



# **Outcomes from Institutional audit: 2007-09**

## **Managing learning opportunities**

**Third series**

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## Preface

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>1</sup> For further information about Institutional audit, see [www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/Pages/Institutional-audit.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/Pages/Institutional-audit.aspx).

## Summary

Of the 76 reports included in this review, all but one recorded judgements that 'confidence' could reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students. The picture is overwhelmingly of acceptable quality. A large number of recommendations are made in the reports for strengthening and improving practice; but an even larger number of instances of good practice are identified. The areas where recommendations outnumbered features of good practice related to the overall management framework; approval, monitoring and review; and aspects of staff support. Features of good practice outnumbered recommendation with respect to the use of external reference points, non-traditional learning environments, the role of research, other aspects of staff support, and admissions.

During the period of time covered by the present *Outcomes* series, institutions operated in an environment where the student was seen as a consumer. Students' expectations of resources, facilities and quality teaching have fuelled initiatives across the sector. Furthermore, expectations are not static: what constituted high quality learning opportunities at one point may be seen as below standard at a later point. Institutions are vigorously enjoined to enhance and to apply continuous improvement to their provision. In this context, the reports provide evidence that institutions have met a number of key challenges posed by the management of learning opportunities.

The first challenge is that of coordination, given the broad scope of learning opportunities. The great majority of institutions have invested time and resource in developing institutional-level strategies which play a significant role. Where this approach is fully developed, institutions have sub-strategies for different functional and academic areas. Many of the features of good practice refer to a strategic approach to aspects of managing learning opportunities. Conversely, a lack of strategic dimension underpins a number of recommendations.

The second challenge posed by the management of learning opportunities is the allocation of scarce resources. In many institutions, strategy and planning are only partly accomplished through established committee systems. The reports note the development and growth of executive structures and planning groups in various forms to take decisions on these matters, and the adaptation of key processes such as programme approval, monitoring and review to address the adequacy of resources. The identification and management of risk is a facet of planning which features in areas of good practice identified in some institutions.

Given the centrality of committee systems to the management of learning opportunities, one of the issues that emerges from the reports is how to ensure that the interface between deliberative and executive structures is effective. Two factors are noted. One is the role of key executive post-holders such as pro vice-chancellors, deans and associate deans in bridging any divide by operating in both deliberative and executive structures. The other is the extent to which academic and professional services or support staff and divisions are involved. A number of features of good practice refer to the integration of academic and professional staff as an important factor in the successful implementation of strategy for learning opportunities.

A third challenge for the management of learning opportunities is the implementation of plans and decisions. Decisions on strategy, resource allocation, and planning are typically taken centrally, but their impact is felt locally. A number of areas of good practice identified in the reports relate to the efficient, effective and consistent implementation of central policies. A large number of the recommendations relating to management systems refer to the need to improve the tracking and oversight of local decision-making. However, there is an

acknowledgement that different disciplines, different groups of students, and different delivery sites may need different inputs and approaches to learning opportunities to maintain equivalence.

Central quality assurance, and increasingly quality enhancement, units have been in place in most institutions for some time and have contributed to the assurance of quality in learning opportunities. It is evident that many institutions have established learning and teaching units which have championed the development of excellence in teaching through scholarship and development and training, and which play a key role in the development and implementation of learning and teaching strategies.

The reports confirm the investment by institutions in the professionalisation of teaching. Resource has been invested in staff training and development. Staff support is the aspect of the management of learning resources which displays the largest number of commendations for good practice. However, the reports reveal that professionalisation of teaching has not been extended fully to those assisting in teaching. A significant number of institutions are recommended to ensure that research students who teach are given proper training before undertaking their teaching role.

Many institutions have adopted the concept of research-led teaching as a means of linking research and teaching together and promoting balance between the two. The reports identify a number of features of good practice based on ensuring that research informs teaching and that teaching is informed by research, as well as engaging students on taught programmes in research activity.

The reports reflect the increasing importance that institutions place on engagement with external stakeholders. Institutions are involving communities, businesses, and the professions in the design and delivery of higher education for the benefit of students' skills, their employability and their careers. Advisory boards, placements and work-based study are all identified as features of good practice.

The audit reports demonstrate the change that is taking place in the use of technology in learning and its impact on the design, delivery and approval of programmes. The widespread development of virtual learning environments has facilitated the development of blended learning and the blurring of distinctions between different modes of delivery. The reports note the adaptations required to support and manage new forms of learning, and the need, in some institutions, for academic and quality assurance policy and practice to catch up with technology.

## Context

1 This paper is based on a review of the outcomes of the 76 Institutional audit reports published between September 2006 and July 2009 (a full list of the reports can be found at Appendix D on page 52). The methodology used in analysing the reports for this and other *Outcomes* series papers is described in Appendix C, page 51.

2 The reports analysed in this paper arise from the Institutional audit process which is described in the *Handbook for Institutional audit: England and Northern Ireland (2006)*. The previous Institutional audit method resulted in a combined judgement about the quality of an institution's programmes and the academic standards of its awards. The revised process, which the 2006 *Handbook* sets out, introduced a separate judgement on the quality of the provision audited. The reasoning behind this was to meet public interest in knowing not only that academic standards were appropriate but also that 'universities and colleges in England and Northern Ireland have...effective means of providing learning opportunities of a quality that enables students, whether on taught or research programmes, to achieve those HE awards and qualifications'.<sup>2</sup>

3 The management of learning opportunities is at the heart of the concept of quality of provision as defined within Institutional audit. Institutional audit examines the effectiveness of an institution's quality assurance structures and mechanisms in the light of the UK Academic Infrastructure,<sup>3</sup> in particular *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)*, the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, subject benchmark statements and *Guidelines for preparing programme specifications*. Institutional audit also pays particular attention to the ways in which the quality of educational provision is regularly monitored and reviewed by the institution itself and how resulting recommendations are implemented.

4 Learning opportunities, as defined in the *Handbook for Institutional audit: England and Northern Ireland (2006)*, include 'the use made of external examiners, internal and external review, students as partners in quality management, research activity to inform learning opportunities, other modes of study (such as workplace and flexible and distributed learning), the Academic Infrastructure and other reference points, management information, learning resources, admissions policies, student support, and staff appraisal and support'.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Institutional audit methodology approaches the management of the quality of learning opportunities from multiple, cross-cutting perspectives. Each topic, such as learning resources, is considered in its own right by the team. In addition, the institution's overarching framework for managing the quality of different facets of learning opportunities is also reviewed, as is the institution's approach to enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. The provision and management of learning opportunities within collaborative provision and the management of learning opportunities for post-graduate research students are also addressed but are generally reported on under these discrete sections of the report.

5 Other papers in this series of *Outcomes from Institutional audit* cover key aspects of the framework for managing learning opportunities in detail; in particular the use made of external examiners and advisors,<sup>5</sup> students as partners in quality management, and the provision of student support.<sup>6</sup> These have not therefore been discussed in this report.

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<sup>2</sup> *Handbook for Institutional audit: England and Northern Ireland (2006)*, paragraph 7.

<sup>3</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/AcademicInfrastructure/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/AssuringStandardsAndQuality/AcademicInfrastructure/Pages/default.aspx)

<sup>4</sup> *Handbook for Institutional audit: England and Northern Ireland (2006)*, paragraph 11.

<sup>5</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-audit-external-involvement.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-audit-external-involvement.aspx)

<sup>6</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-audit-student-engagement.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-audit-student-engagement.aspx)

6 Of the 76 reports included in this review, all but one recorded judgements that 'confidence' could reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students. The contributory factors to the judgement of 'limited confidence' in relation to the management of learning opportunities included: weak oversight of the quality assurance framework through the committee system; inadequate systems for programme approval, monitoring and review; lack of response to internal and external reviews; issues related to student support and staff development; and failure to make good use of management information in, among other areas, admissions.<sup>7</sup> Three further reports contained caveats of 'limited confidence' in the management of quality in relation to the institution's collaborative provision.

7 In total, 162 features of good practice and 178 recommendations relating to the themes covered in this paper were identified in the reports. While overall recommendations outnumber features of good practice, the balance varies between different aspects of learning opportunities. For example, features of good practice exceed recommendations by a ratio of four to one in relation to the management of learning opportunities in non-traditional environments, and the ratio is even greater with respect to linking research and scholarly activity to teaching. On the other hand, recommendations exceed features of good practice regarding the structures and processes of broader quality assurance such as programme approval, monitoring and review, often reflecting weaknesses relating to the management of both quality and standards through the same systems. The relative frequency of recommendations and good practice should, therefore, be treated warily.

8 During the period covered by the audit reports, two sections of the *Code of practice* were revised and published; one on admissions and one on work-based learning and placements.<sup>8</sup> The National Student Survey continued to focus institutions' attention on students' satisfaction with their studies and their experience of higher education. Towards the end of the period the Ramsden report *The Future of Higher Education - Teaching and the Student Experience*<sup>9</sup> highlighted some of the challenges that were being identified across the sector in relation to the management of learning opportunities: namely the need for investment in infrastructure; the demand for improvements in support services and facilities; better use of ICT; professionalism in teaching; student engagement; and more innovative and flexible curricula. The term 'the student experience' became firmly planted in institutional vocabulary and was reflected in the nomenclature of committees, working groups, strategies, and initiatives.

9 Papers on topics relating to the management of learning opportunities were included in the first and second series of *Outcomes from Institutional audit* papers. The topics of these papers were each much narrower in focus and there is no specific comparator with the overall discussion here.

## Themes

10 This paper is structured around the following themes, reflecting important aspects of Institutional audit related to the management of learning opportunities which are not directly covered in other *Outcomes* papers.

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<sup>7</sup> School of African and Oriental Studies, Annex, page 2

<sup>8</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Code-of-practice-Section-9.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Code-of-practice-Section-9.aspx) (Work-based and placement learning) and [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Code-of-practice-Section-10.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Code-of-practice-Section-10.aspx) (Admissions to higher education).

<sup>9</sup> Report for the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills, *The Future of Higher Education - Teaching and the Student Experience*, Paul Ramsden (December 2008).

- Institutional frameworks for the management of learning opportunities:
  - Deliberative and executive structures.
  - The role of strategy and planning.
  - Central support units.
  - Policies and practices.
- Approval, monitoring and review of programmes.
- Use of external reference points:
  - The Academic Infrastructure.
  - Engagement with industry and the professions.
- Learning resources.
- Non-traditional learning environments:
  - Flexible and distance learning.
  - Work-based and placement learning.
- Role of research:
  - Research-informed curricula.
  - Student engagement in research.
- Staff support:
  - Human resources management.
  - Staff development and training.
- Admissions:
  - Regulations, policies and practices.
  - Widening participation.

11 This paper is necessarily at a level of summary and abstraction which captures auditors' findings, but cannot reflect the full richness of the individual reports which themselves distil evidence about the management of learning opportunities.

## **Institutional frameworks for the management of learning opportunities**

12 All reports contain commentary on the overarching frameworks adopted by institutions to manage quality and academic standards. These embrace deliberative and executive structures that contribute both to the management of academic standards and the management of learning opportunities. Any discussion of the institutional-level framework for managing learning opportunities overlaps extensively with the framework for managing standards. The paper *Outcomes from Institutional audit 2007-9: Managing academic standards*<sup>10</sup> provides a commentary on the nature and effectiveness of these overarching frameworks to manage quality and academic standards. The key findings were that frameworks were in the vast majority of cases found to be satisfactory; but while one third included features of good practice, over half gave rise to recommendations for improvements in structures or processes. The proportion of recommendations to features of good practice was found to be similar to that recorded in previous periods in earlier series of *Outcomes from Institutional audit* papers.<sup>11</sup> As noted above, this may reflect rising expectations rather than absence of progress.

13 However, the management of standards and the management of learning opportunities are fundamentally different tasks. The reports indicate that certain aspects of an institution's overarching framework are more pertinent to the management of learning opportunities than others. For example, managing learning opportunities (as opposed to

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<sup>10</sup> *Outcomes from Institutional audit 2007-9: Managing academic standards* ([www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-audit-academic-standards.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-audit-academic-standards.aspx)).

<sup>11</sup> *Managing Academic Standards*, paragraph 11.



academic standards) draws more widely on the professional and support staff of the institution and their associated structures and policies. The relationship with students and their expectations regarding learning opportunities is different from those relating to standards; in the former respect students are more like consumers. The first paper in the current *Outcomes* series, *Managing academic standards*, noted that a third of reports described significant delegation of responsibility for the management of standards and also problems of consistency where responsibilities were delegated to lower levels in the institution. The perceived need to bring the management of quality of learning opportunities close to the 'customer' can lead to tension in relation to pressures to maintain central oversight of provision and services, exploit economies of scale, and provide a standardised service across the institution. Consistency does not appear to emerge as a major theme of the recommendations relating to the management of learning opportunities except in the case of admissions, where consistency is seen as a fundamental requirement for fairness.

14 The reports discussed here contain 57 recommendations for institutional action to develop and improve frameworks for managing quality and standards, as well as citing nearly 40 features of good practice in this area. However, it should be noted that since these frameworks provide the means of managing both standards and the quality of learning opportunities, the impetus to recommend change may come from a variety of sources. Four out of 10 reports include commentary on the institutional framework specifically in relation to the management of learning opportunities. Half of the reports that contain specific comments on the framework for managing learning opportunities also include comments about the effectiveness of the framework.

15 The positive features of systems for the management of learning opportunities noted in the comments on effectiveness within the reports include good design and planning,<sup>12</sup> clarity,<sup>13</sup> self-reflection,<sup>14</sup> and rigour.<sup>15</sup> Such characteristics promote systems that are not only effective<sup>16</sup> but also facilitate individuals to discharge their roles,<sup>17</sup> link deliberative and executive structures, and help to maintain a central/local balance.<sup>18</sup> One institution was noted for 'the pervasive and integrated approach to the management of the quality of learning opportunities which has engaged all areas of the institution and contributed to the ongoing and dynamic development of the University';<sup>19</sup> another for 'the move towards a firm oversight at institutional level of the management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities through the implementation of authoritative guidance on University policy and regulation, combined with well-conceived organisational changes';<sup>20</sup> and a third for the investigations into effectiveness of University policies and procedures carried out by the Academic Audit Committee.<sup>21</sup>

## **Deliberative and executive structures**

16 The reports contain extensive descriptions of the deliberative and executive structures that institutions have in place to manage quality and standards. There are as many structures as reports, but they have a number of common features. A central deliberative body, usually a senate or academic board, is responsible for quality and

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<sup>12</sup> Keele University, paragraph 27; University of Leeds, paragraph 27.

<sup>13</sup> University of Leeds, paragraph 27; University of Hull, paragraph 18.

<sup>14</sup> University of Sheffield, paragraphs 13-23.

<sup>15</sup> University of Sheffield, paragraphs 13-23.

<sup>16</sup> University of Chichester, paragraph 28; University of Leeds, paragraph 27; University of York, paragraph 32; University of Durham, paragraph 22.

<sup>17</sup> University of Kent, paragraph 22.

<sup>18</sup> University of the Arts London, paragraph 26.

<sup>19</sup> University of Lincoln, paragraphs 86, 111, 118, 121-3, 132, 144, 149-51, 155, 157.

<sup>20</sup> University of Bristol, paragraph 20.

<sup>21</sup> University of Salford, paragraph 12.

standards, with sub-committees focusing variously on learning and teaching, research, quality and standards, and the student experience, all of which play a part in the management of learning opportunities. Where an institution is large enough to be subdivided into schools, faculties and departments, this structure may be mirrored at one or more sub-level(s). At the sub-level, further committees usually exist to manage programmes. The committee structure often includes student representatives, as discussed in the paper *Outcomes from Institutional audit 2007-2009: Student engagement and support*,<sup>22</sup> and both academic and professional staff.

17 Parallel with the committee structure are executive structures. At the top of the organisation there is usually a vice-chancellor's group and/or senior management team (often including both academic and professional staff and thus bringing together heads of service departments with academic heads). Key posts such as deans, associate deans, and pro vice-chancellors play an important role in linking the deliberative and executive systems together through committee membership and chairing.

18 Another element comprises central units established to promote quality. These are usually of two types. One type of unit present in virtually all institutions is a professional unit responsible for quality assurance and enhancement and for developing and implementing relevant processes. The second type is one focused on learning and teaching which may provide services to support quality of teaching and learning to both staff and students.

19 More than one in five of the reports made recommendations for reviewing and developing institutional committee structures responsible for the management of quality and standards. Some features of good practice nevertheless pertained to this topic: a few singling out effective reviews of committee structures that had taken place,<sup>23</sup> one noting the careful tracking of actions through the committee system,<sup>24</sup> and another noting the effective way in which a senior committee discharged its duties of oversight.<sup>25</sup> Reports suggested that a number of institutions should improve operational aspects of their committee systems, in particular the recording and quality of minutes of meetings, in order to ensure clarity and transparency of decision-making.<sup>26</sup> Other recommendations related to oversight of the quality assurance framework,<sup>27</sup> and ensuring implementation of plans and decisions.<sup>28</sup> Other reports suggested that institutions should address poor tracking of compliance and actions,<sup>29</sup> lack of formality,<sup>30</sup> very high levels of delegation,<sup>31</sup> and poor oversight.<sup>32</sup> However, the great majority of recommendations relating to the committee structure identified the need to review broad features such as responsibilities, terms of reference, membership, operations, reporting lines, delegation, and communications relating to either

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<sup>22</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-audit-student-engagement.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-audit-student-engagement.aspx).

<sup>23</sup> Bournemouth University, paragraph 17; Leeds Trinity University College, paragraph 8; Rose Bruford College, paragraph 29.

<sup>24</sup> Leeds Trinity University College, paragraph 6.

<sup>25</sup> University of Cambridge, paragraph 119.

<sup>26</sup> University College, Falmouth, paragraphs 10, 68, 89; Institute of Cancer Research, paragraphs 10, 24, 35, 136; Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, paragraph 51; University of Buckingham, paragraphs 56, 110.

<sup>27</sup> School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraphs 34, 36, 37; Institute of Cancer Research, paragraphs 10, 24, 35, 136; Leeds College of Music, paragraphs 21, 26, 29; Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, paragraphs 21, 31, 109; University of Salford, paragraph 24; Liverpool Hope University, paragraphs 26, 69, 73, 91, 150.

<sup>28</sup> Leeds College of Music, paragraphs 20, 21, 26, 29, 129, 130; University of Sheffield, paragraphs 13-23.

<sup>29</sup> Royal Academy of Music, paragraph 25.

<sup>30</sup> University of York, paragraph 33.

<sup>31</sup> University of Bradford, paragraph 40.

<sup>32</sup> Liverpool Hope University, paragraph 26.

all or part of the committee system,<sup>33</sup> in order to ensure greater effectiveness, coherence, clarity, accountability, and transparency.

20 Executive structures, as opposed to deliberative structures, were the subject of limited comment and gave rise to few features of good practice or recommendations. It is possible that this is not reflective of limited involvement of executive structures in the management of quality and standards, but rather arises from the process of Institutional audit, which focuses on evidence from formal committee minutes rather than executive discussion and decision-making. The implications of this disparity are discussed further in the concluding section of this paper (see paragraphs 84-95).

21 Some reports commented positively on institutional management of change, including, in one case, 'energetic leadership';<sup>34</sup> and one institution was urged to press ahead with post-merger changes.<sup>35</sup> One institution was recommended to review the most senior level of decision-making to clarify the relationship between its senate and its external advisory body.<sup>36</sup> Institutional audit reports contain limited comment on the roles of individual officerships; an exception is an institution that was recommended to consider the adequacy of checks and balances in relation to the role of Associate Deans (Education).<sup>37</sup>

## The role of strategy and planning

22 The reports describe a hierarchy of goals and strategies that relate to the management of learning opportunities: at the highest level are institutional goals couched in such terms as 'excellence',<sup>38</sup> 'openness',<sup>39</sup> 'research-led',<sup>40</sup> and 'inclusiveness'.<sup>41</sup> Some reports highlight the role that culture plays in underpinning the effective management of learning opportunities. One institution was noted for 'identifying the need and initiating an institutional drive for cultural change towards an increased focus on the quality of student-centred learning and teaching',<sup>42</sup> a second for prioritising students in its institutional culture;<sup>43</sup> and another report noted 'the ethos, culture and mission of the University which is understood, acknowledged and appreciated by both staff and students and which clearly underpins the work of the institution'.<sup>44</sup> An institution's overall mission and goals are usually reflected in a corporate strategy or plan, beneath which there are sub-strategies and plans for multiple areas such as learning and teaching, human resources, estates, IT, learning resources, student experience, and others. Until 2007, institutions were expected by HEFCE to produce learning and teaching strategies and to publish summaries of these on the Teaching Quality Information (TQI) website.<sup>45</sup> Subsequently, these were recommended by

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<sup>33</sup> Royal College of Music, paragraphs 23, 40, 44, 47, 49; School of Pharmacy, paragraphs 31, 40, 42, 93; Institute of Cancer Research, paragraphs 10, 24, 35, 136; London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, paragraph 37; Royal Academy of Music, paragraph 25; University of the Arts London, paragraph 147; Coventry University, paragraph 22; Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, paragraphs 18-20, 22, 36, 59, 91, 101, 113; Open University, paragraph 50; Queens University Belfast, paragraph 36; Royal Veterinary College, paragraph 104; University of East Anglia, paragraphs 16, 40, 164; University of Northampton, paragraph 17; University of Sunderland, paragraph 14; University of Winchester, paragraph 30.

<sup>34</sup> Anglia Ruskin University, paragraph 17; University College for the Creative Arts, paragraph 61; University of Birmingham, paragraph 20.

<sup>35</sup> Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, paragraph 51.

<sup>36</sup> University of Buckingham, paragraph 24.

<sup>37</sup> University of Southampton, paragraphs 43, 87, 96.

<sup>38</sup> Roehampton University, paragraph 39.

<sup>39</sup> Royal College of Music, paragraph 69.

<sup>40</sup> University of Liverpool, paragraph 47.

<sup>41</sup> Loughborough University, paragraph 73.

<sup>42</sup> University of Surrey, paragraphs 117, 148, 184.

<sup>43</sup> Loughborough University, paragraphs 103, 110, 128, 135, 142, 145.

<sup>44</sup> Liverpool Hope University, paragraphs 5, 14, 17, 115, 124.

<sup>45</sup> HEFCE 2003/51. *Information on quality and standards in higher education: Final guidance* (HEFCE, 2003). [www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2003/03\\_51](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2003/03_51).

HEFCE to form part of the contextual information which institutions should make publicly available. Reports comment positively on the role that a learning and teaching strategy plays in managing learning opportunities, and suggest to some institutions the need to complete, update and clarify these.<sup>46</sup>

23 Reports also comment on the planning and implementation systems in place to achieve strategic goals. Examples of good practice in relation to planning included the adoption of an inclusive and consultative approach;<sup>47</sup> the work of a senior strategy group focused on the student experience;<sup>48</sup> the use of the balanced scorecard;<sup>49</sup> and effective central-local dialogue within the planning cycle.<sup>50</sup>

## Central support units

24 Central quality units perform a variety of roles, including supporting the academic governance structures; developing, codifying and promulgating quality assurance policies and procedures; and managing the processes of approval, monitoring and review of academic programmes. The establishment and work of central quality units is noted as demonstrating good practice in some institutions:<sup>51</sup> these units have been noted for their contribution to delivering an institution's learning and teaching strategy, as well as to more general management and quality.

25 The role played by central teaching and learning units or by Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs) is discussed further under 'staff support' (see paragraphs 60 and 63-66). These units are also seen to contribute to the delivery of university strategies relevant to the quality of learning opportunities, reviewing the effectiveness of quality assurance procedures, and the general assurance of academic quality.<sup>52</sup>

## Policies and practices

26 The body of policies and practices which form the procedural - as opposed to the structural - framework for assuring the management of learning opportunities gives rise to comment in a significant number of reports. A few institutions were noted for their good practice in keeping policies up-to-date.<sup>53</sup> Others were advised to monitor, review, reconsider, and adapt their approach in order to respond to internal and external emerging issues and to strengthen their framework for quality assurance and managing learning opportunities.<sup>54</sup> Recommendations included adopting more effective, systematic,<sup>55</sup> timely,<sup>56</sup> comprehensive,<sup>57</sup> and consistent approaches,<sup>58</sup> and clarifying the respective roles and limits

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<sup>46</sup> Royal College of Art, paragraph 35; School of Pharmacy, paragraphs 48, 80; University of Essex, paragraph 19.

<sup>47</sup> University of Brighton, paragraph 15; University of Southampton, paragraph 102.

<sup>48</sup> University of Bath, paragraphs 104, 148.

<sup>49</sup> University of Bradford, paragraph 178.

<sup>50</sup> University of Lincoln, paragraphs 16, 155.

<sup>51</sup> University of Reading, paragraph 125; University of Salford, paragraph 16; University of Durham, paragraph 21; University of Wolverhampton, paragraph 14.

<sup>52</sup> University of Reading, paragraph 125; Middlesex University, paragraph 22; Open University, paragraph 147.

<sup>53</sup> University of Salford, paragraph 16; University of Portsmouth, paragraphs 16, 58, 80.

<sup>54</sup> University College Falmouth, paragraph 17; Leeds College of Music, paragraphs 53, 58, 59, 65.

<sup>55</sup> Royal Agricultural College, paragraphs 26, 52, 86; School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraphs 22-3.

<sup>56</sup> Royal Agricultural College, paragraphs 26, 52, 86; School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraphs 22-3; Royal Academy of Music, paragraph 42.

<sup>57</sup> University of Sunderland, paragraph 14.

<sup>58</sup> University of Bradford, paragraphs 40, 96, 99, 102, 109; Leeds Metropolitan University, paragraphs 17, 22, 114; Royal Veterinary College, paragraph 76; University College London, paragraphs 58, 83, 84, 99, 131, 139, 141, 163, 174, 206; University of Surrey, paragraphs 34, 52, 57.

of central and local processes. One institution was also warned against gold-plating its processes and asked to reflect on the balance between effectiveness and burdens on staff.<sup>59</sup>

27 On the positive side, a number of institutions were praised for the clarity and accessibility of information on quality policies and processes provided to staff and others through handbooks, guidance notes and the web.<sup>60</sup> One institution was also noted for its use of technology to facilitate staff engagement with quality assurance processes such as programme approval.<sup>61</sup> Conversely, a small number of institutions were recommended to improve the presentation and communication of policies, for example through issuing operational guidance,<sup>62</sup> consolidating the publication of procedures in a single place,<sup>63</sup> and clarifying the degree of applicability of central policies to individual schools.<sup>64</sup>

## Approval, monitoring and review of programmes

28 Programme approval, monitoring and review embrace the management both of standards and of learning opportunities. *Outcomes from Institutional audit 2007-9: Managing academic standards*<sup>65</sup> notes that the processes adopted for programme approval, monitoring and review are overwhelmingly satisfactory, though recommendations for improvement outnumber features of good practice by more than three to one; and in a small number of cases weaknesses in the processes of approval, monitoring and review contributed to judgements of limited confidence.<sup>66</sup>

29 The formal structures and processes for approving new and amended programmes, conducting annual monitoring, and undertaking periodic review of academic provision often form the core of an institution's quality assurance 'handbook' and coordinate a range of internal and external inputs into the management of quality as well as standards. For example, they bring together the inputs from academic staff, planners, service providers, students, external examiners and advisors, and employers. The reports note the almost universal consideration of matters relating to the quality of learning opportunities through initial approval, annual monitoring and periodic review. Where such consideration is not explicit an institution is recommended to review its procedures to make it so.<sup>67</sup>

30 The reports highlight good practice in involving professional and support staff in annual monitoring,<sup>68</sup> either through parallel annual monitoring cycles or as part of annual programme evaluation. Involvement in periodic review also draws comment, with one institution recommended to make greater use of its professional staff in such reviews, particularly given the frequency of issues regarding learning resources emerging from the process.<sup>69</sup>

31 Staffing, teaching space, library and computing resources, and support services may require specific processes at the point of programme approval. These may entail the preparation of separate proposals that complement the academic proposal for new or

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<sup>59</sup> University of the West of England, Bristol, paragraphs 24, 33, 35, 42, 43.

<sup>60</sup> Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, paragraph 23; University of Brighton, paragraph 33; Nottingham Trent University, paragraphs 17, 19, 26; University of Bath, paragraphs 145, 168, 176; University of Birmingham, paragraph 30; University of Hull, paragraph 19.

<sup>61</sup> University of Kent, paragraphs 228, 39.

<sup>62</sup> University of Lincoln, paragraphs 48, 57, 85, 105, 108.

<sup>63</sup> Royal College of Art, paragraphs 44, 46, 48, 85, 86, 98, 194, 249.

<sup>64</sup> University of Southampton, paragraphs 43, 87, 96.

<sup>65</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-audit-academic-standards.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-audit-academic-standards.aspx).

<sup>66</sup> *Managing academic standards*, paragraphs 17-18.

<sup>67</sup> University of Chichester, paragraph 108.

<sup>68</sup> Ravensbourne College of Design and Communications, paragraph 103; Royal Academy of Music, paragraph 58.

<sup>69</sup> University of Durham, paragraphs 34, 79.

modified provision<sup>70</sup> and require sign-off by service providers. In some cases, a two-stage approval process is in place, whereby the strategic and 'business' case is dealt with initially by an academic planning committee, the senior management team, or a sub-group thereof, before proceeding to academic approval.<sup>71</sup> The intention of this approach is to link programme approval to the planning system, and the Institutional audit report for one institution where such a link did not exist commented on the value of developing one.<sup>72</sup>

32 The reports identify two areas associated with programme approval which present challenges for some institutions. One is the lack of a robust process for agreeing formally on the discontinuation of courses or programmes.<sup>73</sup> The other area is the cumulative effect of minor changes and the need to examine the relationship between major and minor amendments to programmes to ensure that major amendments do not occur by default.<sup>74</sup>

33 The reports highlight the complexity of monitoring and review arrangements that are in place in many institutions. Annual monitoring reports prepared on a programme basis may feed into departmental reviews, upwards into school/faculty reviews, and thence into institutional annual reviews. At each level, scrutiny may take place and items may be extracted for action: from the top down there is a process of oversight, ensuring that the work of the level below has been completed satisfactorily. One institution was noted for its good practice in developing an annual strategic review that 'makes an important contribution to the institutional management of the quality of learning opportunities';<sup>75</sup> and another for the contribution that its bi-annual programme monitoring makes to quality assurance and enhancement.<sup>76</sup>

34 In some institutions, programmes once approved enter open-ended validation: in others they may require re-validation on a periodic basis. The relationship between re-validation and other forms of programme, subject or departmental review can become complex. The management of learning opportunities involves most of the institution's service departments, which themselves may undertake annual and periodic reviews: these may feed into the academic review of programmes and may also feed into central planning and strategy processes. In addition, some institutions have an internal audit function that plays a role in quality assurance<sup>77</sup> and needs to articulate effectively with other processes. The cross-cutting role of thematic reviews was noted as good practice in relation to enhancing students' learning opportunities in one institution.<sup>78</sup> However, complexity of review led to the recommendations in some reports for clarification and simplification. For example, one institution was recommended to eliminate duplication and establish clarity of purpose for three overlapping review processes.<sup>79</sup> Another was recommended to review the effectiveness of its various internal audit processes and how they work together to ensure that their outcomes contribute in an integrated way to managing quality.<sup>80</sup>

35 Despite over 50 recommendations for improving the processes of approval, monitoring and review, the reports suggest that these processes were generally effective in

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<sup>70</sup> Ravensbourne College of Design and Communications, paragraph 65; University of Lincoln, paragraph 93; University of Southampton, paragraph 53; University of York, paragraph 83; University of Bath, paragraph 95.

<sup>71</sup> For example, University of Bath, paragraph 95.

<sup>72</sup> Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, paragraphs 54-55.

<sup>73</sup> University College for the Creative Arts, paragraph 33; Coventry University, paragraph 75; Goldsmiths College, paragraph 40.

<sup>74</sup> London Business School, paragraph 36; Southampton Solent University, paragraph 61; University of Greenwich, paragraph 56.

<sup>75</sup> University College Falmouth, paragraph 31.

<sup>76</sup> Rose Bruford College, paragraphs 48, 90, 163.

<sup>77</sup> University of Salford, paragraph 23.

<sup>78</sup> Lancaster University, paragraph 77.

<sup>79</sup> Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, paragraph 73.

<sup>80</sup> Leeds Metropolitan University, paragraphs 36, 39.

terms of assuring the quality of learning opportunities. The improvements suggested are in areas that include observance of internal policy requirements,<sup>81</sup> consistency,<sup>82</sup> clarity,<sup>83</sup> formality,<sup>84</sup> reporting and recording of decisions,<sup>85</sup> and completeness.<sup>86</sup> The use of evidence, both statistical and from internal and external reviews,<sup>87</sup> is addressed (such as the need to ensure effective and consistent analysis of module evaluations and student data in annual reports).<sup>88</sup> Externality,<sup>89</sup> independence,<sup>90</sup> use of the Academic Infrastructure,<sup>91</sup> timeliness,<sup>92</sup> strengthening central oversight,<sup>93</sup> and the link to enhancement<sup>94</sup> are also the subject of recommendations.

36 Features of good practice that were highlighted in relation to approval, monitoring and review included robustness,<sup>95</sup> the use of risk-based approaches,<sup>96</sup> links to quality enhancement,<sup>97</sup> well-designed templates,<sup>98</sup> the use of annual review days,<sup>99</sup> and the integration of approval, monitoring and review into a single academic process.<sup>100</sup> These features of good practice have an underlying theme: effectiveness through focus and efficient use of staff time.

37 Risk-based techniques are not commonly used at this time in relation to approval, monitoring or review. A number of institutions require the explicit identification and addressing of risk at the point of approval of new programmes.<sup>101</sup> Elsewhere, the use of risk alerts or a risk-based approach to annual monitoring (following analysis of performance indicators) was seen to enhance the effectiveness of annual monitoring.<sup>102</sup> The attempt to differentiate approval processes on the basis of defined risk which was introduced by one institution was marred by operational issues.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Royal Agricultural College, paragraphs 29, 30; School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraphs 82-90, 92; School of Pharmacy, paragraph 68; Goldsmiths College, paragraphs 46, 112; University of Northampton, paragraph 33.

<sup>82</sup> University of Birmingham, paragraphs 41, 45, 60, 62.

<sup>83</sup> Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, paragraph 73; Leeds Metropolitan University, paragraph 25.

<sup>84</sup> Institute of Cancer Research, paragraph 33; London Business School, paragraph 36; Lancaster University, paragraph 25.

<sup>85</sup> Loughborough University, paragraphs 44, 52, 88, 90, 91, 94, 119, 134; University of Essex, paragraph 55; University of Lincoln, paragraphs 94, 168; Queens University Belfast, paragraphs 41, 178.

<sup>86</sup> University of Reading, paragraph 44; Leeds Metropolitan University, paragraphs 30, 37; Nottingham Trent University, paragraphs 69, 70.

<sup>87</sup> Royal Academy of Music, paragraphs 49, 50; University College for the Creative Arts, paragraphs 49, 50; Lancaster University, paragraph 45; Leeds Metropolitan University, paragraph 34, 63; University of Northampton, paragraphs 89, 90.

<sup>88</sup> Bath Spa University, paragraph 74.

<sup>89</sup> Royal Agricultural College, paragraphs 29, 30; University of Chichester, paragraphs 34, 106; University of Sunderland, paragraphs 19, 21, 26.

<sup>90</sup> University of Salford, paragraph 23; University of Bath, paragraph 46.

<sup>91</sup> University of Buckingham, paragraphs 35, 66; Leeds Metropolitan University, paragraph 47.

<sup>92</sup> University of Chichester, paragraph 52; University of Birmingham, paragraph 76; University of the West of England Bristol, paragraph 40.

<sup>93</sup> Royal Veterinary College, paragraph 103; University of Greenwich, paragraph 4.

<sup>94</sup> Loughborough University, paragraphs 44, 52, 88, 90, 91, 94, 119, 134; Bournemouth University, paragraphs 41, 77.

<sup>95</sup> University of Cambridge, paragraph 83; University of Salford, paragraph 50.

<sup>96</sup> University of Exeter, paragraph 79; University of Sheffield, paragraphs 14-18.

<sup>97</sup> University of Southampton, paragraph 57; Bournemouth University, paragraphs 41, 77.

<sup>98</sup> University of Oxford, paragraph 89.

<sup>99</sup> Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, paragraph 74.

<sup>100</sup> Open University, paragraphs 46-47.

<sup>101</sup> Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, paragraph 67; University of Bristol, paragraph 64; University of Wolverhampton, paragraphs 51-52.

<sup>102</sup> University of Exeter, paragraph 79; University of Sheffield paragraphs, paragraphs 14-18.

<sup>103</sup> University of Lincoln, paragraph 94.

38 The reports note that the processes of approval, monitoring and review are adapted to deal with collaborative provision (which has been discussed separately in *Outcomes from Collaborative provision audit: Approval and review of partnerships and programmes*)<sup>104</sup> and to accommodate the specific requirements of distance learning and e-learning<sup>105</sup> which is discussed in paragraphs 46-49.

## The use of external reference points

### The Academic Infrastructure

39 Institutional use of the Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points has been discussed in general terms in the *Outcomes from Institutional audit 2007-9: Managing academic standards*. A few institutions were recommended to engage more systematically with the Academic Infrastructure<sup>106</sup> or more generally with external reference points and the higher education sector.<sup>107</sup> Nevertheless, some institutions were noted for their good practice in this area, for example a 'structured approach to the use of the *Code of practice* in the management of learning opportunities'<sup>108</sup> and 'full engagement with the Academic Infrastructure'.<sup>109</sup>

40 Most institutions undertake some form of mapping of policies and practices against the *Code of practice*, and identification of gaps or non-alignment normally triggers action.<sup>110</sup> Institutions also frequently allocate responsibility for ensuring that they remain up-to-date with the provisions of the *Code of practice* and for the monitoring of its use to either or both a central quality unit and a central quality committee.<sup>111</sup> Institutions use the *Code of practice* not only to inform their policies and procedures in a general way but to construct their own codes of practice.<sup>112</sup> Reports include recommendations for greater use of specific sections of the *Code of practice* in relation to learning opportunities and note the positive use of sections in others. For example, an institution was recommended to make greater use of *Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review*<sup>113</sup> in order to develop procedures for closing programmes.<sup>114</sup>

41 Programme specifications are a feature of the Academic Infrastructure which relates directly to the management of learning opportunities. Institutions are variously recommended to complete their suite of specifications,<sup>115</sup> to improve them in terms of content and focus,<sup>116</sup> and to consider their currency and accessibility.<sup>117</sup> One institution was noted for its good practice in extending the preparation of programme specifications to its research degrees.<sup>118</sup> Subject benchmark statements are noted as being used throughout the lifecycle of programmes,<sup>119</sup> but particularly at the design and validation stage<sup>120</sup> where they may be a

<sup>104</sup> [www.gaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-Collaborative-provision-audit-Approval-and-review-of-partnerships-and-programmes.aspx](http://www.gaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-Collaborative-provision-audit-Approval-and-review-of-partnerships-and-programmes.aspx).

<sup>105</sup> For example, University of Chichester, paragraph 104.

<sup>106</sup> School of Pharmacy, paragraphs 44, 45, 66, 69; Institute of Cancer Research, paragraphs 13, 31, 43, 45, 47, 48, 54, 105; University of Leeds, paragraphs 76,79; Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, paragraphs 60, 62.

<sup>107</sup> Central School of Speech and Drama, paragraphs 89, 90, 100, 116, 119; London Business School, paragraph 70; Nottingham Trent University, paragraphs 41, 45.

<sup>108</sup> For example, University of Northampton, paragraph 28.

<sup>109</sup> University of Chichester, paragraph 67.

<sup>110</sup> For example, Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, paragraphs 74-75.

<sup>111</sup> For example, Coventry University, paragraph 55.

<sup>112</sup> Anglia Ruskin University, paragraph 73.

<sup>113</sup> [www.gaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Code-of-practice-section-7.aspx](http://www.gaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Code-of-practice-section-7.aspx).

<sup>114</sup> Goldsmiths College, paragraph 40.

<sup>115</sup> School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraphs 69-71.

<sup>116</sup> University of Leeds, paragraphs 47, 50; Leeds Trinity University College, paragraph 17.

<sup>117</sup> University of Lincoln, paragraphs 41-42.

<sup>118</sup> University of Kent, paragraph 107.

<sup>119</sup> University of Lincoln, paragraph 88.



mandatory element of both programme documentation and validation discussion. One institution's 'procedures for benchmarking of programmes at validation' which used, among other reference points, subject benchmark statements were highlighted as features of good practice.<sup>121</sup>

## Engagement with industry and the professions

42 Accreditation by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) plays a role in the design and review of programmes in many institutions. Although the relationship with PSRBs is often managed at local level, reports note central engagement, for example through the framing of policies and procedures to take account of PSRB input,<sup>122</sup> and compiling of central registers of PSRB activity.<sup>123</sup> A rigorous approach to maintaining an overview of PSRB engagements by one institution<sup>124</sup> and steps taken by another to improve interaction with PSRBs at University, school and faculty levels<sup>125</sup> were both identified as features of good practice.

43 A number of reports highlight as good practice the broader engagement of institutions with professional practice and the wider environment. This ranges from the systematic use of information about practice elsewhere in the higher education sector when developing policy and practice<sup>126</sup> to responding to the needs of the NHS<sup>127</sup> and industry. For example, one institution has established School Advisory Councils which involve local business and other stakeholders providing strategic advice on programme development.<sup>128</sup> Another adopted an 'iterative engagement' with its industry sector in order to support its programme aims and philosophy through placements and outreach work.<sup>129</sup> Good practice in engagement with industry and professions ranges from targeted relations with music and the arts in some specialist institutions<sup>130</sup> to multi-subject, multi-industry links in larger institutions.<sup>131</sup> One institution is highlighted for its pursuit of employability and volunteering strategies.<sup>132</sup> The intended outcome of such schemes is to embed employability into the curriculum. Further discussion of issues relating to employability, careers and student support can be found in *Outcomes from Institutional audit 2007-2009; Student engagement and support*.<sup>133</sup>

44 Engagement with the business environment and local economy is also seen as part of the mission of some institutions, and has attracted recognition as good practice in a number of institutions. A few institutions are commended for engaging strategically with the local community and the local region's priorities for social and economic regeneration, thereby enriching students' learning opportunities.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Royal Agricultural College, paragraph 54.

<sup>121</sup> Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, paragraph 53.

<sup>122</sup> Central School of Speech and Drama, paragraph 65.

<sup>123</sup> Queens University Belfast, paragraph 98.

<sup>124</sup> De Montfort University, paragraph 64.

<sup>125</sup> University of Salford, paragraph 17.

<sup>126</sup> Liverpool Hope University, paragraph 74; University of Wolverhampton, paragraph 95.

<sup>127</sup> School of Pharmacy, paragraphs 25, 150.

<sup>128</sup> Royal Agricultural College, paragraph 61.

<sup>129</sup> Central School of Speech and Drama, paragraphs 43, 83, 89, 103, 111, 124.

<sup>130</sup> Leeds College of Music, paragraphs 76, 96, 97; Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, paragraphs 94, 97, 99.

<sup>131</sup> Loughborough University, paragraph 118; Nottingham Trent University, paragraphs 61 62.

<sup>132</sup> University of Portsmouth, paragraph 145.

<sup>133</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-audit-student-engagement.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/Outcomes-from-audit-student-engagement.aspx).

<sup>134</sup> University College Falmouth, paragraphs 51, 60; Royal Academy of Music, paragraph 84; University of Wolverhampton, paragraphs 91, 123, 128.

## Learning resources

45 In general the reports considered the provision of physical learning resources to be satisfactory and to contribute positively to the learning opportunities provided. The main resources were those of libraries, information technology, teaching space, and virtual learning environments (these latter incorporating elements of the first three).

46 There were only a few features of good practice in this area. One institution was commended for its effective delivery of library services;<sup>135</sup> another for the quality of its distance learning materials;<sup>136</sup> a third for the work of its technical support department;<sup>137</sup> a fourth for its integrated approach to managing library and information technology services;<sup>138</sup> and another for the high level of learning resources available to its undergraduates.<sup>139</sup> Good practice was noted in another institution regarding the integration of the work of learning resource departments with the academic development and planning process.<sup>140</sup>

47 The reports also contained some recommendations for improvement (more than double the number of features of good practice). These fell into two broad groups. On the one hand, a number of institutions were recommended to adopt a more strategic approach to the planning and management of learning resources.<sup>141</sup> In doing so, they were urged to link resource planning to academic and other planning and strategic processes.<sup>142</sup> This is applied not only centrally but also at the local, departmental level.<sup>143</sup> Institutions are urged to ensure that the planning of learning resources is not only effective but also proactive (see also paragraphs 10-21 for similar observations in relation to the overall framework for managing learning opportunities).

48 The other group of recommendations relates to specific aspects of learning resources which audit teams considered needed to be improved or developed. These include better timetabling;<sup>144</sup> better access to library and learning centres;<sup>145</sup> improving electronic access;<sup>146</sup> and increasing the effectiveness and use of the virtual learning environment.<sup>147</sup>

## Non-traditional learning environments

49 All but a few of the Institutional audit reports contained commentary on the provision made by universities and colleges for study in non-traditional environments, under the audit heading of 'Other modes of study'. The features covered are very varied, ranging from distance learning, blended learning and the provision of a virtual learning environment to collaborative provision, work-based study, placements, study abroad, short courses, and different student groups such as part-time or mature students. The management of

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<sup>135</sup> University of Southampton, paragraph 78.

<sup>136</sup> Open University, paragraph 114.

<sup>137</sup> Central School of Speech and Drama, paragraph 97.

<sup>138</sup> University of East Anglia, paragraph 92.

<sup>139</sup> University of Oxford, paragraph 150.

<sup>140</sup> University of Wolverhampton, paragraphs 52, 86.

<sup>141</sup> For example, Royal Agricultural College, paragraph 70.

<sup>142</sup> Central School of Speech and Drama, paragraphs 95, 96, 99, 100; Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, paragraphs 28, 55, 82; Rose Bruford College, paragraphs 30, 132.

<sup>143</sup> For example, Leeds Trinity University College, paragraph 50.

<sup>144</sup> Leeds College of Music, paragraphs 102, 105.

<sup>145</sup> University College for the Creative Arts, paragraph 100.

<sup>146</sup> Liverpool Hope University, paragraphs 19, 106, 210.

<sup>147</sup> University of Brighton, paragraphs 125, 126; University of Salford, paragraph 69; Rose Bruford College, paragraph 127; University of Northampton, paragraph 46.

non-traditional learning environments contributed to a dozen features of good practice and three recommendations for action.

## **Flexible and distance learning**

50 Six out of 10 reports indicated that institutions were involved in the provision of distance learning. Some of this provision was collaborative or contracted out to another provider.<sup>148</sup> Of the remainder, the scale of provision ranged from a single pathway on one degree<sup>149</sup> to one of the largest providers of distance learning in the world.<sup>150</sup> Reports highlighted good practice in the provision of high quality learning opportunities, which in one institution involved a bespoke website allowing access to departmental, library and student support services; a virtual learning environment providing means of electronic interaction; additional library services including mailing materials; study material; local study arrangements; and telephone and e-mail feedback and tutorial advice.<sup>151</sup> Other features of good practice noted were the use of technology to create portals to support both distance learning students and staff,<sup>152</sup> and the work of learning technologists with teams developing flexible and distance learning<sup>153</sup>.

51 On the whole, learning opportunities for distance learning programmes are managed in similar ways to the processes for traditionally taught, face-to-face provision. However, institutions commonly address the specific and additional requirements for distance learning in two ways. The first is through additional requirements for approval and review of programmes involving distance learning to ensure that the design, pedagogy, delivery, and support of such learning is appropriate. Two institutions without such additional procedures were recommended by the reports to review and develop their procedures for programme approval, monitoring and review accordingly.<sup>154</sup> The second is the development of areas of expertise, often located in a central technology, education, or learning and teaching unit to support the development of flexible and distance learning.<sup>155</sup>

52 The development of virtual learning environments in almost every institution has opened up the possibility of using elements of e-learning in combination with traditional and face-to-face approaches. Many institutions have e-learning units, the role of which may include staff development and training, technical assistance and advice. Such units may also play a role in the approval and review of e-learning provision. The lines between traditional learning and flexible and distance learning have become increasingly blurred with the development of 'blended learning', and the incorporation of innovative and technology-based teaching approaches into mainstream teaching and learning. There is potential here for enhancement of learning opportunities and it is an area where institutions may well wish to monitor the impact.

## **Work-based and placement learning**

53 Almost half of the reports include comments on various forms of work-based learning, including work-based qualifications, sandwich degrees, placements and exchange programmes. Work-based degrees are seldom mentioned, though one institution planned to make this a requirement of all Foundation Degrees.<sup>156</sup> Another institution was planning

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<sup>148</sup> For example, School of Oriental and African Studies, School of Pharmacy.

<sup>149</sup> University of Buckingham.

<sup>150</sup> Open University.

<sup>151</sup> University of Leicester, paragraph 52.

<sup>152</sup> Open University, paragraph 138.

<sup>153</sup> Anglia Ruskin University, paragraph 106.

<sup>154</sup> University of Chichester, paragraph 104; Leeds Metropolitan University, paragraphs 27, 72.

<sup>155</sup> For example, University of Exeter, paragraphs 117-119.

<sup>156</sup> University of Greenwich, paragraph 95.

new work-based learning provision as part of its widening participation strategy.<sup>157</sup> Elsewhere, work-based learning was reported in relation to placements, with some institutions anticipating growth in this area.<sup>158</sup>

54 Work-based learning is recognised as requiring a different approach from traditional learning. A few reports noted that institutions had developed work-based learning strategies and frameworks, often including within them wider placement learning, and had aligned these with the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*.<sup>159</sup> Two reports noted the establishment of centres within the institution to develop work-based learning.<sup>160</sup> However, while in one case the audit team noted that the centre had considerable impact internally and externally,<sup>161</sup> in the other case significant development work remained to be done to match planned expansion of distance and work-based learning.<sup>162</sup> In a further example, the institution was unable to demonstrate the equivalence of its work-based learning and traditional route to a degree, and was advised to consider how non-traditional modes of study could be treated explicitly in approval, monitoring and review.<sup>163</sup>

55 Nearly a third of reports discuss the management of placements involving either industrial or professional attachments, or periods of study abroad. Such learning opportunities are much more widespread than work-based qualifications, though the mode of study involved may in some cases be similar. In line with institutional concerns about employability, a number of reports note the intention to increase placement study opportunities.<sup>164</sup> The reports warn that expansion could put pressure on existing systems of management of such learning opportunities, and that these may need to be reviewed.<sup>165</sup> Good practice is cited in relation to one institution where all students are required to undertake a placement in order to enhance learning and employability.<sup>166</sup> A few reports highlight a number of instances of good practice in relation to placements and study abroad in relation to the thoroughness of the ways in which students are prepared and supported, the management of industrial links, and institutional commitment to industrial and professional training.<sup>167</sup> In turn these schemes are seen to contribute to the provision of effective learning opportunities and to employability.

## Role of research

56 The Institutional audit reports comment on the links between research and learning opportunities. This is an aspect of managing learning opportunities where good practice overwhelmingly exceeds recommendations for action. The areas highlighted relate, on the one hand, to the development of research-led teaching and, on the other, to student engagement with research. Good practice is identified in institutions with a strong

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<sup>157</sup> Royal College of Art, paragraph 74.

<sup>158</sup> Aston University, paragraph 91; University of the West of England, Bristol, paragraph 78.

<sup>159</sup> Queens University Belfast, paragraph 131; University of Hull, paragraph 69; University of Sunderland, paragraph 76; Rose Bruford College, paragraph 116.

<sup>160</sup> Aston University, paragraphs 91-3; Middlesex University, paragraph 54.

<sup>161</sup> Middlesex University, paragraph 54.

<sup>162</sup> Aston University, paragraph 93.

<sup>163</sup> Royal College of Art, paragraph 75.

<sup>164</sup> For example, Coventry University, paragraph 112.

<sup>165</sup> Coventry, paragraphs 116, 138.

<sup>166</sup> Leeds Trinity University College, paragraph 58.

<sup>167</sup> Royal Agricultural College, paragraph 74; Keele University, paragraph 108; Loughborough University, paragraph 118; Aston University, paragraph 90; University of Surrey, paragraphs 123, 127; University of Warwick, paragraph 99.

commitment to research-led teaching, and a broad approach to embedding it within the curriculum and academic practice.<sup>168</sup>

## Research-informed curricula

57 There is evidence in the reports that successful research-led teaching involves a strategic element. This may be framed in an institution's education or learning and teaching strategy,<sup>169</sup> its research strategy,<sup>170</sup> and its overall mission.<sup>171</sup> As well as adopting a strategic approach, institutions such as these use multiple structures and processes to facilitate the delivery of teaching that is research-led. For example, academic staff recruitment, development and promotion are used to ensure that teaching staff are themselves actively engaged in research.<sup>172</sup> Programme approval, monitoring and review processes are employed to monitor the link: for example, in one institution approval of a pathway required information to be presented on how staff research has informed the proposed curriculum, and annual monitoring requires information on how scholarly activity has enhanced quality.<sup>173</sup> In another institution a new research centre was given the go-ahead by the institution only when teaching was incorporated.<sup>174</sup> One institution's commitment to link research and teaching was put into practice by supporting 'pedagogic research, research clusters, and projects, open to students, support, and technical staff as well as academic staff'.<sup>175</sup> Reports noted good practice in one institution where research was supported that enhanced the quality of the students' learning experience.<sup>176</sup>

## Student engagement in research

58 The link between research and teaching goes beyond ensuring that curricula are informed by the latest thinking. A second focus is student engagement with research and the use of research-informed teaching techniques. Of particular note are initiatives to bring research into undergraduate teaching identified in a number of reports. For example, one institution shifted its teaching practice to increase independent learning by encouraging the use of enquiry-based learning in order to foster critical enquiry, debate and self-motivation.<sup>177</sup> Good practice was noted in an institution which provided opportunities for undergraduates to become directly involved in research groups and activities supported by a scholarship scheme and investment in research skills development.<sup>178</sup> In another institution, good practice was noted in raising undergraduate students' research aspirations through the work of a dedicated centre, a journal and an internship scheme.<sup>179</sup> Further examples of good practice included the emphasis laid on student engagement with research methods and staff research in the design of taught degree programmes,<sup>180</sup> and the quality of research method teaching provided to students.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Anglia Ruskin University, paragraphs 34, 101, 102, 104; University of Leeds, paragraphs 20, 131, 204; University of Southampton, paragraph 73; Nottingham Trent University, paragraphs 81-86; Open University, paragraph 105; University of Durham, paragraphs 80-95.

<sup>169</sup> University of Southampton, paragraph 73; Nottingham Trent University, paragraphs 81-6; University of Bristol, paragraph 85.

<sup>170</sup> For example, Open University, paragraph 105.

<sup>171</sup> University of Leeds, paragraphs 20, 131, 204; Open University, paragraph 105; Nottingham Trent University, paragraphs 81-6; University of Durham, paragraphs 80-95.

<sup>172</sup> For example, University of Leeds, paragraphs 20, 131, 204; University of Durham, paragraphs 80-95.

<sup>173</sup> Anglia Ruskin University, paragraphs 34, 101-4.

<sup>174</sup> University of Leeds, paragraphs 21, 131, 204.

<sup>175</sup> University College for the Creative Arts, paragraph 95.

<sup>176</sup> Royal College of Music, paragraphs 101, 103, 151, 157.

<sup>177</sup> University of Birmingham, paragraph 90.

<sup>178</sup> University of Warwick, paragraphs 97, 126, 185.

<sup>179</sup> University of Central Lancashire, paragraph 145.

<sup>180</sup> University of Bristol, paragraph 85.

<sup>181</sup> Royal College of Art, paragraphs 180, 183.

59 On the other hand, one institution was recommended to develop further its approach to integrating research and teaching across all its curricula, and to exploit more fully innovative practice within some of its departments and pedagogic advances elsewhere in the sector. This was in order to better embed active research-based learning across all programmes.<sup>182</sup>

## Staff support

60 The 76 reports describe support available to staff mostly, although not exclusively, to academic staff to enable them to carry out their duties effectively. The great majority of institutions have a human resources management function responsible for the policies and procedures related to the employment of staff. These typically include recruitment, probation, induction, performance review, promotion, reward, and training as well as welfare functions. Many institutions have developed workload allocation models. The training and development of staff extends beyond the remit of human resources departments in many institutions, involving learning and teaching centres. The reports show that over 40 per cent of institutions displayed features of good practice related to staff support, with some receiving multiple commendations thereby confirming the contribution of staff support to the quality of learning opportunities.

## Human resource management

61 Human resource (HR) management can play an important role in assuring high quality teaching. A number of institutions were commended for their good practice in relation to the management of staff. One institution displayed good practice in terms of its 'commitment to achieving high staff performance through systematic investment in professional development, career progression and reward'.<sup>183</sup> Another is commended for its management of change, which involved developing a comprehensive HR policy; embedding appraisal; and developing schemes for peer observation, workload allocation and certificated staff development.<sup>184</sup> Good practice is noted in the importance accorded to teaching as well as research in staffing decisions.<sup>185</sup> Elsewhere, an institution with a largely teaching profile was noted for its 'commitment to the development and support of scholarship and research among staff through the system of recognised research status and the funding of doctoral studies'.<sup>186</sup> Among the staff management practices singled out as good practice are clear and informative induction material;<sup>187</sup> annual teaching prizes;<sup>188</sup> and the management of hourly-paid academic staff.<sup>189</sup>

62 Recommendations were made in some reports for improvements in aspects of human resource management. In a small specialised institution, the lack of a formal appraisal scheme 'impeded the transparent identification of the development needs of all groups of staff',<sup>190</sup> while in another institution there was no central record of the appraisal process and thus no picture of the consistency of its application.<sup>191</sup> Improved arrangements for new staff were recommended in a few instances, including ensuring the mentoring and training of new staff<sup>192</sup> and improving arrangements for staff joining mid-year.<sup>193</sup> The need to

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<sup>182</sup> University of Liverpool, paragraph 60.

<sup>183</sup> University of Exeter, paragraph 174.

<sup>184</sup> London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, paragraph 83.

<sup>185</sup> University of Leeds, paragraphs 20, 206; University of Southampton, paragraph 97.

<sup>186</sup> Liverpool Hope University, paragraph 96.

<sup>187</sup> Ravensbourne College of Design and Communications, paragraph 114.

<sup>188</sup> Lancaster University, paragraph 72.

<sup>189</sup> University of Sussex, paragraphs 118-120; Rose Bruford College, paragraph 111.

<sup>190</sup> School of Pharmacy, paragraph 117.

<sup>191</sup> University of Durham, paragraph 110.

<sup>192</sup> School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraphs 155-7.

recognise and reward teaching and teaching excellence was noted in a few reports.<sup>194</sup> Another institution was recommended to develop a work allocation model to alleviate overloading of research supervisors.<sup>195</sup>

## Staff development and training

63 Aspects of staff development comprised almost half the features of good practice associated with staff support in the reports. Institutions were commended on their strategic approach to staff development<sup>196</sup> and the range of development opportunities they provided.<sup>197</sup> Other features of good practice included encouraging engagement with the HEA;<sup>198</sup> teaching fellowships;<sup>199</sup> training for new roles such as research supervision<sup>200</sup> and external examining;<sup>201</sup> training logs;<sup>202</sup> teaching and learning events such as annual conferences;<sup>203</sup> production of materials to raise awareness of teaching developments;<sup>204</sup> and peer observation.<sup>205</sup>

64 These initiatives and broader staff development work were seen to contribute to capacity building,<sup>206</sup> engagement with strategic objectives,<sup>207</sup> and the promotion of excellence and enhancement in teaching.<sup>208</sup> The role of central learning and teaching units in supporting initiatives and staff development was highlighted in a number of features of good practice.<sup>209</sup> Two institutions were highlighted for the inclusiveness of their staff development and training,<sup>210</sup> for example through an annual staff development conference for administrative and support staff.<sup>211</sup>

65 Numerically there were nearly the same number of recommendations for improvement as there were features of good practice regarding staff matters. However, half of the recommendations concerned the need for research students engaging in teaching to receive adequate and timely training, guidance and support.<sup>212</sup> In some cases training was provided but was very brief or informal. Reports noted that where training was provided it was not necessarily mandatory or could be undertaken after the commencement of teaching. They also noted a lack of central policy and oversight of training research students to teach,

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<sup>193</sup> Keele University, paragraph 142.

<sup>194</sup> For example, Leeds College of Music, paragraph 136; University of the West of England, Bristol, paragraph 95.

<sup>195</sup> Keele University, paragraph 184.

<sup>196</sup> University College Falmouth, paragraphs 28, 88; University of Portsmouth, paragraphs 16, 20.

<sup>197</sup> Royal College of Art, paragraphs 156, 180; Queens University Belfast, paragraph 136; University of Birmingham, paragraph 122; University of Hull, paragraph 95; University of Kent, paragraphs 20, 21, 83.

<sup>198</sup> Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, paragraph 139.

<sup>199</sup> City University, paragraph 78; Coventry University, paragraph 143; Goldsmiths College, paragraphs 59, 66, 99; University of Hull, paragraph 117.

<sup>200</sup> University of Brighton, paragraph 181; Southampton Solent University, paragraph 262.

<sup>201</sup> University of Brighton, paragraph 46.

<sup>202</sup> University College London, paragraph 167, 197.

<sup>203</sup> Liverpool Hope University, paragraphs 131-3, 138-9.

<sup>204</sup> University of Reading, paragraph 136.

<sup>205</sup> University of Buckingham, paragraph 87.

<sup>206</sup> University College Falmouth, paragraphs 29, 88.

<sup>207</sup> University College Falmouth, paragraphs 29, 88; Middlesex University, paragraph 79.

<sup>208</sup> University of Buckingham, paragraph 87; University of Hull, paragraph 117.

<sup>209</sup> Coventry University, paragraph 143; University of Birmingham, paragraph 122; University of Oxford, paragraph 159.

<sup>210</sup> Queens University Belfast, paragraph 136.

<sup>211</sup> University of Brighton, paragraph 181.

<sup>212</sup> Royal College of Art, paragraph 232; University of Cambridge, paragraph 127; University of Chichester, paragraph 175; Goldsmiths College, paragraph 90; Leeds Metropolitan University, paragraph 117; Middlesex University, paragraph 90; Queens University Belfast, paragraph 197; Southampton Solent University, paragraph 268; University of East Anglia, paragraph 114; University of Greenwich, paragraph 150; University of Hull, paragraph 146; University of Kent, paragraph 121; University of Portsmouth, paragraph 176; University of Wolverhampton, paragraph 163.

leading to variable practice across an institution. However, one institution was noted for good practice in this area through a teaching assistant scheme, with an associated training programme providing research students with both training and paid employment.<sup>213</sup>

66 Some institutions were recommended to develop or update their overall staff development policies.<sup>214</sup> Reports also noted the need for more central institutional involvement in some cases: this included giving greater consideration to the strategic implications of staff development,<sup>215</sup> integrating central and local activity,<sup>216</sup> and more evidence-based evaluation and review of staff development activity.<sup>217</sup> One specialist institution was recommended to create a focus for teaching and learning to support pedagogical projects, staff development, and engagement with the wider academy.<sup>218</sup> Peer observation was the subject of comment in some institutions where schemes had been devised and not fully implemented, and where their role and purpose was unclear.<sup>219</sup> Training for research degree supervision was found to be lacking in one institution.<sup>220</sup>

## Admissions

67 All reports include descriptions of the structures and processes involved in the admission of students. Three quarters of the reports also include explicit evaluative statements about the effectiveness of institutions' admissions procedures. In addition to providing commentary on regulations, policies and procedures, the reports also provide comment on widening participation and how institutions address the issue of diversity.

## Regulations, policies and practices

68 The aims of the admissions process are commonly framed as, on the one hand, selection of those able to benefit while minimising the risk of failure, and, on the other hand, a positive contribution to the management of learning opportunities. The structures and policies in place for admissions usually include a formal institutional admissions policy reflective of the institution's overall strategy and values. One institution was found to have appropriate procedures in place but recommended to encapsulate these in a formal admissions policy.<sup>221</sup>

69 While many statements simply note that admissions policies and practices are fit for purpose, appropriate, or effective in a general sense, other comments define the characteristics that underpin these statements. These characteristics include clarity, explicitness, transparency, robustness, rigour, coherence, and comprehensiveness. However, above all, positive evaluations of admissions processes are associated with fairness and consistent implementation.

70 To achieve these positive outcomes the reports identify policies and practices that are well designed and developed, well established, well managed, well documented, well understood, professional, reviewed regularly, responsive, and monitored and overseen effectively. The reports also noted that these positive outcomes and features reflect the *Code of practice, Section 10: Admissions to higher education*.

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<sup>213</sup> University of Salford, paragraph 122.

<sup>214</sup> Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, paragraphs 92-3; University of Brighton, paragraph 152.

<sup>215</sup> De Montfort University, paragraph 144.

<sup>216</sup> University of the West of England, Bristol, paragraphs 74, 96-7.

<sup>217</sup> Middlesex University, paragraph 71.

<sup>218</sup> Leeds College of Music, paragraph 94.

<sup>219</sup> School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraphs 155-7; University of Wolverhampton, paragraph 109.

<sup>220</sup> London Business School, paragraph 121.

<sup>221</sup> Liverpool Hope University, paragraph 111.



71 Commendations included the use of current students and alumni in the admissions process<sup>222</sup> and using admissions tests that reflect current professional practice.<sup>223</sup> Good practice was noted in another institution which has developed a dedicated website for applicants.<sup>224</sup>

72 A small number of institutions were recommended to make improvements in their admissions processes, relating particularly to the admission of postgraduate research students.<sup>225</sup> One institution was recommended to review its protocols for accreditation of prior experiential learning in relation to external reference points.<sup>226</sup>

## Widening participation

73 Diversity and widening participation feature strongly in descriptions of admissions processes. Fair access is prioritised in policy and procedures, as are processes designed to identify talent and potential regardless of background. The reports describe a number of initiatives that institutions have taken in order to facilitate fair access; these include adjustments to the admissions process for those with disabilities<sup>227</sup> and targets for under-represented groups.<sup>228</sup>

74 The reports note broader approaches to widening participation, including widening participation strategies, committees and roles with special responsibilities in this area, and a range of targeted initiatives. The reports also identify a number of features of good practice in relation to widening participation both in general<sup>229</sup> and in terms of specific initiatives. The latter includes involving students as mentors and ambassadors,<sup>230</sup> outreach and community programmes,<sup>231</sup> and providing scholarships to care leavers.<sup>232</sup>

## The themes in context

75 The themes identified above need to be set against the environment of higher education that pre-dates these reports, but has had a longer-term influence. One feature of this is the way in which students have been increasingly defined as consumers partly as a result of the introduction of, and increases in, student fees. The consumer perspective has also been heightened by the National Student Survey (NSS) and the increasing role played by students in decision-making in institutions. Public rankings of student satisfaction, input, and output measures also appear regularly in the press, and applicants are encouraged to research and use such public information to make their choice of higher education institution. These measures influence institutional decision-making on the provision of learning opportunities. The impact of the growth of consumerism is reflected not only in structures and processes, but also in expectations of resources, facilities and quality of teaching which have fuelled initiatives across institutions.

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<sup>222</sup> Royal College of Art, paragraphs 121, 215; London Business School, paragraph 80.

<sup>223</sup> Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, paragraph 112.

<sup>224</sup> Southampton Solent University, paragraph 196.

<sup>225</sup> De Montfort University, paragraphs 203, 206, 214, 218; University of East Anglia, paragraph 145.

<sup>226</sup> University of Hertfordshire, paragraph 35.

<sup>227</sup> Royal College of Music, paragraph 67.

<sup>228</sup> Keele University, paragraph 129.

<sup>229</sup> University of Bradford, paragraph 149; University of Cambridge, paragraph 107; University of Liverpool, paragraph 123.

<sup>230</sup> University College Falmouth, paragraphs 115, 148.

<sup>231</sup> Royal Academy of Music, paragraph 84; University of Birmingham, paragraph 104.

<sup>232</sup> University of Winchester, paragraph 91.

76 A second environmental feature is the continuing professionalisation and commercialisation of the delivery of learning opportunities. This trend is reflected in the growing importance of executive roles and structures in decision-making within institutions. As noted above, these roles and bodies are often less visible in Institutional audit. In addition, higher education has seen an increase in non-academic staff numbers, major growth in areas such as marketing, and the continued professionalisation of functions such as human resource management. In many cases this growth and change has brought more staff from the business sector into higher education management. In common with many large organisations, outsourcing has been used to manage key services; outsourced services which affect learning opportunities include buildings and estates and computing. Changing management processes encouraged by greater contact with the private sector and commercialisation include new planning, resource allocation and risk management techniques, as well as processes such as service-level agreements.

77 Technology continues to have a major impact on the provision of learning opportunities. Historically, computing facilities for students were centred on public computing labs. The period covered by the reports saw the continued growth of wireless access and mobile computing. Virtual learning environments and social networking continues to transform access to learning materials and student interaction. The impact of these changes has blurred former distinctions between traditional and flexible learning, and challenges accepted models of teaching delivery. Technology, however, is expensive, especially where major infrastructure investment is required.

78 A fourth factor that continues to influence institutional approaches to the management of learning opportunities is finance. The period covered by these reports saw a continuing squeeze on overall financial resources for most institutions, and additional monies often only available in the form of financing of specific initiatives. At the same time, increasing numbers entering higher education as a result of government policies resulted in rising class sizes at a time when more pressure was being exerted on academic staff to produce publishable research. The impact of financial constraints can be seen in the discussion above, for example in the increased importance of planning, and processes such as outline approval of new programmes, designed to avoid over-commitment of resources. Institutions have also looked to increase their revenue base, for example through collaborative provision, a development that brings its own challenges for managing learning opportunities.

79 Political commitment to increasing higher education participation has not been confined to overall numbers, but also a concern that the higher educational population should be reflective of the gender, racial, class and regional distribution of the population of school leavers and potential students. This has influenced the management of learning opportunities in two ways. On the one hand it has led to widening participation schemes and has had an overwhelming influence on the structures and processes of higher education admissions. On the other hand, increasing student numbers and the recruitment of students from a wider spectrum of the population has precipitated the review of the way that many learning opportunities are provided to ensure that they are accessible to students from different backgrounds. For example, institutions may have to adapt their teaching methods and programme structures to provide for students with less traditional backgrounds and different educational needs.

80 During the period covered by the reviews, overseas students have continued to be a key source of revenue for many institutions. This group brings with it its own requirements for learning opportunities, such as accommodation needs and language support. Throughout the period, higher education continued to be in the public eye. In addition other stakeholders such as business leaders have joined public debate about the quality of

graduates entering the labour market with implications for learning opportunities, for example in the exposure of students to technology and the workplace.

81 Another contextual feature of the management of learning opportunities is the fundamental nature of learning opportunities themselves. In a sense, the quality of learning opportunities is always relative. The learning opportunities that individual students enjoy within an institution cannot be guaranteed by standard inputs because outputs depend on individual circumstances related to the student and his or her course of study. Furthermore, expectations are not static: what constituted high quality learning opportunities at one point may be seen as below standard at a later point. Hence institutions are vigorously enjoined to enhance their provision and to apply continuous improvement to their provision even without the environmental pressures discussed above. The institutional management of learning opportunities is in many senses all-encompassing and can only be partially captured and evaluated through Institutional audit. Therefore the overview given in this paper is only one perspective on some of the structures, processes and activities of an institution with regard to its management of learning opportunities.

## Trends

82 Papers in the previous *Outcomes* series were both broader and narrower than the present paper so that there is no specific comparator with the findings in this paper. Previous papers were broader in the sense of covering the framework for managing both quality and standards together; or narrower in the sense of covering specific aspects of the management of learning opportunities, with over a dozen papers in the last series covering the material covered here.

83 Different groups of institutions provided the basis for each of the previous series of *Outcomes* papers; the questions asked by auditors were different; findings were presented differently; and sector practice and expectations have changed over time. Six years elapsed between some of the audits included in the first *Outcomes* series and those discussed above, during which time institutions gained maturity and experience in using the Academic Infrastructure and adopting sound practices. However, a number of institutions discussed above reported significant organisational change, including mergers or the adoption of new, as yet untested, systems; others were undergoing Institutional audit for the first time.

84 At a general level, the overall picture painted by the reports in earlier series is essentially similar to the picture here. The frameworks used by institutions have in all three series been adjudged to be appropriate in the vast majority of institutions, particularly with respect to the management of learning opportunities. Some of the same issues that were noted in earlier reports recur; though not necessarily in the same institutions. Areas of significant good practice such as staff support and development remain strong. This should probably be interpreted as a positive finding; that despite so much internal and external change, higher education institutions' management of learning opportunities remains effective and fundamentally sound.

## Conclusions

85 The picture that emerges from the 76 audit reports that have formed the basis of this paper is of the overwhelmingly acceptable quality of management of learning opportunities in the institutions audited, as exemplified by the formal judgements made by audit teams and their assessment of the effectiveness of various aspects of learning opportunities. Even though neither the analysis nor even the reports cover every aspect of the management of learning opportunities, the overview of both is broad enough to give a good picture of institutional approaches and effectiveness in this area. A large number of

recommendations are made in the report for strengthening and improving practice; but an even larger number of instances of good practice are identified. The areas where recommendations outnumbered features of good practice related to the overall management framework; approval, monitoring and review; and staff support (because of the large number of recommendations for the improvement of training for research students who teach). Features of good practice outnumbered recommendations with respect to the use of external reference points, non-traditional learning environments, the role of research, other aspects of staff support, and admissions.

86 The 76 audit reports demonstrate how the institutions audited have met a number of key challenges posed by the management of learning opportunities. The first challenge is that of coordination, given the broad scope of learning opportunities. In order to coordinate their approach and services, institutions make use of different elements of their overall framework for managing quality and standards. Of particular importance is strategy. The great majority of institutions have invested time and resource in developing institutional level strategies which play a significant role in the management of learning opportunities. These strategies do not provide a means of decision-making, but rather structure the decisions that an institution takes about its provision in order to pursue higher level goals and the institutional mission. Where this approach is fully developed, institutions have an overall corporate strategy and beneath this sub-strategies for different functional and academic areas. Many of the features of good practice highlighted in the reports refer to a strategic approach to aspects of learning opportunities. Conversely, a lack of strategic dimension underpins a number of recommendations.

87 The second challenge posed by the management of learning opportunities is the allocation of scarce resources. Learning opportunities are provided through the deployment of institutions' human, physical and financial resources. These resources are limited and the costs of learning opportunities are high. For example, infrastructure investment in buildings or equipment and the employment of highly qualified academic staff can strain capital and revenue budgets. Central to effective allocation is planning. In many institutions, strategy and planning are only partly accomplished through established committee systems. The reports note the development and growth of executive structures and planning groups in various forms that undertake these tasks. The reports also note the adaptation of key processes such as programme approval, monitoring and review to encompass consideration of the adequacy of resources and their availability. The identification and management of risk is a facet of planning which feature in areas of good practice identified in some institutions.

88 Given the centrality of committee systems, quality assurance processes and procedures to the management of learning opportunities, it is not surprising that these features attract not only a number of commendations but also account for the largest single area of recommendations for improvement. One of the issues that emerges from the reports is how to ensure that the interface between deliberative and executive structures is effective. Two factors are noted. One is the role of key executive post-holders such as pro vice-chancellors, deans and associate deans in bridging any divide by operating in both deliberative and executive structures. The other is the extent to which academic and non-academic staff and divisions operate in the same or different organisational space. A number of features of good practice refer to the integration of academic and professional staff and perspectives, and the effective involvement of different groups of staff and units emerges as an important factor in the successful implementation of strategy for learning opportunities.

89 A third challenge for the management of learning opportunities is the implementation of plans and decisions. A common pattern reflected in the reports is for decisions on strategy, resource allocation, and planning to be taken centrally but

for their impact to be felt locally. Key services such as computing and libraries are often managed centrally but delivered locally. Academic staff may be organised into local and discipline-based groups and sub-groups, but policy and practice regarding employment, promotion, reward and work are determined centrally. Furthermore, in all but the smallest institutions, there are different levels in the organisation which enjoy varying degrees of autonomy and delegated powers. Institutions therefore have developed bodies of policy, procedures and guidance regarding the provision and management of learning opportunities to ensure that central decisions are implemented locally.

90 A crucial issue for large institutions is to optimise the relationship between the central university and faculties, schools, departments, and dispersed units. A number of areas of good practice identified in the reports relate to the efficient, effective and consistent implementation of central policies. However, a large number of the recommendations relating to management systems refer to the need to improve the tracking and oversight of local decision-making. Similarly, the need to ensure institutional oversight of delegated responsibility and local alignment with central policies underlies a number of other recommendations. A related set of recommendations refers to the need to review the degree of local variability found in a range of practices. Local variation is complex and contentious for many institutions. For example consistency in admissions processes is almost universally seen as a positive attribute that ensures fairness. However, there is an acknowledgement that different disciplines, different groups of students, and different delivery sites may need different inputs and approaches to learning opportunities to maintain equivalence.

91 The descriptions of the management of learning opportunities contained in the reports refer to the widespread existence of interdisciplinary and inter-professional units that play a central role in the management of learning opportunities. Central quality assurance, and increasingly quality enhancement units have been in place in most institutions for some time. Many institutions have established learning and teaching units which have championed the development of excellence in teaching through scholarship, development and training, and which play a key role in the development and implementation of learning and teaching strategies. Such units were seen to constitute good practice in a number of institutions.

92 Teaching is a key component of learning opportunities provided to students. The reports confirm the investment by institutions in the professionalisation of teaching, and the engagement of institutions with the agenda of bodies such as the HEA. Resource has been invested in human resource management and in staff training and development. Staff support is the aspect of the management of learning resources discussed here which displays the largest number of commendations for good practice. These aspects of good practice reflect the impact both of professionalised human resource departments, but also learning and teaching units and Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs), the latter being at least partially funded through central government funding. However, the reports reveal that professionalisation of teaching has not been extended fully to those assisting in teaching. A significant number of institutions are recommended to ensure that research students who teach are given proper training before undertaking their teaching role.

93 Debate both within institutions and in the wider domain regarding the appropriate balance between research and teaching is reflected in a variety of actions discussed in the reports. Many institutions have adopted the concept of research-led teaching as a means of linking the two together and promoting balance. The reports identify a number of features of good practice based on ensuring that research informs teaching and that teaching is informed by research, as well as engaging students on taught programmes in research activity. These developments have required the coordinated effort of individuals and structures involved in the management of academic staff and research, as well as the approval and review of programmes and curricula. This provides an example of effective cross-functional management and enhancement of learning opportunities.

94 The reports reflect the increasing importance that institutions place on engagement with external stakeholders, in particular local communities, business and the professions. The relationship described is two-way. On the one hand, the learning opportunities provided by institutions themselves are managed as part of the commitment by institutions to local economic and social regeneration and development. On the other hand, institutions are involving communities, businesses and the professions in the design and delivery of higher education for the benefit of students' skills, their employability and careers. Advisory boards, placements and work-based study are all identified as features of good practice within the reports of various institutions. These examples demonstrate the broader nature of externality relevant to management of learning opportunities.

95 The audit reports demonstrate the change that is taking place in the use of technology in learning and its impact on the design, delivery and approval of programmes. The widespread development of virtual learning environments has facilitated the development of blended learning and the blurring of distinctions between different modes of delivery. The reports note the adaptations required to support and to manage new forms of learning, and the need, in some institutions, for academic and quality assurance policy and practice to catch up with technology. The need to keep the currency and effectiveness of such policy and procedures under review is further emphasised by new patterns of curriculum design and delivery based on work-based learning mentioned above.

96 A final challenge which emerges in the reports is that of equality and diversity. The reports highlight a number of ways in which institutions seek to broaden the social base of their students through the operation of fair admissions policies and the pursuit of widening participation agendas designed to raise interest and access among under-represented groups. The reports identified a number of instances of good practice in this area. The reports also note the impact of a more diverse student body on the design and delivery of programmes. However, the chief area of response to the diversity of learning needs is seen in student support services.

## Appendix A: Features of good practice relating to managing learning opportunities

### Institutional frameworks for managing learning opportunities

- the comprehensive and accessible Quality intranet pages that contribute significantly to the effective communication of policy and procedures to staff (Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, paragraph 23)
- the careful reflection and energetic leadership which make possible the successful management of a challenging and ongoing agenda for change (Anglia Ruskin University, paragraph 17)
- the way in which the Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning has been integrated into the institution's strategies to enhance learning opportunities (Bath Spa University, paragraph 124)
- the prioritisation of students in the institutional culture (Loughborough University, paragraphs 103, 110, 128, 135, 142, 145)
- the University College's considered and measured approach to managing the process of merger which has, through the careful management of risk and judicious prioritisation of action, ensured the maintenance of standards and quality (University College for the Creative Arts, paragraph 61)
- the developing use of the balanced scorecard method to align central plans with school plans and with performance management (University of Bradford, paragraph 178)
- the inclusive and consultative way in which the University's new Corporate Plan was developed (University of Brighton, paragraph 15)
- the clarity and accessibility of documents that describe the University's processes and procedures for quality assurance (University of Brighton, paragraph 33)
- the exemplary manner in which the Senior Tutor's Committee discharges its responsibilities (University of Cambridge, paragraph 119)
- the 'Annual Conversation' with faculties and service departments as part of the annual planning cycle, which has the potential to contribute to the effective management of programmes (University of Lincoln, paragraphs 16, 155)
- the pervasive and integrated approach to the management of the quality of learning opportunities which has engaged all areas of the institution and contributed to the ongoing and dynamic development of the University (University of Lincoln, paragraphs 86, 111, 118, 121 to 123, 132, 144, 149 to 151, 155, 157).
- the way in which the University's Strategy for Learning and Teaching and its associated Implementation Plan provide a clear direction for enhancement and development activities and a comprehensive framework for delivery (University of Reading, paragraph 66)
- the ways in which the Quality Support Office, the Centre for the Development of Teaching and Learning and the Centre for Staff Training and Development are working together to support the development and delivery of the University's Strategy for Learning and Teaching and related activities (University of Reading, paragraph 125)
- the range and depth of the Academic Audit Committee's investigations into the effectiveness of the University's policies and procedures, its independence in choosing areas for audit, and its authority and status as a committee of Senate (University of Salford, paragraph 12)
- the University's action to ensure that the Procedures and Policies for Academic Quality Assurance: Programmes and Students (AQA) continues to be a robust and increasingly accessible foundation of its quality framework (University of Salford, paragraph 16)

- the establishment of the Academic Quality and Standards Unit and its continuing work contribute significantly to the effectiveness of the University's management of standards and quality management, and that the practice of reviewing the impact and effectiveness of new or significantly revised quality assurance procedures after the initial year is a feature of good practice (University of Salford, paragraph 17)
- the thorough and systematic procedures for quality assurance which are characterised by a high degree of self-reflection and a rigorous cycle of follow-up actions (University of Sheffield, paragraphs 13-23)
- the measures taken to engage staff in the formulation of the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy, and the framework the Strategy now provides for developing teaching and learning (University of Southampton, paragraph 102)
- the University's planned, systematic and reflective approach to the review of its processes and structures (Bournemouth University, paragraph 17)
- the planned and strategic review of the committee structure and the inclusive and effective manner in which its findings were implemented (Leeds Trinity and All Saints, paragraph 6)
- the meticulous tracking of actions through the committee system (Leeds Trinity and All Saints, paragraph 8)
- the ethos, culture and mission of the University which is understood, acknowledged and appreciated by both staff and students and which clearly underpins the work of the institution (Liverpool Hope University, paragraphs 5, 14, 17, 115, 124)
- the Centre for Learning and Quality Enhancement's successful implementation of its dual role of audit and support (Middlesex University, paragraph 22)
- the comprehensive nature and clarity of the Academic Quality and Standards Handbook and the way in which its currency is maintained (Nottingham Trent University, paragraphs 17, 19, 26)
- the cross-institutional impact of the work of the Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (Open University, paragraph 147)
- the rapid and effective embedding of the College's new academic and committee structure (Rose Bruford College, paragraph 29)
- the Student Experience Strategy Group, led by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) which is enhancing learning opportunities at the institutional level (University of Bath, paragraphs 104, 148)
- the formulation of the University's Quality Assurance Code of Practice in a clear and accessible format which includes a series of examples of good practice to illustrate policy and procedure (University of Bath, paragraphs 145, 168, 176)
- the thorough and reflective approach undertaken throughout the process of organisational change (University of Birmingham, paragraph 20)
- the concise and accessible guidance on quality processes provided by the Birmingham Integrated Quality Assurance and Enhancement System documentation (University of Birmingham, paragraph 30)
- the move towards a firm oversight at institutional level of the management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities through the implementation of authoritative guidance on University policy and regulation, combined with well-conceived organisational changes (University of Bristol, paragraph 20)
- the way in which faculty quality assurance teams are used in promoting the consideration within faculties of common themes related to quality and standards, thereby raising awareness of relevant University policies, as well as facilitating the dissemination of good practice (University of Bristol, paragraph 70)
- the contribution of the Academic Support Office to the management of quality and standards (University of Durham, paragraph 21)
- the range of information designed to make the University's Quality and Standards Framework more accessible to all types of staff, including the Implementation



- Guides, Quality and Standards Updates and 'Working with...' series of leaflets (University of Hull, paragraph 19)
- the University's approach to facilitating staff engagement in quality assurance and quality enhancement through the extensive use of its information management system (University of Kent, paragraphs 28, 39)
- the regular review and updating of University policies with consistent use of gap analysis (University of Portsmouth, paragraphs 16, 58, 80)
- the delivery of a clear academic strategy, supported by structures which define responsibility and accountability (University of Sunderland, paragraphs 11, 100)
- identifying the need and initiating an institutional drive for cultural change towards an increased focus on the quality of student-centred learning and teaching (University of Surrey, paragraphs 117, 148, 184)
- the active engagement by the Quality and Academic Standards Division in the academic work of the University, which contributes to the security of academic standards and to the assurance of academic quality across the University (University of Wolverhampton, paragraph 14).

## **Programme and course approval, monitoring and review**

- the approach to the annual monitoring of support services which has the potential to contribute to the enhancement of the student learning experience (Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, paragraph 103)
- the new process for Annual Strategic Review, the strategic focus of which makes an important contribution to the institutional management of the quality of learning opportunities and of academic standards (University College Falmouth, paragraph 31)
- internal quality audit as a robust and effective process of periodic review (Keele University, paragraphs 42, 81)
- the annual programme evaluation process as a mechanism for annual course review (Leeds College of Music, paragraph 81)
- the inclusion of non-academic areas in annual monitoring (Royal Academy of Music, paragraph 58)
- the institution's procedures for benchmarking of programmes at validation (Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, paragraph 27)
- the robust approach taken in the periodic learning and teaching review process (University of Cambridge, paragraph 83)
- the use of risk alerts to provide an independent check on programme performance and enhance the effectiveness of annual programme monitoring (University of Exeter, paragraph 79)
- the robust and thorough processes for the annual review of programmes; their oversight at school, faculty and institutional levels and the commitment to provide institutional-level feedback on the issues identified from overview reports (University of Salford, paragraph 50)
- the distinctive and innovative approach to the annual monitoring of teaching and learning, which draws on a range of performance indicators to determine the level of scrutiny to be applied to individual departments (University of Sheffield, paragraphs 14-18)
- the design of the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Review and Action Plan, enabling it to encapsulate both quality assurance and quality enhancement within the annual monitoring process (University of Southampton, paragraph 57)
- the thematic review process, which has provided a structured approach to enhancing students' learning opportunities (Lancaster University, paragraph 77)

- the annual review days held in November which draw upon the annual programme review process as part of finalising the Institutional Quality Report (Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, paragraph 74)
- the clarity and operation of the Stage Gate process for developing, monitoring and reviewing courses and awards (Open University, paragraphs 46-47)
- the system for bi-annual programme monitoring and its contribution to quality assurance and enhancement (Rose Bruford College, paragraphs 48, 90, 163)
- the design and systematic use of the annual Quality Assurance Template (University of Oxford, paragraph 89).

## **Use of external reference points**

- the integration of employability within the undergraduate curriculum and the preparation of students for the world of work (Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, paragraph 108)
- the establishment and use of School Advisory Councils which inform and enhance the development of the curriculum and student experience (Royal Agricultural College, paragraph 61)
- the proactive approach taken by the College to develop and maximise its network of contacts to support and enhance student learning opportunities (Royal College of Art, paragraphs 111, 120, 205)
- the School's responsiveness to the changing needs of pharmacy education, particularly those of the National Health Service and post-registration practitioners, where the School is playing a leading role in establishing a cadre of practice educators (School of Pharmacy, paragraphs 25, 150)
- the process of strategic engagement with Cornwall's priorities for social and economic regeneration (University College Falmouth, paragraphs 51, 60)
- the iterative engagement with industry, including student placements and outreach work, thus supporting the aims and philosophy of the institution's programmes (Central School of Speech and Drama, paragraphs 43, 83, 89, 103, 111, 124)
- engagement with the music industry and expert professional practice (Leeds College of Music, paragraphs 76, 96, 97)
- the thorough approach to the promotion and management of industrial links and placement opportunities to enhance the educational experience of students and the future employability of graduates (Loughborough University, paragraph 118)
- the work of the Open Academy/York Gate, including in particular the provision of community and industry-facing activities (Royal Academy of Music, paragraph 84)
- the strong level of engagement with the local and professional community (Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, paragraphs 94, 97 and 99).
- the full engagement with the Academic Infrastructure (University of Chichester, paragraph 67)
- the steps the University has taken to improve its overview of interaction with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies at programme, school and faculty level (University of Salford, paragraph 38)
- the University's prompt and effective response to national external initiatives and to matters raised internally through both informal and formal channels (University of Sheffield, paragraphs 43, 53-56)
- the wide range of well-supported placement opportunities taken by a significant proportion of students which broaden and contribute to the overall effectiveness of their learning opportunities (Aston University, paragraph 90)
- the comprehensive support for students provided by the University Careers Service, which helps them to benefit significantly from opportunities to develop their career

management skills and to move readily into employment on graduation (Aston University, paragraph 110)

- the rigorous approach taken by the University to maintain an institutional overview of its professional body engagements (De Montfort University, paragraph 64)
- the systematic visits by academic and professional staff to other higher education institutions to benchmark University practice (Liverpool Hope University, paragraph 74)
- the continued development of links with employers and the embedding of employability across much of the curriculum to which this has led (Nottingham Trent University, paragraphs 61, 62)
- the development of programme specifications for research degrees (University of Kent, paragraph 107)
- the engagement of the Graduate Futures office, both inside the University and with external stakeholders, to further the University's business-facing mission (University of Hertfordshire, paragraphs 96, 105)
- the developmental opportunities provided for students across the University through the Leicester Award for Employability Skills (University of Leicester, paragraph 61)
- the structured approach to the use of the *Code of practice* in the management of learning opportunities in on-campus provision (University of Northampton, paragraph 28)
- the University's pursuit of its employability and volunteering strategies including its cooperation with the Students' Union in these themes (University of Portsmouth, paragraph 145)
- the work-based learning Foundation Degree programme, in partnership with a regionally-based international company (University of Winchester, paragraph 99)
- the clear commitment to and the fulfilment of the University's regional mission which enriches the student learning opportunities (University of Wolverhampton, paragraphs 91, 123, 128)
- the structured way in which the University uses information about practice elsewhere in the sector in the development of its policies and procedures, as in the review and revision of the approach to personal tutoring (University of Wolverhampton, paragraph 95).

## Learning resources

- the Technical Support Department, which provides a vital resource for the School, students and stakeholders and which contributes to the mission of the School (Central School of Speech and Drama, paragraph 97)
- the effective delivery of library resources in support of the student learning experience (University of Southampton, paragraph 78)
- the quality of course materials and the course teams' approach to their development (Open University, paragraph 114)
- the integrated approach, led by the Information Services Directorate, to the management and development of its library and information technology provision, which contributes to the quality of learning opportunities (University of East Anglia, paragraph 92)
- the high level of academic support and learning resources available to undergraduate students (University of Oxford, paragraph 150)
- the effective support for student learning providers by Learning Information Services and Information Technology Services, which is assisted by both departments being integral to the academic planning and development processes (University of Wolverhampton, paragraphs 52, 86).

## Non-traditional learning environments

- the selection, supervision and oversight of student placements on undergraduate programmes (Royal Agricultural College, paragraph 74)
- the work of the support service INSPIRE and the learning technologists, teaching fellows, and learning and teaching advisers in enhancing the student experience (Anglia Ruskin University, paragraphs 102, 103, 106, 145-7)
- the work of the Centre for International Exchange and Languages in managing students' opportunities for study abroad (Keele University, paragraph 108)
- the thorough approach to the promotion and management of industrial links and placement opportunities to enhance the educational experience of students and the future employability of graduates (Loughborough University, paragraph 118)
- the wide range of well-supported placement opportunities taken by a significant proportion of students which broaden and contribute to the overall effectiveness of their learning opportunities (Aston University, paragraph 90)
- the distinctive character, strategic importance and successful outcomes of the College's well organised and effectively implemented placement scheme for all students (Leeds Trinity and All Saints, paragraph 58)
- the distinctive contribution of the Institute for Work-based Learning to the University's portfolio of educational provision (Middlesex University, paragraph 54)
- the use of technology to deliver information and to support online, flexible and distributed learning, notably the StudentHome and TutorHome portals (Open University, paragraph 138)
- the high quality of the learning opportunities provided for the University's distance learning students (University of Leicester, paragraph 52)
- the University's commitment to, and excellence in, professional training (University of Surrey paragraphs 123, 127)
- the student experience provided by the Centre for Lifelong Learning and the University's commitment to opportunities for part-time students (University of Warwick, paragraphs 90, 100, 115)
- the comprehensive and thorough preparation for, and support of, study abroad (University of Warwick, paragraph 99).

## Role of research

- the content of the Research Methods Course and its leadership, management and currency which equips students with excellent skills and research methodology (Royal College of Art, paragraphs 180, 183)
- support for research which aims to enhance the quality of the student learning experience in musical performance which pays close attention to the maintenance of academic standards (Royal College of Music, paragraphs 101, 103, 151, 157)
- the deliberate and systematic manner in which the University ensures that research informs the curricula (Anglia Ruskin University, paragraphs 34, 101, 102, 104)
- the varied mechanisms for making research-led teaching increasingly a distinctive feature of the University (University of Leeds, paragraphs 20, 131 and 204)
- the approach taken by the University in fostering research-led teaching (University of Southampton, paragraph 73)
- the University's commitment to research-informed teaching and the approach it is taking to ensure that the curriculum is informed by research (Nottingham Trent University, paragraphs 81-86)
- the strength of links between research and learning opportunities, some of which have demonstrably achieved cross-institutional impact (Open University, paragraph 105)

- the University's comprehensive approach to defining and developing research-led teaching (University of Durham, paragraphs 80-95)
- the shift in teaching practice to independent learning as demonstrated by the encouragement of enquiry-based learning across the University (University of Birmingham, paragraph 90)
- the University's model of research-informed education, under which the design of taught-degree programmes places significant weight on student engagement with research methods and staff research (University of Bristol, paragraph 85)
- the role of the Centre for Research Informed Teaching in raising undergraduate students' research aspirations, particularly through the Diffusion journal and the Student Intern Scheme (University of Central Lancashire, paragraph 145)
- the opportunities afforded through the Undergraduate Research Scholarship Scheme and the Reinvention Centre for Undergraduate Research for students to become involved in research activities (University of Warwick, paragraph 97)
- the academic and support infrastructure and policies which support the enhancement of undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research student skills development (University of Warwick, paragraphs 126 and 185).

## **Staff support**

- the provision of clear, informative induction material for new staff (Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, paragraph 114)
- the commitment of the College to the provision of a range of staff development opportunities in support of learning and teaching across the College (Royal College of Art, paragraphs 156, 180)
- the way the University College has implemented a strategy for developing staff so that they are better able to engage proactively with strategic objectives, while building capacity within the institution (University College Falmouth, paragraphs 28, 88)
- the effective management of change and the engagement of staff in the development of new arrangements for learning and teaching (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, paragraph 83)
- the contribution to staff development and enhancement of practice made by the annual workshop to prepare staff to be external examiners (University of Brighton, paragraph 46)
- the annual staff development conference for administrative and support staff which contributes to an inclusive approach to staff development (University of Brighton, paragraph 162)
- the maintenance of a register of staff eligible to supervise PhD students, together with training for those wishing to gain eligibility (University of Brighton, paragraph 181)
- the progress the University has made in developing a peer observation scheme which contributes significantly to enhancing the quality of teaching and to the individual development of staff (University of Buckingham, paragraph 87)
- the effective support for learning and teaching provided by the University's learning and Teaching Unit, which contributes to the enhancement of the student learning opportunities (University of Essex, paragraph 113)
- the commitment to achieving high staff performance through systematic investment in professional development, career progression and reward (University of Exeter, paragraph 174)
- the importance given to teaching as well as to research in the University's appointment and support of academic staff (University of Leeds, paragraphs 20, 206)

- the development of user-friendly and informative publications such as Teaching Matters and Policy Plus, which raise awareness of developments in teaching and learning and in quality assurance and enhancement (University of Reading, paragraph 136)
- the Graduate Teaching Assistant scheme and its associated training programme (University of Salford, paragraph 122)
- the adoption of staffing policies which, in line with the University's stated aim, raise the profile of teaching relative to research (University of Southampton, paragraph 97)
- the University's response to the identification, through its standard processes, of inequities in relation to the conditions of service for hourly-paid staff, which has led to a consistent, effectual and vigilant approach to the employment and support of associate tutors (University of Sussex, paragraphs 118-120)
- the annual teaching prizes, which have encouraged innovation and the dissemination of good practice (Lancaster University, paragraph 72)
- the commitment to the development and support of scholarship and research among staff through the system of 'recognised researcher status' and the funding of doctoral studies (Liverpool Hope University, paragraph 96)
- the contribution made by the school-based educational development associates to institution-wide developments in support of good academic practice (City University, paragraph 78)
- the work of the Centre for the Study of Higher Education, most notably the role of the teaching development fellows and the investment made by the University in supporting this work (Coventry University, paragraph 143)
- the strategically targeted approach to the enhancement of student learning through the teaching fellowships scheme (Goldsmiths College, paragraphs 59, 66, 99)
- the broad range of pedagogical initiatives informing the development of learning and teaching activities, in particular the annual Learning and Teaching Week (Liverpool Hope University, paragraphs 131-133, 138-139).
- the Institute's proactive strategy towards enhancing the development of staff through their engagement with the Higher Education Academy and support for research and scholarly activity (Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, paragraph 139)
- the contribution made by learning and teaching strategy leaders to implementing a wide range of institutional initiatives (Middlesex University, paragraph 79)
- the range and degree of staff support and development at all levels and in all areas of the University's work (Queens University Belfast, paragraph 136)
- the level of support for sessional staff, including their access to staff development and research opportunities and the provision of a part-time tutors' coordinator and handbook (Rose Bruford College, paragraph 111)
- the cohesive community of the staff and students (Rose Bruford College, paragraph 163)
- the training of staff in supervision of research students as part of the strategy to increase the pool of potential supervisors (Southampton Solent University, paragraph 262)
- the institution's use of interactive electronic logs to record and monitor both staff training and research student training and progress (University College London, paragraphs 167, 197)
- the quality, range and accessibility of training and support activities available to staff and students offered by the Academic Practice and Organisational Development and Learning Development Units (University of Birmingham, paragraph 122)
- the range of staff development opportunities on offer (University of Hull, paragraph 95)

- the encouragement and recognition of excellence in learning and teaching that is provided by the University Teaching Fellowship scheme, and the contribution of both National and University Teaching Fellows to quality enhancement (University of Hull, paragraph 117)
- the development, coordination and provision by the Unit for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching of a broad range of advisory and support services and development opportunities for staff and students (University of Kent, paragraphs 20, 21, 83)
- the framework for staff development in relation to learning and teaching provided by the Oxford Learning Institute and the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (University of Oxford, paragraph 159)
- the use of strategic themes to direct a wide range of staff development activities (University of Portsmouth, paragraphs 16, 20)
- the management of change which has both engaged and developed staff (University of Sunderland, paragraphs 13, 94).

## Admissions

- the revised postgraduate research student application and recruitment process, matching students to projects and supervisors (Institute of Cancer Research, paragraph 115)
- students' opportunity to participate as members of admissions boards, in support of both the applicant and their own personal development (Royal College of Art, paragraphs 121, 215)
- the systematic approach to widening participation (Royal College of Music, paragraphs 67, 138)
- processes for implementing a widening participation strategy that involves students as mentors and ambassadors (University College, Falmouth, paragraphs 115, 148)
- the creative work of the School of Professional and Community Development in supporting both the School and the constituencies it serves (Central School of Speech and Drama, paragraphs 14, 128)
- the School's proactive approach to the use of alumni and alumnae in recruitment and admissions (London Business School, paragraph 80)
- the work of the Open Academy/York Gate, including in particular the provision of community and industry-facing activities (Royal Academy of Music, paragraph 84)
- the successful institutional arrangements for widening participation (University of Bradford, paragraph 149)
- the range of admissions-related initiatives, especially those promoting the widening participation agenda (University of Cambridge, paragraph 107)
- the attention given, as part of the undergraduate admissions process, to providing auditions which reflect current practice and course content (Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, paragraph 112)
- the development and continuing enhancement of the HelloUni site as a support for students during the recruitment process, particularly prior to their arrival at the University (Southampton Solent University, paragraph 196)
- the outreach activity of the University, with particular commendation for the A2B scheme (University of Birmingham, paragraph 104)
- in the context of a research-intensive institution, the strength of the University's commitment to a diverse and innovative suite of widening participation and equal opportunities activities which is sustaining a positive approach within the University and the region, and is also leading to enhancements in the University's educational provision (University of Liverpool, paragraph 123)

- promoting and achieving access to higher education via scholarships for care leavers (University of Winchester, paragraph 91).



## Appendix B: Recommendations relating to managing learning opportunities

### Institutional frameworks for managing learning opportunities

- review and revise the quality assurance, reporting and management structures for its taught postgraduate provision to secure parity with those for the undergraduate courses (Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, paragraph 72)
- to introduce more systematic institutional-level consideration, oversight and action on themes emerging from existing quality assurance procedures (Royal Agricultural College, paragraphs 26, 52, 86)
- appraise the timeliness with which the College responds to and/or implements changes in key areas relevant to the institutional leadership and management of learning opportunities (Royal College of Art, paragraph 35)
- review, develop and enhance its quality assurance procedures and consider the merit of publishing them in a single, comprehensive, readily accessible source (Royal College of Art, paragraphs 44, 46, 48, 85, 86, 98, 194, 249)
- reconsider the remit and operation of the Board of Professors to ensure that the Board is discharging its responsibilities for the management of quality and standards (Royal College of Music, paragraphs 23, 40, 44)
- review the operations of the subcommittees of the Board of Professors with a view to ensuring they each play a specific and unambiguous role in supporting the Board to discharge its responsibilities (Royal College of Music, paragraphs 47, 79)
- as a matter of priority, establish a systematic approach to ensure that the School responds to the findings of internal and external reviews in a timely and effective way (School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraphs 22, 23)
- ensure that deliberative structures operate with full oversight of the Quality Assurance Framework and have the capacity to assure its effectiveness (School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraphs 34, 36, 37)
- in order to guarantee the overall coherence of the academic committee structure, including the location of the strategic and operational responsibility for the management of quality and standards:
  - review the terms of reference of the Academic Board, and
  - complete the review of the functions and membership of the Academic Standards Committee and of its relationships to the Academic Board, the Undergraduate Studies Management Group, the Taught Postgraduate Studies Committee, the Higher Degrees Committee, and the newly established Education Directorate, so as to ensure that it can fulfil its central role in quality assurance and enhancement (School of Pharmacy, paragraphs 31, 40, 42, 93)
- update the School's learning and teaching strategy and incorporate an assessment strategy (School of Pharmacy, paragraphs 48, 80)
- continue to develop the style in which the meetings of its main committees are minuted to better convey the richness of the developments taking place (University College Falmouth, paragraphs 10, 68, 89)
- continue to reflect on the fitness for purpose of its policies, processes and procedures in relation to institutional management of academic standards and quality of learning opportunities as the institution expands in size and scope (University College Falmouth, paragraph 17)
- to affirm the institutional leadership of both quality assurance and enhancement activities and the roles of those supporting them to ensure clarity and vision, and to overcome the current institutional shortcomings in swiftly expediting change (Central School of Speech and Drama, paragraphs 10, 15, 25, 91)

- to review the operation of delegation within its committee structure, to ensure that all committees operate within their terms of reference, decisions are appropriately recorded, and that the academic board can exercise its full responsibilities for the security of academic standards and the quality of students' learning opportunities (Institute of Cancer Research, paragraphs 10, 24, 35, 136)
- to keep under review recent changes to the terms of reference and operation of the College's committees, in order to assure itself that the new arrangements meet its aspiration to ensure timely implementation of action plans and achievement of targets (Leeds College of Music, paragraphs 20, 21, 23, 29)
- to continue to develop institutional oversight of policies, processes, documentation and associated roles and responsibilities (Leeds College of Music, paragraphs 21, 26, 29, 129, 130)
- to develop its framework for managing academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities to enable the College to fully meet the requirements of the Open University's Handbook for Validated Awards (Leeds College of Music, paragraphs 53, 58, 59, 65)
- continue to clarify the roles and purposes of the academic committees to ensure that they work together in an increasingly effective and complementary way (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, paragraph 37)
- streamlining the responsibilities and reporting lines of the formal committees and working groups with oversight of academic standards and quality, to ensure they each play a necessary, specific and unambiguous role (Royal Academy of Music, paragraph 25)
- identifying a reliable means of ensuring that action resulting from the Academy's quality assurance procedures is carried out in a timely and effective manner (Royal Academy of Music, paragraph 42)
- to review the current committee processes so as to ensure that the Academic Board can effectively discharge its institutional responsibility for the overview of quality and standards (Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, paragraphs 21, 3, 109)
- to ensure that the records and minutes of committees provide sufficient evidence of the engagement with the matters under discussion, with a view to internal communication and external accountability (Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, paragraph 22)
- to progress rapidly towards a more consolidated and harmonised institution-wide quality management structure (Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, paragraph 51)
- to specify clear minimum requirements for schools' management of academic quality and standards and reinforce the use of formal reporting systems to demonstrate fulfilment of these requirements (University of Bradford, paragraphs 40, 96, 99, 102, 109)
- in order both to clarify and to ensure the continuing appropriateness of its current deliberative structure, further to review the respective roles of, and relationship between, its Senate and the Academic Advisory Council (University of Buckingham, paragraph 24)
- in the light of current norms and practices elsewhere within the higher education sector, to reflect further upon the fitness for purpose of its existing practices in the following areas: the systematic engagement of committees and staff with the Academic Infrastructure (paragraphs 33, 63); the provision of overview reports (paragraph 43); updating collaborative provision agreements (paragraph 102); the institutional use of statistical data (paragraph 111); and the independence of the complaints procedure for research students (paragraph 113); (University of Buckingham, paragraphs 33, 43, 63, 102, 111, 113)

- in order to inform and enhance future decision-making, to ensure that all key data, discussions and decisions are reliably recorded (University of Buckingham, paragraphs 56, 110)
- to consider producing supplementary operational guidance for the key quality assurance processes to support the consistent implementation of the Quality Assurance Manual (University of Lincoln, paragraphs 48, 57, 85, 105, 108)
- in developing its new Senate committee structure in the Realising our Vision project, the University is strongly advised to retain its robust arrangements for the management of academic quality, including the current high level of professional support (University of Salford, paragraph 24)
- to review whether the powers delegated to, and exercised by, Associate Deans (Education) are accompanied by suitable checks and balances (University of Southampton, paragraph 21)
- where university-level policy or procedural guidance is issued to schools, to make more explicit the degree of observance expected, so that it is clear whether local variation is appropriate (University of Southampton, paragraphs 43, 87, 96)
- to strengthen its ongoing efforts toward raising the profile of teaching and learning, including by considering whether the primary responsibility for this area of work should be borne by the University Teaching Committee rather than delegated to its subcommittee, the Forum for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching (University of York, paragraph 147)
- to ensure that the impact of the development of its programme frameworks does not detract from its current ability to maintain appropriate oversight of the standards of awards and the quality of the student experience in individual programmes (Bournemouth University, paragraphs 15, 31, 97)
- to clarify the balance of activity relating to quality assurance and quality enhancement within the University's deliberative committees (Bournemouth University, paragraphs 16, 63, 99)
- the University to clarify the delegation of authority between Academic Board and its subcommittees, and strengthen the accountability and reporting arrangements (Coventry University, paragraph 22)
- to seek ways to achieve a more rapid implementation of the College's agreed strategies and policies, particularly at departmental level (Goldsmiths College, paragraphs 28, 46, 98)
- ensure appropriate oversight so that the academic regulations and associated procedures are implemented consistently and accountably throughout the University (Leeds Metropolitan University, paragraphs 17, 22, 114)
- review and revise the academic regulations and associated procedures so as to ensure that they are clear, unambiguous and accessible to staff and students (Leeds Metropolitan University, paragraphs 19, 21, 23, 38, 49, 50, 51, 109, 112)
- consider reviewing the structures and processes in place at institutional level for the oversight of all the University's mechanisms for the assurance of quality and standards to ensure that they are appropriate and effective (Liverpool Hope University, paragraphs 26, 69, 73, 91, 150)
- develop further the management and organisation of its formal boards and committees, and the exchange of information between them, to ensure each is discharging its responsibilities for the management of quality and standards effectively and transparently (Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, paragraphs 18, 19, 20, 22, 36, 59, 91, 101, 113)
- to continue to review the academic governance structure, focusing particularly on the efficiency and transparency of intermediate committee layers (Open University, paragraph 50)
- consider establishing a formal reporting and accountability relationship between each school's senior academic committee or committees and the relevant

- committee(s) of Academic Council, and make committee minutes and papers readily accessible to staff and students (Queens University Belfast, paragraph 36)
- ensure that where inconsistencies at course level in regulatory and other areas are identified, clear institutional action is taken to ensure they are resolved (Royal Veterinary College, paragraph 76)
  - ensure that its arrangements for monitoring the implementation of the College's Learning and Teaching Strategy review the impact of the Strategy's initiatives on the quality of learning opportunities (Royal Veterinary College, paragraph 92)
  - clarify further the respective functions of Academic Board, the Teaching Quality Committee, and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee with regard to the strategic oversight of its arrangements for assuring the standard of awards and enhancing learning opportunities, and that it ensures that members of these committees understand clearly their roles and responsibilities (Royal Veterinary College, paragraph 104)
  - in the light of previous progress on harmonisation, and in order to consolidate further the equivalence of the student learning experience, UCL should maintain its momentum towards achieving the institutional coherence on regulatory and academic processes identified by its own committees (University College London, paragraphs 84, 98, 203)
  - where an institutional position has been reached on the harmonisation and simplification of regulatory and academic processes, UCL should seek to achieve full and timely departmental engagement and alignment (University College London, paragraphs 84, 99, 163, 174, 206)
  - keep under review the extent to which the implementation and operation of the range of new policy initiatives (such as the assessment framework, personal tutoring, peer observation, and staff appraisal) are producing the intended outcomes in terms of the management of academic standards and quality (University of Bath, paragraphs 58, 83, 131, 139, 141)
  - to specify the limits of acceptable variability in practice at school level, with particular reference to nomenclature for key committees and to roles and responsibilities for the provision and accuracy of information for students, including the content of handbooks (University of East Anglia, paragraphs 16, 40, 164)
  - use the opportunity presented by institutional restructuring to simplify its quality assurance processes (University of Leicester, paragraph 7)
  - keep under review the committee structure for academic governance, and to establish clarity in the designation of roles and responsibilities (University of Northampton, paragraph 17)
  - consider how the University may be assured that central policy and procedural requirements are observed in, and across, schools (University of Northampton, paragraph 17)
  - reduce the potential for internal conflicts of interest in the chairing of committees (University of Sunderland, paragraph 14)
  - develop a comprehensive evaluation framework for its approach to quality assurance (University of Sunderland, paragraphs 56, 107)
  - articulate more clearly the role of faculties in the management of quality and standards (University of Surrey, paragraphs 34, 52, 57)
  - to reflect on the balance between the effectiveness of its processes for quality management and the burden those processes may place on staff (University of the West of England, Bristol, paragraphs 24, 33, 35, 42, 43)
  - to take appropriate action based on the analysis contained in the interim report on the University's committee structure (University of Winchester, paragraph 30).

## Programme and course approval, monitoring and review

- review the arrangements for course review, periodic review and course revalidation to eliminate duplication and to establish clarity of purpose for each process (Ravensbourne College of Design and Communication, paragraph 73)
- to reconsider the role of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee to ensure that all validation decisions are fully informed and have appropriate externality (Royal Agricultural College, paragraphs 13, 31)
- to ensure all awards presented for validation adhere to the approved College validation process and reflect good practice in the sector (Royal Agricultural College, paragraphs 29, 30)
- in the context of programme approval, develop guidelines for programme design, criteria for appointment of external subject specialists, and advice for such specialists on the nature of their roles (School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraphs 17-20)
- develop a consistent and effective procedure for ensuring that the Annual Programme Review meets the requirements of its Quality Assurance Framework (School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraphs 82-90, 92)
- ensure adherence to programme validation procedures, and develop criteria for establishing the independence of external panel members (School of Pharmacy, paragraph 68)
- introduce a system of periodic review for all taught provision which will enable the School to take a strategic view of its present and future curricula (School of Pharmacy, paragraph 88)
- ensure effective and consistent analysis of module evaluations and student data in annual subject reports (Bath Spa University, paragraph 74)
- to communicate and implement a formal and comprehensive routine programme monitoring process (Institute of Cancer Research, paragraph 33)
- to review and update the procedures by which taught provision is validated and periodically reviewed (Institute of Cancer Research, paragraph 31)
- to consider the development of internal periodic review in order to promote greater College ownership of programme development (Leeds College of Music, paragraphs 36, 78)
- ensure it has in place a full and formal process for the routine monitoring of programmes over time, including overseeing the cumulative impact of incremental changes to curricula (London Business School, paragraph 36)
- reflect on the processes of programme approval, monitoring and review with a view to ensuring that the opportunities for enhancement afforded by external involvement are capitalised upon; and the outcomes of the processes are fully reported so that good practice is effectively captured and quality enhancement supported (Loughborough University, paragraphs 44, 52, 88, 90, 91, 94, 119, 134)
- making more effective use of management information in monitoring and review procedures (Royal Academy of Music, paragraphs 49, 50)
- develop a robust process for managing the discontinuation of courses. The institution might find the *Code of practice, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review*, published by QAA, a point of reference in this respect (University College for the Creative Arts, paragraph 33)
- develop robust processes for ensuring that professional body requirements and reports are considered fully at appropriate points in the approval, monitoring and review of courses (University College for the Creative Arts, paragraphs 49, 50)
- to ensure that its arrangements for programme approval reflect the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review* (University of Buckingham, paragraphs 35, 66)

- it develops further the annual quality statements by incorporating within them an analysis of the outcomes of the procedures described therein (University of Cambridge, paragraphs 85, 95, 140)
- to ensure that periodic review takes place every five years in line with the University's requirements (University of Chichester, paragraph 52)
- to review the approval and periodic review processes for programmes that involve significant amounts of flexible and/or distributed learning to ensure appropriate specialist scrutiny (University of Chichester, paragraph 104)
- to ensure that annual monitoring includes specific consideration of learning resources (University of Chichester, paragraph 108)
- to review its approach to recording that conditions of approval and review have been met, to ensure that no programme operates when not in full approval (University of Essex, paragraph 55)
- to review the procedures by which the adequacy of learning resources for proposed programmes are recorded centrally (University of Lincoln, paragraphs 93, 131)
- to review the reporting mechanisms of validation to reduce the current variability in the coverage and detail provided (University of Lincoln, paragraphs 94, 168)
- be more thorough in ensuring that annual monitoring reports are received, cover the intended areas, and are given full scrutiny at the appropriate level; ensuring in particular that the University Board for Teaching and Learning has sufficient time to consider in detail the reports from faculties (University of Reading, paragraph 44)
- maintain the independence and thoroughness of its current arrangements for academic audit as carried out by the Academic Audit Committee (University of Salford, paragraph 23)
- to ensure that the process for the approval of joint awards includes the production of a clear specification of the procedures and regulatory provisions to be applied to delivery of the programmes of study (University of Sheffield, paragraph 142)
- the University reviews both its regulatory framework and, in particular, its procedures for programme approval, monitoring and review, and also its assessment regime, to ensure that these take due account of new developments in curricula and delivery methods (Aston University, paragraph 93)
- to ensure that the development of annual monitoring fulfils its potential with respect to the enhancement of student learning opportunities across the University (Bournemouth University, paragraphs 41, 77)
- the University to establish a formal procedure for the discontinuation of courses that will safeguard the quality of learning opportunities for students (Coventry University, paragraph 75)
- to develop and document procedures for programme closure in accordance with the *Code of practice, Section 7* (Goldsmiths College, paragraph 40)
- to strengthen the management of the annual programme review process so as to achieve full and timely compliance with the College's agreed procedures (Goldsmiths College, paragraphs 46, 112)
- review the designation of responsibility for the approval, modification and review of programmes and for the management of research student awards to secure more effective University oversight of quality management (Leeds Metropolitan University, paragraphs 24, 26, 33, 110, 112)
- revise its procedures for the approval and amendment of courses and schemes to ensure that the integrity of awards is always safeguarded (Leeds Metropolitan University, paragraph 25)
- continue the work of the University to ensure that the annual review process provides a rigorous consideration of and reporting on all courses, in line with the expectations of the *Code of practice* (Leeds Metropolitan University, paragraphs 30, 37)

- ensure that the recommendation made in the previous audit report, that periodic review be undertaken at regular intervals and that there should be a contribution from external peers that is always critical and robust, is addressed fully; and ensure that the overriding responsibility for the procedure, nature and timing of the periodic review process is determined by Academic Board or an appropriate subcommittee (Leeds Metropolitan University, paragraphs 33, 35)
- review the effectiveness of the various internal audit processes and how they work together to ensure that their outcomes contribute in an integrated way to the management of academic standards, quality and enhancement (Leeds Metropolitan University, paragraphs 36, 39)
- develop clear procedures for the approval, monitoring and review of joint awards (Leeds Metropolitan University, paragraph 37)
- develop systems and procedures for course approval and periodic review so that the University can assure itself of consistent engagement with the elements of the Academic Infrastructure across the full range of provision (Leeds Metropolitan University, paragraph 47)
- keep under review the annual monitoring process to ensure that the deliberative structure meets the Institute's aspirations for overall consistency of reporting, the implementation of action plans, and the achievement of targets (Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, paragraphs 59, 73, 75, 77, 84, 87 )
- remain mindful of the recommendation of the previous Institutional audit with respect to programme oversight, as it assesses the comprehensiveness and fitness for purpose of its new periodic School review process (Nottingham Trent University, paragraphs 69, 70)
- consider whether the Annual Programme Review process provides the Education Committee and the Collaborative Provision Group with sufficient evidence of appropriate quality and reliability from schools and collaborative partners to enable them to discharge their responsibilities on behalf of Academic Council (Queens University Belfast, paragraphs 41, 178)
- review its programme monitoring and review processes to ensure that the effectiveness of their operation, including appropriate actions, is evaluated at institutional level (Royal Veterinary College, paragraph 103)
- review and revise the procedures for programme approval with particular reference to the determination of the form of approval to be undertaken and the nomination and approval of internal and external panel members (Southampton Solent University, paragraph 54)
- revise its procedure for monitoring the cumulative effects of programme, course and unit modifications to ensure a consistent approach to determining the need for programme re-approval (Southampton Solent University, paragraph 61)
- ensure consistency of procedures for annual review and for granting extensions to coursework deadlines (University of Birmingham, paragraphs 41, 45, 60, 62)
- consider the relative timing of the comprehensive programme review and school quality review cycles (University of Birmingham, paragraph 76)
- review the Academic Quality Assurance manual, Part 1 Appendix 6, section 3, in order to ensure scrutiny of each level of annual monitoring by more than one person within faculty quality frameworks (University of Central Lancashire, paragraphs 77, 78)
- exploit, to a greater extent, the professional expertise of learning support staff in the operation of periodic review (Enhancement-led Review) (University of Durham, paragraphs 34, 79)
- to reflect further on the ways in which central oversight of school-based periodic review is maintained and consider in particular whether provision for light touch reviews, and the relationship between professional, statutory and regulatory body

reviews and internal reviews, should be more closely defined (University of Greenwich, paragraph 41)

- to implement mechanisms to maintain institutional oversight of the cumulative effect of minor changes and derogations on programmes (University of Greenwich, paragraph 56)
- monitor the operation and reporting of periodic subject review to confirm that the University's requirements for separation of the process from those for course approval and for minor modifications to programmes are met (University of Northampton, paragraph 33)
- reconsider its timetable for Internal Academic Review, prioritising those areas which have fallen outside the University's stated timeframe (University of the West of England, Bristol, paragraph 40).

## **Use of external reference points**

- develop a mechanism by which the College can assure itself that it has a systematic, ongoing, timely, and effective engagement with all elements of the Academic Infrastructure (Royal College of Art, paragraph 62)
- ensure that at the earliest opportunity all remaining programme specifications are completed, and suitably comprehensive learning outcomes produced and published for all courses in the context of both undergraduate and taught master's programmes (School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraphs 69-71)
- expedite progress with the new quality assurance manual to meet the planned implementation date, ensuring that the Academic Infrastructure is embedded within it and that its contents and purpose are communicated to all staff (School of Pharmacy, paragraphs 44, 45, 66, 69)
- to consider means by which the School can engage better with the broader higher education community, thus increasing its awareness and understanding of debates and practices within the sector (Central School of Speech and Drama, paragraphs 89, 90, 100, 116, 119)
- to review its engagement with the *Code of practice* and other external reference points (Institute of Cancer Research, paragraphs 13, 31, 43, 45, 47, 48, 54, 105)
- to develop mechanisms to ensure that it can draw and reflect upon qualitative and quantitative data from the institution and the wider sector in order to benchmark and to monitor institutional performance (Leeds College of Music, paragraph 72)
- ensure that it develops and implements procedures for the systematic deliberative oversight of the quality and standards of its educational provision as a whole, with particular reference to the nature and level of its engagement with external reference points (London Business School, paragraph 70)
- ensure that learning outcomes contained in programme specifications are, as the University expects, specific to each programme (University of Leeds, paragraphs 47, 50)
- consider its methods for ensuring that it has a clear, comprehensive overview of the current status of practice with regard to changes in the Academic Infrastructure (University of Leeds, paragraphs 76, 79)
- to fulfil the commitment outlined in the Quality Assurance Manual that programme specifications be made available 'as a source of information for students and prospective students seeking an understanding of a programme' at the earliest opportunity, and reflect on the effectiveness of the process by which programme specifications are kept current (University of Lincoln, paragraphs 41, 42)
- revise its module descriptor forms to make clear the relationship between module and programme learning outcomes (Leeds Trinity and All Saints, paragraph 17)



- engage with the *Code of practice* in a systematic way at institutional level to develop further its policies and procedures for the assurance of academic quality and standards (Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts, paragraphs 60, 62)
- consider how to make the process for responding to changes in external reference points more systematic (Nottingham Trent University, paragraphs 41, 45)
- ensure that its arrangements for engaging with external reference points relating to standards are applied consistently across the College and are clearly articulated in its quality assurance processes (Royal Veterinary College, paragraph 94).

## Learning resources

- to ensure that the strategic planning and management of learning resources are undertaken effectively by the responsible body (Royal Agricultural College, paragraph 70)
- to initiate, at the earliest opportunity, development of a strategic approach to learning resources which links explicitly to other strategies, policies and statements of intent (Central School of Speech and Drama, paragraphs 95, 96, 99, 100)
- to improve the timetabling of learning activities (Leeds College of Music, paragraphs 102, 105)
- to implement a more effective method for strategically linking learning resource planning and academic planning (Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, paragraphs 28, 55, 82)
- review the arrangements for access to resources in support of learning, in particular the opening hours of the Library and Learning Centres (University College for the Creative Arts, paragraph 100)
- to continue to monitor and enhance the effectiveness of studentcentral as a tool to aid learning and teaching (University of Brighton, paragraphs 125, 126)
- enhance, through greater provision of study space and facilitation of shared training across faculties, opportunities for research students to meet other postgraduate research students in their own and other disciplines (University of Leeds, paragraphs 147, 254, 256)
- encourage the continuing improvements in the consistency of use of the virtual learning environment, especially within programmes of study (University of Salford, paragraph 69)
- improve academic departments' liaison with Learning Information Services, to facilitate the timely and systematic provision of learning resources for new and existing programmes (Leeds Trinity and All Saints, paragraph 50)
- ensure that further expeditious action is taken to address the problems of student access to electronic resources (Liverpool Hope University, paragraphs 19, 106, 210)
- to keep under careful review the capacity of its human and physical resources in the context of its many strategic and operational objectives (Rose Bruford College, paragraph 30)
- to expedite the implementation of those aspects of its learning and teaching strategy relating to online learning support (Rose Bruford College, paragraph 127)
- to strengthen the proactive management and coordination of College resources with particular reference to the library, information technology, technical support and estates (Rose Bruford College, paragraph 132)
- develop a more systematic approach to the use of the virtual learning environment across the University in the interests of parity of student learning opportunities (University of Northampton, paragraph 46)

## Non-traditional learning environments

- the University to review the management of placement learning in light of its intention to expand this type of provision in order to ensure that it remains effective (Coventry University, paragraphs 116, 138)
- review its procedures for approval and review of distance learning and for modules adopting a more blended learning approach in light of the *Code of practice* (Leeds Metropolitan University, paragraphs 27, 72)
- develop further the strategy and guidelines for the approval, production, use and delivery of electronic materials deployed in student learning (Liverpool Hope University, paragraph 101).

## Role of research

- to continue to give serious consideration to developing and supporting models of integration between research and teaching across the full range of its curricula, exploiting the results of good initiatives elsewhere and the considerable innovative practice within the University as demonstrated by some of its staff (University of Liverpool, paragraph 69).

## Staff support

- provide training, guidance and support for all PhD students who are granted the opportunity to teach and assess (Royal College of Art, paragraph 232)
- ensure systematic implementation and monitoring requirements of peer observation of teaching, as agreed by the Learning and Teaching Policy Committee, staff development review, and the mentoring and training of new members of teaching staff (School of Oriental and African Studies, paragraphs 155-157)
- continue to develop a consistent approach to appraisal to enable transparent identification of the development needs of all groups of staff (School of Pharmacy, paragraph 119)
- continue to provide training and development so that staff can make the most productive use of centrally provided data in quality assurance and enhancement (Anglia Ruskin University, paragraph 70)
- review its procedures for the induction, training and support of staff and students who join the University at times other than the start of the academic year (Keele University, paragraph 142)
- give priority to the development of a workload allocation model and thus ensure that staff time for supervision of postgraduate research students is appropriately calibrated (Keele University, paragraph 184)
- to establish a focus for the development of pedagogical support and research for academic staff that takes more into account internal and external models of effective practice (Leeds College of Music, paragraphs 94, 136)
- ensure that all members of staff acting as supervisors of research students undertake such development activities as will enable the School to be assured of their competence in this role (London Business School, paragraph 121)
- to develop and implement more expeditiously a comprehensive institutional staff development policy (Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance, paragraphs 92, 93)
- to ensure it promptly reviews its Staff Development and Review Scheme in line with any changes to be introduced as a result of its planned review of staff development (University of Brighton, paragraph 152)
- all graduate students with supervisory or teaching responsibilities are appropriately trained (University of Cambridge, paragraph 127)

- to ensure that postgraduate research students are given appropriate training prior to undertaking a teaching role (University of Chichester, paragraph 175)
- to reflect on the support for and preparation of postgraduate research students engaged in teaching (University of Lincoln, paragraphs 206, 215)
- the University to review whether Academic Board should play a greater part in determining the priorities for academic staff development (De Montfort University, paragraph 144)
- to specify and implement consistently the minimum level of training and support which postgraduate research students receive before they contribute to teaching (Goldsmiths College, paragraph 90)
- ensure that the University's expectation that all research students who undertake teaching and assessment receive appropriate prior training is met consistently (Leeds Metropolitan University, paragraph 117)
- the evaluation of staff development and its future direction is increasingly guided by relevant statistical data (Middlesex University, paragraph 71)
- that all research students who teach and/or assess are adequately prepared for these roles (Middlesex University, paragraph 90)
- clarify further, and standardise across schools, both the training the University requires of those postgraduate research students who teach, demonstrate and/or contribute to the assessment of undergraduate students, and the limits it imposes on the extent of such activities (Queens University Belfast, paragraph 197)
- provide a compulsory programme of training for postgraduate students prior to them undertaking teaching and/or assessment of students (Southampton Solent University, paragraph 268)
- adopt a more systematic approach to the recording of annual staff review to enable the University to maintain an oversight of the consistency of participation in the process (University of Durham, paragraph 110)
- to formalise the expectations for the training and ongoing support for postgraduate research students who teach, to ensure they are adequately prepared for the role (University of East Anglia, paragraph 114)
- to reappraise the current approach to peer observation of teaching, to establish consistent practice across the University (University of East Anglia, paragraph 118)
- in line with the recommendations of the 2004 audit, to make training compulsory for postgraduate research students who teach, and ensure institutional consistency in monitoring their teaching (University of Greenwich, paragraph 150)
- strengthen its oversight of the process by which departments ensure that postgraduate research students who teach are adequately prepared to do so (University of Hull, paragraph 146)
- specify a minimum level of training or development which research students should undergo before they may contribute to teaching (University of Kent, paragraph 121)
- ensure that before postgraduate research students undertake teaching duties, they are trained for that role in accordance with the University's requirement (University of Portsmouth, paragraph 176)
- to consider ways of enhancing the integration of central and faculty support and guidance for staff in respect of learning and teaching (University of the West of England, Bristol, paragraphs 74, 96, 97)
- to explore means of recognising and rewarding teaching excellence at institutional level (University of the West of England, Bristol, paragraph 95)
- in the context of the refocusing of the academic portfolio, to review the institutional policies and procedures for the professional development of academic staff, with particular reference to the peer observation scheme (University of Wolverhampton, paragraph 109)

- to review the approach to research students who teach, including the identification of suitable opportunities for them to teach and the provision of effective training and support (University of Wolverhampton, paragraph 163).

## **Admissions**

- the University to put in place and assure itself that it fully operates and delivers its procedures for postgraduate research programmes that meet the expectations of the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes* relating to the selection, admission and induction of students, supervision, assessment and the development of research and other skills (De Montfort University, paragraphs 203, 206, 214, 218)
- develop further its admissions policy to capture and inform its practice in this area (Liverpool Hope University, paragraph 111)
- to review the policies, procedures and published information relating to the admission of postgraduate research students, to establish clarity of requirement (University of East Anglia, paragraph 145)
- to revise its plans for making awards based on credit-bearing short courses and/or the accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL) so that appropriate attention is paid to external reference points, including subject benchmark statements, in determining the name of such awards, and, in doing so, to review APEL protocols in support of the process (University of Hertfordshire, paragraph 35)
- the University finds ways of ensuring that published information regarding college provision is clear and accurate, in order to allow students to make an informed choice at admission (University of Oxford, paragraph 221).

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

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

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

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

Individual *Outcomes* papers are written by experienced institutional auditors and audit secretaries. To assist in compiling the papers, reports produced using QSR NVivo8 are made available to authors to provide a broad picture of the overall distribution of features of good practice and recommendations in particular areas, as seen by the audit teams. The authors then consider this evidence in the context of the more detailed explanations given in the main text of the technical annex to establish themes for further discussion.

## Appendix D: Institutional audit reports

### 2006-07

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

### 2007-08

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

### 2008-09

Aston University  
Bournemouth University  
City University London  
Coventry University  
De Montfort University  
Goldsmiths College  
Lancaster University  
Leeds Metropolitan University  
Leeds Trinity and All Saints<sup>233</sup>  
Liverpool Hope University  
Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts  
Middlesex University  
Nottingham Trent University  
Open University  
Queen's University Belfast  
Rose Bruford College  
Royal Veterinary College  
Southampton Solent University  
University College London  
University of Bath  
University of Birmingham  
University of Bristol  
University of Central Lancashire  
University of Durham  
University of East Anglia  
University of Greenwich  
University of Hertfordshire  
University of Hull  
University of Kent  
University of Leicester  
University of Liverpool  
University of Northampton  
University of Oxford  
University of Portsmouth  
University of Sunderland  
University of Surrey  
University of the West of England, Bristol  
University of Warwick  
University of Winchester  
University of Wolverhampton

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

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<sup>233</sup> Now Leeds Trinity University College

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

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

All published *Outcomes* papers can be found at:

[www.qaa.ac.uk/ImprovingHigherEducation/Pages/Outcomes.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/ImprovingHigherEducation/Pages/Outcomes.aspx).

**QAA 424 11/11**

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© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2011

ISBN 978 1 84979 418 3

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Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786