QAA

University of Teesside

December 2009

Annex to the report

Contents

Introduction

A team of auditors from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visited the University of Teesside (the University) from 7 to 11 to carry out an Institutional audit. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the learning opportunities available to students and on the academic standards of the awards the University offers.

Outcomes of the Institutional audit

As a result of its investigations, the audit team's view of the University of Teesside is that:

- confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the academic standards of the awards that it offers

- confidence can 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.

Institutional approach to quality enhancement

The University does not have a separate and specific quality enhancement strategy; rather it has taken a systematic approach to establish a range of means of appraising and improving the quality of student learning opportunities. The proactive approach adopted by the University to quality enhancement has created a sound basis for further development.

Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

The audit found that the arrangements for postgraduate research students, including those for support, supervision and assessment, were effective and met the expectations of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice), Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*.

Published information

The audit team found that reliance could reasonably be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information the University publishes about the quality of its educational provision and the standards of its awards.

Features of good practice

The audit team identified the following areas of good practice:

- the proactive use of a range of outcomes from external evaluations to enhance student learning opportunities (see paragraph 53)

- the effective partnership between the University and the Students' Union to support student representation processes on taught programmes at all levels of the institution (see paragraph 60)

- the development and implementation of a comprehensive and responsive structure to support e-learning (see paragraph 69)

- the effective alignment of strategic aims and inclusive staff development activities in support of the University's mission (see paragraph 106)

- the systematic programme for admission, induction and support of postgraduate research students at both the institutional and school level (see paragraph 146).

Recommendations for action

The audit team recommends that the University consider further action in some areas.

Recommendations for action that the team considers advisable:

- ensure that all postgraduate research students involved in the assessment of students are appropriately trained and prepared for this work (see paragraph 153).

Recommendations for action that the team considers desirable:

- monitor the consistency of the use by programmes and schools of its internally generated performance data for taught programmes (see paragraph 41).

Section 1: Introduction and background

The institution and its mission

1   The University has its origins in the period after World War I, when 79 years ago Joseph Constantine, a local shipping magnate, made a gift to the town to stimulate the establishment of a technical college. It was formally opened in 1930 supporting Middlesbrough's booming engineering and shipping industries. In 1969 the College became Britain's 13th Polytechnic, with 17 degree courses and 600 undergraduate students. In 1992 the Polytechnic was renamed the University of Teesside. Following a major review of the marketing and student recruitment work of the institution, the trading name of 'Teesside University' was adopted in May 2009.

2   Since the last Institutional audit there has been rapid expansion of student numbers, diversification of academic provision, continuous enhancement of the University's reputation and, over the last 10 years, major campus development involving over £120m investment. In addition, the University has opened purpose-built University Centres at campuses of local further education Colleges.

3   The Mission of the University is as follows: 'Providing Opportunity, Promoting Enterprise, Delivering Excellence. Working in partnership to enable individuals and organisations to achieve their potential through high quality learning, research and knowledge transfer'.

4   The total number of students in 2007-08 was 23,909, of which 40.5 per cent were studying full-time and 59.5 per cent were undertaking part-time study, which reflects a similar profile to the previous year; 57.8 per cent of students were female and 42.2 per cent were male. There were 927 students studying in overseas partner institutions (3.9 per cent of the overall student population) and 2,618 students studying in UK partner colleges (10.9 per cent of the overall student population).

The information base for the audit

5   The University provided the audit team with a briefing paper and supporting documentation, including that related to the sampling trails selected by the team. The index to the Briefing Paper was referenced to sources of evidence to illustrate the institution's approach to managing the security of the academic standards of its awards and the quality of its educational provision. The team had a hard copy of all documents referenced in the Briefing Paper; in addition, the team had access to the institution's SharePoint site and intranet.

6   The Students' Union produced a student written submission setting out the students' views on the accuracy of the information provided to them, the experience of students as learners and their role in quality management.

7   In addition, the audit team had access to:

- the report of the previous Institutional audit, December 2004

- Overseas audit report - University of Teesside and Mediterranean University College, May 2008

- Foundation Degree review - University of Teesside, Darlington College of Technology, Hartlepool College of Further Education, Middlesbrough College, Redcar and Cleveland College, Stockton Riverside College, June 2005

- Foundation Degree review - University of Teesside and Cleveland College of Art and Design, May 2005

- report of the Review of research degree programmes, July 2006

- Major review of healthcare programmes, June 2004

- the report on the mid-cycle follow up to Institutional audit

- the institution's internal documents

- the notes of audit team meetings with staff and students.

Developments since the last audit

8   In response to the recommendations of the 2004 Institutional audit, changes were made in 2007 to the Threshold Quality Standard (TQS): Assessment Practice regarding feedback provided by staff on draft summative work, and to the programme approval and review documentation to ensure that the use made of formative assessment and feedback is considered. This is currently being developed into an Assessment Policy for consideration by the University Learning and Teaching Committee (ULTC) and the University Academic Standards Committee (UASC) prior to submission to the University Academic Board (UAB) in May 2010.

9   Following a period of revision and reflection a new subcommittee of the UASC, the University Approval Panel (UAP), was introduced in 2008-09 to review, formally approve and have oversight of all approval and periodic review activity and to oversee the appointment and training of chairs and members of approval panels. All programme approvals and periodic reviews are signed off by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) Learning and Student Experience (LSE), as Chair of the UASC and UAP.

10   The system for dealing with issues arising from external examiner reports was revised in 2004-05 to ensure central oversight of the process by the University Monitoring Sub-Committee (UMSC) of the UASC. Following internal reviews in 2006 to 2008, the process was further revised for 2008-09 to allow a more detailed oversight of school responses by the UASC and the UAB.

11   An internal review (2006-07) for the UAB, led to some streamlining of the University's academic committee structure. 'Officer' membership of UAB sub-committees was reviewed and, from 2006-07, where the remit of a committee substantially relates to a primary managerial responsibility of a member of staff, that person cannot be a committee member although they can continue to advise the committee. Following an external audit (2008) of the UAB, and in recognition of changes to the Institutional Plan and the University's Core Strategies, a review of the committee structure was considered by the UAB in 2009, which aimed to streamline and clarify the remit and membership of sub-committees reporting to the UAB. The Terms of Reference and Memberships of the new committees are to be considered by the UAB in February 2010. At the point of audit, the team had sight of the proposed terms of reference and memberships which would be considered and ratified by Academic Board in February 2010. The team felt that based on the evidence it had seen, the proposals would meet the needs of the review and continue to underpin the deliberative structure of the management of standards and quality across the University.

Institutional framework for the management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities

12   The Vice-Chancellor (VC) is the senior officer of the institution. There are three DVC for LSE, Research and Enterprise, and Development who, with the University Secretary and Registrar and Executive Director (Finance and Planning) form the VC's Executive (VCE). The University Corporate Executive Team (UCET) comprises the VCE, the deans of the six University schools and directors\deans of the University's departments, and is the University's Senior Management Team.

13   The UAB is chaired by the VC. Its membership includes UCET, elected staff and student representatives. UAB is 'responsible for overseeing the management of academic standards' and advises the VC and the Board of Governors, which is 'responsible for determining the overall strategic direction of the University'.

14   There are currently seven subcommittees (see paragraph 12) that report directly to the UAB: the ULTC, the UASC, the University Academic Policy Committee (UAPC), the University Research Policy Committee, the University Admissions Committee, the University Enterprise Committee and the University Institutional Audit Committee (UIAC). ULTC, chaired by the DVC (LSE), oversees the student learning experience and enhancement. UASC, chaired by the DVC (LSE), oversees quality assurance. UAPC, chaired by the DVC (Development), approves proposals for new developments. The University Research Degrees Sub-Committee, which oversees development and implementation of the Framework and Regulations for Higher Degrees by research and enhancement of learning opportunities for postgraduate research, reports to the UASC.

15   There are equivalent school committees for learning and teaching, academic standards, policy, and research degrees. These are responsible for 'the implementation and monitoring of University strategies and processes at school level' and report to their corresponding University committees. The Centre for Learning and Quality Enhancement (CLQE) provides central coordination and support for staff development, quality management and enhancement.

16   The University's Quality and Standards Framework for taught awards was approved by UAB in December 2007. Processes for establishment, review and regulation of awards and the University's TQS are described in the Quality Handbook produced by CLQE. This also contains the key processes of the University's framework for the management of quality and standards and the Credit Accumulation and Module Scheme (CAMS) which provides a common framework for all University taught awards and standard assessment regulations. UIAC manages the University's quality audit and review activities, and advises UAB on the application of academic policies, procedures and standards by the schools.

17   Following a refocusing of the University's strategy to include a 'major expansion of workforce development, employer engagement and the creation of tailored corporate programmes', substantial changes have been made to the Quality Handbook to differentiate between the general requirements for the management of collaborative partnerships, and the specific requirements for employer, UK educational, and international partnerships.

Section 2: Institutional management of academic standards

Approval, monitoring and review of award standards

18   Approval of new programmes has three stages. In the first stage, schools and departments produce a three-year development plan which is annually reviewed and includes bids for resources and the business case for new programme developments. Proposals for new programme developments then require approval from the Iniversity Academic Policy Committee (UAPC) which has delegated responsibility from UAB. Initial consideration of a proposal is undertaken by UAPC Review subcommittee prior to formal approval from UAPC.

19   The final stage is an approval event which is organised by schools. The Centre for Learning and Quality Enhancement (CLQE) approves the composition of programme approval panels. These include membership external to the University and may be chaired by an internal or external chair. Criteria exist by which CLQE decides whether the chair should be internal or external to the school. The audit team noted that the issue of internal chairs was raised in the 2004 Institutional audit. The University responded that, as the process had been revised since the last audit, and the panel now makes a recommendation to the University Approval Panel (UAP) which undertakes final scrutiny on behalf of the University Academic Standards Committee (UASC), it felt that it was appropriate to use internal chairs for provision where the risk was deemed low. The team heard that chairs for many events are drawn from another school and thus are external to, and independent of, the provision being considered. Panel chairs and members are trained, and a directory of suitable panel chairs and members and whether they have undergone training, is maintained by CLQE. A member of CLQE is a member of every approval panel.

20   UASC oversees the processes of approval and periodic review and receives the Annual Approval and Review Schedule. It devolves final approval of approval and periodic reviews to UAP. Both committees are chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Student Experience).

21   In response to the recommendation from the 2004 audit that the University consider the process for signing off compliance with conditions and recommendations, the chair of the relevant School Academic Standards Committee (SASC) now confirms that the conditions and recommendations have been met, and this is scrutinised by UAP. Based on the evidence seen by the audit team, approval and review events use standard documentation.

22   Prior to programme approval, module approval panels approve any new modules with guidelines for such events laid down by the University. Curriculum modifications between periodic reviews are approved by the relevant SASC, and reported in the SASC annual report to UASC. If the changes are major, CLQE advises if a re-approval event is needed because of major changes to structure and modules.

Periodic review

23   Periodic review takes place over a six-yearly cycle. The same process is used as for programme approval for the selection of the panel which includes external membership. The Briefing Paper states that periodic review builds on the process of annual monitoring and the audit team saw evidence of this. The school prepares a Programme Evaluation Document using annual reports, student feedback, progression and achievement data and external examiner reports, plus an evidence file which includes SASC minutes, professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) reports and feedback from employers if appropriate. The panel also has a meeting with existing students. The school also produces plans which feed into future annual monitoring. The existing process for periodic review arose out of a pilot conducted in June 2008. A report of the pilot was presented to UASC with recommendations to enhance the process. The recommendations were approved by University Academic Board (UAB) which delegated responsibility for the oversight of the process to UAP. Further revisions to the process were approved by UASC in October 2008 and UAB in December 2008.

Annual monitoring

24   The University Monitoring Sub-Committee (UMSC) is responsible for the oversight of the annual monitoring process on behalf of UASC. Module, subject and programme leaders produce an annual report looking at external examiner reports, student feedback, progression and achievement data. There is no requirement to comment routinely on aspects that are judged to be satisfactory but there must be comment on exceptions. When the audit team asked about the process of reporting by exception, it heard that this approach was used as a maximise focus on important issues while reducing administrative workloads on staff. The team was also advised

that the University reflects on and refines the process to ensure it continues to work well. All the individual reports feed into a school Monitoring and Enhancement Report written by the end of January. The school report identifies school wide actions for enhancement, University wide issues and enhancement themes or topics. School monitoring and enhancement reports are then scrutinised by UMSC at its annual away day.

25   School monitoring and enhancement reports inform the writing of the UMSC annual report. UMSC holds a minimum of two meetings a year to identify university-level issues, finalise its annual report and reflect on the annual monitoring process and its effectiveness and possible enhancement. It also identifies which parts of the report should be fed back to SASCs to close the reporting loop. Relevant elements are presented to UASC and the full report is presented to UAB in May so that University issues can be taken forward. The team saw evidence of institutional issues identified from the 2007-08 annual monitoring reports which included the need to enhance central support provided for international students and the reducing response rates for student evaluations. The team considered that the formal receipt of these issues by UAB in May 2009 was somewhat late in terms of addressing actions ahead of the following academic year, although the team noted that the University had recognised this and, in 2009, the key issues had been presented to UASC earlier in the year in March. The team encourages the University to continue to monitor the effectiveness of the timing of the reporting process.

Quality audit and review

26   The quality audit and review process scrutinises academic policies and procedures as selected by UAB to ensure they are being effectively discharged. Outcomes advise on adequacy and sufficiency of selected policies and procedures, identify best practice and facilitate enhancement. The process is managed by the University Institutional Audit Commitee (UIAC) and the schedule is reviewed by UIAC twice a year. Once completed, an action plan is devised which is monitored by CLQE with six-monthly updates to UAB. The acceptance of the final report by UAB formally closes the audit.

External examiners

27   External examiners are nominated by SASC, proposals considered by UMSC and then endorsed by the Chair of UASC before proceeding to UAB for approval. There are set criteria and regular reports to UMSC on tenure. UMSC keeps processes under review and proposes changes to UAB via UASC. The University's processes reflect the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 4: External examining* in providing induction and training. The UMSC secretary maintains a reciprocity database which is forwarded to chairs of SASC to check whether there are reciprocity issues when considering nominations.

28   The University has both module and award examiners. Module examiners confirm standards against the University Assessment and Progression Regulations which are aligned to The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) award examiners verify implementation of the University Assessment and Progression regulations and classification of awards. In addition to the Regulatory Framework, the audit team saw evidence of the Review of Threshold Quality Standards (TQS) in 2008, which had identified that, although practices across schools had converged to a certain extent, there was a need for greater clarity regarding assessment processes. The revised TQS: Assessment Practice guides the development of school-based Assessment practices in order that they achieve the stated threshold outcomes. The TQS: Assessment Practice also gives details of external examiner involvement in assessment processes, including sampling. A handbook is provided for examiners and they produce annual reports on a standard template.

29   UAB receives an annual report from UMSC on the effectiveness of external examining system. In 2009, the Board recommended to UMSC that appropriate changes are made to the process so that a more detailed report of issues and good practice can be presented to UASC and

UAB for the 2008-09 reports. Reports and school responses are discussed at programme boards containing student reps and at SASC. Responses are written on a template and approved by SASC prior to submission to CLQE. Such responses become part of the overarching external examiner report. An annual summary of issues raised by external examiners is considered by UMSC and presented to UAB, along with items of good practice arising from reports. In addition, an internal audit of annual external examiner reports and responses highlighted the effectiveness of the current procedures to review policy and practice.

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

30   The audit team saw evidence of the application of the Academic Infrastructure as embedded in programme approval and review processes. Guidance provided for programme teams and approval/review panels specifically require them to address the use of the Academic Infrastructure and, in particular, the subject benchmark statements. The University uses level descriptors which adhere to the revised FHEQ.

31   The audit team saw evidence that that the revised programme approval review process (see paragraph 9) has strengthened evidence of programme teams' engagement with QAA's subject benchmark statements (SBS) and PSRB requirements. PSRBs, where appropriate, are involved in approval and review events. PSRB reports are considered by SASC and received by UASC. New SBS are considered by the relevant programme team and verified at next review unless changes mean the review has to be brought forward.

32   The University in its Briefing Paper gives details of consideration of various sections of the *Code of practice* and its discussion about the impact of the Bologna process. The University uses standard programme specifications for all programmes which the team saw had been revised to make them more user friendly for staff and students.

33   The audit team saw other examples of where revisions to the *Code of practice* have led to revised procedures such as the recent revision to the University's complaints and assessment review regulations, and the approach to work-based learning as reflected in the revised TQS: Placement Learning. In addition, the team saw extensive evidence of how the University had engaged effectively with other external reference points.

Assessment policies and regulations

34   A credit accumulation modular scheme (CAMS) has been in operation since 1990. It was revised during 2003-04, the major revisions being the move from 12 to 20-credit modules, the abolition of semesters and the incorporation of Foundation Degrees and doctoral-level awards into the scheme. One of the primary objectives of the scheme is to provide comprehensive and coherent frameworks for progression at sub-degree, degree and post level, which are capable of being consistently applied across all University provision in order to guarantee and protect the application of appropriate academic standards. UAB delegates responsibility for oversight of the effective operation of the scheme to the University Credit Accumulation Modular Scheme Sub-Committee which advises on its development and enhancement. This Sub-Committee makes recommendations to UASC which are then approved by UAB.

35   The University has both modular assessment boards and progression and award boards with clearly defined responsibilities. Both types of boards are chaired by a dean or nominee. Assessment boards have discretionary powers which should always be exercised for the benefit of the student. There is an initial training event and an annual update for chairs to ensure consistency, in keeping with the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*.

36   CLQE undertake an annual schedule of assessment board observations which provides for issues to be addressed and makes recommendations for enhancement, and includes feedback from schools on their own observations of the process. An annual report is submitted to UAB on

the operation of the boards. External examiners also provide comments on the operation of the boards as part of their report.

37   The TQS: Assessment Practice was reviewed in 2008 as part of a review of all TQSs (see paragraph 28) This lays down minimum standards in relation to a number of areas such as feedback to students and samples for moderation and anonymous marking where appropriate. The Briefing Paper indicated that the 2008 review had highlighted instances of divergence between schools on the application of the TQS. As a result of this the University is developing an assessment policy to ensure greater clarity regarding assessment processes and, based on the evidence seen by the audit team in relation to the proposals, this looks fit for its intended purpose.

38   Standard assessment regulations apply across the University, but schools can apply for variance via the University Variance Sub-Committee. Assessment practice which is considered to be effective is promoted through the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and module approval panels scrutinise the appropriateness of the fit between learning outcomes and assessment. CAMS limits number of assessment components.

Management information - statistics

39   Data from the Academic Registry on student progression and performance are provided to module leaders, programme leaders and subject leaders through the assistant deans (Learning and Teaching). These are used to populate their respective annual reports. The audit team saw examples of the data made available to module assessment boards on enrolment, numbers and percentages of withdrawals, non submissions, plagiarism, mitigating circumstances, passes at module level numbers, percentages by group/grade at component and module level, numbers/ percentages of resubmissions/referrals at component and module level. The team also saw a sample of statistical information received by Progression and Award Boards in respect of Pass/ Fail/referrals, distribution of grades and distribution of degree classification. In addition, schools receive a three-year longitudinal analysis of student progression. All data is used to inform relevant annual reports and schools also receive information on applications received and graduate destinations to inform their panning processes.

40   There is also an opportunity through the UMSC annual reporting mechanism for institutional issues arising from the data to be picked up and considered by UASC and UAB.

41   The audit team heard that the University feels that there is sufficient information provided for module, programme and school teams. It acknowledges, however, that there had been some difficulties with data analysis in partner colleges. Prior to 2008, data had not been presented in a way which was readily understood by its further education college partners. Since 2008 the University has presented the data in a longitudinal cohort-based way. From the evidence available to the team, it was clear that progression and admission statistics form an effective and valuable part of the evidence base for periodic review. However, from the evidence available, it was apparent to the team that the discussion of statistics at programme and school levels had been variable. More recent reports seen by the audit team suggest that programme teams and schools are progressively more engaged in analysis of statistics. The team recommends that it is desirable for the University to monitor the consistency of the use, by programmes and schools, of its internally generated performance data for taught programmes.

42   The audit team considers that confidence can be placed in the University's present and future management of academic standards.

Section 3: Institutional management of learning opportunities

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

43   The audit team saw evidence to support the University's view that all elements of the Academic Infrastructure are taken into appropriate account and embedded in regulatory processes and frameworks, and that due regard given to professional, statutory and regulatory bodies. The team saw a number of examples of how processes have changed with the rewriting of some sections of the *Code of practice* (see paragraphs 83 and 115). The team saw evidence of how the University Academic Standards Committee (UASC) has oversight of its working groups established to analyse *Outcomes from institutional audit, Series 1 and 2 papers* and change processes to ensure that the institution follows good practice.

Approval, monitoring and review of programmes

44   There is detailed guidance for staff in both the Quality Handbook and in the form of 'Rough Guides' on key areas such as Learning Outcomes; Assessment; Formative Work and Feedback; Retention and the Curriculum; Inclusive Assessment; Progress Files, Supporting Students through Mentoring; and Work-Based Learning. Support is offered from school learning and teaching coordinators and the Centre for Learning and Quality Enhancement (CLQE) for programme teams. Detailed guidance notes, templates and timelines have been developed for teams undergoing annual monitoring, approval or review processes plus checklists for approval and review panels in order to promote consistency of approach.

45   The revised process at the conclusion of the approval and review activity (see paragraph 8) enables the panel to identify innovation and good practice for the wider consideration of, and dissemination by, the University Approval Panel of recognised good practice.

46   The University states that its commitment to enhancing the student experience is demonstrated through its annual monitoring process which gives module, programme and subject teams the opportunity to review a range of information gained from feedback, internal and external, and student performance data. The process also takes account of student evaluations. In addition, the audit team saw evidence of the development of the TQS: Student evaluation, as a result of the 2004 audit. Paragraph 91 also discusses the way in which the approval, monitoring and review processes have contributed to enhancement of the student experience.

Management information - feedback from students

47   The University uses internal management information, including student evaluation data, and National Student Survey (NSS) data to monitor and enhance the quality of learning opportunities and to monitor student satisfaction. Student evaluation data and external data, such as the NSS and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey, inform annual monitoring. The University responded to the recommendation in the 2004 Institutional audit report concerning university-wide systematic feedback by establishing a UASC working group on student evaluation, which resulted in the production of the TQS: Student Evaluation.

48   The University takes a proactive approach to the NSS, setting participation targets, with results and data used systematically to enhance learning opportunities. NSS results at programme and subject level are discussed between the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Student Experience) and school management teams and good practice is identified and action plans generated. The audit team saw evidence of the requirement to produce action plans, examples of the production and monitoring of school analysis reports, action plans and results memos as well as instructions to working group chairs to take forward actions as appropriate. NSS results also inform specific groups within the University, such as the Assessment Working Group, and the team saw evidence of consideration at the ULTC of the work of this group on aspects of the NSS

outcomes relating to assessment. NSS results, including possible promulgation of good practice between schools, are also discussed at various points within the academic governance structure, including ULTC, UMSC and UAB.

49   NSS results are discussed in a range of school environments including school away days, school policy committees and school executive meetings. The audit team saw evidence of this consideration at school level, and heard from staff about the clear relationship between institutional and school-level work in this area.

50   CLQE and ULTC have a significant role in ensuring that NSS results are used for enhancement purposes. ULTC Terms of Reference were updated in 2009 to emphasise its role in the oversight of NSS outcomes and school action plans. CLQE was charged with devising an approach to close the feedback loop to students and, from 2009-10, it will support enhancement activities by providing an annual synthesis of issues, actions, feedback and best practice. Examples of changes already in effect at schools and University policies were provided to the team.

51   The audit team saw evidence of University consideration of the recently recorded high levels of satisfaction in NSS scores and notes particular strengths in learning, teaching and resources. It continues to improve its performance in assessment and feedback, and in organisation and management. These outcomes are consistent with the views expressed by staff and students in meetings with the team. The team saw evidence to illustrate the consideration, at all levels, of data from the NSS and the action plans generated by schools as a result of this deliberation.

52   University-wide student survey tools have been developed for each module, at the end of the first year and at the end of programmes, which use 'a variety of electronic and paper-based means to administer questionnaires' in order to maximise the data returns within each school. A Teesside Online Evaluation System was piloted in 2007-08, although the variation in response rates has raised some concern at the UASC. An Online Student Evaluation Working Group of the UASC is exploring ways of enhancing the system.

53   The audit team found that the University has effective mechanisms for using internal and external data to enhance learning opportunities for students, and the team considered that the proactive use of a range of outcomes from external evaluations to enhance student learning opportunities constitute good practice.

Role of students in quality assurance

54   The Briefing Paper indicates the University's strong commitment to working in collaboration with the Students' Union to enhance the role of the student voice in quality enhancement. The Vice-Chancellor characterised the relationship between the students and the institution as a partnership, and students and staff who met the audit team confirmed this view. The annual formal meeting between the Vice-Chancellor and student course and school representatives underpins the value of the partnership approach, and the resulting feedback illustrates its importance in supporting both practical engagement with representatives and a culture of open communication with students.

55   In 2003-04 the University audited student representation and as a result developed the TQS: Student Representation. As part of the commitment to engage students in quality enhancement, a further audit was commissioned by UIAC and received at its meeting in October 2009. The audit team saw evidence in this report of a genuine enthusiasm for student participation in enhancement activities and the intention to continue to improve representation, feedback and the inclusion of a diverse range of students in its processes. The report commits to periodic review of the role of the student voice, and to a forum, jointly led by students and staff, to discuss the student voice across all aspects of student experience and share good practice.

56   The audit team saw examples of the contributions at University level that Students' Union representatives have made to UAB and its major committees. School representatives are members of the Student Experience Co-ordination Sub-Committee of UCET and participated actively in the review of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS) in 2008-09, identifying ways in which the student voice could be reflected better in the development and implementation of the Strategy, both of which have been incorporated in the Implementation Plan of the 2009 to 2012 LTAS. The University also values the contribution student representatives make to relevant Working Groups and the team saw evidence of this engagement in the notes and briefing papers from the working groups on Academic Misconduct and Assessment, Review and Complaints. The Students' Union President is a member of the Board of Governors and its Student Experience Sub-Committee. Postgraduate research student representatives and Students' Union representatives are also members of the University Research Degrees Board.

57   The audit team saw evidence that student membership of all of the LTAS Working Groups had provided the opportunity for the student perspective to influence the development and implementation of the LTAS as well as monitoring its impact. In addition, eight students attended the Assessment Working Group dialogue on assessment, and that the team was able to confirm student engagement with this group enabled feedback to be disseminated to a wide range of staff at the University Learning and Teaching Conference 2009. Students and academic staff that the team met confirmed the arrangements described for student engagement and commented positively on the relationship between the Students' Union and student body and the University.

58   Other types of student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement activities include the Flexible Learning Working Group's promotion of the use of Student e-Assistants as a way of involving paid students in the enhancement of e-learning opportunities by providing feedback to lecturers on their virtual learning environment module sites. The TQS: Student Representation requires schools to provide opportunities for the whole student body or its representatives to meet school management and senior staff on a regular basis, and also describes ways in which these meetings or forums may be conducted. The audit team saw evidence of Student Council meetings and heard from staff who confirmed both the regular conduct of these meetings and the benefit gained from them. The paid school representatives who represent the whole student body meet regularly with students, course representatives and the assistant deans (Learning and Teaching (LandT)) to resolve issues affecting the students' learning experiences and support improvement. The team saw evidence of the operation and value to the University of this role and the partnership it embodied with the Students' Union.

59   The TQS: Student Representation requires schools to ensure that each programme appoints the required number of course representatives. Assistant deans act as the link person with the Students' Union and monitor the appointment of course representatives within the school, Students' Union training of representatives and other matters. Course representatives attend programme boards, normally held twice a year, as full members of Boards and are entitled to place items on the agenda. Programme teams also identify a range of mechanisms for liaising with students on a regular basis, for example staff/student liaison meetings.

60   The audit team formed the view that the University was working positively to support its stated commitment to collaboration with students, and the team considered that the effective partnership between the University and the Students' Union to support student representation processes on taught programmes at all levels of the institution represented good practice.

Links between research or scholarly activity and learning opportunities

61   Programme approval and review processes ensure that Panel members examine the ways in which research informs the curriculum and the student learning experience and that approval and review guidance to programme teams and the checklists for panel members make specific reference to enhancing the learning experience through research informed teaching (RIT). The audit team saw documents supporting approval and review which confirmed this approach,

and staff who met the team confirmed that RIT was emphasised in approval and review and supported through staff development. Staff development, scholarship and research in learning and teaching was identified as a priority of the 2005 to 2008 LTAS, and the RIT Team was established in CLQE in 2006 to provide a focal point for this development. RIT has been further strengthened by becoming a main priority for the 2009-2012 LTAS, and the team heard that staff endorse the view that RIT is strongly supported throughout the University.

62   The work of the RIT Working Group has culminated in the development of the University RIT Action Plan which encompasses the ways in which the student learning experience should be informed by research. Schools have developed their own RIT Action Plan to implement the provision of student learning opportunities informed and enriched by research and scholarship. Academic staff who met the audit team cited examples of both the strategic commitment to the support of RIT and specific examples, such as the inclusion in the University's own level descriptors of the development of student research skills, made explicit in programme and module learning outcomes, and the inclusion of a focus on RIT in the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education.

63   A range of supportive activities has been designed to ensure that research informs the quality of teaching and learning. This includes the long-established Teaching Fellowship Scheme (incorporated into the University's framework for Initial and Continuing Professional Development in Learning and Teaching), which was accredited by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) in September 2009. Staff who met the audit team commented positively on the University's commitment to RIT, illustrated by an approach that sees discipline-based research enriching teaching, and practical support for staff to undertake pedagogical research.

64   The audit team formed the view that there were well-organised institutional structures to ensure effectively that links between research and teaching were developed and maintained.

Other modes of study

65   Technology enhanced learning and work-based learning are priorities of the current LTAS. The LTAS 2009-12, considered in detail by the audit team and discussed with academic staff, was seen by the team to represent a 'step-change' in the use of e-learning for the University.

66   A major revision of the Institutional E-learning Strategy was carried out under the auspices of the Technology Enhanced Learning Working Group (previously the Flexible Learning Working Group), a working group of ULTC. Key milestones were established for 2008 and 2009, including the development of the TQS: Use of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), provision of electronic assessment feedback to students, and the provision of generic and subject-specific e-induction for students prior to their enrolment. The University's VLE provides main access to resources; the effectiveness of its use is monitored at school level to ascertain staff and student usage in terms of numbers and the range and sophistication of tools used. The audit team saw evidence of the process undertaken by school e-learning coordinators and trained student e-assistants to review the quality of module sites and provide feedback. This feedback, which includes views on structure and layout as well as content, has clearly identified areas for improvement.

67   A Distance Learning Task and Finish Group, established by the Vice-Chancellor's Executive is investigating a number of potential areas of development in light of the University's view that distance learning is potentially a key strategic area for future growth. Expected outputs include a quality framework for distance learning. Support for staff in the development of e-learning is provided by a central e-learning team based in CLQE and embedded in the schools through academic e-learning co-ordinators. In 2008-09, student e-assistants were also employed to provide further support for e-learning in schools. The audit team heard positive views about these developments from academic staff they met.

68   In response to increasing work-based activity in the University a Work-based Learning Working Group was established (WBLWG). Responsibility for skills and personal development planning has been transferred to the Retention and Progression Working Group. The WBLWG now focuses solely upon the learning and teaching aspects of work-based learning provision and provides guidance for staff. A Work-Based Learning Consultant based in CLQE supports this work and helps to disseminate best practice internally and externally.

69   The audit team took the view that there were effective overall arrangements in place to support other modes of study and that the development and implementation of a comprehensive and responsive structure to support e-learning constituted good practice.

Resources for learning

70   The Head of Learning Environment, responsible to the Director of Campus Facilities, is responsible for general teaching accommodation, while school managers have responsibility for managing specialist learning and teaching spaces. Normal budgetary processes support the general learning environment and extensive upgrading is discussed and prioritised by the Estates Development Sub-Committee. Additional resources have been allocated by ULTC from the HEFCE Learning and Teaching Grant to improve General Purpose Teaching accommodation.

71   The learning environment became a priority area of the 2005 to 2008 LTAS that established the Learning Environment Working Group of which the Head of Learning Environment is a member. The LTAS recognised the need to ensure that pedagogical principles were considered when developing new or upgrading existing learning spaces and a number of practical outcomes resulted. Staff who met the audit team commented positively on these improvements and of the staff development support implemented to support their use.

72   There is an ongoing programme of development supported by input from the Learning Environment Working Group which draws on staff and student views on learning spaces elicited through the Learning Environment Project. The Project identified the importance of social learning spaces and a consultant has been commissioned to scope how the Library could be upgraded to facilitate social learning. A questionnaire and student focus groups are planned for 2010 to elicit students' views further.

73   The Library and Information Services Department (LandIS) provides student-focused resources, services, support and spaces to enable learning, teaching, research and enterprise activities. The results of the National Student Survey (NSS) and International Student Barometer Survey indicate a high level of satisfaction with the service among students. The LandIS work on the enhancement of resources, services and support, and learning environments is based on an annual Development Plan, produced as part of the planning cycle and which is informed by the University's strategies. This work is also informed by close relationships with schools and relevant departments. Internal feedback is gathered through the subject information team leaders, meetings with Students' Union officers and the LandIS Annual Student Survey and Comments forms. External feedback is generated from sources including the NSS, the Times Higher Survey, and benchmarks from the Society of College, National and University Libraries. Internal input is used to support service enhancement and the 'You said, we did' seen by the audit team offers a clear 'loop closing' response to issues that have been raised.

74   The University regards the work of the subject information team leaders assigned to schools and the LandIS School Liaison process as key to gaining feedback for service enhancement. The subject information team leaders are members of school committees and facilitate consultation with staff and students, liaising with schools to develop learning resources and to inform collection building. Increasingly, resources are provided electronically to support access on and off-campus and students have access to a wide range of other resources through partnership schemes.

75   Skills development supported by LandIS ensures that students can effectively use the resources provided for their learning and that induction is provided for all students. Subject information team leaders work in partnership with academic staff in this area and also provide one-to-one support via Subject Information Desks and via an online chat service. The Drop-in Student Skills Centre (DISSC) offers in-depth academic skills support, and the audit team saw evidence of evaluation of this support in the annual report on usage which is considered by ULTC.

76   Services provided for international and transnational students include a new University Transnational Student Handbook and enhanced digital delivery which have been developed in liaison with the Director of International Development. LandIS provides support for international students on-campus working with English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) tutors.

77   Overall governance of central information technology (IT) is provided through the University Information Strategy Sub-Committee of UCET, which oversees the development and implementation of the University's Information Strategy Framework and IT Strategy, and IT Policy Development. The University operates a partially devolved IT structure with central IT function managed by the Director of ICT Systems, in three divisions responsible for Information Systems and Academic Services. In a recent change, the IT support for two schools is now managed by the Central ICT Service, and staff that the team met testified to the effectiveness of this innovation.

78   The audit team formed the view that, in relation to maintaining the quality of students' learning opportunities, the institution's arrangements for the provision, allocation and management of learning resources were effective at both the strategic and operational level.

Admissions policy

79   The University's Admissions Policy was approved by UAB in 2008, replacing the 2001 Policy. The Policy clearly relates the admissions process to the University's core aims, and previous prescriptive statements regarding entry requirements have been replaced by a clear generic statement of principle and practice.

80   Applications are assessed on an individual basis and admission is based on an applicant's relative merits and abilities. The principal academic criterion for determining suitability for admission being that there is a reasonable expectation that the candidate will be able to fulfil the learning outcomes of the course and achieve the standard required for the award. Specific entry criteria for a given course are set by the school responsible for the course and are scrutinised as part of the programme approval/review process.

81   Through the operation of the Admissions Policy, the University places great weight on transparency and consistency in admissions. The policy includes detailed sections on relevant areas such as criminal convictions, changes to published courses, feedback to unsuccessful applicants, appeals and monitoring and review.

82   Admissions activities are overseen by the University Admissions Committee (UAC), which reports to UAB and has responsibility for all areas of admissions and considers various relevant aspects, including the impact on academic standards of admissions decisions, widening participation, and assuring students' learning opportunities. Specific aspects of the Admissions Policy can be revised by UAC in the light of the management information.

83   Since its establishment, the UAC has worked on a number of specific areas such as enhancing information and communications for prospective students. The new University Admissions Policy monitors diversity and equal opportunities in University admissions, and carries out periodic review of University practice in relation to QAA's *Code of practice, Section 10: Admissions to higher education*. The audit team saw evidence of detailed consideration of these matters in UAC papers and in other committee papers and policy documents.

84   In respect of operational responsibilities, the Academic Registry has overall responsibility for managing and facilitating University admissions, for liaison with UCAS and other external bodies and for admissions data in the University's Student Information System. The Academic Registry also develops new admissions processes and procedures, and delivers admissions training for school-based staff. Responsibility is devolved to schools for setting entry criteria, updating entry profiles and other information for applicants, recruitment, selection and (except in the case of international admissions), making offers.

85   The Graduate Research School (GRS) has specific responsibility for research admissions (including international students) and is involved in decision-making. Schools are responsible for ensuring alignment with academic expertise in the school and the availability of an appropriate supervisor.

86   The University has decided to centralise decision-making for international admissions. Offers are made on the basis of entry criteria that have been agreed by the school that will deliver the course. The Academic Registry liaises with The Centre for International Development and the University's English Language Co-ordinator to maintain a record of acceptable English Language qualifications. For courses that require evaluation of portfolios, decision-making is a collaborative exercise that draws on relevant expertise in schools.

87   The audit team took the view that the University had a clear and well-understood admissions policy which is administered effectively.

Student support

88   Support for students is delivered through a partnership between schools and departments and is supported by a set of TQSs. Support for postgraduate research students by schools and departments is coordinated by the GRS and outlined to postgraduate research students at induction.

89   UAB has formal oversight of student support and ULTC, via the implementation of the LTAS, oversees the enhancement of its student support systems and Learner Engagement Support and Success Working Group has a coordinating role.

90   The University manages student support through the planning process. Some universal aspects are structured into programmes, including academic guidance, key skills, induction, and the provision of clear information about the programme and about the availability of support across the University. The TQS: Student Support Systems, requires schools to specify a school support system, and it is a requirement that schools have in place specific academic support roles, such as personal tutors, year tutors and route leaders. Staff groups met by the audit team indicated a clear understanding of the requirements and of the differences between University, school and Students' Union provision. Students also indicated both a clear understanding of the resources, and their location, and a very positive view of the support they received.

91   The programme approval, review and annual monitoring processes are used to scrutinise student support arrangements and to support enhancement. An example of this was seen by the audit team through the school level introduction of a more formal personal tutorial system in September 2008, which emerged from a consideration of student feedback from the 2007-08 academic year. The audit team saw the detailed guide which outlined the aims, objectives and guidelines for the system, and heard confirmation from students of the changes that were implemented.

92   The Learning and Teaching Development Team (LTDT) in CLQE supports the development of student support systems and enables the sharing of good practice. The LTDT also evaluate existing practice and make recommendations for further enhancement. The Retention Team in CLQE has overseen activities in support of different groups of students and the audit team saw evidence of research undertaken on the experience of particular groups of students. These projects have been used to refine the delivery of targeted services to students and to support staff development.

93   The Retention Team play an active role in a range of key activities, particularly in providing guidance materials and training on the implementation of peer-mentoring schemes, designing retention strategies, supporting personal tutoring skills, and the implementation of personal development plans. The Retention Team also focuses on individual student needs and oversees the operation of Retention Support Officers (RSOs) based in schools whose work includes monitoring students' interaction with their programmes and following up non-attendance supportively. The RSOs also help students to find specific support in the Department of Student Services or through appropriate academic staff.

94   The Department of Student Services is the principal central provider of student support and consists of Accommodation, Disability Services, Childcare, Careers, Counselling, Chaplaincy, Sport and Recreation, Student Funding, and Student Support. The Department has been accredited under Matrix Standards in 2006, and this was renewed in April 2009. The services are co-located both centrally and within schools and work collaboratively to allow students easy access to a range of services and a seamless transition between them. This collaborative approach extends to Student Services' work with the Students' Union, which is promoted as an independent and complementary source of support and advice. Staff and students who met the audit team were clear about where support could be gained, why it was located in different areas, and were very supportive of the collaborative approach.

95   Student Services undertakes a systematic evaluation of its activities against the objectives established in the development planning process and informed by feedback from service users and extensive data collection, and lists a range of consequent developments. The audit team saw evidence of data gathering and analysis and its use in enhancing the service to students.

96   The audit team took the view that the institution has effective mechanisms for student support that benefit from a collaborative, cross-institutional approach.

Staff support (including staff development)

97   A range of mechanisms is in place to assist staff in the assurance and enhancement of the quality of teaching and the student learning experience, and that staff development is supported for all staff by the team within CLQE with LTDT providing additional support to academic staff.

98   The audit team verified that the University's strategic priorities for staff support, development and reward are clearly identified in the Human Resource Strategy and Implementation Plan 2008. Academic staff who met the audit team confirmed that they had a clear understanding of institutional priorities.

99   The University's Human Resources Department and CLQE share responsibility for human resource issues, and the Human Resources Strategy (HRS) 2005 was developed jointly, structured around HEFCE's People Management Self-Assessment Tool. This enabled the Rewarding and Developing Staff in Higher Education (RandDS2) funding to be used to provide continued support for staff development. The HRS Implementation Plan is reviewed and updated on a quarterly basis by CLQE and HR, and also is considered by the University's Employment Policy Committee.

100   Following an extensive external Investors in People (IiP) Review in December 2008, the University achieved Level 2 overall and Level 3 for the indicator which focuses on 'people being encouraged to take ownership and responsibility in decision-making'. The audit team heard that the University has been awarded 'Bronze' status and is (to date) the only University to have achieved this distinction. Further improvements suggested by the IiP Report are being addressed by the IiP Action Plan which is monitored by the staff development Committee. Staff who met the audit team recognised the value of IiP, but felt that it was the quality of the institution's approach to Staff Development which had resulted in IiP success, rather than the other way round. The University remains committed to the alignment of staff development with organisational strategy and academic staff met by the audit team clearly understood both the University's commitment in this area, and the methods of delivery to achieve this.

101   The learning and development planning process at school level has also been enhanced to strengthen links between strategic planning and staff development. The audit team saw examples of these plans and academic staff who met the team gave a very positive view of planned staff development support offered through local school arrangements, starting with the Initial Development Plan and continuing with support at various points of their careers through the personal development review (PDR) process.

102   The University acknowledges that the timing of PDRs has not been consistent across the University and this has impacted on organisational planning and allocation of resources for staff development. The audit team saw the review of the timing of PDR, which was driven by the guiding principle that all staff should start the 2009-10 academic year with a clear focus of their work and personal priorities in order to rectify previous shortcomings.

103   Material seen by the audit team supports the University's view that it provides a comprehensive staff development programme across a range of areas of activity from Induction, through Initial, and Continuing Professional Development of Academic Staff, to Leadership Development, with appropriate and detailed support for local induction activity. New academic staff who met the audit team confirmed the operation and value of the induction and initial development plan. Other material such as the Initial and Continuing Professional Development Matrix for Learning and Teaching Staff highlights the centrally coordinated 'potential areas for development' for staff' and provides a flexible framework for PDR activity. This also assists in planning for individual needs and helps to identify overall needs in each school and associated resource planning. Staff who met the audit team testified to the effectiveness of this type of material when used by their managers in PDR activity to plan their individual development, and managers equally supported its value in their PDR work and SD resource planning. Staff specifically indicated that they understood and valued the planned strategic approach to development, as well as particular features of provision including support for IT needs, the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, the Learning and Teaching Exchange workshops (L@TE), E-learning at Tees (E@T), and work undertaken in partnership with the HEA and other regional universities. Many activities are also available to staff in partner colleges, and academic staff contribute to development activities in international partner institutions.

104   Teaching Fellowships and Associate Teaching Fellowship schemes are also valued, and staff perceived the University scheme to be at least as rigorous and valuable as the national scheme, and that the Associate scheme was particularly valuable in supporting professional staff. Staff valued the explicit parallel that the Teaching Fellowship represented with Readerships in the research environment.

105   Leadership and management development is a key priority in the University's HRS and it has committed RandDS2 money to support a rolling programme of leadership development. This programme provides specific support for groups of academic leaders who are key to delivering priorities within the Academic Strategy, and supports professors in their role in leading the research and enterprise agendas. The audit team saw material relating to the University's expectations of staff in the leadership environment and the programme supporting development, and heard positive views from staff about the success of the programme.

106   The audit team saw a range of evidence to support the University's stated commitment to the alignment of staff development with organisational strategy. The team formed the view that the effective alignment of strategic aims and inclusive staff development activities in support of the University's mission constituted good practice.

Section 4: Institutional approach to quality enhancement

Management information - quality enhancement

107   The Learning, teaching and Assessment Strategy (LTAS) (2009 to 2012) is a central component of the University's quality enhancement framework and is aligned to the Institutional Plan (2009 to 2012). The LTAS identifies priority areas for enhancement, including feedback and assessment; learner engagement; learning environment; research informed teaching (RIT); supporting teaching excellence; technology enhanced learning; and worked based learning. University LTAS Priority Working Groups are supported by the Centre for Learning and Quality Enhancement (CLQE) and each working group has specific, cross-institutional, enhancement areas which, together with School Implementation Plans for the LTAS are considered by the University to provide a coherent and comprehensive framework for the enhancement of student learning opportunities. Each school's Implementation Plan is overseen by its learning and teaching committee (LTC). LTAS activities are monitored annually through SLTCs, ULTC and its working groups.

108   The framework aims to promote enhancement of learning and teaching. Changes to programme approval, review, annual monitoring, external examining and quality audit and review processes, described in paragraphs 8, 13, 24-30 and 49-51, have ensured that assessment of enhancement is embedded in all of these activities. Annual monitoring is used to identify enhancement themes, which are then discussed at a quality enhancement (QE) Workshop. The audit team saw evidence of the identification, assessment and promotion of enhancement in the documentation provided by the University. The University's strong performance in the NSS provides a comparative measure against which enhancement activities can be judged, and the University was seen to have effective mechanisms for the discussion of NSS data for enhancement purposes at institutional and school level. The University manages the relationship between quality assurance processes and quality enhancement by providing a Threshold Quality Standards (TQS) Framework that allows for some variation and testing out of new approaches at school, subject group and programme levels.

109   The University's strategic approach to QE includes central and school-based structures Centrally, CLQE's LTDT and Quality Management and Enhancement team provide support and guidance for school staff involved in learning and teaching, including the dissemination of good practice. CLQE's Retention, RIT and e-Learning teams have been enlarged to provide increased support for schools. CLQE staff work closely with student-facing departments, including Library and Information Services. There has also been funding of school staff to enable them to contribute to the work of the Library's Drop-in Student Skills Centre for the development of student skills.

110   In schools, a core team of Assistant Dean (Learning and Teaching), the Co-ordinator for Learning and Teaching and Co-ordinator for e-Learning, has been established to provide guidance and support for school Implementation Plans of the LTAS. Students and staff who met the audit team commented on the effectiveness of this organisational structure. Other components of the University's QE strategic approach include engaging students more strategically in enhancement activities through student representation, focus groups and regular meetings with senior staff; funding of learning and teaching research innovation projects; funding of professional development activities in learning and teaching for new and experienced staff; funding of staff professional development activities in Higher Education Business Partnership (HEBP) Colleges; and supporting student and staff volunteering through the work of a Community Volunteering Project Co-ordinator.

111   The audit team found that the University's multifaceted approach to quality enhancement had helped to develop a strong ethos across the University which expects and encourages enhancement of learning opportunities, and provides the means for opportunities for enhancement to be identified, supported and disseminated.

Section 5: Collaborative arrangements

112   The University operates three broad types of collaborative provision. Firstly there are UK educational partnerships which include the Higher Education Business Partnership (HEBP), a consortium of five strategic partners within the Tees Valley, and a number of other partners offering 'simple provision' (that is, single subject relationships with one of the University's schools.) Secondly, there is a range of international collaborative provision. The audit team heard from staff about the strategic aim of the University to increase significantly the level of activity in this area and expansion is currently underway. International collaborative activity currently includes the franchising of provision to international partner institutions, overseas delivery of programmes by University staff, and articulation agreements for admission by advanced standing with overseas institutions. There are also a small number of distance-learning programmes delivered to overseas students which are facilitated by University staff and supported by local study centres. Finally, the University has a range of partnerships with employers through which a variety of programmes are offered.

113   The University is strengthening its strategic partnerships with colleges in the Tees Valley, with the creation of 'University Centres' in five partner further education colleges (three have been established to date) and the development of a University campus in Darlington (2011). The University has also well-established links with local schools. The University created the Centre for International Development in 2006 to coordinate centrally a major expansion in its international activity.

114   The University Academic Standards Committee (UASC), acting on behalf of Academic Board, is responsible for the academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities of all provision including that delivered collaboratively. Responsibility for the day-to-day management of quality and standards in collaborative provision resides within schools which operate according to structures and processes detailed in the relevant sections of the Quality Handbook. The audit team note that, at the time of the 2004 audit, the oversight of UK-based collaborative provision was devolved to the University Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee, but that this subcommittee was subsequently disbanded and its terms of reference incorporated into terms of reference of the UASC. This committee took on the oversight of arrangements for approval monitoring and enhancement of collaborative provision and the Director of Educational Partnerships (DEP) and the Director of International Development (DID) assumed responsibility for receiving individual monitoring reports for collaborative provision within their respective remits and producing overview reports for the University Monitoring Sub-Committee (UMSC).

115   Engagement with the Academic Infrastructure operates in the same way for collaborative as for other types of provision. The audit team found evidence, for example, that the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)* had been considered when revising the quality assurance processes for managing international collaborations. The team also note the regular engagement with QAA, HEA and other higher education institutions has taken place as the University has developed its approach to managing quality in employer partnerships. The team found evidence also that when entering into international partnerships, through the partnership approval process, there is appropriate engagement with local regulatory and quality assurance authorities.

116   Joint provision of support for students studying at the University's HEBP Colleges is developed in liaison with the Director of Educational Partnerships and HEBP Heads of Library Services, informed by the HEBP Co-ordinators Group and the HEBP Librarians Sub-Committee.

Approval of partnerships

117   The general principles for the approval of collaborative programmes are outlined in the Quality Handbook. In recognition of the diversity of partnership types operated by the University, and differing levels of experience in prospective partners, the procedures for approval permit a

degree of flexibility. This flexibility is informed by the University's 'Typology of Partnership Types', which provides a full description of the range of partnership types which may be entered into.

118   The decision to pursue a new partnership is confirmed at the level of the University Executive: in the case of UK college or international partnerships this is given by the DVC (Development), and in the case of employer partnerships, the DVC (Research and Enterprise), in his capacity as Chair of the Workforce Development Executive Group. This level of approval is required to ensure that collaborative developments – whether in the UK or overseas – are consistent with overall University strategy.

119   A key feature of the University's approach to the approval of partnerships is the use of 'risk assessment tools' to identify and manage likely risks associated with any given partnership proposal. The audit team found evidence of the effective use of these risk assessment tools in the early stages of partnership development. The risk assessment process offers an effective framework in which the precise details of partnership approvals can be tailored to accommodate the specifically identified risks. All approvals of collaborative arrangements must, however, address four common themes. First, the institution or employer must be approved as a collaborative partner, and this must include a 'due diligence' check. Secondly, the programmes themselves must be approved for delivery or, if approved already, attention is given to the suitability of the programme for delivery by this partner. Thirdly, the location of delivery must be approved, and this will include, if appropriate, facilities and learning resources and staff to be involved in the delivery of the programme. Finally, the details of the ongoing quality assurance arrangements must be approved as suitable to the level and type of collaborative activity being proposed.

120   The audit team found evidence that the initial risk assessments of proposed partnerships informed the detailed approval processes, and resulted in a level of scrutiny appropriate to the partner, type and level of provision and location of delivery.

121   The University has recently approved a generic Operations Manual for international collaboration, to which schools may include local addenda, and there is an Operations Manual defining operational procedures used in the HEBP. These are comprehensive documents which set out the ongoing requirements for the assurance of academic standards and quality, including admissions, assessment, monitoring, feedback and student support and guidance.

122   In accordance with the provisions of the *Code of practice, Section 2*, the University requires all partnerships to be governed by legally binding contracts or agreements, which clearly set out the rights and obligations of all parties. A specific Workforce Development Agreement has been developed as the basis for contracts entered into with employer collaborative partners. The audit team saw evidence of appropriate contractual agreements underpinning collaborative partnerships. Specific arrangements exist for the approval of undergraduate awards of 60 credits or less, or postgraduate awards of up to, but not including, 60 credits which involve existing partners, and these processes are detailed in the Quality Handbook. These arrangements allow such awards to be approved at school level, with outcomes reported to UASC via UAP.

123   The University operates articulation agreements with a number of overseas institutions, which allow students to be admitted to its programmes with advanced standing. Articulation agreements are approved at school level and, consistent with the general risk-based approach to quality management in collaborative provision, are tailored to the specific circumstances of the partner institution. Thus, the initial risk assessment carried out when such a partnership is proposed determines the degree and nature of the ongoing scrutiny which the University will exercise during the operation of the agreement. The audit team saw evidence of this approach leading to detailed and tailored articulation agreements and of clear and systematic mapping processes being carried out at school level.

Approval, monitoring and review of programmes

124   The University revised its annual monitoring processes in 2006-07 to reflect the growth in collaborative provision. The processes were further refined in 2009 to include specific processes for the annual monitoring of employer collaborative partnership provision. The generic annual monitoring processes require the completion of module and programme reports and, where partners are involved in the delivery of more than one programme, a collaborative provision annual monitoring report pro-forma must also be completed. Annual programme reports are informed by these, and cover all provision related to the programme, including collaborative elements. Schools produce annual monitoring and review reports which highlight any significant issues relating to partnerships.

125   The audit team saw evidence that the Operations Manual requires that all collaborative partners receive an annual quality visit from appropriate University staff and, in terms of day-to-day operations, that each programme is overseen by a University-based programme manager.

126   A feature of the annual monitoring process for both UK and international partnerships is that the DEP for the former, and the DID for the latter, each produce annual overview reports for the provision within their respective remits. These reports are discussed at the annual away day of the UMSC, and generic issues arising from these areas are discussed and addressed. The audit team found evidence that this process is effective in identifying both generic and specific issues arising from these two areas of collaborative provision. The team further notes that for the 2008-09 annual monitoring cycle, a parallel process will be adopted under the purview of the new Employer Partnerships Quality Manager, thus bringing annual monitoring arrangements for this area of collaborative provision in line with the others.

127   All programmes delivered in collaboration with partners are covered by the University's arrangements for periodic review. Additionally, the University has developed an approach to partnership confirmation which normally takes place every six years, and through which the continuing suitability of individual partnerships is reviewed. The audit team saw evidence that where a decision is taken to end a partnership, due care and attention is paid to the arrangements for securing the experience of existing students studying on the affected programmes.

128   The appointment of external examiners for collaborative provision follows the standard University processes. Where possible, the University seeks to appoint the same external examiner for collaborative provision as for the University-based programme, so as to promote consistency. Exceptions can be made, for example, where the medium of instruction and assessment is in a language other than English and the external examiner is required to be fluent in that language. However, the audit team notes that at present there is only one collaborative partnership where this is the case and this partnership is in the process of being terminated. The team further notes that the University has made a policy decision not to enter into future partnerships where delivery and assessment is not in English.

129   Clear guidance is given in the relevant operations manuals about the processes for setting, marking and moderating assessments. This guidance is consistent with the University's general approach to assessment as outlined in the Quality Handbook. The operations manuals also clearly define actions which should be taken in the event of second-marking or moderation procedures identifying problems with assessment.

Role of students in quality assurance

130   In keeping with its general approach, the University adopts procedures which seek to involve students appropriately in quality assurance of programmes delivered collaboratively. The requirements for the involvement of students are detailed in the relevant operations manuals. Consistent with the approach taken to students studying on-campus, a student forum is established for programmes delivered in partner institutions, and guidelines for the establishment

and conduct of these are given in the relevant operations manual. In addition, annual monitoring visits are made to each partner institution, during which visiting staff conduct private meetings with students. The composition and outline agenda of the annual quality monitoring visits are again specified in the relevant operations manual. The outcomes of these visits are then fed into the annual monitoring and action planning process. The overview reports produced both in respect of UK and overseas collaborative provision include reference to issues raised by students and identify any generic actions to be taken.

131   Student feedback on modules and programmes delivered in partner institutions is obtained as part of the routine monitoring processes, and fed into module, programme and, where applicable, institutional reports. A key objective for the HEBP has been more demonstrable use of NSS data. The audit team saw evidence that this data is now considered and included in the annual monitoring reports from the partnership, and responded to, as part of the annual monitoring process.

Learning resources

132   The adequacy of learning resources for programmes delivered collaboratively is assessed and monitored as part of the University's standard processes for approval, monitoring and review. Particular arrangements are in place to ensure that staff from partner institutions are exposed to appropriate staff development activities. The expectations regarding staff development are clearly outlined in the relevant operations manuals. In all cases it is the responsibility of the University-based programme manager to coordinate appropriate staff development activities for staff in the collaborating institution. In the case of the HEBP, an annual 'HE in FE' conference is organised by the University, and staff from the partner colleges have access to a full range of the University's staff development activities, including significant fee remissions for undertaking its awards.

Published information

133   Arrangements for the production of module and course guides are clearly set out in the relevant operations manuals for collaborative provision, and were found by the audit team to support systematic institutional oversight of published information. Additionally, generic handbooks exist for students undertaking different kinds of collaborative provision which clearly set out relevant rules, policies and procedures for such students.

Section 6: Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

134   The University has awarded research degrees since 1992 and offers master's (MSc, MRes, MPhil, LLM) and doctoral degrees (PhD), and professional master's (MProf) and taught doctorates (DBA, DClinPsy, DProf). In 2008-09 there were 201 enrolled research students including 141 doctoral students; about two thirds of research students are currently part-time. Postgraduate student numbers remained constant in the five years to 2008-09, with doctoral students increasing by 11 per cent in that period.

135   QAA's Review of research degree programmes at Teesside in May 2006 concluded that the 'institution's ability to secure and enhance the quality and standards of its postgraduate research degree provision was appropriate and satisfactory'. Collaboration with the University of Durham with respect to research skills training was commended as good practice by the Review.

136   One issue raised by the Review was the low completion rates of postgraduate research students, and there have been a number of initiatives since 2006 that have focused on improving the experience of postgraduate research students and, thus, their progression and completion rates. Key changes have been to make the admissions process more rigorous, including identification of training needs. Postgraduate research students are also required to register their work programme within a specified time; a Progression Board has been introduced for all students, and there is an increased focus on full-time postgraduate research students.

137   The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) Research and Enterprise (RE) has responsibility for postgraduate research students in consultation with the DVC (Learning and Student Experience (LSE)). The URDSC, supported by the Graduate Research School (GRS), has responsibility for the quality and standards of the University's research degree programmes (paragraph 19), overseeing development and implementation of the Framework and Regulations for the Award of Higher Degrees by Research, and the enhancement of learning opportunities for postgraduate research students. University Reasearch Degrees Sub-Committee (URDSC) approves all formal decisions concerning postgraduate research students; reviews all stages of the research degree programme; and considers all withdrawals, examiners' comments, and student feedback. There is a separate Framework and Regulations for Assessment, Award and Progression for Professional Doctorates; changes to which were approved by the University Academic Board (UAB) in May 2009. These aligned the management and assessment of the research component more closely with those for research degrees. For two meetings per annum the URDSC functions as the University Research Degrees Board (URDB), with the addition of student representation, and as such is equivalent to a Programme Board (paragraph 34). The Chair of URDSC is a member of the University Research Policy Committee (URPC) (paragraph 19), which also advises on postgraduate research matters.

138   School research degrees committees (SRDC) oversee the quality of supervision, the overall student experience and the standard of degrees awarded in schools. The school senior management team includes an assistant or deputy dean with responsibility for research. A school postgraduate tutor has specific responsibilities for management of research degrees. The Briefing Paper refers to a robust reporting structure from schools to URDSC through minutes and an annual report, and the audit team saw evidence for this in the documentation provided by the University which included comprehensive progression and completion statistics.

The research environment

139   In seeking to improve the depth and breadth of the University research activity, the GRS was established in 2005, and in 2008 five virtual Research Institutes were created to promote more focused research activity in areas of perceived strength. The establishment of Institutes outside of the school structure has been an integral step in the development of the University's Research Strategy (2009 to 2012), an objective of which is to achieve international quality research in selected themes. One of the University's research targets is to have at least 120 registered full-time postgraduate research students by 2012, more than double the current number. To help achieve this, annual Teesside University Research Doctoral Scholarships have been created.

140   Inline with a recommendation from QAA's Review to focus research degree programmes in areas of research strength, all new postgraduate research students are assigned to a Research Institute. The Research Institutes work closely with the GRS and schools to enhance the research environment. The Dean of the GRS is a member of UAB, URDSC, URPC and University Research Ethics Sub-Committee, and chairs the Research Institutes' Sub-Committee. The Research Quality and Policy Manager is responsible for the coordination of all matters relating to the quality of research degree programmes.

141   The GRS's remit is to provide a strong central support system for postgraduate research students and takes the lead in the 'implementation of all new initiatives' such as the online annual monitoring system (see paragraph 153). The GRS, together with CLQE, are also involved in staff training in relation to the admission and supervision of postgraduate research students (paragraphs 148 and 150). The University has also taken steps to enhance communication between research students, including University and school-based Postgraduate Research Forums, Annual Research Days, and monthly GRS 'Postgraduate Research Network' meetings. Research students also have access equivalent to academic staff to the University staff social area and the Library.

Selection, admission and induction of postgraduate research students

142   The UAC chaired by DVC (LSE) oversees all student admissions activities and reports to UAB (see paragraph 19). The Admissions Policy was revised by UAC in 2008, and includes revised admissions criteria. The University's normal minimum entry requirement for a research degree is a 2:1 honours degree or an equivalent qualification, although alternative qualifications, including relevant professional experience and publications can be taken into account. Applicants with a master's degree or equivalent in a relevant subject with research training may be considered for direct registration at doctoral level.

143   An enhanced, two-stage procedure for selection and admission was introduced by the University in 2007. Applicants complete an Initial Enquiry for Admission to Research Degree form, which is submitted to GRS who forward it to the relevant school. If the entry requirements are met, and there is an appropriate expertise to supervise the proposed research, the candidate is invited to complete an Application for Admission to Research Degree form by a postgraduate tutor or prospective supervisor, who assist in completing sections on the proposed research, the initial work plan and research training. Schools submit completed applications to GRS.

144   All students must be interviewed prior to offer, and first stage of training needs analysis carried out by the prospective student prior to offer. In line with recommendations in the Review, at least two staff who have received specialist training are involved in the admissions and selection process. The offer letter includes details of the Director of Studies and the Supervisory Team, the entrant's training requirements, and dates for induction, training sessions, registration and progression. A record of the training required and subsequently completed is recorded in consultation between the student, the Supervisory Team and the Research Governance and Training Manager in GRS (paragraph 151).

145   The University and schools are jointly responsible for the induction of postgraduate research students. The GRS runs tri-annual University induction days which include input from the Library and Information Services, Welfare and other student support services. Copies of the University's regulations, policies and guidelines, and codes of practice and procedures relating to postgraduate research students, are available online and are given to all new students and research supervisors. Subject specific induction and programmes of study outlined in the registration documents for each student are the responsibility of the relevant school research degrees committee and the student's primary Supervisor (Director of Studies). The Research Governance and Training Manager in GRS has reviewed the induction process with each school. The audit team heard from students that the selection and induction processes were inclusive and supportive. The GRS has developed a VLE site for postgraduate research students where all relevant documentation can be easily accessed. A personal development planning, 'My Portfolio', is introduced to students at induction.

146   The audit team heard from students that the selection and induction processes were inclusive and supportive, and found that the systematic programme for admission, induction and support of postgraduate research students, at both the institutional and school level, represented good practice.

Supervision

147   The school dean and postgraduate tutor are responsible for establishing each student's Supervisory Team, which consists of a Director of Studies and at least one other second supervisor, who between them will have at least two successfully completed research degree supervisions. Supervisor's roles and responsibilities are described in the University Code of Practice and in the Research Degrees Handbook. This information is given to new supervisors during a compulsory, Research Supervisors' Training Module run by the Centre for Learning and Quality Enhancement in conjunction with GRS and the School of Social Sciences and Law. Existing supervisors and administrators are kept informed at the bi-annual Supervisors and

Research Administrators' Forum run by GRS, which also provides an opportunity to debate proposed developments, and to feedback ideas and any concerns. To improve communication with supervisors, the GRS has developed an area on its intranet site that holds all relevant documentation for staff. The audit team heard from students that the quality of supervision and support generally was high.

148   The Review asked the University to consider ensuring that the quality of supervision is not put at risk through excessive work demands on supervisory staff. The University now has a system where the postgraduate tutor monitors the number of students assigned to a Director of studies at registration, who would not normally be responsible for supervising more than six students at any time.

Progress and review arrangements

149   Various measures have been taken to improve progression and completion rates. Targets for postgraduate research student numbers and completions for each school over a three-year period were introduced in 2007 in order to enhance the ability of the University to monitor effectively the postgraduate research population. Quarterly monitoring of progress against targets is compiled by the GRS and reported to URPC. Since 2007, full and part-time students are required to register their work programme with the relevant SRDC with in six or nine weeks of enrolment, respectively.

150   Student progression and assessment arrangements are detailed in the Framework and Regulations for the Award of Higher Degrees by Research. The process begins at registration, where the intended frequency of meetings between the supervisor and student to be formally recorded is agreed. A formal progression board has been introduced for all postgraduate research students at the end of year one or year two for full and part-time students, respectively. Progression boards comprise the postgraduate tutor as chair and the supervisory team, with input from two independent expert advisers (assessors), one of whom is external to the University. At least one of the assessors is expected to attend the board. The student submits a written report and is present at the progression board. Progression board decisions are formally approved by URDSC. In other years, students complete an online Annual Monitoring Form for review by the postgraduate tutor. A Log Book system was introduced in 2004, where supervisors and students must record a minimum of three meetings per year; this is submitted as part of the annual monitoring process. The audit team heard that the revised progression arrangements have been positively received by staff and students, with online Annual Monitoring and Log Books quoted as valuable support for both students and supervisors.

Development of research and other skills

151   Since the Review, the University has, in consultation with the schools, introduced a comprehensive generic training programme for postgraduate research students to meet the requirements of the Joint Skills Statements. The University also established the position of Research Governance and Training Manager in GRS in 2008, and formalised the embedding of training needs analysis for each research student. A feature of the training programme is that it offers a flexible set of training options, including evening and weekend sessions, to accommodate the needs of part-time students. Students can maintain an online record of their personal progress on My Portfolio (paragraph 147). The University also intends to host the programme on its VLE to allow access for distance-based students. English language training tailored to needs of individual international students is under development.

152   There are various opportunities for postgraduate research students to interact and discuss their work with other students and staff, including school-based events, a monthly Postgraduate Research Forum for all students convened by the GRS and the Students Union, and an annual GRS Postgraduate Research Conference where final-year students are invited to present their work. The University is active in regional engagement with research training through the VITAE

Yorkshire and North East Hub, and the North East Collaborative Researcher Development Group. Collaboration with the University of Durham on research skills training was commended by the Review.

153   The audit team was told of the University's intention to increase the number of full-time students involved in teaching as postgraduate research numbers increase. A training module has been developed for postgraduate research students who engage in teaching during their degree. This is not a compulsory requirement but students are encouraged to look at the module, which is part of the University Certificate in Continuing Education in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. Postgraduate research students who taught and who were also involved in assessment would not necessarily receive formal training to support these activities. Although students who teach are encouraged to take a specifically designed training module, this is not a compulsory requirement. The team, therefore, concluded that in order to improve the quality of learning opportunities for research students, it was advisable for the University to ensure that all postgraduate research students involved in the assessment of students are appropriately trained and prepared for this work.

Feedback mechanisms

154   The University has established various ways for obtaining feedback from postgraduate research students, including school representatives to the URDB. Central to the internal mechanisms for obtaining the views of individual students is the online annual monitoring process, which allows students to respond to comments made by their supervisory team; student comments on any confidential issues go directly to the postgraduate tutor.

155   The University participates in the national PRES survey and reports findings to URDSC and URDB, and to the Postgraduate Research Network. The University reflects on actions that could be taken on its 'Response to Survey Responses' site. The audit team heard from students that the feedback processes were clear and that they were aware of actions taken by the University in response to student feedback.

156   In response to a Review recommendation on introducing mechanisms to obtain and respond to comments from external parties involved in research degree programmes, the University plans to adapt the Bristol Online Survey system to target employers and sponsors.

Assessment

157   The assessment process is operated by the GRS in conjunction with the postgraduate tutors. Training is available to postgraduate research students in preparation for the assessment procedures during the early stages of their degree programme and before the final viva voce examination. Assessment is part of the training programme for all new supervisors and is discussed at bi-annual Supervisors and Research Administrators' Forum meetings.

158   The Director of Studies nominates external and internal examiners for approval by URDSC, in accordance with the Regulations for Research Degrees. Normally, the external examiner should have examined at least two previous candidates at the same level. In line with a recommendation from the Review, on the appointment of internal examiners, the University regulation has been amended to prevent a member of the supervisory team being appointed as an internal examiner. Since September 2009, subject to the agreement of the candidate, the URDSC is required to appoint an independent non-examining chair for the examination panel.

Representations, complaints and appeals

159   There is a formal structure of postgraduate research representation at University level. A representative is nominated by the Postgraduate Tutor in each school to be a member of the URDB. At school and subject level representation is not formalised. In the University Code of Practice, and from induction through the training and progression system described above, all

postgraduate research students are actively encouraged to raise any issues with their supervisory team, school postgraduate tutor or other member of the University as appropriate.

160   The Students' Union offers independent advice and support regarding complaints and appeals. The formal complaints and appeals procedures are available online. The grounds for appeal are detailed in the Assessment Review Regulations for Higher Degrees by Research (2009). There is no automatic right to appeal against academic judgements but the University states that it will usually formally consider all appeals.

161   The audit team found that the University has a sound infrastructure in place through the GRS, schools and Research Institutes to ensure satisfactory arrangements for the selection, admission, induction, training, supervision, progression and assessment of postgraduate research students. Institutional oversight is provided by URDSC and its Chair, who also sits on UASC and URPC. The University has taken appropriate action following the report of QAA's Review of research degree programmes in 2006. The research environment and postgraduate experience meet the expectations of the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programme*s.

Section 7: Published information

162   The University has in place a variety of methods to ensure that its published information is complete and accurate. The University has introduced comprehensive entry profiles, which include details of programme aims, structures, teaching and learning strategies as well as entry requirements. These are maintained by schools, with oversight by the University Admissions Committee (UAC).

163   Overall responsibility for communication with students rests with the University Student Information Co-ordination sub-committee (USICSC), which in turn reports to the UIAC. The USICSC is responsible for the production of key documentation and as part of its remit, monitors the effectiveness of this documentation. The principal documents for which the USICSC is responsible include the Student Protocol, the Essential Information Guide, the University Student Handbook, the University Student Handbook for Students taught in UK-based Partner Colleges and the Transnational University Student Handbook. Taken together, the audit team found that these publications constitute clear and comprehensive guides to key issues of importance to students. Furthermore students reported finding these materials clear and accessible. The TQS: Communicating with Students was developed following an evaluation by USICSC in 2008 of students studying on the main campus or in the HEBP. USICSC includes representation from the Students' Union, which helps to ensure that its deliberations are informed by student views.

164   Handbooks at programme and module level are provided by schools in line with a comprehensive TQS laid down in the Quality Handbook. Programme and module handbooks are also scrutinised at the approval stage and during the periodic review process.

165   The University Approval Panel has oversight of all new and revised programme specifications following sign off by the school academic standards committees at the conclusion of a programme approval and/or periodic review event. A standard programme specification is completed for all University programmes. At present, the audit team heard that students access programme specifications either through their programme leader or the University website. In response to actions arising from the review of programme approval processes in 2008, the programme specification template was revised in line with QAA guidelines. The team was advised that a project is currently developing an electronic programme catalogue to enable programme teams to input information directly into the catalogue, which will in turn generate a programme specification and provide a central document management system for all approved programme specifications. It is also anticipated that the programme catalogue will be available to current and potential students.

166   Oversight of all material published online rests with the Marketing and Student Recruitment Department (MSR). The MSR provides schools with templates, verification guidelines and guidelines on writing style. These, together with MSR retaining final approval for all printed publications, ensures that information entering the public domain is as far as possible accurate and complete.

167   The University maintains an online repository of regulations, policies and procedures to which all staff, students and prospective students have access. This is maintained by the University Secretary's department, and accuracy is ensured by only allowing the publication of documents approved by principal committees.

168   The University issues clear guidelines to its partner institutions on the marketing and promotion of its provision through the operations manuals. Final approval for such activity is retained by MSR. In this way, the University is able to ensure the accuracy of information issued on its behalf by its partners.

169   The audit team found that, overall, reliance can reasonably be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information the University publishes about the quality of its educational provision and the standards of its awards.