QAA

Trinity College, Carmarthen

November 2006

Institutional review

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Preface

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) exists to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education (HE) qualifications and to encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of HE.

To do this QAA carries out reviews of individual HE institutions (universities and colleges of HE). In Wales this process is known as institutional review. QAA operates similar but separate processes in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

The purpose of institutional review

The aims of institutional review are to meet the public interest in knowing that universities and colleges are:
- providing HE, awards and qualifications of an acceptable quality and an appropriate academic standard
- exercising their legal powers to award degrees in a proper manner.

Judgements

Institutional review results in judgements about the institutions being reviewed. Judgements are made about:
- the **confidence** that can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of its programmes and the academic standards of its awards
- the **reliance** that can reasonably be placed on the accuracy, integrity, completeness and frankness of the information that the institution publishes, and about the quality of its programmes and the standards of its awards.

These judgements are expressed as either **confidence, limited confidence or no confidence** and are accompanied by examples of good practice and recommendations for improvement.

Nationally agreed standards

Institutional review uses a set of nationally agreed reference points, known as the 'Academic Infrastructure', to consider an institution's standards and quality. These are published by QAA and consist of:
- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), which include descriptions of different HE qualifications
- The *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*
- subject benchmark statements, which describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects
- guidelines for preparing programme specifications, which are descriptions of the what is on offer to students in individual programmes of study. They outline the intended knowledge, skills, understanding and attributes of a student completing that programme. They also give details of teaching and assessment methods and link the programme to the FHEQ.

The review process

Institutional reviews are carried out by teams of academics who review the way in which institutions oversee their academic quality and standards. Because they are evaluating their equals, the process is called 'peer review'.

The main elements of institutional review are:
- a preliminary visit by QAA to the institution nine months before the review visit
- a self-evaluation document submitted by the institution four months before the review visit
- a written submission by the student representative body, if they have chosen to do so, four months before the review visit
- a detailed briefing visit to the institution by the review team five weeks before the review visit
- the review visit, which lasts five days
- the publication of a report on the review team's judgements and findings 22 weeks after the review visit.

The evidence for the review

In order to obtain the evidence for its judgement, the review team carries out a number of activities, including

- reviewing the institution's own internal procedures and documents, such as regulations, policy statements, codes of practice, recruitment publications and minutes of relevant meetings, as well as the self-evaluation document itself
- reviewing the written submission from students
- asking questions of relevant staff
- talking to students about their experiences
- exploring how the institution uses the Academic Infrastructure.

The review team also gathers evidence by focusing on examples of the institution's internal quality assurance processes at work using 'thematic trails'. These trails may focus on how well institutional processes work at local level and across the institution as a whole.

Institutions are required to publish information about the quality and standards of their programmes and awards in a format recommended in document 04/05 *Information on quality and standards in higher education,* published by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

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Introduction

A team of reviewers from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visited Trinity College, Carmarthen (the College) from 20 to 24 November 2006 to carry out an institutional review. The purpose of the review was to provide public information on the quality of the opportunities available to students and on the academic standards of the awards that the College offers.

To arrive at its conclusions the team spoke to members of staff throughout the College and to student representatives. It also read a wide range of documents relating to the way in which the institution manages the academic aspects of its provision.

The words 'academic standards' are used to describe the level of achievement that a student has to reach to gain an academic award (for example, a degree). It should be at a similar level across the UK.

Academic quality is a way of describing how well the learning opportunities available to students help them to achieve their award. It is about making sure that appropriate teaching, support, assessment and learning opportunities are provided for them. In institutional review both academic standards and academic quality are reviewed.

Outcome of the review

As a result of its investigations, the review team's view of Trinity College, Carmarthen is that:

- confidence can be placed in the soundness of the institution's current and likely future management of the quality of its academic programmes and the academic standards of its awards.

Features of good practice

The review team identified the following areas as being good practice:

- the many forms of external engagement offered in the student learning experience

- the programme review process including the use of external and student representatives within the process

- the strong staff development opportunities in place

- good strategic planning in general, and, in particular, with regard to the College's mission and the needs of national bilingualism.

Recommendations for action

The review team also recommends that the College should consider further action in a number of areas in order to ensure that the academic quality of programmes and the standards of the awards that it offers are maintained. The team considers it desirable that the College:

- continues the development of effective methods of peer review for all academic staff

- broadens the group of staff chosen to chair quality assurance events

- reviews procedures for the input of external subject expertise into the approval and monitoring of modules at faculty level.

National reference points

To provide further evidence to support its findings the review team also investigated the use made by the College of the Academic Infrastructure which QAA has developed on behalf of the whole of UK higher education. The Academic Infrastructure is a set of nationally agreed reference points that help to define both good practice and academic standards. The findings of the review suggest that the institution has engaged effectively with subject benchmark statements, *The framework*

for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education.*

The institutional review process includes a check on the reliability of the information set published by institutions in the format recommended in the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales' document, *Teaching Quality Information (TQI) Requirements for Higher Education in Wales (*HEFCW *W04/05HE).* At the time of the review the College was alert to the requirements set out in HEFCW *W04/05HE* and was fulfilling its responsibilities in this regard. The College is meeting the requirements with regard to the coverage, accuracy, reliability and frankness of information that it provides.

Main report

Main report

1 An institutional review of Trinity College, Carmarthen (the College) was undertaken from 20 to 24 November 2006. The purpose of the review was to provide public information on the quality of the College's programmes of study and on the academic standards of its awards.

2 The review was carried out using a process developed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) in partnership with the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW). For institutions in Wales it replaces the previous process of continuation audit, undertaken by QAA at the request of Universities UK (UUK) and the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP) (now GuildHE). Institutional review also replaces assessments and engagements relating to the quality and standards of provision at subject level. The former were undertaken by HEFCW and the latter were undertaken by QAA on behalf of HEFCW as part of HEFCW's statutory responsibility for assessing the quality of education that it funds.

3 The review checked the effectiveness of the College's procedures for establishing and maintaining the standards of academic awards from the University of Wales (UoW), for reviewing and enhancing the quality of programmes of study leading to those awards; and for publishing reliable information. The scope of the review encompassed all of the College's provision and collaborative arrangements leading to UoW awards.

Section 1: Introduction: Trinity College Carmarthen

The institution and its mission

4 Trinity College, Carmarthen, founded in 1848, became an Associated Institution of the UoW in 1990 and a Member Institution of UoW in 2005. It was originally a teacher training institution training teachers from a Welsh context for Welsh Church Schools, and it is now a Voluntary Church College of Higher Education. It is the only denominational institution of higher education in Wales. The College is situated on a compact single campus in Carmarthen.

5 The College's self evaluation document (SED) explained that recently 'the College has concentrated on serving the academic needs of west Wales and has developed a range of strategies to support various Welsh Assembly Government policies'. Its mission statement is 'To advance Trinity College, a Church in Wales community university institution, as a provider of quality bilingual higher education and training, that makes an effective contribution to the economic, social, cultural and spiritual prosperity of Wales'. The development of 'strategic and functional alliances with other institutions in south west Wales' and 'partnerships with key agencies and organisations' are central to the achievement of this mission.

6 The College does not hold degree awarding powers. The College's degree programmes are all validated by the UoW, which regulates academic and quality procedures through the UoW Academic Framework. The change from Associated to Member status of the UoW followed changes suggested to the UoW in Professor Sir David Williams' Report *University of Wales: A Review of its Membership, Structures and Modus Operandi.* This change of status required the assumption by the College of additional responsibilities in quality assurance. All aspects of external examining and scheme approval were devolved by the UoW to the College from September 2005, and award regulations and appeals and unfair practice procedures were devolved from September 2006. The relevant College procedures were reviewed and the College's Academic Quality Handbook (AQH) revised during the academic year 2004-05 to ensure complete assumption of the additional responsibilities. Both staff and students reported to the review team that the transition in responsibilities had been smooth and was not affecting the teaching and learning environment.

7   The standards and quality assurance relationship with the UoW also changed following the QAA institutional review of the UoW in May 2004. Subsequent to the review of the UoW, in January 2005 the UoW Council approved interim arrangements for a period of no more than four years during which time constituent parts of the UoW would individually work towards securing other degree validation arrangements including, where desired, the completion of an application for taught degree awarding powers (tDAP). The review team learned that at the date of the review the timing of a tDAP application had not been decided by the College. In the light of regional developments the College had chosen to use interim quality assurance arrangements through the University of Wales, Swansea (UoWS) with which it had signed a consultancy agreement. This agreement falls within the models for quality assurance laid out by the UoW. In the arrangement the College's degree awards continue to be validated by the UoW, but the monitoring of the College's quality assurance processes by the validating body, UoW, is through external academic assessors (EAAs) appointed by UoWS rather than directly by UoW. The arrangement could, if required, continue beyond the interim period. The EAAs attend a wide variety of the College's boards, committees, reviews and validation events and report to the UoW twice each year.

8   The number of enrolled students in the academic year 2005-06 was 2,137, of whom about one-third were part-time and 12 per cent were taught postgraduates. The College does not offer research degrees but may later seek to participate in the provision of research degrees through regional collaboration. In 2005-06 the College employed 266 academic and support staff. The SED stated that 'the College is committed to widening access and to providing a platform for improving the skills of the workforce'. An example of this commitment is the 'flexible route mode' of attendance which allows study by those in full-time employment through attendance in the evenings and at weekends. The SED also noted that a high

percentage of the students are ordinarily resident in Wales, with very many of them local, and that 'the proportion of students from under-represented communities is high'. The College's current year's Annual Operating Statement states that following the achievements of the last five years there can now be a period of expansion.

9   The Principal and Chief Executive of the College, Dr Medwin Hughes, was appointed in September 2000. Following reviews by external and internal panels the Principal led a restructuring of the entire academic portfolio, completed by the end of the year 2000-01. Associated with the restructuring was a focus upon developing the College as a community higher education institution (HEI).

10   The restructuring resulted in the creation of three faculties, the Faculty of Creative, Performing and Cultural Arts, the Faculty of Education and Training, and the Faculty of Environment. Following further consideration in 2003, the College Council then decided to revise the faculty structure to form two faculties, the Faculty of Arts and Social Studies, and the Faculty of Education and Training, each of which consists of five schools. The basic teaching unit in the College is the school, and some of the schools concentrate upon one major programme of study. The College focuses upon programmes in the creative and liberal arts, and a high proportion of the programmes taught are vocational, with particular emphasis on the training of teachers. In addition to the predominant honours-level courses, the portfolio includes a Foundation Degree, a certificate, a diploma, a postgraduate certificate and a Postgraduate Diploma of Higher Education.

11   At the time of the review the College was working to a strategic plan developed in 2005-06 following extensive discussions which included a two-day open debate involving College staff. An additional discussion day was convened for the governors. The current strategy is underpinned by three core values which are 'a commitment to enhancing and developing a Christian ethos and

understanding as the only Church related institution of higher education in Wales; a commitment to Welsh language and culture and the development of a bilingual nation; a commitment to empowering individuals to gain access to education'. A specific ambition is that the College will become the national leader in Welsh-English bilingual education. The strategic plan details both medium and long-term aims of the College positioning itself very stably 'as a key provider of education and training within the confederation of university institutions in south west Wales'. The aims set out in the plan are 'investing in the Knowledge Economy - enhancing and advancing the reputation of the College for excellence in teaching and learning; supporting economic, social and cultural development; supporting community development through widening participation and facilitating access; supporting the Welsh Language and Bilingual Development; venturing in Mission; ensuring sustainability'.

Collaborative provision

12   The College has few collaborative study arrangements. The SED highlighted a collaborative arrangement which is for the study of archaeology on its campus at Carmarthen by students registered as University of Wales, Lampeter (UoWL) students. The course was taught jointly between the institutions but following an agreement in September 2005 standards and quality assurance matters for this programme are now primarily the responsibility of UoWL. The College has written a code of practice to be applied to current and future collaborative activity.

13   The College has collaborated with Glamorgan College and the University of Wales Bangor (UoWB), in order to extend in south and north Wales its Geiriau Bach scheme for improvement of expression and confidence in the Welsh language. The College has a student exchange scheme, currently confined for outgoing students to institutions in the United States of America (USA), and involving incoming short-term students from the USA and elsewhere. This exchange scheme was not

described in the SED as a collaborative arrangement but the collaborative code of practice is applied to it. Although other possible links are being explored with institutions in Asia, there are no immediate plans to enter into further collaborative ventures.

Background information

14   The published information available for this review included:

- information on the College website

- the previous Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) quality audit report for the College, published in 1997

- information on the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA), Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), Higher Education and Research Opportunities in the UK (HERO) and HEFCW websites.

In addition, the institution provided an institutional SED. This SED provided links to other external reports. These included the report of the Estyn inspection of 2000-01 of initial teacher training (ITT) provision and the report of QAA's subject review of 2002-03 of archaeology provision at the College

15   During its visit, the review team was given access to the College's intranet and internal documents.

The review process

16   QAA conducted preliminary visits in November 2005 and June 2006 to discuss operational aspects of the review. QAA received the SED in August 2006. The review team visited the College on 17 and 18 October 2006 for the purpose of exploring with the Principal, senior members of staff and student representatives matters relating to the management of quality and standards raised by the SED and other documentation provided for the team. During this briefing visit the team signalled a number of themes for the review visit, including two thematic trails. The thematic trails selected by the team were in the

consequences for management of standards and quality 2004-06 of changes in the role of the UoW, and in externality in the student experience. A programme of meetings was developed, which was agreed with the College.

17   At the preliminary meetings for the review, the students of the College were invited, through their representatives, to submit a separate document, the student written submission (SWS) expressing views on the student experience at the College, and identifying any matters of concern or commendation about the quality of programmes and the standard of awards. The student representatives decided that they would provide a separate submission to the review team, and submitted a SWS in August 2006.

18   The review visit took place from 20 November to 24 November 2006 and involved further meetings with staff and students of the College. The review team was: Emeritus Professor J Beeby, Dr M Bowen, Dr H McKenzie, Professor D Meehan, reviewers, and Mr D Attwood, review secretary. The review was coordinated for QAA by Mr A Bradshaw, Assistant Director, Reviews Group.

Developments since the previous quality audit

19   During the last 10 years the College has been subject to profound changes in the environment within which it has been operating. In consequence, both the structure of the College and the nature of its academic provision have changed. The review team learned that changes in the context within which the College operates have continued to occur in the interval between submission of the SED and the review visit. These last included changes in the position with respect to the UoW, partnership activity in relation to the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), and changes in the number of teacher training places allocated to the College.

20   The College was last subject to a quality audit under HEQC arrangements in 1996. The report, published early in 1997, contained recommendations drawing attention to quality

assurance processes which could be improved. Following that report the College invited an external panel to analyse the changes which had been in progress at the time of the audit or had been put in place to meet the audit recommendations. This panel commented upon the revised processes instituted to meet each recommendation and which provided the basis for the College's response to HEQC. After more discussion, HEQC recommended the College to refine its quality procedures further. The SED for the current institutional review stressed that, since the time of the quality audit, other significant developments 'have changed both the structure of the institution and the nature of its academic provision', and asserted that 'the HEQC audit no longer reflects the current infrastructure or quality assurance procedures of the College'. The review team was able to confirm the validity of those statements.

21   Amongst other changes in the context of the College, in 1995 HEFCW decided to reduce the four-year BA Education programme for ITT to three years, resulting in a loss from the College of students and funding. A feasibility study was conducted by the College in 1998 for a possible merger with UoWL. A merger was rejected by the College Council on financial grounds and, according to the SED, 'because it was considered that the new university would not safeguard the bilingual and denominational character of the College'.

22   A new institutional strategy was adopted in 1999 following an independent review commissioned by the College Council. The changes included a new management structure and the creation of new faculty structures, with the aim of repositioning the College as a key provider of education in west Wales. The SED argued that the repositioning and internal restructuring have been successful, and that the College has developed as a community university-level institution addressing the regional training needs of west Wales. The review team noted from its discussions and from documentation that this repositioning has occurred.

23   Policies of the WAG have also impacted on the College, particularly following the publication in 2002 of WAG's Reaching Higher which set out the 10-year strategy for higher education in Wales. A key element of this strategy was that new collaborative structures had to be created including, as response to WAG's Spatial Development Plan, the creation of the Virtual University of south west Wales. An independent assessment commissioned by the College of its academic role in the light of WAG priorities concluded that the College offered a very distinctive brand of higher education not available elsewhere in Wales. A note prepared by the College stated that, under the 2006 ITT Change Plan of WAG, the College, 'as part of the proposed South West Wales School of Teacher Education, will be the lead institution in terms of training future Welsh medium and bilingual primary school teachers in Wales'.

24   The College is now implementing the strategic plan developed in 2005-06 following the setting of external priorities and extensive staff-governor internal discussions. The strategic plan sees the College as a key member of a confederation of university-level institutions in south west Wales. The review team judged the development of strategic planning with the full engagement of staff and governors and the reflection of the College's mission, together with the management of major structural changes and the responses to external issues such as national bilingualism, to be an example of good practice.

25   During 2002-03, the College was subject to a QAA subject review of archaeology conducted in the form of a Welsh engagement. The subject review team expressed confidence in the academic standards of the programme and found the quality of student progression and the quality of learning resources to be commendable. The need for developing programme specifications with distinctive aims for each joint honours programme was identified during the review. Such programme specifications are now a College requirement for new programmes and for programmes when subject to quinquennial review. Most

quality assurance responsibilities for the teaching of archaeology have now been assumed by UoWL, with teaching on the College's campus managed according to the College's collaborative code of practice.

26   The College is inspected every five years by Estyn, the office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales, with respect to the detailed statutory requirements for ITT. Following inspection in 2000-01 the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) Primary and Secondary programmes were deemed to be of a good standard and the BA Primary Education programme to be satisfactory. The recommendations of the review were each analysed by the College in a response to the Estyn report, and changes proposed. In particular, there has been significant investment by the College in the Primary Schools Partnership which was relaunched in 2003.

27   The College has adjusted well to the rapid changes in the political and educational context within which it operates, changes which are continuing to occur. It has put in place sound, responsive quality assurance processes, and is working to ensure that all staff, academic and support, engage fully with them. The review team was assured by students whom it met that the assumption by the College of additional quality assurance responsibilities from the UoW had been managed so that the student experience was not affected. The team judged the management of strategic change within the College to be an example of good practice.

Section 2: The review investigations: institutional processes

The institution's view as expressed in the SED

28   The SED affirmed that 'the College operates within a context of continuous development with respect to quality assurance and enhancement'. The body with overall responsibility for quality and standards is the Academic Board (AB) which advises the Principal on all academic matters. The Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), supported by the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU), reports to the AB and is charged with developing, monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the College's quality assurance systems. A member of the College's governing body sits on the QAC. The Senior Management Team (SMT) supports the Principal in the strategic management of the College. The SMT consists of the Principal, the Academic Registrar, the two heads of faculties and the Directors of Resources/Operations, Student Services and Human Resources. The SED referred to 'the level of trust and understanding that has been established between the SMT and all staff', arguing that 'this has significantly improved the capacity of the College…to thrive'.

The institution's framework for managing quality and standards, including collaborative provision

29   In its SED, the College described how its quality assurance framework is set out in the AQH which is consistent with the requirements of UoW, Estyn, and the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (*Code of practice*), published by QAA. The SED went on to state that the procedures set out in the AQH have been designed to delegate as much responsibility as possible to the point of delivery, based on the AB's recognition that quality assurance systems work effectively only if they are understood and owned by staff, and are consistently and

systematically applied. The AQH plays an essential role in the management of the quality assurance processes and its content is reviewed annually to address matters raised by internal and external sources. The review in 2002-03 had as its main purpose ensuring consistency with the *Code of practice*. Detailed terms of reference of all the AB's subcommittees, including the Information Services and Resources Committee, the Student Services Committee, the International Education and Collaborative Provision Committee and the Staff Development Committee, are set out in the AQH. The review team noted that committees in the College maintain a list of actions and responsibilities so that there can be assurance that the actions agreed have been completed.

30   The two faculties each have a faculty board, and these are also subcommittees of the AB. As with the QAC, each of the faculty boards includes a member from the Governing Body. The boards are responsible for overseeing the development and operation of the academic portfolios of their constituent schools. Recently, one of the faculty board meetings each term has had a specific focus on quality assurance and resources; colleagues from faculties and support teams give presentations and lead discussions on matters associated with the enhancement of teaching and learning. The SED argued that 'this development has been particularly useful in ensuring greater engagement of the academic staff with quality assurance issues'.

31   Responsibility for the quality of individual programmes lies with the programme teams within the schools, and is monitored at faculty level. Accordingly, the boards of each school are charged with evaluating and monitoring the management, content, delivery, assessment and resources relating to the school's academic provision. School boards report to the relevant faculty board. Following a recent decision, all heads of school are now members of the AB. This change was described in the SED as leading to a greater understanding by staff of the contexts within which the College operates and to a more inclusive approach to decision-making.

32   In accordance with the requirements of the UoW and the consultancy agreement with UoWS, two EAAs appointed by UoWS on behalf of UoW have been monitoring systems at the College since 2005. The EAAs regularly attend the College's committee meetings and the College stated to the review team that it has found their commentaries useful. The EAAs' reports to the UoW are available for discussion at the University's Committee on Academic Standards. In copies of recent reports seen by the review team, the EAAs commented favourably on the effectiveness of the College's quality assurance processes. The SED described the regular presence of the EAAs at various committee meetings as extremely useful and commented further that the College 'will need to carefully evaluate the possible options beyond the interim period, including the advisability of applying for Degree Awarding Powers'.

33   The review team judged the College's quality assurance system to be effective and to support a good student learning experience. The system is generally similar to that in much larger institutions but is necessarily headed by a smaller number of senior staff. The team noted that this can lead to potential conflicts of interest where, for example, review and validation panels are headed by the chair of the committee which will consider the panel's later report. Given the increased involvement of other staff, for example, heads of school in discussions and decision-making, the team recommends that a cohort of staff at head of school level, be trained as chairs of panels and working groups.

34   The SED stated that 'the College's quality assurance systems have developed significantly in recent years, and have now reached a stage of constant and regular monitoring and review'. The review team confirmed that the findings of external reviews are considered and actioned at College committees and reported to the AB, so providing evidence to support and strengthen the systems. In particular, the College affirmed that the engagement with UoWS had been 'a very positive and constructive development', and that it 'secures academic rigour and

continual self-evaluation of systems'. The College explained that the terms of reference of all committees in the structure were recently revised with a view to 'identifying and removing gaps' and 'strengthening feedback loops'.

35   A primary element in the College's monitoring and evaluation of the quality of the provision is the feedback from external examiners. External examiners' reports seen by the review team indicated that the standards achieved are consistent with the standards achieved at other HEIs. The team saw evidence that school boards consider and respond to the recommendations made in external examiners' reports; these are themselves also the subject of a later College report with recommendations that is considered at the AB. The attendance of the Students' Union (SU) President at central committees including the AB and QAC, and the presence of student programme of study representatives at review and audit events, also play a significant role in monitoring and evaluation processes.

36   The College is developing a more integrated approach to the process of detailed strategic planning where it still regards the current level of engagement across the schools as variable. A more inclusive approach to decision-making and a greater understanding of external political contexts have resulted from inviting all heads of school to become members of the AB. Proposals for new developments are assessed for viability during the middle of the first semester of each academic year. According to the SED, ownership of the Strategic Plan by line managers has been increased by an annual two-day off-campus strategic planning event for senior staff. The plan is finalised during the summer months for submission to HEFCW in August.

37   The College's framework for managing quality and standards is effective and robust, with a clear expectation that the procedures are understood and owned by staff at all levels. The review team noted that one consequence of the small size of the College is that there are few staff at senior levels to chair meetings, leading to possible conflicts of interest, and it recommends that a further cohort of staff, for

example, at head of school level, be trained to chair panels and working groups.

The institution's intentions for the enhancement of quality and standards

38   There have been recent moves towards formalising the approaches to quality enhancement within the remit of the faculties, so replacing the informal approaches previously centred in the schools. A review of academic enhancement was undertaken across all schools during 2004-05. This led to a discussion at AB and to the subsequent restructuring of the format of faculty boards. Annual quality enhancement documents are prepared; those for 2004-05 and 2005-06 were largely listings of examples of good practice within the schools. The AQH sets out an analysis of quality enhancement and provides an agenda and list of priorities. Each year the Academic Registrar prepares a composite report based on the minutes of all boards of study and annual reviews, and identifies areas of good practice for consideration by QAC and AB.

39   The College has a Learning and Teaching Strategy (LTS) with three principal aims: enhancing the quality of provision; enhancing the attainment of students; providing an effective environment for learning and teaching characterised by sufficient and high quality accommodation, staffing and information resources. The strategy includes short and medium-term targets. Heads of faculty now have responsibility for updating the LTS; the intention is that this will secure greater ownership of the strategy by academic staff. The SMT regards full ownership of the LTS by the schools as 'a key mechanism for maintaining and enhancing the quality of provision'. The SED noted that the LTS needs to be more clearly linked with academic enhancement than at present, and that further work is required to secure the desired level of ownership. Academic staff who met the review team confirmed that they had been involved in developing both the Strategic Plan and the LTS, and this involvement, they argued, had enhanced the quality of provision and spread good practice.

40   A second aspect of greater staff appreciation of quality issues is that staff involvement extends beyond their membership of specific programme teams. The SED affirmed that opportunities had been developed 'for staff to benchmark their activities against other Schools across the College', for example as members of preliminary validation panels and school audit teams. Several examples of cross-school and cross-faculty sharing of good practice were brought to the attention of the review team.

41   The SED pointed to the development of technologies supporting student learning and to the commitment shown in faculty development plans for the use of e-learning as an additional mode of learning delivery. A shared virtual learning environment (VLE) platform has been developed with UoWS. In concert with this development has been a related, extensive staff development programme. Each year support teams develop action plans for enhancement of their role in quality and standards, and in the student experience generally. The support action plans are discussed at the annual staff development week.

42   The review team noted that whilst the College has good staff development practices, these were not linked in the SED to quality enhancement, although the linkage is listed as one of the priorities in the AQH. However, the team noted that some connection was made between staff development and enhancement in the comments made by staff to the team.

43   The College has shown in its SED, in documents provided to the review team and in discussions with the team that it is seeking to enhance the quality of the student experience. Its quality assurance processes include evaluation of the effectiveness of activities and developing action plans to improve upon them. The team formed the view that the SED accurately described current processes and that it discussed frankly those aspects where further improvements were possible.

Internal approval, monitoring and review processes

Programme approval

44   The UoW was responsible for scheme approval of new programmes until September 2005. The College then assumed devolved responsibility for the validation of new programmes in accordance with its own procedures as set out in the AQH.

45   Outline proposals for new programmes are originated by schools and presented to the faculty board. The programme's rationale must consider resource implications and identify with the College's strategic plan. Likely student demand, vocational links, any ethical concerns and employment objectives must also be evidenced. Approval by the faculty board then allows the proposal to proceed to SMT where the proposal is subject to further scrutiny that revisits the rationale for the proposed programme in relation to the College's strategic plan and resources.

46   Approval by SMT is an additional stage that was trialled during the academic year 2005-06. The intention in creating a new stage was to enable SMT to consider resource issues before the programme proposal reached the AB. This stage is now formally included in the procedures for the academic year 2006-07. SMT is an appropriate forum for discussions regarding the strategic intent and resource implications for new proposals, but its remit in this regard duplicates a section of the AB approval process. In the new extended process, upon approval by SMT the proposal is given its final scrutiny at AB. The formal role of SMT in the revised process was not well recognised by all academic staff met by the team, but staff did recognise that AB gives final approval for proposals to proceed.

47   The QAU plans the validation process and agrees a timetable with the school concerned in accordance with AQH procedures. The QAU also assists in providing advice and guidance to proposal teams during the validation process. The QAC receives for approval from the school the nominations for external representative on the validation panels, and the school prepares the validation document using an agreed format. This document is submitted to the QAU which examines it to ensure compliance with the AQH. The school modifies the document in response to issues raised by the QAU. The document is then thoroughly scrutinised at a preliminary validation panel. If the proposal is given permission to proceed, the school modifies the document in accordance with the preliminary panel's recommendations, and it is then submitted to a final validation panel. The recommendations of this panel must be addressed by the school before it submits the revised proposal to the QAU, which scrutinises the document on behalf of the QAC. The outcome of this scrutiny is then reported to the AB which takes the decision of whether to grant the programme final approval.

48   The SED stated that the preliminary validation event is very effective in providing staff development concerning the validation process. The review team noted that although the Academic Registrar or a nominee could chair the preliminary validation panel, in practice it was unusual for the Academic Registrar not to undertake this role. The SED recognised that the final two stages of programme approval can result in contradictory advice being given to a course team. However, the SED also expressed the view that course teams can benefit from preliminary validation events that may draw attention to weaknesses within proposals, and that this opportunity outweighs any disadvantages. The final validation panel also benefits from receipt of the preliminary validation event report.

49   The programme validation, monitoring and review procedures described in the AQH state that programmes of study must be designed to comply with the requirements of the relevant subject benchmark statements, the *Code of practice* and the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW). Individual procedures within the AQH are mapped against relevant sections of the *Code of practice*, in particular, *Section 7: Programme*

design, approval, monitoring and review. The College is also committed to the use of programme specifications, the principles of which are built into new programme proposal templates. This need was originally identified in 2002 when a requirement to produce adequate programme specifications for joint honours programmes was established by the College subsequent to the QAA subject review of archaeology. In response to this review the College determined that programme specifications were required for all programmes of study, including joint honours programmes. The requirement to include programme specifications as part of quinquennial review submissions then followed. The SED stated that preparing programme specifications can still be difficult where programmes cross subject boundaries. The review team learned that the use of single boards of study for joint programmes, student handbook templates, and individual programme coordinators for joint honours programmes had helped to create a framework within which joint honours programmes successfully gained a separate identity.

50   The College has procedures for approving minor amendments to a programme while the programme is operating. Through the use of forms available in the AQH appendices, some amendments to programmes and some new modules can be sanctioned by the faculty board in accordance with AQH procedures. Any existing programme subject to proposals for change amounting to less than 25 per cent change in module profile may be approved by the faculty board. A faculty board may also recommend for approval by AB changes of programme title and the withdrawal of programmes. The QAU is available for advice and guidance on process, and any new module validations or programme revisions are reported to the QAC. While the review team viewed this as an efficient method by which to expedite minor programme amendments, it was evident from meetings with staff and from documents that consultation with the external examiner or other external subject specialists was not a prerequisite of the process. On the theme of the process by which new modules may be

introduced into a programme of study, staff stated that, at level five and above, external examiners were presented with all module assessments and assessment criteria for approval prior to the inception of the module and the setting of work. Staff argued that this gave external examiners the opportunity to make any representations that they might have about new or amended module content.

51   The review team concluded that, in general, the programme approval procedures were systematic in design and thorough in operation, and that they met the general expectations of the *Code of practice*. However, the team recommends that, in order that full benefit may be gained from the expertise provided by external advice, the College reviews procedures for the input of external subject expertise into the approval at faculty level of new modules.

Annual monitoring

52   All programmes at the College are subject to annual review. Prior to 2003 each programme of study had an individual annual review. Annual reviews were then amalgamated where programmes of study shared a large proportion of modules, and the SED stated that 'This resulted in a far more efficient engagement that further enhanced the quality of the monitoring and reporting procedures'. Consequently, programmes of study with a high degree of modular commonality have been considered as a single submission, and joint honours programmes are each considered at one annual review event, led by a single programme coordinator. The major event for annual review is a board of study meeting chaired by the head of faculty. The minutes of these events are discussed at faculty board and a composite report is prepared by the Academic Registrar for the QAC and AB. Annual review templates provide programme teams with a framework for them to document their programmes in preparation for the board of study meeting. The framework requires colleagues reviewing programmes to compare the programme with developments in the discipline, subject benchmark statements,

The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) and professional body requirements.

53   The review team learned in meetings that the composite report on annual review that is presented to QAC and AB is returned to the spring quality assurance and resources faculty board meetings. The team was able to verify this feedback process, and noted that action points raised in response to annual review were discussed at a spring faculty board meeting which then sought to ensure that these action points were being addressed at school and programme level.

54   The review team concluded that the annual review process was applied consistently and effective. There was clear evidence of the checking of implementation of action points, and that the composite report produced by the process allowed the QAC to gain effective institutional oversight.

Periodic review

55   Periodic review of programmes is by quinquennial review or revalidation, the selection of method being dependent upon criteria described in the AQH. The quinquennial review schedule is detailed in an AQH appendix. Quinquennial review now includes preparation of a programme specification and a curriculum map to ensure that all programme documentation fulfils the College's commitment to programme specifications.

56   The AQH presents three routes for revalidating programmes that have undergone changes. The review team noted that in this respect the College's procedures are complex. The route to be taken depends upon the percentage change introduced to a programme and whether a new combination of modules, a new award, or a differing mode of delivery is proposed. Quinquennial review is another periodic review route and is complementary to revalidation routes. The team learned during meetings that the validation system had 'developed through practice' into its current form, in part from the UoW method of periodic review that was in use prior to September

2005, and which the College had considered to be fit for purpose. The SED stated that 'Deciding whether proposed changes require the full re-validation of a programme is not always straightforward. Despite the guidelines, circumstances sometimes arise that are not covered by the guidelines. As a general rule, in cases of doubt, a full validation panel is convened'. The team heard this view reiterated during meetings with staff, amongst whom there was an understanding that the QAU offers clear guidance if there is any confusion concerning choice of validation route.

57   Schools are required to produce an updated validation document for quinquennial review together with a quinquennial review report. The quinquennial review report should include a critical evaluation of the programme's operation in the period since validation or since the most recent periodic review. The quinquennial review focuses on changes that have taken place since the last major report, and on planned future developments. Supporting documents include annual review reports, the last three years of external examiner reports, and programme statistical data. Externality is a feature of the process; the panel includes three external representatives and three elected student representatives. The review team considered that inclusion of students in review processes reflects the inclusive and cooperative nature of the College context. Approval for a programme of study to be revalidated for a further five years is given by AB following a successful review.

58   The review team found that academic staff were conversant with the College's validation and review processes and that these processes, although complex in their totality, worked well given that advice was available from the QAU as required. The AQH prescribes the composition of panels for quinquennial review and for revalidation routes. The team learned that, whilst a nominee of the Academic Registrar may chair preliminary validations, in some revalidation events and quinquennial reviews, in practice, the Academic Registrar normally undertakes the role. The team recommends that

the College broaden the group of staff chosen to chair quality assurance events.

59 The College's structure is such that in many instances the main business of a school is the management of a single programme or allied suite of programmes. A review of a school is thus in great measure a review of a programme or of a close combination of programmes. A process of internal school audit commenced in September 2004. The College used this pilot to create a revised and formalised structure for school audits and three more schools were audited in the academic year 2005-06. The process has been further refined and discussed at the QAC, and a schedule of school audits is now established by the AB in consultation with schools. Scheduling takes into account other external audits and reviews. School audits are now conducted as an event combined with quinquennial review, if this is felt appropriate. In such a case, two reports are generated as a consequence, although the recommendations in both may be similar.

60 Schools are required to present an SED by an agreed date, and a pre-audit meeting is then held to finalise arrangements. The audit normally takes two days, and is chaired by the Academic Registrar. Two external subject assessors and an EAA are present in addition to academic staff from both faculties of the College. Following the audit the chair leads preparation of the audit report, a draft of which is circulated to the school for comment. The final report is accompanied by an implementation plan generated by the school in accordance with a template. These documents are submitted to the AB which identifies key points and refers the report and plan to the faculty for action. The school must report annually to the QAC, which monitors progress at college level.

61 School audit has been incrementally refined to improve its effectiveness, and the SED stated that 'Schools are benefiting significantly from the audit process and are making important changes to School and Programme structures following audit'. In particular, the SED

noted that 'School Self Evaluation Documents have become less descriptive and increasingly reflective and evaluative'.

62 The review team noted that the College had worked to improve the effectiveness of its school audit process. Although less than half of the schools had undergone audit prior to the institutional review, a robust methodology had emerged that was focused on improving the management and enhancement of quality assurance procedures within schools. The team concluded that, overall, internal approval, monitoring and review processes generally work well to assure academic standards and the quality of programmes. The inclusion of students in internal review processes is a particular strength.

External participation in internal review processes

63 The College is currently awarding degrees validated by the UoW through the interim arrangement lasting four years in which EAAs appointed by the UoWS report to UoW on the quality assurance processes of the College. The EAAs attended some College committee meetings during 2005-06, and will continue attendance throughout the interim period. The review team learned that EAAs are active in the meetings that they attend, and that their contributions have been helpful to the College. The reports presented to the UoW by the EAAs have expressed satisfaction with the College's quality assurance processes.

64 The SED stated that 'The level of engagement with external representatives and with student representatives is considered to be a strength of the monitoring and review process', and further stated that 'The institution has clearly demonstrated the value of externality in its quality processes'. The SED described how the College has clear criteria for the selection and appointment of external advisers for programme approval. Schools nominate to QAC a minimum of two external representatives for final validation and quinquennial review panels. At least one of the

nominations should be for an advisor from a HEI or for a person able to provide relevant information and guidance on current developments in the discipline, and one nomination should be for a person from outside the higher education sector and likely to be involved in the employment of graduates from the programme. The AQH procedures allow for certain circumstances when the EAA may substitute for the higher education sector external member. Until recently, a consolidated list of nominations for external members of a panel has not always been presented at a single meeting of QAC. The SED explained that for the academic year 2006-07 the QAU would be retaining nomination details for simultaneous presentation of all nominations to the QAC. The review team found that QAC tracking of the progress of nominations was already generally effective and noted that the recent change to the procedure is designed to improve its effectiveness.

65   An external representative is also appointed for annual review board of study meetings. The review team saw this, in principle, as a strength of the process. However, evidence presented to the team demonstrated that external members were not always present for annual review meetings. The team also noted that the single external member of faculty board may, in some circumstances, represent the only external input in the consideration by faculty board of proposals for new or amended modules.

66   Outgoing study-abroad students to the USA may select modules to study at their partner institution through discussions with tutors at the College and at the institution to be visited. These modules are then considered for approval as part of the students' diet of study for the College's programmes by the relevant faculty board of the College. The review team found, that under such circumstances, the source of any external advice on or verification of the module was likely to come mostly or entirely from the external member of the faculty board present when the study abroad module was approved for use within a programme of study.

67   The review team concluded that, through such mechanisms as the EAAs and external advisers in validation, the College has assured an adequate degree of external participation in its internal review processes. However, the team also recommends that the College reviews procedures for the input of external subject expertise into the approval and monitoring of modules at faculty level.

Assessment practices and procedures

68   The SED expressed the view that 'the College is confident in the effectiveness of its quality assurance systems in relation to the assessment process'. The College's assessment regulations were first published as a single document Modular Degrees and their Assessment in 2000-01. In 2003-04 this document was used to form what is now part of the AQH. The General Assessment Policy, in existence since 1996-97, also became part of the AQH in 2002-03. In the AQH, the section 'Modular Degrees and their Assessment' makes extensive reference particularly to the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. Chapter 7 of the AQH, 'General Assessment Policy', likewise maps its content directly to sections of the *Code of practice*. The review team found that in this way the College's assessment policy and procedures are clearly expressed within a framework that reflects the Code of practice. Similarly, the College respects the content of *Guidelines for higher education institutions in Wales for effective practice in examining and assessing in a language other than the language of tuition,* published by QAA. Draft amendments to the AQH and to its assessment policy and procedures are reviewed annually by the QAC. The AB is then asked to consider and approve the revisions.

69   The SED explained how the usefulness of generic assessment criteria was reviewed in 2002 in the context of the large variety of assessment methods in use. The review team was informed that owing to the diversity of the programme portfolio, assessment criteria were more useful when set at school level. It is now a requirement that schools prepare assessment criteria for each assessed component of a

programme, and, at levels five and six, these must be approved by external examiners. The approved assessment criteria are often provided to students in a module booklet, and, although the team found that their form and content vary, these booklets were judged by the team to be effective.

70   The SED stated that, at school level, the demands of different assessment methods are reflected in different marking processes. These marking processes involve a combination of moderation, blind double-marking, second marking and marking teams. Each school is required to produce a marking policy that also identifies the precise marking mechanisms in use. The review team found evidence that these policies were in place but variable in detail. The SED further stated that the College intended to refine these marking processes and policies during the 2006-07 academic year. To establish a balanced volume of assessment in relation to credit value across schools the QAU provides guidelines against which to measure assessment requirements. These guidelines are drawn from programmes that have recently passed through validation, and reflect, therefore, the accumulated experience and thought of the programme team and external representative input. The QAU advises on assessment load, and may draw the programme team's attention to any assessment that is particularly higher or lower than the normal assessment load for a module of the same level and credit value.

71   The SED explained how the General Assessment Policy clearly identifies the grounds upon which extensions to assessment deadlines may be granted. The SED also noted a variation in these assessment deadlines for schools with vocational provision. The review team found evidence that, in order to monitor the degree of compliance with the College's policy, the QAU provided schools with an extenuating circumstances policy and pro forma for completion. In practice, most schools have published their own individual extenuating circumstances policy alongside the pro forma detailing the rules concerning late work submission and the extensions of deadlines.

The team noted that some schools had found it necessary to develop their own school extenuating circumstances policy because they had been faced by the difficulties of assessing some types of vocationally-based work. Students were satisfied with feedback received from assessment work, although, in the view of some students, material is not always returned by staff within the suggested maximum period.

72   The SWS raised a concern that guidance regarding plagiarism is not readily available to all students. The review team noted that the College's regulations and information to students regarding plagiarism indicated a college-wide recognition of the issues. The team found the College's plagiarism guidance and its institutional response to such issues to be competent. In addition, students who met the team did not express disquiet over the availability or quality of information published regarding plagiarism. However, the team did find some evidence of external examiners' concerns regarding instances of student plagiarism at programme level. The team found that the College's approach to plagiarism is sufficiently robust, but that variations in the application of this policy exist at programme level, and that the perceptions of students differ on the theme.

73   Students may study many modules through the medium of Welsh, if they wish. The SED stated that modules delivered in the medium of English may normally be assessed in the medium of Welsh at the request of the student, and the College is conscious of the *Guidelines for higher education institutions in Wales for effective practice in examining and assessing in a language other than the language of tuition*. One school has introduced bilingual module delivery whereby students may choose to receive individual lectures, study materials, and assessments in the medium of either Welsh or English. The SED expressed the view that this bilingual mode of delivery is 'an important development in terms of providing a flexible approach to meeting the varied needs of Welsh-speaking students'. This curricular development and the associated assessment

practices are in line with the College's mission statement and two of its core strategic values. The team noted that there is a willingness of the College to try new policies and approaches to assessment whilst recognising when action must be taken to address matters of concern. The team found that the College has generally robust procedures for assuring assessment, and that it displays good practice in meeting the needs of national bilingualism.

External examiners and their reports

74   External examiners are appointed for all programmes and the SED stated that their feedback 'is considered a crucial part of the process of monitoring and evaluating the quality of provision'. All aspects of external examining were devolved to the College from UoW in September 2005. The process and criteria for selection of external examiners mirror that formerly operated by UoW, except that AB takes responsibility for final approval of nominations. The QAU receives external examiners' reports and distributes copies to the faculties. These reports are first considered by the schools, which then offer responses to school-related themes. The external examiners' reports and the schools' responses subsequently form part of annual programme review.

75   The Academic Registrar receives a copy of all external examiners' reports and prepares a composite report for the QAC. The response of QAC is then presented along with the composite report to AB for approval and recommendations. The external examiners also receive a copy of this composite report and the minutes of the QAC at which the report was considered. The EAA receives a copy of the composite report and copies of all external examiners' reports. The SED stated that external examiners regularly report that standards are consistent with those at similar institutions and that schools respond 'positively and decisively' to the recommendations of external examiners. Where significant concerns have been raised externally, the review team found evidence of thorough and timely engagement with external examiners' comments at all levels within the

College. The team concluded that the feedback structures in place to respond to comments from externals are effective and well monitored.

76   The SED explained how the College has used the *Code of practice, Section 4: External examining* to produce a checklist of matters upon which external examiners are required to comment. This initiative was taken by the College in response to a lack of analytical feedback from some external examiners. The review team read a selection of external examiners' reports written for all programmes over the previous three years, and it was evident to the team that feedback has become more analytical.

77   The SED explained how prior to 2001 external examiners were seen by the College as another tier of markers. In 2002 the *Code of practice* was used to modify College practice, and external examiners were expected to act in the role of moderator rather than that of marker, except in special circumstances. The SED further stated that this change has allowed external examiners to 'play a much wider role in relation to the assessment process', and the review team found from its reading of external examiners' reports that moderation of student work rather than second-marking is now common practice for them. The SED also affirmed that feedback on marking from external examiners has generally suggested it to be a fair and consistent process; but the SED further pointed to how some external examiners have noted that it is 'sometimes difficult to tell which scripts have been double marked'. The SED identified that schools have different marking policies and that they are now required to publish their own marking policy. Initial publication of these policies was achieved in 2005 but the process is still under refinement for the academic year 2006-07.

78   The review team learned during meetings that the process of selection and appointment of external examiners originates within schools. Under guidance from the QAU, schools forward nominations and curricula vitae to their faculty board. If accepted by the faculty board, details

of a newly proposed external examiner are forwarded to the QAC. QAC then recommends to AB whether to accept the nomination. The team further learned that schools generally viewed the approvals of QAC and AB as routine formal endorsements of the recommendation from faculty board, although both QAC and AB may exercise their prerogative to reject a nomination.

79   The most difficult issue regarding new external examiners raised in the SED is the scarcity of candidates from outside UoW for selection to Welsh-medium programmes. In such cases the College has an exemption clause within its regulations allowing the nomination of an external examiner from within UoW. The AB has the final decision over such appointments. The College will also appoint more than one external examiner if necessary, for example to cover separately English and Welsh-medium provision for a given programme, or when both professional and academic external examiners are required. In the difficult context of the restricted pool of expertise available from outside UoW for Welsh-medium provision, the review team found the system of nomination to be effective. New external examiners are briefed by the programme coordinator on their task, and are given an induction by the Academic Registrar on their role and in the general regulations. The SED explained that it is usual for all assessments and assessment criteria at levels five and six, and for all assessments contributing to a final award to be approved by an external examiner. External examiners also attend assessment boards.

80   Outgoing study-abroad students take assessments of their host-institution modules while in the USA, and bring the assessed work and marks to the home programme of the College. In advance of the study abroad, the College validates modules, expressing them in UK terms (for example, where necessary, with the inclusion of learning objectives), and all students agree an individual learning contract that requires them to return their completed work for re-assessment at the College. The College established this system in response to

doubts about the validity of some host institution marking. In the revised system, the grade delivered abroad is converted into a UK-equivalent mark and, following school agreement and any necessary adjustment being made, the mark is presented at the College's programme assessment board.

81   The review team concluded that the external examiner system operated by the College is robust, and that it contributes properly to the maintenance of the standards of awards. The College has combined a rigorous system with the flexibility needed to overcome difficulties, in particular those associated with the relative unavailability of Welsh-speaking external examiners outside UoW. The team noted the endorsements by external examiners of the standards of programmes, and the willingness of the College to consider criticisms and recommendations by external examiners.

External reference points

82   The SED explained that the College has adopted all aspects of the CQFW for its provision. The CQFW is used as a basis for defining the level and volume of credit associated with every module, with learning outcomes being set and assessed at the appropriate level within each module. In 2004-05, the College changed the labels that it used for the different levels to those defined within the FHEQ.

83   The SED stated that the College 'recognises the importance of the principles set out within the precepts of the QAA Code of Practice, and the value of general compliance with the Code'. The SED described how in 2001-02, the AB had set up working groups to examine the extent to which the AQH met the expectations of the Code of practice and to make recommendations to the AB through QAC on any changes necessary. At that time, one member of academic staff was also seconded to the QAU for a year to assist with the process of modifying the AQH with reference to the Code. The review team learned that working groups have reconvened following recent revisions to sections of the Code, and

that the AQH has been modified accordingly. Each chapter of the AQH references the relevant section of the *Code*. During the College's annual staff development week in September, staff are briefed on revisions to the AQH. More recently, the College has also offered staff development sessions on the *Code*. While awareness of the Academic Infrastructure overall varied among staff, staff who met the team were consistently able to describe the linkage between the AQH and the *Code*. From the evidence available the team concluded that the College's engagement with the *Code* is thorough and consistent, with the AQH providing a framework for the mapping of the *Code* to the College's academic regulations, policies and procedures.

84   The AQH sets out the requirements for the validation of programmes of study which it holds, 'will be designed to comply with the requirements of the relevant Benchmarking Statements, the Higher Education in Wales Credit Specification and Guidance, the QAA Code of Practice, National Assembly Circulars, currently 35/92 (relating to Secondary Education) and 13/98 (relating both to Primary and Secondary Education), and any relevant professional body requirements'. Programme documentation presented at validation must include a programme specification, a curriculum map, learning outcomes and assessment criteria. The AQH explains that these items, 'together with indicative content, will provide interested parties such as prospective students, external examiners and collaborative colleagues both nationally and internationally with a firm indication of what its graduates, diploma and certificate holders can do at the end of their programmes of study'. Programme specifications are also considered as part of the documentation for quinquennial reviews and school audits. The review team saw evidence that programme specifications appear in programme of study handbooks and on the College's web site, and that they cover programme information such as aims, subject knowledge and understanding, practical skills and generic and graduate skills. The College is working towards making the programme

specification part of the student's final transcript in line with the objectives of the Diploma Supplement.

85   The SED acknowledged that the process of preparing a programme specification may be challenging where programmes cross subject boundaries. The review team noted that the report of the 2002-03 QAA subject review of archaeology recommended that, 'programme specifications, with distinctive aims articulated, should be developed for the joint honours programmes'. The team learned that there remains additional work to be done in the case of programme specifications for joint honours programmes spanning two disciplines, although the number of these programmes offered by the College is now small. Notwithstanding this, the team concluded that, overall, the College is making effective and appropriate use of programme specifications, particularly in the design and validation of programmes of study.

86   The review team saw evidence that the College expects that documentation presented at validation should demonstrate a link to the relevant subject benchmark statement(s). Programmes leading to Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) are benchmarked against the requirements set out in the relevant circular, and in other subjects programmes are mapped against relevant benchmark statements. The team learned that, in subject areas where there are no subject benchmarks, schools select alternative materials to provide subject benchmarks; for example, the BA Early Years Education programme refers to the subject benchmark for Education Studies. In the case of programmes spanning several disciplines such as the single honours Outdoor Education programme, several benchmark statements are referenced. The team concluded that subject benchmark statements are, in general, being used effectively by programme teams as external reference points.

87   The review team concluded that the College is alive to the opportunities and challenges afforded by external reference points. The College makes good use of the UK

Academic Infrastructure and of the reference points developed especially for Wales.

Programme-level review and accreditation by external agencies

88   In the case of the QAA subject review report on archaeology, 2002, the College responded to general and subject-specific comments of the review in a timely manner by producing a response with action plan prior to publication of the review report. The review team was able to confirm that effective action has been taken by the College to improve the programme specifications for joint honours programmes.

89   The College is an accredited provider of ITT programmes and is inspected by Estyn every five years under the terms of the Teaching and Higher Education Act 1998. The College's last Estyn inspection was conducted through the academic year 2000-01. At the time of inspection, the College offered four programmes in ITT at undergraduate and postgraduate level: one English-medium and one Welsh-medium BA (Ed) with QTS intended for primary school teachers, and two postgraduate Certificate in Education programmes. The two postgraduate programmes each had two language routes. The postgraduate ITT programme profile was PGCE Primary (Welsh-medium and English-medium), and PGCE Secondary (Religious Education) (Welsh-medium and English-medium). Overall grades of satisfactory for primary programmes and good for PGCE programmes were awarded.

90   The review team found that the College's response to this report was well managed, timely and thorough. In its SED, the College expressed confidence that the outcomes of the next Estyn inspection due in the academic year 2007-08 will demonstrate that it has further enhanced the performance and standing of its ITT course provision. The detailed planning contained in the formal response to the 2001 Estyn report enabled the team to conclude that the engagement had strengthened the

College's assurance of quality and standards.

91   The review team noted that the College has engaged fully and self critically with external programme-level review. The College has used external scrutiny to enhance the quality of its programmes and the standards of its awards.

Student representation at operational and institutional level

92   The AQH outlines the College's commitment to giving students opportunities to contribute to quality assurance processes through their representation on committees responsible for the design, validation and monitoring of programmes of study and by having representation on committees dealing with the annual review of programmes. At institutional level, students are represented through the SU President or the President's nominee on key College committees including College Council, Academic Board, QAC, Student Services Committee, Equality and Diversity Committee, the Disciplinary Committee, the Financial Contingency Fund (hardship) Committee and faculty boards. Programme of study representatives are elected for each year group and, where relevant, for part-time students. They are members of the relevant board of study, annual review and quinquennial review panels, and take part in school audits. The election of student representatives takes place at the start of the academic year, when elections are arranged at school level, normally supported by a representative from the SU.

93   The SED explained that student representatives are expected to meet their student cohort regularly and to play a full role at meetings, and are also encouraged to meet heads of school informally. Student representatives have been asked from 2005-06 to note the main matters which they wish to discuss with their head of school prior to each board of study meeting, with these matters then being formally placed on the meeting agenda, and also to share issues with the SU

President prior to the meeting. Minutes of meetings read by the review team reflected these procedures.

94   Some schools have introduced staff-student committees, although many of the students who met the review team seemed unaware of these arrangements. In meetings with staff, the team heard that, having recognised the benefit of these committees, the College was encouraging all schools to create staff-student committees. The team also learned in meetings with students that student representatives liaise with the SU, the Students' Union Council providing one such mechanism for this liaison to take place.

95   Under new arrangements the SU takes responsibility for organising training for student representatives and provides a student representative handbook. The SED stated that during the academic year 2005-06 concern had been expressed by some student representatives that they had not received adequate training, and that to rectify this heads of faculty had been working with the SU President to improve training. This issue was also raised in the College's report on annual reviews 2005-06; the minutes of QAC demonstrated that the issue is being addressed. Student representatives who met the team expressed general satisfaction with the training that they had received. The team was given a copy of the Programme of Study Representative Handbook 2005-06, produced by the SU, which, in the team's view, was clear and helpful.

96   The SED expressed the view that the engagement of the SU President on central committees and of the programme of study representatives at school level is, 'an effective and invaluable part of the monitoring and evaluation process', and that, 'the quality of the engagement of the student representatives at Boards of Study/Annual Reviews, Quinquennial Reviews and School Audits is a strength'. This view was confirmed in the 2005-06 report of the EAAs. The College has also taken steps to strengthen its relationship with the SU and commented in the SED that, 'it has developed a strong partnership, which it will continue to maintain and develop'.

97   The SWS commented that it is of the utmost importance to the SU that students are involved in all levels of quality and management within the institution. In the view of the SWS the programme of study representative system is working well, being a 'great example' of the benefits of staff-student collaboration in decision-making. Students who met the review team confirmed their satisfaction with the arrangements for student representation although some part-time students commented that their representatives were unable to attend board of study meetings because of meeting timings. Students were able to give the team examples of remedial action taken as a result of issues raised by students.

98   The review team had access to a comprehensive set of agendas and papers for meetings and committees. These confirmed that elected student and SU representatives attend and participate in meetings as stated in the SED, thereby making a contribution to the assurance of quality and standards within the College.

99   From the evidence presented the review team concluded that the College has a substantial structure for student representation, and that the view expressed both in the SED and the SWS that student representation is valued within the College is accurate. The team also saw evidence that the College was taking responsible action on concerns raised by students. The team formed the view that the arrangements for student representation and, in particular, student input into the programme review process within the College are a strength.

Procedures for student complaints and appeals

100 The College's regulations for complaints and appeals are set out in of the AQH, also available on the College's intranet. Students are directed to this information via the publication, College Regulations - Student guide, which is issued to all students at registration. The College defines an academic appeal as a 'request for the review of a decision of an Examination Board, a Faculty Board or other relevant college procedures that have implications for a student's progression'. The AQH sets out the scope of the

appeals procedures and indicates that appeals which question the academic or professional judgement of examiners are not admissible. At the award level, the procedures allow for the verification of the accuracy of a student's award, followed, if required, by a formal appeal hearing. Complaints are defined by the College as 'any specific concern about the provision of a Programme of study or related academic service'.

101 Until August 2006 responsibility for dealing with appeals from students at the award stage rested with UoW, with appeals from students at other stages of their programme being handled internally by the College. Under new arrangements, the responsibility for dealing with appeals by students at any stage of their award has been devolved to the College, with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator providing final arbitration where necessary. During the academic year 2004-05 the College reviewed its procedures for dealing with complaints and appeals in order to simplify the procedures, to introduce a stage within the formal process so that it paralleled the informal process already in use, to provide externality for those cases that proceed to a formal hearing, and to provide students with clear information about the role of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. To accommodate the additional responsibility for hearing final stage appeals, the College further refined its procedures during 2005-06.

102 The SED affirmed that the College attempts to resolve student complaints and appeals close to the point of origin, through discussion between staff and students, initially without invoking the formal procedures that involve officers of the SU. The SED explained that, as a result of informal point-of-origin resolution, relatively few complaints and appeals proceed to the College's formal procedures. Complaints and appeals that do proceed to the formal stage are managed by the Academic Registrar and the Senior Administrative Officer within the QAU. Complaints and appeals are considered by a Complaints Board and an Academic Appeals

Board respectively, both chaired by the Principal or Principal's nominee. Students may bring to hearings a representative of their choice and are informed in writing of the outcome of the appeal with full details of the reasons for the decision made.

103 Following agreement at AB in June 2005, an annual summary of complaints and appeals is prepared by the Academic Registrar and presented to the AB. Recent discussion at AB demonstrates the College's concerns regarding the work generated and the cost of processing an increasing number of appeals, particularly as many are not upheld. The discussion has broached the possible need to clarify for students the differences between the complaints and appeals procedures. The review team noted that AB had requested a working group to be set up by QAC to consider these issues and to review the first year of operation of the fully devolved procedures.

104 Although the College has previously dealt with appeals up to the award stage of its programmes of study, at the time of the institutional review the College had yet to experience the new, fully devolved procedures. In its SED the College stated that, 'it considers its long established informal system for resolution of complaints and appeals to be a strength upon which it would wish to build'.

105 Students who met the review team confirmed that they were aware of the procedures for both complaints and appeals. The students also confirmed that, in the case of complaints, they felt able to raise and resolve issues informally through discussions with staff or through student representatives and the SU. The team concluded that arrangements for complaints and appeals were well structured, and competently managed, and that the College was seeking to refine the processes for both.

Feedback from students, graduates and employers

106 The College sets out its commitment to collecting and responding to student feedback in the Student Survival Guide, and has

mechanisms for gathering feedback from its current students. Feedback on individual modules is collected through module questionnaires, which are analysed by module leaders and considered at school level, forming part of the evidence base considered at the board of study and annual review. Feedback is also gathered centrally by means of a programme questionnaire for students on exit from the College. A summary of the views of students in these questionnaires is compiled into a report by the Academic Registrar which is then considered by each of the support units during the staff development week in September. In turn, support staff identify their response to issues as part of their action plan for the new academic year. A similar process is undertaken with the schools, which prepare responses to the report that are subsequently considered at QAC. Final-year students are also surveyed in the National Student Survey (NSS), the results of which are considered at AB.

107 First-year students are surveyed at the end of the first semester primarily to establish whether the information given about the College prior to the start of their programme was accurate. Student feedback is also gathered by the College's support services either by means of a separate questionnaire, as in the case of the learning resources centre (LRC), or as part of a composite questionnaire covering a number of components of a service. In meetings with the review team students confirmed their awareness of the formal student feedback processes, and cited examples of action being taken as a result of their feedback. They also consistently stressed the accessibility of staff and staff willingness to take action to ensure the speedy resolution of issues.

108 The SED acknowledged that the process for gaining feedback from former students is less well developed and varies across the schools. It also commented that, while schools are able to gather information about the progress of graduates after the initial first destination survey, further development work is required to enhance the College's alumni arrangements. The review team heard in

meetings with staff that some subject areas have their own informal alumni networks, and that the International Office has compiled a database of international students who have studied at the College.

109 The SED confirmed that there is no single method within the College for collecting feedback from employers but affirmed that the College has a good range of employer links across its academic portfolio, with these links contributing to the quality of its provision. The review team was provided with evidence of the ways in which the schools and College engage with employers and other external stakeholders. For example, employers may be represented in annual reviews, and as members of validation and quinquennial review panels. In the case of ITT, employers are involved in the student interview and selection process. They are also engaged with the College as part of the work placement provision, including teaching practice, which is available to students across a range of programmes. Visiting lecturers, including some practising professionals, are used in programmes.

110 Student feedback with regard to any overburdening in assessment is listened to and swiftly dealt with. The SWS applauded, in particular, the way in which the College deals with these issues. The SWS expressed general satisfaction with the mechanisms available to students to give feedback, but highlighted two areas for attention. First, the SWS cited the need for a specific forum for final-year students where they can state their needs and concerns. Secondly, the SWS suggested an initiative whereby graduates might liaise with the College to give feedback about their life after graduation. The College shares this view that further work is needed to develop its alumni networks.

111 From the evidence presented the review team concluded that the College has an efficient framework for the collection and evaluation of student feedback that forms the basis for planning. The responsiveness of all types of staff across the College in the resolution of issues was consistently praised by

students. The team noted the College's intentions to develop further links with its former students. The College recognises the different opportunities for engagement with employers and other external stakeholders, and in the view of the team demonstrates effective engagement with these groups, which, in turn, enhance the student learning experience.

Student admissions and the use made of progression and completion statistics

112 The SED outlined the College's requirement for programme statistics to be considered at the annual review of each programme of study. The data are extracted from the Management Information System (MIS) by the QAU, and include figures on entry profiles and student progression. In meetings with staff the review team learned that schools could request additional data that may be of interest to them in the management of their programmes. The SED stated that the consideration of data at the annual review meetings has been improved by the introduction from 2004-05 of a supplementary report summarising the main features of the data, resulting in better awareness and informed discussion. The team saw examples of individual school reports which, in its view, provided a helpful focus for the discussion of data at annual review meetings. The team also saw evidence in annual review reports and minutes that discussion of the data forms a key element of the review of the programme of study and of subsequent action planning.

113 Outcomes of data analysis include preparation of summaries showing the number and percentage of students awarded marks for each module within each degree classification category, together with the mean and standard deviation of the marks awarded. In 2004-05, the College refined the process through the production of individual reports for each school, which, in turn, are required to provide a response. From 2005-06, in order to facilitate a more speedy completion of the process, these reports have been presented to schools during

the College's staff development week in September, together with a series of questions designed to provide a framework for the schools' responses. The data and the school responses are discussed at QAC, including recommendations for action in emerging from discussion of the data. The SED stated that until 2005-06 the report on the presentation of module marks had been confined to those for students who had completed the module and the assessment. The presentation had excluded students who had not completed the module, and there was no analysis of numbers failing to complete a module. The review team learned that following recommendations made by the EAAs this lack had now been addressed, and that the data presented from 2006-07 differentiate between students who have failed and those who have withdrawn from modules.

114 The general entry requirements for each qualification offered by the College are set out in the AQH and in the College's Admission Policy, which the team found to be fit for purpose and aligned with the intentions of the *Code of practice*. The operation of admission procedures is reviewed annually by QAC; recruitment and admissions are discussed in annual reviews, quinquennial reviews and school audits. The SED stated that a high percentage of the College's students come from Wales and that the proportion of students from communities under-represented in higher education is high. The College has responded energetically to its agenda for widening participation by, for example, developing the 'flexible route' mode of attendance, with delivery of the programme taking place in the evenings and on weekends. The use of the VLE is one of the strategies developed to support these students.

115 Annually, results from surveys such as the First Destination Survey and the NSS, as well as data concerning complaints and appeals, are also considered through QAC and Academic Board. The College makes use of comparative material in offering services; for example, benchmarking data are also used by some support services such as the Estates Department.

116 The SED stated that significant progress had been made in recent years in the use of statistical data to improve the quality and consistency of the College's provision. This had been achieved partly by increasing staff awareness and ownership of the data. The review team also heard in meetings that the College has presented a reconfiguration bid with UoWS with the intention of enhancing the current MIS. The team heard evidence to support the claim of staff ownership and awareness of data. The team was also made aware from the SED, other written evidence, and meetings, that the College had used statistical information strategically to reposition itself over the past six years. Overall, the team concluded that the College is making appropriate use of statistical information in the monitoring of quality and standards and in the development of policy.

Assurance of the quality of teaching staff: appointment, appraisal and reward

117 The SED stated that the College's Human Resources (HR) strategy provides a framework for the management of HR across the College, and is designed to underpin the College's strategic plan, articulating the College's approach to recruiting, inducting, developing, rewarding and supporting its staff. The HR strategy 2007-08 covers themes that include recruitment, selection and retention, remedying poor performance, communications, rewarding excellence, bilingualism, induction, probation and mentoring, diversity and equality, work-life balance and appraisal. The College's HR Department provides practical guidance and advice on HR best practice and employment legislation. An HR Committee of the governing body was established during the academic year 2001-02 and is chaired by the President of the College, who chairs the governing body. This Committee meets each semester and receives reports from the HR Director.

118 The SED stated that the College has developed policies to standardise appointment and induction procedures, and to express appointment criteria more clearly. The College has also refined its arrangements for the appointment of fractional and part-time staff in order to secure more consistency in processes. The College's recruitment and selection policy and code of practice aim to maintain and promote professional standards and best practice in the recruitment and selection of employees. Staff involved in the recruitment and selection of staff are expected to take part in the College's staff development programme covering this area of activity.

119 The College's induction for new staff is a three-part process: HR induction, corporate induction and local departmental induction. The College provides staff handbooks, one each for academic staff and support staff, covering a range of information, policies and procedures. Information for staff is also posted on the College's intranet. The College has a mentoring policy to support new members of staff, including part-time and fixed-term appointments, ensuring that the new member of staff is paired with a more experienced member of staff (the mentor). Full and part-time staff who met the review team praised the processes for staff induction and subsequent support, including the mentoring process.

120 The College was commended on its appraisal system in the HEQC audit in 1997, and the same system remained in operation until the academic year 2002-03. During those years there was no mechanism for linking appraisal to staff development, and the system was for academic staff only. The review team learned that during 2003-04 the College introduced a revised appraisal process for all staff; this links appraisal to staff development and to strategic planning. All staff are required to undertake an appraisal training programme. Staff who met the team consistently confirmed that the appraisal system works for all staff and is clearly linked to the institutional strategic plan, the objectives of which form the basis for agreed individual objectives. The staff development requirements identified during the appraisal process are collated by the HR Department, and are presented to the Staff Development Committee, which reports to AB.

121 The College is currently revising its reward mechanisms as part of the implementation of the Higher Education Role Analysis framework. This has involved reviewing and evaluating the role profiles of all academic and support staff. One objective is to establish criteria for acceptable performance in teaching, research and income generation by academic staff. The review team learned that the new reward mechanisms will be implemented by August 2007.

122 Previously, promotions such as to professorial status were possible only through the approval of UoW. The HR strategy identifies the requirement for a readership structure to reward excellence in learning and teaching. Further, the AB has recently agreed a system for awarding sabbatical periods for academic staff in order to encourage a higher level of staff research. The Staff Development Committee considers applications for sabbaticals, and two such sabbaticals were awarded for 2006-07.

123 In the SED, the College affirmed that its procedures for the selection, appointment and induction of staff have improved significantly in recent years. It also stated that over the previous two years, a concerted effort had been made to clarify and strengthen the links between strategic planning, appraisal and staff development. From the evidence presented the review team concluded that the College's HR strategy was well articulated with its strategic plan. The evidence also supports the conclusions in the SED that the links between planning, appraisal and staff development have been strengthened in recent years, and improvements made in the selection, appointment and induction of staff.

Assurance of the quality of teaching staff through staff support and development

124 The SED stated that 'considerable efforts' have been made in recent years to develop and improve systems in order to ensure that adequate staff development and training opportunities are available for all staff. Initiatives taken include the identification of a weekly three-hour period for staff development, training and planning, when no student lectures are scheduled. The SED also acknowledged that prior to 2004-05 support units did not have parity with academic schools in opportunities for staff development.

125 In January 2006 the College was awarded the status of Investors in People. The Staff Development Committee, a standing committee of AB set up in 2005-06, is chaired by the Academic Registrar, and is responsible for developing and coordinating the College's staff development plan. The College's HR Strategy for 2007-08 includes action plans for such themes as staff development, management development, enhancing bilingualism, and promoting equality and diversity.

126 The main responsibility for identifying academic staff development needs is held by the schools, which are expected to include funding for staff development in their budgets having recorded needs through mechanisms such as appraisal. Heads of school have responsibility for allocation of the funding. Staff seeking financial support in addition to the support provided through their school or unit can apply to the Staff Development Committee. The review team was given evidence of the opportunities supported by that route; these vary from staff registered for academic and professional qualifications to conference attendance and preparation for field trips. Staff are also encouraged to participate in the staff development and training opportunities offered at other HEIs, in particular, UoWS, and Swansea Institute of Higher Education. Staff development to meet institutional priorities, (such as appraisal, equality and diversity, recruitment and selection), as well as in areas such as Welsh for adults and information technology (IT) training, is identified centrally by the College. In the team's view staff development opportunities are diverse, and participation in them covers a good proportion of staff. Full and part-time academic staff, in particular, who met the team were enthusiastic about the range of staff development opportunities available to them, and were able to link staff development to the sharing of good practice and to quality enhancement.

127 The College organises an annual staff development week, held each September, which all staff are expected to attend. The review team was provided with the agenda and other papers for the events held in September 2005 and 2006, and learned that the week contains both compulsory sessions for all staff as well as sessions tailored to specific needs. The College uses the week to update staff on issues of relevance to the forthcoming academic year, to bring staff together for strategic and action planning, and to organise generic staff development sessions. Staff who met the team welcomed the opportunity that the week provides for staff to focus on common issues and share good practice.

128 In 2004-05, the College validated a Postgraduate Certificate, a Postgraduate Diploma and an MA in Learning and Teaching, which all new academic staff without HE experience are expected to undertake. These staff are accompanied by staff from support units. The College expects that this programme will formally gain Higher Education Academy (HEA) accreditation. In an associated development, sessions have been organised to support staff in their individual applications for HEA membership. The review team heard that there had been significant progress on this, in particular within the Faculty of Education and Training.

129 The review team learned that there is no one method of peer observation operating within the College. Initial developments had taken place in the Faculty of Education and Training, building upon conventional practice. Following discussion at AB in January 2005, AB resolved that peer observation should be extended across both faculties during the academic year 2004-05. The AB noted that it was appropriate to allow schools to have their own peer observation models, which would be approved at faculty board with an annual report going from faculty board to QAC. The team learned that most peer observation within the College is conducted in the Faculty of Education and Training. The College reiterated to the team the importance of schools

developing their own policies on peer observation rather than having a single method imposed on them. Notwithstanding the merits of school-based policies, the team formed the view that the College might wish to consider a speedy resolution to the AB requirement for both faculties to develop and implement peer observation, and also to consider the continued development of effective methods of peer review for all academic staff.

130 Overall, the evidence available to the review team supported the view expressed in the SED that successful efforts have been made to ensure that there are good staff-development opportunities open to all staff in the College. The team formed the view that the staff development opportunities, including the staff development week, are a feature of good practice.

Assurance of the quality of teaching delivered through distributed and distance methods

131 The College has positioned itself as a community HEI addressing the major regional educational needs of west Wales, and also meeting key education policy areas identified by WAG. At the time of the institutional review the College was developing regional collaboration with other HEIs in south west Wales with the intention of participating in a 'virtual university' for this region. The College already has strong quality assurance links with another of the regional contributors, UoWS, within the current UoW interim arrangements. The College affirmed that its VLE system is one of the developments resulting from engagement with the devolved UoW quality assurance arrangements and its relationship with UoWS. Staff comments to the review team indicated that they had embraced the construction of the VLE with enthusiasm. The SED indicated that there had been extensive staff development for the use of the VLE, and that the College had invested with UoWS in development of a shared system. Support for the development was obtained from the Knowledge Exploitation Fund Strategy for

Innovation and Third Mission. The College's development of the VLE started in the 2003-04 academic year, and progress in both Welsh and English mediums has been rapid, for example, in the e-learning option within Geiriau Bach which has enjoyed a £500,000 grant from WAG. The Geiriau Bach project was designed for Early Years workers across Wales who do not speak Welsh or who lack confidence in using Welsh. At the time of the review the College was working energetically on the project in mid and west Wales. The College has also collaborated with Glamorgan College and the UoWB, in order to extend the scheme to groups in south and north Wales. The project has been delivered in a flexible manner. Paper and electronic materials developed to support the learning have been well-received by students and tutors. The project has contained an element of self-evaluation.

132 The College sees its many developments in VLE and other electronic media as an important aspect of academic enhancement. Faculty strategic plans show a commitment to the development of e-learning more generally as an additional mode of learning delivery. An 'e-team' has been set up to support staff in the development of e-learning within the curriculum. The College has an Information Services and Resources Committee and a Web Development Committee. The latter undertakes the monitoring of the VLE and its use as an effective learning and teaching resource. The Web Development Committee has taken account of the section of the *Code of practice* devoted to distributed and distance-learning. The College has operated a Working Group on the quality assurance of distance learning, and QAC has discussed various aspects of e-learning and the submission of electronic assignments. The AB ensures the training, monitoring and mentoring of distance-learning tutors. With regard to the lifelong learning activities across the College, three types of learners (part-time, distance learning and community students) are clearly defined. All modules offered follow the same quality assurance processes and standards as modules offered on full-time campus-based

degrees. In a meeting with the review team, students studying full-time, part-time and on the flexible route praised the College's VLE, finding it effective and supportive. Overall, the team found that the College has made rapid and careful progress in offering distributed and distance learning, often through electronic means, to its student body.

Learning support resources

133 The SED indicated some variation in the quality of learning support resources at school level, but stated that the LRC (Library and Teacher Resources Centre) were generally excellent. In response to student requests the LRC has developed a Customer Service Policy. The LRC opens from before 0900 until 2100 hours each weekday, with shorter service on Saturday and Sunday. There is a postal loan service and summer loan policies. Students may borrow laptop computers and there is a document-binding service. All information about the LRC is available in both Welsh and English.

134 The SED considered the IT network system to be robust. Relative inflexibility of the system, as perceived by students, (a function of measures to protect the integrity of IT networks) has been addressed by the College's commissioning of an external review of the IT and Network Services Unit. There is an IT wireless network across the campus, and teaching rooms are equipped with data projectors and interactive whiteboards. In office software the College is continually improving Welsh grammar and spell-check facilities. User surveys on the computer and media laboratories have shown a moderately high satisfaction rate. The College has a commitment to updating PCs. However, heavy investment by WAG in computing in primary and secondary schools has resulted in some ITT students comparing College facilities unfavourably with those found in schools.

135 Staff ensure that all modules studied in Welsh are provided with texts written in or translated into Welsh, complemented by further information provided in Welsh. The review

team received conflicting opinions on the availability of materials in Welsh. Students met by the review team indicated general satisfaction with materials available to them to study through the medium of Welsh. However, Welsh-medium students also indicated in the SWS that they were less satisfied with written resources. It was explained to the team that dissatisfaction was largely a product of fewer texts being commercially available in the Welsh language for most topics. In addition, some religious studies students indicated to the team that they are less satisfied with their subject resources because of the inadequate number of texts available in their discipline. Training for students in the use of interlibrary loans is helping to alleviate the demand on texts within the College. The College is aware of the criticisms made by students in the SWS.

136 Accommodation issues brought to the attention of the College by students have included ventilation and air conditioning. The College has addressed these matters, and students met by the review team pointed to improvements made by the College. The team found that, in general, the College responds diligently to student comments.

137 The College has a new Sports Centre with a Health and Exercise Suite. The Centre provides good facilities and learning resources for physical education and sports studies, as well as health and exercise students, and recreation facilities for all students and staff. At the time of the review, building was underway for the enlargement of the campus with a Cultural Enterprise Centre providing facilities for creative industries as well as Theatr Genedlaethol Cymru, Wales' National Welsh-Medium Theatre Company. The Cultural Enterprise Centre will provide opportunities for students studying across a range of performing and creative programmes. A training centre for Mudiad Ysgolion Meithrin (Welsh Nursery Group) is also planned and fits well with the mission of the College to support the Welsh language and culture, and to contribute to the development of a bilingual nation. Field trips and theatre visits arranged by the College are a notable enhancement to the student experience of learning.

138 The review team finds that the College provides learning resources that support its current programmes and its plans for its developing mission. Within available financial resources, the College has been responsive to student comments on resources needed for study and accommodation.

Academic guidance, support and supervision

139 The SED affirmed a culture of caring and support throughout the College. The College has a College Regulations Student Guide (CRSG), which is updated annually. It provides information on College policies and answers typical student questions such as the meaning of accreditation of experiential and/or prior learning. The CRSG explains assessment, plagiarism, academic progress, assessment, expectations of students in regard to conduct, personal tutors, plus learning and IT resources. Students indicated to the review team that they found the CRSG extremely useful.

140 Each single and joint honours programme of study has a programme of study handbook for students. There is some variation in the 0level and type of detail provided by each programme. The College has the future intention of including the programme specification in all programme handbooks. Plagiarism penalties are clearly defined in each programme handbook.

141 The College has taken account of the *Code of practice, Section 9: Placement learning,* published by QAA. Placements are available to students on many programmes, and placement learning handbooks provide detailed guidelines. ITT programmes include placements that are entirely planned and managed by the Faculty. Other programmes use the national 'Go Wales' initiative to help find work-experience placements. Students described to the review team how they were supported both in the selection of placements and by visits from tutors during placements. The College's support for students on work placements varies according to the type of placement undertaken. In the case of teaching practice, school-based mentors are trained by the College to

undertake the support role. Students confirmed to the team that where placements are assessed, they are aware of the assessment criteria. Students described the value of work placement opportunities, which they feel allow them to marry theory and practice, to meet other professionals in their chosen field, and to enhance their prospects of employment. Educational visits to theatres and field trips are regular occurrences enhancing the student experience.

142 Module handbooks are available to students and the form is tailored for each module. Full and part-time undergraduate students indicated to the review team that they received good support for the project dissertation element of their programmes. There were new study abroad handbooks which students rated highly in a meeting with the review team. International students also praised the support that they have received from the International Office. The one critical comment made by these students to the team was that there was a need for more information on the College website on the high costs of study in Britain. The content of master's programme handbooks is good and includes useful forms such as the dissertation proposal form and supervision record.

143 The SED indicated that in order to ensure good access to study support, designated periods of free study have been identified in both Welsh and English-medium programmes. No other classes are scheduled during these periods. There are also study skills booklets available. Mature and part-time students have requested more help of the College, and it has responded by allocating periods of study support. In meetings with the review team mature, part-time, flexible-mode learners and dyslexic students praised the study skills support that they had received from programme tutors and elsewhere.

144 Intensive induction programmes for new students are designed to develop key skills and create an atmosphere of community. Students confirmed the usefulness of these inductions. Some modules are offered in the evening, at weekends and during holiday periods so that students who are employed can access them.

145 Concerns voiced by students over inadequate facilities for them to improve sufficiently in the Welsh language have been addressed by the College. The Faculty of Education and Training responded by making new appointments in the language improvement area. The SU commended the College for its commitment to the Welsh language set out in the Welsh Assembly policy document Iaith Pawb. The College has recognised that in support offered to students there must be differences between those for a fully bilingual programme and those offered for one conducted in a single language (Welsh or English).

146 In 2004-05 a new student Personal Development Plan (PDP) scheme was developed and trialled in both Welsh and English. A revised PDP scheme was then developed for 2005-06. Documentation is comprehensive and has developed into a more student-driven process, which is less time-consuming for academic staff. There is limited monitoring of PDPs by staff, and students are expected to take ownership of their PDP with support from Student Services. Students on ITT programmes are encouraged to produce career-entry profiles and PDPs help this process. The PDP scheme was introduced in 2005-06 for the first-year intake and will be expanded to all years. Staff received training for the PDP scheme during the September 2006 staff development week. Some schools utilise 'process workbooks', which are an effective mechanism for helping students to become reflective practitioners within their discipline, thus supplementing the PDP.

147 Students who met the review team supported the College's affirmation that it provides a caring and supportive environment for study. The review team found, too, that the College offers good academic guidance, support and supervision

Personal support and guidance

148 The SED affirmed that the College was proud of the quality of its student support and

repeated its identification of a caring culture. Student numbers have increased and, in response to the challenge of providing support for different students, the College undertook in 2003-04 a review of its student support services. The review led to the provision of a single Directorate of Student Services (DSS). DSS includes careers counselling, learning support, study support, disability, additional needs and the financial hardship fund. The chaplaincy also plays an important role in pastoral support. Support services are offered in both Welsh and English. In addition there are crèche facilities for 50 children. DSS has expanded its operations; the College has repeatedly given attention to its increasing space requirements and, at the time of the review, was rehousing the unit.

149 There is a close working relationship between the Director of Student Services and the SU, which is involved with DSS in financial contingency fund allocation and the short-listing and appointment of halls of residence wardens. Counsellors hold regular meetings with the SU on welfare issues. Specialist staff are used by DSS, for example, educational psychologists. The SED indicated that, although proud of DSS, the College was aware that communication with students was at times difficult, and that support for part-time students was less available.

150 The SED suggested that the Careers Service was a particular strength, and the review team agreed with this affirmation. The College has a comprehensive Careers Education and Guidance Policy which students esteem highly. Interviews and advice are offered to students through the medium of Welsh and English. Mechanisms used to support students include mock interviews, as well as more general careers information and support. Value is added to the service through contracts with Graduate Wales/Graduate Support, funded by HEFCW, the Work Placement Contract and the Careers Wales Adult Guidance Contract.

151 The College evaluates its services in part by questionnaire survey. Some recent student replies concerning the personal tutor system

were critical. However, students also indicated that in general they were very happy 'with pastoral support' at the College. The evidence suggests a variation in the personal tutor support available in different schools. The College has a clear, formal process for ensuring that students meet their personal tutors. However, because of easy access to staff, both academic and support, students do not find it necessary, in many instances, to contact their personal tutor. There were favourable comments in the SWS on the College's support for part-time students. In the SWS the SU reported that such students did not feel isolated and noted that there was a friendly atmosphere in the College.

152 The AQH provides information on planning for students with special needs; undergraduates and PGCE students are screened for dyslexia on entry and, if dyslexic, a student is referred to specialist helpers and the student's school informed. To assist with particular requirements of some students, procedures are in place to record lectures. The College's service to dyslexic students is very substantial, but external constraints hinder timely completion of assessments by dyslexic students. Students with various disabilities, including dyslexia, praised highly the support given by staff at the College. Alternative assessment strategies have been developed for students whose disabilities prevent their demonstration of knowledge and understanding through the written word.

153 The College has responded effectively to the sections of the *Code of practice,* published by QAA on students with disabilities and on career education, information and guidance. The review team agrees with the SED that the College provides caring and effective personal support and guidance for its students.

Collaborative provision

154 The College has decided to end its collaborative arrangement with UoWL and the agreement is now running out, with few UoWL archaeology students still studying on the College's campus. The formal involvement of the College with these students is very small,

and is restricted to the College's provision of teaching accommodation. Most responsibility for assurance of standards and quality rests with UoWL.

155 The College has established a code of practice which conforms to the collaborative provision section of the *Code of practice,* published by QAA. The QAC discusses international education as a standard agenda item. The College's code of practice is used with respect to students who use the opportunity provided by the College to undertake study abroad, and for incoming international students. Students studying abroad select from the partner institution modules which are approved by the College to provide credits for the home programme of study. Grades are transferred to the College from the partner institution and converted into a UK equivalent. A reverse process applies to incoming study-abroad students. A study-abroad handbook is available, and the College's International Office supports both outgoing and incoming students. Students commented positively to the review team on the support that they had received from the International Office.

156 The extent of the College's collaborative provision is small. The review team found that in its withdrawal from archaeology teaching the College had been careful in the proper management of the student experience, and that it has developed mechanisms to ensure quality and standards in collaborative provision.

Section 3: The review investigations: published information

The students' experience of published information and other information available to them

157 In its SED the College expressed the opinion that its published information for students and intending students was accurate, consistent and fit for purpose. The College has a well-constructed prospectus in both Welsh

and English. The programme section of the prospectus emphasises key features of each programme, the facilities available for the course of study, and typical content. Information on the award, course length, entry requirements and career opportunities is clear in both languages. Most of the College's published documents, for example, 'Cymru Creadigol Arts Express', feature both languages on the same page or on facing pages, with the Welsh language first. The paper form of the prospectus is a bilingual document also featuring the Welsh version followed by the English version (rather than the frequent bilingual practice of double 'back to front' publication). The College's physical publication strategy indicates to readers that the Welsh language is important in the life of the College. The College seeks to embody the policy that it values the Welsh language and culture, and that it welcomes students who may wish to study in either language or bilingually. Students met by the review team confirmed that they had found nearly all the information on programmes of study and on the institution in general, for example, the welfare ethos, was correct and relevant.

158 The Marketing Officer has responsibility for ensuring the accuracy of published information. Details within the prospectus are signed off by academic schools prior to publication. Sections of the College prospectus on central facilities are approved by members of SMT, and the overall prospectus is approved by the Principal and Academic Registrar. Academic schools work closely with Registry staff in order to ensure the accuracy of the College's information available on the UCAS website. Information published on the College's own website is accurate in regard to programmes of study and College facilities. Some published financial information on the level of bond set for student accommodation has not been accurate according to the SWS. The College has addressed this issue which, the College explained to the review team, derived from some students mistakenly looking at archived web pages rather than updated

information. Procedures are now in place to ensure that this misunderstanding does not reoccur.

159 Some general College documents are available on the College website and intranet; they include AQH and the College Regulations Student Guide. The website is bilingual, and there is a useful link on each page which allows readers to toggle between the two language versions. The SWS offered the view that the website could be made more inviting. Some of the information on the College's website is available only in Welsh. The strategy of the College is to avoid confusion, and Welsh-only publication occurs exclusively where the only language of study for that topic is Welsh, in short, where only those fluent in Welsh will find the information relevant.

160 The Faculty of Education and Training has a newsletter published in English and Welsh. A recent edition provided information on proposed cuts in training places for teachers in Wales; so informing prospective and actual students of how WAG might develop teacher education. The publication Unigryw ('Unique') is a Welsh-only publication giving a picture of the changes made in the College to meet the needs of the community and the College's mission to strengthen acquisition and use of the Welsh language. There is a detailed student guide booklet on the College Regulations, covering topics such as assessment, plagiarism, academic progress and the structure of programmes, expected conduct, personal tutors plus the College's resources. During the review students indicated that this document is comprehensive and helpful, and the SWS also commented favourably on the publication. When students indicated to the College that they would appreciate, in addition, a basic fact sheet for crucial information, the need was addressed through production of a student 'survival guide'.

161 The programme of study handbooks provide clear and comprehensive information on students' responsibilities to inform the College of changes in their circumstances,

on how programmes may change, and on progression through levels of study to successful completion of a programme. Students regard the programme of study handbooks as very useful. The handbooks also provide information on how to reference and cite correctly in assessed work, on plagiarism, and penalties for plagiarism. There is also concise information on problem solving, teamwork, communication and self-organisation for study, and on modules. The handbooks provided in Welsh are equally as wide-ranging and detailed as those available in English. The Partnership School Experience handbooks are provided in both languages in order to help students to reflect on their experience during teaching placement in a primary or secondary school, and are regarded as exceptionally informative by students.

162 Module booklets seen by the review team varied in level of detail provided, but all booklets sampled were informative on the content, teaching and assessment of the module, and offered advice on how to achieve a good grade. Clear and comprehensive assessment information is published in the programme handbooks. The review team found that the students' experience of published and internal information was generally favourable, and that the bilingual mission of the College is strongly supported by the College's procedures and by students' reception of written material.

Reliability, accuracy and completeness of published information

163 The College's published and internally distributed information in its prospectus, website, College regulations student guide, survival guide and programme handbooks is consistent, accurate and detailed. In the prospectus and associated publicity material standards of expression, completeness and presentation in the two languages are similar. Admission procedures and appeals procedures are clearly expressed, and written complaints and appeals procedures are readily available to students. External examiners' reports, summaries, published internal documents and student

feedback summaries seen by the review were accurate and fairly reflected the full reports.

164 Teaching quality information requirements in Wales differ from those in England and Northern Ireland in that publication of summaries of external examiners' reports is not a requirement. In addition, publication of summaries of internal annual and periodic monitoring reports is not a requirement of the framework in Wales. The College fully respects HEFCW's document *Teaching Quality Information (TQI) Requirements for Higher Education in Wales, W04/05H*.

Findings

Findings

165 An institutional review of Trinity College Carmarthen (the College) was undertaken during 20 to 24 November 2006. The purpose of the review was to provide public information on the quality of the College's programmes of study and on the discharge of its responsibility for the standards of its awards. This section of the report summarises the findings of the review. It concludes by identifying features of good practice that emerged, and recommendations to the College for enhancing current practice.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for assuring the quality of programmes

166 The College has positioned itself as a community HEI addressing the major regional educational needs of west Wales, and it has developed structures and processes to assure the quality of programmes in this context and beyond. Both the students and the review team confirmed the College's affirmations that its procedures and environment offer students a caring culture that reflects and promotes the quality of programmes. In the light of regional developments and changes in the University of Wales (UoW) the College has chosen to use interim quality assurance arrangements through the University of Wales, Swansea (UoWS) with which it has a consultancy agreement. This agreement falls within the models for quality assurance laid out by the UoW. The College has a Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), supported by the Quality Assurance Unit (QAU). The QAC reports to the Academic Board (AB) and is charged with developing, monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the College's quality assurance systems.

167 The College has a Learning and Teaching Strategy (LTS) with three principal aims: enhancing the quality of provision; enhancing the attainment of students; providing an effective environment for learning and teaching characterised by sufficient and high quality accommodation, staffing and information resources. The strategy includes short and medium-term targets. Heads of faculty now have responsibility for updating the LTS with the intention that this will secure greater ownership of the strategy by academic staff. The Senior Management Team regards full ownership of the LTS by the schools as 'a key mechanism for maintaining and enhancing the quality of provision'. The self-evaluation document (SED) of the College noted that the LTS needs to be more clearly linked with academic enhancement than at present, and that further work is required to secure the desired level of ownership.

168 Student feedback is obtained from both informal and formal methods. Students may raise concerns informally directly with staff, and consistently praised the accessibility of all staff. More formal feedback mechanisms operate to review the delivery of individual modules, feeding into the annual review process via module questionnaires. More general feedback is gained through the programme questionnaire which students complete on exit from the College, and through a variety of questionnaires used to elicit feedback on the College's support services. The results of the National Student Survey are considered at AB. The College has identified feedback from its alumni as an area for further development. The College's engagement with employers and other stakeholders is extensive.

169 Student representation is a key element of the College's arrangements for gaining feedback from the student body; it also allows students to make a strong contribution to quality assurance processes. The Students' Union (SU) president or nominee represents the student body on a wide range of institutional-level committees with programme of study representatives taking a key role in annual and quinquennial review and school audits. The evidence is that the College acts competently in response to issues. Student representation in programme review is a strength of the College.

170 On the matter of complaints and appeals procedures, the review team found that students were clear about where to find

information relating to both complaints and appeals. The team concluded that arrangements for complaints and appeals were well considered and competently managed, and that the College was seeking to refine the processes for both.

171 The College has responded diligently to the section of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice), Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*, published by QAA. The review team saw evidence of good practice with regard to good planning of the virtual learning environment (VLE) and, in particular, with regard to the College's mission and the needs of national bilingualism. More specifically, the College's response to the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) agenda has been to create a 'virtual university' through regional collaboration. The College has rapidly developed mechanisms for the delivery of on-campus and distributed programmes of study.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for securing the standards of awards

172 The College's degree programmes are all validated by the UoW, of which the College is a full member. The College has recently assumed additional responsibilities from UoW. All aspects of external examining, scheme approval, award regulations and student appeals have been devolved by UoW to the College. Both staff and students reported to the review team that the transition in responsibilities had been smooth. In the interim arrangements of UoW the College's degree awards continue to be validated by UoW, but the monitoring of the College's quality assurance processes by the validating body, UoW, is through external academic assessors (EAAs) appointed by UoWS rather than directly by UoW. The EAAs attend a wide variety of the College's boards, committees, reviews and validation events and report to UoW twice each year.

173 The review team concluded that the programme monitoring, approval and annual review procedures were thorough, systematic and effective, and met the general expectations of the *Code of practice* in this area. There was clear evidence of the following through of action points in annual review through use of a summary report that allows the QAC to gain effective institutional oversight of the process. Concerning validation panel membership, the team raised a question of staff development and separation of duties. While the Academic Registrar or a nominee may chair most validation events, in practice the Academic Registrar normally undertakes the role in person. The team recommends that the College broadens the group of staff chosen to chair quality assurance events. The team noted that the College had worked to produce a school audit process that was effective and focused on improving the management and enhancement of quality assurance procedures within schools.

174 The review team found that new study-abroad modules may be proposed for approval within a programme of study with little external input except for the presence of an external member of the faculty board. The team recommends that the College reviews procedures for the input of external subject expertise into the approval of new modules at faculty level.

175 The College has little collaborative provision; it has a code of conduct for its participation in collaborative programmes. The College's code is applied to the programme in Archaeology of the University of Wales Lampeter, which has most of the formal responsibility for the quality assurance of the programme. The College provides a teaching site for the programme. The College's code is also used for the short-term exchange programmes in which the College participates; these study-abroad programmes are, outgoing, to institutions in the United States of America and, incoming, from various institutions world wide.

176 The review team observed that the locus of responsibility for detailing assessment policy has progressively shifted from college to school

level. As system now operates in which variability is allowed but is controlled and overseen centrally by the QAU through adherence to the Academic Quality Handbook and policy published at school level. There is a willingness of the College to try new policies and approaches to assessment, with the College recognising when action must be taken to address matters of concern. The College's vigorously pursued strategy is to promote bilingual modes of module delivery. In this way, students on certain programmes of study may select learning and assessment through the medium of Welsh or English, or a combination of the two, and this policy is a feature of good practice.

177 The annual review process and the composite report of external examiner comments provided by the Academic Registrar to the QAC form the framework for consideration of external examiner reports. The review team found evidence that this framework enabled thorough and timely engagement with external examiners' reports, and that effective, well monitored structures are in place to action comments from externals.

178 In the last six years the College has responded to two programme-level external reviews. The review team found that the reviews received satisfactory consideration at institutional level and that College responses were timely and robust. The team also concluded that these engagements had strengthened the College's assurance of quality and standards.

179 The College requires schools to consider statistical data during the annual review of programmes. To facilitate this consideration, it produces overview reports to accompany the data extracted form the Management Information System. Statistical information is also considered during quinquennial reviews and school audits. Overall, the review team found that the College is making wide and effective use of statistical data to inform the monitoring of standards and the development of policy.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for supporting learning

180 The review team concluded that the College has a substantial human resources strategy linked to and underpinning its strategic plan. Recent improvements have been made to the College's appointment and induction processes. The appraisal system within the College covers all staff and is securely linked to staff development. The team concluded that the College is supporting and promoting staff development, and that it links staff development to its strategic aims and objectives. The annual staff development week is compulsory for all staff and is used effectively by the College to facilitate forward planning, staff development and updating. Peer observation has yet to be fully implemented across the College; most current peer observation is conducted in one of the two faculties. However, overall, the College shows good practice in its staff development.

181 The College has a caring and supportive culture, and pastoral support is integral to the ethos of the College. The College has many robust procedures for supporting learning. Among other features, the College has taken proper account of the *Code of practice, Section 9: Placement learning* for the many external engagements, such as placements and field trips, which form an important part of the student experience. The external experience offered to the students in placements, field trips, theatre visits plus input from external practitioners into the teaching programme is a strength.

182 The College Regulations - Student Guide is found helpful by students; in addition, each single and joint honours programme of study has a programme of study handbook for students. There is some variation in the level and type of detail provided by each programme; the College has the intention of including the programme specification in all programme handbooks.

183 The College has responded properly to the sections of the *Code of practice* on students with

disabilities and on career education, information and guidance. Careers advice, which is comprehensive and linked with the work placement opportunities and other outward-looking aspects of learning, is a particular strength. At the time of the review, Personal Development Plans were being embedded in the student experience at the College.

The use made by the institution of the Academic Infrastructure

184 The College uses *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and the *Code of practice*. It uses the FHEQ in conjunction with the *Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales*. The College also makes use of subject benchmark statements to inform curriculum design and to define the level of each module and the overall standard of an award. The review team concluded that subject benchmarks are generally used effectively as external reference points by programme teams in course design and validation. Programme specifications are included in validation documentation and programme of study handbooks, and are also considered as part of quinquennial review and school audit. The programme specifications for all undergraduate programmes appear on the College's website. In 2001-02 the College set up working groups to consider the requirements of the *Code of practice* against its academic regulations and policies as set out in the Academic Quality Handbook (AQH). Subsequent working parties have considered revision of the College's protocols. Staff development events cover understanding of the AQH and of the *Code*. The team concluded that the linkage between the AQH and *Code* was consistently understood by staff across the College.

The utility of the SED as an illustration of the institution's capacity to reflect upon its own strengths and limitations, and to act on these to enhance quality and standards

185 The review team found the SED to be clear, accurate and comprehensive; it provided a sound basis for the review. The document was well structured and the version provided on CD helpfully contained automatic links to the cited evidence base. The SED was a solidly analytical document, and helped to demonstrate the College's capacity to reflect on its own strengths and limitations as a basis for future action.

Commentary on the institution's intentions for the enhancement of quality and standards

186 The College uses varied processes to monitor, evaluate and enhance its quality and standards. A summary annual report identifying good practice is prepared by the Academic Registrar based on the minutes of boards of study and annual programme reviews. After discussion at QAC, recommendations for action are presented to AB. Also, external examiners' reports are considered each year at school boards which must also provide a school response. All the reports are read by the Academic Registrar who prepares a report for QAC which is presented, with QAC's response, to AB. The College seeks to spread good practice through such devices as cross-membership of faculty boards and the annual staff development week. The College has also used the attendance of the EAAs at boards, committees, reviews and school audits as an enhancement activity. In addition, the LTS is being further developed at school and faculty level to link it more clearly with academic enhancement.

187 The review team concluded that the College has effective processes for the enhancement of its academic programmes, the processes are regularly evaluated with the intention of developing them, and emphasis is

being placed on ensuring that all staff are aware of the opportunities for enhancement of the student learning experience.

Reliability of information

188 The College's published information is useful and accurate in both Welsh and English. The College's claim to be a bilingual college with a commitment to the Welsh language is witnessed in the nature of the bilingual documentation that it publishes.

189 The College meets the requirements of the HEFCW circular *Teaching Quality Information (TQI) Requirement for Higher Education in Wales (HEFCW W04/05HE).* The review team found that it could be confident that the material published by the College has accuracy and integrity, and that it is complete with regard to information on its programmes and procedures.

Features of good practice

190 The following features of good practice were noted:

i   good strategic planning in general and, in particular, with regard to the College's mission and the needs of national bilingualism
(paragraphs 24, 27, 73, 137, 145, 161)

ii   the programme review process including the use of external and student representatives within the process
(paragraphs 57, 62, 99)

iii the many forms of external engagement offered in the student learning experience
(paragraphs 109, 111, 137, 141-142, 150)

iv   the strong staff development opportunities in place (paragraphs 125-128, 130).

Recommendations for action

191 Recommendations for action that the review team considers it desirable for the College to address are as follows:

i   to broaden the group of staff chosen to chair quality assurance events
(paragraphs 33, 37, 58)

ii   to review procedures for the input of external subject expertise into the approval and monitoring of modules at faculty level (paragraphs 50-51, 65-67)

iii to continue the development of effective methods of peer review for all academic staff (paragraph 129).

Appendix

Trinity College Carmarthen's response to the institutional review report

Trinity College, Carmarthen notes the findings of the QAA Institutional Review report that confidence can be placed in the soundness of current and likely future management of the quality of its programmes and the academic standards of its awards. The College is particularly pleased to find that the report confirms its own belief that it provides caring and effective personal support and good academic guidance for its students.

The College found the whole engagement with the reviewers to be an extremely constructive and positive experience. In particular, the institution would like to commend the sensitive and careful manner in which the QAA and the review team recognised and responded to the bilingual context of the College.

The College is delighted that the reviewers have identified several areas of good practice including 'the many forms of external engagement offered in the student learning experience', 'the programme review process including the use of external and student representatives within the process', 'the strong staff development opportunities in place' and the 'good strategic planning in general, and, in particular, with regard to the College's mission and the needs of national bilingualism'.

Within the report, the review team recommended that the College should broaden the group of staff chosen to chair quality assurance events, continue developing effective methods of peer review for all academic staff, and review procedures for the input of external subject expertise into the approval and monitoring of modules at faculty level.

An action plan is currently being developed to address each of the report's three recommendations. Responsibility for chairing quality assurance events will be extended to a broader group of individuals. Current peer review mechanisms will be extended to include all academic staff, and it is likely that External Examiners will be invited to provide external subject expertise into the process of approval and monitoring of modules at faculty level. In preparing the action plan, the College has also taken careful note of a number of pertinent observations and useful pointers for improvement that appear within the review report but are not listed as recommendations.

In conclusion, Trinity College, Carmarthen welcomes the Institutional Review report and its findings. The College will address the report's recommendations for action and will continue to strengthen and build upon the features of good practice identified therein. Building upon the premise that full confidence can be placed in the current and likely future management of the quality of its programmes and the academic standards of its awards, the College will now proceed with its application for taught degree awarding powers.