

University of Derby

MARCH 2005

Preface

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

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

The purpose of institutional audit

The aims of institutional audit are to meet the public interest in knowing that universities and colleges are:

- providing HE, awards and qualifications of an acceptable quality and an appropriate academic standard, and
- exercising their legal powers to award degrees in a proper manner.

Judgements

Institutional audit results in judgements about the institutions being reviewed. Judgements are made about:

- the confidence that can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of its programmes and the academic standards of its awards
- the reliance that can reasonably be placed on the accuracy, integrity, completeness and frankness of the information that the institution publishes, and about the quality of its programmes and the standards of its awards.

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

Nationally agreed standards

Institutional audit uses a set of nationally agreed reference points, known as the 'Academic Infrastructure', to consider an institution's standards and quality. These are published by QAA and consist of:

- The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ), which include descriptions of different HE qualifications
- The Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education
- subject benchmark statements, which describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects
- guidelines for preparing programme specifications, which are descriptions of the what is on offer to students in individual programmes of study. They outline the intended knowledge, skills, understanding and attributes of a student completing that programme. They also give details of teaching and assessment methods and link the programme to the FHEQ.

The audit process

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

The main elements of institutional audit are:

- a preliminary visit by QAA to the institution nine months before the audit visit
- a self-evaluation document submitted by the institution four months before the audit visit
- a written submission by the student representative body, if they have chosen to do so, four months before the audit visit
- a detailed briefing visit to the institution by the audit team five weeks before the audit visit
- the audit visit, which lasts five days
- the publication of a report on the audit team's judgements and findings 20 weeks after the audit visit.

The evidence for the audit

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

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

The audit team also gathers evidence by focusing on examples of the institution's internal quality assurance processes at work using 'audit trails'. These trails may focus on a particular programme or programmes offered at that institution, when they are known as a 'discipline audit trail'. In addition, the audit team may focus on a particular theme that runs throughout the institution's management of its standards and quality. This is known as a 'thematic enquiry'.

From 2004, institutions will be required to publish information about the quality and standards of their programmes and awards in a format recommended in document 02/15 *Information on quality and standards in higher education* published by the Higher Education Funding Council for England. The audit team reviews progress towards meeting this requirement.

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Summary

Introduction

A team of auditors from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visited the University of Derby (the University) from 14 to 18 March 2005 to carry out an institutional audit. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the opportunities available to students and on the academic standards of the awards offered by the University.

To arrive at its conclusions the audit team spoke to members of staff throughout the University, to current students, and read a wide range of documents relating to the way the University manages the academic aspects of its provision.

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

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

In institutional audit, both academic standards and academic quality are reviewed.

Outcome of the audit

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

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

Features of good practice

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

- the high level of staff commitment to student support, in particular at programme and module level

- the retention strategy: its development, implementation and review with the full engagement of staff and students
- the University's regional agenda as evidenced in particular both by student recruitment and by the links with local employers, agencies and practitioners
- the Learning Through Work Scheme and its reflective approach to this innovative area of practice
- the responsiveness to staff development needs and the high quality of support documentation for staff, in particular the Programme Leader's Handbook.

Recommendations for action

The audit team also recommends that the University should consider further action in a number of areas to ensure that the academic quality and standards of the awards it offers are maintained. The team advises the University to:

- create a higher level of consistency in the degree of critical analysis in the University's internal review reports
- establish clear mechanisms for ensuring that students follow a coherent programme within the Open Credit Scheme
- embed further and ensure more consistent application of the University's assessment requirements.

And to consider the desirability of:

- developing further staff awareness of the University's quality assurance procedures, in particular in respect of periodic programme review
- seeking to achieve further clarity regarding the nature of the academic deliberative systems and their links to executive and management functions
- moving to a more centrally coordinated approach to the provision, utilisation, and quality assurance of e-learning, with a greater emphasis on pedagogical considerations

- taking action to address the variability of student participation in the formal representative processes at school level, and to enhance the effectiveness of the Campus Forum.

Outcomes of discipline audit trails

Undergraduate programmes in Law, Psychology, Travel Tourism and Events, and Visual Communication

To arrive at their conclusions, the audit team spoke to staff and students, and was given information about the University as a whole. The team also examined in detail the programmes listed above to find out how well the University's systems and procedures were working at programme level. The University provided the team with a range of documents, including student work. The team was able to state that the standard of student achievement in each of the programmes is appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*. The quality of learning opportunities available to students is suitable for a programme of study leading to the named awards.

National reference points

To provide further evidence to support its findings the audit team also investigated the use made by the University of the Academic Infrastructure which QAA has developed on behalf of the whole of UK higher education. The Academic Infrastructure is a set of nationally agreed reference points that help to define both good practice and academic standards. The findings of the audit suggest that the University was generally making effective use of the academic infrastructure to inform its framework for the management of quality and standards.

From 2004, the audit process will include a check on the reliability of information about academic standards and quality published by institutions in a standard format, in line with the Higher Education Funding Council for England requirements for *Information on quality*

and standards in higher education: Final guidance (HEFCE 03/51). At the time of the audit, the University was making progress towards fulfilling its responsibilities in this area. The information it was publishing about the quality of its programmes and the standards of its awards was found to be reliable.

Main report

Main report

1 An institutional audit of the University of Derby (the University) was undertaken during the week commencing 14 March 2005. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the University's programmes of study and on the discharge of its responsibility for its awards.

2 The audit was carried out using a process developed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) in partnership with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Standing Conference of Principals (SCOP) and Universities UK (UUK), and has been endorsed by the Department for Education and Skills. For institutions in England, it replaces the previous processes of continuation audit, undertaken by QAA at the request of UUK and SCOP, and universal subject review, undertaken by QAA on behalf of HEFCE, as part of the latter's statutory responsibility for assessing the quality of education that it funds.

3 The audit checked the effectiveness of the University's procedures for establishing and maintaining the standards of its academic awards; for reviewing and enhancing the quality of the programmes of study leading to those awards; and for publishing reliable information. As part of the audit process, according to protocols agreed with HEFCE, SCOP and UUK, the audit included consideration of examples of institutional processes at work at the level of the programme, through discipline audit trails (DATs), together with examples of those processes operating at the level of the institution as a whole. The scope of the audit encompassed all of the University's provision leading to its awards, with the exception of its collaborative provision, which will be the subject of a separate audit by QAA.

Section 1: Introduction: the University of Derby

The institution and its mission

4 The University traces its origins to the Diocesan Institute for School Mistresses, founded in 1851. A series of mergers of providers of

courses in arts, technology and education led to the creation of Derbyshire College of Higher Education in 1983. The College was incorporated as the University of Derby in 1992 and subsequently merged with High Peak College, a general Further Education College located in Buxton in Northwest Derbyshire in 1998. The University currently operates from a number of sites in Derby and a major campus in Buxton.

5 The total student population for 2003-04 is 23144 (16,234 full-time equivalents (FTEs)), of which 841 come from overseas (higher education (HE) and further education (FE)), 3,337 are franchise students and 5,918 are FE students. Excluding these, the overall number of home HE students is 13,048, of which 66 per cent are full-time, 34 per cent part-time, 83 per cent are enrolled on undergraduate programmes and 17 per cent are postgraduates. A significant proportion (48 per cent of full-time HE and 63 per cent of part-time) come from within Derbyshire and the East Midlands. The majority of students are over the age of 21 at enrolment. 18.6 per cent of the home students come from ethnic minority backgrounds, and there are more female students than male students (especially amongst those who are studying in the part-time mode). A significant number of full-time students (about one-third) enter with qualifications other than GCE A-level, reflecting the University's widening participation mission.

6 The executive management structure comprises the Vice-Chancellor, two Deputy Vice-Chancellors (Academic and Services) and a Pro Vice-Chancellor/Director of Finance. The extended Corporate Management Team also includes the four directors of schools and the six directors of services. These services comprise a Business Development Unit (BDU), Human Resources, Customer Services Department (CSD), Learning and Information Services (LIS), Facilities and the Quality Enhancement Department.

7 There is an Academic Board chaired by the Vice-Chancellor which is responsible for academic policy and regulations and for defining and maintaining academic standards. There are five subcommittees of the Board; Conferments

Committee, Equal Opportunities Committee, Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC), Learning Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTAC) and the University Research and Research Degrees Committee.

8 The University was extensively restructured in 2002-03 from eight schools into four schools, creating new academic units which had a strong curriculum coherence; these are now Arts, Design and Technology (including Creative Industries and Manufacturing), Education, Health and Sciences (mainly Public Sector), the Derbyshire Business School (Business, Law and Computing) and University of Derby College, Buxton (Peak District Economy, especially Tourism and Hospitality). Each school is led by a Director, who acts as the chair of the School Quality Committee, and three Assistant Directors. One Assistant Director is responsible for Quality, and line manages the School Quality Manager. As well as responsibility for specific aspects of the school, such as Learning and Teaching, and Business Development, each Assistant Director also has oversight of Subject Groups within the school. Schools are further subdivided into Subject Groups, each of which has a Subject Manager. Programmes are run by Programme Leaders, with oversight by a Programme Committee.

9 The University has extensive FE provision at Buxton, a large number of students on franchised and other collaborative programmes and a relatively high proportion of part-time students. It sees itself as being the community university for Derbyshire and the immediate surroundings, offering educational opportunities at all levels for FE and HE, both directly and in partnership with other institutions.

10 The current Vice-Chancellor is a new appointment, and took up the post in August 2004. Extensive restructuring of the management and structure of the University took place in 2002-03, and new synergies are beginning to develop as the effects of these changes begin to bed down.

11 The University's mission statement in the self-evaluation document (SED) is that 'The

University of Derby aims to be the leading provider of high quality accessible and flexible further and higher education for regional, national and international communities'. This is currently under discussion with the appointment of the new Vice-chancellor, and the draft 2004-08 Corporate Plan (January 2005) is currently suggesting that the mission statement be changed to 'The University of Derby aims to be the learner's first choice university for quality and opportunity'. The University is intending to deliver on this mission while meeting the diverse needs of its student body by being community-based, student-focused and achievement driven. Its leading aim is seen as achieving a high-quality student-focused learning experience. It also aims to be the first choice university for communities in Derbyshire and the immediate surroundings by offering learning opportunities in FE and HE delivered directly and in partnership with other institutions. Further to this the University aims to become the leading employer-focused learning and teaching university in the East Midlands, to contribute to the economic growth of the East Midlands through promoting an enterprise culture and raising levels of transfer of knowledge and expertise, and to strengthen the internationalism of the University.

12 The University's collaborative provision will be subject to a separate collaborative audit by QAA.

Background information

13 The published information available for the audit included:

- the information on the University's website
- the report of the quality audit of the University undertaken by QAA, published in May 2002
- the reports of HEFCE and QAA reviews of provision at subject level.

14 The University provided QAA with:

- an institutional SED and appendices
- four discipline self-evaluation documents (DSEDs) for the areas selected for the DATs

- the documentation as listed in the Appendix of the SED.

During the briefing and audit visits the audit team was given access to the University's internal documents, to its managed learning environment and to a range of documentation relating to the selected DATs, the latter including examples of student work. The team appreciated the unrestricted access it was given to these sources of information.

The audit process

15 Following a preliminary meeting at the University in June 2004, QAA confirmed that four DATs would be conducted during the audit visit. QAA received the SED in October 2004. On the basis of the SED and other published information, the audit team confirmed that the DATs would focus on taught programmes in Law; Psychology; Travel Tourism and Events; and Visual Communication. QAA received the DSEDs in January 2005. All of the DSEDs were written specifically for the audit.

16 At the preliminary meeting, the students of the University were invited, through the Students' Union (SU) to submit a separate document expressing views on the student experience at the University, and identifying any areas of concern or commendation with respect to the quality of programmes and the standards of awards. They were also invited to give their views on the level of representation afforded to them, and on the extent to which their views were taken into account by the University. The students' written submission (SWS) was submitted to QAA in October 2005. The audit team is grateful to the SU for the work involved in the preparation of the SWS.

17 The audit team carried out a briefing visit to the University on 9 and 10 February 2005 for the purpose of exploring with the Vice-Chancellor, senior members of staff, and representatives of the SU, matters relating to the University's management of quality and standards raised by the SWS, the SED, and published information. During the briefing visit the team identified a number of themes for the audit visit and agreed

with the University a schedule of meetings. No areas were selected for a thematic enquiry.

18 The audit visit took place from 14 to 18 March 2005 and involved further meetings with staff and students of the University, both at institutional level and in relation to the selected DATs. The audit team comprised Dr P Banister, Dr S Hargreaves, Professor P Manning, Dr M Edmunds and Professor G Roberts, auditors, and Dr C Robinson, audit secretary. The audit was coordinated for QAA by Dr P D Hartley, Assistant Director.

Developments since the previous academic quality audit

19 The University received a continuation audit in December 2001 (the report of which was published in May 2002), which commended the University for the value of the Academic Audit Committee in providing a focus for the rigorous review of key aspects of the University's provision: the ownership of the quality of provision in schools; the effectiveness of the Quality Managers' Advisory Group in enhancing quality and in aiding the consistency of the quality of provision in schools; the continuous development and refinement of a systematic approach to mapping learning outcomes to national reference points; the University's sound framework for the development of full-time members of staff; and the effective communication of policy development which facilitates a shared sense of purpose among staff and students.

20 In addition, several recommendations were made which have been actively addressed in the interim period by means of a series of changes in procedures. These include the provision and use of student data, the appropriate consideration of the previous external examining experience of teams of examiners and the central monitoring of responses to all external examiner reports, and the giving of high priority to the implementation of procedures for the induction and development of sessional staff.

21 A number of the matters which emerged from the continuation audit report have been followed up in the present audit.

22 Extensive management and structural changes took place in 2002-03, and a revised undergraduate regulatory framework was introduced in 2003-04. Rationalisation and enhancement of committee structures has also taken place since the 2001 audit. In addition, there is currently a drive towards the consolidation of schools onto single sites.

23 The University has had three developmental engagements since March 2003 and these made a number of recommendations which have been addressed. Detailed responses to the developmental engagements were not provided in the SED, but action plans have been produced for the Academic Board, and progress is being monitored by Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC). Since the developmental engagements, the University has undergone significant structural changes and the issues identified have been revisited by the current audit team.

Section 2: The audit investigations: institutional processes

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

24 In the SED the University made clear that the Academic Board is responsible for the establishment and maintenance of academic standards, and sets as its overall aim the continuous improvement of academic quality and educational standards. In the wake of the restructuring of the school academic framework the University has reviewed its committee structure and the Academic Board has established committees to advise and assist it in carrying out its responsibilities. These include the AQSC, described in the SED as being, together with the Academic Board, the main deliberative agencies relating to both quality and academic standards. Two other committees specifically concerned with quality and standards also report to the Academic Board: the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee and the University

Research and Research Degrees Committee. AQSC has three sub-committees, the Collaborative and Distributed Learning Sub-Committee, the Regulatory Framework Sub-Committee and the Further Education Quality and Standards Sub-Committee. Committees may commission working groups and project groups as necessary.

25 Each school has an upgraded School Quality Committee (SQC), a Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee, and a Research and Research Degrees Committee. The audit team was informed that there is no direct reporting line between these school committees although it is local (rather than required) practice to exchange minutes in some schools. The SQC is seen as the key committee in the school structure and 'is responsible to AQSC for monitoring the standards of each school's award- or credit-bearing programmes for all modes of delivery and in all locations including collaborative arrangements'. The SED claimed that this overall structure encourages the development of a very direct relationship between institutional and school activity. At the time of the audit visit, the audit team was informed that AQSC had recommended that the work of SQCs within the system should be reviewed. A consultation exercise was proposed to revisit the terms of reference of SQCs and their working practices. AQSC also queried the extent to which a clearer distinction should be drawn between the business of SQCs and of school management meetings.

26 The SED explained that the central agencies supporting AQSC and the Academic Board in executive terms include the Quality Enhancement Department (QED) and the CSD. The responsibilities of QED include the development, implementation and monitoring of the University's procedures for the approval and on-going evaluation of programmes of study including arrangements for internal review, and the appointment of external examiners. The academic staff in QED work in liaison with administrators performing key functions in areas such as approvals, monitoring and review, and they are also engaged in development activity with

academics and support staff, translating policy implementation activity into quality enhancement. The SED claimed that 'there is now clear evidence of the synergy between quality management and enhancement that the new structure was designed to achieve'.

27 QED (in liaison with CSD) provides the managerial support for the development and implementation of the University's regulations. QED also performs a regulatory function in ensuring local compliance with University policies and requirements. There was evidence that the balance between central requirements and local responsibility was properly and effectively managed by QED and the audit team formed the view that QED was effective in its overall function of mitigating risks during a process of considerable change and development.

28 Each of the four schools has a School Quality Manager (SQM), a senior level academic post with responsibility for oversight and support of school-level quality management. According to the SED, the SQMs have operational knowledge and expertise which allow them to support colleagues, to manage quality activity in the school, and to act as the conduit to central agencies and personnel. Further, SQMs have a major influence on policy development and implementation realised through the Quality Managers' Advisory Group (QMAG) and some of them are also members of AQSC. The SED argued that the effectiveness of this role, and the link it provides to central processes, was a major strength of the institution's quality management, and that the introduction of standardised reporting lines to an Assistant Director (AD) responsible for quality in each school ensured that both operational and strategic quality considerations informed the senior management of schools.

29 The SED explained that a cornerstone of the framework for quality and standards is QMAG, which works informally on the initiation and refinement of policy, and on implementation issues. The last QAA audit commended the University for the effectiveness of QMAG in enhancing quality and in aiding the consistency

of the quality of provision in schools. It also suggested that the University might wish to consider formally requiring QMAG to report to AQSC and to carry out the discussion aspects of AQSC's role. However, the institution considered that the informal nature of the group and its freedom from reporting lines was an asset.

30 QMAG minutes show that its agenda is extensive and confirm that it performs an important function within the overall structure. While recognising the vitality of its work and the effectiveness of the links between QMAG both with the central University systems and the school structures, the audit team considered that a more formal capturing of its minutes within the deliberative structure would assist the University to make its thinking transparent to the wider academic community and would further enhance its quality mechanisms.

31 The audit team formed the view that the proposal by AQSC to review the working of SQCs was indicative of a reflective and self-critical approach by the University and the team would wish to encourage such a review. It would also recommend the University to widen the brief of any review to include a broader reappraisal of the nature of the academic deliberative systems and their links to executive and management functions, both within schools and at institutional level.

32 The key processes, which the University perceives as being central to its management of quality and standards, are set out in two booklets: 'Validation and Approval Procedures for HE Provision' and 'Quality Monitoring procedures for HE Provision'. In addition, QED publish annually a staff guidance handbook 'Implementation of HE Academic Regulations, Policies and Procedures 2004/05' which covers the role of individual members of staff in a range of processes including recruitment; admissions and enrolment; student support and guidance; programme management and delivery; and assessment.

33 In 2004 QED followed up its general staff guide with a handbook specifically for programme leaders, recognising the

importance of this responsibility within the QA structure as playing a key role in maintaining oversight of the students' overall experience on the programme. The introduction to the handbook explains that 'although the maintenance and enhancement of quality and standards is a collective responsibility, the principal role of the Programme Leader is to foster the conditions and practice that promote high standards of academic quality and maintain these through the effective management of the programme'. The SED stated that the Programme Leader's Handbook is a good example of a product of a synergy between quality management and enhancement that the new structure was designed to achieve. The audit team considered that the Programme Leader's Handbook was a helpful and well thought out document and heard evidence from programme leaders regarding its utility and effectiveness.

34 The audit team concluded that the support documentation made available to staff is of a high quality and that the Programme Leader's Handbook, in particular, constituted an example of good practice.

35 AQSC has a broad remit, reporting to the Academic Board on the ways in which the University ensures that its academic provision is of an appropriate quality and standard. It works closely with the LTAC. Its detailed terms of reference encompass ensuring the implementation of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, published by QAA, and overseeing internal quality assurance processes, including reviews and audits.

36 LTAC also reports directly to the Academic Board. Its terms of reference require it to oversee all matters relating to the University strategies for learning, teaching and assessment. In revising its committee structures, the University stated that the new institutional-level LTAC was a welcome addition and that it had proved very active since its inception in carrying forward the learning, teaching and assessment (LTA) agenda of the University and linking directly to school LTA committees and

the two support departments of LIS and CSD. Each school's LTAC aims to lead and monitor LTA strategy as it applies in their local context.

37 The University Research and Research Degrees Committee also reports directly to the Academic Board and oversees policy and matters relating to research policy, including how that policy relates to research students.

38 Central to the University's mechanisms for managing standards is the Undergraduate Regulatory Framework (UGRF). The new framework came into operation in September 2003. According to the SED the 'changes were designed to achieve greater transparency in assessment processes, to enhance students' progression opportunities, provide better information for students, and ensure institutional equity in the determination of outcomes.' The University has invited external reviewers to undertake an independent review of the operation of the UGRF. The remit of the review includes an assessment of the extent to which academic standards are safeguarded; efficiency of operation is achieved; rules and regulations are easy to understand; the framework is effective in enabling student progression; and, assessment arrangements are appropriate. By the time of the audit, a brief interim report had been produced, listing a number of preliminary findings. The audit team was able to confirm that there is now a higher level of consistency and equity of treatment in student progression and achievement. The team concluded that the revised UGRF had made a significant contribution to the establishment of clarity in the University's approach to the management of the standards of its awards, and that the University, in undertaking the current review, was exercising its responsibilities with appropriate diligence.

Assessment

39 The University embeds its assessment strategy within the context of its overall institutional mission, including its aim to encompass 'regional, national and international delivery for students on and off campus' and recognises the need to ensure that it has the

infrastructure in place to support the 'necessary range of methods of delivery of curriculum and assessment to the students'. Part of that infrastructure is provided by the work of the Centre for Interactive Assessment Design (CIAD), a well-established research and development centre which forms part of the Centre for Educational Development and Materials (CEDM).

40 Among the milestones included within the University's LTA strategy are targets to:

- devise assessment methods which are effective in promoting student learning which are also manageable for staff
- increase the amount of formative assessment designed and delivered through CIAD
- encourage the use of innovative methods of assessment, which deter or prevent plagiarism.

A particular feature of the strategy is the development of on-line assessment, both for on-campus and distance-learning students.

41 The QAA audit (2002) referred to the University's cautious approach to the development of mechanisms for assessment off-campus where comparability with Derby-based students is required. A new policy for the use of off-campus examination centres has subsequently been established and the audit team was informed that work was still progressing in terms of implementing the policy.

42 The QAA audit (2002) recommended that the University should assure itself that robust, effective and consistent internal moderation processes are taking place in all subject areas across all schools. The University subsequently reviewed its policy regarding internal moderation of assessments leading to the use of a more standardized pro forma. The policy is set out in the University Internal Moderation Policy, which requires that all student assessed work, including assignments and examinations, wherever and however the module is delivered (including collaborative provision) is internally moderated. The policy draws particular

attention to the fact that moderation is not the same as second marking. In 2004, AQSC undertook a review of each school's monitoring arrangements for its internal moderation reports and concluded that there was general consistency across schools. In meetings with staff, the audit team found that the moderation policy was generally well understood. However the team also saw a small number of examples within the DATs where the concept of moderation had become confused with double-marking, leading to changes in the moderated marks of some of the students within the moderation sample without an overview of the effect of the moderation process on the marks of the whole cohort.

43 Double-marking is not a compulsory element within the assessment policy. However, there is a clear policy stated in the Staff Guidance Handbook and confirmed orally to the audit team by the University, that double-marking is compulsory in the context of the final year independent study. Again the team found that the policy was adhered to in general but that some instances were seen within the DATs where double-marking was not practised. The team formed the view that the University would be advised to ensure that best practice becomes the norm and to assure itself that the assessment moderation policy is universally understood and adopted.

44 The audit team concluded that the structures in place within the University provided a suitable framework to enable it to exercise its responsibilities in relation to managing quality and standards.

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

45 The SED stated that the University is committed to continuous improvement, and outlines a number of initiatives, which will be in progress or at an early stage in spring 2005.

46 There will be a review and refinement of policies, procedures, strategies and supporting structures relating to quality. These will

particularly look at approval and annual monitoring processes. In addition, student contribution within larger committees and the Campus Forum initiative will be examined. The working of the new university undergraduate assessment regulations are also being reviewed.

47 The integrated system to support student, financial and related processes will be reviewed to determine its future direction; it has subsequently been decided to replace it with a new system. It is intended that this new system will provide integrated support for administrative purposes and will afford staff and students self-service opportunities. This will affect the University's Genesis Academic Information Access system (GAIA), which also needs to be made more available and intuitive to encourage greater use of the available data by the staff. It is also planned to expand and improve the University of Derby on-line managed learning environment, especially in areas such as staff development. It has now been decided that the University will standardise on the single virtual learning environment (VLE), thereby cutting down on duplication of effort; appropriate training will be provided in due course. This system can also be further used as a channel of communication with current students, and to get further feedback from students. The use of the internet as an external marketing medium and the intranet in terms of improving communication is also being reviewed.

48 It is proposed to consider the implementation of a scheme during 2005-06 for the training, accreditation and continuous professional development of teaching staff to enhance academic practice. In addition, there will be continued monitoring and development of Foundation Degrees, and the Learning Through Work Scheme was subject to internal academic audit in autumn 2004.

49 Other intended new developments which will affect the student experience include progress files, the retention project and the new skills strategy. All these are currently in progress.

50 These plans are very much seen as being ongoing, and, at the time of the audit, were

under active debate within the University at a variety of levels. QED provided the audit team with an update of progress on the University action plan indicating that good progress had been made on a number of the issues raised in the SED.

Internal approval, monitoring and review processes

51 The University has four quality assurance mechanisms within its internal systems for programme approval, monitoring and review, in addition to the involvement of the University with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). These are programme approval, annual monitoring, periodic review and academic audit. These processes are administered by QED and are monitored within the academic deliberative framework by AQSC. In the light of previous QAA reports the University has amended its processes to fine-tune their operation.

Programme approval

52 The SED reported that, for new developments and revalidations, a Planning Approvals Panel (PAP), chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic), considers at overall institutional level both academic and business aspects of a proposal, decides whether a development can continue and, if so, the nature of any validation process to be adopted. Its formal terms of reference indicate that its task is to: 'ensure that appropriate preliminary planning has taken place in the development of the academic portfolio, with particular reference to the University's Mission and Strategic Plan, School Development Plans, and the identification and utilization of resources; and to approve and indicate institutional support for specific developments within the academic portfolio, subject to validation/approval'. PAP meets some six times a year and lies outside the formal reporting committee structure. Rather it acts as a senior management filter as proposals progress through the more formal committees.

53 Prior to any proposal reaching PAP, the audit team was informed that it had to be approved by

the corresponding school, ideally by the relevant SQC, but that constraints associated with meeting the requirements of the PAP timetable, coupled with the termly meetings of SQCs, meant that, in practice, school approval was often sought by management executive action, arguing that the main academic approval had already been attained in principle by the adoption by the school's SQC of its Development Plan. In reviewing the role of SQCs the team would encourage the University to consider further this particular aspect of their work, as an example of the balance between the management function and the academic deliberative system within the quality procedures.

54 The SED explained that normally the organisation and conduct of a validation event is delegated to schools. More complex validations, and all those involving overseas collaborations, are organised by QED and conducted by University Panels. University policy, as stated in its 'Validation and Approvals Procedures' requires any validation panel to include an academic and/or a professional practitioner external to the University, as well as an academic from a school not involved in the development.

55 The SED indicated that the University had had concerns about the volume of approvals and revalidations undertaken each year and had found that documentation was occasionally of variable quality, there were backlogs and delays in process, and some approvals generated a long list of conditions. It further reported that these issues applied to a minority of provision but that the University regarded them as being sufficiently significant to be concerned.

56 A further concern recognised by the University had been the role of AQSC in the validation process. Specifically, the previous audit report had recommended that the University should find ways to avoid allowing programmes to start before AQSC had formally ratified their approval following validation. In order to address this issue, AQSC had introduced a policy whereby it is represented formally on each validation panel. This policy was being implemented at the time of the audit.

57 AQSC had identified a number of issues in relation to the processing of validations and proposed minor modifications to existing programmes, including examples of late submissions and inadequate documentation. QED had engaged in discussions with schools to alleviate the problems, and the current regulations include a tightly defined schedule for the process, along with a suitable pro forma. Criteria are laid out in the procedures covering what constitutes a minor modification, and the relevant SQM is charged with assessing whether or not the cumulative effects of proposed changes warrant a revalidation. Approved modifications are reported within the committee structure. QED provides advice as necessary regarding the process, including the decision regarding revalidation. The audit team was satisfied from the evidence available to it that the system worked appropriately but would encourage the University to keep its procedures under review, particularly in relation to providing greater clarity regarding the process for making the final judgment regarding revalidation.

58 The audit team was able to scrutinise a number of validation and revalidation reports and found that the processes, as evidenced by those reports, had been conducted according to the University's regulations and had included an appropriate level of externality. In particular, the validation process incorporates due consideration of the *Code of practice*, subject benchmark statements, *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), and programme specifications. Moreover the team was satisfied that the reports demonstrated a suitable level of rigour and that there was an effective overall monitoring of the processes by QED. The team was also able to judge that the University's overall scrutiny of its processes, coupled with its ability to identify and address weaknesses, provided a level of confidence in the University's ability to continue to maintain effective oversight of quality and standards.

Annual monitoring

59 A new system for annual monitoring came into effect during the academic year 2003-04, following the establishment of the new schools. The process starts with module reports being considered at a programme committee. Each programme produces an annual programme report and an accompanying action plan. These are considered by the relevant school quality committee, and each school subsequently produces a school annual monitoring report and action plan which also inform periodic school reviews. Support Departments also produce annual reports.

60 Separate reports are produced for the Combined Subject Programme and the Lifelong Learning Scheme, and are also provided from the External Examiners Reading Panel, from student performance indicators and from University-wide projects (for example e-learning). These are all considered by an Academic Quality and Standards Committee subcommittee, and an annual monitoring meeting is held to consider the various reports. A report from this meeting, along with an action plan is considered by the Academic Board. All contributors are subsequently informed of the outcomes of the Academic Board consideration.

61 The University identified the need for further staff development in order to ensure that the system becomes more effective. The SED recognised that more needed to be done to improve feedback loops at all stages of the process, in particular to staff at module and programme levels and stated its intentions to utilise subject managers more to this end. The SED also indicated the University's belief that the process was comprehensive, and that levels of evaluation were improving.

62 The audit team was able to scrutinise the reports produced on the basis of the 2003-04 academic year and was able to concur with the University view that the school reports showed a significant improvement on the previous year. Notwithstanding the common pro forma now in use across all schools, the reports still varied significantly in terms of their layout, their detail and their level of critical analysis. The team

noted the mechanism introduced by AQSC to discuss the main reports within a cross-school forum. Nevertheless it considered that further progress in terms of achieving greater comparability of presentation and a more consistent degree of critical analysis was advisable in order to allow the Academic Board, as the main committee within the deliberative process, to take an appropriate overview of the University's academic objectives and the contribution of each school to their achievement.

Periodic review

63 The University implemented a new periodic review scheme in 2003-04. The periodic review process is designed to confirm that the quality and academic standards of programmes are being maintained, that programme validation documents are valid and that the programme level data sets are routinely utilised. Normally review of a programme or a cluster of programmes will occur within a period of five years. School Quality Committees set up a Programme Review Panel to examine the documentation and to meet the appropriate staff, students and others. This Panel will include academics from elsewhere in the school, an academic from another school, and an external academic. A report is produced from the Panel, and the Programme Team is required to produce an action plan based on the outcomes of the report. This is monitored by the school, and progress is reported to the AQSC.

64 There are also periodic reviews of schools on a four-year cycle, to evaluate the academic work of a school, to report on its management of quality and the academic standards of its awards and to enhance quality across the University by the identification of areas for improvement and the dissemination of good practice. The Review Panel is normally chaired by the Deputy Vice-chancellor (Academic), and includes senior staff from other schools and two external academics with senior management experience. Each school produces an SED before the review meeting which results in a report. The school then produces an action plan, and the report and action plan are submitted to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee and

forwarded for consideration and approval by the Academic Board. The outcomes are monitored at school level, and a progress report is submitted.

65 The SED identified that the strengths of the scheme lay in strong externality. Two senior academics from other institutions are used in School Review and one at programme level. Meetings with students are a part of both levels of review, and for School Review a representative of the Students' Union is a full member of the Review Panel.

66 In terms of periodic programme reviews the University had identified the need to make provision for staff development and support from QED, and the SED reported that a member of QED had acted as an observer and given oral feedback on at least one event in each school. The reviews are timed to take place after a programme has become firmly established, generally in the year preceding revalidation. The review may recommend either the continued validation of the programme or the need to proceed to revise the programme in advance of a full revalidation.

67 The reports scrutinised by the audit team were appropriate in their detail and in the level of externality involved in their production. However, in meetings with DAT staff, the team found that general staff awareness of the link between periodic programme review and revalidation was limited. The team was told that staff would become progressively more aware of the new system as they became more directly and personally affected by review and validation events. Nevertheless the team considered it desirable for the University to ensure that staff became more aware of its QA procedures in general and, in particular, of the important link between review and revalidation.

68 The SED indicated that the detail of programme review was still under revision, particularly with a view to reducing elements of repetition in relation to the requirements of PSRBs and other University systems. For example, the University proposed that periodic review evaluations and reports may be used for the subsequent cycle of programme annual

monitoring. The SED also identified that the first programme reviews had yielded Programme Evaluation Documents of variable quality, and had reinforced a need to disseminate good practice both within and across schools.

69 By the time of the audit the new process of School Periodic Review had led to a review of the Derbyshire Business School in spring 2004, and a review of the School of Arts, Design and Technology in autumn 2004. The SED reported that much was learned from the first review, and recommendations from the Review Panel included some amendments to the process. The audit team noted that the second school evaluation report had adopted some of the lessons learned as a consequence of the recommendations arising from the first report and that, in general, it considered that the University was taking appropriate steps to evaluate its processes in a responsible manner.

Internal academic audit

70 As part of the revision of the committee structure, the previous Academic Audit Committee has been replaced by a new mechanism. In its review the University had recognised that there was a need to 'improve the transparency of internal audit, and the engagement of staff with its outcomes, in order to maximise enhancement'. The Academic Board adopted a formal policy as a basis for this new mechanism in 2003. This policy sets out the criteria for conducting an audit and the terms of reference and responsibilities of an identified pool of individuals involved, including identification of those responsible for putting into effect the audit outcomes. Decisions concerning the strands to be audited rest ultimately with the Academic Board, informed by suggestions from either AQSC or the Corporate Management Team. One or more of the members of the pool would be members of an audit team, with other members being selected on the basis of expertise relative to the area being audited. The chair of each audit panel would normally be a member of the Academic Board.

71 The audit process was temporarily suspended while restructuring took place. By

the time of the QAA audit visit, one audit of collaborative arrangements had been carried out under the new methodology and a second audit of the Lifelong Learning Scheme (Learning Through Work) took place in autumn 2004. The University had identified some concerns regarding the new process. In particular it had identified the need for consistency in the process, having noted that, since audit chairs and panel membership would change each time, good practice might be lost and expertise fail to develop. It was therefore decided, in time for the conduct of the first audit, to provide a senior administrator from QED to act as secretary to each audit, assisting in organisation, attending meetings, and overseeing report writing. The secretary would ensure consistency, and pass on good practice, as well as having a key organisational role.

72 A second concern identified by the SED centred on the nomination of audit chair. It noted that finding a nominee from the Academic Board with sufficient expertise who can commit the necessary amount of time to an audit was proving challenging, and it may be that other criteria should be used to nominate chairs.

73 The SED indicated that these changes in light of experience have introduced a more developmental focus to the process and that the University is endeavouring to move from a passive state of 'being audited' to one of more active involvement. The audit team considered that the steps being taken by the University to review its system of internal academic audit were balanced and appropriate and would encourage the University to resolve the issues it has identified so as to establish a clear, sustainable and efficient audit process.

74 The audit team found that the University had made significant changes to its procedures for approval, monitoring and review and that, in general, these changes had been based on an open and constructive appraisal of those procedures. The University had also identified continuing weaknesses, which it was taking appropriate action to address. As those new processes become embedded within the

University's thinking, the team noted instances of inconsistencies across schools, particularly in terms of the presentation and critical content of annual reports, and limited staff awareness of some aspects of the QA procedures, particularly the link between periodic programme review and the revalidation process.

External participation in internal review processes

75 Acknowledging that external peers have not always been involved in University procedures, the SED emphasised the importance that the University currently places on external participation, claiming that it is now a key feature of the University's framework for the management of quality and academic standards. The SED also explained that whilst academic peers represent the largest group of participants, representatives from industry, the professions and commerce are also involved. The SED indicated that the University ensures that current external examiners are excluded from the programme review process so as to ensure an impartial view. The audit team noted the active engagement of the University with Buxton and the High Peak Development Agency both in terms of its engagement with the regional agenda and the enhancement of the student learning experience.

76 On the basis of a consideration of the available documentation, the audit team is able to confirm that the operation of arrangements is in line with the statements made in the SED and that the University includes appropriate external participation in the full range of its quality assurance procedures.

External examiners and their reports

77 It is a requirement of the University that at least one external examiner should be appointed in respect of each programme or subject leading to an award of the University. In the case of programmes or subjects with large numbers of students, or comprising more than one subject, additional external examiners are appointed to cover their size and scope. The procedures governing the appointment and use of external

examiners are consistent with the precepts and guidance set out in the *Code of practice*.

78 The University appoints external examiners in three categories: Programme/Award Examiners with responsibilities in relation to a named programme or award, including normally a number of programme/award modules; Subject Examiners with responsibilities solely in relation to a number of modules in a subject area; and in the case of programmes with more than one Programme/Award Examiner, the possibility of a Chief Examiner with overall responsibility for coordinating the contributions of the various members of the examining team. Exceptionally, in circumstances where assessment is conducted in a language other than English (for example an overseas collaborative arrangement), external moderators may be appointed to assist external examiners.

79 The procedures for appointing external examiners are long standing. Nominations from programme leaders are first considered by the relevant SQC. If approved at this level, nominations are then considered by a University Scrutineer, appointed by the University's Quality Enhancement Department. In the case of postgraduate research examiners, nominations are considered by the relevant School Research and Research Degrees Committee prior to approval or otherwise by the University Research Degrees Committee (URRDC).

80 External examiners are also invited to an annual forum, held in January. These events provide opportunities for quality enhancement and usually focus on specific topics. Previous forums, for example, considered the impact of changes to undergraduate assessment regulations, and commented on the new report form and proposals to accommodate Teaching Quality Information (TQI) requirements. The January 2005 forum considered induction and training for external examiners. Postgraduate externals have contributed to a current review of postgraduate regulations.

81 Reports from external examiners are scrutinised both centrally and locally. Schools are responsible via the School Quality

Committee for ensuring that each external examiner report is considered by the relevant Programme/Subject Committee, and that appropriate responses are submitted to the external examiner detailing actions taken, or to be taken. These processes form part of both programme and also school annual monitoring.

82 At University level both the Vice-Chancellor and the Director of Quality Enhancement read the reports of external examiners. In the case of any serious concerns at programme/school level, a copy of the school response is sent to the Director of Quality Enhancement for monitoring. The Director also responds personally to external examiners regarding institutional-level concerns. In addition, in the autumn of each year the External Examiners' Reading Panel (EERP), consisting of a small group of academics representing each school, considers all the external examiner reports for the previous year. This panel compiles an independent report highlighting common trends and issues which are then considered further as part of the processes of annual monitoring.

83 The responsibilities of external examiners are clearly articulated both as part of the appointment procedures and also in the documentation made available to programme leaders and internal examiners and moderators via the '3R's Handbook'. Attention is specifically drawn to their responsibilities to verify that the University's standards are appropriate to awards for which they have a responsibility, taking account of the level descriptors in the University credit framework and relevant subject benchmarks. In addition they are asked to comment upon the maintenance of academic standards by comparing student performance with equivalent students in other institutions and also by ensuring that the assessment process is valid and fair.

84 The audit team viewed external examiners' reports across a range of programmes and levels, including the responses by programme leaders and the subsequent monitoring and follow up procedures at both school and University levels. Although some variations in practice were noted in terms of the reporting

procedures used at both programme and school levels, the audit trails confirmed that this aspect of quality assurance and enhancement is generally secure and suitably responsive to the issues raised by external examiners.

External reference points

85 The *Code of practice*, the FHEQ, and the subject benchmark statements have materially influenced the development of the University's academic infrastructure. The University has taken advantage of developmental engagements to evaluate the effectiveness of its evolving regulations, policies and procedures.

86 In terms of the *Code of practice*, implementation was initially incremental, each section upon publication being scrutinised by relevant groups in the University, leading proposals to amend practice which were subsequently implemented. In due course, AQSC took the view that a more strategic overview was necessary in order to ensure a thoroughly consistent implementation and monitoring of the precepts. Accordingly all sections were systematically mapped in terms of practice with oversight of individual sections delegated to key senior managers. The subsequent restructuring of schools provided an opportunity to embed the precepts in the terms of reference of both school and University committees, which now provide the primary safeguards for these aspects of quality assurance on an on-going basis.

87 The FHEQ was closely scrutinised by the Academic Board, and with the exception of the regulations for the Doctor of Practice, which were subsequently amended, a view was taken that University regulations and level descriptors required little amendment. At the time of the audit, level descriptors for M level were being revised as part of a current review of postgraduate regulations. Subject benchmarks are now routinely considered as part of programme approval processes, and distributed to all members of validation panels.

88 Programme specifications, taking full account of these external reference points are

mandatory for all programmes. The University sees these specifications as the most challenging aspect of the QAA infrastructure, in the sense that the suggested formats as originally proposed were geared to the needs of institutions and far from student-friendly. Programme developers are accordingly being encouraged to produce programme specifications which are more accessible to both students and potential employers as part of the processes of programme approval and revalidation. One key benefit that has been identified and acted upon in this context is the need to embed the development of skills and knowledge in programmes in a suitably focussed manner.

89 In the case of revalidation, a further consideration is the periodic programme review which takes place one year before, and provides the primary forum for the consideration of these key aspects. The associated Programme Evaluation Document specifically requires a review of QAA subject benchmarks and PSRB requirements to ensure that the programme specifications meet the requirements of these external reference points. Similarly the Validations and Approvals Procedures manual makes explicit reference to relevant QAA subject and qualification benchmarks and, where relevant, professional body requirements.

90 Whereas the procedures for periodic programme review and validation/revalidation seem suitably robust in this regard, a potential weakness may exist in the procedures that are available for minor modifications to existing programmes. Although the changes allowed via these procedures are necessarily limited they nonetheless embrace considerations such as the learning and teaching strategies of programmes and the specifications for pathways. Such changes may have implications in terms of external reference points, and the potential outcomes in this context as a result of a series of incremental changes between validations could prove significant. The University may wish to consider revisiting the terms of reference for these procedures to ensure that this important aspect of quality assurance is not inadvertently overlooked.

91 The audit team, via the DATs and associated documentation and reports on recent validations, revalidations and periodic programme reviews, was able to confirm that the expectations of relevant external reference points are appropriately embedded in the design of programmes, and the associated processes of learning, teaching and assessment. One aspect of the Combined Subject Programme (CSP), however, raised some issues which warranted further enquiry.

92 The CSP is designed for students who wish to obtain a degree in two or three named subjects, and for those who wish to delay their decision on the extent to which they wish to specialise in those subjects until the end of the first year. The structure of this programme is suitably coherent in terms of the choice of subjects and modules within subjects, with appropriate safeguards in terms of progression year by year.

93 The University, however, also provides an Open Credit Scheme (OCS) which currently caters for the needs of a small but growing number of students. The scheme allows students to determine the content of their degree from the University's provision as a whole with no requirement to take any particular modules from any given subject. In the view of the audit team this raises issues about overall coherence and progression, which can only be partially addressed by prerequisites, and creates difficulties in terms of designing a definitive programme specification. Having considered the framework and also taken account of the comprehensive information and guidance given in the programme handbook, the team came to the conclusion that the University would be advised to revisit the scheme and to establish processes to ensure that students follow a coherent programme.

Programme-level review and accreditation by external agencies

94 Since the last QAA audit in December 2001, three developmental engagements have been conducted at the University. The SED reported that their recommendations were considered at

programme and school level as well as institutionally, with the Academic Board being informed of the outcomes and AQSC responsible for their scrutiny. Examples highlighted by the SED included the introduction of more staff development and a review of staff-student ratios leading to the inclusion of a specific target in the University's Corporate Plan.

95 In one developmental engagement report it was recommended that 'the University might wish to consider putting in place a requirement for a more formal method for the recording of meetings'. The current audit team noted that, in general, the quality of the papers seen by the team and produced for internal University and school meetings was high, as was the quality of the minuting of such meetings. However the team also noted a degree of variation in the policies adopted in the production of minutes and was told that the University did not have a central policy on the taking of minutes. The team would therefore wish to encourage the University to develop a more consistent minute format, based on the identification and dissemination of best practice.

96 The cycle of subject reviews had been completed at the University by the time of the last QAA audit and the SED reported that those issues which had been highlighted within that cycle had been addressed at that stage.

97 The SED reported that 'it is the University's policy to seek professional accreditation for its taught programmes of study where appropriate and a significant number have achieved such recognition'. Across the University's academic disciplines the main subject areas attracting accreditation include business, computing, education, engineering, health and social care, law and psychology. Since the last audit, 32 accreditation applications have been made, all of which were reported in the SED as having been successful.

98 Since 2001 the University has maintained a database of all accredited programmes, which is revised annually. The SED reported that the database is made available to each school to update its records and to flag up important accreditation dates. Schools are actively

involved in the accreditation process and maintain records of accreditation documentation and correspondence with PSRBs to reflect the established good practice associated with programme validation.

99 The SED indicated that reports arising from validation events and reviews involving professional bodies, Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), and other PSRBs are addressed either at programme or school level. Any matters for action are identified and form part of the annual programme monitoring process. The issues arising from the accreditation process are also considered during Periodic Programme Review.

100 The audit team saw evidence which corroborated the views expressed in the SED and confirmed that a consideration of PSRB reports is included routinely within School Annual Monitoring Reports and as part of the process of Periodic Programme Review. It also appeared to the team that issues arising from such reports were identified at an appropriate point within the system for subsequent consideration and action.

Student representation at operational and institutional level

101 In their discussion with the audit team, the University of Derby Students' Union (UDSU) Officers indicated that they have good formal and informal access to senior University staff at Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor level including a monthly meeting with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Services). They are members of the Academic Board, AQSC and other senior committees. They meet Governing Council and participate in the Governor's 'away day' with senior staff. They were also members of the Institutional Audit Steering Group.

102 Student representation at school level was identified as problematic in the previous audit despite the University's efforts to encourage student participation. The means of representation at school level has changed recently from School Board to school LTA committees. There is also representation at

campus level through the recently formed Campus Forum which includes an UDSU representative and programme representatives. The HE students involved in the move to Buxton are also afforded the opportunity to discuss issues pertinent to this move through the two- to three-weekly meetings of the Buxton Student Liaison Committee.

103 At operational level the main means of student representation is through the Programme Committees. Student representatives for these committees are chosen in a number of ways ranging from election to nomination. Students are also represented on various ad hoc Committees at University level, including the Retention Strategy Group, and have participated in the two school Periodic Reviews held to date. Both the University and UDSU claimed that there was a programme of training for student representatives run by UDSU which had trained a significant number of representatives.

104 The SED asserted that the students themselves acknowledged the accessibility of senior management and the consideration given to student issues. It was also claimed that student participation in Governing Council and University Court, the Academic Board and AQSC has resulted in significant contributions to policy development, for example the anonymised marking of examinations. The SED did, however, acknowledge that the University had experienced difficulty in securing student representation on the majority of formal senior committees, at Campus Forum and school boards. The University is working with UDSU to improve the level of participation in these committees and the Campus Forum.

105 Representation at programme committee level is viewed as both active and effective and is supported by reports from Developmental Engagements. Meetings are minuted and progress on actions reported back to students.

106 In their meeting with the audit team students from the UDSU Executive Committee were complimentary with regard to the access they had to senior University staff and the results it produced. The SWS expressed satisfaction with the extent of representation on

senior university committees but did not comment explicitly on other levels of representation. Students commented positively on the concept of Campus Forum and were particularly appreciative of the fact that senior members of University staff had to respond face-to-face to students who had experienced problems which had not been resolved to their satisfaction. However, they felt that the low levels of student participation were due to lack of student awareness of meetings and that more effective publicity was needed to address this. The students at all levels also expressed some concern over the representation of part-time and distance-learning students.

107 On the basis of available documentation and its meetings with students and staff, the audit team was able to establish that the SED was accurate in its overall assessment of the representation of full-time students but could have been more reflective on the representation of part-time and e-learning students. The formal and informal representation at the most senior levels is clearly valued by students and staff. The Campus Forum is potentially a significant development and the University has invested considerable effort in ensuring the attendance of senior staff. There will, however, in the view of the team have to be much improved awareness and interest amongst the student body if the Forum is to succeed.

108 It was evident to the audit team that student participation at School Boards had been poor and the initiative to replace this with representation on school LTACs, while an appropriate measure in tune with the new committee structure at school level, is so new that only two of the four schools have held meetings where such representation was possible. There is some evidence, however, that it will take considerable effort to ensure student attendance at these meetings.

109 The programme is the key unit of organisation in the University with Programme Leaders playing the key staff role. Programme committees generally meet regularly with effective student representation, although there were some examples where committees had

not met or were otherwise not operating as intended. The quality of minutes was generally good with actions being followed and progress reports made back to students.

110 A training programme is available for student representatives, but the audit team found, in contrast to the University and UDSU's claim, that only a minority of the student representatives they met had received training.

111 The audit team was mindful of the mechanisms put in place by the University to facilitate student representation on its boards and committees, but formed the view, on the basis of discussions with staff and students and of written evidence, that the University should consider taking action to address the variability of student participation in representative processes at school level. It might also wish to seek further ways of enhancing the effectiveness of the Campus Forum, which is potentially a valuable mechanism for student feedback.

Feedback from students, graduates and employers

112 The University has a Student Representation and Feedback Policy which was revised to take account of structural and other developments in the University in October 2004. This outlines 'The Model' for ensuring that feedback is systematically and effectively gathered at module, programme and institutional level. The Module Evaluation Questionnaire (MEQ) is distributed at set times of the year, is processed centrally and the analysis completed at module, programme, school and institutional level. Programme committees are important in gathering feedback and reporting on actions at both programme and module level with school LTACs fulfilling a similar function at school level. The Campus Forum is intended to gather information on the quality of services provided to students and complement the Institutional Annual Student Satisfaction survey.

113 The main feedback from graduates at institutional level is obtained through the First Destinations Survey although there are some

examples of good practice at the operational level (for example in Law) where ex-students have a considerable positive impact on the student experience through feeding their employment experience back to current students.

114 To gather employer feedback Derbyshire Business School organises an annual event at which placement employers are invited to give feedback and the SED claimed significant employer involvement in programme design and development. UDCB has close links with the Peak Partnership and voluntary organisations and the audit team formed the view that such links are examples of good practice which lead to enhanced opportunities for student learning. The BDU researches market demand and trends and identifies employer needs.

115 In their meetings with the audit team University staff expressed confidence in the robustness of the mechanisms for obtaining and responding to feedback from students and employers generally. However, in addition to the difficulties experienced in ensuring proper participation at school level and in the Campus Forum the University acknowledged in the SED that the module evaluation questionnaires had suffered from delays in reporting and that the feedback from e-learning modules has been 'patchy'. Steps were being taken to address these issues. The Institutional survey had a claimed good return rate of 35 per cent.

116 The University notes that students praise the running of programme committees and although the SWS did not comment on this matter the majority of students met remarked positively on the conduct of, and results produced by, the programme committees. There were however some instances of meetings not being held, or committee meetings which in the view of the students were not operating in a satisfactory manner.

117 The MEQ is a significant development and its continued development should be able to take account of the problems which have emerged over the timing of the questionnaire and its impact on student feedback. There were, as already indicated, some acknowledged problems with feedback from e-learning

students and with the Campus Forum but these were being actively addressed. While programme committee meetings generally work well there are some limited cases where meetings do not take place or are not operating in the prescribed manner.

118 The audit team noted the positive developments in relation to employers both at University level, where the Vice-chancellor and senior colleagues regularly engaged with local employers in discussions on the regional agenda, and at local level, for example at UDCB, where collaboration with the High Peak Development Agency had led to several projects and other work-based learning opportunities which had enhanced the student learning experience. The Law Department had also developed links with local Law Centres to offer significant opportunities to students to work in a real advisory capacity.

119 In the view of the audit team the arrangements for securing and responding to feedback from students, graduates and employers were effective and robust, particularly with full-time students. However, the team also formed the view that the University should seek to address more effectively the problem of student representation at school level identified in the last audit.

Progression and completion statistics

120 The SED noted that the production and use of student statistics has been a priority in the period since the last audit. Two initiatives have played a particular role in this context: the GAIA project and the Retention Initiative.

121 GAIA is the main statistical resource maintained electronically by the University, covering all aspects of student statistics from admission and progression to completion and graduate destination. A key feature is the licensing of key individuals throughout the University, including staff within schools, in terms of direct access to the database. This facility augments the more conventional production and dissemination of statistics at periodic intervals and encourages staff to engage proactively with the data.

122 Whereas some members of staff have responded very positively to this initiative, others have been a little more reticent to take ownership of the data, preferring to be given data rather than source it themselves. In order to facilitate the production and dissemination of statistics, and also provide developmental support, a new Planning and Statistics Support team has been identified within the CSD.

123 The Retention Initiative has allowed the University to focus on local analysis of different categories of students to determine patterns of non-completion. Here the availability of data through GAIA online within schools has proved especially useful for admissions and student support, both in terms of targeting those most likely to drop out and also monitoring the effectiveness of the steps taken to reduce this risk. The Retention Strategy Progress Report (June 2004) provides strong evidence of areas of highly proactive engagement with this information within all schools, and these activities provide useful models for others to follow. The audit team formed the view that the development and implementation of the University's retention strategy, with the full engagement and support of staff and students, constituted good practice.

124 The use of statistics in evaluating quality and standards is articulated in the Quality Monitoring Procedures Guide, embracing aspects of annual programme and school reports, and the annual monitoring report from Central Support Services. In the specific context of student performance indicators, reports are required to include student recruitment, progression, retention and achievement statistics for taught provision, and an analysis of the statistics to indicate trends over the previous years and, where known, an indication of the reasons for these trends.

125 On the evidence of the annual programme and school monitoring reports made available to the audit team it would appear that the overall level of engagement with statistical data is somewhat variable, especially at programme level, and the team formed the view that the University might wish

to consider the advantages of ensuring a higher level of consistency in the degree of critical analysis. There are opportunities here to disseminate good practice more widely and also improve the consistency of engagement within all programmes with statistical data.

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

126 The SED described the University's staff appointment procedures as careful and rigorous. It referred to the emphasis on equality of opportunity for all applicants, training of staff involved in recruitment and, with new changes relating to academic appointments and inexperienced staff, greater emphasis on identifying the need for training and the attainment of teaching qualifications. In line with the University's mission, the recruitment policy for academic staff has a teaching focus in which research and scholarship are valued as supporting pedagogic practice and teaching quality. The audit team considered that the appointment procedures for academic staff, both full-time and part-time, were clear, appropriate and sound.

127 The University has kept under review the role of sessional lecturers and the extent to which their use impacts on the student experience. Following a recommendation from AQSC, contracts for sessional lecturers were recently reviewed. Proposed new contracts, which at the time of the audit were close to finalisation, clarify the roles and responsibilities of sessional staff, expressly including matters such as student support, attendance at meetings and participation in probation and development review. The University views sessional staff as a valuable resource, since many provide specialist expertise and current industrial or practitioner experience. However, it is recognised that the extent of their use should be carefully monitored.

128 Induction is organised both centrally, by the Human Resources department and also locally, within schools. Staff expressed satisfaction with induction arrangements and the

audit team noted the additional support for sessional academic staff provided by the induction checklist for managers. New staff receive documentary and online support in the 'green book', a comprehensive guide to the structure, organisation and processes of the University and newly-appointed programme leaders are supported by the Programme Leaders' Handbook, also available online. All new academic staff must complete a probationary period of six months or one year, in accordance with their contract. The team heard details of the processes employed for both full-time and part-time staff, including the observation of teaching and the support of a mentor.

129 The University's staff development and performance review arrangements were revised following an internal audit of the existing scheme in December 2002. The new Development and Performance Review Scheme, which uses simplified documentation, had been introduced at the time of the audit and the audit team were told of positive outcomes relating in particular to the identification of staff development needs.

130 Teaching excellence is recognised and promoted through the recently introduced Teaching and Research Fellowships Scheme, which replaces the previous system of Principal Tutors and school Readers. The scheme envisages a permanent Senior Teaching Fellow and a Senior Research Fellow, together with a number of Teaching Fellows, in each school. The latter will lead specific areas of learning and teaching development, whilst the Senior Teaching Fellow will perform a lead pedagogic role. Although the scheme was too new for its operation to be evaluated at audit, the audit team noted the University's positive approach to the encouragement and reward of excellence through clear specification of the new roles and the provision of some financial incentive for the post-holders. The University has extended the celebration and reward of excellence beyond teaching to embrace the recognition of excellent service throughout the institution in areas such as innovation, embracing change, the application of technology and improving quality, as well as in

teaching and learning. The 'Excellence Awards' for staff aim to identify special achievement across the University's activity and recognise and share excellent practice. In the first tranche, 39 team and individual awards were made.

131 In adopting the processes and measures described relating to the appointment, induction and development of sessional staff, the University has in the view of the audit team made a substantial response to the relevant recommendations of the 2002 QAA Quality Audit.

Assurance of the quality of teaching through staff support and development

132 One of the key strategic aims of the University's Corporate Plan is to develop the capability of its people, both individually and collectively. The SED explained that articulation with corporate planning is achieved through liaison between the Head of Staff Development and the key authors of the Corporate Plan. Centrally, both the Human Resources Department and the Quality Enhancement Department have a staff development remit relating, respectively, to corporate and to learning and teaching staff development activity. The SED referred to effective liaison between the two departments, with online information communicated to staff from a single source. It appeared to the audit team that liaison and information channels were functioning effectively. There was clear evidence of systemic planning of centrally delivered staff development activity, informed by school and departmental staff development plans. Staff development is a significant feature of the institutional enhancement agenda and the University has already completed the first phase of a project to develop this area further by commissioning an external consultant's report on a continuing professional development framework for academic staff.

133 Much of QED's staff development activity is organised locally, by negotiation, and can in this way overcome the difficulties associated with staff attendance, notably the tension between central programming and staff availability. While

recording the good evaluations received from staff in relation to local events, the SED recognised a need to increase participation. In this regard, initiatives have been introduced to increase flexibility in the delivery of staff development. The audit team noted, in particular, the Programme Leader's Handbook, and the staff 'green book', a comprehensive and valuable resource for all staff. These resources, together with various other on-line resources available on University of Derby Online (UDo), provide effective alternative mechanisms for the delivery of staff development. It was clear to the team that all staff, be they full-time or part-time, are welcomed at and encouraged to attend staff development events. The alternative staff development resources are of particular benefit to sessional staff, whose physical presence on campus is necessarily more limited than that of full-time staff.

134 At local level, staff development activity is planned and supported through the School Learning and Teaching Committees as well as through a number of post-holders, including the Staff Development Coordinator, the School Quality Manager and the new Teaching Fellows and Senior Teaching fellows. The Development and Performance Review scheme and the Observation, Monitoring and Support of Teaching scheme provide mechanisms for the identification of staff development needs. Information collected is incorporated into school planning and used to inform central staff development planning. Staff commended the opportunities available for academically- and pedagogically-based staff development.

135 The SED stated that, in line with Higher Education Academy guidelines, the University has a compulsory programme of training for inexperienced staff and offers an Institute for Learning and Teaching accredited Postgraduate Programme in Learning and Teaching (PGPLT), managed by the School of Education, Health and Sciences. The new staff recruitment procedures aim to encourage participation in the PGPLT programme by highlighting to new staff the need to achieve teaching qualifications. The audit team heard that both

full-time and sessional staff participate in the programme and that time is set aside for this, though sessional staff may well not commence their training until some time after they have taken up appointment. All staff are expected to participate in the University's Observation, Monitoring and Support of Teaching scheme, being observed and receiving confidential feedback at least once each year. Both full-time and sessional staff informed the team that they had participated in the scheme. Appropriate training is offered to graduate students who carry out teaching duties.

136 The audit team was able to confirm that the University had responded positively to the relevant recommendation of the 2002 QAA quality audit report in implementing procedures for the development of sessional staff. The team noted the University's inclusive and proactive approach in evaluating and responding to staff development needs and regarded this, and the high quality of support documentation for staff, in particular the Programme Leader's Handbook, as examples of good practice.

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

137 The University employs both paper-based and online media for distributed and distance learning. Its online provision ranges from pure e-learning programmes delivered via an external platform host to around 300 students, through to the publication of module materials on the University's own on-line service, UDo, used by over 50 per cent of the University's programmes. In 2003-04, over 720 students were enrolled on modules delivered exclusively via e-learning. The key aim of the University's e-learning strategy with regard to the student learning experience is to establish e-learning as a fundamental part of the University's mainstream activity. Targets for 2004-9 include the development of e-learning modules within each programme, e-learning opportunity for all students, the significant growth and retention in the number of students engaging in e-learning and extensive staff development.

138 The SED described the streamlining of the e-learning management and operational structure over the past two years, which had considerably reduced the number of e-learning groups across the institution. A new deliberative committee, the Collaborative and Distributed Learning (CDL) Sub-Committee of ASQC is now charged with central oversight of activity in this area. Until recently, the management infrastructure, changed for 2003-04 to accommodate the E-learning Enhancement Group, comprised three institutional level groups covering, respectively, Strategy, Operations and Enhancement. This structure aimed to ensure adequate and appropriate discussion of e-learning enhancement issues such as assessment, development process and staff development. The SED referred to the problematic demarcation between these three groups (all still in existence at the date of the SED), resulting largely in overlap rather than omission. There was, additionally, some concern about delays in identified action through issues being passed between groups. It became apparent that a review of the robustness of the infrastructure was required for 2004-05 and, at the time of the audit, the E-learning Enhancement Group had been merged with the Operations Group. The audit team concluded that the central management and operational structure for e-learning was still undergoing a process of definition, development and refinement. Similarly, there appeared to be a developing framework of e-learning structures within schools, with emergent links across schools and into the central infrastructure.

139 The University is currently facing the challenges presented by its use of different support technologies for e-learning. Options are being considered for the proposed move towards a single e-learning platform. There was consciousness within the University of the need for discussion of e-learning pedagogic models for the support of both on-campus and off-campus students, with appropriate resourcing in terms of staff time, and the need to ensure that the student learning experience is enhanced through transition to single-platform delivery. In this respect, the University's Centre for Educational

Development and Materials (CEDM) and the Centre for Interactive Assessment Development (CIAD), provide a valuable resource base.

140 Other challenges are also being addressed. The response rate to feedback questionnaires from online students has been low and results have not always reached the appropriate staff, but the SED explained that systems are being developed and feedback questionnaires revised to deal with these problems. The University is responding to issues raised by student feedback. A free online induction module for all e-learning students was launched to disseminate information relating to the e-learning experience and is being used to manage students' expectations of e-learning. Module tutor performance is being monitored to address concerns about tutor response times. It has proved more difficult to resolve the problems associated with the provision of off-campus examination centres, a matter which was raised by the 2002 QAA audit. Following the development of new policy in 2002-03, a working group is revising procedures in this area.

141 The SED set out the University's approach to quality assurance for distributed and distance learning. Provision is subject to the same policies and procedures as other provision, with additional checks embedded as appropriate. Thus, validation, annual monitoring, periodic review procedures and, where appropriate, collaborative procedures apply. Reports from programme and school annual monitoring and periodic school review are required to provide an evaluation of the development and effectiveness of the teaching, learning and assessment strategy and methods with reference to e-learning and other forms of distributed learning. External examiners' reports provide further opportunity for evaluation. Where a programme is to be 'substantially' delivered by distributed learning, the additional approval procedures include consultation with the CEDM, which provides technical and pedagogic support, and internal and external peer review of the materials. It appeared that these procedures were being applied and that, in this respect, the University has moved to

address the point for further consideration relating to the review of e-learning material raised by the 2002 Quality Audit Report. Nonetheless, with the planned growth of e-learning provision the University will wish to consider the defined extent of 'substantiality' and how this test is to be applied in relation to the approval of individual programmes.

142 A range of services has been put in place to support distributed and distance learning. Within the Learning Centre, the Distributed Learning Unit provides services to off-campus students and the Virtual Services Unit within the CSD deals with administrative matters relating to distributed modes of delivery. The E-learning Operational Manual, which sets out quality assurance procedures, provides a valuable reference document for staff. It was clear to the audit team that many features of the University's distributed and distance learning provision were valued by students and staff. Notwithstanding these endorsements, in view of the considerable challenges inherent in this particular delivery mode, the team considered it desirable for the University to move to a more centrally coordinated approach to the provision, utilisation and quality assurance of e-learning, with a greater emphasis on pedagogical considerations.

Learning support resources

143 The new Learning and Information Services Department (LIS) integrates those central services which provide learning support for students. There is a Learning Centre at each of the main sites with arrangements in place to secure the transfer of books and other materials between sites. Students can order and renew loans on-line through UDo. Each school has a dedicated support team to advise staff and students, who welcomed the active involvement of library staff in developing and supporting student learning.

144 The University has invested significantly in LIS over recent years including investment in sites due for closure. The overall view which emerged from the DATs and other meetings was that there were adequate funds available to

purchase books and other resources although there were some cases where students complained of shortages of appropriate texts. The LIS Department is integrated into other structures, including new approvals, through PAP. This mechanism is designed to ensure that sufficient resources are available to support all new programmes before they are approved.

145 The Department operates a Study Advisor Scheme which involves second year and higher level students being trained to work on a one-to-one basis with other students to help them identify and solve study skills problems. A dyslexic student voiced the particular assistance that this had been to her in the early stages of her studies. In the view of the audit team the Scheme was a further example of the University's commitment to student support.

146 According to the SED, the LIS Department is responsive to evaluation and actively seeks feedback. The staff and student feedback received, examples of which the audit team was able to consult, indicated high levels of satisfaction with the service provided.

147 The students expressed satisfaction with the provision of learning resources, in particular those available electronically through UDo both remotely and in the University. There was, however, generally a low level of awareness amongst students who met the audit team of the on-line service and interlibrary loan facility and the SWS pointed to the need for improved facilities in terms of internet access and IT; theatre facilities; reading material; and up-to-date equipment. The audit team was aware that this was based on the views of a relatively small number of students.

148 It was evident to the audit team from its discussions with students that there is a perception that the quality of LIS resources directly available to them is dependant on the site at which they are located, although the position will become more uniform as the University continues to rationalise its estate. This process of development was identified in the previous Audit and appeared to the team to be continuing satisfactorily.

149 The level of resources available was regarded by the students as generally satisfactory, with the LIS Department making an active, positive contribution to the student experience. There were some variances of the level of provision between sites as might be expected in an institution involved in the long term rationalisation of its estate. The University was, however, aware of this and was, through the planning process and other means, making efforts to make available appropriate resources at the smaller sites which will ultimately close. The development of UDo, although variable, was making a significant contribution to student learning both through the improved general availability of resources such as electronic journals, and the specific materials provided through the blended learning approach of many modules.

Academic guidance, support and supervision

150 The Continuation Audit found it desirable that the University should consider the simplification of student support and guidance processes. It has recently moved to a holistic approach which is reflected in the new University structures in which central academic support and welfare services have been brought together within the Customer Services Department (CSD) which liaises closely with schools. The University views academic and personal support holistically, an approach which is encapsulated in its Guidance and Learner Support Policy. This is delivered through a mixture of local tutor support, often focused on Programme Leaders, and a range of central services which provide financial guidance, counselling, health (including mental health), disability assessment and in-class support, and a Career Development Centre. Guidance as to the appropriate referral mechanism is helpfully given to staff in tabular form in the Programme Leaders Handbook and the Guidance Handbook. A Customer Information Centre is the contact point for each site and functions as a one-stop shop for students seeking advice and guidance. The University Career Development Centre provides information for jobs, gap years

and work abroad, and other advice for students during their studies and at entry and exit including the employability and work experience programmes.

151 Each school and the CSP has a CSD Customer Operations Manager who acts as the link between the Department and the school, and, as a result of the Retention Strategy, a Student Liaison Officer. Special arrangements are made for international students which include a pre-arrival pack, airport pick-up, and welcome week. Research students have their own programme of support comprising central induction, a central research seminar series and customised school/research centre support. Day to day support is provided largely through research supervisors.

152 The University encourages work-based learning (WBL) generally and placements in particular. There are examples of such initiatives across the University, although specific guidance on placements is not to be found in current University-level publications which contain much other helpful guidance. The SED acknowledged that the University needs to develop its practice in respect of placements. It has a working group engaged in revision of placement regulations, and is planning to initiate a working group to pull together good practice on WBL and placement. It hopes to encourage more students to take up placement opportunities and build on existing examples of good practice. The audit team would encourage the University to proceed to ensure that appropriate guidance on placements is available and effectively disseminated.

153 The University is the lead institution nationally of six universities developing and providing the Learning Through Work Scheme, an online framework for negotiating a programme which demonstrates and recognises learning achieved at work, which can contribute to a higher education qualification. The overall aim of the Scheme is to enhance personal employability and organisational effectiveness by stimulating the demand and extending the provision for learner-managed work-based learning through a quality-assured, flexible,

readily accessible and supportive framework for the delivery of undergraduate and postgraduate awards. The programme strongly supports the University's Widening Participation agenda. It took its first students in 2001 and by 2003/4 had 505 enrolled students (213 FTEs), many of them on programmes leading to minor awards of 30 credit points. The University's approach to the Scheme offers employers a valuable opportunity to develop with the University bespoke programmes of professional and workplace learning, tailored to organisational objectives and leading to University of Derby credit and awards. An internal Academic Audit of the scheme was carried out in 2004 involving input from an external specialist, employers, and students. It identified areas of good practice and made recommendations for action which were incorporated into the fifth version of the Derby Learning Through Work Operation Manual. The Team concluded that the Scheme, with its reflective and innovative approach in this area of work was an example of good practice.

154 It was evident to the audit team that the University was operating with due regard for the sections of the *Code of practice* on Career Education, Information and Guidance and Students with Disabilities, but the team formed the view that the University might wish to review the consistency of the support it provides to placement students, and, in publishing and implementing its revised placement regulations, ensure closer alignment with the section on Placement learning.

Personal support and guidance

155 The University does not operate a uniform Personal Tutor system and allows for local variation in the way such support is provided. This is frequently focused on the Programme Leaders although some schools operate systems involving year tutors, personal tutors and admissions tutors. The level of support, and student satisfaction, is monitored through the Student Satisfaction Survey, MEQs, Programme Committees, Programme Periodic Reviews and the Campus Forum. Students have access to the four Programme Advisors on technical

issues concerning their programmes. CSP students are supported by a team of 11 Academic Counsellors, drawn from academic staff, and coordinated by the Director of CSP. They undertake a twice-yearly review for each student, identifying where support or other intervention is necessary.

156 The University has a Code of Practice in relation to students declaring a disability. Students with disabilities are assessed at point of entry and a student support plan agreed. The plan is used to notify all appropriate staff through an appropriately rigorous set of procedures and is reviewed annually, as well as by individual request, with the student to ensure effectiveness. The Specialist Support team liaises with subject staff as well as disability coordinators in schools to ensure appropriate advice and support for students.

157 With regard to the *Code of practice, Section 3: Students with disabilities*, and the Disability Discrimination Act, the University commissioned an audit of teaching and learning support in this area in 2002 and carried out a review of progress in 2003. Evaluation of the procedure now occurs regularly through the Disability Coordinators Group and further investigation is being undertaken to analyse the effectiveness of that support from a school perspective.

158 Students expressed their satisfaction with the level of personal and academic support provided and many were fulsome in their praise of the 'open-door' policy of staff. There were many examples given where staff had made considerable efforts to help students through particular problems, both personal and academic. Combined students particularly welcomed the support they received in making their choice of courses from the wide range available to them. Some part-time students did, however, experience some difficulties in identifying and contacting an appropriate tutor but all eventually made contact with staff willing to provide the necessary service. Some placement students cited shortcomings in the level of support received. International students welcomed the University-level support provided at the point of entry to the University. Overall the general level of

commitment of staff was felt by students to be exceptional with many drawing favourable comparisons with their experience of other UK higher education institutions.

159 On the basis of discussions with staff and students at University level and within the DATs, and of its scrutiny of the documentation made available, the audit team reached the conclusion that the high level of staff commitment to student support, in particular at programme and module level, was an example of good practice.

Collaborative provision

160 The University's collaborative arrangements will be the subject of a separate audit.

Section 3: The audit investigations: discipline audit trails

Discipline audit trails

161 In each of the selected DATs, appropriate members of the audit team met staff and students to discuss the programmes, studied a sample of assessed student work, saw examples of learning resource materials, and studied annual module and programme reports and periodic school reviews relating to the programmes. Their findings in respect of the academic standards of awards are as follows.

Law

162 The DAT covered provision in Law and Criminology for the LLB, LLB (part-time), LLB with a Modern Language, LLB with Criminology, Combined Studies Programme (CSP) Law, CSP Criminology, LLM Commercial Law and LLM (part-time). The DSED had been prepared specifically for the institutional audit and all the relevant programme specifications were appended. These were clear and comprehensive, incorporating links to FHEQ, both at honours and masters levels, and addressing appropriate benchmark statements for the undergraduate programmes.

163 The progression and completion data available to the audit team was presented in a useful, non-complex format and was being used as an effective monitoring tool within the programmes. Staff spoke confidently about the interrogation of GAIA data at programme level and the accessibility of that data, though it appeared that the downloading of statistics from GAIA could be frustratingly time consuming. In addition to this annually generated data, the subject team had undertaken an eight-year longitudinal study of LLB students to trace retention and evaluate effective interventions. Data monitoring through the programme levels gave rise to concerns about progression and retention rates, particularly at Stage One and on the part-time programme. Action has been taken to address these issues, including modifications to induction, the Legal Context and Skills module and the Reflective Diary, as well as the re-ordering of modules for LLB part-time students. The team noted the clear articulation of this targeted, diagnostic and remedial approach to student progression and retention with the University's retention strategy and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.

164 Internal monitoring and review is undertaken within the University's framework. Annual programme reporting draws on evidence from statistical data monitoring, assessment board papers and results, module reporting, programme committee minutes, external examiner comment, feedback from placement providers, student feedback from module questionnaires and student Reflective Diaries. Using the University's template, programme annual reports incorporate action plans, which include both perceived strengths as well as issues, and from which progress on action points is tracked through to the following year. Diverse matters have been addressed. In direct response to student feedback, hard copy (as well as on-line) programme handbooks are made available to students, and representations on staffing made to the School Directorate were reported to have produced a satisfactory outcome. In accordance

with formal University quality monitoring procedures, annual programme reports are considered at Programme Committee and School Quality Committee and feed into school monitoring reports. Recent school annual monitoring reports provide examples of both strengths and weaknesses which have been tracked through from annual programme reporting in Law, for instance the good and flexible module choice on CSP Law and concern about retention rates for first year LLB part-time students. It appeared to the audit team that the annual monitoring process in Law was thorough and effective.

165 The subject team stated that external examiners were drawn from old and new Universities. Their recent reports have commented positively on the quality and health of the programmes and have commended good design, variety in assessment, useful feedback to students on the LLB and CSP Law and the skills content of the LLB programmes. External examiner reports inform annual programme monitoring. Programme Leader responses to external examiner reports are timely and appropriate, any institutional issues arising are followed through and responded to by QED and the report form provides space for external examiner comment on responses received. The audit team considered that the subject team's use of external examiners and their reports aligned with University policies and processes.

166 Assessment strategy in Law accords with the aim of the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy to equip students with the skills, knowledge and attributes to make them employable and to be reflective and independent learners. Assessments are diverse and include a variety of legal skills assessments, independent study assessments and Reflective Diaries, as well as examinations and problem-solving assignments. Students spoke enthusiastically about the value of legal skills in the curriculum, especially the input of visiting practitioners in the delivery of some of these modules. They referred to the recognition given by potential employers to student achievements in legal skills and, in particular, were clearly proud of their achievements in mooting and in the Clinic module.

167 In most of the samples of assessed work seen by the audit team, feedback to students ranged from being full and constructive to generally adequate, and the team formed the view that the subject team should consider encouraging more extensive feedback in some modules. Students indicated that personal feedback from tutors is available and of good quality. The subject team appeared to be implementing the University's moderation policy. Internal moderation reports were completed and independent studies assessments were double-marked.

168 Stage and module handbooks are produced both in hard copy and on University's intranet, UDo. The audit team noted that Stage handbooks gave clear information on staff, programme structure, learning outcomes, grade descriptors and student involvement in quality assurance procedures. Module handbooks included lecture outlines, prescribed reading and other learning materials. Although students confirmed that they were clear as to assessment requirements, and module books generally set out relevant information, the subject team might consider whether module assessment requirements could be presented in a clearer and more consistent format.

169 Following a recent comprehensive review of resources, based on the Draft Statement on Minimum Resources for Law Schools, the subject team is confident that its resourcing is adequate to provide student support in both Law and Criminology. Staff spoke of the good liaison between the subject team and the designated library law specialist and students indicated that prescribed books, as listed in module books, were made available in the library. Referring to the importance of electronic resources in Law, staff and students commended the training, demonstrations and individual assistance provided by the library in this area.

170 Visiting practitioner input into the undergraduate skills modules is a notable feature of staffing support and is seen as greatly enhancing the student experience. Students considered this to be a valuable aspect of their learning. Equally, students following the Clinic

module, though few in number, greatly valued the opportunity to experience law in practice through working on their own case load at local Law Centres. The audit team heard from students that the small number of sessional staff employed in Law were indistinguishable from other teaching staff in all respects concerning the quality of their programmes.

171 Academic and personal support for students is viewed holistically, in line with University philosophy. There is a formal personal tutor system on the undergraduate programmes, LLB full-time and CSP students having regular meetings with their personal tutors and LLM students with their supervisors. In addition, CSP students receive advice on module choices from a CSP Academic Counsellor and students told the audit team that any students who wish to 'sample' modules by attending sessions before firming up their module choices are encouraged to do so. LLB part-time students, whilst apparently not having a designated personal tutor, were happy with the support provided by the programme leader. Students praised the availability and helpfulness of tutors.

172 Action on feedback from students appears to be appropriate and timely. When LLM students raised the issue of out-of-date library books, this situation was speedily remedied; staff referred to the development of the Criminology Major in response to student pressure; and problems arising from the protracted sick leave of a lecturer were dealt with promptly to students' satisfaction. There is an LLB library student representative whose representations lead to satisfactory action.

173 Further formal representation occurs through student programme representatives, who are elected by their peers and receive training from the SU. While there was evidence of attendance by student representatives at programme committee meetings, this sometimes did not cover all stages of the programmes. Student attendance at Staff-Student Liaison Committee meetings was much stronger. Students provided examples of action taken as a result of student representation:

change to the timing of teaching sessions and, to deal with some apparent lack of motivation in Year 1, the organisation of an event at which Law alumni returned to give talks on careers and prospects for Law graduates.

174 The audit team considered that the subject teams provided a supportive and vibrant learning environment, further enhanced by local links and the input of practitioners. On the basis of the evidence provided and their discussions with staff and students, the audit team was able to confirm that the quality of learning opportunities was suitable for the programmes of study leading to the awards, and that the standard of student achievement was appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ.

Psychology

175 This DAT covered all degree schemes delivered by the Psychology subject area within the School of Education, Health and Sciences, including undergraduate single honours degree Psychology (both delivered on-campus and via e-learning mode), the non-professionally recognised degree in Psychological Studies, the honours degree in Psychology and Counselling Studies and the combined subject programme pathways in Psychology. In addition, the professionally accredited Master's in Health Psychology was examined. The Psychology provision in Israel, Inter College and Burton on Trent College was not considered, as it comes within the scope of the forthcoming separate collaborative audit. In addition, it was noted that there was also provision in the area of Psychology in the combined subject programme in the Derbyshire Business School and in the University of Derby College at Buxton, which were not included in this DAT. The DSED was separately produced for this audit, and was presented along with programme specifications for each programme.

176 The DSED claimed that the aims of the provision were contained within each programme specification and were informed and influenced by the QAA subject benchmark. It was also claimed that module reports were reviewed to ensure that they reflect subject benchmarks.

Although there was no explicit mention of the QAA *Code of practice* or of the FHEQ, the programme learning outcomes provided within the programme specifications appeared to the audit team to be based on the Subject benchmark statement for psychology, and this was confirmed in external examiner reports.

177 There was clear evidence that the centralised GAIA statistical system was well used in the current year, and detailed comparisons across time were possible; in addition, individual students could be tracked, enabling the examination of any link between particular student characteristics (for example, gender or different entry qualifications) and their progress on a particular programme. The annual monitoring report provided a detailed examination of student data. The progression and completion data provided suggested that there was a very high retention and completion rate. About 50 per cent of all graduates gain at least an Upper Second class honours degree. Detailed statistics for the MSc students were obtained from GAIA, and were extensively used in the programme annual monitoring report.

178 Detailed information was provided for a number of modules and in every case there was a module report along with a statistical summary of the results of the centralised module evaluation questionnaire. Although a significant number of students had completed this questionnaire and useful overall feedback was provided, it was noted that not all questions referred to every course, and students were often confused in answering questions about feedback on their performance in assessments. In the view of the audit team the subject team might consider adapting this questionnaire or providing ancillary notes to ensure the usefulness and comparability of feedback gained. It was also noted at a programme committee that the feedback questionnaire posed problems for a student with a visual impairment.

179 In their meeting with the audit team, staff did not demonstrate a clear awareness or comprehension of the University's new processes for quinquennial programme review and

revalidation. The audit team formed the view that the University might wish to consider ways of enhancing staff awareness of its quality assurance procedures as they continue to develop.

180 Each external examiner report is carefully considered at the relevant programme committee, and there is a section in the annual monitoring report which summarises their concerns and suggestions. In addition, an annual programme report action plan is produced which is illuminated inter alia by the comments from external examiners. All examiners are written to individually to inform them how their report has been considered and what the outcome of deliberations has been.

181 Members of the Psychology subject area play an active part in the School Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee, and have informed discussions there. In several instances (for example, in the development of e-learning) the subject group has been at the forefront of developments in the University, and has influenced the development of policy. A variety of assessments is utilised, and assessment strategies and criteria are clearly set out and communicated to students. Assessments are carefully considered at programme committees and in annual monitoring reports, and are changed as necessary in the light of ongoing experience.

182 Assessed work seen by the audit team was entirely appropriate for this discipline area. External examiners' reports stated that they were satisfied with the quality and level of work produced and confirmed that the quality of student performance is very closely comparable with that on similar courses elsewhere in the UK.

183 The audit team noted that detailed student handbooks were provided; for the undergraduates one handbook was produced for the first and second year students together and an entirely separate one for the third year students (in cases where there is considerable choice of course). Students spoke highly of the handbooks and the quality of the information contained in them. Detailed course information (including summaries of each lecture and assignment) was also provided online.

184 The provision of learning resources appeared to be adequate, and was highly praised by the students, who were particularly appreciative of some of the more unusual equipment available. Learning resources are considered in detail at the programme committee, and have a separate section in the annual monitoring report. Several student evaluations particularly praised materials available via module web pages. Students made some negative comments regarding library provision and computer availability, but the audit team was informed that these issues were being actively pursued.

185 Students play an active part in programme committees, which are well minuted and lead to action plans and subsequent discussion of progress. An example was the requesting of case studies in a particular module, which were subsequently provided. Other issues raised in committees included the library provision, computer availability and the prompt provision of lecture notes on the web.

186 The students attend programme committees on a regular basis, and they confirmed in their meeting with the audit team their belief that they are carefully listened to and their suggestions acted upon. Every module is evaluated, and a report is written on an annual basis, which includes student feedback questionnaire data as one of the sources of evidence. In addition, the students spoke of the ease they experienced in contacting members of staff, and their responsiveness. In particular, the programme leader was seen as being a key figure in quality management and enhancement.

187 On the basis of the evidence provided and their discussions with staff and students, the audit team was able to confirm that the quality of learning opportunities was suitable for the programmes of study leading to the awards and the standard of student achievement was appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ.

Travel, Tourism and Events

188 The DSED had been specifically prepared for audit. The scope of the DAT comprised courses in Travel, Tourism and Events management leading to the Awards of MA Tourism Management, BA (Hons) Events Management, CSP Events Management, BA (Hons) Tourism, CSP Tourism, CSP Travel and Tourism, CSP Adventure Tourism, BA (Hons) Travel and Tourism Management, HND Travel and Tourism Management, and HND Heritage Tourism and Countryside Management. These programmes have been moved to the University of Derby College, Buxton (UDCB) which is approximately 30 miles from the main Derby Campus. UDCB as an academic school was formed in 2003 as a part of the institutional restructuring following a merger of the division of Tourism and Hospitality Management (previously located within the Derbyshire Business School) and the School of Access and Further Education.

189 The programmes are currently being transferred from the main Derby Kedleston Road Site to the new Devonshire Royal Campus that is being developed at Buxton. The move is being organised so as to ensure that students who started their studies at Derby can complete them there. The UDCB Campus is unique in the University in that there is a substantial further education student presence that is planned to account for around 75 per cent of the eventual student numbers. The main HE provision covered within this DAT currently runs level 4 at Buxton, with levels 5 and 6 currently running at Derby and planned to move in September 2005 and 2006 respectively. The master's programme will transfer in September 2005. Student numbers for 2004-05 took a significant downturn due to the decision to move being taken around Christmas 2003, with students who had applied to Derby being notified accordingly and some choosing to withdraw. Current application figures would suggest that this is a short term downturn which has been successfully overcome.

190 The DAT meetings indicated that the HE provision at UDCB has a group of HE staff on terms and conditions equivalent to other

University HE staff and distinct from those of FE staff. The HE provision is also subject to separate annual monitoring. There are defined procedures for the development and transfer of FE staff qualified for and wishing to undertake HE work on a part or full-time basis.

191 The programme specifications for all programmes made clear reference to the appropriate external benchmarks and are compliant with the FHEQ. The specifications were developed in consultation with employers and Sector Skills Councils and where appropriate made use of Occupational Standards. The specifications are clear in relation to both the learning outcomes to be achieved and the structures of the programmes, and are available to students on UDo.

192 The school's current placement practice is underpinned by the *Code of Practice, Section 9: Placement learning*. The school does, however, identify some concerns with regard to placements and is about to undertake its own review of work placements to inform developments at University level.

193 The Programme Monitoring Reports reviewed showed very little use of GAIA-derived progression and completion data. The school is aware of this and is addressing the issue. Staff also commented favourably on the progress that had been made recently in developing the GAIA system and the reports available from the MEQs, and there were some examples of good use of qualitative comments from MEQs in particular.

194 The programmes reviewed presented a full set of reflective Annual Monitoring Reports for programmes and modules. The programme reports were scrutinised by a subcommittee of the School Quality Committee which advised on improvements where necessary. This provided an opportunity for the Programme Leaders to meet and discuss their reports and disseminate good practice to the less experienced authors.

195 The example of the Events Management programmes would indicate that internal monitoring and review are working effectively. Feedback from both students and external

examiners indicated that there were quite severe problems with this programme in relation to a number of issues. The programme team responded by making changes to both content and modes of assessment which have received a very positive response from the students and the external examiner.

196 External examiners' reports were available for all programmes and in each case the University pro forma had been completed in an analytical and reflective manner. These provided the basis of an individual written response to each examiner which was considered and approved by the School Quality Committee together with the original report. The audit team noted one case in which an adverse report received from an external examiner generated meetings and discussions at University level, a response from the School Director and an institutional response from the Director of Quality Enhancement. The School Annual Monitoring Report contains full reference to external examiners' reports when indicating strengths and weaknesses of the school's provision.

197 The MEQs indicate that there are high levels of satisfaction with the setting of assignments, the communication of assessment criteria and the assessment workload.

198 The varied and innovative assessment strategies, clear marking schemes and subject specific assessment criteria used in UDCB are commented on favourably by external examiners and University- and school-level reviews. These combine with the flexible and vocationally orientated curricula with good industry links and placement opportunities to produce a provision that articulates well with the University's regional agenda. The QAA *Code of practice* on Assessment is not specifically mentioned in any local documentation, but the provision generally appears in line with the expectations of the *Code*.

199 The samples of student work consulted by the audit team indicated that the tasks set for students were well matched to the assessment strategies set out in the relevant programme specifications. Scrutiny of marked student work

confirmed that independent study work was subject to double-marking, and that moderation of coursework was being undertaken in accordance with the University's procedures. The work available to the audit team matched the expectations of the programme specifications. Feedback to students is provided on all the course work they submit for assessment. Students who met the indicated they were content with the level and quality of feedback comments they received.

200 The Programme Handbooks seen were generally an accurate reflection of the programme concerned and helpful to students. Students commented favourably on the assistance the CSP handbook provided to them in choosing their paths of study. The Module Handbooks provided very clear assessment briefs and full marking criteria. This was identified as a shortcoming in the school's 2003-04 Annual Monitoring Report and has produced an appropriate response.

201 Overall, the results of the MEQs show a high degree of satisfaction and are positive about the level of support received from academic staff. There was some variability in the use of UDo by staff with evidence of much emerging good practice employing a variety of pedagogic models. The UDo generally, and the electronic journal access in particular, were valued by students.

202 The School Development Plan for UDCB 2004-08 identified that the development of a Derbyshire Royal Campus was likely to put pressure on resources. The evidence would suggest, however, that while the pressure on resources that would normally be associated with a development of this magnitude has not been totally avoided for HE students, it has been carefully planned for and managed to minimise its impact.

203 The school has the expected University structures in place to gather feedback but has also this academic year set up the Student Liaison Committee specifically to address the concerns of the HE students over the move to the Derbyshire Royal Campus. This has met at two- to three-

week intervals through this academic year and appears to have achieved some success in addressing issues which have arisen. The students welcomed both the Committee and the results it had achieved. The recent move to more clearly identified action points and the response to them is also likely to contribute to the successful working of this Committee.

204 Programme Committee meetings appear to be generally well attended and produce very full minutes. The school considers these committees and its approach to gathering and responding to student feedback to be one of its strengths.

205 The school reports that only a small number of complaints were received in 2003-04, that these were related to e-learning and APL and that appropriate steps were taken to provide revised guidance which addressed the complaints in so far as they were justified.

206 On the basis of the evidence provided and their discussions with staff and students, the audit team was able to confirm that the quality of learning opportunities was suitable for the programmes of study leading to the awards and the standard of student achievement was appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ.

Visual Communications

207 The DAT in Visual Communications embraced four programmes within the School of Arts, Design and Technology: Year Zero (previously known as Level Zero), BA (Hons) Graphic Design, BA (Hons) Illustration, and BA (Hons) Illustration for Animation. These programmes are part of a scheme known as the Art and Design Scheme, validated in 2002. The newest programme, the BA (Hons) Illustration for Animation, was introduced in 2004.

208 A single SED was provided for the purposes of the audit, illustrating clearly the key features of the three degree programmes, and the content and purpose of the Year Zero programme as a foundation year for a degree in art and design. During the course of the audit this DSED was augmented by the validation and revalidation reports for all four programmes and additional reports and documentation

associated with both annual programme and school reports. The audit team was also able to consult the report of the new-style School Review, completed in November 2004.

209 The programme specifications provide concise and suitably comprehensive information on the design and content of each programme, making appropriate use of the relevant subject benchmark statements and also the FHEQ. Module-specific learning outcomes are clearly articulated and suitably mapped to the generic learning outcomes, which are in turn reinforced by suitable references to the learning and teaching methods employed, and also the associated assessment strategies and criteria.

210 The contextual strand of modules is seen as an essential part of the curriculum, integrating study skills with more traditional historical and theoretical studies. Feedback from external examiners and students has led to some modifications of the balance between these components in the Illustration programme, also taking into account in the design of the new Illustration for Animation programme. Similar modifications are being made to the Graphic Design programme, for implementation in September 2005.

211 Students applying for these programmes are invited to interview, which provides a valuable enhancement to the processes of admission and student choice. Student progression is considered as part of annual review at both programme and school levels, using statistics produced by the University's GAIA system. At school level these statistics are subject to generic scrutiny with increasing attention being given to significant trends. More detailed consideration of key indicators is carried out at programme level, integrating the quantitative monitoring of quality and standards in terms of progression and completion data with qualitative appraisals of learning, teaching and assessment.

212 The annual programme review considers progress on action reports arising from the previous year's report; the curriculum and programme structure; learning, teaching and

assessment issues; student support and guidance; resources; student data; external examiners' reports and student feedback, leading in turn to an action plan. Although this template is suitably comprehensive, some variation in its application was observed within the range of programmes considered as part of the discipline audit trail. Whereas 2003-04 annual programme reports for Level Zero and Illustration were detailed and evaluative, the report for Graphic Design, although adequate, lacked an equivalent degree of critical engagement and detail. Student data, for example, is presented in summary form with no accompanying commentary. In contrast, the equivalent section in the Level Zero report presents a detailed breakdown of key statistical data used in turn to inform evaluations of key features such as admissions, disability issues, and student progression and achievement.

213 This variability of practice in terms of annual programme review is less evident in the consideration given to external examiners' reports. It is apparent from the supporting documentation, not least the action reports and the monitoring of key issues at both school and University level, that this aspect of quality assurance is robustly engaged with by all the programmes within the DAT. Issues raised by external examiners are subject to prompt attention at programme level, each external examiner receiving a full and considered response from the programme leader, following detailed internal consideration and where appropriate, the implementation of remedial action. In the case of all the reports available to the auditors in this DAT, these responses were appropriate and thorough, with good evidence of the outcomes being applied to improve standards.

214 In terms of assessment strategies and policies, the DSED confirmed the expectation that all programmes must follow the University quality assurance processes, including those associated with internal moderation. Whereas on the evidence of assessed work made available to the auditors it would seem that the marking procedures for both the Level Zero and the Illustration programmes comply fully

with these requirements, significant irregularities were identified in the marking of four of the six modules provided for scrutiny from the Graphic Design programme.

215 In the case of three modules (Visual Studies in Graphic Design, Introduction to Typography, and Visual Communication 2) the moderation reports indicate that grades of individual students were altered. Since only a proportion of scripts are moderated (less than 25% in these three cases) this amounts to selective second marking which appeared to the audit team to be at variance with the University's internal requirements. The University's internal moderation report proforma makes it clear that the role of the moderator is to be limited to comments on specific aspects of the marking process, identified in the accompanying instructions.

216 The audit team noted that the Independent Studies module was sample moderated, in direct contravention of the University requirement that all Independent Studies modules must be fully double-marked. In the light of these irregularities the University is advised to audit closely the implementation of its assessment policies in the Graphic Design programme with a view to rectifying these deficiencies in their application.

217 The audit team was provided with samples of assessed work embracing all programmes and all levels within programmes, and confirmed that they matched the expectations of the associated programme specifications and the views of external examiners.

218 The student handbooks and associated module-specific documentation collectively provide comprehensive and informative support for the student learning experience. Practices, however, vary both between programmes and also between modules. For example there is currently no requirement to provide full module descriptions, in an on-line format on UDo. The latter facility thus only provides partial access to the complete range of modules embraced by this discipline audit trail.

219 Similarly, whereas the handbook for Graphic Design is exemplary in terms of the clarity and quality of information provided, including all module learning outcomes and the associated modes of study and assessment, the handbooks for both Illustration and Illustration for Animation, are more selective, providing only summary module details. These students are encouraged to refer to module leaders for further information. The school may wish to consider revisiting its expectations with regard to the consistency of programme-specific information provided for students both in printed and electronic formats.

220 The students who met the audit team spoke very highly of the quality of the resources provided for learning and commended both the academic and personal support they received from the staff. The location of these programmes in a self-contained annexe of the University helps to create a strongly cohesive community with good communications between staff and students. Learning resources are scrutinised as part of the processes of annual programme review, and it is evident from the associated reports that issues raised by students, staff, and external examiners in this context are carefully considered and wherever possible suitably rectified.

221 One consequence of this self-contained environment away from the main campus is the strong reliance on informal communications, not least in terms of raising and addressing student concerns. The standard University student questionnaire provides the primary mechanism for soliciting and evaluating student views on individual modules, and it was evident to the audit team from the samples provided that in general the levels of satisfaction are high. The informality of communications, however, has resulted in a reluctance of student representatives to attend the Joint Subject Programme Committees (JSPC), the main forum for discussing staff/student issues at programme level. Only one of students in the group met by the team was a member of the JSPC, and the other students seemed unaware of the formal arrangements for representation at programme level.

222 Notwithstanding the high level of satisfaction expressed by the students in the effectiveness of the informal channels of communication available to them, the school may wish to consider ways and means of encouraging students to engage more positively with the work of the JSPC so that key quality assurance mechanisms and processes such as the annual programme and school reports can be better informed.

223 On the basis of the evidence provided and their discussions with staff and students, the audit team was able to confirm that the quality of learning opportunities was suitable for the programmes of study leading to the awards and the standard of student achievement was appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ.

Section 4: The audit investigations: published information

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

224 The audit team was able to consult an extensive range of published information about the University, its programmes, schools and student services, including current prospectuses and information on the University's website and in the Student Handbook. The website provided password-protected links to the University's intranet, UDo, and to module-specific information, as well as to the 3Rs (Rights Responsibilities and Regulations for students on taught programmes), an institutional document which is also published in hard copy and on CD ROM. Numerous programme handbooks and module handbooks were also available. The accuracy and reliability of the information was discussed with students in the DATs and the institutional student meetings.

225 Responsibility for the accuracy and quality assurance of information for prospective students lies with the Recruitment and Corporate Relations section of the CSD. The

overall process entails the submission of information through school contacts and final signing off by school directors or their designated representative. QED takes responsibility for ensuring the accuracy of the 3Rs, which is the definitive version of University regulations and policies and which incorporates all assessment regulations and complaints and appeals procedures. Publication of the Student Handbook is coordinated by the Retention and Records unit within CSD. Programme-level information relating to approvals and minor modifications is received by QED for transfer to systems providing information directly to students. Subject managers within schools are responsible for assuring the quality and accuracy of programme and module handbooks.

226 The SWS reported that students found prospectuses to be user-friendly and accurate, containing a wealth of information from accommodation to fee information. This view was endorsed by students in meetings. All students commended UDo as an accurate, comprehensive and very useful source of information, though some had experienced problems in logging-on and others found navigation somewhat difficult. Students highlighted particular features of UDo as extremely helpful, including access to timetabling information and to their assessment grade records. There appeared to be some variability across modules as to the extent of information placed on UDo, but students said that the module information available was useful and reliable. Similarly, programme and module handbooks were helpful and accurate. Students were generally aware of the 3Rs and that this publication included information on complaints and appeals. Overall, student responses indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the information provided by the University and demonstrated confidence in its accuracy and reliability.

Reliability, accuracy and completeness of published information

227 Lead responsibility for TQI lies with the Director of Quality Enhancement and QED, with oversight maintained by the Academic Board

and AQSC. The University began planning for TQI requirements at an early stage, following the publication of the Cooke Report in 2002, and the SED explained that timely and appropriate action has been taken as further proposals and requirements have emerged. After wide consultation with external examiners, most notably within the University's External Examiner Forum in 2003, it was decided, in order to achieve honesty and transparency in relation to their judgements, that the first part of all external examiner reports would be placed on the website. Progress is being made towards publication of periodic review reports, programme specifications and statistical data. At the time of the audit, the University was engaging appropriately with the recommendations of HEFCE's document 03/51, *Information on quality and standards in higher education: Final guidance*, and was moving to fulfil its responsibilities in this respect.

228 The team noted in its examination of publicly available information that the Higher Education and Research Opportunities in the United Kingdom (HERO) website contained several items of information which were out of date (including the school structure and references to the preceding Vice-Chancellor). This was brought to the attention of the University staff who undertook to address the issue in discussion with HERO.

229 On the basis of scrutiny of the available documentation, and discussions with staff and students, the audit team was able to conclude that the University's confidence in its mechanisms for ensuring the quality and accuracy of its published information was well founded.

Findings

Findings

230 An institutional audit of the University of Derby (the University) was undertaken during the week commencing 14 March 2005. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the University's programmes of study and on the discharge of its responsibility as a UK degree-awarding body. As part of the audit process, according to protocols agreed with the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Standing Conference of Principals and Universities UK, four discipline audit trails (DATs) were selected for scrutiny. This section of the report of the audit summarises the findings of the audit. It concludes by identifying features of good practice that emerged from the audit, and recommendations to the University for enhancing current practice.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for assuring the quality of programmes

231 The University has drawn on the outcomes of internal and external audits and reviews to develop its policies and processes for assuring the quality of programmes, the key features of which are set out in two booklets: 'Validation and Approval procedures for HE Provision' and 'Quality Monitoring procedures for HE Provision'.

232 Formal responsibility for quality assurance is vested in the Academic Board, which approves all academic policies and regulations and exercises its responsibilities through its standing committees, the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC), the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (LTAC), and the University Research and Research Degrees Committee.

233 The work of AQSC and the Academic Board is supported centrally by the Quality Enhancement Department (QED) and the Customer Services Department. The responsibilities of QED include the development, implementation and monitoring of the University's procedures for the approval and on-going evaluation of programmes of study including

arrangements for internal review, and the appointment of external examiners. The support documentation made available to staff by QED is of a high quality and the audit team concluded that the Programme Leader's Handbook, in particular, is an example of good practice.

234 Each of the four schools has a School Quality Committee (SQC), an LTAC, and a Research and Research Degrees Committee. The SQC is the key committee in the school structure and is responsible to AQSC for monitoring the standards of the school's programmes. Each school has a School Quality Manager (SQM) who reports to an Assistant Director in the school and who takes responsibility for oversight and support of school-level quality management.

235 A feature of the framework for quality and standards is the Quality Managers Advisory Group (QMAG). Consisting of SQMs and members of QED, this group works informally on the initiation and refinement of policy, and on implementation issues.

236 Following an initial period of allowing the new committee structure to settle, the AQSC proposes to review the working of SQCs. The audit team would endorse the University's plans and considers it desirable for the University to widen the brief of any review to include a broader reappraisal of the nature of the academic deliberative systems and their links to executive and management functions, both within schools and at institutional level.

237 The University has a two-stage programme approval process. Initially a Planning Approvals Panel (PAP) considers academic and business aspects of a proposal and decides whether a development can continue. The programme may then proceed to the formal validation stage, either at school level or at University level. In practice, timing constraints meant that school approval for a proposal to go forward to PAP was often sought by management executive action, on the basis that the main academic approval had already been attained in principle by the adoption by the school's SQC of the Development Plan. In reviewing the role of

SQCs the team would encourage the University to consider further this particular aspect of their work, as a particular example of the balance between the management function and the academic deliberative system within the quality procedures

238 The annual monitoring process includes reports on both modules and programmes, and at school level the Annual Monitoring Report is the main vehicle for self-reflection. The audit team concurred with the University view that the school reports for 2003-04 showed a significant improvement in presentation on the previous year. Nevertheless it considered that further progress in terms of achieving comparability of presentation was advisable in order to allow the Academic Board, as the main committee within the deliberative process, to take an appropriate overview of the University's academic objectives and the contribution of each school to their achievement.

239 The University introduced a new periodic review scheme in 2003-04, which includes provision for periodic programme review and for school periodic review. The methodology for periodic programme review incorporates an important link with the revalidation process. In terms of periodic programme reviews, the University has identified the need to make provision for staff development and support from QED in order to disseminate best practice both within and across schools.

240 The periodic programme review reports scrutinised by the audit team showed that reports were appropriate in their detail and in the level of externality involved in their production. However, the audit team found that staff awareness of the link between periodic programme review and revalidation was limited and considered it desirable for the University to ensure that staff became more aware of its quality assurance (QA) procedures in general and, in particular, of the important link between review and revalidation.

241 By the time of the audit, two school reviews had been completed within the new process of School Periodic Review. The

University reported that much had been learned from the process and that the detail of implementation was under constant review. The audit team considered that the University was taking appropriate steps to evaluate its processes in a responsible manner.

242 The University has amended its processes for internal audits. Its current policy is that academic audits should be undertaken of strands of activity within the University which affect academic quality and/or standards. Decisions concerning the strands to be audited rest ultimately with the Academic Board. At the time of the institutional audit, the University had completed only two internal audits under the new system and aspects of the overall methodology were still being refined in the light of experience. The audit team considered that the steps being taken by the University to review its system of internal academic audit were balanced and appropriate.

243 External participants in quality assurance processes include academic peers as well as representatives from industry, the professions and commerce. The University's processes for programme approval, monitoring and review appeared to the audit team to be detailed and thorough and to make appropriate use of external specialists. The audit team considered that the University's institutional framework for the assurance of quality defined both the nature of central control and the devolution of authority and responsibility. It also incorporated appropriate checks and balances. The University demonstrated a capacity for self-reflection and a willingness to subject its processes to internal review. The findings of the audit, based on evidence from meetings with staff and students and scrutiny of documents, confirm that there can be broad confidence in the soundness of the University's current and future management of the quality of its programmes.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for securing the standards of awards

244 The Academic Board and its subcommittees are responsible for all aspects of

quality assurance at institutional level, with a complementary structure of committees at school level. These structures are designed to achieve a close integration of the procedures to assure quality and standards while at the same time ensuring that the necessary distinctions between the two are appropriately maintained.

245 In securing the standards of its awards the University relies on external examiners, reviewers and advisers and its procedures for programme approval, annual monitoring and periodic review. Periodic Reviews takes place normally within a five-year cycle, and involves an external panel member. In terms of benchmarking of standards the University's regulatory frameworks are based on a commitment to credit accumulation and transfer and the use of learning outcomes.

246 The University embeds its assessment strategy within the context of its overall institutional mission, including its aim to encompass regional, national and international delivery for students on- and off-campus. A particular feature of the strategy is the development of on-line assessment, both for on-campus and distance-learning students.

247 The University's policy regarding internal moderation of assessments requires that all student assessed work is internally moderated. In meetings with staff, the audit team found that the moderation policy was generally well understood but the team also saw a small number of examples within the DATs where the concept of moderation had become confused with double-marking. The University is advised to ensure that its assessment policy is universally understood and adopted.

248 The University has adopted a policy whereby double-marking is compulsory in the context of the final year independent study. The audit team found that the policy was adhered to in general but that some instances were seen within the DATs where double-marking was not practised. The University is advised to ensure that its policy on double-marking of the final year independent study is comprehensively adopted.

249 The University's seeks professional accreditation for its taught programmes of study where appropriate. Across the University's academic disciplines the main subject areas attracting accreditation include business, computing, education, engineering, health and social care, law and psychology. Since the last audit, thirty-two accreditation applications have been made, all of which were reported by the University as having been successful.

250 A database of accredited programmes s made available to each school to update its records and to flag up important accreditation dates. Schools are actively involved in the accreditation process and maintain records of accreditation documentation and correspondence with professional statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) to reflect the established good practice associated with programme validation. The audit team was informed that reports arising from validation events and reviews involving professional bodies, OFSTED, and other PSRBs are addressed either at programme or school level. Any matters for action are identified and form part of the annual programme monitoring process. The issues arising from the accreditation process are also considered during Periodic Programme Review.

251 The audit team saw evidence corroborating the views expressed by the University and confirmed that a consideration of PSRB reports is included routinely within School Annual Monitoring Reports and as part of the process of Periodic Programme Review. It also appeared to the team that issues arising from such reports were identified at an appropriate point within the system for subsequent consideration and action.

252 The University's framework for the assurance of quality and standards has evolved over a long period, with a number of recent changes. The University claims to have taken the principle of public accountability seriously and through its approval and monitoring systems is endeavouring to ensure that there is evidence-based achievement of high quality provision for the students. The audit team was provided with considerable evidence that the

systems were under a state of constant review and evaluation, and that a number of changes had been recently made or were in train. It was however evident to the team from discussions with University staff that not all staff were familiar with current procedures, and monitoring report templates were at times interpreted somewhat differently at programme and school level.

Progression and completion statistics

253 The University maintains an electronic database of student statistics known as GAIA, covering all stages from admission and progression through the years to completion and graduate destination. A key feature is the licensing of key individuals throughout the University, including staff within schools, in terms of direct access to the database. This allows programme leaders and associated staff to take ownership of this information and its application. Developmental support is provided by a support team located within the CSD.

254 Statistics are routinely analysed in the preparation of annual programme and school reports, and the annual monitoring report produced by Central Support Services. These reports record and analyse student recruitment, progression, retention and achievement statistics for taught provision, identifying trends over the previous years and, where known, an indication of the reasons for these trends. The introduction of a retention initiative has allowed the University to focus on local analysis of different categories of students to determine patterns of non-completion, targeting those most likely to drop out and also monitoring the effectiveness of the steps taken to reduce this risk.

255 The on-line accessibility of GAIA to staff involved in the interpretation of statistical data considerably enhances the opportunities for making use of this information. However, it would appear that there is still scope for improving its functionality, notably reducing the time taken to download the data. It would also seem from the DATs that at programme level there is still some variability in the level of engagement with statistical data.

External examiners and their reports

256 The University appoints external examiners in three categories - Programme/Award Examiners with responsibility for a named programme or award, Subject Examiners responsible for a number of modules in a subject area, and in the case of programmes with more than one Programme/Award Examiner, a Chief Examiner with overall responsibility for coordinating the contributions of the various members of the examining team.

257 External examiners are also invited to an annual forum, held in January. These events provide opportunities for quality enhancement and usually focus on specific topics. Reports from external examiners are scrutinised both centrally and locally. Schools are responsible via the SQC for ensuring that each external examiner report is considered by the relevant Programme/Subject Committee, and that appropriate responses are submitted to the external examiner detailing actions to be taken.

258 At University level both the Vice-Chancellor and the Director of Quality Enhancement read the reports of external examiners. In addition, in the autumn of each year the External Examiners Reading Panel (EERP), consisting of a small group of academics representing each school, considers all the external examiner reports for the previous year. This panel compiles an independent report highlighting common trends and issues which are then considered further as part of the processes of annual monitoring.

259 The audit team were able to confirm from the scrutiny both of external examiner reports and also the formal responses and action points arising, that all schools have appropriate procedures in place to ensure that effective use is made of these key indicators for securing the standards of awards.

The effectiveness of institutional procedures for supporting learning

260 Student support is seen as being the business of all staff at the University, underpinned by specialist dedicated support services. The CSD provides central academic and pastoral support

and welfare services, in close liaison with the schools. The new Learning and Information Services Department (LIS) provides the full range of library and related services and the University of Derby online (UDo) provides a range of online services to staff and students which to some extent are still in the process of development. There are extensive processes for staff development with whole University Staff Development Priority days twice a year. Staff development opportunities are now accessible to sessional staff.

261 The University provides academic and personal support holistically through a mixture of local tutor support and a range of central services. A Customer Information Centre is the contact point for each site and functions as a one-stop shop for students seeking advice and guidance. The University Career Development Centre provides information for jobs, gap years and work abroad, and other advice for students during their studies and at entry and exit including the employability and work experience programmes. The University does not operate a uniform Personal Tutor system and allows for local variation in the way such support is provided. This is frequently focused on the Programme Leaders although some schools operate systems involving year tutors, personal tutors and admissions tutors. Special arrangements are made for International students and research students again through a mixture of centrally organised events and local support.

262 The University has invested significantly in LIS over recent years. There is a Learning Centre at each of the main sites and each school has a dedicated support team which advises staff and students. The self-evaluation document (SED) saw resource provision as being good, but recognised that there are problems with keeping both staff and students up to date with new initiatives and enabling them to take advantage of what is on offer. Student feedback supports the view that academic and personal support is both effective and valued. It is, however, apparent that there are concerns relating to some aspects of its provision and the University working to improve the position in these cases.

263 The students expressed overall satisfaction with the levels of academic and personal support, with the provision of learning resources, in particular those available electronically through UDo. There was, however, some concern about the support and services provided to placement students, part-time and distance-learning students, and generally a low level of awareness amongst students of some important services.

264 The University is successfully pursuing one of its key strategic aims, to develop the capability of its people, through its responsiveness to staff development needs and the high quality of support documentation for staff. Well-planned staff development programmes, organised by the Human Resources Department and QED, provide both full-time and sessional staff with access to a wide range of central and school-level events. Notable features of staff development support also include on-line and documentary resources and the Development and Performance Review and Observation and Monitoring of Teaching schemes.

265 The audit team found evidence to support the SED claims in regard to the high levels of academic and personal support provided to students, although with some variability in relation to particular categories of student. Library and related support services were also appropriately resourced although with some variance between sites in terms of resource availability. UDo was an increasingly important resource but was subject to significant variability in implementation and use. Staff confirmed that due to other commitments they could not always avail themselves of staff development opportunities, but they found the support and provision of such staff development as useful.

266 The University would appear to be in line with the expectations of the *Code of practice, Section 8: Career education, information and guidance* and *Section 3: Students with disabilities*, but might wish to review the consistency of the support it provides to placement students, and in its ongoing revision of regulations and practices, to pay particular attention to the services provided to part-time and distance-learning students.

Outcomes of discipline audit trails

Law

267 The DAT covered provision in Law and Criminology for the LLB, LLB (Part-time), LLB with a Modern Language, LLB with Criminology, Combined Studies Programme (CSP) Law, CSP Criminology, LLM Commercial Law and LLM (Part-time). The programme specifications were clear and comprehensive, incorporating links to FHEQ, both at honours and masters level, and addressing appropriate benchmark statements for the undergraduate programmes.

268 Learning and Assessment Strategy in Law aligns well with the aim of the University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy to equip students with the skills, knowledge and attributes to make them employable and to be reflective and independent learners. Student evaluation of the programmes was very positive. In particular, students valued the skills elements and the input of practitioners, both in delivery of some of the skills modules and in extra-curricular events. Students praised the academic and personal support provided and the availability and helpfulness of staff. They considered that they had extensive opportunity to have their voice heard and confirmed that action taken in response to their feedback was timely and appropriate.

269 From its discussions with staff and students and on the basis of the available documentation, the audit team was able to confirm that the quality of learning opportunities was suitable for the programmes of study leading to the named awards, and that the standard of student achievement in the programmes was appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ.

Psychology

270 This DAT covered all degree schemes delivered by the Psychology subject area within the School of Education, Health and Sciences. The external examiners confirm that the standards of achievement are comparable with those of programmes in Psychology elsewhere in the country, and moreover meet the standards required by the British Psychological

Society, the relevant PSRB which recognises some of the programmes provided.

271 The Psychology programmes provide learning opportunities of an appropriate quality. Programme specifications indicate good awareness of the benchmarks of this area. Resources are good, and there is extensive e-learning provision, including the availability of all lecture and assessment information on the web; this has now been developed, so that the undergraduate psychology course is also available in an entirely online form only (although this has yet to attain recognition from the PSRB). Students, staff and external examiners are clearly well informed of the assessment requirements and criteria, and marking is carefully moderated.

272 The Psychology provision is flexible and responds well to local and other needs, and is also illuminated by ongoing research. Students were particularly appreciative that some of the teaching was provided by well informed research-active postgraduates and staff. The web facility was well liked, and the discussion forum was particularly singled out for praise, as it was always responded to quickly and carefully monitored, and students could contribute to it anonymously, thus avoiding potential embarrassment. The audit team was satisfied that the quality of learning opportunities was suitable for the programmes of study leading to the named awards, and that the standard of student achievement in the programmes was appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ.

Travel, Tourism and Events

273 The Travel, Tourism and Events DAT covered the MA Tourism Management, BA (Hons) Events Management, CSP Events Management, BA (Hons) Tourism, CSP Tourism, CSP Travel and Tourism, CSP Adventure Tourism, BA (Hons) Travel and Tourism Management, HND Travel and Tourism Management, and HND Heritage Tourism and Countryside Management.

274 This provision is strongly supportive of the University's Regional Agenda. Its key strengths include its developing links with local industry,

and its flexible and vocationally orientated curricula designed to support regional development. Placement and other opportunities for work based learning are about to be reviewed but are also potentially of great benefit to the student learning experience. The use of UDo by staff was variable, employing a variety of pedagogic models, but including some examples of good practice. The programme specifications were developed in consultation with appropriate external agencies, use appropriate external benchmarks and are compliant with the FHEQ.

275 Assessment has been developed using varied and innovative strategies, is well received by students and has been reviewed favourably by external examiners and University- and school-level reviews. The College has promptly and appropriately responded to problems as they have arisen, and the provision generally appears compliant with the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*.

276 Students were generally complimentary about the nature and quality of their developing experience at Buxton which will inevitably change as the provision grows. The University is taking all appropriate steps to consult and inform students during this process. The audit team was able to confirm that the quality of learning opportunities was suitable for the programmes of study leading to the named awards, and that the standard of student achievement in the programmes was appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ.

Visual Communications

277 The DAT in Visual Communications embraced four programmes within the School of Arts, Design and Technology: Year Zero (previously known as Level Zero), BA (Hons) Graphic Design, BA (Hons) Illustration, and BA (Hons) Illustration for Animation.

278 The programme specifications provide concise and suitably comprehensive information on the design and content of each programme, making appropriate use of subject benchmark statements and the FHEQ. Module specific learning outcomes are clearly articulated and

suitably mapped to the generic learning outcomes, which are in turn reinforced by suitable references to the learning and teaching methods employed, and also the associated assessment strategies and criteria. The overall framework for these programmes is supported by clear guidelines and information on the breadth and scope of attainment required at every level in terms of subject-specific and generic skills, and also the relationship between theory and practice in their application.

279 The audit team was provided with samples of assessed work embracing all programmes and all levels within programmes, and confirmed that they matched the expectations of the associated programme specifications. External examiner reports confirmed that the student achievement was of an appropriate standard.

280 The student handbooks and associated module-specific documentation offer comprehensive support for the student learning experience. The information provided both on module content and also the modes of teaching, learning and assessment usefully underpin the quality of provision. The students who met the audit team confirmed the quality of the resources provided for learning and commended both the academic and personal support they received from the staff. The location of these programmes in a self-contained annexe of the University helps create a strongly cohesive community with good communications between staff and students. It was evident to the team that in general the levels of student satisfaction are high.

281 The audit team was satisfied that the quality of learning opportunities was suitable for the programmes of study leading to the named awards, and that the standard of student achievement in the programmes was appropriate to the titles of the awards and their location within the FHEQ.

The use made by the institution of the Academic Infrastructure

282 The University recognises the importance of using nationally agreed reference points to inform its framework for the management of

quality and standards. Key features are external inputs, both in the use of external examiners and in the use of external peers in internal audit. Professional body feedback, student feedback and student statistics are also seen as providing precise indicators to inform review. The University institutional processes for the assurance of academic quality and standards have evolved over time, but have changed quite radically over the last five years. The SED saw the phased introduction of the QAA Academic Infrastructure as being a major influence on this process.

283 Subject benchmarks are now routinely considered as part of programme approval processes, and distributed to all members of validation panels. Programme developers are accordingly being encouraged to produce programme specifications which are more accessible to both students and potential employers as part of the processes of programme approval and revalidation.

284 Although some variability of practice was encountered, the auditors were able to confirm that appropriate use is made of external reference points at the programme level. At the institutional level it was noted that AQSC takes a strategic overview of these external reference points, with a view to ensuring consistent implementation and monitoring of the associated precepts. Programme specifications are now mandatory, and the programme validation and revalidation processes provide a mechanism for revisiting these key documents on a periodic basis.

285 The audit team noted, however, that although the University places considerable emphasis on work-based and placement learning and their advantages in terms of the student experience, there was little explicit linkage between programme-level and University-level mechanisms and the relevant section of the *Code of practice*, and the University is encouraged to address this as it seeks to develop and enhance its procedures and practices.

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

286 The SED was a clearly articulated document which provided a useful introduction to the University and its systems. There was a lucid description of the management structures and framework for the management of quality and standards, together with an indication of the way in which the University had addressed issues arising from previous audits and reviews. There was also useful critical reflection on those areas still in need of change or modification. There had been a series of major structural changes within the University in recent years, and it was acknowledged that the full impact of some of these could not yet be evaluated.

287 The auditors found the SED to be an appropriately reflective document which effectively outlined the internal discussions and decisions with regard to the University's procedures for the management of quality and standards. It also pointed the way to probable further developments and intentions with regard to enhancement of quality and standards. In their reading of the SED the audit team was able to discern the University's reasoning behind its current and proposed systems and processes, and this provided a valuable preparation for the audit process.

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

288 The SED was published in October 2004, and devoted considerable space to the future plans of the institution for the enhancement of quality and standards, showing good awareness of the current situation and ways in which improvements might be achieved. In addition, there have been significant developments in quality assurance procedures which have been discussed above. The Quality Enhancement Department has carefully reviewed its intentions, and has produced an Action Plan, the implementation of which has already commenced.

289 The Quality Enhancement Department has a key role to play in the continuous monitoring of internal and external developments. It is envisaged that the new Vice-Chancellor will also have a significant impact on the future direction of the University's enhancement agenda, and there will continue to be change. In particular, the proposed introduction of progress files, further work on the retention project and the new skills strategy should have a very direct impact on the student experience.

290 The audit team concluded that the institution has established a full and ambitious set of targets for quality enhancement. The structures for the implementation of this agenda within the University's quality assurance framework are in the view of the team sufficiently robust to perform this function but the University is also encouraged to set itself achievable goals within a prioritised list and to ensure that they are regularly reviewed as part of a continuous process.

Reliability of information

291 The audit team was able to consult an extensive range of information published by the University both as hard copy and web-based, and considered student views on the reliability and accuracy of this information. The audit process also included the opportunity to check the University's procedures for ensuring the accuracy and reliability of its published information. Student responses indicated a high degree of satisfaction with the information provided by the University and demonstrated confidence in its accuracy and reliability. The team noted that the University had established systems for preparing and checking published information and, at the time of the audit, the University was engaging appropriately with the recommendations of HEFCE 03/51, *Information on quality and standards in higher education: final guidance*, and was moving to fulfil its responsibilities in this respect.

292 The Director of Quality Enhancement and QED have taken the lead responsibility for TQI implementation and the University claims in the SED that excellent progress has been made. Extensive consultation has taken place with the

external examiners, and report forms have been amended to exactly match the TQI template for summaries.

293 The University has published full periodic review reports, but is keeping under review the possible use of more 'student-friendly' summaries. Programme specifications are on line for publication, and the interpretation of Higher Education Statistics Agency data is still being worked on. The University is confident that the relevant deadlines will be met.

Features of good practice

294 The following features of good practice were noted:

- the responsiveness to staff development needs and the high quality of support documentation for staff, in particular the Programme Leader's Handbook (paragraphs 34 and 136)
- the University's regional agenda as evidenced in particular both by student recruitment and by the links with local employers, agencies and practitioners (paragraphs 114 and 118)
- the retention strategy: its development, implementation and review with the full engagement of staff and students (paragraph 123)
- the high level of staff commitment to student support, in particular at programme and module level (paragraphs 145, 158 and 159)
- the Learning Through Work Scheme and its reflective approach to this innovative area of practice (paragraph 153).

Recommendations for action

295 The University is advised to:

- embed further and ensure more consistent application of the University's assessment requirements (paragraphs 42 and 43)
- create a higher level of consistency in the degree of critical analysis in the University's internal review reports (paragraphs 62, 74 and 125)

- establish clear mechanisms for ensuring that students follow a coherent programme within the Open Credit Scheme (paragraph 93).

296 The University is also invited to consider the desirability of:

- seeking to achieve further clarity regarding the nature of the academic deliberative systems and their links to executive and management functions (paragraphs 30, 31 and 53)
- developing further staff awareness of the University's QA procedures, in particular in respect of periodic programme review (paragraphs 67 and 74)
- taking action to address the variability of student participation in the formal representative processes at school level, and to enhance the effectiveness of the Campus Forum (paragraphs 107, 111 and 119)
- moving to a more centrally coordinated approach to the provision, utilisation, and quality assurance of e-learning, with a greater emphasis on pedagogical considerations (paragraph 142).

Appendix

The University of Derby's response to the audit report

The University welcomes this positive report and the opportunity to provide a response to its findings. We are pleased to note that the content of the report reflects our own understanding of the University in terms of its strengths and the challenges it faces.

The many features of good practice identified by the audit team span a wide range of University practice, but undoubtedly the first of these - our commitment to students - is the one of which we are most proud. The statement in the text

'overall the general level of commitment of staff was felt by students to be exceptional'

is at the heart of our objective to provide a high quality student learning experience.

The recommendations of the audit team relate mainly to areas already identified by the University as a focus for action, much of which has already begun, as illustrated below. The comments of the audit team will provide a helpful basis for developing this.

The challenges of student participation in School-level formal processes, and participation in Campus Forum were well documented in our SED. The effectiveness of the Forum has already been formally reviewed, and alternative proposals for student representation and feedback in formal committees will shortly be under active consideration, in liaison with our student representatives.

The audit team recognised the significant progress already made in the quality of internal reviewing and reporting within the University. This is an area in which we continually strive for improvement, and we are confident that further work will result in greater consistency in presentation and levels of critical analysis in School reports in the next round of annual monitoring.

The University has recently agreed an exciting development in the creation of a new School of Flexible and Partnership Learning. This initiative will bring together the Combined Subject Programme, the Open Credit Scheme, the Learning through Work scheme and the leadership of e-learning into one academic unit, and will put pedagogy at the heart of our developments. The opportunity will be taken to use the experience of the LTW scheme in the development of negotiated programmes, confirmed as a feature of good practice in the audit, and apply this to a review of the Open Credit Scheme.

The establishment of the new School aligns well with the audit recommendation to move to a more centrally co-ordinated approach to e-learning, but more comprehensive measures will integrate e-learning with our learning and teaching strategy.

A reading of the findings of the audit and accompanying recommendations gave the University cause for satisfaction, but we were even more delighted with the substance of the report which does so much to highlight our achievements and good practice.

