes of practice which established minimum expectations for the operation of personal tutor systems. Some reports also indicated the steps taken to support these systems, such as the provision of training for new personal tutors, handbooks and web-based materials for tutors, and arrangements to facilitate the dissemination of good practice.

42   However, it is clear from the ten recommendations in the audit reports that related to personal tutoring that this is one of the areas where the student experience is most variable. In three cases the report indicated that, despite policies being in place, the institution needed to ensure that its requirements in relation to personal tutoring were being consistently implemented for all students.[111] In another four reports the emphasis was on the extent to which the interpretation of any requirements at school, faculty or department level was meeting institutional expectations.[112] In a further example, where variability in provision of academic support at department level had been an issue in a previous audit, progress was reported to have been made, in part through the introduction of guidance for personal tutors, but it was noted that the institution needed to ensure that all students were aware of the personal support available for them.[113] In addition, the recommendations in two audit reports focused in particular on the consistency of support for joint or combined honours students.[114]

43   Tutorial support was cited as a feature of good practice in six audit reports, including one institution's arrangements for 'deliberate co-ordination of academic and pastoral support for students'.[115] In another report a review of tutorial provision was noted to have identified and implemented good practice from elsewhere in the sector.[116] The good use being made of an electronic recording system for tutorials[117] and the supplementary

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[109] Nottingham Trent University, paragraphs 104 and 105; University of the West of England, Bristol, paragraph 89
[110] Leeds Metropolitan University, paragraph 82
[111] Royal College of Art, paragraphs 87, 139 and 226; University of Bath, paragraph 131; University of Warwick, paragraph 117
[112] School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraphs 146 and 147; Roehampton University, paragraph 83; University of Leeds, paragraphs 22 and 160; University of Southampton, paragraph 87
[113] University of Kent, paragraph 82
[114] University of York, paragraph 133; University of Warwick, paragraph 116
[115] University of Durham, paragraphs 102-104 and 106
[116] University of Wolverhampton, paragraph 95
[117] Keele University, paragraph 135

support being provided by academic advisers at school level were identified as good practice in other reports.[118] Other significant factors acknowledged in the reports as contributing to the effectiveness of tutorial support include the degree of engagement by students themselves and the individual relationship between student and tutor.[119]

Central support services

44   In addition to the entitlement to individual academic and pastoral support offered by institutions, the audit reports describe a wide range of services available to students as required. As well as further learning and study support, these services normally include counselling, support for disabled students, health, welfare and finance advice, and careers services. The diversity of the sector means that the arrangements for the delivery of these services differed between institutions, but in the majority of cases such provision was managed and delivered centrally. There were other arrangements in, for example, institutions with a collegiate structure and those where academic responsibility lies with schools and faculties and pastoral support with the centre. Nevertheless, in these instances there is normally some integration between local and central provision. For example, one institution was noted to be 'currently working towards better integration of its central support services with its academic framework of faculties and departments'.[120]

45   It is clear from at least a fifth of the audit reports that institutions had made efforts to facilitate student access to services by physically and/or virtually housing them under one roof in what was frequently referred to as a 'one-stop shop'. The arrangements in one institution, where a new 'Gateway' building 'groups a number of student services within its premises and offers access to the full range of services in the University via a triage system from the Service Desk operated by a team of staff and student ambassadors', was considered to be a feature of good practice.[121] In another example, also identified as a feature of good practice, the Student Resources Network provided 'a physical and virtual access point for students to obtain support and information in person, remotely and out of hours'.[122]

46   Another notable feature of the support offered to students was the use made by some institutions of electronic methods, for example websites and portals, to promote and give access to the services on offer. Examples cited in audit reports included the 'website 'askBU on-line', providing access to financial, facilities and services matters',[123] and the 'one-stop Student Services web portal' which contributed to the identification of a feature of good practice in one institution.[124] Some audit reports also described the support services offered by the students' union which supplemented those provided by the institution itself, for example a 'Students' Advice Centre and a Jobshop'.[125] In another report the Students' Union's 'close collaboration with schools and central teams' was described as a 'distinctive feature of pastoral support'.[126]

47   Overall, the quality of the support provided for students by institutions is illustrated by the number of features of good practice identified in this area, compared to just one recommendation for an institution 'to reinforce the management and strategic co-ordination

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[118] University of Sussex, paragraphs 94-96
[119] University of Surrey, paragraph 153
[120] School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraph 151
[121] Liverpool Hope University, paragraph 113
[122] University of Southampton, paragraph 89
[123] Bournemouth University, paragraph 59
[124] University of Warwick, paragraph 119
[125] Aston University, paragraph 108
[126] Middlesex University, paragraph 65

of its Student Services'.[127] A feature of good practice which encapsulates many of the wider strengths of this provision identified the value of 'the integrated student support service' for 'its accessibility and the provision of high quality information, guidance and support for students'.[128]

Student induction and transition into higher education

48   Nearly half the audit reports refer to the arrangements in place for student induction and only a very few identified any shortcomings, none of which were sufficiently significant to give rise to a specific recommendation.[129] In contrast, six audit reports contained features of good practice which related to the quality of pre-arrival and induction support for students.[130] Access to web-based support materials before students arrived at the institution was mentioned in a number of reports[131] and was noted as a feature of good practice in one case, where the audit team commended the 'development and continuing enhancement of the HelloUni site as a support for students during the recruitment process, particularly prior to their arrival at the University'.[132] The collaboration between the students' union and the institution in developing and delivering an induction programme was recognised in two features of good practice[133] and the involvement of current students as buddies or mentors was referred to in a few reports.[134] The provision of additional induction arrangements for students in subsequent years of study received only very limited mention.[135]

Personal development planning

49   Although most audit reports provided details of the efforts being made to introduce opportunities for personal development planning (PDP) it was clear that in many cases the uptake by students was variable and often low. In most cases the opportunities provided were outside the curriculum, with students being encouraged to participate through a variety of means, including support from the personal tutor system. In some institutions PDP had been embedded in the curriculum in the form of compulsory or optional modules, opportunities for work experience or the explicit development of transferable skills. In other institutions a mix of embedded and extra-curricular approaches had been adopted. In one of these institutions it was noted that students had not fully engaged with PDP where it was not integrated into the curriculum, and the University was 'working on customising and embedding within the curriculum an emphasis on developing and demonstrating employability skills'.[136] One audit report identified a wide range of initiatives 'to support student personal development and employability' which were considered to be a feature of good practice.[137] These included a scheme to encourage part-time campus-based employment, the embedding of PDP within the academic disciplines through first-year modules, and the encouragement of students to take up extra-curricular and volunteering opportunities through a Service and Leadership Award. In a quarter of the reports, PDP was noted to be supported by electronic tools such as e-portfolios, which were largely just being

[127] Rose Bruford College, paragraph 143
[128] University of Central Lancashire, paragraph 121
[129] Keele University, paragraph 132; University of East Anglia, paragraph 102
[130] Nottingham Trent University, paragraphs 111, 112 and 114; Southampton Solent University, paragraph 196; University College London, paragraph 157; University of Surrey, paragraphs 151 and 249; University of Winchester, paragraph 73; University of Wolverhampton, paragraph 99
[131] University College Falmouth, paragraph 114; University of Reading, paragraph 104; University of Salford, paragraph 75; University of Portsmouth, paragraph 140
[132] Southampton Solent University, paragraph 196
[133] Nottingham Trent University, paragraph, 112; University of Wolverhampton, paragraph 99
[134] University College Falmouth, paragraph 114; University of Essex, paragraph 93; Nottingham Trent University, paragraph 112; University of Winchester, paragraph 73
[135] University of Sussex, paragraph 93; Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, paragraph 115
[136] University of Portsmouth, paragraph 144
[137] Liverpool Hope University, paragraphs 119-123

introduced or still under development at the time of the audit. The audit reports overall indicate that the development of, and encouragement of student participation in, PDP was expected by institutions to be an ongoing challenge, even though the theme of employability was becoming more prominent.

Careers and employability

50   The nature of career-related guidance and support provided by institutions was described in the majority of the audit reports. Most institutions had a central facility, which was sometimes reported as being linked to provision at a more local level such as faculty or school. For example, in one institution the arrangement where a central Department for Employability was linked to each faculty by a professional careers adviser and strongly supported by the students' union was considered to be a feature of good practice.[138] In many audit reports the emphasis was placed on employability, with examples of institutions with employability strategies,[139] an Employability Charter[140] and an Employability Steering Group.[141] The breadth of support available to students in this area is illustrated by one institution where the Enterprise and Innovation Centre's assistance to students in 'achieving work experience and placements, and in making applications for employment' and in 'supporting the development of employability in the curriculum' were considered to be a feature of good practice.[142]

51   While a small number of audit reports referred to the provision of standalone modules to support career development and employability, one-fifth of the reports explained how institutions were embedding or integrating the development of employability skills and career development within the curriculum. In one example which was noted to have been effective, an institution offered 'Summer University' credit-bearing courses which were intended to enhance employability skills for prospective students and those progressing between levels.[143] However, in another case, where a compulsory five-credit career management module had been included in all second-year undergraduate programmes for the past five years, the audit report noted the negative views of students about the compulsory nature of the module and the need to tailor it more closely to different disciplines.[144] Similarly, in another institution, in relation to a compulsory professional and academic development module, students were noted to consider the work experience element more useful than the generic workshops and lectures.[145]

52   In one example, the Careers Advisory Service supported the effective embedding of employability within the curriculum by providing presentations and workshops for courses.[146] In another case, the combination of careers guidance and support provided by visiting lecturers (representatives from pharmaceutical companies), mock interviews, and support for curriculum vitae writing, which was embedded in the curriculum, was identified as a feature of good practice.[147] Overall, the significance accorded to, and the general effectiveness of, this aspect of support for students across the sector was apparent from the 13 features of good practice identified, compared to just one recommendation. In this latter case, the institution was committed to the development of employability skills, but these were given

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[138] University of Portsmouth, paragraph 145

[139] Leeds Trinity and All SaintsLeeds Trinity and All Saints, paragraph 58; University of Bath, paragraph 130; University of Warwick, paragraph 127

[140] Keele University, paragraph 139

[141] University of Southampton, paragraph 90

[142] Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, paragraph 108

[143] University of Greenwich, paragraph 114

[144] University of Reading, paragraphs 110 and 111

[145] Bath Spa University, paragraph 110

[146] University College Falmouth, paragraph 112

[147] School of Pharmacy, paragraph 131

insufficient attention in the curriculum itself, so the institution was recommended to 'give further consideration to its approach to achieving its aim that each student will have a curriculum characterised by the principles and practice of employability'.[148]

Specialist student support: disabled students and additional learning needs

53   Most audit reports made specific reference to the support available to students with disabilities or additional learning needs such as dyslexia. In addition, some reports also provided details of the wider support available to develop students' study skills in areas including academic writing, mathematics, information and communication technology and statistics. As with the more general central student support services, the accounts in the audit reports of these specialist services were generally positive, with no associated recommendations. In one example the audit report noted that students rated the support provided by the Disabilities and Additional Needs Service as excellent, and the 'prioritisation of students in the institutional culture' was identified as a feature of good practice.[149]
In another institution the features which led to the identification of good practice included the establishment of a disabled student forum, the effective oversight by the Disability and Equality Committee, staff development opportunities and an inclusivity audit of all programme documents.[150] An 'AccessAbility Centre' was seen in one audit report as a feature of good practice, providing effective support for 'students with dyslexia and other learning difficulties, disabilities and longer term conditions' which was 'wide ranging in scope and sensitively delivered' and which included an easily navigable website.[151]

International student support

54   Two-thirds of the audit reports made reference to the additional support for international students. In many cases the reports noted the existence of international offices and officers or equivalent at institutional and occasionally school, college or faculty level. Some audit reports also mentioned other features of the support provided, such as bespoke handbooks and guides,[152] websites[153] and 'buddying' arrangements with existing students.[154] One-fifth of the reports described the specific, often extended, induction processes in place for international students. Singled out for comment in many reports was the provision of pre-sessional[155] and ongoing English language support. In one report the form of provision of such support for different academic levels, and related to the wider use of English for the creative arts, was considered to be a feature of good practice.[156] In only one instance did the quality of language support give rise to a recommendation, where ' the enhancement of international students' English language skills, as well as their acclimatisation to the English academic approach, was not as great as that claimed' by the institution.[157] Overall, the positive comments regarding the support for international students outweighed the very few concerns expressed in audit reports[158] and it was clear that students were generally satisfied, with one example where 'the comprehensive support for international students,

[148] University of Northampton, paragraph 60

[149] Loughborough University, paragraph 142

[150] Rose Bruford College, paragraph 145

[151] University of Leicester, paragraph 60

[152] Bath Spa University, paragraph 108; Loughborough University, paragraph 143; University of Bradford, paragraph 158; University of York, paragraph 126

[153] Royal College of Art, paragraph 129; Royal College of Music, paragraph 117

[154] University of Bath, paragraph 134; University of Central Lancashire, paragraph 124; University of Portsmouth, paragraph 147

[155] University of the Arts London, paragraph 105; De Montfort University, paragraph 128; University of Surrey, paragraph 157

[156] University for the Creative Arts, paragraph 117

[157] Royal Agricultural College, paragraph 78

[158] Keele University, paragraph 132; Lancaster University, paragraph 67

prior to joining, during induction and while on their programme' was identified as a feature of good practice.[159]

Postgraduate research student support

55   Institutional audit requires specific consideration of institutions' arrangements for postgraduate research programmes in light of the *Code of practice, Section 1* on the topic. Nineteen reports identified features of good practice alongside seven recommendations (excluding those which referred to the training of graduate students who also had a teaching role). Six reports highlighted the role played by graduate schools in providing a focus for support for research students. One audit report noted that:

> the Graduate School represented something more than simply the enhanced facilities...It was clearly an important focal point, lending a dimension to the student experience that would otherwise be difficult to gain through the academic schools, as the population of research students is relatively small and unevenly distributed across subject areas.[160]

In another report it was noted 'that the work of the Graduate School is a significant contributor to the positive view of research students regarding learning opportunities within the University'.[161]

56   Aspects of skills development for postgraduate students which were identified as features of good practice included a 'Research Students' Logbook', which had been designed 'to encourage research students to take responsibility for monitoring their own progress by keeping regular records of supervisory meetings, attendance at research seminars and other research-related activities'.[162] In other reports a training needs analysis mechanism which had 'been introduced for evaluating individual needs that are outside of the generic training programme';[163] a 'compulsory Research Training Programme' in which 'particular attention is paid to critical thinking and originality of research';[164] and a 'College-wide Research Methods Course, administered by the Research Office, and designed to be consistent with the Joint Research Councils' Skills Statement' were also identified as features of good practice.[165] One institution had introduced an innovative 'probationer scheme' which was considered by students to be particularly effective in preparing them for research, and which resulted in approximately half of those first admitted through the scheme proceeding to full registration.[166] The majority of recommendations related to postgraduate research students receiving variable levels of support, with one report noting 'that the extent of variation, especially in respect of supervision and progress meetings and reports, was unacceptably wide',[167] and another institution being recommended 'to ensure greater consistency in the operation of arrangements for postgraduate research students as described in the University's Code of Practice, and communicate its policies and procedures clearly to students'.[168]

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[159] University of Hertfordshire, paragraph 93
[160] Roehampton University, paragraph 116
[161] University of Northampton, paragraph 114
[162] School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraph 186
[163] University of Hertfordshire, paragraph 173
[164] University of Winchester, paragraph 111
[165] Royal College of Art, paragraph 182
[166] University of Chichester, paragraph 165
[167] University of Sheffield, paragraph 162
[168] University of the West of England, Bristol, paragraphs 132, 133, 136 and 141

The themes in context

57   The themes identified in the 76 audit reports which have been discussed in this paper reflect a number of the trends that emerged within the wider higher education sector in the period leading up to and during the time the audits reported on took place. These included:

- the emphasis placed on student engagement in the Scottish Quality Enhancement Framework and Enhancement-led institutional review (ELIR) process since 2003 and the work of sparqs (Student Participation in Quality Scotland), introduced in conjunction with NUS Scotland in 2003[169]
- the establishment of the National Student Forum by the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills in 2008[170]
- the commitment of the Higher Education Academy, in its Strategic Plan 2008-13, to student engagement in quality assurance and enhancement[171]
- the introduction of the National Student Survey in 2005[172]
- the 2005-06 implementation date for personal development planning arising from the National Committee of Inquiry into Higher Education (the Dearing Report, 1997)[173]
- the work being carried out in Scotland on 'The First Year Experience' and 'Employability' as part of the Scottish Higher Education Enhancement Committee (SHEEC) Enhancement Themes[174]
- the more than doubling of the number of non-EU students in UK higher education in the ten years between 1997-98 and 2006-2007[175]
- the introduction of variable tuition fees in 2006-07 in accordance with the *Higher Education Act 2004.*[176]

58   The participation of students in quality assurance and enhancement was becoming a higher priority for institutions in this period, reflected in the establishment in 2008 of the National Student Forum 'to amplify the student voice within government, the [higher education] sector and [higher education] institutions'. It was discontinued at the end of the 2009-10 academic year, but its development was indicative of the importance being placed on student engagement within the higher education sector. It is clear that work undertaken by institutions and other bodies, such as the Higher Education Academy, at the time of these audits was laying the foundation for the significant developments around student involvement which were to follow, such as the inclusion of student members of Institutional audit teams in England and Northern Ireland from 2009. This emphasis continues in the new Institutional review method to be introduced from 2011-12.

59   Since the NSS was only introduced in 2005, institutions audited early in the cycle were inevitably only just beginning to appreciate its significance, while those towards the end of the period covered in this paper had been able to embed procedures for responding to its outcomes. The NSS was also a catalyst for some institutions to further develop the way in which they gathered and responded to student feedback.

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[169] www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/StudentEngage08.pdf; www.sparqs.ac.uk
[170] www.bis.gov.uk/assets/biscore/corporate/migratedD/ec_group/110-08-HE_b
[171] www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/ourwork/ipp/Issue2_studentvoice
[172] www.thestudentsurvey.com/
[173] www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Guidelines-for-HE-Progress-Files.aspx
[174] www.qaa.ac.uk/Scotland/DevelopmentAndEnhancement/Pages/Enhancement-Themes.aspx
[175] www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/Publications/Documents/Patterns%208.pdf
[176] www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/8/contents

60   The emphasis placed on personal development planning resulted from the expectation set out in the Dearing Report in 1997 that institutions would have in place by 2005-06 'a means by which students can monitor, build and reflect upon their personal development'. Linked to this was the increasing emphasis, reflected in the audit reports, on the development of employability skills. This had featured as an Enhancement Theme in Scotland in 2004-06, and was evidently becoming a government priority that was eventually supported by the merger of the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS) and the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) to form the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) in 2009.

Trends

61   The broad themes identified in the audit reports and discussed in this paper relating to representation and feedback are consistent with those considered in the equivalent papers in the first two series of *Outcomes from Institutional audit*. In all three papers, the number of features of good practice is roughly equal to the number of recommendations. Although it is clear that institutions have continued to develop more structured arrangements for student representation, comparison of the findings of the papers shows that institutions still face many of the same challenges: maintaining a good level of student participation; engaging part-time and distance-learning students; and 'closing the loop' by letting students know what action has been taken. However, there are examples in this paper from several institutions that illustrate that they have been responsive and innovative in trying to address these issues. The current paper reflects the increase in emphasis on student feedback that was beginning to become apparent in the parallel paper in *Outcomes Series 2*, which has developed as a consequence of the introduction of the NSS.

62   The aspects of student support discussed in this paper map well to those considered in previous *Outcomes* papers and reflect continuing strengths in institutions' activity in this area. The proportion of audit reports containing features of good practice (approximately two-thirds) and those containing recommendations (approximately one-third) mirrors that reported in the paper in *Outcomes Series 2*. Many of the positive features in institutional practice that are identified in the reports are similar, but it is also noteworthy that lack of consistency in arrangements for personal tutoring is once again identified as an issue in a number of audit reports. The current paper suggests that institutions have been adopting a more strategic approach to PDP, although encouraging student engagement continues to be a challenge.

Conclusions

63   It is apparent from analysis of the reports of the 76 Institutional audits carried out between February 2007 and June 2009 that most institutions are committed to facilitating and encouraging student participation in quality assurance and enhancement. The arrangements for student representation at institutional and local level have generally been in place for some time and are well established and effective. This is reflected in the 27 features of good practice on the topic identified in the reports, compared to 17 recommendations. The audit reports indicate that institutions were strongly committed to developing collaborative and constructive working relationships with their students, and that in many cases this approach was effective in identifying opportunities for enhancing the student experience. The establishment in many institutions of committees with a specific remit to facilitate wider student engagement and enable the student voice to be heard was also important in raising the profile of student participation. Another measure of the commitment to facilitating student participation was the extent to which student representatives had regular access to senior staff within their institutions. Arrangements for

student representation were generally effective at programme level, although a number of recommendations related to variability in the application of these processes across an institution. The engagement of sufficient numbers of representatives was sometimes a challenge, which was often being met through the development of close collaborative relationships with students' unions and the provision of training and support materials for representatives.

64   The audit reports demonstrate that institutions have put considerable effort into making arrangements for gathering and responding to student feedback. This is an area which saw considerable developments during the period covered by these audits, particularly following the introduction of the NSS. Although there was only a relatively small number of features of good practice and recommendations related to feedback, the greater number of the latter (16 compared to 10) reflects the pace of change in this area. The main way of gathering feedback from students was through a range of questionnaires used at levels from institutional down to module, some of which had a focus on specific aspects of the student experience such as library provision, or on specific groups of students such as postgraduate research or international students. The information obtained was generally valuable and frequently used successfully to enhance the quality of the student experience. However, a number of audit reports commented on the potential for student feedback to be used more systematically in annual monitoring and for the processes by which students were informed of the outcomes arising from their feedback to be more effective.

65   The audit reports illustrate that the range and quality of support provided for students continues to be a real strength in institutions' management of the student experience. Seventy-nine features of good practice were identified across 54 institutions, in contrast to 27 recommendations for improvement. The audit reports generally described an impressive range of academic and pastoral support being delivered at institutional and local level. A particular feature in a number of audit reports was the move by some institutions to provide the initial access to central support services through a single physical or virtual 'one-stop shop'. Specialist support services for disabled students, those with additional learning needs and specific groups such as international and postgraduate research students were also highlighted frequently in the reports. There was a growing emphasis in many audit reports on the development of employability skills and opportunities for personal development planning (although uptake among students was variable). Although the provision of personal tutorial support was generally considered to be satisfactory, recommendations in a number of audit reports indicated that this was one of the areas where a student's experience of the support provided by the institution could be most variable.

Appendix A: Features of good practice relating to student engagement and support

Student representation

- the College's deliberate and systematic involvement of undergraduate students in multiple aspects of its academic activities (Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, paragraph 84)
- the establishment and use of School Advisory Councils which inform and enhance the development of the curriculum and student experience (Royal Agricultural College, paragraph 61)
- the College's commitment to ensuring the research students' voice is heard through its student representation mechanisms (Royal College of Art, paragraph 107)
- students' opportunity to participate as members of admissions boards, in support of both the applicant and their own personal development (Royal College of Art, paragraphs 121 and 215)
- the opportunities provided for student representation at all levels of the School's deliberative structures (School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraphs 14 and 15)
- the support for the work of the student representative coordinators, which promotes active and effectual student representation (Anglia Ruskin University, paragraph 92)
- the responsive and collaborative culture the School has created as a context for securing the active engagement of students in its feedback processes (London Business School, paragraphs 71 and 90)
- the prioritisation of students in the institutional culture (Loughborough University, paragraphs 103, 110, 128, 135, 142 and 145)
- the pre-meetings held between committee chairs and student representatives to brief the representative on forthcoming agenda items in order to encourage informed participation (University College for the Creative Arts at Canterbury, Epsom, Farnham, Maidstone and Rochester, paragraph 91)
- the partnership approach with the Students' Union (University of Bradford, paragraph 128)
- the high degree of responsibility, which includes agenda setting, delegated to students by the Student Affairs Committee of the Board of Governors (University of Brighton, paragraphs 140 and 141)
- the value the University places on students as individuals, and the generosity and appropriateness of its response to their particular needs (University of Buckingham, paragraph 73)
- the involvement of students in all aspects of quality assurance, and the consultation of the student body in the development of the academic and social environment (University of Exeter, paragraph 113)
- the introduction and support of student liaison representatives in extending and increasing the effectiveness of the constructive engagement of students in the quality assurance process and quality enhancement (University of Salford paragraph 61)
- the close working partnership between the University and its Students' Union in the context of making improvements to the student experience (University of Southampton, paragraph 70)
- the University's engagement with students to secure their involvement in the management of the quality of learning opportunities (University of York, paragraphs 99 and 150)

- the strong and effective relations between the University and the Aston Students' Guild, and the constructive overall relations between staff and students which underpin the quality of learning opportunities (Aston University, paragraph 79)
- the recent emphasis on constructive dialogue with students, as exemplified in the strengthening of student representation on the Student Affairs Committee (City University London, paragraph 61)
- the establishment and commitment to the continued appointment of the Student Representative Coordinator that contributes to the improvement in communication between course consultative committees, the student body and the University (Coventry University, paragraphs 86, 88 and 93)
- the positive engagement of the University with the student body and the responsiveness of the institution to the student voice (De Montfort University, paragraph 87)
- the constructive and systematic involvement of students in their contribution to the work of the College in planning, policy development and quality assurance (Goldsmiths' College, paragraphs 50 and 54-56)
- the arrangements for ensuring that the student body is represented on key committees within the College; the opportunities for the student voice to be heard and acted upon to the benefit of the College and the enhancement of the student experience, and the commitment of the student body to these arrangements (Royal Veterinary College, paragraph 112)
- the Student Experience Strategy Group, led by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning), which is enhancing learning opportunities at the institutional level (University of Bath, paragraphs 104 and 148)
- the University's effective working partnership with the Students' Union which supports the enhancement of the student experience in a variety of ways (University of Bath, paragraph 147)
- the specification and application of the framework for student involvement in quality assurance throughout the University, which afford significant opportunities for students to express their views to the University (University of East Anglia, paragraph 74)
- the University's commitment to student representation and the effective engagement of students in the development of policy and practice (University of the West of England, Bristol, paragraph 72)
- the student representation framework including the student-staff liaison committee (SSLC) system, the support for, and training of, student representatives, and the SSLC portal and handbook (University of Warwick, paragraphs 93 and 162)

Student feedback

- the University's commitment to gathering and responding to student feedback, and in particular its willingness to invest in a bespoke survey which complements the National Student Survey and provides more sophisticated data on student satisfaction, particularly in respect of its distinctive dual honours programmes (Keele University, paragraph 88)
- the development of more systematic approaches to obtaining student feedback across the School as a whole, and the responsiveness of the School to the views of its London-based students (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, paragraph 60)
- the development of mechanisms across the University for the consideration and publicising of responses to National Student Survey results (University of Leeds, paragraphs 117 and 142).

- the systematic response to the outcomes of the National Student Survey (University of Lincoln, paragraphs 111 and 135)
- the widespread and effective use of student feedback at all levels of the University (University of Southampton, paragraph 66)
- the ways in which the University makes effective use of feedback from students, which is collected at institutional level (Queen's University Belfast, paragraph 110)
- the comprehensive and structured arrangements for student feedback for on-campus programmes including the student semester review process (Rose Bruford College, paragraph 100)
- the consideration given to data derived from student surveys (University of Oxford, paragraph 98)
- the use of systematic feedback from students to inform major planning (University of Portsmouth, paragraph 107)
- the systematic approach, led by the Dean of Students, to the collation of student views from a range of internal and external sources which demonstrates the University's regard for the student voice (University of Wolverhampton, paragraphs 64 and 112)

Student support

- the approach to the annual monitoring of support services which has the potential to contribute to the enhancement of the student learning experience (Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, paragraph 103)
- the integration of employability within the undergraduate curriculum and the preparation of students for the world of work (Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, paragraph 108)
- the content of the Research Methods Course and its leadership, management and currency which equips students with excellent skills and research methodology (Royal College of Art, paragraphs 180 and 183)
- the care and attention given to the professional development of students (Royal College of Music, paragraph 130)
- the support provided to both undergraduate and postgraduate students by the Learning and Teaching Unit (School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraph 149)
- the introduction of the Logbook for postgraduate research students as a means of tracking progress and supporting the development of appropriate skills (School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraph 186, 187)
- the sense of community fostered within the School, as exemplified by the 'buddying' systems for new undergraduate and overseas students, and the arrangements to support disabled students (School of Pharmacy, paragraphs 129 and 135)
- the well-received Academic Tutor scheme which operates on the MPharm programme (School of Pharmacy, paragraphs 130 and 135)
- the effective careers support which is embedded throughout the curriculum (School of Pharmacy, paragraphs 131 and 135)
- the procedures for reviewing the progress of postgraduate research students, in particular the annual one-to-one meetings which all such students have with the Director of Graduate Studies (School of Pharmacy, paragraph 171)
- the role of the faculty student advisers in securing a coordinated approach to student support (Anglia Ruskin University, paragraphs 121 and 124)
- the Technical Support Department, which provides a vital resource for the School, students and stakeholders and which contributes to the mission of the School (Central School of Speech and Drama, paragraph 97)
- the arrangements for ensuring that postgraduate research students are well supported in their research programme, thereby contributing to successful

completion of their studies within four years (Institute of Cancer Research, paragraph 119)

- the use of 'E-vision' as an effective tool for supporting the revised personal tutoring system (Keele University, paragraph 135)
- the pastoral support provided by the Student Services Unit (Leeds College of Music, paragraphs 112, 114 and 115).
- the work of the programme offices in providing support to students throughout their period of study (London Business School, paragraph 81)
- the support given to London-based students prior to their arrival and throughout their period of study (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, paragraph 79)
- the integration of the Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning in learning and teaching to enhance student support and the student experience (Loughborough University, paragraph 124)
- the contribution made by the Graduate School in establishing a community of research students and, in particular, assisting the integration of part-time students (Roehampton University, paragraph 116)
- the degree of monitoring of student progress and the interaction between academic and pastoral support (Royal Academy of Music, paragraphs 85 and 89)
- the manner in which the institution's programmes aim to address the whole student experience and student wellbeing (Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, paragraphs 87 and 88)
- developments in English language support that focus on specific needs at different academic levels and that relate to English for the Creative Arts (University College for the Creative Arts at Canterbury, Epsom, Farnham, Maidstone and Rochester, paragraph 117)
- the strategic and coordinated institutional approach to the development of student engagement and support (University of Bradford, paragraphs 143 and 162)
- the exemplary manner in which the Senior Tutors' Committee discharges its responsibilities (University of Cambridge, paragraph 119)
- the 'Probationer MPhil' scheme designed to prepare students for a higher degree programme (University of Chichester, paragraph 165)
- the enhancement of student services within schools through the identification of needs, and targeting and focusing of delivery (University of Exeter, paragraph 155)
- the University's achievement in continually reviewing, refreshing and enhancing its provision of student support and student services (University of Reading, paragraph 113)
- the development of the Student Resources Network, providing an integrated physical and virtual access point for students to obtain support and information in person, remotely and out of hours (University of Southampton, paragraph 89)
- the arrangements for taking forward and embedding the University's strategy for enhancing the employability of its graduates (University of Southampton, paragraph 91)
- the role of the student advisers in providing a coordinated local approach to student support and guidance (University of Sussex, paragraphs 94-96)
- the wide range of well-supported placement opportunities taken by a significant proportion of students which broaden and contribute to the overall effectiveness of their learning opportunities (Aston University, paragraph 90)
- the comprehensive support for students provided by the University Careers Service, which helps them to benefit significantly from opportunities to develop their career management skills and to move readily into employment on graduation (Aston University, paragraph 110)

- the peer-assisted learning scheme, in its development opportunities for student mentors and in the additional support it provides for first-year students (Bournemouth University, paragraphs 61 and 107)
- the fully integrated support mechanisms for research students operating across all areas of the University (Bournemouth University, paragraph 134)
- the contribution made by the school-based educational development associates to institution-wide developments in support of good academic practice (City University London, paragraph 78)
- the University's response to the diverse learning needs of its students, as evidenced by the quality of the support offered by bodies such as the Centre for Academic Writing (Coventry University, paragraph 133)
- the integrated and structured student support mechanisms to underpin the student experience (De Montfort University, paragraph 139)
- the work of the Graduate School in providing cross-college support for postgraduate research and taught postgraduate students (Goldsmiths' College, paragraph 140)
- the strategic use of student liaison officers to enhance significantly the learning experience for students (Leeds Metropolitan University, paragraph 65)
- the distinctive character, strategic importance and successful outcomes of the College's well organised and effectively implemented placement scheme for all students (Leeds Trinity and All Saints, paragraph 58)
- the accessible, comprehensive and cohesive student support services provided through the 'Gateway to Hope Building' (Liverpool Hope University, paragraphs 113-114)
- the broad range of initiatives in place to support student personal development and employability (Liverpool Hope University, paragraphs 119-123)
- the use of the University's Welcome Week as an institutional approach to enhancing the induction and retention of a diverse student body (Nottingham Trent University, paragraphs 111, 112 and 114)
- the effectiveness of supervision, support and monitoring of postgraduate research students (Nottingham Trent University, paragraphs 85, 141, 142 and 149)
- the College's focused approach and initiatives in support of a diverse student body with particular reference to students with disabilities (Rose Bruford College, paragraph 145)
- the leadership and administrative support provided by the Graduate School for all postgraduate students (Royal Veterinary College, paragraph 187)
- the management and monitoring of the supervision, and the training and support provided for, postgraduate research students (Royal Veterinary College, paragraph 203)
- the role of the student support network officers as an effective interface with students in the coordination of student support and sharing of good practice across faculties (Southampton Solent University, paragraph 190)
- the development and continuing enhancement of the HelloUni site as a support for students during the recruitment process, particularly prior to their arrival at the University (Southampton Solent University, paragraph 196)
- the Transitions programme that supports the transition of first-year undergraduate students into higher education (University College London, paragraph 157)
- the quality and range of support that is available to Foundation Degree and top-up honours students studying for University awards in partner institutions (University of Bath, paragraphs 121 and 160)
- the comprehensive and effective service offered by the Careers and Employability Centre, including the provision of early engagement with undergraduates and the partnership agreements with colleges of the University (University of Birmingham, paragraph 112)

- the quality, range and accessibility of training and support activities available to staff and students offered by the Academic Practice and Organisational Development and Learning Development Units (University of Birmingham, paragraph 122)
- the comprehensive training-needs analysis undertaken for postgraduate students and supported by a wide range of training opportunities (University of Birmingham, paragraph 165)
- the integrated student support service, known as The 'i', for its accessibility and provision of high quality information, guidance and support for students (University of Central Lancashire, paragraph 121)
- the deliberate coordination of academic and pastoral support for students (University of Durham, paragraphs 102-104 and 106)
- the strategic management of student support services by the Dean of Students' Office, which promotes the provision of comprehensive and coordinated support to students (University of East Anglia, paragraph 109)
- the provision through the Transitions initiative of an extensive and student-focused training programme for postgraduate research students, which develops a range of skills directly relevant to the students' programmes of study and also prepares them for employment (University of East Anglia, paragraph 154)
- the comprehensive support for international students prior to joining, during induction and while on their programmes (University of Hertfordshire, paragraph 93)
- the engagement of the Graduate Futures office, both inside the University and with external stakeholders, to further the University's business-facing mission (University of Hertfordshire paragraphs, 96 and 105)
- the support for research students, including the generic training programme and the comprehensive information available via StudyNet (University of Hertfordshire, paragraph 173)
- the development, coordination and provision by the Unit for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching of a broad range of advisory and support services and development opportunities for staff and students (University of Kent, paragraphs 20, 21 and 83)
- the University's inclusive approach to learning support, which is designed to meet a wide range of student needs (University of Leicester, paragraphs 31 and 60)
- the developmental opportunities provided for students across the University through the Leicester Award for Employability Skills (University of Leicester, paragraph 61)
- the rigorous management and oversight of research student supervision (University of Leicester, paragraph 89)
- the provision of readily accessible support for student learning through the Centre for Academic Practice (University of Northampton, paragraph 56)
- the University's support for research students, centred on the Graduate School (University of Northampton, paragraphs 114 and 131)
- the high level of academic support and learning resources available to undergraduate students (University of Oxford, paragraph 150)
- the University's pursuit of its employability and volunteering strategies including its cooperation with the Students' Union in these themes (University of Portsmouth, paragraph 145)
- the comprehensive nature of student induction, including the Big Guide and Project Welcome (University of Surrey, paragraphs 151 and 249)
- the effectiveness of quality procedures and strength of support for postgraduate research students (University of Surrey, paragraphs 239, 241 and 247)
- University initiatives under the Student Experience Programme that support key aspects of the student learning experience (University of the West of England, Bristol, paragraphs 87, 88, 91 and 101)

- the academic and support infrastructure and policies which support the enhancement of undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research student skills development (University of Warwick, paragraphs 126 and 185)
- the Headstart induction scheme for students (University of Winchester, paragraph 73)
- the University's blended learning research training programme offered to postgraduate research students, which meets the expectations of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice), Section 1*, and fulfils the requirements of the Arts and Humanities and other research councils (University of Winchester, paragraph 111)
- the establishment of a range of methodical initiatives, for example effective study-skills support, designed to improve student retention and progression (University of Wolverhampton, paragraphs 36, 99 and 112)
- the effective support for student learning provided by Learning Information Services and Information Technology Services, which is assisted by both departments being integral to the academic planning and development processes (University of Wolverhampton, paragraphs 52 and 86)
- the University's cooperative partnership with the Students' Union, exemplified by the work of the University Student Affairs Committee and the Dean of Students and the provision of pastoral support (University of Wolverhampton, paragraphs 63, 64, 102 and 112)
- the structured way in which the University uses information about practice elsewhere in the sector in the development of its policies and procedures, as in the review and revision of the approach to personal tutoring (University of Wolverhampton, paragraph 95).

Appendix B: Recommendations relating to student engagement and support

Student representation

- to reconsider how the College might achieve improved student representation and participation in institutional level committees (Royal Agricultural College, paragraph 62)
- continue to take steps to improve the effectiveness of student representation (Royal College of Music, paragraph 92)
- make explicit reference to student representation in the memorandum of cooperation with partner institutions and ensure that partner institutions are represented on the new Student Representatives Steering Committee (Bath Spa University, paragraphs 84 and 134)
- consider more formal and consistent arrangements to ensure student engagement in quality assurance at subject level (Bath Spa University, paragraph 85)
- to consider the benefits of increasing student participation in the monitoring and review of taught provision (Institute of Cancer Research, paragraph 71)
- to ensure consistent representation of postgraduate research students at institutional level (University of Bradford, paragraph 214)
- the University together with the Students' Union, explore further ways of enhancing the systematic dissemination of information from course representatives to ensure all students have access to key information (Coventry University, paragraphs 90 and 97)
- ensure the robust and consistent use of appropriate data in the periodic review process and consider whether this process should routinely involve engagement with students (Leeds Metropolitan University, paragraphs 34 and 63)
- review the effectiveness of its processes to manage student representation (Leeds Metropolitan University, paragraphs 69 and 119)
- take steps to put in place the timely delivery of training for all student committee representatives (Leeds Trinity and All Saints, paragraph 43)
- consider further its range of mechanisms for achieving the full and active participation of students in quality management (Leeds Trinity and All Saints, paragraphs 44 and 71)
- develop mechanisms that will further support students in their role as representatives (Liverpool Hope University, paragraphs 93-94)
- take steps to improve the effectiveness of formal student representation and participation on boards and committees (Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, paragraphs 89 and 91)
- to be more proactive in enabling, supporting and training students for engagement with the full range of appropriate University committees, including programme committees (Open University, paragraph 100)
- to consider whether the positive contribution of the student community to the College's quality assurance and enhancement processes could be further strengthened by providing appropriate support to the Students' Union (Rose Bruford College, paragraph 104)
- establish a role for current students at faculty level through direct representation at relevant faculty committees, as distinct from the role of student liaison officer employed as a member of staff by the University (University of Central Lancashire, paragraph 98)

to ensure the consistency, continuity, coherence and support of student representation in quality management at all levels (University of Greenwich, paragraph 89)

Student feedback

- review, develop and enhance its quality assurance procedures and consider the merit of publishing them in a single, comprehensive, readily accessible source (Royal College of Art, paragraphs 44, 46, 48, 85, 86, 98, 194 and 249)
- ensure that students are made aware of the outcomes of course and programme evaluations (School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraphs 100-110)
- through its review of student feedback, ensure greater consistency in the use of both quantitative and qualitative feedback in its Annual Strategic Review reports, and give careful consideration to the explicit inclusion of written student feedback (University College Falmouth, paragraphs 30, 55, 72 and 73)
- systematically capture empirical information from students at unit level (University College Falmouth, paragraph 70)
- review the approach to identification and consideration in the University's central deliberative bodies of matters of institution-wide significance to secure a more effective and systematic contribution to enhancement of the student learning experience (Anglia Ruskin University, paragraphs 80, 86-88,122, 136 and 137)
- ensure effective and consistent analysis of module evaluations and student data in annual subject reports (Bath Spa University, paragraph 74)
- to revise internal student feedback questionnaires, and other student consultation processes, to provide more and better information about the higher education student experience (Leeds College of Music, paragraphs 83 and 87)
- to take more effective action to address student concerns evident in the results of the National Student Survey (Leeds College of Music, paragraph 91)
- to consider further how the University might promote greater consistency, and the adoption of best practice, in the collection of student feedback across the range of provision for which it is responsible (University of Brighton, paragraphs 101 and 102)
- extend the development of appropriate data collection and analysis processes relating to postgraduate taught students in the context of plans to develop postgraduate taught provision (University of Salford, paragraph 42)
- to ensure that the development of annual monitoring fulfils its potential with respect to the enhancement of student learning opportunities across the University (Bournemouth University, paragraphs 41 and 77)
- keep under review the annual monitoring process to ensure that the deliberative structure meets the Institute's aspirations for overall consistency of reporting, the implementation of action plans and the achievement of targets (Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, paragraphs 59, 73, 75, 77, 84 and 87)
- to adopt a more comprehensive approach to informing students about actions taken in response to their feedback (Open University, paragraph 94)
- continue to prioritise and expedite the development of the integrated College-wide approach to the systematic collection, analysis, evaluation and use of management information at course and institutional level; and that, as part of this approach, the College moves rapidly towards a consistent and regulated approach to the identification, dating, attribution and registration of all relevant documents (Royal Veterinary College, paragraphs 86, 103 and 108)
- review the procedures for module evaluation by students based on good practice in the institution (University of Birmingham, paragraph 83).

- ensure that any action taken as a result of student feedback from module evaluation questionnaires and staff-student committees is communicated effectively to all students (University of Hull, paragraph 56)
- to give further consideration to the provision for research students, to provide feedback at local level within research centres and institutes (University of Wolverhampton, paragraph 166)

Student support

- to reconsider student learning support arrangement for international students whose first language is not English (Royal Agricultural College, paragraph 78)
- ensure that the tutorial system regulations are implemented consistently across the College including the issuing of written feedback to all students after each formal assessment (Royal College of Art, paragraphs 87, 139 and 226)
- establish a personal tutor network for MPhil/PhD students, separate from the supervisory team (Royal College of Art, paragraph 225)
- establish and monitor threshold requirements for academic support systems for students (School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraphs 146, 147 and 152-154)
- extend personal tutoring to all postgraduate taught students (Keele University, paragraph 136)
- review its procedures for the induction, training and support of staff and students who join the University at times other than the start of the academic year (Keele University, paragraph 142)
- monitor the effectiveness of the newly reorganised personal tutor system in ensuring that all students receive their stipulated entitlement to academic guidance within an overall support system which, because of its distributed nature, offers students a variety of sources of assistance (Roehampton University, paragraph 83)
- where, to reflect disciplinary differences, it permits variation in practice in personal supervision, check that variation in order to ensure that it is still within the University's expectations and in order to facilitate the spread of good practice (University of Leeds, paragraphs 22 and 160)
- to secure consistent and equitable application of central and local guidance for the management of postgraduate research provision with particular reference to supervisory arrangements and rules for progression from MPhil to PhD (University of Sheffield, paragraph 162)
- where university-level policy or procedural guidance is issued to schools, to make more explicit the degree of observance expected, so that it is clear whether local variation is appropriate (University of Southampton, paragraphs 43, 87 and 96)
- to review the approach at institutional level to the use of the qualitative and quantitative management information collected from both internal and external sources with a view to establishing a holistic and methodical approach to the provision of student learning opportunities (University of Sussex, paragraphs 55, 63, 64, 76 and 123)
- to take stock of departmental practices in the support and preparation of postgraduate research students for assessment to encourage consistency of approach across the institution (University of Sussex, paragraph 163)
- to strengthen its academic support for students on combined degree programmes (University of York, paragraph 133)
- the University review the range and extent of support which it provides to postgraduate research students, particularly on entry and in the early stages of their research (Aston University, paragraph 152)

- the University to review the management of placement learning in the light of its intention to expand this type of provision in order to ensure that its remains effective (Coventry University, paragraphs 116 and 138)
- the University to put in place and assure itself that it fully operates and delivers its procedures for postgraduate research programmes that meet the expectations of the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes* relating to the selection, admission and induction of students, supervision, assessment and the development of research and other skills (De Montfort University, paragraphs 203, 206, 214 and 218)
- improve the timeliness of enhancement initiatives in order to have greater impact on the experience of current students (Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, paragraphs 87, 120, 142, 145 and 148)
- address the variability in education practices at school level, to ensure equity of treatment of all students and of the student experience (Queen's University Belfast, paragraphs 81, 111, 122 and 211)
- to reinforce the management and strategic coordination of its Student Services (Rose Bruford College, paragraph 143)
- provide formal training in research methods for all part-time postgraduate research students (Southampton Solent University, paragraph 266)
- keep under review the extent to which the implementation and operation of the range of new policy initiatives (such as the assessment framework, personal tutoring, peer observation and staff appraisal) are producing the intended outcomes in terms of the management of academic standards and quality (University of Bath, paragraphs 58, 83, 131, 139 and 141)
- following amendment to the University's requirements in relation to research supervision, to review implementation of the provision for 'a range of individuals in addition to the student's supervisor(s)' to support a research student, in order to ensure that access to a supervisory team is now normally available to every such student (University of Bristol, paragraph 127)
- revisit its approach to the Personal Academic Support System in order to ensure that all students are made aware of the personal support available to them (University of Kent, paragraph 82)
- that the University give further consideration to its approach to achieving its aim that each student will have a curriculum characterised by the principles and practice of employability (University of Northampton, paragraph 60)
- ensure greater consistency in the operation of arrangements for postgraduate research students as described in the University's Code of Practice, and communicate its policies and procedures clearly to students (University of the West of England, Bristol, paragraphs 133, 134, 137, 141 and 143)
- to review its management of joint honours courses, including the application of additional credit to such courses (University of Warwick, paragraphs 58, 78, 90 and 116)
- to review the operation at departmental level of the new central guidelines on personal tutoring with a view to enhancing consistency of implementation (University of Warwick, paragraph 117).

Appendix C: Methodology used for producing papers in *Outcomes from Institutional audit*

The analysis of the Institutional audit reports which underlies the *Outcomes* papers is based on the headings set out in Annexes B and C of the *Handbook for Institutional audit: England and Northern Ireland* (2006).

For each published Institutional audit report, the text is taken from the report and technical annex published on QAA's website and converted to plain text format. The resulting files are checked for accuracy and introduced into a qualitative research software package, QSR NVivo8®. The software provides a wide range of tools to support indexing and searching and allows features of interest to be coded for further investigation. The basic coding of the reports follows the template headings set out in the *Handbook*. Further specific analysis is based on the more detailed text of the technical annex.

An audit team's judgements, its identification of features of good practice, and its recommendations appear in the introduction to the technical annex, with cross references to the main text where the grounds for identifying a feature of good practice, offering a recommendation and making a judgement are set out. These cross references are used to locate features of good practice and recommendations to the particular sections of the report to which they refer.

Individual *Outcomes* papers are written by experienced institutional auditors and audit secretaries. To assist in compiling the papers, reports produced using QSR NVivo8® 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. The authors then consider this evidence in the context of the more detailed explanations given in the main text of the technical annex to establish themes for further discussion.

Appendix D: The Institutional audit reports

2006-07
Ravensbourne College of Design and
Communication
Royal Agricultural College
Royal College of Art
Royal College of Music
School of Oriental and African Studies
School of Pharmacy
University College Falmouth

2007-08
Anglia Ruskin University
Bath Spa University
Central School of Speech and Drama
Institute of Cancer Research
Keele University
Leeds College of Music
London Business School
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
Loughborough University
Roehampton University
Royal Academy of Music
Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance
University College for the Creative Arts at
Canterbury, Epsom, Farnham, Maidstone and
Rochester
University of Bradford
University of Brighton
University of Buckingham
University of Cambridge
University of Chichester
University of Essex
University of Exeter
University of Leeds
University of Lincoln
University of Reading
University of Salford
University of Sheffield
University of Southampton
University of Sussex
University of the Arts London
University of York

2008-09
Aston University
Bournemouth University
City University London
Coventry University
De Montfort University
Goldsmiths' College
Lancaster University
Leeds Metropolitan University
Leeds Trinity and All Saints[177]
Liverpool Hope University
Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts
Middlesex University
Nottingham Trent University
Open University
Queen's University Belfast
Rose Bruford College
Royal Veterinary College
Southampton Solent University
University College London
University of Bath
University of Birmingham
University of Bristol
University of Central Lancashire
University of Durham
University of East Anglia
University of Greenwich
University of Hertfordshire
University of Hull
University of Kent
University of Leicester
University of Liverpool
University of Northampton
University of Oxford
University of Portsmouth
University of Sunderland
University of Surrey
University of the West of England, Bristol
University of Warwick
University of Winchester
University of Wolverhampton

The full text of the Institutional audit reports is available at
www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/Pages/Institutions-A-Z.aspx.

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[177] Now Leeds Trinity University College.

Appendix E: Titles in *Outcomes from Institutional audit: 2007-09*

- *Managing academic standards*
- *Managing learning opportunities*
- *Student engagement and support*
- *External involvement in quality management*
- *Assessment and feedback*
- *Published information*

All published *Outcomes* papers can be found at
www.qaa.ac.uk/ImprovingHigherEducation/Pages/Outcomes.aspx.