

# University of Exeter

**November 2007**

## **Annex to the report**

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## Introduction

A team of auditors from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visited the University of Exeter (the University) from 12 to 16 November 2007 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 is that:

- confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the academic standards of the awards that it offers
- confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students.

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.

### Institutional approach to quality enhancement

The University's current investment in quality enhancement is strongly influenced by the strategic agenda outlined by the Vice-Chancellor in 2004, 'Imagining the future', and subsequently implemented through a management and administrative reorganisation. Current University objectives to improve the University's performance in both teaching and research are expressed in the Strategic Plan, with more detailed consideration of goals, actions and performance indicators developed in separate Research and Education strategies.

### Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

Research degree programmes at Exeter were subject to review by QAA in July 2006, which noted that Exeter regulations and codes of practice in relation to research degree programmes were fully aligned with the *Code of practice for the assessment of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice), Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*, published by QAA in September 2004.

In considering the University's management of its research degree programmes, the audit team noted that this is automatically subject to oversight as part of the University research strategy. The audit team concurred with the earlier research degree programmes review that the institutional framework for managing the standards and quality of research degree programmes is satisfactory.

### Published information

Overall, the University publishes clear and accessible information for its students both in printed form and on its website.

The audit team looked at examples of programme specifications for both collaborative and non-collaborative provision and found them to be detailed and useful. The intended learning outcomes are measured against subject benchmark statements published by QAA and *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)* and these are shown in the programme specifications.

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 use of risk alerts to provide an independent check on programme performance and enhance the effectiveness of annual programme monitoring (paragraph 79)
- the involvement of students in all aspects of quality assurance, and the consultation of the student body in the development of the academic and social environment (paragraph 113)
- the enhancement of student services within schools through the identification of needs, and targeting and focusing of delivery (paragraph 155)
- the strategic approach to quality enhancement, which is facilitated by transparent planning informed by the use of key performance indicators at institutional and School level, and underwritten by University investment (paragraph 165)
- the commitment to achieving high staff performance through systematic investment in professional development, career progression and reward (paragraph 174).

## Recommendations for action

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

Recommendations for action the team considers advisable:

- ensure that reviews of all partnership agreements are undertaken on a regular basis (paragraph 214).

Recommendations for action the team considers desirable:

- review the application of the University's marking and assessment strategies with a view to ensuring comparability of practice across all schools (paragraph 72)
- provide, in the University's Teaching Quality Assurance Manual, a clear description of the duties of the individual in a partner organisation who takes primary responsibility for a collaborative programme (paragraph 207)
- ensure that the University's development of its personal tutoring provision encompasses postgraduate taught students (paragraph 225).

## Section 1: Introduction and background

### The institution and its mission

1 The current institutional title and degree awarding powers were granted in 1955.

2 Since its incorporation, the University has expanded to accommodate over 14,000 students. About 3,200 are postgraduate and 1,800 are international students. At the time of the audit, the University occupied three main sites: the Streatham and St Luke's Campuses in Exeter, and the Tremough Campus near Falmouth in Cornwall.

3 The University comprises two Faculties, Undergraduate and Postgraduate, each led by a dean, and 11 academic schools.

4 The University's mission, set out in the Strategic Plan, '...helps to shape the future by extending the boundaries of knowledge for the benefit of individuals, society and the environment'. Its vision, '...is to be a leading international University, recognised for the high quality of our research and the distinctive student experience we offer'.

5 The Strategic Plan provides the strategic direction of the University's activities and informs the allocation of resources. It summarises the core strategies for research, student experience, external affairs and sustainability, with supporting sections on governance and management and key performance indicators.

### **The information base for the audit**

6 The University provided the audit team with a Briefing Paper and access to a wide range of internal and published documents, many of which were available on the intranet. The University also provided the team with audit trails of two recent programme-level reviews including all submitted documentation, the minutes of meetings and consideration by relevant committees and the resultant actions. The team was granted access to the intranet during the briefing and audit visits. In addition, the audit team had access to:

- the report of the previous institutional audit of 2003
- reports of reviews by QAA at the subject level since the previous institutional audit
- reports produced by other relevant bodies (for example, Ofsted and professional, statutory or regulatory bodies)
- the institution's internal documents
- the notes of audit team meetings with staff and students
- research degree programmes report.

7 The audit team was particularly grateful to representatives of the Student Guild who produced a student written submission. The student written submission set out the students' views on the accuracy of information provided to them, the experience of students as learners and their role in quality management.

### **Developments since the last audit**

8 The University has introduced a number of changes since 2003 in its organisation and management... 'to improve efficiency and accountability and to strengthen its capacity to respond effectively to the key strategic challenges identified in the Vice-Chancellor's paper "Imagining the Future"'.

9 The University responded positively to the recommendations contained in its previous institutional audit report, published four years ago.

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

10 The Briefing Paper describes the underlying framework developed by the University as one in which there is:

- a fundamental distinction between standards (seen as absolute) and quality (seen as relative)
- a concern for balance between central and local responsibility
- devolution of day-to-day responsibility for quality and standards to schools while maintaining central oversight and requiring schools to comply with policies, procedures and codes of practice
- focusing of central oversight on the monitoring of outcomes rather than the audit of process
- a strong emphasis on student involvement.

11 Policies and procedures are codified in regulations, the University calendar and University codes of practice. The sum of the University codes of practice form the Teaching Quality Assurance Manual.

12 The academic senior management of the University comprises the Vice-Chancellor and four deputy vice-chancellors, three of whom have a functional responsibility as well as oversight of a group of schools. In the interests of impartiality, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Resources does not have a line-management brief. The Vice-Chancellor, deputy vice-chancellors, Registrar, Secretary and heads of key professional services make up the Vice-Chancellor's Executive Group. This group is augmented on a monthly basis by the deans of the two faculties and heads of schools who are also members of the Senior Management Group.

13 Academic standards are ultimately the responsibility of Senate which formally awards degrees. Senate delegates extensive responsibilities for academic standards to the Vice-Chancellor and the deputy vice-chancellors, in particular the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education, faculty boards and the University Education Committee. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education and the University Education Committee work with faculties and schools. Support for managing academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities is provided centrally and to schools by Academic Services. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education is also advised by an informal Quality Strategy Group with representation from a wide range of internal stakeholders, including students.

14 Externality in defining and managing academic standards is provided by external examiners and the involvement of external assessors in programme approval and periodic review.

15 Programmes are managed within a matrix structure. On one dimension are the faculties with overarching responsibilities for common policies and standards across undergraduate and postgraduate degrees: on the other dimension discipline-based schools and departments are responsible for the design, delivery and assessment of courses. Faculty boards have day-to-day responsibility for managing the security of academic standards including programme approval and withdrawal, which is managed through the Programme Accreditation Committee; annual programme monitoring by schools; the scrutiny of external examiners' reports; and periodic subject review reports. The Management Information Working Party which is a joint body between the two faculties plays a central role in the management of these processes. Faculties approve the membership of examination boards.

16 The Education Strategy is at the heart of managing quality of learning opportunities. Central oversight is maintained by the University Education Committee chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education. Faculty boards play a key role as do schools. While the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education is responsible for all aspects of learning and teaching including quality assurance, faculty boards are responsible for the operational aspects of learning and teaching. Schools are responsible for the day-to-day management of the quality of learning which is overseen by the University through the annual programme monitoring process. School strategy is provided by the School Planning Group through the School Education Plans which are produced each year. This is part of the annual planning cycle and allows articulation with strategic University objectives and resource planning, as well as providing a means for identifying and disseminating good practice. The Briefing Paper identifies a number of problems with the school-level planning process in terms of lack of alignment with other processes, lack of clear targets and limited evaluation, all of which reduce its effectiveness. A review of the process is planned.

17 Schools vary in structure but all have formal management structures including committees focusing on learning and teaching. Staff/student liaison committees play an important role in identifying problems in the quality of provision from the student perspective.

18 Reorganisation of the support for managing and enhancing quality of learning opportunities through Academic Services has taken place in order to improve coordination and support to schools. Of particular relevance to the management of quality of learning opportunities are the Education Enhancement Unit and the Student Experience section. Schools now have school managers. This role, which has been created at a senior level, supports heads of schools in planning and in managing support services. School managers also have a role in ensuring that quality assurance processes are carried out effectively.

19 Collaborative arrangements, except for joint institutional provision, are managed through the same structures as the University's direct provision with appropriate variations to take account of the particular nature of collaborative provision. The Collaborative Provision Sub-Committee of the University Education Committee is responsible for overseeing the quality assurance of validated provision. Joint provision is managed by a joint board responsible to the constituent partners.

20 Research degrees are within the remit of the Board of the Faculty of Postgraduate Studies which is responsible for managing their standards and quality on behalf of Senate. University oversight of school processes for research students is through annual monitoring of research students' progress and periodic review of research degree provision. The University is currently extending processes such as annual monitoring and periodic review to research degree programmes.

21 The audit team formed the view that the University's framework for managing academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities is robust and effective. The institutional audit in 2003 recommended that it would be desirable for the University to give further consideration to the balance between a light touch approach to oversight and staff engagement in the then new processes for approval, monitoring and review. The audit team had the opportunity to meet with staff at all levels in the institution and found them to be well informed and engaged in quality assurance processes.

22 The University's framework for managing academic quality and standards combines extensive delegation to schools with strong vertical links and central oversight by key committees and senior staff. The matrix structure of faculties and schools provides assurance of consistency in standards and programme provision across the University. The school level planning process ensures that school level activity aligns with the strategies and priorities of the University as a whole.

23 The University reorganised its management through the development of professional and support services at both central and school level. The University also streamlined its governance in particular through the creation of joint Council/Senate committees. This approach is now being developed further into a 'dual assurance' model of management whereby joint committees are replaced by executive responsibility. Dual assurance involves the transfer of committee responsibilities to a senior University manager, such as a Deputy Vice-Chancellor, who discharges their role in consultation with a lay member of Council. Where dual assurance includes specific projects 'task and finish' groups are set up to involve a wider group of stakeholders including, where appropriate, students.

24 So far 13 areas including resources, external relations, information services, research, and equality and diversity have been made subject to dual assurance. In time the system may be extended to other areas and to school-level decision-making. It is not yet possible to evaluate the impact of this new model of governance. The University will wish to review working of the new system, in particular its impact on staff engagement, internal communications and accountability.

## **Section 2: Institutional management of academic standards**

### **Approval, monitoring and review of award standards**

25 The primary means by which the University defines the academic standards of its awards involves the specification of programmes and modules and the articulation of levels of study with associated learning outcomes and assessment criteria. The University assures itself of the appropriateness of its standards through the use of external scrutiny of programme proposals and student assessment, particularly through the work of the external examiners. The maintenance of standards is monitored through annual and periodic monitoring and the work of central committees and senior managers.

26 The approval system is set out in a University Code of Practice. A two-stage approval process is in place. Approval in principle is based on a business case signed off by the relevant deputy vice-chancellor, school head and school committees. Detailed approval is given by the Programme Accreditation Committee based on programme and module specifications and academic coherence. External advisers are involved at the second stage. Programmes on the Cornwall Campus are additionally considered by the Cornwall Campus Academic Group and Combined Universities in Cornwall Academic Planning Group. Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry approval is via the Joint Approval and Review Board. The central marketing function and school marketing managers provide advice on design and market research. There is a formal process for withdrawal of programmes which requires schools to specify arrangements for existing students.

27 New modules are approved by the Programme Accreditation Committee using a one-stage process. Schools are able to make minor amendments to programmes and modules within carefully defined guidance and the delegation framework.

28 Module leaders generate annual module monitoring reports using student feedback, outcome and progression statistics, external examiners reports, and where appropriate, public, statutory and regulatory bodies' (PSRB) reports. The reports are checked by the School Manager for completeness.

29 Monitoring is seen as an ongoing process that is visited annually in a coordinated way. Schools are responsible for annual monitoring with some central input and oversight. Operational responsibility is primarily at school level; the University's main concerns focus on programme performance rather than process issues. Programme teams, or where appropriate clusters of teams, are expected to meet annually to discuss internal and external feedback and to review programmes against key performance data. This meeting is known as the programme review meeting. Internal feedback includes 'risk alerts' generated by the faculties on the basis of statistical analysis of programme data undertaken by the Planning Services. Further discussion of the system of risk alerts can be found below.

30 The programme director is responsible for writing the annual report which is in the format of a standard form. The forms for all programmes within a school, together with the minutes of programme review meetings, are then discussed at school level. This discussion takes place in the school audit meeting, or the school programme cluster review meeting, although in reality this may be a special meeting of a committee such as the School Teaching Committee. Students are present and the meeting is chaired by a senior member of staff independent of the annual monitoring process.

31 Schools report the outcome of this review to faculties on another standard form which identifies programmes considered satisfactory and those considered at risk. The latter must provide plans detailing responses to issues emerging from monitoring and risk alerts, that is to say performance issues, identified centrally from internal and external data. These forms go to the Management Information Working Party which reports outcomes to the University Education Committee. The timing and issuing of risk alerts is being modified to improve effectiveness. The University is considering whether to extend the process to research degree programmes but no final decision has yet been taken.

32 The annual monitoring system is used in collaborative provision with one or two variations, for example the risk alert system, does not apply.

33 The institutional audit carried out in 2003 recommended that it would be desirable for the periodic review system to include a specific decision on the continuation of programmes. A new system of periodic subject review, detailed in a University Code of Practice, has subsequently been introduced with a first pilot in 2005-06. It involves a subject-based review of provision to check quality and standards on a four-year cycle. The process is thorough, utilising a broad database and an overarching reflective document prepared by the subject area. The review panel meets on two



occasions, first in a pre-review meeting, then during a two-day review event. A member of the Education Enhancement Unit is a member of the panel and provides advice and ensures the dissemination of any good practice identified in the review. The panel also involves both 'internal externals', student representation and an external assessor who is responsible for commenting on the continuing validity of programmes. Reports, school responses and action plans go to faculties and the University Education Committee. A 15-month follow-up report is required.

34 The new system is to be reviewed in 2007-08. A pilot has also taken place which included research degrees in the subject area. This was seen by the University to be broadly successful and the 2007-08 review will look to extending this system with suitable adjustments. Collaborative provision, except some validated provision, involves the same system.

35 The audit team was able to read a range of validation and review documents and formed the view that the processes of approval, monitoring and review were thorough and robust. The University has clear definitions of its award standards which are widely disseminated and employs both internal and external checks on their application in the course of programme approval, annual monitoring and periodic review. External advice and student involvement are notable features of the approval, monitoring and review processes. A particular strength of the annual review process is the system of oversight which focuses on checking that problems have been addressed rather than on conformity with process.

### External examiners

36 The University states that it recognises external examiners as one of the principal safeguards of academic standards. They are responsible to Senate for ensuring both the maintenance and external equivalence of standards and the alignment of courses with subject benchmark statements and programme specifications.

37 The detailed roles and responsibilities of external examiners are laid out in the University's Code of Practice which states that external examiners should undertake the following:

- ensure that each candidate is treated fairly
- ensure that academic standards are applied evenly
- compare the performance of students on the degree with students on comparable programmes elsewhere
- satisfy themselves of the fairness of the examination requirements in relation to the syllabus
- approve the form and content of examination papers
- satisfy themselves of the appropriate form and content of coursework that contributes to final assessment
- provide comment on proposed changes in assessment.

38 The University's Code of Practice describes the rights of the external examiner to information and their powers and authority within the assessment process, as well as duties with respect to commenting on assessment processes and attending assessment boards.

39 Criteria for appointment, period of appointment and the circumstances under which an external examiner's appointment may be terminated are laid down in the University's Code of Practice. The criteria reflect the *Code of practice*, published by QAA. Nominations are made to the relevant dean who approves the appointment and reports their decision to the Faculty Board: this process is intended to promote consistency across the institution and central knowledge.

40 The University's Code of Practice specifies the documentation that should be provided to external examiners on their appointment. The University has created a handbook for external examiners which is available electronically and provides examiners with details of relevant policies, and procedures and summary reports for previous years. Local briefing in the form of a visit is encouraged.

41 External examiners are required to make an annual report on a standard form. The report is addressed to the Vice-Chancellor and is read and processed by the Quality Review Services Office and the relevant dean. This process applies in both direct and collaborative provision. Examiners are also able to send a confidential report to the Vice-Chancellor should they so wish. Following the removal of the requirement to publish qualitative data on the Teaching Quality Information website, the University decided to share external examiners' reports in full with student representatives. Reports are required within four weeks of the main meeting of the Board of Examiners. A procedure also exists for external examiners on taught postgraduate programmes to file an interim report ahead of the final board identifying any issues that the University needs to consider before the beginning of the next academic year.

42 In addition to commenting on assessment matters and the comparability of standards in their reports, external examiners are also asked to comment on the delivery of the programmes from a teaching and learning point of view including:

- the fit between the structure and content of the programme and its learning outcomes
- whether the aims of the programmes meet national benchmarks
- whether the learning outcomes in the programme specification have been met.

43 The University has special reporting requirements for externals involved in moderating clinical and work placements and for the University's Postgraduate Certificate in Education, reflecting the particular requirements of these courses.

44 Reports for internal programmes are sent to school heads for consideration and action. Reports for collaborative provision are sent to a nominee of the partner institution and the relevant University coordinator. Where issues requiring a specific response are identified, the Vice-Chancellor will request a formal response from the appropriate head of school, of a partner institution or head of a professional service. School and partner institutions are expected to discuss reports and issues raised at staff meetings, student/staff liaison committees and local teaching and learning committees, and to send a response to the Vice-Chancellor within a prescribed time-limit. The University's Code of Practice states that once the consideration of matters raised in external examiners' reports has been closed internally, the head of school is responsible for sending copies of the school's response and relevant correspondence with the University to the external examiner. The audit team noted that the practice of writing to external examiners in this way varied between schools. However, the previous year's report and the school or partner institution's response form an agenda item at the next annual meeting of the relevant board of examiners, which ensures that externals know whether their comments have been considered and acted upon.

45 The Quality Review Services Office is responsible for monitoring responses to externals' reports. It prepares tables showing areas of concern, and an annual report on the external examining process and the issues that have been raised. This report is sent to faculty boards and the University Education Committee and, if appropriate, the Research Committee. Examples of good practice noted in external examiners' reports are disseminated by the Academic Support team through discussions with schools and periodic review.

46 The University identified weaknesses in its system including duplication of effort, lack of synchronisation with other quality processes, and the lack of a single system which can work for all degrees. A new system for considering external examiners reports has been developed which was piloted for reports relating to the academic year 2006-07. Under this system reports will continue to be received centrally, where the issues raised by external examiners will be classified according to their significance and urgency. Reports will be processed in different ways according to the grade assigned. Addressing minor issues will be delegated to schools and oversight will be through the periodic review system. More serious issues will be reported to the Management and Information Working Party which will handle the matter through the risk alert system and the annual monitoring process. The University has identified that the new system could involve a loss

of central oversight and supervision. The audit team concurred with the importance of considering such matters in the evaluation of the pilots and development of the new system.

47 The same procedures for external examining generally apply to both on-campus and collaborative provision. The exception is the Joint Approval and Review Board which manages the processes in relation to the Peninsular College of Medicine and Dentistry.

48 Where the same programme is offered in multiple locations the same external examiner is used to ensure consistency. External examiners for collaborative provision are encouraged to note any matters related to partner institutions on their report form and to raise these at assessment boards.

49 The audit team was able to confirm the University's view that external examiners play a central role in safeguarding the standards of the University's degrees and assisting the University to maintain their quality. The University has clearly defined processes for the appointment of external examiners, for their role in assessment and quality assurance, and for making use of their reports. The audit team confirmed that these new processes operate as intended. The University has identified possible ways of enhancing the current system and is carefully piloting revised processes aimed at increasing the effectiveness of external examiners' reports. The audit team confirmed that the University now makes strong and scrupulous use of external examiners which supports a judgement of confidence in the University's current and future management of the academic standards of its awards.

### **Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points**

50 The University has translated the elements of the Academic Infrastructure into its own codes and frameworks which demonstrate alignment with the *Code of practice*, published by QAA. The University has considered each section of the *Code of practice* as it has been published in order to ensure that its codes are consistent. Faculty boards take a lead role in reviewing compliance with new/revised elements of the Infrastructure.

51 The University has developed a levels and awards framework, based on FHEQ which provides generic descriptors of qualifications and module levels from foundation to doctoral studies. It also lays out the credit requirements for the award of degrees and other qualifications. The framework applies to all students across the University and to collaborative provision in validated institutions.

52 Schools are expected to use subject benchmark statements in the design of curricula and are required to note the relevant benchmark statement on programme specifications. Schools are responsible for amending programme specifications in line with subject benchmarks. External examiners are asked to indicate whether they consider that programme aims are consistent with subject benchmark statements.

53 The Briefing Paper states that programme specifications provide a 'comprehensive statement of the structure and content of academic programmes'. The audit team saw a number of programme specifications and was able to confirm the University's view of their utility. The University has produced a template for programme specifications which is available on the website. The template requires schools to identify the levels of proposed awards, the aims and outcomes of the programme, the methods by which the materials will be delivered and the ways in which they will be assessed.

54 The previous QAA institutional audit noted that the University had limited involvement in the preparation of documentation for PSRB scrutiny. The University has published a Code of Good Practice which details how schools and the University should plan and work together on external reviews. The University Education Committee maintains oversight of the processes involved in meeting the requirements of external bodies for review and responding to reports. In the case of education, the Ofsted Monitoring Committee, which meets annually under the leadership of the Undergraduate Faculty Dean and reports to the University Education

Committee, has been set up to mitigate the risk of an unfavourable inspection report. The University considers its recent Ofsted reports to have been 'very positive'.

55 Similar systems apply to collaborative provision. Programme coordinators play an important role in ensuring that partner institutions are aware of the University's requirements relating to the Academic Infrastructure and relevant external reference points.

56 The University's Teaching Quality Assurance Manual contains various guidelines relating to research degrees such as admissions, supervision, annual monitoring and assessment. These are aligned with the precepts in the *Code of practice, Section 1*.

57 External advisers are used in programme approval and periodic review processes. Advisers are suggested by schools and appointed from a list supplied by the school to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education. In the case of periodic review, the external member is a full member of the panel: more than one external may be appointed where there is a wide spread of subjects involved. In the case of programme approval, external advisers provide a written report on aspects of the design, content, delivery and assessment of the proposed programme.

58 The University states in its Briefing Paper that it is aware of European Standards and Guidelines. Students are provided with a combined Diploma Supplement/Transcript. The Quality Review Services Office, on behalf of the University Education Committee, has a central role in advising faculty boards in consideration of European matters.

59 The University's systems make careful use of the Academic Infrastructure and external reference points in designing and evaluating provision. The audit team noted that staff throughout the University and partner institutions were made aware of the requirements of the FHEQ, the *Code of practice* and subject benchmark statements through the University's own codes and guidance notes. The University reviews its alignment with the Academic Infrastructure and the European framework in a systematic fashion. The team was able to confirm that the University's use of the Academic Infrastructure and external reference points contributes to its effective management of academic standards.

### **Assessment policies and regulations**

60 Key policies and procedures are enshrined in University Codes of Practice which schools are required to adapt and follow locally. Codes of Practice and other guidelines are available on the University's website. Codes cover such areas as assessment criteria, marking, conduct of assessment boards, prizes, appeals, disclosure of marks, and the assessment of students with special needs. These codes are aligned with the relevant sections of the *Code of practice*, published by QAA.

61 Student handbooks are required to contain the University's assessment regulations and to have reference to assessment and marking criteria as well as other procedures as applied at the local level. The University's levels framework sets out the requirements for students to achieve in each of its qualifications and to progress from one level of a degree to the next. Student handbooks are available on the web. Nevertheless, students identify continuing problems with respect to understanding clearly the marking criteria that apply to their work. External examiners receive information on assessment practice in the external examiners' handbook and are asked to confirm in their annual report that regulations are being followed.

62 In 2006, as a response to the outcome of the 2005 National Student Survey, an Assessment and Feedback Strategy Working Party was set up by the Learning and Teaching Committee. The working party developed a strategy and action plan approved by the University Education Committee. The plan is currently in the process of implementation. Actions are required at school, faculty and University level and the plan identifies the processes and groups responsible for the oversight of its implementation.

63 The University's Codes of Practice detail the terms of reference, membership and modus operandi of assessment boards and mitigation committees. External examiners are expected to

be present at final assessment boards. Schools retaining viva voce examinations must publish policies and procedures relating to their conduct.

64 Ultimate responsibility for assessment rests with Senate which delegates responsibility for assessment policies and regulations to faculties. The principal way of the University assuring itself that these processes are working is through comment from the external examiners on the matching of marking to criteria. School learning and teaching committees and student-staff liaison committees also consider assessment issues: minutes of these meetings are available to deans and the Students' Guild.

65 The University seeks to ensure consistency through the use of generic marking criteria (undergraduate) and the degree classification system. The University has generic marking criteria for undergraduate and postgraduate degrees and is in the process of developing model assessment criteria. Schools are required to produce discipline specific versions of the generic marking criteria written in the Teaching Quality Assurance Manual. Compliance is partially checked through the external examiner reports: external examiners are asked to comment on whether marking is appropriate and consistent with marking criteria.

66 All schools are required to have a marking strategy and to reflect the University's policy on double-marking and moderation. Schools should have in place procedures to monitor marking trends and identify any unreliability. The audit team saw examples of locally produced marking strategies which varied in their interpretation of University policies. Staff who met the team noted that some variation reflected discipline differences, whilst other differences reflected local approaches to marking practice.

67 The University has an assessment strategy which incorporates the principles of timeliness and appropriate weight of assessment and is in the process of developing guidelines to facilitate this.

68 Partner institutions are responsible for the conduct of assessment in accordance with the University's assessment regulations and under the guidance of the University's programme coordinator. The programme coordinator chairs the Board of Examiners. Moderation is carried out by the partner institution.

69 The University has published a Code of Practice for the examination of research degrees which covers such matters as the appointment of examiners; submission procedures; arrangements for, and the conduct of, vivas; assessment criteria and permissible outcomes of the examination process. A working party was set up by the Faculty of Postgraduate Studies to review the arrangements for assessing professional doctorates: the working party has completed its review, with changes to regulations for professional doctorates introduced in 2006-07.

70 The University has a comprehensive set of policies for assessment that provides a fair and robust framework for measuring student performance and judging the attainment of standards. Policies and practices are well publicised to both staff and students and both groups that met the auditors stated that they were generally well informed.

71 The University has made a number of recent changes to assessment policies and practices such as the introduction of the undergraduate awards framework, whose impact is not yet fully measurable.

72 The framework for assessment and assessment policies is intended to provide consistency of treatment of students across the University. However, the University relies on schools and individual boards of examiners to implement its assessment and marking policies. In setting policy and guidelines the University has allowed schools freedom to reflect the differences between disciplines. The audit team concluded that, in continuing to address the balance between central regulations and local preference, it would be desirable for the institution to review the application of the University's marking and assessment strategies with a view to ensuring comparability of practice across all schools.

## Management information - statistics

73 The 2003 institutional audit recommended that it would be desirable for the University to improve the accessibility of student data for management information purposes at programme level. Since the audit the University has established a professional Planning Service which supports University planning and review processes and supplies data to external agencies such as the Higher Education Funding Council for England and Higher Education Statistics Agency.

74 Central to the University's approach to management information is the identification of key performance indicators. These include the ranking of Exeter's performance against a sample of competitor higher education institutions, and the comparison of performance of specific programmes against performance across the University. Each key performance indicator is owned by a senior member of staff.

75 The University's Planning Service collects and publishes data on student numbers and characteristics as well as information on progression, non-completions and outcomes using the student record system. Extensive use is made of data from the National Student Survey and the University intends to broaden its databases, for example by collecting further market data. The Planning Service provides both raw data and analysis to University committees and schools. From 2007-08, data for three years will normally be available.

76 Data that is collected and analysed centrally by Planning Services is used as the basis of risk alerts which feed through the annual monitoring process. Risk alerts are issued where a programme's metrics, for example relating to the proportion of First or Upper Second class degrees awarded or student ratings of teaching, lie outside certain boundaries. The risk alert system triggers a process of review at school level and oversight at University level intended to ensure that the reason for the anomaly is investigated and, where appropriate, the underlying causes of the feature are addressed. Staff who met the audit team noted that this system acted as an important safety net in relation to quality and standards by providing an independent internal check on programme performance. The audit team considered that the risk alert system contributed significantly to the effectiveness of the annual monitoring process.

77 Statistical data is provided centrally to underpin periodic review. Faculties are responsible for analysing and reporting on equality and diversity. The University has an equality and diversity manager and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Resources has responsibilities in this area. At school level it is proposed to include equality and diversity monitoring in annual monitoring and to make the area subject to risk alerts.

78 The Planning Service provides briefings for senior management on the achievement of targets. The Planning Service is also responsible for overseeing the annual planning process at both University and school level. Individuals from the Planning Service work closely with particular schools and their planning groups which are responsible for the development of educational plans.

79 The University has developed a central planning service which has the capacity to provide statistical data and analyses to underpin monitoring and reviews processes as well as forward planning and strategy development. The system is structured in ways that facilitate the integration of central and local policy making and planning. The audit team noted the importance of statistical data in policy making and enhancement. The team considered the use of risk alerts to provide an independent check on programme performance and enhance the effectiveness of annual programme monitoring a feature of good practice.

### Section 3: Institutional management of learning opportunities

80 The University produces its own codes and procedures, consistent with the *Code of practice*, published by QAA. Schools are responsible for alignment with benchmark statements. Individual members of staff are not expected to be experts on quality assurance matters and may assume that the University's own codes and procedures have been matched against the *Code of practice*. Faculty boards take the lead in reviewing the University's codes and procedures in the light of revisions to the *Code*, to ensure consistency and identify areas for improvement. Faculty boards receive alignment surveys comparing current practice with the *Code* (for example, alignment survey for postgraduate research programmes, following publication of the revised *Section 1* of the *Code* in 2004). External examiners are explicitly responsible to Senate for ensuring that 'courses comply with benchmarks'. 'Compliance' is also reviewed at periodic subject review by the external assessor. Programme specifications, available to students, make specific reference to 'compliance with subject Benchmark statements'.

81 Example 1: Marking strategy. The Teaching Quality Assurance Manual requires schools to have marking strategies that take account of the mix of approaches detailed in the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*.

82 Example 2: Levels and awards. The University's levels and awards framework, which was revised recently to reflect levels in the Postgraduate Certificate in Education, is designed to comply with benchmark statements, the FHEQ, and European Standards and Guidelines.

83 Documented examples of reference to the *Code of practice* were seen by the audit team, including Collaborative Provision Committee Paper CPC/05/18 - Adherence of University Procedures in QAA Code of Practice: Spring Term 2005 Survey, and Board of the Faculty of Postgraduate Studies Paper FPG/05/02 - QAA Code of Practice: Research degree programmes.

84 Staff from Professional Services maintain contacts with relevant professional bodies and agencies, for example, the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). Senior officers of the University hold appointments on a number of national and regional bodies. For example, the Vice-Chancellor is Chair of the 1994 Group, a member of the National Council for Educational Excellence Board and a member of the Department for Children, Schools and Families Working Group on Post Qualification Applications. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Education is Chair of the 1994 Group's Student Experience Policy Group, a member of the Department for Children, Schools and Families Higher Education Engagement Project Board, Chair of HERDA-South West Health and Social Care Group and a member of HERDA-South West Teaching and Learning Group.

85 The Major review of healthcare programmes, undertaken by QAA in 2006, covered the Doctorate in Clinical and Community Psychology and BSc in Medical Imaging (Diagnostic Radiography). The review expressed confidence in academic and practitioner standards and commended the learning opportunities available.

86 The University's Collaborative Provision Committee considers the Academic Infrastructure and external reference points in relation to the collaborative provision including the *Code of practice*. For example, through scrutiny of documentation, the audit team noted an alignment exercise between the *Code of practice* on collaborative provision with University procedures which was being undertaken by the Collaborative Provision Committee during 2007. Each collaborative and flexible and distributed learning programme had been surveyed against the *Code's* precepts and an action plan developed. The outcome of this process was sent to the Programme Approval Committee with a recommendation that all new programmes should consider the precepts at the approval stage.

## **Programme approval**

87 Programme proposal and design are based on information provided by schools, supported by market research from the Marketing Office and with engagement of internal and external stakeholders. Programme approval is defined in a Code of Practice and is a two-stage process. Initial approval in principle is given by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education, the Head of School and school committees and based on a business case that ensures that the consideration of new programmes is demand-led. Detailed approval is then given by the Programme Accreditation Committee based on programme and module specifications and according to academic coherence. The latter process involves a written report from an external assessor and a detailed, pro forma based assessment of whether school and University quality and resource standards have been met.

88 The University's procedure for programme approval is described in detail in the Teaching Quality Assurance Manual, along with templates and guidance on procedures. The audit team noted that staff involved in the presentation of programmes for approval engaged with Academic Services to ensure that the resource and facility implications of a proposed programme could be met.

89 The University is intending to involve school planning groups more closely in the consideration of new course proposals in order to ensure that new programmes are demand-led and fall within the context of the School Plan. This applies particularly to postgraduate taught programmes: the University has recently reviewed its portfolio of postgraduate taught programmes with a view to ensuring adequate class numbers and maximising income.

90 Programmes on the Cornwall Campus are additionally considered by the Cornwall Campus Academic Group and Combined Universities in Cornwall Academic Planning Group. Approval of programmes at the Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry is given by the Joint Approval and Review Board. Through scrutiny of documentation, the audit team noted that collaborative provision follows the same procedures for programme approval as other programmes within the University.

## **Annual monitoring**

91 The annual monitoring of programmes is a school responsibility, and feeds into periodic subject review. The approach used is decided by the school but there must be a minimum of one meeting of the programme team each year, to review performance and complete Form 1 for school consideration. The audit team reviewed documentary evidence of annual programme reviews and noted that these were based on detailed information obtained at both module and programme level, including summaries of assessed performance, student feedback and external examiner reports.

92 The school submits an action plan and risk analysis to the Faculty on Form 2. The Faculty may identify further risks on the basis of student progression or performance statistics and issue a risk alert, incorporating other data, and feedback to the school. School reports are also digested by the Management Information Working Party for report to the University Education Committee, although in future this role will be carried out by deans. The timing and issuing of risk alerts is being modified to improve effectiveness and the University is considering whether to extend the process to research degree programmes but no final decision has yet been taken. In future, the Faculties will also be responsible for monitoring equality and diversity data, as part of the annual programme monitoring process. The University has identified a possible need for further guidance for schools on the review of research degree programmes.

93 In discussion with the audit team, school staff expressed the view that the risk alert system, although useful as a formal reminder of statistical data, should reinforce information of which they are already aware in the context of annual review. Nevertheless, the University considers this 'risk informed' approach to be a good way of balancing central oversight with local action, and staff appreciated the reassurance that they were able to base their programme and



course decisions on objective performance data. Monitoring is considered to be an ongoing process; responsibility for monitoring is primarily taken at school level so that central oversight is focused on academic performance rather than process.

94 The annual monitoring system is used in collaborative provision but with one or two variations; for example, the risk alert system does not apply and all programmes are reviewed.

### **Periodic review**

95 The University reviews its programme provision and quality management through periodic subject review, which is described in a Code of Practice. It has a schedule of periodic subject reviews to review provision across the institution over a four-year cycle. A new periodic subject review scheme has been in place since 2005-06 and was piloted in Archaeology. The new process makes use of existing documentation and builds on the same information as annual programme monitoring. The University considers this efficient and reports positive responses from staff. The new system is to be reviewed in 2007-08 and may be developed further. The University's intention is to combine undergraduate and postgraduate periodic subject review processes.

96 The periodic subject review panel is chaired by a member of the University Education Committee and includes two academics 'Directors of Teaching', a student representative, an external assessor and a member of the Academic Support team. External assessors are suggested by schools and are appointed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Education; they are specifically tasked with assessing programme validity. The review results in a report to which the school responds by submitting an action plan to the Faculty and the University Education Committee. The school provides the University Education Committee with a progress report at 15 months.

97 Following a desirable recommendation from the previous audit, the University has reviewed its light touch approach to the management of approval, monitoring and review processes. It believes that its policies of local responsibility, minimal upward reporting, reduced administrative burdens on staff and the provision of professional support and guidance remain appropriate. Its goal remains to 'ensure that administrative systems and educational structures are efficient, effective, transparent and enabling'.

98 From examination of documentary evidence relating to programme approval, monitoring and review, and interviews with staff and students, the audit team formed the view that the University's approaches to the evolution of its portfolio of programmes and to the management and maintenance of programme quality were effective and efficient.

99 The audit team examined the evidence presented for an exemplar periodic subject review at a partner college and found a robust system in place. The University uses the same system of periodic review for its collaborative provision as it does for other programmes. The exception is for University College Plymouth St Mark and St John which undertakes its own periodic review. The processes for informing the partner organisation of the outcomes of periodic subject review are effective and there is evidence of comprehensive action planning and progress monitoring of the completion of actions by the University.

### **Management information - feedback from students**

100 The University uses multiple mechanisms to obtain feedback from students. These include standard online course questionnaires, data from the National Student Survey and from its own surveys mirroring the National Student Survey. It carries out marketing surveys of prospective applicants, applicants, decliners and new students. It undertakes its own survey of penultimate year undergraduate and postgraduate master's students and surveyed year one undergraduates for the first time in 2006-07. The University also commissions user surveys of specific support services such as information technology and library. The Projects Office has commissioned undergraduate student lifecycle reviews, geared towards service improvement. The University also takes part in the HEA Postgraduate Research Student Experience survey.

101 Data are collected and analysed centrally and used locally, for example by schools during annual monitoring. Management information is provided by Planning Services and published on a secure website which can be interrogated by schools. The University uses National Student Survey information as key evidence of its performance. National Student Survey outcomes are distilled by Planning Services and used both to disseminate good practice and to work with poorly performing schools to develop an action plan. Feedback on resources is provided for schools and committees in the form of National Student Survey outcomes and internal surveys. The results of internal and external surveys are fed back into business and academic planning cycles. Senior management use University-level information but note any school implications and discuss them with schools. School/subject-level analysis informs school plans and is used by school planning groups.

102 The University has a standardised online feedback mechanism: Module and Course Evaluation. The University considers this approach effective as it gives good response rates. This system is available to both undergraduate and postgraduate students and is accessed via the student portal. The results feed into annual programme monitoring and periodic subject review at school level and into University business reviews through the Projects Office. End-of-semester results are fed into schools' monitoring processes, and some schools also use mid-semester evaluation to permit action before the end of the unit. Actions are discussed at the Student/Staff Liaison Committee. Students may not always receive direct feedback on their comments, although reports from Student/Staff Liaison Committee meetings are widely disseminated.

103 The University 'is committed to delivering a high quality service and encourages its students to tell it where there is cause for concern and a case for improvement'. There is a Code of Practice for handling student complaints and a standard complaints procedure. Professional Services produces an annual summary report of matters on which students have been raising complaints, for consideration by the University/Students' Guild Liaison Group.

104 The University commissions a yearly survey of international students, 'International Student Barometer', to inform the work of the International Student Exchange and Support Office. It has carried out a process review on the international student experience. The International Student Exchange and Support Office looks after international, study abroad and Erasmus students and has been cited as an example of good practice by the Department of Innovation, Universities and Skills.

105 Collaborative programmes in partner organisations involve student representation on the boards of study. Students on collaborative programmes have a personal tutor whose duties are laid down in the student handbook. However, a Student Lifecycle Review at the Streatham and St Luke's Campuses in January 2006 highlighted personal tutoring as an area for improvement. Personal tutoring is an aspect of student support which is being addressed during 2007-08.

106 The University expresses a wish to 'ensure that the University is responsive to the needs and concerns of all its students and staff in producing an educational environment that emphasises health and social well being, consideration to others, tolerance and social diversity'. It acknowledges that its mechanisms for obtaining feedback are evolving and also notes the risk of survey fatigue amongst students (the audit team found no evidence of this in its discussions with students). It is reviewing survey incidence and timing, in order to rationalise and improve effectiveness. Outsourcing is also being considered.

107 From its discussions with undergraduate and postgraduate students and with staff at all levels, the audit team came to the conclusion that the University has a strong culture of engagement with student opinion. It has effective mechanisms in place to obtain, review and act on views and opinions representing the diversity of the student body. Feedback systems operate effectively at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The team also noted, however, that some response tools, such as the survey of year one students, were newly implemented and may need to be further refined.

108 The University places emphasis 'on student representation and involvement in the policy and decision making processes'. Students play a 'key role' in quality management and enhancement. The University's tradition of strong student involvement in committees and consultation was noted at the previous audit. Students are full members of periodic review panels and are involved in audits of collaborative provision. Students sit on all major committees. The Vice-Chancellor and senior staff meet regularly with members of the Students' Guild in the form of a University/Guild Liaison Group. This is a forum which deals with a wide range of social, infrastructural and student well-being matters and leads to the identification of issues for action.

109 The University requires schools to have student/staff liaison committees, as defined in a Code of Practice, whose purpose is to facilitate student participation in improving the quality of learning and teaching, to allow identification and airing of causes of concern, to allow students to contribute to decision-making within the University, to disseminate examples of good practice, and to document the key role played by students in quality assurance and programme development.

110 The Code of Practice sets out terms of reference for student/staff liaison committees and their composition, minimum requirements for the frequency of meetings and agenda items, and obligations for the involvement of the Students' Guild. Schools implement these requirements as they think most appropriate, but the audit team formed the view that student/staff liaison committees were a central feature of staff-student interaction in all schools and an important mechanism for quality assurance. Students chair student/staff liaison committees and receive training from the Guild for this role. The outcomes of Student/Staff Liaison Committee discussions are made known to students by the publication of minutes and through informal mechanisms. Minutes are also read by deans and by the Guild Education Officer.

111 The Students' Guild has a particularly strong role in planning and strategy within the University and provides training for its representatives. It has introduced 'subject chairs', operating at department or equivalent level, who report to the Academic Affairs Committee and liaise with course representatives. Chairs are elected through ballots organised by the Guild. There are similar systems at all campuses and students consider the system to be seamless, with all students having an equal voice. The Students' Guild has appointed a Research and Representation Coordinator to develop and support representation and to provide training for the student/staff liaison committee representatives. The Guild and Faculty have reviewed the operation of student/staff liaison committees, for continuing improvement, for example, in providing secretarial support and adopting standard agendas. Postgraduate students are also well represented on student/staff liaison committees.

112 The audit team observed that the annual programme monitoring documentation at partner institutions produced by the University's programme coordinator included comment on student feedback meetings. Periodic subject review panels involve a student member from the Students' Guild.

113 The audit team found evidence that students play a major role in quality assurance and that strong student representation pervades the culture of the institution, including at strategic and decision-making levels. Student representatives are trained for their role and their views are taken into account at school, campus and University level, in all matters associated with the academic and social environment of the institution. This involvement was praised at the previous audit and, in the team's view, the involvement of students in all aspects of quality assurance, and the consultation of the student body in the development of the academic and social environment continues to be an element of good practice within the University.

## **Links between research or scholarly activity and learning opportunities**

114 The University values and promotes strong links between teaching and research and defines this approach in a Code of Practice. All its programmes must be research-informed and practice must be research-like 'in the way that it encourages students, through enquiry-based learning, to become effective independent learners'. The audit team heard that appointments to academic positions took explicit account of the need for staff to be active in both research and teaching, and both activities are reflected in the University's policy on promotions. The Education Strategy aims to promote high-quality programmes that link research and learning through research-informed teaching and enquiry-based learning, and the University has commissioned a study to identify how key elements of the strategy can be delivered. Programme design and content are naturally influenced by the research and scholarship of the staff that provide and teach on programmes. The University has held two education conferences devoted to research-informed teaching and enquiry-based learning. Staff described these events as valuable and energising and providing good opportunities for networking.

115 The University encourages staff in its partner organisations to be research-active, so that students in those organisations should also experience the University's culture of research-informed teaching. Partners' staff are also invited to education conferences on research-led teaching and other aspects of teaching and learning in higher education and are able to register for higher degrees and take part in development activities at the University.

116 The strong link between teaching and research is considered by the University to be a characteristic feature of what it has to offer. Students value the influence that research has on the teaching that they receive and recognise it as a distinctive feature of the University. The audit team found that the University has a clear view of what it means by 'research-informed teaching'. The team formed the view that the close relationship between research and teaching pervades the University's educational activities and is a characteristic feature of the Exeter student experience.

## **Other modes of study**

117 As a multicampus institution, the University offers e-learning as its principal 'other mode of study' and provides support to staff and students in this area. The e-learning development team within the Educational Enhancement Unit looks after technological aspects of educational provision, including e-learning, distributed video-conferencing, distance learning, blended learning and information and communications technology.

118 In 2006, the University took part in the JISC/HEA Phase 1 Benchmarking project. This highlighted the need for an e-learning strategy, and a working party chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor reported on an e-learning strategy during 2006-07. Following the report, the University intends to set up a working party during 2007-08, once the new head of the Education Enhancement Unit is in post, in early March 2008, to refine the e-learning strategy. There is a current project, funded by JISC/HEA Pathfinder, into the use of intercampus video-conferencing between the Exeter and Cornwall campuses which is relevant to the University's collaborative provision. Learning and teaching and IT facilities are managed centrally by Academic Services. The IT provision was recently reorganised to increase efficiency and customer service. Facilities and management are currently under review. A recently produced Infrastructure Strategy includes refurbishment of parts of the Streatham Campus and redevelopment of library facilities and buildings on the central campus (the Forum). A new Learning Spaces Development Officer has been appointed within the Educational Enhancement Unit who is responsible for promoting and ensuring the effective use of formal and informal learning spaces.

119 The e-Learning Development team 'supports the internal and external face of the Web, the development of distance learning, blended learning and the implementation of information and communications technology with other aspects of teaching and learning'. It supports 'programmes and initiatives that improve communication within schools and aid staff development' and has been working to develop wireless connectivity throughout the University.

120 Where required, the Cornwall Campus is largely integrated with provision at the Streatham Campus through video-conferencing and the MyExeter Portal, or receives equivalent levels of local IT and library service provision. Provision of services at the St Luke's Campus may have been less developed in the past, due to uncertainties over the Campus' future, but these issues have been largely resolved.

121 The University has an electronic system (BART) for the submission, collection and receipting of assessed coursework. This system was developed by one school and is currently being piloted by a further two schools with a view to being rolled out across the University for the next academic year. The purpose of BART is (1) to make this process of submitting coursework efficient and error-free, (2) to provide clear information for students about when assessed work is due, (3) to show clearly for staff and students when work has been submitted, whether it was late, and whether an extension has been granted, and (4) to provide students with evidence that they have submitted coursework. Students generally perceive this to be a reliable system which is fair to all.

122 In the audit team's view, the University has effective communication systems in place to support learning and strives to make its multicampus arrangements work well and responsively. The team considered that the University's approach to the provision, distribution and enhancement of its e-learning facilities was effective and that in general there was equivalence of provision across its campuses.

### **Resources for learning**

123 The University's policy is to 'encourage, support and enable students to develop as active learners, providing them with excellent resources and facilities to do this'. Academic Services is responsible for resource deployment. The Strategy, Performance and Resources Committee plans and allocates learning resources and is advised by the University Education Committee and the Director of Academic Services. Library facilities are managed by Academic Services but with a budget devolved to schools and used according to a formula. Purchasing decisions on printed and electronic resources are delegated to schools within certain constraints such as formulae for purchase of sufficient core textbooks. The library uses performance indicators to assist in managing the learning resources and makes use of an annual user survey (LIBqual Survey). Additional investment for resources is monitored through the business planning process. For example, schools identify the needs they have for additional resources or support from Professional Services who can then highlight this in their own plans.

124 The student written submission indicated general student satisfaction with resources for learning, except for some issues over space for postgraduates. Postgraduate students interviewed by the audit team expressed general satisfaction with the resources provided for them. During meetings with the team, students indicated that information provided on the University website may not always be as up-to-date as they would like.

125 Academic Services has recently undergone a major reorganisation and a change of culture, from service provision to educational enhancement. This approach is now well developed (see below: Student support), for example, by identifying school-based contacts for the promotion of library services, career development and employability, and e-learning.

126 The audit team found that the central management of learning resource provision was closely linked with a policy of working directly with schools, through identified liaison officers and academic staff, to ensure that the central provision was responsive to local needs. The team also saw evidence of significant investment in, and modernisation of, library buildings and services. Overall, the team formed the view that the provision of library and IT services throughout the University was good. Provision was being developed and modernised to take account of new approaches to information handling and changing modes of student learning and patterns of study.

127 Learning resources in a partner organisation are assessed through the audit carried out by the Collaborative Provision Committee during the partnership approval process. The outcome of this audit is included in the report provided for the University Education Committee during the approval of a new partner process. The learning resources are reviewed annually during annual programme monitoring by the programme coordinator and are also considered during periodic subject review. The responsibility for advising schools on the deployment of learning resources lies with the school's Learning and Teaching Committee.

### **Admissions policy**

128 The University has a centralised admissions policy, operated by the Admissions Office and working with school admissions officers according to school policies. University Codes of Practice and policy statements lay out a framework within which admissions must operate. Schools develop their own admissions strategies within centrally agreed target numbers and review their admissions during annual programme monitoring. School policies and entry qualifications are monitored through a Working Party chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Education. In future, equality and diversity data will be monitored by faculties.

129 In response to the previous audit the University has monitored its admission statistics and finds that its proportional intake from state schools and lower socioeconomic groups has risen. It is using bursaries and scholarships to fulfil its strategy of recruiting 'highly talented students from a variety of backgrounds'. The University considers that it has an important role to play within the South-West area in offering higher educational opportunities to under-represented groups; it has established partnerships with some 75 local schools. The University has 'completed a major international partnership agreement to bring more students from around the world to study at Exeter and...opened an office in Dubai'.

130 The University currently considers its rate of recruitment of postgraduate research students to be lower than desirable and is looking at ways of improving this; including using specific investment from the Great Western Research group of South-West-based research organisations. Postgraduate admissions are governed by a Code of Practice and are being centralised. The Taught Programmes Admissions Policy Working Group chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Education sets this aspect of the Education Policy and monitors admissions and entry qualifications. The Graduate School recently reviewed the University's portfolio of postgraduate taught programmes in the light of the University's education strategy (which includes goals for demand-led programmes); it identified weak demand for some current programmes and considered opportunities for improved student numbers and income. It recommended that future provision of taught programmes be demand-led and suggested some rationalisation of provision through the development of inter-school programmes. Further recommendations were made concerning procedures for the ongoing review and revision of current programmes and the identification of new opportunities.

131 In the case of collaborative provision, the responsibilities of the partner regarding the recruitment, selection and admission of students are laid down in the partnership agreement. The admissions policy for the programme must adhere to the entrance requirements of the University and any special cases must be referred to the University. Information on all applications is provided by the partner institution to the University's programme coordinator.

132 Overall, the audit team found that the University has an active approach to enhancing its admissions strategy, based on an awareness of the structures of its student cohorts and its local, national and international position. The University has well developed admissions policies and actively manages and monitors the implementation of these policies at school level.

### **Student support**

133 Students can access a range of support services within schools at University level through Professional Services or through the Students' Guild. Professional staff within Academic Services

have been brought together into two new units to provide more effective support for students: the Educational Enhancement Unit and the Student Experience section.

134 The Educational Enhancement Unit is responsible for learning and teaching support services; it comprises the Academic Support team, the Student Skills team, the e-Learning Development team and a newly-formed Learning Spaces Development Office. It uses a 'hub and spoke' model to promote, enable and deliver enhancement in schools. The Academic Support team aims to enhance learning and teaching for students and staff. It has links with the University's Education Committee and collaborates with schools, Professional Services and the Students' Guild to promote skill development and employability. It runs training courses including work-experience modules for students, the Learning and Teaching in Higher Education programme for junior academic staff and the Induction of Teaching Assistants programme for graduate teaching assistants. The Student Skills team works closely with staff and students to embed skill development at school level. The e-Learning Development team, previously known as Learning and Teaching Support, promotes the use of new technologies in learning and teaching including flexible and distributed learning and mechanisms for online assessment and evaluation.

135 The Student Experience section brings together non-academic support services including the Student Counselling Service, the Disability Resource Centre, the Family Centre and Student Music. The Head of the Student Experience section is responsible for coordinating welfare and support services and works closely with schools, Academic Services and the Educational Enhancement Unit; service managers meet regularly. An example of service development is the ongoing improvement of the personal tutor system (see below). The University states that 'all services have robust and transparent complaints procedures'. Students reported that they find these services to be accessible and useful.

136 Provision of student services in Cornwall is managed jointly with University College Falmouth. The Students' Guild also operates on a joint basis at the Cornwall Campus. The University considers its operation in Cornwall to be equivalent in every way; the Cornwall Campus is not an outpost. Senior staff from Exeter make regular visits to the Cornwall Campus and academic staff based in Cornwall are active in ensuring that resources are adequate for their students and that matters of concern are dealt with rapidly. The audit team were satisfied that the provision of educational services and student support at the Cornwall Campus was managed effectively and comparable to that at the Exeter Campus.

137 The University's principal means of communication with students on academic matters and support services is the student portal 'MyExeter', launched in September 2006. Other channels for communication include an Academic Services booklet for new students and a Student Help website. The latter has been launched this year and contains a brief student information guide, replacing a longer student handbook. Schools also produce their own student information handbooks. Comprehensive and detailed programme specifications are available on the school websites and through a University web page. These detail each programme's structures and requirements, educational aims and intended learning outcomes, and describe how programmes comply with subject benchmark statements and other external reference points. They also detail the support available to students, admission criteria, methods of assessment, indicators of quality and standards and methods by which the latter will be evaluated and improved.

138 The University has a 'well established' student learning skills service which works in partnership with schools and other providers. This provision was reviewed as part of the reorganisation of Academic Services. Schools are responsible for the provision of academic/tutorial guidance. Academic guidance is provided by programme leaders or module tutors or academic group tutorials as appropriate. For postgraduate taught students, the academic tutor is the director of the programme.

139 The assessment and feedback strategy and associated action plan was developed in response to feedback from the first National Student Survey in 2005, and has recently been

approved by the University Education Committee for implementation in each school. There is a Code of Practice on the provision of assessment results and marks. This defines school responsibility for advising, for example, on such matters as plagiarism. Procedures for handling cheating are defined in a Code of Practice and are described in school handbooks. Procedures are currently under review by the Academic Support team and the Academic Policy and Standards Section, including a trial of Turnitin plagiarism detection software and proposed staff training. This is being led by the Academic Support team and piloted this year with three schools. Students generally are aware of plagiarism issues. There is a University-wide policy of permitting a 40 per cent maximum mark for late coursework, which is applied uniformly. Undergraduate and postgraduate taught students expressed general satisfaction with the speed of return of marked coursework and the quality of formative and summative comments which they received.

140 Student induction occurs during welcome week; it is being revised this year to improve the dissemination of relevant information.

141 The University has an International Office which provides pre-arrival information for international students, organises a social and interactive programme during welcome week and maintains an ongoing support service for international students during their period of study. The Office also works with schools, through identified international officers, to ensure that the academic information sent to international students is consistent and up-to-date. The Office obtains feedback from students about the service it provides.

142 The University's employability strategy supports its education strategy. Each school has reviewed its 'employability development' in association with the Careers and Employment Service in the context of the school's Education Plan. Schools undertake an Employability Audit to ensure that the matter is addressed within course design and that there is a developmental dialogue between school careers and employability representatives and key providers including the Careers and Employment Service. The Careers and Employment Service is active in several areas, and works with the Students' Guild as well as with schools. The University envisages that the next iteration of the education strategy may well subsume the employability strategy.

143 The University is currently piloting a personal tutor system for undergraduate students which is delivered by staff in schools to standards set by the University. Other elements of the student support system include resident tutors, the Student's Guild, skills development, IT skills and employability skills, the Careers and Employment Service support for careers and employability, work and volunteering experience, and personal and professional skills including research skills for postgraduate students. Personal development planning systems supported by an electronic tool are available for undergraduate students, supported by tutors, and postgraduate students supported by supervisors, for annual self-appraisal or review.

144 The University's Undergraduate Student Life Cycle and Experience Review of January 2006 identified a need for more consistent provision of tutorial support. Personal tutor support was an area students thought to be the least useful and least well organised. The student written submission noted the unevenness of the tutorial system across the University and this view was confirmed to the audit team by students. The Student Life Cycle Review concluded that 'success in personal tutor provision depends on staff/student ratios, but also on the motivation, training and understanding of the importance of the process on the part of personal tutors'. Student engagement with the process was also considered crucial.

145 As a result of the Review, the University drew up an action plan to improve the provision of pastoral support. This defined a need to monitor both personal tutor performance and student participation, to ensure that staff received proper training for their role and a requirement for resource and technical support for an enhanced approach. It also led to the creation of a central manual for personal tutors (August 2007). Pilot development programmes were established in three schools (Law, Biosciences and Geography). The pilot schools have developed their own approaches to provision, complying with the requirements set out in the action plan and the revised Personal Tutor Manual but adapted for their own circumstances.



146 The audit team viewed documentary evidence of effective developmental activity within the pilot schools and noted significant cross-school communication between the staff involved. The team also found that staff across the University, not just in the pilot schools, were developing and improving the provision of pastoral support.

147 In collaborative provision the partner organisation provides students with a range of student support services which are audited by the University of Exeter during the partnership approval process. In addition to this, students studying at partner institutions have access to some University services and the Students' Guild welfare and social facilities and services. Although there is some reference to the access to services provided at the University, the audit team found that the extent of this provision available to students on collaborative programmes is not made explicit in the student handbook. The University may wish to consider clarifying the scope of University services' availability as described in handbooks for students in collaborative provision.

148 The University describes its aim as to '...empower students to take responsibility for their personal and professional development and enhance their leadership and employability skills, enabling them to become sought after nationally and internationally, whether for further study or employment'. Overall, the audit team formed the view that the University was moving towards the implementation of an effective, institution-wide system of pastoral support, incorporating an active personal tutoring system and supplemented by a range of other support services. Active and creative steps were being taken to ensure a uniform standard of provision across the University. There was evidence that academic staff considered the delivery of pastoral support to be a key element of their role, that appropriate training and guidance in this role was being provided and that links to central support and specialist referral services were well developed.

## **Section 4: Institutional approach to quality enhancement**

149 The University of Exeter's current investment in quality enhancement is strongly influenced by the strategic agenda outlined by the Vice-Chancellor in 2004 'Imagining the future', and subsequently implemented through a management and administrative reorganisation. In meetings with staff, the audit team heard that rationalisation of the schools at Exeter had led to professionalisation of support roles, through aggregation of activity across larger units, and an increasingly structured school planning environment. Since 2004, all schools have appointed school managers who are part of the School Management Team. They provide strategic support to the Head of School and other senior academics in developing executive, strategic, financial, administration and estates policies for their school. School managers have overall responsibility for ensuring that their school adheres fully to University policies and procedures, and complies with both internal and external quality assurance and enhancement requirements. They are also expected to take a leading role in all internal and external quality audits.

150 Senior officers in the University, including the Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Education, lead the University's engagement with external bodies concerned with enhancing learning and teaching, including 1994 group, HEA, JISC and regional bodies. The University states that: 'The University's approach to managing quality enhancement has concentrated on building on and disseminating good practice, and on promoting specific enhancement initiatives across the University'. Central to the University's strategy for learning and teaching enhancement is the recently-established (August 2007) Academic Services section, which merges Information Services, Student Services and the Project Office.

151 Current University objectives to improve its performance in both teaching and research are expressed in the Strategic Plan, with more detailed consideration of individual goals, actions and performance indicators developed in separate University research and education strategies. The Strategic Plan identifies key performance indicators that include measures of student satisfaction, entry standards, retention rates, degree classification and employability, and also monitor spend on student services, capital investment and maintenance of support infrastructure and facilities, which are used to assess whether the University is meeting both specific targets and

its incremental enhancement agenda. Capital investment plans to the year 2020, discussed at a recent meeting of University Council and several meetings of the Strategy, Performance and Resources Committee leading up to this, prioritise improvements in student facilities and learning resources, as a means of underwriting the University's strategic objectives. The audit team identified a variety of examples where the enhancement agenda within the Strategic Plan is being systematically followed through.

152 Example 1: The assessment and feedback strategy and associated action plan was developed in response to feedback from the first National Student Survey in 2005, and has recently been approved by the University Education Committee for implementation in each school.

153 Example 2: The current pilot of personal tutoring in three schools (see above) is a response to a student lifecycle and experience review completed in 2006, which identified personal tutoring as one of the University's least satisfactory services.

154 Example 3: The University's employability strategy 2007-10 identifies five strands of additional activity to be developed jointly by the University and schools, as follows:

- all students to take part in at least some elements of a comprehensive preparation for work scheme
- engage students with employability issues throughout their University career, by communicating a sense of urgency and enthusiasm for graduate level employment or further study
- schools to develop and extend work experience options for their students
- enhance careers activities such as fairs, vacancy information and employment schemes to improve student support in gaining graduate level employment
- benchmarking to achieve 'better than the previous best'.

Corresponding additional resources required to implement these activities have been identified and agreed through the University Education Committee. The audit team concluded that the University is actively concerned about the employability and skill development of its students and that overall both undergraduate and postgraduate students experience good levels of support towards career development.

155 The audit team also concluded that the University has effective mechanisms for directly linking the central provision of enhancement and support services with delivery to staff and students within schools. The team considered the enhancement of student services within schools through the identification of needs, and targeting and focusing of delivery as a feature of good practice.

156 The Management Information Working Party is responsible for reviewing school education plans, and identifying generic issues which should be considered by the University Education Committee. It produces an annual report, summarising generic issues under headings of student recruitment, programme and curriculum development, student learning, student support, employability, and performance review and enhancement; it also identifies innovation and good practice, and gaps in information, under each heading.

157 Each school's education plan is revised annually in accordance with recently revised guidance (see above) to help the school reflect on provision, and develop and enhance it. The University aims to set targets that stretch each school, but as a minimum expects each school to be among the top 20 in its discipline nationally, in line with the University's objective of achieving top 20 institutional status. The plan forms the core of periodic subject review, by providing an iterative record of school progress. The education plan covers both undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision, and also indicates resource implications, for example library, IT, e-learning, estate, as well as increased costs relating to marketing, employability initiatives and

teaching. School Planning Groups review and update education plans on an annual cycle; they are approved by the school deputy vice-chancellor, and then forwarded for consideration by the University Education Committee, for which they are summarised by the Management Information Working Party. The audit team was satisfied that this annual planning process effectively aligned school targets with the institutional strategy, and was well-informed by appropriately detailed key performance indicators and comparative performance data.

158 At school level, each school planning group is responsible for agreeing annual objectives with its Deputy Vice-Chancellor that align with the University's strategy in relation to five different plans: education, research, financial, staffing and external affairs.

159 The University's approach to quality enhancement is extended to its collaborative partners through the Collaborative Provision Committee, which works with partners in the maintenance and enhancement of the quality and standards of University programmes through, for example, the appointment of representatives to partnership boards. The audit team saw evidence, in the minutes and papers, of the Collaborative Provision Committee being actively engaged in enhancing the student experience in collaborative provision through, for example, investigating the library access for students in collaborative programmes and monitoring partners' quality assurance information.

160 As part of its ongoing review of the framework for managing enhancement, a review of the role and membership of the University Education Committee is planned in 2008 as part of a wider review of the management and governance of the education portfolio. The format and process for developing school education plans has itself also been recently reviewed to ensure that they align with both the short and medium-term University education strategy. The school education plan is also intended to form the core of the University's periodic subject review process, by providing an iterative record of school progress over a period of time. The audit team particularly noted the commitment, scale and consistency with which the University is addressing its enhancement agenda through its Strategic Plan.

### **Management information - quality enhancement**

161 Planning Services, in consultation with the Academic Support team, is responsible for analysing and summarising student survey data for consideration by faculty boards and the University Education Committee to inform development of institutional policy, for example the development of the assessment and feedback strategy, and the review of personal tutor systems (both mentioned above). External examiners are also asked to report on examples of good practice.

162 Quantitative and qualitative data are used to support quality enhancement through the annual planning, annual monitoring and periodic subject review processes. About half the 15 key performance indicators relating directly to the quality of the student experience and its enhancement, are identified in the Strategic Plan as the University's primary performance indicators, and are used to benchmark the University at both institutional and discipline or school level against other Universities that are in, or competing for, top 20 status in the United Kingdom.

### **Good practice**

163 School education plans provide an opportunity for each school to identify good practice for wider dissemination. Good practice is then elicited at University level from the annual update process for education plans. These are reviewed by the Management Information Working Party which informs a summary of innovation and good practice under six headings into the University Education Committee. Good practice is also identified from various other sources including external examiners' reports and periodic subject reviews. Good practice is disseminated by the Academic Support team in the Educational Enhancement Unit, which receives the annual Management Information Working Party summary through its representation on the University Education Committee.

164 Established mechanisms for disseminating good practice include departmental away days, workshops, and more formal staff development programmes. In the last two years, one-day education conferences have been run, and a further conference on assessment and feedback is currently being planned for May 2008. A website will shortly be launched to allow staff to submit examples to a planned resource bank of good practice. The audit team was shown descriptions of courses considered to be exemplars of good practice, but at the time of the visit these had not yet been mounted on the good practice website.

165 On the basis of the evidence examined, the audit team formed the view that the school education planning process provided an excellent University-wide strategic enhancement and oversight mechanism. There was strong evidence, cited through the examples above, that incremental annual targets at both school and institutional level are being set and achieved to enhance the University's student experience, as measured using common sector-wide key performance indicators. Where appropriate, there is evidence that targets are underwritten by University investment. The audit team considered that the strategic approach to quality enhancement, which is facilitated by transparent planning informed by the use of key performance indicators at institutional and school level, and underwritten by University investment, is a feature of good practice.

166 Although communication of the enhancement agenda through the planning process is strong, the audit team felt that lateral communication of good practice between schools was less secure. The University's processes for capturing good practice seem to rely largely upon voluntary disclosure by schools, who may be inhibited by reticence or simply assume that their good practice is standard practice, and thus not worth reporting. A light-touch external audit mechanism (for example by the Educational Enhancement Unit) may be advantageous in developing interschool propagation of good practice.

### **Staff development and reward**

167 Staff development activity is managed by the Training and Development Unit within personnel and staff development. The training and development report 2006 from the Training and Development Unit describes and evaluates both internal and external provision, and indicates how this is being further developed. The newly launched learning and development website aggregates information on a range of staff development activities including performance and development review, personal development planning and support, IT skills training, management and leadership training for senior University managers, and training for University graduate teaching assistants.

168 Initial professional development is supported through the University's five-year Professional Development Programme, including registration for the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice in Year 1. There is added incentive by additional increments after three and five years (subject to satisfactory performance). Confirmation of the appointment, and promotion from Lecturer (Grade F) to Senior Lecturer (Grade G), is subject to satisfactory completion of all aspects of the programme. Further promotion to the newly introduced grade of associate professor is an intermediate step towards a full professorship, and is evaluated against a broader set of criteria (including management, leadership and entrepreneurship) than the previous reader grade.

169 The University aims to 'equip staff with appropriate training, support and rewards to provide them with the means to fulfil their goals and ambitions as excellent teachers, researchers and facilitators of learning'. The University has adopted a 'high-performance, high-reward' approach to staff career development, which encourages individual performance that aligns with the University's strategic agenda. In addition to normal incremental progression through a grade, the University is also able to reward performance by means of the University bonus scheme, merit awards and contribution points.

170 The University bonus is conditional upon the University meeting its financial target for the year, and is distributed at a rate of up to 1 per cent of salary to all University employees (subject

to satisfactory performance) after the end of the financial year. Staff whom the audit team met confirmed that a bonus had recently been paid in respect of financial year 2006-07.

171 Merit awards recognise exceptional performance for staff who are currently within the normal range of incremental points of their grade, and are conditional on completion of the annual professional development review process for the relevant period. Merit awards are annual but not recurrent, and therefore represent a bonus for personal achievement over the previous year. Once they reach the top of the normal range for their grade, however, staff can be considered for contribution points (which are recurrent and correspond to promotion onto the discretionary points of a grade), subject to sustaining a consistently higher level of performance than would normally be expected of a competent professional in that grade.

172 The University has expressed concern over its poor rate of success in the National Teaching Fellowship scheme and has set itself a target of increasing its achievement of these and other esteem indicators of teaching quality. A new internal award scheme was being developed to address this and the University has introduced internal financial incentives for excellence in teaching and learning, with public recognition of excellent teachers at graduation ceremonies. It currently has two national Teaching Fellows.

173 The audit team also noted the commitment of the University to the support and development of staff in its collaborative provision. Examples of support included the provision of dedicated training events for collaborative provision, support for staff wishing to register for higher degrees, access to training provided by the staff development unit, and the involvement of the Education Enhancement Unit on the Cornwall Campus. Staff new to teaching at higher education level are encouraged to register for either the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice or the Learning and Teaching in Higher Education programme.

174 Teaching staff whom the audit team met confirmed that, although there had been some initial concerns that the revised gradings within the framework agreement and new incentive schemes might prove divisive, they are now accepted and welcomed. In discussions with academic staff, the team found that staff are generally content with the job grading structure and with the opportunities for personal development and promotion it provides. The team concluded that the commitment to achieving high staff performance through systematic investment in professional development, career progression and reward is a feature of good practice.

## **Section 5: Collaborative arrangements**

175 The University maintains a number of collaborative arrangements with institutions in the South-West region of the UK. The University identifies two types of collaborative arrangements: validation and institutional partnership. In addition to these there is also a joint-venture partnership with INTO University Partnerships, delivering English language and other preparatory programmes to international students, and a campus (Cornwall Campus) shared with University College Falmouth at which University of Exeter awards are delivered and supported by shared student services and infrastructure.

176 As a response to a recommendation of the previous audit, the system for managing collaborative provision has been integrated into the processes for managing the quality and standards of on-campus provision.

### **Validated provision**

177 Validation arrangements leading to University of Exeter awards are provided through the partners discussed below. The management of the largest area of accredited provision, the University College Plymouth St Mark and St John, is about to change as the College has achieved taught degree awarding powers with effect from 2009.

178 The University's Collaborative Provision Quality Assurance Manual has been integrated in the Teaching Quality Assurance Manual. New partners are approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for External Affairs and new partnerships require the support of a corresponding discipline in one of the University's schools. The school takes oversight of the work of the partner which enables the University to control quality assurance. During the institutional visit, the audit team was made aware of one instance where a collaborative programme is not integrated into a school. This is an historical anomaly and the University aims to address this during a future planned approval of a new programme. The team would encourage the University to bring such historical anomalies in line with its normal practice.

179 At the time of the audit, the University was considering offering dual registration to students studying in partner organisations in response to a request made by students on the course board of a collaborative programme. The University was scoping the benefits to students and the implications for the partner institutions and hoped to come to a decision during academic year 2007-08.

180 The auditors found evidence, in the review of the accredited relationship with the University College Plymouth St Mark and St John, that the College has collaborations with Malaysia. Although the College has recently gained degree awarding powers, the University should monitor carefully the involvement of its own awards in any curriculum offer being made by the College to external partners during the period of termination of its relationship with the College.

### **Institutional partnerships**

181 In addition to validated provision, the University also maintains institutional partnerships. The Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry and the Peninsula Allied Health Collaboration lead to joint awards of the participating institutions. Both partnerships are overseen by the University Education Committee and have administrative support provided by the Quality Review Services Office. These partnerships have been initiated at institutional level and have joint institutional structures. At the time of the audit Peninsula Allied Health Collaboration was under review because of a change in two of the partners.

### **Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry**

182 Peninsula Medical School was established in 2000 and the Peninsula Dental School in 2006. The two schools form the Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry. The Peninsula College is a partnership between the University of Exeter and the University of Plymouth. There are two mechanisms of governance involved: the Joint Board of Management and the Joint Approval and Review Board. Regulations and governance are detailed in the University calendar. The operation of this partnership is governed by a Memorandum of Agreement.

183 The Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry is managed by the Joint Board of Management which is a committee of the Council of the University of Exeter and the Board of Governors of the University of Plymouth. The Dean of the Peninsula College reports to both governing bodies. The Board is responsible in the Peninsula College for overall management; strategic development and resources; management accounts and budgets; senior staff appointments, structures, pay and conditions; the education and research profile; and equality and diversity.

184 Within the University of Exeter the Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry is managed by a Deputy Vice-Chancellor in the same way as other schools but it is different from other schools in terms of quality assurance which is managed through the Joint Approval and Review Board. The Joint Approval and Review Board also has responsibility for overseeing the appointment of external examiners and consideration of their reports and the approval of new programmes.

## **Peninsula Allied Health Collaboration**

185 The Peninsula Allied Health Collaboration was formed by the Universities of Exeter and Plymouth, and the University College Plymouth St Mark and St John to provide education for the allied health professions. It is managed by an Advisory Board that reports to the governing bodies of the partner institutions. The Advisory Board ensures that regular consultation is held between the Peninsula Allied Health Collaboration and the Devon and Cornwall National Health Service Workforce Development Confederation and other health bodies as appropriate. The management and governance arrangements are set out in a Memorandum of Agreement dated January 2004. Within the partnership there is a Collaboration Programme Review Board which designates a department or school within one of the partner institutions to take the lead responsibility for each programme.

186 Students graduating from programmes approved by the Collaboration Programme Review Board will be awarded qualifications jointly by all the awarding bodies. Students are registered with the lead institution in which the school which hosts their programme sits. In addition to marketing and promotion, the lead institution is responsible for other aspects of academic administration of the programme, including student records; codes of conduct and disciplinary matters; appeals and complaints; bursaries and hardship funds; and statutory returns.

187 The Memorandum of Agreement sets out the Regulations for Collaboration Programmes of Study which includes information on programme approval and review; general regulations; assessment and awards; and regulations for undergraduate programmes.

188 The University is currently reviewing its involvement in this collaboration, following the granting of degree awarding powers to the University College Plymouth St Mark and St John and the relocation of University of Plymouth's programmes from Exeter to Plymouth.

## **Joint venture: INTO**

189 INTO University of Exeter is a joint venture between University of Exeter and a commercial organisation INTO University Partnerships to provide English language and other preparatory courses for international students. Students in the first intake start their programme in 2007-08. The University has equal rights in running the joint venture and full control over the academic standards and quality of the programmes. INTO is treated as a school of the University, is subject to the University's quality assurance processes, and is represented on the two faculty boards.

190 The audit team were able to see documents relating to the Memorandum of Agreement which set out the duties and responsibilities of each partner but, at the time of the audit, this joint venture was commercially sensitive and information was limited.

## **Cornwall Campus**

191 Combined Universities in Cornwall is a major European Union and UK government funded initiative to expand higher education opportunities in Cornwall and develop the Cornish economy. It involves the principal higher and further education providers in the county. In 2004, the Cornwall Campus (Tremough) was established as a hub of activity for Combined Universities in Cornwall, and is a collaborative initiative between the University of Exeter and University College Falmouth. The University of Exeter's involvement with Combined Universities in Cornwall is solely through the Cornwall Campus where it offers undergraduate programmes in biosciences, English, geography and earth resources, history, politics, law, and Cornish studies, and taught master's programmes in ecology, conservation, earth resources, geography, English, and Cornish studies. A small number of postgraduate research students are based at the Cornwall Campus (Tremough).

192 The programmes are managed through the host schools and coordinated by an academic member of staff appointed from among the schools represented on the campus. The auditors found a commitment by academic staff and managers to monitoring the quality of provision on the Tremough Campus to ensure students an equivalent experience to that offered in Exeter.

193 The University manages the provision through the Cornwall Campus Management Group which reports to the Strategy, Performance and Resources Committee. Its remit includes the provision of advice to the Committee on University strategy in Cornwall with particular reference to Combined Universities in Cornwall; governance and management arrangements; and it receive reports, minutes and recommendations from the Cornwall Campus Academic Group.

194 The arrangement is collaborative in that the students on the Cornwall Campus (Tremough) are provided with services which they share with University College Falmouth students also using the Tremough Campus. The student services are different from those provided on the Exeter Campus but the University seeks to make them equivalent. The services are managed by a campus manager (University of Exeter appointment) and a combined services manager. The combined services provided are listed in the 'Cornwall Campus: Approval Process Services Agreement', last amended in July 2007, with services reorganised into support services, academic services and estates and facilities. University of Exeter staff who teach on the programmes are based at the Tremough Campus. Students are able to follow their programme solely at the Cornwall Campus or can opt for modules delivered at the Exeter Campus. The Students' Guild at Tremough is joint between the two partner institutions.

195 The University includes the Cornwall Campus in its timetable for its Learning and Teaching in Higher Education programme for graduate teaching assistants. It was evident to the audit team that the University also sought to provide other events and training at Tremough such as induction events and staff training, and maintains links to the main campus through video-conferencing. Although students reported some difficulties with administration and in accessing equivalent service provision at Tremough, the audit team noted the commitment by the University to provide a seamless experience for students across the campuses and the efforts being made by staff at all levels to ensure this is so. The University expected that the appointment of a new campus manager would improve the communications with the combined services manager and facilitate problem trouble-shooting.

### **Institute of Cornish Studies**

196 The Institute of Cornish Studies, formed in 1970, exists to support and foster academic research on Cornwall and its past. The Institute of Cornish Studies is a collaborative venture between Cornwall County Council and the University of Exeter. In 2003 it became part of the University's School of Humanities and Social Sciences. As well as encouraging University level research, the Institute of Cornish Studies offers taught programmes at undergraduate and postgraduate level for Exeter awards. The Institute of Cornish Studies has a Board of Management with representation from the University of Exeter and Cornwall County Council. It reports annually to University Senate and Cornwall County Council.

### **The institution's processes for managing collaborative provision**

197 The University has procedures, published in the Teaching Quality Assurance Manual on its website, for the approval of new collaborative provision. The audit team found a robust, staged process involving both the approval of the institution seeking collaboration and the approval of any programmes for delivery. The initial approach by a partner is considered by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for External Affairs and, if there is a prima facie case to proceed, the collaborating institution submits information specified by the University to a Working Party appointed by the Collaborative Provision Committee.

198 The Collaborative Provision Committee Working Party is charged with ensuring the appropriateness of the institution's internal structures, quality assurance mechanisms and



resources for the delivery of University of Exeter programmes. The application process for new partnerships includes an assessment of the financial position of the partner and due diligence regarding their good standing, their capacity to fulfil their role, their legal status and their capacity in law to contract with the University.

199 As part of the institutional approval process an audit visit is conducted by an auditor from the University, appointed by the Collaborative Provision Committee, who verifies the information provided by the new partner. The outcome of this stage of the process, whether to approve an institution as a partner or not, is reported to the Collaborative Provision Committee and thence to University Education Committee.

200 Approval procedures require the University to inform any appropriate PSRB and the details of any appropriate body have to be included in any application for partnership.

201 If successful, the new partner institution is invited to submit an application to the relevant Faculty Programme Accreditation Committee for the approval of programme(s) or module(s). A representative from the partner institution may be invited to attend this meeting. Once the institution and the programme have been formally approved, a Partnership Agreement or Memorandum of Agreement is drawn up by the Quality Review Services Office for signature on behalf of the institutions.

202 Previously handled separately, the responsibility for managing collaborative provision has been transferred to the Faculties of Undergraduate and Postgraduate Studies and, as a result, the management of collaborative provision has been largely integrated into the University's standard processes for quality assurance. Academic Services has also undergone restructuring which has brought together the staff responsible for faculty support and management of collaborative provision.

203 Each faculty has a Programme Accreditation Committee which, in addition to approving new programmes and amendments to existing programmes including withdrawals, maintains oversight of the University's Accreditation Procedures.

204 Since the previous audit, the management of validated provision has been changed and strengthened in response to the advisable recommendation '...to make use of the recently revised structures and procedures for managing collaborative provision in a more active and timely manner'. The Faculty of Academic Partnerships has been dissolved and responsibility for quality assurance transferred to a Collaborative Provision Committee reporting to the University Education Committee. The number of support staff has been increased. Management processes have been aligned with the University's procedures and incorporated in the Teaching Quality Assurance Manual.

205 The Collaborative Provision Committee is responsible for auditing quality assurance processes in partner institutions and the host school at the University. The Chair of the Committee is appointed by, and attends, the University Education Committee. The Collaborative Provision Committee is attended by the Academic Registrar of the University College Plymouth St Mark and St John, the University's largest partner and an accredited College of the University. The University's Academic Audit of University College Plymouth produced a detailed action plan in January 2007 showing clear responsibilities and a timeline for action.

206 Annual programme monitoring within partner organisations is undertaken predominantly using the University's procedures but with minor amendments to make it more suitable for partner institutions to complete. The risk alert approach to oversight of the annual programme monitoring processes used in schools is not used for partners; all programmes are reviewed in full. External examiners and University programme coordinators provide part of the University's monitoring and review of partner institutions. The Collaborative Provision Committee acts in place of the school as the cluster review board for annual programme monitoring in collaborative provision.

207 The audit team found evidence of a thorough process of programme monitoring in place in which the programme coordinator's role was central. The duties and responsibilities of this key role are set out within the Teaching Quality Assurance Manual. However, the responsibilities of the opposite number within the partner organisation are less clearly articulated. Although the duties of the partner are embedded within the Partnership Agreement (Memorandum of Agreement), they are not listed in the Manual in a similar way to those of the programme coordinator. The relationship between the two individuals (the one from the University and the other from the partner) in the day-to-day running of the programme and the monitoring of its quality is an essential part of the effectiveness of the programme management. The audit team recommends as desirable that the University provides, in the Teaching Quality Assurance Manual, a clear description of the duties of the individual in a partner organisation who takes primary responsibility for a collaborative programme.

208 In future, the University intends to make more use of management information in the scrutiny of partner institutions' academic provision. The Quality Review Services Office will work with colleagues in Academic Policy and Standards Section to combine the collection and analysis of data for use in managing the annual programme monitoring process for both schools and partner institutions. All collaborative provision is involved in periodic subject review and students play a part in quality assurance processes through the Guild's representation on periodic subject review and audits of collaborative provision.

209 The University has an accreditation agreement with the University College Plymouth, and the College is required to provide an accreditation report each year, which is reviewed by Collaborative Provision Committee. The College undertakes periodic subject review itself and the University monitors this through its annual accreditation report and its six-yearly audits.

210 The collating of management information for validated provision where students are not registered with the University is dealt with through the Collaborative Provision Committee chiefly through the annual programme monitoring process where the University departs from its risk-based approach and requests full documentation and statistical information from all its partners. If dual registration is granted to students at partner colleges, the data would be generated within the University. In the case of the University College Plymouth data are monitored as part of its annual accreditation report. If students are registered with the University of Exeter, the management information process and procedures are the same as those for University programmes.

211 The issue of transcripts for students on collaborative programmes is the responsibility of the Quality Review Support Office at the University.

212 In 2005, the University undertook a review of the adherence of University procedures to the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*. The University's processes were considered by the Collaborative Provision Committee against the precepts in the revised *Code of practice* and actions were identified. The audit team found evidence that these action plans were being monitored. Much of the evidence for the University's alignment with the *Code* lay with the Collaborative Provision Quality Assurance Manual which has now been superseded by the collaborative provision section of the Teaching Quality Assurance Manual. The University uses precepts in the *Code* in its review of collaborative provision.

213 Each collaboration is covered by a memorandum of agreement which details the roles and responsibilities of each of the partners including the financial arrangements; staff selection; and the University's expectation for its approval of all public information, publicity and promotional activity relating to its collaborative provision.

214 The University states in its documentation that institutional level agreements are reviewed every five years, linked to the periodic subject review process and lead to the renewal of

agreements between parties. However, during the audit, the team found that this was not always undertaken in a timely or systematic manner to a published timetable. The audit team considered it advisable that the University ensures that reviews of all partnership agreements are undertaken on a regular basis.

215 Information on University processes, procedures and expectations of partners are included in the web-based Teaching Quality Assurance Manual. This website includes information on the approval, reporting and monitoring procedures for collaborative provision and the responsibilities of partners with respect to, for example, examination procedures.

216 The information regarding raising concerns, complaints and appeals is contained within partner institutions' student handbooks. The University has an expectation that students at partner institutions will receive appropriate institution/programme handbooks, and that a copy of these will be available in the Quality Review Support Office.

217 In collaborative programmes student involvement is evident in all of the University's processes. The Students' Guild is involved in programme approval and the student voice is embedded in programme management processes. The audit team noted that student views are sought in a variety of ways including through tutorials, induction review, module evaluations, course committee meetings (twice-yearly) and end-of-course review. In addition, in collaborative programmes, there is a private meeting between the University's programme coordinator and students to monitor their views about the quality of their experience. Information drawn from these sources, together with the views of the external examiners, forms the basis of the course action plans.

## **Section 6: Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students**

### **Institutional arrangements**

218 The University framework for maintaining the standards and quality of research degree programmes, is the responsibility of the Faculty for Postgraduate Studies, headed by a Dean. The Faculty maintains oversight of this framework, recommending changes where necessary to the University Education Committee and Senate for approval. Day-to-day responsibility for operational management of the research degree programmes framework rests with schools, monitored by the Faculty through processes such as annual monitoring of research students' progress and periodic review of research degree provision. Research degree programmes at Exeter were subject to review by QAA in July 2006, when it was noted that Exeter regulations and codes of practice in relation to research degree programmes were fully aligned with the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*, September 2004, published by QAA and were also subject to review by the Faculty for Postgraduate Studies in 2005.

219 In the case of the Peninsular College of Medicine and Dentistry, oversight of research degree programmes is jointly managed by Exeter and Plymouth Universities through the Joint Approval Review Board. The Peninsular College provision was approved for accreditation by a General Medical Council accreditation panel in September 2006.

220 In considering the University's management of its research degree programmes, the audit team noted that this is automatically subject to oversight as part of the University research strategy, where several University key performance indicators (research quality, facilities, IT and library spend, completion rates and postgraduate research students per academic staff full-time equivalent) relate indirectly or directly to the quality of research student experience. The team concurred with the earlier QAA Research degree programmes review that the institutional framework for managing the standards and quality of research degree programmes is effective.

## **The research environment**

221 The primary goal of the University's research strategy is to establish the University amongst the top 20 universities in the UK for research excellence, on the basis of further strategic investment which builds upon the University's strong showing in RAE2001. The research strategy requires that each school has a Director of Postgraduate Studies with responsibility for taught and research degree supervision, although students may also be supported through other research structures such as research centres in particular discipline areas. A recent initiative to strengthen the research environment has been the development of the Great Western Research collaboration of South-West universities, which is creating 130 additional PhD studentships and a regionally-based postgraduate training network as part of a £14 million strategic initiative to boost research of economic importance to the region.

222 The University's research strategy includes goals to increase the number and quality of research students, and to enhance their experience. The research strategy specifies various aspects of this enhancement, including: compliance with Research Council prerequisites; workspace, infrastructure and resource provision for research students; training support for research students, including research skills and methods; and research supervisory workload and supervisor training. The research environment has also benefited from recent University investment in refurbishing the dedicated postgraduate social facilities at both the Streatham and St Luke's Campuses. The audit team considered that institutional management and oversight of the research environment at the University is effective.

## **Selection, admission and induction of students**

223 Postgraduate selection and admissions procedures are set out in a University Code of Practice and training is now provided for school admissions tutors. An induction programme is provided for new research students by means of a 'Welcome Week' in late September, which was noted as an example of good practice in the 2006 QAA Research degree programmes review. The Faculty Board expects schools also to provide suitable induction programmes for the smaller numbers of research students who arrive in January or April.

224 The audit team learned from postgraduate students that there is a strong conversion rate of existing undergraduate or postgraduate taught students to postgraduate research, indicating generally high levels of student satisfaction with the student experience and research environment at Exeter. Although clear guidance and information is provided to applicants, the content and timing of information sent to international applicants did not always meet their expectations. There is, however, an extensive and clearly structured prospectus for postgraduate students on the postgraduate study page, and this is augmented by school postgraduate handbooks with subject-specific information. Since 2007, there is also an independent English-language preparation college (INTO) for both undergraduate and postgraduate international students on the Exeter site.

225 Pastoral support for postgraduate taught students is intended to fall under the same centrally defined but locally developed arrangements as those being established for undergraduate students. In talking to postgraduate taught students, the audit team found that further development may be needed to ensure that tutorial support is individually targeted and appropriate for students on short, intensively taught postgraduate programmes. The team also found that whilst support for undergraduate and postgraduate research students was generally good or improving, there was a less consistent approach to the provision of support for postgraduate taught students. The team considers it desirable that the University ensures that development of its personal tutoring provision encompasses postgraduate taught students.

## **Supervision**

226 Each research student is supervised by a team consisting of a supervisor or co-supervisors and/or a mentor. Supervisors are expected to be well-qualified, and if inexperienced will normally work as a co-supervisor or mentor before assuming individual supervisory responsibility. Training

is provided for new and early career supervisors, and is also monitored as part of the annual staff professional development review process. Mentors provide pastoral support, according to guidance given in the University's Code of Practice on supervision of postgraduate research students: this was considered to be an area of good practice in the 2006 QAA Review of research degree programmes.

227 Each unit's research students are overseen by a panel or board independent of the supervisors, whose responsibility is to 'ensure quality of supervision, comparability among students, report to the School, and ultimately to the Postgraduate Faculty Board'.

228 Recently, the University has turned its attention to providing more systematic update training of established supervisors through a pilot school-based event shared between new and established research supervisors. Further events are planned for other schools either individually or jointly.

229 Postgraduate research students are given adequate opportunities to develop personal and research skills and are generally content with the facilities provided for their research work. From talking to postgraduate research students and academic staff, the audit team formed the view that postgraduate research students were well supervised and supported, and that the high quality of supervision and support extended to students at all campuses.

### **Progress and review arrangements**

230 Procedures for monitoring and formal review of research student progress are set out in a University Code of Practice, and require formal annual monitoring of each student's progress at school level (which may also include transfer from MPhil to PhD registration). Exact procedures are left to schools' discretion, but the annual review requires reports from the student and supervisor to be considered by a school panel which advises the Head of School on the progress decision. A recent University review has noted that the current procedures do not formally require schools to evaluate overall supervision quality, or to propagate examples of good practice. It is proposed that procedures be augmented to provide this overarching annual review of the quality of the school's research supervision, and a pilot is currently being conducted to refine the proposals.

### **Development of research and other skills**

231 The Faculty for Postgraduate Studies runs a university-wide generic skills training programme for research students, which is aligned with training requirements specified by Research Councils UK. Sessions are run several times per year and on all University sites (including Cornwall) to facilitate attendance by part-time students and those arriving in mid-year. Student engagement is monitored through the research student annual progress review procedure. Centralised generic skills training is now complemented by discipline-based workshops, online material and a student skills ambassador network.

232 Research students who also teach, and are not eligible to take the staff Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice programme, can instead take the Learning and Teaching in Higher Education programme, successful completion of which confers HEA Associate status. For those with more limited teaching responsibilities, a shorter 'Induction of Teaching Assistants' programme has been introduced in 2007-08. Support is also available for personal and professional development, including an online profile facility allowing students to showcase their ideas and to raise their external presence.

233 Pastoral support for postgraduate research students is provided either by an identified personal tutor (for example law) or by members of the student's supervisory team (for example biosciences). In the case of the Peninsular Medical School, pastoral support is provided separately from, but complementary to, professional development support. All postgraduate students are encouraged to make use of opportunities for skill development. The University is using its postgraduate skill development experience as a model for undergraduate skills development and is promoting and strengthening the use of these tools in association with its development of the personal tutorial system.

234 The audit team found evidence of considerable and growing support by the University for research student skills training. This was indicated by the varied and extensive range of research skills development courses now available, in the encouragement of research students to develop online 'e-Profiles' to present themselves externally, and in the enthusiasm reported to the auditors to take up the available training. The audit team considered the institutional arrangements for developing research and other skills to be appropriate and satisfactory.

### **Feedback mechanisms**

235 Formal feedback to research students on their performance is provided via the annual student progress monitoring process, and students can also use this process to provide individual feedback on the quality of supervision they have received. Surveys are carried out on the Generic Skills Training Programme, but until recently there was no individual anonymous mechanism for students to comment on their programme and student experience. To address this omission, Exeter has taken part in both the pilot (August 2006) and the first full (March 2007) Postgraduate Research Student Experience survey, carried out by the HEA. Evidence from these surveys is circulated to schools and to the Faculty for Postgraduate Studies for information, and was considered for the first time in October 2006.

236 The audit team considered that institutional arrangements to enable research students to provide feedback about their experience and supervision are satisfactory and thorough.

### **Assessment**

237 Research student assessment procedures are documented in University regulations and a Code of Practice, and are consistent with the FHEQ. Training in viva voce examinations is offered as part of the Generic Skills Training Programme and at school level. The regulations and Code of Practice have recently been amended to include professional doctorate awards.

238 Research students have the opportunity to comment on their programmes through student/staff liaison committees, although most schools operate joint postgraduate taught and research student committees. Students are also represented on most University and faculty-level committees, and there is a positive working relationship between the Students' Guild and the University. Research students are included in standard University complaints and appeals procedures, and although few cases reach formal University review (stage 3) or appeal (stage 4), those that do disproportionately involve research students. The published complaints and appeals procedures were examined as part of the 2006 QAA Review of research degree programmes and considered to be appropriate and satisfactory. The audit team concurs with this view.

## **Section 7: Published information**

239 Corporate publications are the responsibility of the Communication and Partnership Office which ensures the accuracy and completeness of all corporate information relating to academic programmes. School marketing managers, located in the centre but with responsibility for groups of schools, provide a link between the centre and the academic units.

240 The accuracy and completeness of information on registered students is confirmed through the school education plans and the periodic subject review process.

241 Amendments to the University's formal record of its regulations and syllabuses are subject to the approval of the relevant committee. Responsibility for updating sections of the University calendar lies with the originating office. The web team within the Communication and Partnership Office coordinates the publication of the calendar online annually in September. Changes that take immediate effect are updated throughout the year by the originating office. A working version is provided so that amendments agreed for a subsequent session can be made. The review of collaborative provision includes consideration of the accuracy and completeness of information for students.

242 The undergraduate and postgraduate prospectuses, Cornwall Campus prospectus and study abroad catalogue are produced by the Marketing and UK Student Recruitment Office, as are the school undergraduate and postgraduate 'factfiles'. Prospectuses are produced in print form and available online. Programme information is amended against Programme Accreditation Committee minutes and sent to schools for checking as part of the annual editing process. The Office resolves with schools the inclusion (or otherwise) of forecast changes to the curriculum offer. The introductory non-school part of the prospectuses is checked in a similar manner.

243 The web team within the Communication and Partnership Office is responsible for the corporate-level pages of the University website. It provides corporate templates and offers advice and guidance to schools and Professional Services who have devolved responsibility for second-level pages. The website information is derived from printed prospectuses but kept up-to-date throughout the year by staff within the Marketing and UK Student Recruitment Office who have responsibility for the printed versions. Professional Services and schools are responsible for carrying out periodic exercises to check and update the web pages they manage.

244 The audit team found the part of the website dedicated to the Education Enhancement Unit required some work to make it more useful. The University acknowledges that there is work to be done in remedying this. The Unit was undergoing significant change at the time of the audit which might account for these problems.

245 The University Education Committee is responsible for approving University Codes of Practice collated in the Teaching Quality Assurance Manual. Maintenance and updating of the Manual is managed by the Academic Policy and Standards Section. Amendments are posted on the web as and when they are approved. The University recognises that its restructuring has had some negative impact on the communication of teaching quality assurance information to partners and this was borne out by the meetings held with staff involved in collaborative arrangements during the audit.

246 School prospectuses are bound by the quality assurance procedures set out in the policy documents 'Accuracy and Transparency in Promotional Materials' and 'Policies and Procedures for the Production of Student Recruitment Publicity Material'. Also within the Teaching Quality Assurance Manual there is a Code of Good Practice 'Provision of Information by Schools to Students' which details the responsibilities of schools. School marketing managers are responsible for coordinating the production of school/subject-level 'factfiles' and prospectuses.

247 The consistency of message in student recruitment documents is supported through a document entitled 'Communicating the Exeter Brand to Student Audiences' maintained by the Marketing and UK Student Recruitment Office, aimed at ensuring that the University communicates a coherent corporate image and a consistent set of institutional messages to each of its student markets.

248 To ensure consistency with University level procedures, the Code of Good Practice draws attention to the need for school information not to conflict with that of the University. The handbooks seen during the audit complied with the University's guidance and it was reported during meetings with students that they provided useful information. Details of each module within the programme were provided on a standard template which includes details about the aims and outcomes, learning and teaching methods, assignments and assessments, syllabus plans and indicative reading.

249 The audit team looked at examples of programme specifications for both collaborative and non-collaborative provision and found them to be detailed and useful. The intended learning outcomes are measured against subject benchmarks, and FHEQ, published by QAA, and these are shown in the programme specifications.

250 Information provided for students about University of Exeter awards in the prospectus of partner institutions is approved by the University before publication. The University also reviews

the availability of information to students as part of the process of periodic subject review and handbook information is checked by the programme coordinator. Guidance on the approval of publicity and marketing for collaborative provision is made available on the Teaching Quality Assurance Manual website and partners' publicity is monitored on an annual basis by the Quality Review Services Office. The information for students about the University of Exeter collaborative awards is not consistent, for example, programme specifications are not always available on partners' websites. Partners are kept up-to-date about the University information from the Communication and Partnership Office via the Quality Review Services Office and through the liaison work of the programme coordinators.

251 The Quality Review Services Office provides information to collaborative partners of the expectations regarding the content of student handbooks and this guidance is also available in the Teaching Quality Assurance Manual. The information regarding raising concerns, complaints and appeals is contained within partner institutions' student handbooks. The examples seen during the audit complied with this. However, it was not always clear in the handbooks whether the regulations were those of the University of Exeter or the partner institution.

252 The Memoranda of Agreement contain a clause to ensure that the prospectus and website of each Institution will include a common agreed set of information material for the programmes.

253 Summaries of periodic subject review reports and the overview of external examiners' reports are posted on the Quality Review Services Office website. The relevant office is responsible for generating the quantitative and qualitative data required which is approved by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Education and uploaded by the Quality Review Services Office.

254 The Marketing and UK Student Recruitment Office surveys potential students who decline offers, after application and at the point of entry. The recipients are asked to identify their decision-making factors and to rate the quality of the University website, prospectus and schools' publications.

255 The audit team found that reliance could be reasonably 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.



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