University of Winchester

May 2009

Annex to the report

Contents

Introduction

A team of auditors from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visited the University of Winchester (the University) from 11 to 15 May 2009 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 that the University offers.

Outcomes of the Institutional audit.

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

- confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of 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.

In addition to the two judgements above, the audit team also produced commentaries on the University's arrangements for quality enhancement, collaborative provision, postgraduate research students and published information. These can be found in the report.

Institutional approach to quality enhancement

The University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2009-11 has identified four priorities for enhancement: enhancing the student learning experience via academic staff support and learning resources; enhancing the quality of teaching provision by research-informed teaching and e-learning; enhancing the learning process through the provision of a variety of assessment methods with timely and constructive feedback, and enhancing student employability and lifelong learning. During meetings with students and staff, and scrutinising minutes of faculty meetings, the audit team heard and saw evidence that each item was being progressed and that action against set objectives was being monitored annually.

Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

The University recognises the role of postgraduate research students in creating a vibrant research culture and community, and has mechanisms in place to support both research students and research-active staff. The University intends to participate in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey in the future.

The University is encouraged to consider further external benchmarking of its postgraduate research degree provision by participating in the national Postgraduate Research Experience Survey, organised by the Higher Education Academy, and implementing the outcomes of the Research Councils UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. An annual overview of external examiner comments following the examination of postgraduate research students could become a valuable addition to the enhancement of research degree programmes.

Published information

The audit team found that reliance could reasonably be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that 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 as being good practice:

- the Headstart induction scheme for students (paragraph 73)

- promoting and achieving access to higher education via scholarships for care leavers (paragraph 91)

- the work-based learning Foundation Degree programme, in partnership with a regionally based international company (paragraph 99)

- the University's blended learning research training programme offered to postgraduate research students, which meets the expectations of the *Code of practice for the assurance of quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice), Section 1*, and fulfils the requirements of the Arts and Humanities and other research councils (paragraph 111).

Recommendations for action

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

Recommendations for action that the audit team considers advisable:

- to review its policy and procedures to ensure that the University exercises adequate control over the issuing of transcripts to students on validated provision, and ensure that the procedures are acted upon in a consistent and transparent manner (paragraph 38).

Recommendations for action that the audit team considers desirable:

- to take appropriate action based on the analysis contained in the interim report on the University's committee structure (paragraph 30)

- to work towards routinely providing student transcripts that meet the requirements of the European Diploma Supplement (paragraph 39)

- to consider further external benchmarking of postgraduate research degrees provision, for example, by implementing the Research Councils UK Concordat, and through institutional overview of external examiners' comments relating to research degree examinations (paragraph 113).

Section 1: Introduction and background

The institution and its mission

1   The University was founded in 1840 as the Winchester Diocesan Training School to provide training for elementary schoolmasters. It has occupied its present site since 1862, on land granted by Winchester Cathedral. In 1928 it became King Alfred's College. Between 1970 and 1990 it expanded into a general college of higher education. Taught degree awarding powers were conferred in 2004, when the institution became known as University College Winchester. A year later, the Privy Council conferred the title of University of Winchester; research degree awarding powers followed in 2008.

2   The University's mission is 'To educate, to advance knowledge and to serve the public good'. Its values include freedom, justice, truth, human rights and collective effort for the public good. More specifically, these are articulated as intellectual freedom, social justice, diversity, spirituality, individuals matter and creativity.

3   King Alfred Campus, West Downs and Medecroft are all within walking distance of Winchester city centre. The small Chute House Campus is located in the centre of Basingstoke, 20 miles distant, opened in 2003 to deliver full and part-time University courses for students wishing to combine study with employment and others requiring a flexible approach to study. Shortly after receiving their university title in 2005, the structure of the institution was reorganised into three faculties: Arts, Education, and Social Sciences. Two years later, 14 academic departments were created within the faculties. In 2008, the large Faculty of Social Sciences was divided to create a fourth Faculty of Business, Law and Sport.

4   At the time of the audit, the University had 5,933 students, including 3,813 full-time and 2,028 part-time students, of whom 65 were postgraduate research students. Numbers of overseas students (237) and students on collaborative programmes (124) were relatively low.

5   The University has a long tradition of teacher education, which now sits within an expanded portfolio of degree programmes, at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels, in the fields of arts, humanities and social sciences. The majority of awards are offered on a full-time basis. Until 1992, the University's programmes were validated by the Council for National Academic Awards. Between 1992 and 2004, the University of Southampton validated awards. All undergraduate students admitted since September 2005 have been registered for University of Winchester awards and since 2008, the same has been true of postgraduate student admissions. The University is currently running out its formal accreditation agreement for research degrees with the University of Southampton.

The information base for the audit

6   The following documents provided the evidence base for the current Institutional audit report:

- QAA Institutional audit report May 2005 (RG 168 11/05)

- QAA Review of postgraduate research programmes, 2006

- QAA review of the University of Southampton's Childhood Studies Foundation Degree delivered by the then University College Winchester, April 2005 (FD13/2005)

- Major review of healthcare programmes, Nursing and Midwifery, November 2006 (RG306 01/07).

- University of Winchester Institutional Briefing Paper (IBP)

- University of Winchester students' written submission (SWS)

- the University's internal documents

- HEFCE circular 2006/45, *Review of the Quality Assurance Framework. Phase two outcomes*

- the notes taken by the audit secretary of audit team meetings with staff and students during the briefing and audit visits, and agreed with the team.

Developments since the last audit

7   The previous Institutional audit, in May 2005, found that broad confidence could be placed in the soundness of the University College's current and likely future management of the quality of its academic programmes and its institutional-level capacity to manage effectively the security of its awards.

8   The audit report noted the following features of good practice: the articulation of the University College's strategic direction and its management of change; the work of the Research and Knowledge Transfer Centre, especially in its support for postgraduate research students and in the enhancement of a postgraduate research culture; the development of the role of Learning

and Teaching Co-ordinators and their effective integration into University College processes for the enhancement of quality; the accessibility and supportiveness of staff in their pastoral and academic relations with students, including those in the part-time mode, and the role of senior students in induction and in enhancing the resident student experience.

9   The University College was advised to give priority to ensuring that its data processes were fit for purpose, appropriately targeted and consistently used both centrally and across the schools to support its learning and teaching strategy. It was also advised to develop such guidance on the peer observation of teaching as would ensure that a shared and clearly understood system was put in place, which was designed to secure further the quality of the learning experience.

10   In addition, the audit team of 2005 considered it desirable that the University College: ensure greater engagement at programme level with *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), in order to assist staff in the setting and monitoring of standards; ensure that the University College has effective systems in place to assure the quality and standards of its collaborative and its off-site provision during a period of substantial planned expansion, and consider strategies to increase the validity and reliability of feedback from students to the institution.

11   The discipline audit trails undertaken, indicated appropriate standards of student achievement and suitable quality of learning opportunities available to students. The report also stated that the University College had responded appropriately at institutional level to the Academic Infrastructure and was moving in an appropriate manner to fulfil its responsibilities in respect of ensuring the reliability of its published information.

12   The University responded to the general recommendations contained in the Institutional audit report in the one-year follow-up report submitted to QAA in October 2006. A further supplementary progress report was considered by Senate a year later. Actions approved by Senate since the previous audit include a range of measures intended to improve the provision and use of data, notably the appointment of a Planning Officer (Performance) and the introduction of the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) Excellence Model. Considerable improvements have been made to the quantity of available data and the quality of data analysis, as exemplified by the Annual Statement on the Quality of Taught Programmes. There was evidence of the work of the Planning Officer, but none to suggest that the introduction of the Excellence Model had contributed to the improvement. A Collaborative Enhancement of Teaching Policy, incorporating Peer Observation of Teaching, has been developed and implemented. It was clear to the 2009 audit team that academic staff were not only fulfilling the basic requirements of the scheme, but deriving considerable benefit from it. Revised guidance and staff development has been provided to assist staff at programme level in the setting and monitoring of academic standards. The team was satisfied that staff at programme level were engaging appropriately with the FHEQ within the processes for validation and review.

13   The University describes its engagement with collaborative provision since the last audit as 'cautious and strategic'. The planned expansion has been curtailed. Action taken to address the recommendation included revisions to the Quality and Enhancement Handbook, the provision of staff development, the establishment of the Collaborative Provision Committee (CPC) and the development of a Collaborative Provision Strategy. The audit team noted that in most respects systems had improved. Two specific areas in which practice was less than secure are discussed in detail in paragraphs 35 to 38. Steps taken in relation to student feedback include changes to the format of the University's Student Satisfaction Survey (undergraduate) and the prioritisation of student representation within the new faculty structure. The quality of student feedback provided via programme committees and other mechanisms indicated a high level of student satisfaction.

14   The current Vice-Chancellor was appointed in 2006. Under the Vice-Chancellor's leadership, the University continued the process of reviewing and redeveloping its policies and strategies for the enhancement of the student learning experience. Processes for programme approval and review have been reviewed and aligned with the new structure of faculties and departments. In 2008, the University made a submission to the Research Assessment Exercise under six Units of Assessment, 76 per cent of which was judged to be internationally recognised, and opened the new University Centre.

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

Key tenets

15   The University states that its approach to safeguarding academic standards, and thus securing a quality experience for its students, is underpinned by the following key tenets: ownership of, and engagement with, quality processes and procedures throughout the University, by staff and students alike; accountable and transparent standards; involvement of external academic and professional peers in academic development, validation and review, and engagement with the Academic Infrastructure.

Underpinning processes

16   Senate is the principal academic committee and is responsible for matters relating to the University's academic activities. Senate has four subcommittees: the Academic Standards Committee (ASC); the Learning and Teaching Committee; the Student Recruitment Committee and Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE) Committee. Students are represented on all academic committees at institutional level with the exception of the Academic Regulations Committee (ARC), and Senate RKE Committee. Senate ASC and its three subcommittees (Academic Regulations Committee, Collaborative Provision Committee (CPC) and Research Degrees Quality Committee (RDQC)) are responsible for the monitoring of the quality of the provision of the faculties. The activities of CPC and RDQC are described further is Section 5 and 6, respectively. Senate Learning and Teaching Committee has institutional oversight of the management of learning opportunities and is responsible for the dispersal and management of funds for learning and teaching projects, including a range of awards and fellowships.

17   The University's Admissions policy was rewritten in 2008-09 and in parallel with the Senate Student Recruitment Committee is responsible for guiding and monitoring the operation and effectiveness of the University's UK and international recruitment strategies. Responsibility for assuring and enhancing the quality of staff research and the research environment in general, rests with the Senate RKE Committee and its two subcommittees the RKE Internal Grants Committee and the RKE Ethics Committee. The Senate RKE Committee produces and monitors the implementation of the University's RKE Strategy, receives the annual report on postgraduate research provision, following approval by Senate and the Academic Standards Committee and considers applications from new subject areas hoping to recruit postgraduate research students for the first time.

18   Each faculty has its own faculty committee, faculty quality committee (FQC), faculty learning and teaching committee and faculty research and knowledge exchange committee, broadly reflecting the University's academic committee structure. The University states that there is appropriate delegation of responsibility to the faculties as regulated by institutional guidance, policy and practice and the audit team concurs with this view. Membership of committees and lines of reporting are intended to reflect the designated roles and responsibilities assigned to each level of the structure. Students are represented on faculty quality committees and faculty learning and teaching committees, but not on faculty committees or faculty research knowledge exchange committees.

19   As well as the formal structure, the University has a number of less formal groupings, which provide input into quality assurance. They provide fora for 'blue skies' thinking, problem solving and the discussion of proposals and ideas. These include the Programme Leaders Forum, the Heads of Department Forum, committee chairs/associate deans meetings, and the 'Blue Skies' meetings for ASC and the Learning and Teaching Committee. The latter involve an end-of-year meeting, which provides an opportunity to look at key issues that have emerged during the year and discuss possibilities for addressing them. In the recent past, these have included the whole validation and review process, the role of departments in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement process, and the development of a new Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. The informal meetings of heads of department, programme leaders and those having key roles in relation to Quality Assurance and Enhancement variously consider policy formulation, disseminate information or gather opinion. Staff the audit team met were very positive about the advantages of having such fora for discussion. The team viewed the collegiality and the good communication between staff of different faculties as a positive advantage to the University in developing and delivering its quality assurance agenda

20   The Senior Management Team (SMT) of the University meets weekly and is chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, who has overall responsibility for the quality of learning and teaching. Operational responsibility is delegated to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic), who in turn delegates specific responsibilities to the academic directors and the chairs of Senate ASC, the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee and Senate RKE Committee.

21   Since the previous audit in 2005, the University has reviewed and developed the majority of its policies and strategies including its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2009-11, and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Implementation Plan, which at the time of the audit was in early draft form.

22   The University produces a Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook (QAE Handbook), which is annually updated for approval by ASC. The handbook is available both online and in printed form. It includes detailed guidance for staff involved in quality assurance and enhancement. In addition, advice is available to staff at faculty level from the associate deans and chairs of the FQCs, and at university level from the Director of Quality, the Quality Office, Director of Learning and Teaching and the Director of Regional Academic Programmes, the latter specifically in relation to collaborative programmes.

Section 2: Institutional management of academic standards

23   Responsibility for operating the systems for the assurance and maintenance of academic standards and quality is delegated by Senate to the Academic Standards Committee (ASC). The ASC and its subcommittees manage the operational aspects of the University's provision. The ASC receive reports from each faculty, in particular, there is an annual Faculty Quality Report. The latter is based on programme reports, action plans and evaluations (AP&Es), departmental reports and reports of validation and re-approval events within the faculty. It is submitted to ASC following approval by the faculty committee. In addition, ASC audits a selection of department deports from all the Faculties each year.

24   The ASC reports to Senate by means of its minutes, the production of strategies and policies and the production of an 'Annual Statement on the Quality of Taught Programmes'

Programme approval, monitoring and review

25   New programmes are approved by ASC on behalf of Senate, following a validation process. That process is initiated after the approval of an Academic Resources Form (ARF) by the University Management Group and the Planning and Resources Committee. A validation panel is then set up and is chaired by a member of staff independent of the faculty. All panels have two external members, one academic and one representing professional and/or employer interests.

The University takes seriously the role of external participants and the audit team saw evidence of the effectiveness of their involvement in securing standards. There is detailed guidance in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement (QAE) Handbook on the documents and criteria that the Validation Panel requires to be produced and considered. These include a programme specification, including where relevant a statement of compliance with requirements of professional or statutory bodies, a detailed set of module descriptions, the approved ARF, staff curricula vitae and any other relevant supporting documents, such as specialist needs, student support. The team was provided with copies of these documents for recently approved programmes, which clearly demonstrated the thoroughness of the process and the important contribution that programme approval makes to the University's management of the standards of its provision.

26   Periodic review of programmes occurs every six years. The University describes this as the re-approval process. Programmes may choose to bring such re-approval forward if there is a need or a proposal to make substantial alterations to the provision that minor validation or Interim Review cannot satisfy. Programme teams produce a self-evaluation document that draws upon annual monitoring and other evidence. That document plus a new definitive document and supporting documentation, is considered by a re-approval panel, which is constituted in the same way as those for new programmes. The format of the meetings for a re-approval is similar to that for a new programme, except that provision is made for considering the student experience in more detail. An ARF is not needed unless there is a need for significant additional resources. The audit team saw evidence of this process being operated, and came to the view that it is both effective and thorough. However, the University has acknowledged that it may be possible to lighten the burden on faculty quality committee (FQCs) in particular, and to improve the quality of approval and re-approval by using academic reviewers and a more paper-based approach. To this end, it is conducting a pilot project involving five programmes during 2008-09. The project is not yet completed, but the earliest findings indicate that the revised process has a number of advantages, although it is acknowledged that there are some further improvements to be made. The team would encourage the University to continue to review its processes with the intention of streamlining and simplifying them wherever possible.

27   There are processes for considering changes to programmes between periods of validation. The process used depends on the scale of change. For minor changes, there is a process of Minor Validation, which involves FQC approval. Minor changes include the addition of new modules to a programme, and amendments to existing modules. The latter should normally involve no more than 20 per cent of a programme in any one year, and no more than 50 per cent over the six-year period of validation. For more significant changes, there is a process of Interim Review. From the evidence the audit team viewed, it was satisfied that these processes worked well with flexibility and appropriateness.

28   There is also a process for the closure and running-out of programmes. This is outlined in the QAE Handbook. Decisions on closing a programme are initially made at faculty level, and ratified by the University Management Group (UMG). The programme is required to produce an AP&E for annual monitoring, until all students on the programme have graduated. The audit team saw evidence of this process being used effectively, with a programme run both within the University and as an overseas collaborative programme.

29   Course academic standards are reviewed annually by means of the annual monitoring process, which is managed by ASC and the FQC. Each programme leader produces an AP&E, which is scrutinised by the relevant FQC. In addition each Department produces a Department Report, which provides an evaluation of the Department as a whole, drawing out common themes and issues that is also scrutinised by the FQC. The AP&Es are audited by FQC. Some will be subject to more detailed auditing; normally this will involve at least one postgraduate and one undergraduate programme from within the faculty, the programmes to be from different departments. The FQC will determine the degree of confidence it has in the AP&E. Should an

AP&E receive a verdict of no confidence, it would have to be totally recast and resubmitted. With the recent introduction of departments, this is much less likely to occur than previously. Once that process has been completed then the Associate Dean produces an annual report on the quality of the programmes in the faculty. Following approval by FQC, this is forwarded to the faculty committee and then to the ASC. The ASC, in its role as being responsible for monitoring the overall quality of the academic programmes of the University, will normally decide to audit one departmental report from each faculty. Its choice is guided by a number of factors which may include whether the Department has been audited recently, the type of programmes in the department, and any concerns or issues reported. As at faculty level, the ASC will form a confidence verdict on the Department's management of its programmes. The audit team heard and saw evidence that this was a thorough and robust process.

30   Although students and staff assured the audit team that attendance at committee meetings was neither repetitive nor burdensome, concern has been voiced within the University about the efficiency of the arrangements. The team shared these concerns, observing the extent to which deliberation on issues and developments tended to be replicated at different levels and in various fora. In 2008-09, a working party was established to consider the structure and scope of the University's academic committees, with a view to reducing overlap. Far-reaching recommendations were anticipated. There is ample evidence that faculty, department and programme committees are discharging their responsibilities for academic activities diligently and thoroughly. It was also made clear to the team that staff at the University welcome the opportunity to participate in this aspect of the academic community. Notwithstanding this effectiveness, which reflects the effectiveness observed at institutional level, the team shares the view expressed by the University about the efficiency and sustainability of its operation within the faculties. At the time of the audit, the first Interim Report of the Outcomes of the Review of Committee Structure had been produced. Despite describing the burden on staff as becoming 'problematic' and enumerating multiple negative traits of 'committee culture' affecting the University, the Interim Report does not contain proposals to address the issues. In the light of this, and notwithstanding the effectiveness of committee arrangements, the team consider it desirable that the University take appropriate action, based on the analysis contained in the Interim Report on the University's committee structure.

External examiners

31   The QAE Handbook clearly sets out the role and duties of external examiners. External examiners are nominated by FQCs, confirmed by ASC and approved by Senate. Responsibility for ensuring that external examiners are appointed at the appropriate time lies with an individual in each faculty; normally this is the Dean or Associate Dean. External examiners are appointed to an individual programme or group of programmes. There are clear criteria set for their appointment, which the audit team saw implemented through the approval process. These include academic qualification, experience of higher education, subject familiarity and expertise, and previous experience as an external examiner. There are also criteria for inappropriate proposals, including not being from the same institution as the previous external examiner, previously being a member of staff, a close previous relationship with the University or any kind of reciprocal relationship. Once appointed, they are offered the opportunity of an induction session at the University. They are also provided with a defined set of information including all course definitive documents, the most recent AP&E, programme and module handbooks and details of the staff teaching on the programme. They are also given an information pack of standard University documentation.

32   External examiners attend department boards, which deal with module marks, and make recommendations to faculty examination boards concerning individual students. One of the external examiners from the faculty's programmes will act as chief external examiner and that individual attends the faculty award board. All external examiners are required to produce an annual report. The report and a formal response to it form part of the AP&E. External examiners

receive a copy of the AP&E for the programme(s) they examine. All external examiner reports are distributed to the Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic), the Director of Quality and the Chair of ASC. The Director of Quality produces an annual report of significant issues for ASC, and any actions to be taken with regard to any significant issues are decided at that committee. From the evidence that the audit team saw, it was clear that the external examining system which was in operation was effective in assuring the academic standards of both programmes and awards.

33   Themes of good practice noted by external examiners include, for undergraduate programmes; pedagogic strengths, staff engagement and enthusiasm, the quality of feedback on student work, the connection of theory and practice with research, the quality of the final-year project, the connection with professional requirements and the use of the learning network. For postgraduate programmes, the external examiners noted the high quality of student work, the learning opportunities, the use of detailed feedback, and the interaction of academic learning and practical application.

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

34   The University states in its Institutional Briefing Paper (IBP) that external reference points are considered to be a key aspect of the institution's framework for quality assurance, including the use of external examiners, a good working relationship with relevant professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) and use of the Academic Infrastructure. The University has embedded the requirements of the FHEQ and the *Code of practice* into the relevant sections of its own quality assurance framework. The ways in which this are implemented are clearly outlined in the QAE Handbook. There is an expectation that associate deans, chairs of FQCs and heads of departments engage directly with the *Code of practice*. Other staff engage with it through the adoption of the University's processes. Any revisions to the *Code* are noted at ASC and incorporated into University documents as appropriate. The FHEQ is embedded into the University's process for validation and review, and is explicitly used by panels judging the quality of the provision. External examiners are required to report that the programmes they moderate meet the FHEQ. Programme specifications are published for all programmes on the University website, and they are incorporated into validation documents. The QAE Handbook provides a template and guidance on their production. Those that the audit team saw showed that they are effective in describing the design and organisation of curricula and their relationship with assessment. Course definitive documents must include reference and consideration of the latest subject benchmark statements. The use of all these external reference points is kept under review. It was clear from the evidence the team saw and heard that the Academic Infrastructure is clearly embedded as the University states and in the way in which the University sets and monitors its academic standards.

35   The University's Quality Assurance Handbook makes it clear that all awards of the University are granted by the University. It notes that a validated award partner may provide a transcript of marks but may not grant an award. It specifies that arrangements for the production of certificates by the Registry, the detail recorded on them and provided for graduation should be established via the Memorandum of Agreement. The Memoranda of Agreement seen by the audit team contained very little of this detail, but all stated that the University will be responsible for issuing award certificates and transcripts. During the audit visit, however, it became apparent to the team that there was some uncertainty and variation in practice.

36   In response to a request from the audit team, the University provided additional information in the form of a briefing note. This document informed the team that the University was in the process of changing its practice in relation to the production of transcripts. It indicated that, in respect of collaborative awards, marks are held on the University's system, the Examination Board processes of the University apply and the University issues certificates and transcripts itself. In respect of the seven validated awards delivered by three partner institutions, the document indicates that the University has delegated to the partner institution responsibility

for the recording of marks, the production of examination board data and the production of student transcripts. These arrangements have been reflected in memoranda of agreement signed since November 2008. Two further memoranda of agreement signed before that date have been revised and brought into line with the new arrangements. Others signed before that date, including those seen by the team, were due to be revised at the next meeting of the Collaborative Provision Committee. It appeared from the briefing note provided, however, that despite what is said in the memoranda of agreement about the University issuing both certificates and transcripts, this process did not operate and that, in effect, the arrangements are currently being revised to reflect custom and practice. The team formed the view that there would be benefit in attaching an operational statement to each memorandum of agreement.

37   The *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)* specifies that 'an awarding institution should ensure that it has sole authority for awarding certificates and transcripts relating to the programmes of study delivered through collaborative arrangements' adding that 'if the awarding institution wishes to devolve responsibility to a partner organisation for issuing these documents, it should ensure that it has retained the means to exercise proper control over all certificates and transcripts that are issued in its name'. The briefing note describes how the University assures the quality of examination boards for validated awards at partner institutions and the process by which results and recommendations for awards are received and approved by the University. Following ratification by Senate, award certificates are sent to the partner institution so that 'the transcript can be married to the certificate and posted to the graduate'. Neither the briefing note, nor the staff the audit team met, were clear about how the University exercises control over the transcripts at this point. Nor was the University clear how it ensures that data is synchronised with the partner institution following the University's examination processes, nor how data is appropriately archived.

38   The audit team's concern regarding this issue is two-fold: firstly, that the University has tolerated a departure from agreed procedures on a matter which can have a significant impact on academic standards and secondly, that there is insufficient evidence that the University has retained the means to exercise proper control over all transcripts which are issued in its name, both at the point of graduation and at any point in the future. The team recognised that the scale of the problem is currently small, representing less than 1 per cent of the student population, but was of the view that the matter needed to be addressed, to safeguard the integrity of the University's academic standards both now and in any future context. The team agreed therefore it is advisable that the University reviews its policies and procedures to ensure that it exercises adequate control over the issuing of transcripts to students on validated provision and ensure that the procedures are acted upon in a consistent and transparent manner.

39   The University considers itself compliant with Part 1 of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* by means of its quality assurance and enhancement processes. In relation to European Diploma Supplement, it provides the detailed information required when any graduate requests it. The audit team considers that the quality of learning opportunities would be enhanced if students were proactively provided with the Diploma Supplement. The team, therefore, considers it desirable that the University works towards routinely providing student transcripts that meet the requirements of the European Diploma Supplement.

40   Some of the University's awards are accredited by PSRBs. In the case of new awards, course proposers have to identify both the resources and any other specific requirements that have to be met, in order that they may be tested by the approval process. These must be submitted to the FQC so that a judgement can be made as to whether the programme has met the requirements. For courses already in approval, the AP&E must consider the ongoing requirements of accreditation. From the evidence the audit team saw, the procedures for considering PSRB requirements are effective.

Assessment policies and regulations

41   The University's assessment policy is articulated in its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and Implementation Plan, its academic regulations and its Moderation of Assessed Work Policy. There are common sets of regulations for undergraduate awards, master's programmes and higher degrees, including collaborative provision. There is a copy of the relevant regulations within the Student Handbook, and they are also available on the Portal. There is a mechanism for seeking exceptions to the regulations for individual programmes, which requires approval of ASC prior to validation. Students met by the audit team were clear about the regulations in force for their particular programmes. The regulations clearly state the requirements in relation to module assessment, credit rating, grading, assessment load and timing, academic conduct, compensation and condonement, and progression. The team saw evidence in the course documentation provided of the detailed information in relation to assessment that had gone through the approval process, and what was subsequently provided to students. The team also saw evidence of the importance given to it in the validation and approval procedures. Overall, the team concluded that the University's arrangements for the assessment of students were effective in maintaining its academic standards.

42   One of the priorities of the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2009-11 relates to assessment, and states that 'assessment will be designed to contribute constructively to the learning process through the provision of a variety of assessment methods that are appropriate to the assessed tasks'. It also states that all assessed work should be returned to students on time (these times are stated in the relevant module handbooks) and that timely and constructive feedback supporting student learning should be provided in relation to each assessment task. Students the audit team met confirmed that these criteria were applied and delivered, indeed that the feedback given, staff availability to discuss assessed work, and their responsiveness, were to be commended.

Management information - statistics

43   The University has made good progress since the previous audit in developing its management information systems, and has improved the processes to make use of the data produced. The Planning Office supplies data to the faculties to inform the University's quality processes. In turn, the associate deans provide direct advice to the programme leaders on the effective use of such data. The data includes a range of statistics on applicants, entrants, progression, completion and first-destination information on existing students and their performance, at the level of both the module and the programme. This data is used in monitoring and review processes. The audit team was able to see evidence of this use in the course documentation made available to it. The University acknowledges that presenting some of this data for its combined honours programmes still presents a challenge. Notwithstanding this, the team came to the view that the data supplied was used appropriately in annual monitoring and in periodic review.

44   The University makes use of comparative data from UniStats to benchmark the University's standing against both regional and other similar providers. Data with comprehensive results analysis is provided for Senate and ASC and also is given to all academic departments.

45   The audit team concluded that confidence could reasonably be placed in the soundness of the University's present and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards.

Section 3: Institutional management of learning opportunities

46   The University sees the management, development and enhancement of learning opportunities and experiences as being at the core of its Learning and Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2009-11. The Strategy has a number of key principles, among which the development of critical, autonomous and lifelong learners from diverse backgrounds is at the heart of its approach. The resource planning process determines the adequacy of learning resources based on an analysis of the viability of programmes given its resourcing needs. All new programmes must complete an Academic Resources Form (ARF) for approval by the University Management Group, and then by the Planning and Resources Committee, before proceeding to validation. An approved ARF constitutes an assurance for the validation panel that the faculty and the University consider that the proposed programme can be resourced satisfactorily during the period of the validation.

47   The audit team found clear evidence of widespread engagement with the Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points informing the University's management of learning opportunities. The University's approval and review processes have the Academic Infrastructure as an important reference. There was also evidence that the *Code of practice* regularly and effectively informs policy-making across the University.

48   Some of the University's programmes are accredited by a range of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). These provide external reference points for a number of disciplines. This means that appropriate professional standards and curricula inform the programmes which lead to the award of professional qualifications alongside University awards.

49   The University has a comprehensive and effective system for the approval, monitoring and review of programmes. The Academic Standards Committee (ASC) and its subcommittees provide oversight at an institutional level of this system. From the evidence seen by the audit team, there is a clear relationship between the processes for monitoring and review and the maintenance of appropriate learning opportunities for students, in order that they are able to achieve the intended learning outcomes of their programmes. There was effective reporting at module, programme, department and faculty levels, with consideration of key issues at ASC.

50   Student feedback is integral to the University's management of both academic standards and learning opportunities. In addition to the National Student Survey (NSS) of final-year undergraduates, the University organises its own Student Satisfaction Survey (SSS). The University uses the SSS annually, based on the NSS, to obtain feedback from all undergraduate and taught postgraduate students. Issues raised by the SSS are considered widely across the University in particular, as part of the annual monitoring process, both for programmes and for Professional Services. The University currently considers that the response rate (23 per cent) for the student survey is too low and is taking steps to increase the participation. The students who met with the audit team during the briefing and audit visits were not unduly worried by the low response rate, as they felt the student body had ample opportunity to make their views known. The Students' Union is however working with the University to increase the response rate.

51   The main issue raised by students in the SSS has been the timing and quality of feedback on assessments. A project was undertaken in 2007-08 to address the issues, which resulted in an improvement in the 2008 survey. Students who met with the audit team during the audit visit expressed the view that the feedback they were receiving was timely, constructive and helpful.

52   At the level of the programme, student evaluation takes place in a number of ways. These include anonymous module evaluation forms. The results including the participation rates and the tutor's responses feed into programme committee meetings, and also into annual monitoring reports. The changes made in response to the previous year's student representatives are also included as a section in the subsequent year's module handout.

53   The University's response rate in the NSS has been of the order of 69 per cent. The results from the NSS are considered at all levels of the University, from Senate to programme and form part of the annual monitoring process. Results of the 2008 NSS showed an improvement for the University, and further improvement for the 2009 survey is being stimulated in 2008-09, by making improvement one of the University's annual quality enhancement themes.

54   Evidence of evaluations seen by the audit team show firstly the high level of participation, and also the way in which programmes respond. Students that the team met were very positive about the way in which responses are made by staff of the University at all levels. Overall, the team concluded that the University is well informed about student views through its feedback mechanisms and that it is proactive in dealing with issues that are raised.

The role of students in quality assurance

55   Students have representation in all of the relevant committees of the University including the Board of Governors, Senate, the Planning and Resources Committee and Senate's subcommittees. Students are also represented on all of the relevant faculty committees.

56   The Institutional Briefing Paper stated that student attendance at programme committees is mandatory. The audit team sought explanation of this statement at the briefing visit from the students they met, and it was explained that without students in attendance the programme committees could not proceed. In practice, this means that if the student nominated for the role is unable to attend the committee, he or she must provide a substitute. The students the team met during the briefing and audit visit were happy with their role in the quality assurance processes and felt their views were listened to and taken seriously by the University, and that attendance at these committees was a good use of their time. Students who met with the team during the audit visit, none of whom were class representatives, stated they are able to access minutes of relevant committees via the University portal and therefore easily find out actions being taken by the University in response to concerns raised. They also expressed the view that they were happy with the class representative system in general.

Links between research or scholarly activity and learning opportunities

57   The aim of the University's Strategic Plan is to have all staff involved in Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE) activity by academic Session 2010-11. Each member of staff is allocated a minimum of 400 hours of their time to undertake RKE activity, which is further supported by internal research funding and funds generated from the Research Assessment Exercise.

58   Each member of staff is required to show how their RKE activity connects to his/her teaching activity in an annual report. These reports are collated and monitored at faculty level. The Senate RKE committee approved the University Annual Report on RKE Activity for 2007-08 in November 2008. The report notes that the faculty RKE reports demonstrate a close relationship between RKE activity and teaching.

59   Since 2007-08, the University has employed staff specifically to grow and promote research informed teaching. Currently there are four faculty research informed teaching officers who oversee projects in their areas. This has been supplemented by the Winchester Research Apprenticeship Programme, one of the aims of which is to increase staff and student engagement in research informed learning and teaching. In addition there is an annual research informed teaching conference at University level.

60   In 2006-07, the University funded a project which confirmed that students were aware of, and appreciated, the connection between staff research and teaching. This view was confirmed by the student groups the audit team met during the briefing and audit visits, who put forward the view that the staff in general were experts in their fields and that the expertise contributed positively to the student experience. Students cited several examples of research activity positively influencing the undergraduate student experience; some of the overseas students the team met

stated that they had chosen to enrol at the University on the strength of a specific member of teaching staff's published research papers (see also paragraph 88). Staff who met with the team during the audit visit commented positively on the University's strategic approach to research-informed teaching and how the approach was stimulating the adoption of good practice across the institution. In addition, the team noted that the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Implementation Plan 2009-11, approved by the Senate Learning and Teaching committee in April 2009, includes a commitment to fund up to 11 research informed teaching projects per year and deliver two University-wide events on research informed teaching.

Other modes of study

61   The University currently has six programmes delivered via distance learning, all of which were validated specifically for that purpose. These programmes are managed via the University's standard procedures for programme approval and monitoring, in conjunction with the University's Guidelines on Distance Learning, which are part of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook.

62   The audit team noted one collaborative, work-based learning programme, the FdA Management (Information Technology), in partnership with a regionally based international company offering information technology services. Students attend for one day each week at the Basingstoke Campus, with online access to Winchester course materials and staff. The students are guaranteed employment with the company for two years after graduation and their career opportunities are enhanced by the course (See paragraph 99).

63   The University has been using Moodle as its virtual learning environment since 2007, at the same time adopting the title 'Learning Network' for the system. While the University acknowledges that e-learning is not extensive, use is growing as a key element of the current Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. The University Learning Teaching and Assessment Implementation Plan 2009-11 confirms the University's commitment to increasing the use of the Learning Network. This is supported by a Blended Learning Fellowship and up to five funded projects. The students who met with the audit team during the audit visit, including those on programmes delivered away from Winchester, were happy with access to the Learning Network, the lecturers' use of the Learning Network to mount lecture and tutorial material, and the increasing use of the network to deliver more advanced types of e-learning.

Resources for learning

64   The majority of the University's resources for learning are delivered by two service departments, the library and Information Technology Services. The heads of both departments submit annual reports to the Planning and Resources Committee so that the performance of the services can be monitored.

65   The library, which is on the main campus, is open seven days a week, 13 hours per day, has 500 study spaces, over 250,000 items, over 600 print journals, access to 250,000 electronic books and access to 20,000 journals online. Benchmarking of the library using information supplied by The Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL) shows that it performs well in relation to its benchmarking groups with respect to books and loans per full-time equivalent student. Library funding is allocated to faculties based on student numbers, who then make allocations to departments based on differential costs and specific demands. Start-up funding is provided for new programmes via an Academic Development fund. Library funding has increased by 22 per cent since 2005-06. The students who met with the audit team, including students studying at Chute House in Basingstoke, were happy with the library facilities including space in the library for study, availability of textbooks for short and long-term loan, and both hard copy and electronic access to journals.

66   The Information Services Strategy, monitored by the Planning and Resources Committee, sets out the plans for the development of IT in the University in the period to 2011. All staff and students have access to email, the internet and the University Portal and much of the main campus has wireless access to the internet and has 1,500 networked devices on site. The Portal provides convenient access to University resources for staff and students to interact in an intranet environment, and is the main repository for strategies, policy and guidance. The students who met with the audit team, including students studying at Chute House in Basingstoke, were happy with the on and off-campus access to IT facilities.

67   The student written submission (SWS) highlights the lack of appropriate teaching rooms and spaces available for the wide variety of subject areas the University covers and notes that this was identified as a key area for improvement in the 2005 SWS. The submission also highlights the need for more spaces to enable students to work as groups. In response to these needs and also the need identified by staff, the University's Estates Strategy 2007-11 has identified teaching and learning accommodation as a top priority. This is currently being addressed by a £14 million investment in a new teaching block, plans for a Performing Arts Centre and a dedicated building for the Business School. Students and staff are being involved in the specification of the new teaching spaces. During the briefing and audit visits, students confirmed that learning spaces were a problem, but acknowledged that the University was addressing it. In addition to the new building on campus, the audit team noted that the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Implementation Plan 2009-11 includes plans to audit all learning and teaching spaces across the University, to assess fitness for purpose and to ensure that all teaching rooms are in good condition, suitably equipped, used appropriately and well furnished.

Admissions policy

68   The University has recently revised its admissions policies. A new policy approved by Senate in May 2009 covers undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes, while a separate policy approved by Senate in February 2009 covers the admission of postgraduate research students. The policy for taught programmes was developed to address all the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 10: Admissions to higher education*, September 2006, with regard to the advice and expertise of the sector-wide Supporting Professionalism in Admissions initiative. The policy clearly states the admissions process, the various roles and responsibilities of the individuals involved and how the University processes international applicants, applicants with disabilities and applicants with criminal convictions. The Postgraduate Research Policy clearly states the procedures for the selection and admission of students to MPhil and PhD programmes.

69   In addition to the policies described above, the University has a Widening Participation and Lifelong Learning Strategy, which is reviewed every three years. The current strategy that covers the period from 2008 until 2011 has an associated action plan, which is reviewed annually against a range of key performance indicators. The strategy derived from the Mission and Vision of the University seeks to raise the aspirations of under-represented groups, break down barriers, recruit students from groups currently under-represented in higher education through a fair admissions system, nurture and support students through to successful course completion, and promote high levels of academic achievement. The University's Key Performance Indicators considered by the Board of Governors in May and July of each year show that the University is meeting or exceeding its targets on widening access.

Student support

70   The University student population comes from a wide variety of backgrounds. Student Services supports the students, where appropriate, with financial help, welfare, counselling, study-skills support, career development and volunteering opportunities. The SWS notes that the current location of Students Services is seen as a problem by the student population. The University has responded to this problem and Student Services had moved to a new purpose-built building on the main campus by the time of the audit visit in May 2009.

71   All students have access to personal tutors for guidance support and advice. In addition, each faculty has academic advisers who can be accessed if required for additional personal learning support. The students who met with the audit team during the briefing and audit visits were happy with the system and how it operated in practice. In addition, the students emphasised the important support role played by the dissertation supervisor in their final year.

72   The University states that it has widening participation, increased access, retention and student achievement at the heart of its mission. In this regard, the Institutional Briefing Paper states that the University meets or exceeds its benchmarks in the percentage of students who come from the state sector, the percentage of students who come from disadvantaged backgrounds and the number of students in receipt of the Disabled Students Allowance.

73   Induction to the University takes place via the Headstart programme. On arrival, students are met by a second or third-year student guide who escorts them through a series of events designed laid on to make the first week informative and enjoyable. The week includes study-skills sessions including assignment planning, academic referencing and presentation skills; sessions relevant to residential students, such as living and working in harmony, student budgeting and part-time working in the locality. There are information sessions to enable the students to become familiar with the University, the support available and the academic requirements of their programmes. Enrolment takes place online prior to students' arrival at the University. During the programme, the students register with the University. This includes receiving the student ID card, IT account details, registering with the Medical Practice and applying for an NUS card. The week concludes on the Friday with a faculty welcome and meetings with staff who will deliver programmes of study. The students who met with the audit team during the audit visit were very supportive of the Headstart programme and had greatly valued the experience. The team concluded that the Headstart programme is a feature of good practice.

74   The University approved a Retention Strategy in 2007. The strategy and its associated actions aim to produce a holistic approach to student retention. Retention is one of the University's Key Performance Indicators derived from the University Strategic Plan 2005-2011. Currently and consistently over the past five years, the retention rates, both for young full-time first-degree entrants and mature full-time first-degree entrants, surpass the University's benchmarks.

75   A study-skills strategy and an associated action plan was approved by the Board of Governors in 2008. The aims of the strategy are to encourage students to care and enthuse about their learning, to instil the ethos of self-directed learning, to support first-year students and to support progression to years two and three. Study-skills coordinators and staff in Careers provide individual support for students. In addition, 55 generic study-skills courses and a further 34 tailored courses to meet the needs of individual subject areas are provided. Students who met with the audit team during the audit visit had a positive experience of study-skills support both in the one-to-one and workshop modes.

76   Employability is one of the University's Key Performance Indicators derived from the University Strategic Plan 2005-2011. The University Employability Strategy, approved by the Board of Governors in 2008, was devised in response to concerns regarding the levels of graduate employment. The strategy aims to assist students to expand and enhance their employability and career management skills, to enable them to make and implement realistic, well-informed decisions about their careers, and to ensure that programme content encourages employability. An Employability Strategic Working Group was set up in January 2009 to monitor the implementation of the strategy.

77   The students who met the audit team during the audit visit had a positive experience of a range of careers advisory support services. However, the students did not seem to understand either the concept or the importance of graduate employability. The team heard from staff that the Employability Strategic Working Group had met, and further that one school was in the process of reshaping its programmes, for example, by including a sandwich element, to improve employability.

78   Since the previous audit in 2005 the University has appointed a Head of Disabilities and Learning Differences, two full-time disability advisers and a part-time mental health adviser. The University Disability Policy was approved by the Board of Governors in 2007. The welfare team provides support for students with personal difficulties, and counselling is provided through students services. The overall context for supporting students is laid out in a University approved document, Supporting Students - Guidelines for Staff. Students who met with the audit team during the audit visit were happy with the welfare support provided and the support for disabled students, with the caveat that disabled access could be improved to some of the University buildings.

79   Personal development planning (PDP) is embedded in the curriculum in some parts of the University and in others students are provided with the resources to undertake their own PDP. Currently PDP is a learning and teaching priority of the University and pilot projects to give the students access to e-portfolios are underway. During the visit, the audit team saw a progress report from a working party which is currently considering the merits of four electronic portfolios with a view to making a recommendation as to which the University should adopt by the summer of 2009. The students who met with the audit team on the briefing and audit visits confirmed that although PDP was not mandatory, it was taken seriously across the University. In addition, they were aware of the University's efforts to develop online portfolios to support the PDP process.

80   Support for international students is also seen as a priority area for the University. In addition to the normal methods of student support, international students have access to the International Students Welfare Group and the English Language Teaching and Support Unit. In 2009, the University plans to open an Internationalisation Centre to lead in internationalisation of the curriculum, and University activities in general. The international student who met with the audit team during the audit visit expressed satisfaction with all aspects of the student experience at the University.

Staff support (icluding staff development)

81   The Institutional Briefing Paper notes that the current Staff Development Policy was revised during 2007-08. Staff development is the responsibility of the Assistant Vice-Chancellor with assistance from the Director of Lifelong Learning and Staff Development and guidance from the Staff Development and Training Group (SDTG). The remit of the SDTG is to identify staff development issues and to guide planning and evaluation of the Staff Development Programme. Deans and Directors produce an annual summary of staff development activity which has been undertaken in their area that includes priorities for the future. This is reported to the University Management Group and reviewed by the Planning and Resources Committee.

82   The University's Staff Development and Review (SDR) scheme was updated in 2007, in particular to enable a more systematic approach to be taken to RKE activity All academic staff have an annual SDR discussion which includes their Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE) activity and their involvement in the collaborative enhancement of teaching, including peer observation of teaching. For academic staff, the Dean of Faculty reviews the written record of the discussion. Staff who met with the audit team during the audit visit were very positive about the process including the support stemming from the process, and in particular the identification and delivery of their training needs. Training in the use of the virtual learning environment was cited by staff as an area where support and encouragement is provided.

83   The Induction Mentoring and Review Scheme for new academic staff includes a comprehensive, centrally organised induction programme delivered by senior members of the University covering all of the University's mission, activities and policies and procedures. In addition new staff are allocated a mentor for their first year of employment, during which they must develop a personal research programme. New members of staff, with little or no experience in higher education, are expected to complete the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education (PCLTHE) within 24 months of their appointment. The audit team

met with recently appointed staff during the audit visit, who confirmed the effectiveness of the processes described above.

84   The audit team concluded that confidence can be placed in the soundness of the University's present and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students.

Section 4: Institutional approach to quality enhancement

Management information - quality enhancement

85   A Learning and Teaching Development Unit was established in 2008 to coordinate, prioritise, and disseminate innovations in learning and teaching. The University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2009-11 has identified four priorities for enhancement, namely; enhancing the student learning experience via academic staff support and learning resources; enhancing the quality of teaching provision by research-informed teaching and e-learning; enhancing the learning process through the provision of a variety of assessment methods with timely and constructive feedback, and enhancing student employability and lifelong learning. During meetings with students and staff, and scrutinising minutes of faculty meetings, the audit team heard and saw evidence that each item was being progressed, and that action against set objectives was being monitored annually.

Good practice

86   The audit team noted the effective work the University is undertaking relating to widening participation in higher education of students who have been in public care. A compact agreement with a local Children's Services Department ensures that these students are given additional individual support from a welfare adviser, accommodation and a financial scholarship in their first year at the University. There are currently 10 undergraduate care leavers and a scholarship is provided to any care leaver progressing to the University. This support for care leavers has been recognised nationally by the award of a Quality Mark from the Frank Buttle Trust. The team agreed that promoting and achieving access to higher education via scholarships for care leavers is a feature of good practice.

Staff developmet and reward

87   The University considers that Learning and Teaching are greatly enhanced by their connection to research and knowledge exchange, as evidenced in annual faculty Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE) reports. It aspires to all academic staff being engaged in Research and/or Knowledge Exchange activity in 2010-11 with measurable outputs. Currently, 81 per cent of staff have peer-reviewed outputs in 2007-08. Students confirmed that they are conscious of the research profiles of the academic staff and were able to cite several examples of how the research activity of staff was positively influencing their undergraduate experience (see also paragraph 60).

88   An example of the enhancement of the quality of the teaching environment, resulting from an advisable recommendation from the previous audit visit, is the Collaborative Enhancement of Teaching Policy, 2008-11, which has focused on the peer observation of teaching that takes place biennially. Academic staff record their individual academic practice and pedagogic needs, which feed into the annual Staff Development and Review (SDR) process. Academic staff confirmed that they understood their responsibilities with regard to the Collaborative Enhancement of Teaching and Peer Observation of Teaching.

89   The development of staff and enhancing the student learning experience is considered vital by the University. The annual SDR process enables workloads to be negotiated, individual staff development needs to be identified and appropriate workshops and training events are provided by the University. The Induction, Mentoring and Review Scheme for New Academic

Staff includes the requirement for all new staff to attend a centrally organised staff-induction programme, the allocation of an experienced colleague as a mentor to provide supportive contact and the development of a personal research programme. The audit team noted that the use of the virtual learning environment by academic staff was both expected and encouraged by the University, in response to the needs of students.

90   Enhancement project outcomes are disseminated at Learning and Teaching and Research Development Days. Research-informed teaching days are posted on the Portal and outcomes are published in an in-house e-journal, entitled Capture, edited by University staff. In addition, the University actively seeks out good practice across the sector to inform its policies, processes and procedures. During meetings with academic staff, the audit team confirmed that staff are aware of the value and relevance of these events. The University is developing its approach to rewarding excellence in learning and teaching.

91   The Winchester Research Apprenticeship Programme (WRAP) was established in April 2009 as a pilot in the Faculty of Arts. It aims to increase staff and student engagement in research-informed teaching, to promote student awareness of, and interest in, research activity, and to strengthen the research culture within the faculty. The scheme proposes a four-week apprenticeship funded by the faculty for students to experience research alongside academics.

Section 5: Collaborative arrangements

92   Currently, a modest part of the academic portfolio is delivered through collaborative provision, categorised as collaborative and validated awards. Collaborative awards are delivered by the University with a partner organisation, using the Winchester quality assurance procedures monitored by a faculty quality committee. On the other hand, validated awards are delivered by a partner, whereby the partner's own quality assurance processes are applied operationally, having been declared fit for purpose by the University.

93   There are currently 19 programmes at 12 partner institutions, of which seven are validated awards and 12 are collaborative awards, totalling 352 students, equivalent to 224.6 full-time equivalent students. This represents 5.9 per cent of the student body.

94   The University has operated an MSc Health Informatics course in collaboration with a University in South Africa. Approval was given by the Senate Academic Standards Committee in March 2006. The first enrolment of 11 students commenced their studies in June 2006 and completed their taught modules in January 2008.

95   The introduction of academic link tutors, as a response to the desirable recommendation of the 2005 QAA audit, has ensured a closer and more effective management of collaborative provision. The Collaborative Provision Committee was introduced in late 2008 as a subcommittee of the Academic Standards Committee, to monitor the quality of the validated programmes. The Regional Programmes Forum provides a staff development opportunity that brings together academic and support staff involved in collaborative provision, and is seen as an appropriate forum for raising awareness of University learning and teaching initiatives.

96   The Director of Regional Academic Programmes has strategic responsibility for the development and enhancement of collaborative provision, and works closely with the faculties, Directors of Professional Services, the Quality Office and partner institutions to plan provision, and enable effective approval and review. The Director chairs the monthly Regional Programmes Group, attended by the Dean of each faculty and minutes are forwarded to the Senate Academic Standards Committee. In 2008, the Senate Academic Standards Committee established a collaborative provision committee to monitor the Collaborative Provision Strategy; this forum includes representatives from partner organisations and the Students' Union.

97   The Collaborative Provision Committee had its inaugural meeting in November 2008 and has subsequently met in February 2009. A consideration of the terms of reference and the minutes of the first two meetings caused the audit team to question the purpose and value of this committee, since it appeared to duplicate existing business. The team formed the view that the oversight of collaborative provision might belong better with the Director of Regional Academic Programmes, rather than with a committee that meets only three times each year. The team also noted that the current Review of the University Committee System was considering the value of this and other University committees (see paragraph 30).

98   For validated awards, the partner institution is responsible for annual monitoring, working with external examiners appointed by the University, and reporting to the University faculty exam boards and the faculty quality committees.

99   The audit team noted one collaborative, work-based learning programme, the FdA Management (Information Technology), in partnership with a regionally based international company offering information technology services. Successful students are awarded an FdA after two years of full-time equivalent study, and a BA (Honours) Business and Management after a further period of one year full-time equivalent study. The company has actively contributed to the development of the programme and encourages the 10 student employees each year to establish their personal development plans. Students attend for one day each week at the Basingstoke Campus and those met by the audit team enjoyed a positive learning experience, with online access to University course materials and staff. They are guaranteed employment with the company for two years after graduation and their career opportunities are enhanced by the course. Information from relevant meetings confirmed to the team the strong nature of this partnership, based on the employer's need for trained graduates and the ability of the University to ensure appropriate academic provision. The team noted the enthusiasm and commitment of those involved with the programme. The team concluded that this collaborative programme is a feature of good practice.

Section 6: Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

100   The University recognises the role of postgraduate research students in creating a vibrant research culture and community, and has mechanisms in place to support both research students and research-active staff. There are currently 65 postgraduate research students and six PhDs were awarded during 2007-08. The Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE) Annual Report details progress against key performance indicators.

101   Academic staff at the University have supervised postgraduate research students since 1992, firstly under the auspices of the CNAA and more recently through an accreditation agreement with the University of Southampton. Research degree awarding powers were granted in 2008 and since then all new research students have registered under University of Winchester regulations. Six PhD awards were conferred during 2007-08.

102   The scrutiny process for research degree awarding powers indicated appropriate and rigorous processes for research degrees. Subsequently, the History Panel for RAE 2008 praised University support for postgraduate research students as 'outstanding'. Of the submitted refereed outputs, 76 per cent were identified as being of international quality.

103   The Review of postgraduate research degree programmes in 2006 stated that 'overall, the institution's ability to secure and enhance the quality and standards of its research degree programme provision was appropriate and satisfactory'. It recommended that further opportunities be made available for postgraduate research student training for higher education teaching and asked how part-time students can engage fully with the research training programme. These matters were addressed by the introduction of a teaching module for postgraduate research

students and blended learning opportunities for part-time students in 2007-08. Postgraduate research students do not teach in their first year of study. In subsequent years, full-time postgraduate research students are permitted to teach up to six hours per week of paid work in undergraduate tutorials and seminars, with an average of two hours undertaken by each.

104   Academic standards are assured through the University's Regulations for Higher Degrees. The responsibility for monitoring and enhancing the quality of postgraduate research student provision resides with the Research Degrees Quality Committee (RDQC). Management of postgraduate research student provision is centralised in the RKE Centre, with overall responsibility resting with the Director of RKE. Information on postgraduate research student progress flows from the faculty RKE committees to the central RKE committee, whose annual report is considered by Senate.

105   The University is developing a culture of research centres, based on a critical mass of staff and postgraduate research students in specific areas, a robust research environment and regular training for new and experienced supervisors. The responsibilities of research students and supervisors are detailed in dedicated handbooks. Further development of the research culture and a growth in postgraduate recruitment is planned following the successful outcome of the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise.

106   The selection, admission and induction of postgraduate research students follow a clear process, with the central role of the supervision team, in accordance with the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes,* September 2004. Supervisory teams consist of a Director of Studies, supervisor(s) and a specialist adviser, if appropriate. A maximum of five supervisions for each member of staff is permitted.

107   Independently completed annual progress reports by the student and the Director of Studies, with an agreed action plan, are submitted to the RKE Centre and scrutinised by the Research Degrees Quality Committee. The transfer process from MPhil to PhD provides a further opportunity for the review of student progress via the submission of specimen chapters and a viva voce examination. Assessments are organised by the RKE Centre and it is the responsibility of the Research Degrees Quality Committee to make arrangements for the examination. The final viva voce examination is overseen by an independent chair.

108   Postgraduate student feedback is in annual progress reports, through student representation on faculty RKE committees and via the postgraduate student satisfaction survey. The Research Degrees Quality Committee produces an annual action plan posted on the Portal.

109   The University's Complaints Handling Policy includes complaints from postgraduate students. Cases are monitored annually by the Research Degrees Quality Committee and reported in the Postgraduate Research Enhancement Review and Action Plan.

110   A distinctive and mandatory Research Training Programme is offered to postgraduate research students, which fulfils the expectations of precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes,* September 2004, the Arts and Humanities and other research councils. The programme is delivered in a blended learning format over two years and is accredited and graded at level 7. Two compulsory modules, The Researchers' Toolkit and Originality in Research are followed by a choice of either Knowledge Transfer or Introduction to Teaching in Higher Education, with each module weighted at 20 credits. Students who successfully complete the programme are awarded a Postgraduate Certificate in Research Skills. The Faculty of Education monitors the programme and reports are submitted to the Research Degrees Quality Committee, with action points highlighted for the following year. This programme is accompanied by a process of compulsory training for research supervisors that includes a multiple-choice, online assessment of their understanding of the University of Winchester regulations and the *Code of practice, Section 1*. The audit team is confident that, in this way, the University is laying the foundations for the success of postgraduate research students in the future.

111   The University of Winchester has used Quality Related (QR) and capability funding from the Research Assessment Exercise 2001, internal funds, and awards from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) to develop its postgraduate research programme. In 2007-08, the AHRC capped Winchester's application to five awards. At postgraduate level, the compulsory Research Training Programme contains modules that directly address the AHRC/Research Councils skills requirements for postgraduate research students. Particular attention is paid to critical thinking and originality of research. The audit team concurred that the University's blended learning research training programme offered to postgraduate research students, which meets the expectations of the *Code of practice, Section 1*, and fulfils the requirements of the Arts and Humanities and other research councils, is a feature of good practice.

112   In meetings with the audit team, academic staff were unaware of the national Postgraduate Research Experience Survey and the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. Neither had been included in the online assessment of research supervisors and nor had there been an annual report of external examiner comments following the viva voce examinations of postgraduate research students. A document tabled during the audit visit indicated that the University intended to participate in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey in the future, while the Concordat, although listed as a key driver in the paper, Towards a Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Post RAE 2008 (dated 18 November 2008), was not included in the accompanying action plan.

113   The University is encouraged to consider further external benchmarking of its postgraduate research degree provision, for example, by participating in the national Postgraduate Research Experience Survey, organised by the Higher Education Academy, and by implementing the outcomes of the Research Councils UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. Furthermore, an annual overview of external examiner comments following the examination of postgraduate research students could become a valuable addition to the enhancement of research degree programmes. The audit team agreed that it is desirable the University considers further external benchmarking of postgraduate research degrees provision, for example, by implementing the Research Councils UK Concordat, and through institutional overview of external examiners' comments relating to research degree examinations.

Section 7: Published information

114   The University's website provides public access to a wide range of published material in a user-friendly and attractive format. This includes: the Mission Statement; the Strategic Plan; the Quality and Enhancement Handbook; the Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy; programme specifications; regulations for undergraduate and postgraduate awards; the minutes of the meetings of major committees and links to employers.

115   Published information for staff, students, prospective students and members of the public is managed by means of the University's External Publications and Communications Policy, which was last revised in January 2009. Four levels of editorial control are identified, with accompanying examples to illustrate their application. The Policy advises staff of the legal obligations of the University and makes it clear that the publication or communication of any University management information is subject to prior approval by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

116   Arrangements with collaborative partners in respect of published material are governed by the External Publications and Communications Policy and the Protocol for Publicity and Marketing of Collaborative Provision, and incorporated within each Memorandum of Agreement. The Collaborative Provision Committee and the Regional Forum consider general issues concerning published information, as required. For example, the inaugural meetings of the Collaborative Provision Committee dealt explicitly with this issue in relation to the *Code of practice* and the approval of the University's Protocol.

117   The audit team noted that the arrangements by which collaborative partners are required to secure approval of published material are not described consistently in the University's documentation. The Institutional Briefing Paper states that material must be sent to the University's Quality Office and Student Recruitment and Marketing for approval. Some memoranda of agreement state that the marketing offices of the University and the collaborative partner institution reach a joint decision to approve, while others state that materials will be jointly approved by the University and the partner without any further specification in relation to process and personnel. The protocol states that draft information is to be submitted to the Quality Office, which then coordinates the process of approval. The External Publications and Communications Policy states that material produced by collaborative partners should be subject to scrutiny at level 2, which entails gaining approval by the relevant dean and being subject to central review by the Information Provision Working Group. Discussions with staff did not clarify this matter. The team formed the view that material generated by collaborative partners is not published without approval by the University, but that there is a mismatch between operational practices and the documentation which should guide such practices. The team was of the view that the University may wish to consider addressing this variation of practice.

118   The Information Provision Working Group comprises relevant managers from Professional Services and is responsible for monitoring the University's submission to Unistats, reviewing published information, considering associated processes and procedures and taking appropriate action to enhance the quality of published information. The Group, which has met twice a year in recent years, conducts its business, in respect of reviewing published information, with appropriate reference to the levels of editorial control specified in the External Publications and Communications Policy. There was no evidence in the minutes of these meetings, however, to indicate that the Group was monitoring the University's submission to Unistats. The minutes of 19 September 2008 note, to the contrary, that responsibility for Teaching Quality Information (sic) does not sit with this Group. The audit team would encourage the University to clarify the role of the Group in this respect. Primary responsibility for signing off the preview data for Unistats lies with the Planning Officer and the Director of Finance.

119   QAA's Institutional audit report of 2005 advised the University College to give priority to ensuring that its data processes were fit for purpose, appropriately targeted and consistently used, both centrally and across the schools, to support its learning and teaching strategy. The audit team saw evidence that significant improvements have been made in respect of both the quantity of data and the quality of data analysis since the last audit. Data from the National Student Survey, the University Student Satisfaction Survey and Unistats are presented in the Annual Statement on the Quality of Taught Programmes to Academic Standards Committee and Senate and disseminated to faculties, academic departments and programmes. The accompanying data analyses consider data on recruitment, applications and enrolment, results appeals and employability, together with retention and student satisfaction against key University performance indicators. The University uses comparative data from Unistats to benchmark the University's standing against regional/similar providers, both institutionally and, where possible, at subject level. The team was interested to hear about proposals to bring forward to the first semester the production of statistical material for quantitative analysis, better to inform qualitative analysis within annual programme monitoring.

120   Students confirmed that the information provided to them as prospective applicants was accurate, informative and helpful. In particular they regarded the quality of teaching staff as an important element in making the University attractive as a place to study. In making their applications, students had been very aware of staff research profiles and the way in which research underpins learning and teaching. On arrival, their expectations had been met. Several examples of the ways in which research has had a direct impact on the undergraduate student experience were cited to the audit team (see also paragraph 60). The audit team noted that students were equally content with the published information they receive as learners. Students indicated that they had clear and accurate information about their modules and programmes,

and would know how to access information about quality assurance processes such as complaints or appeals as, and when, the need arose.

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