



**Annual report to the Higher Education
Funding Council for England**

January 2011

Contents

1	Introduction	1
	Summary of outcomes	2
	Emerging themes	3
	Progress with public engagement	6
	The future	6
2	Institutional audit	8
	What we found	8
	What the students told us through the student written submission	12
	Outcomes of the evaluations	12
	Summary	15
	The future	16
3	Review of higher education provision in further education colleges	17
	What we found	17
	What the students told us through the student written submission	23
	Outcomes of the evaluations	23
	Public information	26
	Summary	27
	The future	28
4	Foundation Degrees	29
	What we found	30
	Foundation Degree awarding powers	31
	Summary	32
	The future	32
5	Development and enhancement	33
	Introduction	33
	Main roles and responsibilities	33
	Specific activities	33
	Supporting and enhancing quality	34
	External examining	37
	Assessment	37
	International students	38
	Contact hours	38
	Offering expertise	39
	Rationalising regulation	39
	Working worldwide	40
	Summary	41
6	Working with students	43
	Student engagement in QAA activities	43
	Student membership of audit and review teams	44
	Short films	45
	Information for student representatives	46
	The student written submission	46
	Summary	47

7	Feedback and evaluation from other activities	48
	Process evaluation	48
	Evaluation of other activities	48
	Summary	50
8	Concerns about academic standards and quality	51
	Introduction	51
	Activity during 2009-10	51
	Revisions to the scheme	51
9	Equality and diversity	53
	Introduction	53
	Single equality scheme	53
	Outcomes of monitoring	53
	The future	55
10	Summary and recommendations	56
	Protecting the interests of students	56
	Provision and verification of public information	57
	Responding to concerns about quality and standards in HE	57
	Protecting the reputation of higher education	58
	National Student Survey	58
	International activities	58
	Employer engagement	58
	Recommendations	58
	References	60
	Appendix 1: Institutional audit	61
	Institutional audit, including hybrid (2009-10)	61
	Audit of collaborative provision (2009-10)	61
	Appendix 2: Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER)	62
	Developmental engagements (2009-10)	62
	Summative reviews (2009-10)	64
	Appendix 3: Comparison data 2007-08 and 2008-09	66
	Institutional audit	66
	Integrated quality and enhancement review	67
	Appendix 4: Features of good practice and recommendations, by method	68

1 Introduction

1.1 The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's (QAA's) mission is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications, and to inform and encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. To this end, QAA carries out reviews of higher education provision in higher education institutions (HEIs) and further education colleges, on behalf of the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

1.2 The contract between QAA and HEFCE for 2010-11 requires QAA to provide a detailed account of audit and review activity for the academic year 1 August 2009 to 31 July 2010.

1.3 The contract stipulates that:

'QAA shall by 31 January each year prepare and submit to HEFCE a report which:

- a. Provides a summary and overview of all review activity undertaken by QAA during the preceding academic year. This will incorporate Institutional audit, mid-cycle follow-up, collaborative provision audit, IQER, handling Causes for Concern and any other programmes that may be specified in Part B.
- b. Identifies, and provides commentary on, the main themes and trends arising from these activities, and the inferences that may be drawn from them about the state of, and trends in, quality and standards in higher education.
- c. Provides commentary on relevant developments to the Academic Infrastructure.
- d. For IQER, Institutional audit and mid-cycle follow up, includes a "Report on Evaluations", being a report on institutions', contract reviewers', review co-ordinators', auditors' and (where applicable) subject specialist reviewers' evaluation of IQER, mid-cycle follow ups and audit visits undertaken in the preceding academic year. As well as evaluating the process, the report should assess the effectiveness and value of the review method as it is perceived by the institutions reviewed as well as the reviewers, in relation to the maintenance and enhancement of quality and standards.
- e. Reports on examples of good practice in the provision of Foundation Degrees and the quality and standards of Foundation Degrees across the sector, gathered through the contracted review activity, primarily through IQER.
- f. Distinguishes between different groups of HEIs and different groups of FECs, using such categories as may be relevant for the purpose.
- g. Makes recommendations with a view to future action, by HE providers, QAA, HEFCE or other relevant parties, to sustain and improve quality and standards, and address any weaknesses.
- h. Provide a summary and overview of quality enhancement activity undertaken with the sector and other relevant bodies, and the work of the QAA development and enhancement group.
- i. Provides a summary of equality and diversity work within QAA.'

1.4 QAA's contract with HEFCE includes the activities of Institutional audit and audit of collaborative provision, and the review of higher education provision in further education colleges through the Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER) method. In addition, QAA has responsibility for the development and maintenance of various UK-wide frameworks that underpin the maintenance and enhancement of quality and standards within the higher education sector. We call the frameworks the Academic Infrastructure.

1.5 Another significant area of QAA's work is support for the development and enhancement of the quality of provision in UK higher education. The Development and Enhancement Group promotes the understanding of academic standards and quality in UK higher education and the methods used for their assurance. This is achieved by developing within higher education and its stakeholders, a shared understanding and acknowledgement of the basis and the validity of academic standards and quality, and the processes for their assurance and their reporting.

1.6 QAA has a role in responding to concerns about academic quality and standards. In 2009-10 QAA received 24 formal applications to the 'concerns...' scheme and 21 other enquiries which were dealt with through the process. It is envisaged that this will continue to be a growing area of QAA's work.

1.7 Other aspects of QAA's work, such as overseas audit, the management of the Access to HE courses scheme, and applications for degree awarding powers and university title, are not referenced specifically in this report, although some generic issues arising from the full range of review activity are included. The report does not include reference to privately funded institutions that subscribe to QAA.

1.8 This is an evaluative report based largely on published information and internal QAA documents. It brings together data on the number of events conducted over the period with an overview of outcomes and a commentary on the method. In accordance with its established practices, QAA has conducted evaluations of its activities over the previous year, and the outcomes of these and selected quotations from participants are also included within this report.

1.9 Based upon review activity during 2009-10, QAA has published a number of reports reflecting on the outcomes of its processes. These also form part of the evidence base for this evaluation.

Summary of outcomes

1.10 QAA conducted 30 Institutional audits during 2009-10 (see Appendix 1). Of these, nine were hybrid audits and a further five audits of collaborative provision were undertaken. To date, only 29 of the reports have been published. In 28 cases the audit team confirmed confidence in 'the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards' for on-campus provision. In one audit, a limited confidence judgement was offered for the likely future management of the academic standards, with limited confidence related specifically to the institution's management of the standards of awards in collaborative provision.

1.11 Nine hybrid collaborative provision audits were undertaken and five separate audits of collaborative provision. The outcomes of Institutional audit are presented in Section 2.

1.12 During 2009-10, as part of the review of higher education colleges using the IQER method, 79 Developmental engagements and 66 Summative reviews were undertaken. Of the 66 Summative reviews, all resulted in a 'confidence' judgement for academic standards

and the quality of learning opportunities. In only one of the 66 Summative reviews, the review team concluded that reliance could not be placed on public information. The outcomes of IQER are presented in section 3.

1.13 The Developmental engagements confirmed that colleges display a strong commitment to enhancing the higher education they deliver. There was much good practice identified within colleges through the 79 Developmental engagements and 66 Summative reviews. One college received recommendations for improvement through their Developmental engagement that were categorised as essential, and a further college received essential recommendations through the Summative review process. The findings of the reviews are described in section 3.

1.14 In respect of Foundation Degrees, the evidence from IQER to date indicates that Foundation Degrees are generally well designed and fit for purpose and that the arrangements for managing and ensuring the quality and standards of the Foundation Degrees in the institutions reviewed are operating successfully. Many of the recommendations and features of good practice identified in respect of Foundation Degrees accorded with those identified in relation to higher education provision within the college in general. Foundation Degrees are considered in section 4.

1.15 Although various examples of good practice in relation to postgraduate provision were identified through Institutional audit, the recommendations continued to focus on ensuring that those students with teaching responsibilities are provided with the appropriate training (see 2.19). This has been a recurring theme through the recommendations in recent years.

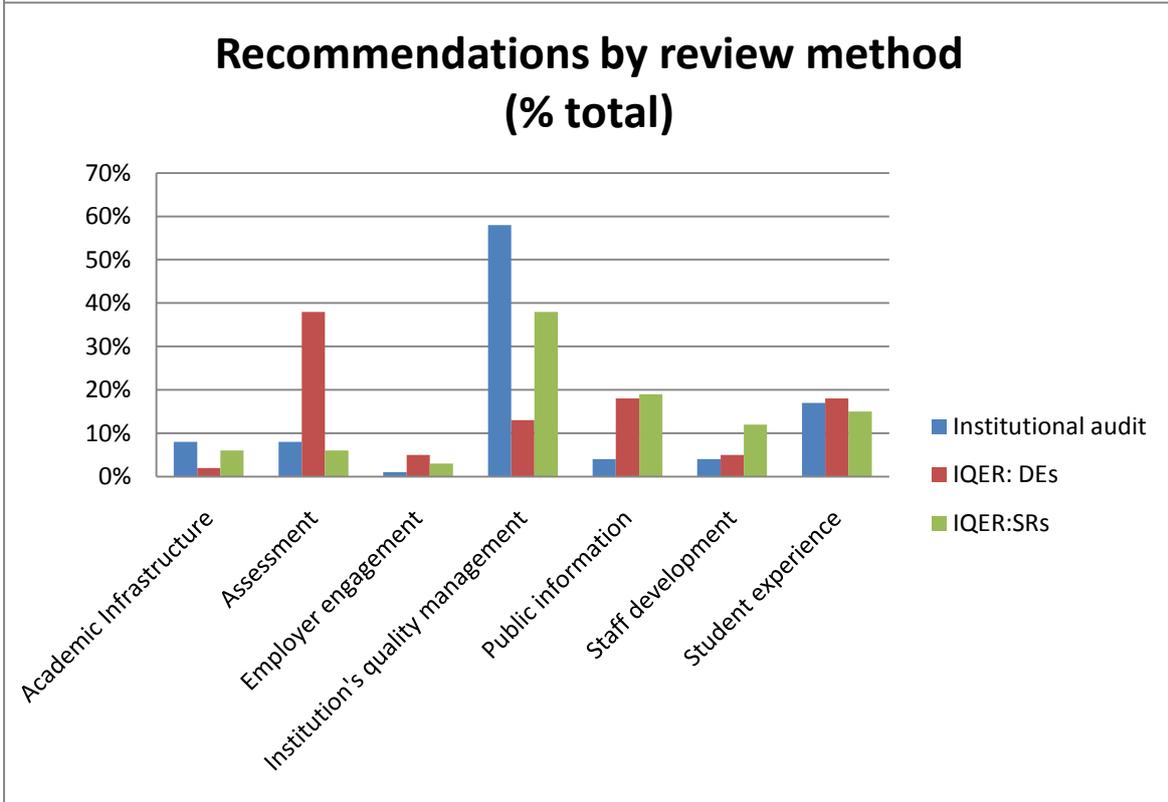
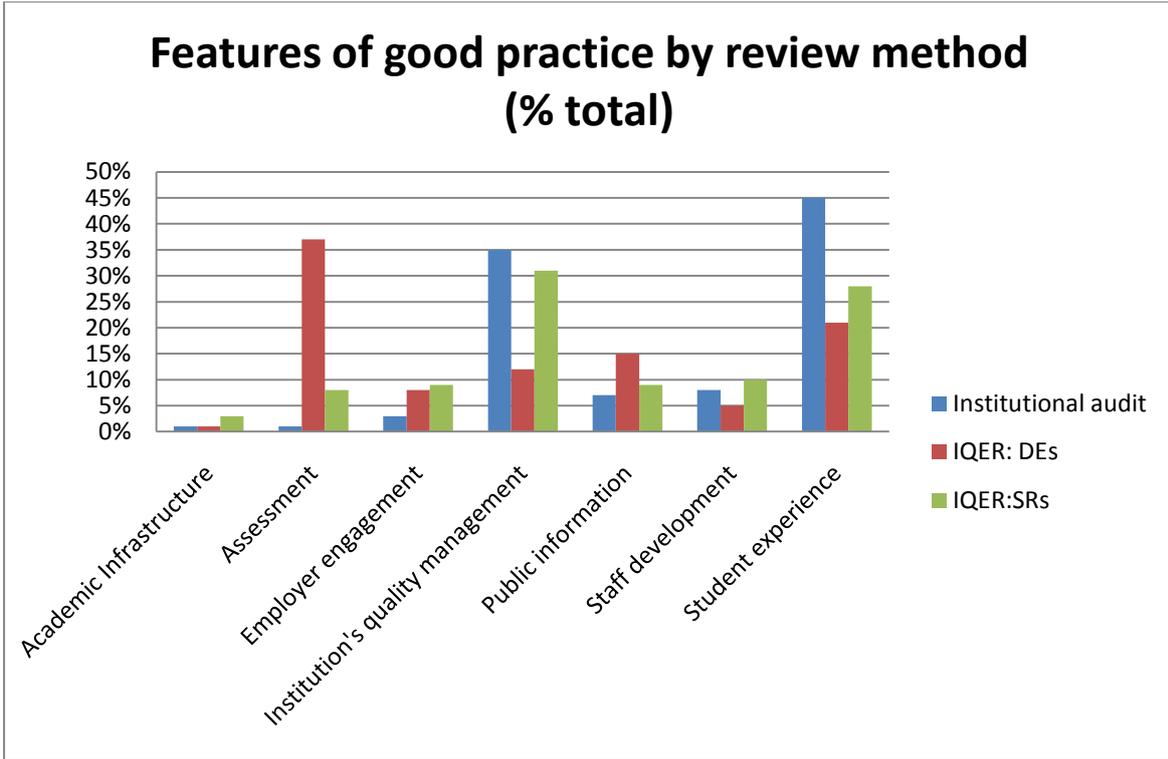
1.16 The evidence presented through QAA review activities confirms the conclusions from previous years that institutions have in place appropriate mechanisms to assure the standards and quality of provision of higher education programmes. There is also a strong commitment to enhancement across the sector, and the outcomes of the various review activities identify numerous examples of good practice in the delivery of learning opportunities. The majority of reviews have resulted in judgements of confidence in academic standards and learning opportunities.

1.17 The overall outcomes of both audits and reviews are based on the measured peer evaluation of teams and reflect the overall assessment of all aspects of academic standards and quality. Specific areas for improvement are identified in the text of reports and monitored through the continuing engagements between institutions and QAA.

Emerging themes

1.18 As in previous years, through the peer evaluation of quality and standards in higher education in England, review and audit teams identified extensive good practice (1,074 examples) and made recommendations (1,173) to institutions and colleges in respect of areas for development or improvement (see Appendix 4). This demonstrates that while there is much good practice, there are areas where further work needs to be done.

1.19 A common theme to emerge again from the activities was the need for greater consistency within institutions in relation to the processes in place for the management of quality and standards, and the student experience. The emerging findings from audit and review activities highlight the following themes.



1.20 There were many examples of good practice identified in relation to the **student experience**, both within colleges (28 per cent of Summative review features of good practice) and HEIs (45 per cent of institutional audit features of good practice). In particular, reference was made to support for learning and learning support resources. In terms of recommendations, 17 per cent of recommendations made through audit and 15 per cent of those through IQER related to the student experience. Within HEIs, there was a clear

recognition that there is a need for formal training for postgraduate students engaged in teaching activities. While students confirmed that staff were supportive, a small minority identified issues associated with the accessibility of staff and core resources.

1.21 Extensive good practice was identified across institutions (35 per cent of all features of good practice for audit) and colleges (31 per cent of all features of good practice for Summative reviews) regarding the arrangements in place for the **management of quality and standards** within colleges and HEIs. This also extended to the partnership arrangements in place between colleges and their awarding bodies. However in some cases recommendations highlighted scope for improvement in the existing arrangements, through increased clarification and the tightening up of policies and procedures for the management of quality and standards, and in respect of collaborative arrangements. Fifty eight per cent of all recommendations made through audit related to the institutions' arrangements for the management of quality and standards, compared to 38 per cent through IQER Summative reviews.

1.22 As with previous years, examples of good practice were identified in respect of the **information** provided to students through course handbooks, module guides and other sources. However in some cases it was considered that the information made available to students could be improved. Recommendations relating to public information accounted for only four per cent of all recommendations made through audit and 19 per cent of recommendations made through IQER. The recommendations focused on the need to ensure clear articulation of intended learning outcomes, assessment strategies and arrangements for the submission of work for assessment and general information relating to programmes of study and wider student-related policies and procedures. Through the student written submissions, examples of good practice were identified in respect of information for prospective and current students, and areas for improvement. It was apparent that in respect of information for current students, there was variability in experience within individual institutions.

1.23 There was good practice identified in relation to the ways in which institutions and colleges were effectively **engaging with industry and employers**. IQER demonstrated the links between colleges and employers, and the involvement of the latter in curriculum design and assessment, assisting with the vocational relevance of programmes. However, this was also an area identified for improvement through the recommendations. The value of employer and industry links in the design and delivery of programmes is pertinent to the provision of vocationally relevant programmes which align with industry/employment skill requirements.

1.24 A notable feature of QAA's activities over the previous years has been in relation to promoting **student engagement** and the centrality of students to quality assurance. This is clearly evidenced by the inclusion of students as members of audit teams and the proposals pertaining to the role of students within the replacement to institutional audit, Institutional review.

1.25 The first students participated as a full members of audit teams during the 2009-10 audits. The outcomes of the evaluation activity demonstrated the success of this initiative, with benefits identified for the team, the institution and the student (see 6.11-6.17).

1.26 QAA hosted and contributed to a number of national events focusing on student engagement in quality and standards, and worked with students in the development of supporting material for students in preparing for audit and review. A significant outcome of QAA's work on student engagement was the production of a series of video podcasts posted on the QAA website. The video podcasts were aimed at providing students with information

about the work of QAA, audit and review, and supporting their preparations for audit and review. See section 6 for further information about QAA's work with students.

1.27 Through the **evaluation** of audit and review activities, QAA confirmed that those involved in the process, as a reviewer or auditor, or a representative of an institution or college, considered that the method of review was fit for purpose and that the review had achieved its aim. Benefits of the audit and review activities were identified for institutions and students (see section 8).

Progress with public engagement

1.28 Following the publication of the *Higher ambitions* paper, QAA acknowledged the increasing importance of the public facing nature of its role, and the need to reflect upon the nature of information made available publicly regarding quality and standards in UK higher education, to inform learner choice and to satisfy the requirements of accountability.

1.29 QAA has reviewed its approach to public engagement. This is reflected in a revised external engagement strategy and the creation of a group with responsibility for public engagement. QAA is working towards ensuring that accessible information is made available to stakeholder groups, to include prospective students.

1.30 QAA's commitment to making accessible information available to stakeholders is demonstrated through the proposals for short accessible summaries for review reports, information tailored to specific groups and a drive towards the use of plain English in QAA publications. QAA is actively using other means and formats for the dissemination of information, to include shorter and more accessible reports, short films, podcasts and social media. QAA has redesigned the website to ensure that information is easily accessible to the user. In addition, QAA is developing relationships with other providers of information about higher education, to embed links and 'signposts' from other sites to QAA, in order to inform stakeholders, including prospective students.

1.31 QAA developments in relation to public information are taking place alongside the work of HEFCE and the Higher Education Public Information Steering Group, and the HEFCE consultation on Public Information on Higher Education. Likewise, QAA has consulted upon the role of public information and associated judgement within the revised audit method.

The future

1.32 QAA is operating in a changing and challenging external environment. Since the 2010 General Election, a number of developments have had, and will continue to have, an impact on our work. These include:

- the recommendations of the Browne Review on how higher education is regulated
- the forthcoming Government White Paper on higher education
- a culture shift in the way higher education is funded, with students due to take on the purchasing power from September 2012
- the continuing intense pressure on public finances and higher education institutions
- projected growth in the number of private providers entering the market, a development backed by the Higher Education Minister.

1.33 During 2010-11, QAA is revising its strategic plan. The new agenda for quality includes a number of priorities that will help to shape QAA's strategic plan for 2011-14 and

will underpin developments following the publication of the White Paper on the future of higher education. These include:

- protecting student interests
- provision and verification of public information
- responding quickly and efficiently to concerns about quality and standards
- protecting the reputation of UK HE.

2 Institutional audit

2.1 Institutional audit is an evidence-based process carried out through peer review. It forms part of the Quality Assurance Framework established in 2002 following revisions to the UK's approach to external quality assurance. At the centre of the process is an emphasis on students and their learning.

2.2 Institutional audit balances the need for publicly credible, independent and rigorous scrutiny of institutions with the recognition that the institutions themselves are best placed to provide stakeholders with valid, reliable and up-to-date information about the academic standards of their awards and the quality of their educational provision. Institutional audit encourages institutions to be self-evaluative, and is therefore a process that, in itself, offers opportunities for enhancement of institutional management of standards and quality.

2.3 QAA began the current cycle of Institutional audit in 2006-07. The method has been revised, following the recommendations of the Quality Assurance Framework Review Group (QAFRG) set out in *HEFCE 2005/35*. The *Handbook for Institutional audit: England and Northern Ireland 2009*¹ documents the revised process, in particular the arrangements for including students as members of audit teams and revised arrangements for the audit of collaborative provision.

2.4 During 2009-10, 21 Institutional audits were undertaken (see Appendix 1). In addition, nine hybrid audits (audit of collaborative provision audit/Institutional audit) were carried out. All audits were subject to evaluation in accordance with normal QAA processes. In addition, five audits of collaborative provision were undertaken.

What we found

2.5 To date, 29 of the 30 audit reports have been published. In 28 of the audits, the audit teams confirmed confidence in 'the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards'. In one case, there was a judgement of limited confidence applied to the management of standards only in relation to collaborative provision.

	Institution's present and likely future management of academic standards and awards	Institution's present and likely future management of the quality of learning opportunities
Confidence	28	29
Limited confidence	0	0
Limited confidence (differentiated judgement)	1	0
No confidence	0	0

Table 1 - Institutional audit (2009-10)

N=29

Notes: Includes nine hybrid audits, excludes audits of collaborative provision

The one unpublished audit report is not included in the judgements table

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/institutionalAudit/handbook2009/InstitutionalAuditHandbook2009.pdf

2.6 In 30 audits, the audit team confirmed confidence in 'the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students'. In all 30 audits, examples of good practice were recorded by the audit team.

2.7 In respect of the five audits of collaborative provision, one audit concluded limited confidence in the management of academic standards and awards, and the management of the quality of learning opportunities. In the remaining four audits, confidence was awarded.

2.8 Through the 30 audits, 115 examples of good practice were identified.

2.9 The primary area of good practice identified through the audits related to the student experience (52). Twenty six out of the 30 institutions had good practice identified in relation to the student experience. Seventeen recommendations were made across 30 institutions in relation to student support. This follows the pattern of previous years in respect of a clustering of good practice around the student experience.

Area of good practice	Per cent
Academic Infrastructure	1%
Assessment	1%
Employer engagement	3%
Institution's quality management	35%
Public information	7%
Staff development	8%
Student experience	45%

Table 2 - Features of good practice
N=115

2.10 Examples of good practice identified in student support were relatively diverse in nature; examples included:

- the support arrangements for students with disabilities
- the support and services provided for students through graduate schools and student services
- personal and academic support for students
- support and monitoring arrangements in place for postgraduate students.

2.11 Other features of good practice identified in respect of the student experience included:

- the provision of learning support resources
- the links between teaching, learning and employability
- the use of virtual learning environments and other e-technologies in supporting learning and teaching.

2.12 Forty examples of good practice were recorded across 21 institutions in relation to the institution's arrangements for the management of quality and standards. Around a third of these related specifically to the policies and procedures in place within institutions for the management of quality and standards.

2.13 Nine examples of good practice were recorded across eight institutions in relation to staff development. Examples included the institution's focus upon staff development and the associated opportunities available.

2.14 Eight examples of good practice in respect of public information were recorded. These generally related to the provision of handbooks and other course-related information.

2.15 Audit teams also made 190 **recommendations** for action for institutions, arising from their investigations. Of these, 100 were deemed advisable, 88 as desirable and a further two recommendations across two institutions were deemed to be essential.

Area of recommendations	Per cent
Academic Infrastructure	8%
Assessment	8%
Employer engagement	1%
Institution's quality management	58%
Public information	4%
Staff development	4%
Student experience	17%

Table 3 - Recommendations for improvement

N=190

2.16 One hundred and eleven recommendations were made across 29 institutions in relation to the institution's arrangements for the management of quality and standards. Focus fell specifically on the internal arrangements in place for review, evaluation and reporting, with 25 recommendations made across 17 institutions.

2.17 Twenty one recommendations were also made across 16 institutions in respect of externality in the management of quality and standards; examples included recommendations to:

- ensure external examiners reports were seen by student representatives (6)
- ensure external examiners reports were seen and discussed through appropriate boards and committees (5)
- use external experts on validation committees and in internal reviews (2)
- ensure external examiners are sufficiently informed, briefed and trained (2)
- ensure there are clear criteria for the nomination and appointment of external examiners (2).

2.18 Eighteen recommendations were made across 11 institutions in relation to policies and procedures for internal quality management. Twelve additional recommendations were made across ten institutions in respect of the arrangements, policies and procedures in place regarding collaborative provision.

2.19 In respect of the recommendations focusing on the student experience, 33 recommendations were made across 21 institutions. Specifically in terms of student support, 19 recommendations were made by teams across 16 colleges. Of these, 12 recommendations were made relating to the need to ensure that all postgraduate students involved in the delivery of teaching and assessment were properly prepared and trained. Three recommendations related to implementing arrangements for personal development planning.

2.20 Other recommendations made by the team focused upon:

- assessment policies and procedures (10 recommendations, 10 HEIs)
- use of management information as part of internal quality management (10 recommendations, 9 HEIs)
- student involvement in quality management through committees (8 recommendations, 8 HEIs)
- partnership arrangements (7 recommendations, 6 HEIs)
- committee structures for internal quality assurance (6 recommendations, 6 HEIs)
- engagement with employers (5 recommendations, 5 HEIs)
- arrangements from student representatives (5 recommendations, 5 HEIs)

2.21 Where the audit team concluded that only limited confidence could be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards, the associated 'essential' recommendations included the following:

- put in place robust procedures and systems to ensure that the central deliberative bodies of the University are able to be assured that appropriate, timely and effective action has been taken on recommendations arising from its audit of collaborative provision.

2.22 Five audits of collaborative provision were additionally undertaken, of which one received a limited confidence judgement in respect of both the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the academic standards of the awards that it offers and the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students.

2.23 In respect of audits of collaborative provision, 18 features of good practice were identified across all four institutions, and 29 recommendations were made. Thirteen of the recommendations were advisable, 14 were desirable and two were essential.

2.24 Emerging good practice focused upon:

- the institution's arrangements for the management of quality and standards (13), in particular the arrangements for collaborative activities and work with partners
- staff development (3)
- the student experience (1).

2.25 Emerging areas of recommendations focused upon:

- the institution's arrangements for the management of quality and standards (20), including policies and procedures, internal arrangements for review, reporting and evaluation, externality and the use of management information
- engagement with and implementation of the Academic Infrastructure (3)
- the student experience (3)
- public information (2)
- staff development (1).

What the students told us through the student written submission

(See paragraphs 6.24-6.29)

2.26 Through the student written submissions, students were generally positive about their teaching and learning experience. There was much positive comment expressed in relation to the information published and provided about the institution and programmes of study, and staff within institutions. The provision of learning support resources and the opportunities to participate in quality assurance were also praised.

2.27 The main areas of concern expressed by students through the written submission related to the apparent variation in their experience both within and across institutions. Even within a single institution, students reported differences in their experiences associated with:

- teaching and learning
- information and documentation
- assessment and feedback
- learning support resources
- access to academic support
- opportunities to participate in quality management.

2.28 There was much comment expressed through the student written submissions on feedback on assessed work. Although examples were cited which students considered to be positive, there were concerns about the timeliness of such feedback. It was considered that institutions needed to ensure that feedback on assessed work is timely and constructive, as feedback is an important part of the learning process

Outcomes of the evaluations

2.29 In accordance with normal QAA evaluation practices, the audits were subject to evaluation. The questionnaire used to support evaluation was amended to make the evaluation more focused on supporting continuous improvement and identifying strengths and challenges in the method and benefits to stakeholder groups.

Role	Number sent	Number returned	Response rate
Auditor	145	128	88%
Audit Secretary	30	29	97%
Institution	24	16	67%
TOTAL	199	173	87%

Table 4 - Response to the evaluations

2.30 Comments have been received from audit teams and higher education institutions. The majority of auditors and audit secretaries completed an evaluation questionnaire following their audit and 16 institutions have returned completed questionnaires (note, the audit evaluation questionnaire is not sent out until much later than the team questionnaire, in part accounting for the lower response rate). Overall, the findings from the evaluations were very positive. Audit teams and institutions overwhelmingly agreed that the audit had achieved its aims.

Percentage of respondents that agree that the audit achieved its aim:

- Auditor - 95 per cent
- Audit Secretary - 100 per cent
- Institution - 93 per cent.

2.31 Overall, the evaluations revealed that audit teams and institutions were generally satisfied with the Institutional audit process. There were, however, some areas that were highlighted by respondents as areas where improvements could be made. The institution's briefing paper and the students' written submission remained as the areas of the audit process that were identified as being slightly problematic for the audit teams. In some cases, the briefing papers were not considered to be sufficiently reflective or descriptive and the indexes to the briefing papers did not always illustrate the institution's approach and evidence to support its effectiveness. In respect of the students' written submissions, there was a perception among a minority of respondents that the documents were not sufficiently analytical or balanced, and as such, were not always useful as a source of evidence. These areas continue to receive the lowest number of 'good' or 'yes' responses on the evaluation questionnaires, but this year there has been a slight decrease in the proportion of 'partially' and 'no' responses relating to the student written submission.

2.32 Key findings from the evaluation are as follows.

- Communication with QAA is good and the *Handbook for Institutional audit: England and Northern Ireland 2009* is clear and useful to the auditors and institutions.
- The training is informative, effective and useful.
- Team members and institutions feel that the process works well and achieves its aim.
- There is room for improvement in the institutional briefing papers and student written submissions. These documents are not always evaluative or analytical.

2.33 Respondents identified a series of benefits for the institution as a result of the audit. Comments included:

'A publicly verified "health check" and the opportunity to benchmark one's own performance. It gives weight to changes which need to take place internally but to which there may be resistance.'

'As a young HEI it provided an important opportunity for testing its audit systems against national expectations.'

'A periodic, in-depth reflection on their quality management processes.'

'Opportunity to take stock and look at big picture and assure self of effectiveness (or otherwise).'

'It offers an objective assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of their approach.'

2.34 Respondents identified a series of benefits for the students as a direct result of the audit. These included:

'The opportunity to tell an informed external panel about the achievements of their institution and those areas where some improvements to the learning experience might be desirable.'

'Where the auditors make recommendations that these are acted upon and the resulting actions do improve the student experience.'

'To realise that an external body is interested in the standards and quality of provision; to participate in the process, to validate their perceptions.'

'To ensure they can have confidence in the university's academic standards.'

2.35 In addition, students who participated in the audit process were also invited to provide feedback on their experience. Following each audit, an evaluation questionnaire was sent to the Students' Union and the QA contact at the institution for dissemination to those students who were involved in the process in some way. A total of 36 questionnaires were returned, from students involved in audits at 15 institutions.

2.36 Respondents considered that the information provided to students was generally good, but considered that the guide could be more useful in terms of writing the student written submission. Students involved in compiling the submission made use of the websites of and events run by QAA and NUS.

2.37 In relation to the preparation of student written submissions, the main challenges identified were the length of time it takes, the timing of the submission and getting engagement from the wider student body. The most common methods of data collection to inform the submission were existing data (for example NSS), focus groups and bespoke surveys.

2.38 Communication is generally felt to be good, although the highest level of satisfaction is with communication with staff at institutions. The meetings with audit teams were good, and the majority of students had their expectations fulfilled. However, it was suggested that the meetings might be more beneficial if there were more of them through the process.

2.39 Most students believed that there would be changes to the student learning opportunities at their institution as a result of the audit. Those involved in the process did not necessarily feel that their involvement had strengthened existing connections and engagement with the institution as they felt they were strong already. The primary benefit of student engagement in the process was considered to be getting the student voice heard by both the institution and QAA.

2.40 Comments offered by student respondents regarding the impact of their involvement in the audit process through the preparation of the student written submission and/or meetings with audit teams included:

'As far as I know, actions were taken as the result of the last audit, so I guess the university will take the feedback seriously.'

'The University was already aware of, and taking action on, many of the issues raised so progress has already been made in some cases. The University is generally positive about addressing issues so I am optimistic, although some issues will take a lot of additional energy to address.'

'From previous years we have seen a very responsive institution.'

'The points raised by the audit team based on students' views will be addressed thoroughly.'

'In my experience, the University's School of Health has responded quickly to feedback given by students whether with respect to improving the learning experience or pastoral care.'

'The University should want to improve for present and prospective students, therefore making any suggested changes should help this.'

2.41 Helpful comments were offered by the students to improve student involvement in audit, from preparing the student written submission (SWS), through meeting with the audit team as part of the visit and receiving the findings and subsequent actions to arise from the audit report.

'Forums for different student groups, arranged with assistance from the University, as those not heavily involved in the SU, may not attend otherwise.'

'Greater communication between QAA and their expectations of student involvement.'

'Have the students who are attending the meeting(s) be directly involved with the student written submission.'

'Explain to the students what is usefully required for the students and their rights.'

Summary

2.42 Overall, the audits confirmed the high standards of higher education provision in HEIs within England. Extensive good practice was identified by audit teams. Likewise, teams identified areas for attention and/or development, making a series of recommendations for action to the institutions.

2.43 Only one of the collaborative audits recorded limited confidence and essential recommendations in respect of the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards. One institutional audit recorded a qualified judgement of limited confidence. Recommendations made by teams primarily focused upon the need to ensure greater consistency within institutions in relation to the internal arrangements for quality assurance and the management of standards, collaborative arrangements and training for postgraduate research students with teaching responsibilities.

2.44 Many examples of good practice were identified by audit teams in relation to the management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. Specific examples of good practice identified included:

- the arrangements in place for student support
- policies and procedures for quality management
- learning support resources
- public information
- staff development.

2.45 The audits confirmed that, in the main, the quality and standards of the higher education programmes delivered were sound. The evaluation confirmed that the audit process was working well in practice and had achieved its aims. All respondent groups identified multiple benefits for the institution and the students as a direct result of the audit process. (See 6.4 to 6.17 for further information about feedback from students about their involvement in audit, and the experience of student members of audit teams).

2.46 QAA has continued to develop its work in relation to student involvement. QAA has supported and contributed to the Quality Matters events, held in conjunction with the National Union of Students (NUS) and other organisations. In addition, QAA has continued

to engage with students and develop a series of materials with the explicit aim of informing and supporting students in preparation for audit.

The future

2.47 In October 2010, a consultation was launched by QAA on the proposed operational description for the arrangements for the assurance of quality and standards in higher education in England and Northern Ireland.

2.48 The process is called 'Institutional review' and in September 2011 will replace the current method for reviewing academic quality and standards in higher education, which is called Institutional audit.

2.49 QAA has worked closely with colleagues across the higher education sector, including the sponsoring bodies, to develop the draft operational description for the proposed new method.

2.50 The proposals are intended to help bring about real improvements in students' experiences, and will enable QAA to safeguard as effectively as possible the standards and quality of higher education. A commitment to clear communication to the public runs throughout the proposals.

2.51 The aim of the proposed new method is to better safeguard quality and standards in higher education in England and Northern Ireland; to help improve students' experience of higher education; and to allow QAA to look into public concerns about quality and standards in higher education quickly and efficiently.

2.52 Some of the key elements of the proposed new review method are:

- higher education institutions will be reviewed as part of a rolling programme: there will be no fixed cycle length
- every review will consist of a core area and a thematic element
- a greater emphasis on the information institutions make available to the public, including, subject to the outcome of the consultation on public information, a judgment on this
- clear judgments on threshold academic standards, student learning opportunities and plans for enhancement of learning opportunities
- shorter, more accessible reports produced in a timely way
- each review will lead to a published action plan with details of how an institution plans to address any areas identified for improvement.

2.53 The results of the findings of the consultation on the proposals for institutional review have been made available to HEFCE and the Quality in Higher Education Group.

3 Review of higher education provision in further education colleges

3.1 The overarching aims of Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER) are to:

- support colleges in evaluating and improving their management of their higher education, for the benefit of students, and within the context of their agreements with awarding bodies
- foster good working relationships between colleges and their awarding bodies, for the benefit of students
- enable HEFCE to discharge its statutory responsibility for ensuring that provision is made for assessing the quality of education provided by the institutions it funds
- provide public information.

3.2 IQER reports on three core themes: academic standards, the quality of learning opportunities, and public information. The review method involves two related processes: Developmental engagement and Summative review. The Developmental engagements have a development and enhancement focus. The report is not published but is made available to HEFCE and to the college and its awarding bodies. It is intended to aid the college in developing capacity to manage quality assurance. Summative review reports include judgements on the academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, and a commentary on public information. These are published on the QAA website. The outcomes are similar to Institutional audit so that public information is available in a similar form for reviews of higher education in both higher education institutions and further education colleges.

3.3 IQER is now in its fourth year of a five-year cycle. The reviews in this method will be completed by the end of academic year 2011-12. Full details of the method may be found in *The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review*, available on the QAA website.

3.4 During 2009-10, QAA carried out 79 Developmental engagements and 66 Summative reviews.

What we found

3.5 Of the 66 Summative reviews, all resulted in a judgement of confidence in academic standards and in the quality of learning opportunities (Table 3).

3.6 In 65 of the 66 Summative reviews, the reviewers concluded that reliance could be placed on public information. In one review the team considered that reliance could not be placed on public information (Table 3).

	Judgement on academic standards	Judgement on quality of learning opportunities	Public information
Confidence	66	66	
Limited confidence			
No confidence			
Reliance			65
No reliance			1

Table 5 - Outcomes of Summative reviews (N=66)

3.7 Through the 79 Developmental engagements, reviewers identified 497 examples of good practice. Through the Summative reviews 350 examples of good practice were identified. Good practice was evident in every college reviewed. Within the context of IQER, good practice is defined as:

practice that the IQER team regards as making a particularly positive contribution to the college's management of academic standards and/or academic quality in the context of that particular college; and which is worthy of wider dissemination within and/or beyond the college.

3.8 As the Developmental engagements primarily focused on assessment, the majority of good practice examples and recommendations for improvement directly related to policies and practices associated with assessment (183 examples).

Area of good practice	Per cent
Academic Infrastructure	1%
Assessment	37%
College quality management	12%
Employer engagement	8%
Public information	15%
Staff development	5%
Student experience	21%

Table 6 - Developmental engagements: features of good practice
N=497

3.9 Specific areas of good practice reported included:

- the arrangements for assessment and associated policies and processes in place within colleges (64 examples in 41 colleges)
- the arrangements for the provision of feedback to students on assessed work (55 examples in 37 colleges), to include high quality and timely feedback
- the arrangements in place within the college for assessment design, to include verification and approval (38 examples in 26 colleges), encompassing well designed assessment briefs and linkages to learning outcomes

3.10 In respect of the student experience, 106 examples of good practice were identified through the Developmental engagements. These were diverse in nature. Particular reference was made to student support for learning (46 examples in 34 colleges). Examples included the access to staff and the effective arrangements for student support. In addition, the use of virtual learning environments was identified as a feature of good practice in 19 colleges (22 examples). In the main, good practice examples focused upon the way in which virtual leaning environments are used to provide information to students on assessment and other matters related to study, and for providing feedback on assessments This was repeatedly identified as an area of good practice.

3.11 Seventy five examples of good practice were identified in relation to public information. Thirty four examples related to the information provided to students through handbooks and other course materials (30 colleges). Handbooks and other information were considered to be informative, clear and comprehensive. In addition, the quality of the published public information was identified as a feature of good practice in 16 colleges (18 examples); again reference was made to its clear and comprehensive nature. Fourteen

examples of good practice were identified in relation to the accessibility of public information (11 colleges) in respect of the range of information and the format, in terms of the means of dissemination/access.

3.12 Fifty nine examples of good practice were identified in relation to the arrangements for the management of quality and standards. Eighteen examples (15 colleges) focused on the arrangements for collaborative working between the college and the awarding body. Working arrangements were considered close with regular on-going dialogue and liaison. A further 14 examples (12 colleges) of good practice were identified in relation to the policies and strategies for managing higher education. These were considered comprehensive, robust and well managed.

3.13 Forty one examples of good practice in employer engagement were identified through the Developmental engagements. Thirty examples specifically related to the links with employers (21 colleges), and a further seven to the involvement of employers in the design of the curriculum and/or assessments (7 colleges).

3.14 Twenty seven examples of good practice were identified in respect of staff development. In particular, these focused specifically on staff development to support learning (23 examples in 20 colleges).

3.15 In respect of the Summative reviews, 31 per cent of all features of good practice related to quality management and a further 28 per cent related to the student experience.

Area of good practice	Per cent
Academic Infrastructure	3%
Assessment	8%
Employer engagement	9%
Public information	9%
College quality management	31%
Staff development	10%
Student experience	28%

Table 7 - Summative reviews: features of good practice
N=350

3.16 Through the **Summative reviews**, 350 examples of good practice were identified. The primary area of good practice related to the management of quality and standards. Within this area, 32 examples of good practice of policies and strategies for the management of higher education were noted in 26 colleges. A further 24 examples of good practice, identified in 22 colleges, related to the arrangements for collaborative working with awarding bodies. In such cases, relationships were seen as effective, efficient and open.

3.17 In 15 colleges, reviewers cited as good practice the arrangements in place for quality management, in relation to the organisation and presence of committees and boards, and the responsibilities and associated reporting arrangements, in managing, overseeing and providing a focus for the management of higher education.

3.18 In respect of good practice in the quality of the student experience, through the Summative reviews 41 examples (34 colleges) of good practice were identified related to student support for learning. In the main, it was considered that there were high levels of academic and pastoral support for students from student advisors, academic and technical staff and personal tutors.

3.19 A further 21 examples of good practice were identified in 18 colleges in relation to learning resources provided specifically for higher education students. Examples of good practice included:

- the range and quality of resources
- access to specialist and industry standard equipment
- access to dedicated resource centres.

3.20 In 14 colleges, examples of good practice were noted in the use of virtual learning environments as an information resource for students. In addition to their role as an information repository, their role in supporting and enhancing teaching and learning and supporting student representatives was also identified.

3.21 Thirty six examples of good practice related to staff development. Examples were diverse in nature and included the arrangements in place within colleges for the peer observation of teaching and for staff development. Well supported arrangements for staff development were reported as contributing to the enhancement of the student learning experience and supporting the delivery of provision.

3.22 Thirty three examples of good practice were also identified in relation to links with employers and the involvement of employers and other industry specialists in the design of the curriculum.

3.23 Reviewers also make a series of recommendations for action by colleges. These recommendations are graded as desirable, advisable and essential, and are subsequently used to inform the colleges' action plan. Only one college received an essential recommendation in respect of a Developmental engagement. One college received an essential recommendation as a result of their Summative review.

3.24 Five hundred and eleven recommendations were made in the 79 **Developmental engagements**. Of these, 352 (69 per cent) were classified by reviewers as desirable, and a further 158 (31 per cent) as advisable. Only one recommendation was considered essential.

3.25 Three hundred and fifty two recommendations were made across the 79 Developmental engagements.

Area of recommendation	Per cent
Academic Infrastructure	2%
Assessment	38%
College quality management	13%
Employer engagement	5%
Public information	18%
Staff development	5%
Student experience	18%

Table 8 - Developmental engagements: recommendations
N=352

3.26 In total, 194 recommendations were made in respect of assessment (38 per cent). Many related to the need to improve consistency in assessment across higher education provision within the college. In particular, assessment-related recommendations primarily focused upon the need to improve and address the policies and practices in place in relation

to assessment (88 recommendations in 45 colleges). In part, this was associated with the need for clear and comprehensive strategies, consistency and sharing good practice. A further fifty four recommendations were made in relation to the need to improve and address the arrangements and practices in place within the college for providing feedback to students on their assessed work (42 colleges), to ensure that feedback is consistent, timely and developmental. Also in relation to assessment, 28 recommendations were made in 21 colleges regarding assessment design, verification and approval, identifying the need for improvements in the processes, procedures and arrangements in place.

3.27 Ninety four recommendations were made in respect of public information. In particular, thirty five recommendations were made in 30 colleges in relation to programme and module handbooks, to ensure the provision of consistent, comprehensive and timely information on assessment. A further 17 recommendations were made in respect of the quality of public information (16 colleges), and 17 regarding the accessibility of public information (15 colleges).

3.28 Ninety four recommendations were made in relation to the quality of student experience. Twenty eight recommendations were made in 26 colleges in relation to the use made of virtual learning environments in supporting teaching and learning. It was suggested that the use of virtual learning environments be developed, ensuring that staff and students have access and engage in such technologies. In addition, the academic support provided for students (26 recommendations in 22 colleges) was also identified as an area for improvement. Recommendations were quite diverse in nature.

3.29 Sixty eight recommendations were made regarding the arrangements for the management of quality and standards. Seventeen colleges were recommended to improve and/or apply policies and strategies for managing higher education, to include the development of existing quality management systems. A further 12 colleges were recommended to clarify aspects of their collaborative working arrangements with awarding bodies. It was recommended that colleges could engage in greater dialogue in respect of the arrangements for assessment, feedback and other areas pertinent to the student experience, and in respect of public information.

3.30 In total, 364 recommendations were made through the **Summative reviews**. Around three quarters of these were classified as desirable, with only two recommendations for one college being deemed by reviewers as essential.

Area of recommendation	Per cent
Academic Infrastructure	6%
Assessment	6%
Employer engagement	3%
Public information	19%
College quality management	38%
Staff development	12%
Student experience	15%

Table 9 - Summative reviews: recommendations
N=364

3.31 Thirty eight per cent of all recommendations made related to the arrangements for quality management within colleges. Fifty six of the 65 colleges reviewed received recommendations to improve their arrangements for quality management, with particular emphasis on the need to:

- review existing policies and procedures, and ensure that policies and procedures are clear, robust, appropriate and internally consistent
- review and evaluate the role and effectiveness of committees, boards and other structures for the management of quality assurance (to include reporting lines, terms of reference, sharing of minutes and frequency of meetings)
- review and improve the arrangements for internal review and monitoring activities (to include process and reporting).

3.32 Nineteen per cent of all recommendations related to public information. Particular reference was made to the arrangements for the management of public information. Forty five of the 65 colleges reviewed received recommendations about their approach to public information. Specific areas for improvement identified through the recommendations focused on the need for colleges to review and develop internal processes for the provision, checking, approval and sign-off of public information, in order to ensure that information provision was accurate and sufficient and appropriate information was being made available.

3.33 Fifteen per cent of recommendations made related directly to the quality of the student experience. Thirty three colleges received recommendations about the student experience. Particular reference was made to the use of virtual learning environments (15 colleges) and the provision of learning resources specifically for higher education students (14 colleges). In respect of virtual learning environments, recommendations included the need to:

- encourage staff and students to use the resource
- ensure that training is available to staff and students in the use of virtual learning environments
- extend the use of the virtual learning environments beyond that of a repository for information, to further support teaching and learning across the college.

3.34 Recommendations about higher education learning resources focused primarily on ensuring that library resources were appropriate and accessible and met the needs of students. It was also recommended that the level of information technology provision should be appropriate to students' needs. In particular, it was recommended that there must be sufficient items of hardware and an adequate range of, and licenses for, software to match proposed expansion in student numbers.

3.35 There were 45 recommendations for 35 colleges to improve staff development. The recommendations focused primarily on the opportunities available for staff development, in respect of programmes, protocols and procedures and arrangements in place for the observation of teaching.

3.36 Twenty one colleges received recommendations to increase their use of the Academic Infrastructure. This includes one third of all colleges reviewed. Recommendations focused on the need to:

- engage with the Academic Infrastructure, and implement where appropriate
- make reference to the Academic Infrastructure in policies, procedures and relevant programme documentation
- align policies and procedures with the Academic Infrastructure, namely the *Code of practice*.

What the students told us through the student written submission

(see paragraphs 6.24-6.29)

3.37 Central to the IQER process is engagement with students. Such engagement is facilitated through a student written submission (SWS) provided for the review team by the student body, and the opportunity for students to take part in meetings with the review team.

3.38 Strengths of higher education provision within colleges identified through the SWS included:

- arrangements for student support
- information on assessment presented through course handbooks and assessment briefs
- changes in response to issues raised through student feedback.

3.39 In contrast, a series of issues were also identified by students through the SWS. One of the most notable was the variation that exists within colleges in respect of students' experience, in part related to such factors as programme of study and location of study (campus). Other issues to emerge included:

- the need for improved timetabling and scheduling of assessment deadlines
- improved access to core texts and other specialist resources
- greater clarity on the expected styles of referencing material
- greater provision of information about the arrangements and opportunities for progression.

Outcomes of the evaluations

3.40 Overall, the IQER Developmental engagement process was well received by colleges, awarding bodies and students. Ninety four per cent of respondents agreed that the **Developmental engagement** had achieved its aim. The process was generally deemed to have operated smoothly. All respondent groups identified a series of benefits for the college, the awarding body/ies and students as a direct result of IQER.

Respondent group	Questionnaires sent	Number returned	Response rate per cent
Awarding bodies	230	89	39
Reviewers	81	65	80
Nominee	138	106	77
CR	79	62	79
College	79	28	35

Table 10 - Developmental engagement response rates by respondent group

3.41 Comments have been received from review teams, colleges and awarding bodies. The majority of reviewers and CRs completed an evaluation questionnaire following their review. Only 28 of the 79 colleges returned an evaluation questionnaire. Through the focus groups it was apparent that the relatively low response from colleges was due to the Nominees expressing the views of the college within their evaluation questionnaire. Overall, the findings from the evaluations were very positive. Review teams and those institutions who responded, overwhelmingly agreed that the Developmental engagement had achieved its aims.

Percentage of respondents that agree that the Developmental engagement achieved its aim:

- Awarding bodies 86%
- Reviewers 97%
- Nominee 97%
- CR 98%
- College 93%

3.42 Benefits to the college, as identified by respondents included:

- good preparation for Summative review
- an opportunity for both internal and external review
- an opportunity to focus and reflect on higher education provision
- an opportunity to highlight the importance of academic quality and standards and raise awareness of the Academic Infrastructure
- an opportunity to share good practice both internally and with awarding bodies.

3.43 Benefits to awarding bodies included:

- stronger relationships with partner colleges
- confirmation that appropriate quality and standards are being maintained in partner colleges
- clearer understanding of roles and responsibilities
- an opportunity to support partners.

3.44 Benefits to students included:

- a formal opportunity to share views and have them taken seriously
- greater understanding of quality assurance and peer review
- a feeling of full inclusion in the process and an opportunity to influence recommendations and the recognition of good practice
- opportunities to enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

3.45 The 66 **Summative reviews** carried out were also well received; with much positive comment about the benefits of the interaction between reviewers and colleges. The relatively low response rate attributed to colleges is due to the fact that the facilitators reported through the focus group that they reflected the views of the college within their own response.

Respondent group	Questionnaires sent	Number returned	Response rate per cent
Awarding bodies	186	73	39
Reviewers	178	159	89
CR	66	43	65
College	66	26	39
Facilitator	54	45	83

Table 11 - Summative review response rates by respondent group

Percentage of respondents that agree that the Summative review achieved its aim:

- Awarding bodies 73%
- Reviewers 97%
- CR 91%

- College 94%
- Facilitator 100%

3.46 Respondents identified benefits to the college as:

- an opportunity to improve communications with all awarding partners
- increased understanding of the Academic Infrastructure
- an opportunity for external evaluative judgements based on peer review
- an opportunity to reflect on higher education provision
- help in developing and sharing good practice
- focused attention on higher education and on relationships with awarding bodies.

3.47 Benefits to awarding bodies included:

- reassurance that standards are being adhered to
- closer working relationships with partner colleges
- recognition of important differences in how higher education in further education colleges and in universities is managed
- an opportunity to share good practice and evaluate the extent that their partners are effective in delivering higher education provision.

3.48 Benefits to students included:

- improvements to their education
- an opportunity for the student voice to be heard and acted upon
- a clear identity for higher education in each college
- assurance that their course is aligned to national academic standards and quality assurance requirements.

3.49 Challenges identified through the evaluation included:

For the college:

- understanding the IQER process
- the demands upon college staff and their workloads
- ensuring effective interaction and participation with awarding bodies and employers
- preparing the documentation
- recognising the distinctive needs of higher education provision, providing a coherent approach to higher education management in a further education setting.

For the students:

- becoming involved in the review process
- writing a representative and evaluative student written submission
- understanding the IQER process.

For awarding bodies:

- time commitment, especially for those at a distance or with numerous partnerships
- identifying the appropriate level of involvement
- providing support for the college.

Other challenges of the IQER process included:

- triangulating evidence in a desk-based review
- effective communication with all parties involved to ensure full understanding of requirements

- promoting transparency.

Public Information

3.50 During 2009-10, QAA published four new information bulletins on the findings of IQER carried out in further education colleges in England. A further bulletin on assessment was published in November 2010.

3.51 Our information bulletins aim to provide timely and accessible information to colleges, their awarding bodies and other interested stakeholders. Aimed at college staff and students, the bulletins have been published on QAA's website.

- ***Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER) - supporting and enhancing the student learning experience 2010***
This information bulletin provides information about supporting and enhancing the learning experience of students within further education colleges in England. It is aimed at college staff and students.
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/infobulletins/SupportStudents/default.asp
- ***Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER) - for college governors***
This bulletin provides information about IQER for governors of further education colleges that provide higher education. It includes a summary of the key questions they may wish to ask to assist them in the college's governance of higher education. These are based on five important areas - students, employers, awarding bodies, HE management and HE delivery.
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/infobulletins/forCollegeGovernors/default.asp
- ***Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER) - student engagement 2010***
This information bulletin provides information about student engagement in quality assurance within further education colleges in England. It is aimed at college staff and students.
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/infobulletins/StudentEngage/default.asp
- ***Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER) - Foundation Degrees***
This information bulletin provides an overview of the standards and quality of Foundation Degrees based on findings from our Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER) activities during 2007-08 and 2008-09.
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/infobulletins/FoundationDegrees/default.asp
- ***Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER) - Assessment and Feedback***
This bulletin is intended to provide information for both college staff and students about emerging good practice in relation to assessment and feedback, as derived through IQER reviews in England.
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/infobulletins/QAA354_Info%20bulletin_assessment.pdf

Summary

3.52 The 79 Developmental engagements and 66 Summative reviews carried out as part of IQER identified good practice in each college (see Annex 4 for comparative tables). The main items include:

- Assessment
 - clear and comprehensive assessment policies and strategies
 - timely and comprehensive feedback to students on the outcomes of assessed work, in relation to quality, timeliness and usefulness
 - the arrangements for assessment design, to include verification and approval
 - the use of virtual learning environments for information sharing and providing feedback to students
- the student experience
 - effective student support arrangements and accessibility of staff
 - the provision and availability of learning resources
- the provision of information to students about their programme of study and assessment arrangements
- effective arrangements for collaborative working
 - with awarding bodies, through on-going dialogue and liaison
 - with employers, through programme design, delivery and assessment
- staff development opportunities.

3.53 In terms of recommendations and areas for improvement, the following areas were identified:

- the need for greater consistency within colleges for the management and provision of higher education, with particular reference to the provision of information, student support and assessment
- Assessment
 - the need to develop and implement revised and consistent assessment policies and strategies
 - the need to provide timely, comprehensive and helpful feedback to students on assessed work
- the need to review and develop existing policies, strategies and procedures and the arrangements for managing higher education in the college and engage in dialogue with awarding bodies in the development of such arrangements
- the need to provide comprehensive and clear information for students, particularly in relation to assessment.

3.54 The evaluation confirmed that IQER was operating effectively and achieving its aims and objectives. All participant groups identified a series of benefits to the college, awarding bodies and students as a result of both Developmental engagements and Summative reviews. (See 6.4 to 6.10 for further information about feedback from students about their involvement in IQER).

The future

3.55 The current cycle of IQER draws to a close in July 2012. In planning for the future, a project group composed of QAA staff and an external advisory group have been set up to take forward the development of the method that will succeed IQER from the academic year 2012-13.

3.56 The project group is aligning the proposed new method with the requirements of the Guild HE, HEFCE, UUK commissioning letter for Institutional review, to ensure convergence of methods. This planning is also taking account of the consultation on the future revisions to the Academic Infrastructure and other important developments of quality assurance arrangements for UK higher education.

3.57 During 2010-11, a more detailed examination of the features of good practice and recommendations from IQER reviews will be available in a series of papers: *Outcomes from IQER*. Two papers, on college management of higher education and staff development, will be published during 2010-11 and two more, on assessment and student engagement, during 2011-12. In 2012-13 an overview of the impact of IQER on higher education in further education colleges and a summary of its strengths and weaknesses will be published as part of QAA's 'Learning from' series.

4 Foundation Degrees

4.1 Foundation Degrees were introduced in September 2001 to enable students to develop the intermediate higher-level skills that characterise the high-quality graduates needed by the labour market. The qualification is located at level 5 on *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), published by QAA.

4.2 Foundation Degrees were also introduced to contribute to widening participation by providing an award that aims to attract learners who may not previously have considered studying for a higher-level qualification. Many programmes are designed to meet the needs of local employment markets, although some are targeted at national and international employment needs.

4.3 The specification of Foundation Degree programmes was drawn up initially by the former Department for Education and Skills and has been codified by QAA in its *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* (2004). This provides details of the scope, structure and organisation of Foundation Degree programmes, including the involvement of employers and opportunities for work-based learning. The statement also identifies the need for progression routes from Foundation Degrees to awards at level 6.

4.4 Partnership between employers, higher education institutions, further education colleges and Sector Skills Councils are central to the concept of Foundation Degrees. QAA recognises that, while many Foundation Degree programmes are delivered by a consortium of institutions, some are provided by only one institution which may also be the awarding body.

4.5 The primary responsibility for the academic standards and quality of the students' learning experience rests with the awarding higher education institution. Where the higher education institution is in partnership with a further education college, the college and employers are normally partners in the delivery of a Foundation Degree and share responsibility for the delivery and the quality of the students' learning experience with the higher education institution, but the ultimate responsibility for academic standards rests with the awarding HEI.

4.6 To date, QAA has conducted two special reviews of Foundation Degrees since their introduction in 2001, the first in 2002-03 and the second in 2004-05. Following the reviews, QAA published a report entitled, *Learning from reviews of Foundation Degrees in England carried out in 2004-05*. The report identified a variety of examples of emerging good practice, and made a series of recommendations for the design, delivery and assessment of Foundation Degrees, for consideration by providers and policy makers.

4.7 In Autumn 2009, QAA provided a bespoke report to HEFCE on quality and standards in Foundation Degrees. This was supported by a QAA Information Bulletin published in summer 2010, reporting on emerging good practice and areas for improvement, as identified through IQER reviews.

- ***Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER) - Foundation Degrees***

This information bulletin provides an overview of the standards and quality of Foundation Degrees based on findings from our Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER) activities during 2007-08 and 2008-09.

www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/infobulletins/FoundationDegrees/default.asp

What we found

4.8 The contracts between QAA and HEFCE for 2007-11 require QAA to gather information through review activity on the extent to which Foundation Degrees meet their intended purpose. IQER is the primary method of review through which this information has been collected.

4.9 Foundation Degrees are explicitly considered within IQER Developmental engagements and Summative reviews. These provide a useful source of information to explore the arrangements in place within colleges. In order to report on Foundation Degrees, conclusions have been extracted from published review reports.

4.10 Each of the published Summative review reports offered a discrete section about Foundation Degrees. Nine of the reports identified that the college did not offer Foundation Degrees. In a further seven colleges, the review team did not identify specific features of good practice or recommendations, typically due to the newness or small size of the provision, but nevertheless provided a comment.

4.11 In some 26 reviews, it was reported that the good practice and recommendations identified in respect of Foundation Degrees were broadly the same as those identified in respect of the rest of the college's higher education provision. In 24 reports examples of good practice and/or recommendations were reported by the review teams, specific to the provision of Foundation Degrees. See section 3 for a summary of features of good practice and recommendations identified in colleges in respect of their higher education provision.

4.12 Excluding those areas of good practice or recommendations that related to higher education provision in general within the colleges (including Foundation Degrees), 112 examples of good practice specifically related to the delivery of Foundation Degrees were cited across 24 colleges.

4.13 Good practice in the provision of Foundation Degrees focused primarily on the quality of the student experience (34 per cent). This was slightly higher, proportionally, than for higher education in general in colleges, as identified through Summative reviews. Just under half of all of these good practice examples focused specifically upon the arrangements for the support for student learning.

Feature of good practice	
Academic Infrastructure	2%
Assessment	10%
College quality management	24%
Employer engagement	12%
Public information	9%
Staff development	10%
Student experience	34%

Table 12 - Foundation Degrees: features of good practice
N=112

4.14 Around a quarter (24 per cent) of examples of good practice related to the arrangements within the college for the management of quality and standards. These primarily focused upon the policies and strategies in place for the management of higher education.

4.15 Reviewers also identified scope for the improvement and further development of Foundation Degrees. Through the Summative review reports, 107 recommendations were made specifically related to Foundation Degrees. Of the recommendations, 67 were considered desirable and the remaining 40 as advisable. There were no essential recommendations.

4.16 Recommendations specifically related to Foundation Degrees focused upon college quality management (29 per cent) and the student experience (27 per cent). In respect of college quality management, the primary areas for improvement included the need to improve and address the policies and strategies in place. For student experience, recommendations focused upon the need to improve access to learning resources and develop virtual learning environments as a learning resource, as well as to encourage student and staff engagement with such technologies.

Recommendations	% total
Academic Infrastructure	9%
Assessment	3%
College quality management	29%
Employer engagement	2%
Public information	20%
Staff development	9%
Student experience	27%

Table 13 - Foundation Degrees: recommendations
N=107

4.17 In respect of public information, recommendations specific to Foundation Degrees focused upon ensuring that published information was complete and accurate.

4.18 The evidence from IQER to date indicates that Foundation Degrees are generally well designed and fit for purpose. The evidence from the reviews indicates that programmes continue to be developed in new and innovative disciplines reflecting local and regional employer needs, and also in growth sectors of the economy. The development of Foundation Degrees has continued to strengthen colleges' links with employers and between colleges and their higher education partners.

4.19 The reviews concluded that the arrangements for managing and ensuring the quality and standards of the Foundation Degrees in the institutions reviewed are operating successfully. The commentary on Foundation Degrees in review reports indicates the unexceptional nature of programmes in that Foundation Degrees continue to be well established as part of the suite of higher education awards.

Foundation Degree awarding powers

4.20 During 2009-10, two applications were received from colleges for Foundation Degree awarding powers. However, neither application progressed to full scrutiny. Two applications were ongoing during 2009-10, one of which is near completion, and the other will come to full report in the early summer 2011. During early 2010-11 an additional application was received and will proceed to full scrutiny.

Summary

4.21 The QAA review activities, in respect of the discharge of responsibilities, through institutional audit and IQER, provide a rigorous approach to the assurance of the quality and standards of Foundation Degrees. On the basis of the outcomes of review activities, QAA recommends that the quality and standards of Foundation Degrees continue to be monitored through existing review mechanisms and, where appropriate, specific reference is made to such provision within reports.

The future

4.22 QAA will also continue to monitor the recommendations arising from the *Learning from reviews of Foundation Degrees in England carried out in 2004-05* report (QAA, 2005), through the remainder of the IQER and Institutional audit cycles. Foundation Degree awarding power scrutinies can provide an additional source of evidence to support and inform ongoing analysis and monitoring.

4.23 Given the current range of activities for monitoring the delivery of Foundation Degrees and for promoting the enhancement of provision, including the contribution of employers, QAA does not see the need for further special reviews of Foundation Degrees at this stage. The outcomes from the various review activities have confirmed that existing external and internal review and verification processes are effective and widely used. QAA will continue to evaluate provision through its existing review processes, and disseminate findings through bespoke publications.

5 Development and enhancement

Introduction

5.1 This section provides a summary and overview of quality enhancement activity undertaken with the sector and other relevant bodies including a commentary on relevant developments to the Academic Infrastructure, and identifies some of the highlights and key themes that have come from the work during 2009-10. It also provides an indication of some themes that may be of particular relevance/importance in the following year.

5.2 The summary identifies the particular strengths and values of the work in this area where the work contributes to QAA's key strategic priorities both in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and internationally.

Main roles and responsibilities

5.3 The main roles and activities in development and enhancement are linked to QAA's responsibility for the stewardship of the Academic infrastructure and include:

- review and revision of the Academic Infrastructure, to ensure its currency and applicability to evolving and emerging practice in HE
- providing events and publications, mostly for the HE sector, to support and promote the Academic Infrastructure and its effective implementation
- working with stakeholders to ensure that the Academic Infrastructure is understood and used effectively
- undertaking special projects to identify effective quality assurance practices, and support their evolution and innovation; this is done through work both in the UK, Europe and internationally.

5.4 While the Academic Infrastructure is UK wide, this report is concerned primarily with activities undertaken in England. All of QAA's development and enhancement work is inter-related; there are several ways in which linkages can be demonstrated and as examples a few 'cross-cutting themes' are identified and summarised.

5.5 While QAA's main responsibilities (leading stewardship of the Academic infrastructure) and some aspects of planning timeframes are predictable, much of our development and enhancement work is also about responding to requests, recognising and creating opportunities, promoting discussions that can identify improvement and working in partnership, often to other organisations' deadlines. The work is informed by latest developments and is proactive where appropriate.

Specific activities

5.6 A very wide range of activities has been undertaken during the year, some within the original planning framework set out in QAA's Annual operating plan and some aspects that have arisen either by request from external organisations or where QAA saw particular benefit (proportionate to 'cost') in adapting existing, or undertaking new, work. Almost all of the tasks and measures indicated in the original Annual operating plan were completed by the end of the year. Notable exceptions include; delay in completing the development of a 'minimum set of expectations' for external examiners - the timetable for this programme of work has been determined by the sector-led review of external examining which will report in January 2011.

Supporting and enhancing quality

Evaluation of the Academic Infrastructure

5.7 The evaluation of the Academic Infrastructure has formed a major strand of development and enhancement activity in 2009-10. The evaluation of the Academic infrastructure has been a thorough and important piece of work for QAA and the HE sector.

5.8 In February 2010 a detailed consultation document, supported by a shorter, 'straightforward' version aimed at non-specialist audiences, was launched. The discussion paper was circulated to individuals, higher education providers, organisations and public bodies with an interest in higher education, and to students through their representative bodies. In March, April and May 2010, QAA organised four roundtable discussion events in Leeds, London, Glasgow and Cardiff, convened focus groups with student representatives and attended meetings with specialist interest groups to raise awareness of the evaluation exercise and take feedback. Over 200 delegates from a wide range of higher and further education institutions including academics, quality officers and student representatives, from higher education representative bodies, from professional, statutory and regulatory bodies and two international guests attended the roundtable events, with a similar number participating in the various individual meetings. The roundtable meetings provided opportunities for particular groups of users to discuss their understanding and experience of the Academic Infrastructure and share opinions about the value and effectiveness of the Academic Infrastructure as a whole and its individual components, in addition to providing suggestions for how the Academic Infrastructure may develop in the future

5.9 A total of 118 written responses were received, from higher education institutions in all parts of the UK, further education colleges, professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, UK representative bodies and individuals. The outcome of the evaluation has shown that the Academic Infrastructure has served the HE sector well. There is much evidence of the positive impact the Academic Infrastructure has had on assuring the standards and quality of higher education provision in the UK. There are also areas where further improvement would be welcome - typified by one respondent's observation that 'the Academic Infrastructure needs strengthening to gain greater credibility, but our counsel here is to move towards simplification rather than elaboration: too much insistence on detail or nuance will not help. Overall better communication is needed, and that will be enabled by greater clarity of purpose, strengthening key elements to be mandatory, and the avoidance of academic jargon'.

5.10 The final report of the evaluation was published in August 2010 and set out a clear agenda for revising the Academic Infrastructure to ensure that it remains 'fit for purpose'. A formal consultation on specific proposals for these revisions will take place between 14 December 2010 and 1 March 2011.

Revision of the *Code of practice*

5.11 The review and revision of two sections of the *Code of practice* (*Section 3: Disabled students* and *Section 8: Career education, information, advice and guidance*) was completed and the second edition of each section was published in February 2010. In each case the review has been assisted by an advisory group drawn from across the sector and key stakeholders. In the light of various comments questioning the fitness for purpose of *Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)* we also opened discussion with the sector about the necessity of re-visiting this section (initially revised in 2004). As a result of these discussions and while the consultation on a revised Academic infrastructure is undertaken, QAA has, with advice from stakeholders, supplemented the existing Section 2 with additional guidance on how some of the precepts

may be applied to different context, for example to be more applicable to transnational education (TNE), private providers and developments in employer responsive provision. The amplification was published in October 2010.

The development of guidelines and a credit framework for HE in England

5.12 Following on from the recommendations of the Measuring and Recording Student Achievement (Burgess) Group, QAA has supported the Credit Issues Development Group in preparing and consulting on a credit framework for HE in England. The credit framework and its associated guidance *Higher education credit framework for England: guidance on academic credit arrangements in higher education in England* was published in August 2008. A complementary guidance document *The frameworks for higher education qualifications and credit: how they relate to academic standards* was also published in August 2008. In July 2009 the Burgess Group asked QAA to monitor the adoption of the HE credit framework. Survey work was undertaken in July and August 2009 and the final report presented to the Burgess Group and published in August 2009. The findings showed that implementation is widespread across the sector.

Maintain and develop work relating to subject benchmarks

5.13 Subject benchmark statements are written by the relevant subject communities. QAA's work in this area is very ably supported by the Benchmark Steering Group (BSG), and falls into three main areas: review and revision of existing statements; recognition of new statements; and the relationship between benchmark statements and other reference points used for setting standards and naming awards. During the year QAA completed the two-year programme of activity to update all undergraduate benchmarks statements published since 2001. In addition, the BSG approved the development of a new statement for Master's level Computing. Following discussions with relevant subject centres and the BSG, the decision was taken not to develop an overarching statement on the use of benchmark statements for multidisciplinary programmes.

5.14 Consultation on the revised recognition scheme for benchmark statements took place between April and July 2010. Minor amendments to the scheme were proposed, with the revised guidelines for the scheme published in September 2010.

Work on the nature and nomenclature of master's degrees and doctoral qualifications

5.15 Following initial discussions on the need for master's level benchmark statements, a *Master's degree characteristics* document was produced, under the guidance of the BSG, and made available for consultation in between September and November 2009. The final guidance document was published in April 2010. The document received a positive reaction from the HE sector and will offer additional guidance to the master's qualification descriptor of *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). The approach to developing the *Master's degree characteristics* document has also been applied to the development of a 'doctoral characteristics' statement.

5.16 During 2009-10 QAA led a joint project with the HEA and UKCGE to produce guidance around the nature of 'doctorateness'. A new area of the QAA website was dedicated to doctoral qualifications in March 2010 and the doctoral characteristics paper published on the website in May 2010

Contribute to and support work on the development of the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR)

5.17 The Measuring and Recording Student Achievement Group (the 'Burgess Group') has for some time been working on papers with the aim of providing proposals 'to build and implement a sustainable system for recording achievement that is fit for purpose in the 21st Century. The final report of the Burgess Group: *Beyond the honours degree classification* recommended the development of the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR). In addition to representing QAA on the Burgess Group, QAA staff have also provided expert advice to the Centre for Recording Achievement on qualifications frameworks and levels and to the UK Europe Unit as it coordinates the revision to the *National Description of Higher Education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*. The National Description will form an essential part of the Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR)/UK Diploma Supplement

Monitor and promote the application of the Academic Infrastructure

5.18 The Academic Infrastructure was developed, following the recommendations of the Dearing and Garrick reports (1997), to provide a set of shared and explicit reference points that would provide a basis for setting, and setting out, the academic standards of HE awards and also provide a means for the internal and external quality assurance of those standards and the quality of the study programmes leading to the awards. The concept was designed to provide a sound and explicit basis for public and specialist confidence in a system that is essentially self-regulating.

5.19 While evidence on the applicability and effectiveness of the Academic Infrastructure can be gleaned from thematic scrutiny of audit and review reports (through, for example, the *Outcomes...* papers) and from the discussions and consultations associated with the ongoing programme of review and revision of the various components of the Academic Infrastructure, and other 'intelligence gathering', a formal evaluation of the Academic Infrastructure as a whole has not been undertaken to date. With a continuously evolving HE context, it was decided that such a review should be undertaken and this is planned for 2009-10/2010-11. It is anticipated that this will inform any necessary or desirable revisions to the bases and procedures used in setting out and securing the standards and quality of UK HE.

Outcomes from institutional audit second series

5.20 Four papers in series 2 of *Outcomes from institutional audit* (based on the institutional audit reports published between December 2004 and August 2006) were published in October 2009. Three papers, covering the FHEQ, subject benchmark statements and programme specifications, and an overview paper explaining their relationship as essential components of the Academic Infrastructure, were published together in October 2009, and contributed to providing information about quality and standards and informed the evaluation of the Academic Infrastructure. A further four papers, including a closing overview of series 2, were published in December 2009.

5.21 Draft papers contributing to the *Outcomes from collaborative audit provision* were received during summer 2010, with publication scheduled from October 2010. QAA staff have also been working to devise a procedure for analysing and producing thematic and analytical reports from Integrated quality and enhancement review.

5.22 One of the aims of *Outcomes from institutional audit* is to provide an opportunity to reflect on changing circumstances in higher education in England and Northern Ireland as shown in recently published Institutional audit reports. As such, it frequently raises questions for others as well as for QAA. Media interest in the *Outcomes...* papers was a significant

contributory factor in generating interest and debate about quality and standards in higher education in England in summer 2008. As a consequence QAA initiated a revised procedure for notifying HEIs of forthcoming publications in the *Outcomes...* series.

5.23 The *Outcomes...* team regularly reminds readers of *higher quality* and attendees at conferences that it is willing to analyse the Institutional audit reports, the audit of collaborative provision reports and the overseas audit reports on behalf of individuals and HEIs to produce 'bespoke' digests of information. The number of such requests (some via QAA liaison officers) has steadily grown. We hope that the responses of the *Outcomes...* team to such enquiries are valuable for those making the enquiries, but they are also valuable for the *Outcomes...* team itself, in providing an indication of what might be future topics for *Outcomes...* papers in a more timely manner.

5.24 Work also began in 2009-10 on revising the procedure and protocols for producing future *Outcomes...* papers. An initial scoping meeting for *Outcomes...* series 3 was held in November 2009; followed by an internal consultation event in February 2010. The *Outcomes...* team has developed a new protocol and procedures for identifying topics and for producing *Outcomes...* series 3 papers. Authors for this series have been identified and the first training event for the new cohort of authors will take place in October 2010

Thematic enquiries

5.25 QAA has undertaken, throughout 2009-10, a programme of work to follow-up the issues identified in the 'Thematic enquiries' project in 2008-09. A one-day discussion forum was convened in October 2009 to discuss implementation of an action plan and how the recommendations contained in the report might be implemented, by whom and to what timescale. Progress against each strand of work is reported separately below.

External examining

5.26 A joint discussion paper between UUK, GuildHE and QAA was made available for comment to the sector on 22 July 2010 - the deadline for responses was 1 October 2010. The three bodies have worked together to analyse the responses, leading to a report to the UUK and GuildHE convened Review Group in November 2010. The Review Group will report to UUK and GuildHE Boards in January 2011.

5.27 A meeting of an Expert Group on 17 September 2010 provided valuable feedback on proposed minimum expectations for the role (which were devised by QAA and incorporated into the joint discussion paper). In discussing proposals for a national report template, the Review Group agreed that the content of any such template should reflect the minimum expectations. Once they are agreed, the minimum expectations will be incorporated into the new Academic Infrastructure, during the course of 2011.

Assessment

5.28 QAA hosted three regional events around assessment on 13 October at Oxford Brookes University, 12 November at Northumbria University and 14 December 2010 at Wolverhampton University. The events were designed to give staff in institutions the chance to explore assessment standards between subjects and institutions. Oxford Brookes and Northumbria were chosen because of the presence of the assessment-related Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and Wolverhampton because of links with the Student Achievement and Classification Working Group. The HEA also agreed to present at each of the events on the development work that they are currently engaged in around assessment.

5.29 The events provided an opportunity for QAA to seek feedback on a draft guide around assessment for early-career academic staff, which is currently being prepared. There

are plans to produce a similar guide on assessment and how it operates for students, in partnership with the NUS.

International students

5.30 QAA has convened an advisory group composed of representatives from sector partner organisations and institutions to assist in the development of guidelines for institutions' management of the experiences of international students. This was an agreed action from a cross-sector discussion held on 8 April 2010. The advisory group met on 10 September 2010. A drafting group drawn from the advisory group, comprising of institutional representatives, met to produce a first draft in autumn 2010.

Contact hours

5.31 QAA has convened a working party composed of HEA subject centre directors, and representation from the HEA, to assist in the production of an explanation of the meaning of contact hours within the context of students' learning. This will be of help to students and others interested in higher education and we hope will be used as a point of reference for institutions producing course level information and guiding students' expectations. QAA has worked closely with HEFCE colleagues and the Higher Education Public Information Steering Group to ensure that this work contributes to the development and guidance on the proposed Key Information Set.

QAA events designed to support enhancement

5.32 The various discussion, consultation and dissemination meetings and conferences organised by QAA all, in one way or another, seek to support a wider enhancement strategy relating to continuous improvement in the Academic Infrastructure and associated guidance, and their application, that underpin the setting of academic standards and quality assurance. Over 20 open public meetings were arranged with nearly 1,000 registered delegates. Evaluation and feedback from delegates indicated that the events are well-organised, topical and relevant to the HE sector and its partners.

QAA liaison officer schemes

5.33 The schemes through which all subscribing institutions in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and all 25 HEA subject centres are offered a 'first point of contact', for all matters excluding specific audits/reviews, continues to be popular. During 2009-10 QAA has initiated an evaluation of the schemes by gaining feedback from HEIs, subject centre directors and QAA liaison officers about the range and level of activity within the scheme and an initial appraisal of the value and impact it has to HEIs, subject communities and QAA. Initial findings suggest that approximately two-thirds of institutions make use of the scheme and more than half have engaged in substantial activity during the year, through formally arranged meetings.

5.34 In the main, there was much support for the continuation of the Liaison Scheme from institutions and liaison officers. Institutions reported that they considered there to be many benefits associated with participation in the scheme and that they found it to be useful and helpful. There was, however, a clear sense on the part of liaison officers that the purpose of the scheme needed to be clarified.

5.35 Overall, the evaluation highlighted a need to review, revise and clarify the purpose and principles of the scheme to ensure its continued applicability and usefulness to all parties. Proposals for revising the liaison schemes will be considered alongside the development of a 'stakeholder engagement strategy'.

Support/contribute to networks and events

Raise profile of QAA outcomes in UK forums

5.36 QAA Assistant Directors and Development Officers spend on average 6-8 days per month out of the office, with approximately half of this time used to support and contribute to the work of others. This effort has to be targeted (we are invited to far more than we can accept) and is aimed very directly at both promoting the work and profile of QAA and 'information gathering and 'horizon scanning' that can better inform our own work. Other activities are presented below, in the sections on Offering expertise and Rationalising regulation.

Offering expertise

Maintain and expand links with key employer and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies

5.37 Regular discussions are held with key employer bodies including Sector Skills Councils and various professional, regulatory and statutory bodies (PSRBs), to enable better information flow and understanding of matters dealing with the setting and assurance of (academic) standards and quality in an HE sector that is becoming increasingly diverse and more closely and directly linked with business. The work is organised within the strategic approach to 'employer engagement'. It is worth noting that our work is closely linked with that being done by the representative bodies (UUK and GuildHE), funding council(s), *fdf* (formerly Foundation Degree Forward) and the Higher Education Academy (HEA).

5.38 The quality assurance challenges faced by HEIs in delivering 'employer responsive provision' was a particular focus of both the institutional and HEA subject centre liaison schemes in 2008-09 with liaison officers collecting information via surveys and face-to-face interviews with HEI representatives about the challenges and approaches taken by HEIs to employer engagement. A major conference designed to share the outcomes of the survey work and gain feedback on draft guidance for quality assurance of employer responsive provision took place on 10 July 2009. In December 2010 a joint HEFCE/*fdf*/HEA/QAA conference also discussed the draft final report and findings from the survey. The report *Employer-responsive provision survey. A reflective report* was finalised for publication in February 2010. This and other work, in particular with various Lifelong Learning Networks and Skills Pathfinders, has informed QAA's work on employer engagement and workforce development. This work will continue in 2010-11 with the establishment of an 'employers' forum'.

5.39 The established PSRB Forum has continued to go from strength to strength in 2009-10. Established with the support of the UK Inter-professional Group (UKIPG), the Forum held three meetings in 2009-10 (all of which ran at full capacity) and is attracting an increasing number and diversity of PRSBs. At its meeting in March 2010 the Forum discussed sustainability issues in relation to conducting review and audit activity. At its June 2010 meeting, a representative from the Higher Education Better Regulation Group briefed the Forum on its work and discussed how the two groups could work together in the future.

Rationalising regulation

5.40 QAA maintains a liaison scheme with the HEA's subject centre network. In May 2010 the fifth 'Working Together' meeting was held with a number of subject centres directors and staff. This annual meeting provides a vehicle for discussion of our various activities and for exchanging intelligence on developments within the HE sector. This meeting clearly demonstrated the constructive relationship between the organisations.

Discussions focused on issues surrounding external examining, student workload and contact hours, assessment, and postgraduate provision, and on the respective work of the HEA, subject centres and QAA in these areas. Sixty five representatives from the HEA, the subject centres and QAA attended to exchange information and views and provided an opportunity for QAA to share initial thoughts, and gain feedback on future joint working.

5.41 During 2008-09 QAA and the HEA conducted a joint project examining the balance of quality enhancement and quality assurance activity undertaken by higher education institutions in Wales. The project built on a similar successful collaboration conducted in England and Northern Ireland in 2008. The project culminated in October 2009 with a joint conference, attended by over 80 delegates, designed to present the project's findings for discussion and inform further joint working between QAA and the HEA in 2010-11 in support of the Enhancement Framework for Wales.

5.42 QAA staff also contribute to a variety of shared working groups and special interest Groups and are involved in joint programmes of work focusing on, for example, assessment, external examining and employer engagement. Some elements of the follow-up work arising from the thematic enquiries project (see paragraph 5.16-5.18) undertaken in 2009-10 are likely to be undertaken in collaboration with the HEA (for example, in a review of external examining).

5.43 During 2009-10, QAA's Executive and HEA's Executive Team met twice to discuss, in light of the changing agendas for both organisations, increased political and public interest in the standards and quality of HE and the student learning experience; pressures on public funding and a growing emphasis on public engagement; and areas of mutual interest and opportunities for joint working. The two executive teams agreed to establish a Joint Operational Working Group and to publish a joint statement covering the areas of partnership and joint works, in addition to a delineation of responsibilities and the specific contribution the two organisations make to the HE sector, particularly in the area 'enhancement'. The terms of reference for the Joint Operational Working Group is due to be discussed at the first group meeting in October 2010.

Working worldwide

Contribute to relevant project work, including European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong learning (EQF) and *The framework for qualifications of the European higher education area (FQ-EHEA)*

5.44 QAA has provided advice and guidance on matters relating to the 'levels' of qualifications, both in comparisons between different qualifications frameworks in the UK and Ireland, and across Europe. QAA staff participate regularly in the '5 countries' annual meetings and working group discussions. QAA staff were instrumental in securing agreement among the regulators and qualifications (and credit) framework 'owners' in the five countries of the UK and Ireland to update the *Qualifications can cross boundaries* leaflet.

5.45 At the request of DIUS, the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and the Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland (DEL), the second edition of the FHEQ was verified as being compatible with the FQ-EHEA. The final verification report was published on websites of QAA, the Bologna Follow-up Group and the Council of Europe in February 2009.

5.46 A European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) has been developed by the European Commission and endorsed by ministers in 2008. A UK EQF Coordination Group has been established to oversee the referencing of the vocational and training and overarching credit and qualifications frameworks in the UK to the EQF. QAA

staff are regular participants in the UK EQF coordination group discussions and represent QAA on the England and Northern Ireland EQF National Coordination referencing group.

Offering expertise

5.47 An important and significant achievement for QAA was the re-election, in September 2009, of one of QAA's Assistant Directors to the ENQA Board, as Vice President. In addition to the personal recognition and continuing staff development opportunities this appointment brings to the individual, QAA will benefit from the continuity of experience since Peter Williams stepped down as President of ENQA in 2008. QAA's international reputation for expertise in quality assurance and enhancement was evident in 2009-10 when QAA staff central to the *Outcomes...* team were invited to use the same procedures and techniques used to produce the *Outcomes...* series of papers to analyse and report on the ENQA's own reviews of quality assurance agencies.

Summary

5.48 In terms of its main roles and activities in development and enhancement, QAA has made significant advances in each of the main areas of its work. QAA staff have lead or made influential contributions to major developments across the HE sector in 2009-10. The year's key themes and highlights may be summarised as:

- review and revision of the Academic Infrastructure:
 - evaluation of the Academic Infrastructure formed one of four significant developments in the HE sector during 2009-2010 - QAA staff have led this evaluation and delivered the objectives on time, within budget and to the agreed objectives of the project.
 - QAA's contribution to the sector-wide review of external examining and maintained links with the broader evaluation of the Academic Infrastructure
 - review and revision of benchmark recognition scheme was completed
 - review of two sections of the *Code of practice* (3 and 8) was completed in 2009-10; all sections of the *Code of practice* are now in their second edition
 - a survey of the extent to which the credit framework for England has been implemented was undertaken at short notice and outcomes reported and published in a timely manner.
- providing events and publications, mostly for the HE sector but also key stakeholders, to support and promote the Academic Infrastructure and its effective implementation:
 - the discussion ('roundtable') meetings and conferences organised by QAA to support development and enhancement activity are almost always oversubscribed and well received
 - in addition to the formal (consultation, and so on) documents published in relation to the review and revision of the Academic Infrastructure, the *Outcomes...* series of reports makes a significant contribution to the development and enhancement agenda of QAA and the HE sector. These have attracted wide attention both across the HE sectors in the UK and abroad, and some reports have also been subject to wider interest amongst key stakeholders, including the national press
 - increasing attention and resource has been committed to promoting a better understanding of the Academic Infrastructure and its use in further education colleges.

- working with stakeholders to ensure that the Academic Infrastructure is understood and used effectively:
 - particular time and attention has been given to working with organisations and staff involved in developing and delivering key government and funding council priorities. In particular this relates to review of the Quality Assurance System (and development of the new operational description for Institutional review for England and Northern Ireland) and the review of public information, employer engagement and workforce planning, and widening participation and progression.

- undertaking special projects to identify effective quality assurance practices, and support their evolution and innovation; this is done through work both in the UK and in Europe:
 - coordinating follow-up activity to the 'Thematic enquiries into concerns about quality and standards in higher education in England' project
 - QAA staff have contributed to a number of international projects which are, or will have, significant impacts, including work concerned with: doctoral and postdoctoral students and staff; student assessment; and a major comparative review of quality assurance agencies across the whole of the 'Bologna area'.

6 Working with students

6.1 The *Strategic plan 2006-11*² identified students as having a key interest in the safeguarding of academic standards and in the continuous improvement of quality management. The *Transitional Plan (2010-2011)* maintains the centrality of students in quality assurance and quality management. QAA believes that an important feature of higher education is that students are active participants in their own education and therefore can and should be directly involved in the sector's approaches to quality assurance and enhancement.

6.2 Building on developments in previous years, QAA has continued to undertake extensive work in relation to students and student involvement in its core activities. QAA has taken a lead in developing new and innovative ways of engaging students in important decisions about HE provision in England and has identified communicating information about quality and standards on higher education to students as one of its purposes, supporting initiatives from the National Student Forum, BIS (formerly DIUS) and HEFCE. In addition, during 2009-10, QAA actively engaged in the cross-sector student engagement group for England, and the HEA/NUS training for course representatives. Likewise, QAA recognises the importance of student involvement in the assurance and enhancement of the quality and standards of their higher education.

6.3 Throughout 2009-10, QAA has continued to strengthen links with students and student representative bodies. Activities included student participation in the audit and IQER processes, through the student written submission and meetings with audit teams. In response to a consultation in 2007-08 on student involvement in quality assurance QAA has included students as full members of audit teams, and has trained further student auditors in preparation.

Student engagement in QAA activities

6.4 Through the evaluation process of audit and IQER, students welcomed the opportunity to participate and express their views, and institutions and audit/review teams valued the contributions that students made in meetings and through the student written submission. Students repeatedly commented that the audit and review processes provide them with the opportunity to share their views with a team of external and independent reviewers about their higher education experience.

6.5 Through process evaluations, students were asked whether they expected improvements to their education through involvement in QAA reviews. In the main, respondents answered 'yes' or 'don't know'. It was envisaged that feedback through the process had the potential to bring about change - through the report and recommendations.

6.6 Students welcomed the opportunity to provide an input, either through a student written submission or through meetings with the review teams, or both. In many instances, direct action and change was reported as a result of the student written submission and associated preparatory activities.

6.7 Benefits identified by students of involvement in IQER and audit included:

- getting the student voice heard and their opinions listened to

² www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/strategicPlan/2006/Strategicplan06-11.pdf

- potentially acting as a catalyst for change that can benefit current and future students
- providing students with the opportunity to provide feedback, which in turn may bring about improvements to their teaching and learning experiences within the college/institution
- providing students with the opportunity to identify strengths and weaknesses associated with their learning experience and higher education experience more generally

6.8 Challenges reported by students of their involvement in IQER and audit included:

- getting students to see the benefits of getting involved
- getting students involved in contributing to the process, especially developing the student written submission
- trying to involve students from all sections of the student body, to ensure a greater degree of representativeness
- the timing of the student written submission, in relation to vacations and workloads
- insufficient time to contribute, and accommodating this around lectures and assessments and other activities.

6.9 Over recent years, QAA has sought to improve communication and the provision of information for students, through the production of formal guidance and informative events with other organisations, such as the NUS. When asked how student involvement in review processes could be improved, the following themes emerged:

- provide greater information about the process, and what will happen/is expected when, how and why
- provide further information about the benefits of student engagement in review activities
- promote the activity more widely within the college/institution
- encourage students to participate.

6.10 Respondents from colleges suggested that a predefined questionnaire or set of questions would be helpful in aiding their preparation for both the student written submission and the meeting with the team.

Student membership of audit and review teams

6.11 In 2009-10, the first students were included as full members of audit teams. This introduction followed an extensive consultation with the sector and piloting of the scheme. Following successful recruitment and training, the first student auditors were deployed in autumn 2009.

6.12 In the academic year 2009-10, a total of 30 Institutional audits were undertaken. Sixteen of these audits included a student member of the team. For 11 of these audits, the student member of the audit team completed and returned an evaluation questionnaire.

6.13 The student members of audit teams were very positive about their experience of undertaking an audit. They were particularly positive about their engagement with the team and the institution, and their overall experience of undertaking an audit.

6.14 When asked about the benefits of the audit process for institutions, the majority of responses accorded with the wider benefits as perceived by the team and institution in general. One respondent, however, made direct reference to the benefits of having a student member of the audit team.

'I think that having a student auditor meant that they were asked question that they weren't expecting, about critical engagement of students in committees, which will hopefully help them improve what they do'.

6.15 When asked specifically about the benefits to the student experience of the audit, the views of the student members of the team reflected the team and institution in general. The student members also saw benefits for how the reports might be used to improve the overall student experience.

'I hope that the Students Union will use the audit report to engage the university on key quality assurance issues to improve the student experience at the institution. I also hope that prospective students may use the audit report to find out a little about the university'.

'Safeguarding the students' interest in the sound standards of higher education qualifications'.

6.16 When asked about their personal experience as a student member of the audit team, both benefits and challenges were identified. In respect of challenges, respondents highlighted that the time commitment was extensive and there were large amounts of documentation and information to process. Reference was made to the often technical information with which they had to deal. However, it was acknowledged that fellow team members and QAA Officers had been very supportive.

'I felt extremely welcomed as a new auditor by the panel of auditors particularly by our Assistant Director. I felt I was able to participate fully in all parts of the process'.

6.17 In terms of the overall experience of undertaking the role of a student member of an audit team, respondents were highly positive identifying the benefits that they had gained. Many cited experience as one benefit, and the opportunity to take the experience back into their institution and reflect further. As one respondent commented:

'It is an absolutely unbelievable development opportunity for student auditors, and I cannot thank the QAA enough for that'.

Short films

6.18 During 2009, QAA made the decision to produce a series of short films and podcasts with the aim of sharing information with stakeholders. The podcasts and short films represented QAA's first engagement with new media technologies as part of the dissemination of information. None of the materials were intended to be promotional, but were designed to convey appropriate information to specific audiences.

6.19 The films were derived from the various conference presentations and conversations with conference delegates. Four short films on student engagement were produced following the student engagement workshops, each addressing the importance of student engagement in quality assurance. These four short films were intended to provide information for senior and middle managers within institutions regarding student engagement, with the aim of sharing good practice.

6.20 A further five films were produced following the Institutional audit event for student representatives. These five short films were intended to provide information for student representatives in their preparations for audit.

6.21 The short films were published on YouTube and also on the QAA website. Awareness of their presence was raised through QAA news and other formal and informal communication networks.

6.22 An initial evaluation of the short films has suggested that they are useful to viewers. This is based upon direct feedback from users and QAA staff. On the basis of successful implementation of the use of new social media by QAA, further developments and opportunities are being investigated, to include a Facebook page and further short films, alongside existing communication sources such as QAA on Twitter and QAA podcasts. Feedback from an institution on the short films:

'Just to let you know some feedback. University of [...] are already planning to use our videos in the training of their 450 course reps'.

Information for student representatives

6.23 In addition to the development of short films aimed at student representatives to support planning and preparation for audit and review, QAA has engaged a group of current student representatives to help with the writing of other supporting material. Involvement of student representatives in writing the materials sought to ensure that they were fit for purpose, useful and informative and accessible to the intended audience. These have been made available in hard copy and published on the QAA website.

The student written submission

6.24 As part of audit and IQER, students are invited to provide a student written submission to inform the review team. While there is no set template for production of the written submission, QAA provide guidance on those areas that students may wish to comment upon within their submissions.

6.25 In order to identify any recurring themes from the student written submissions, QAA undertakes an annual analysis of the information. This information can be considered in the context of the National Student Survey and the conclusions drawn from review activities on strengths and areas for improvement in higher education.

6.26 Those issues identified by students in relation to their higher education experience in colleges and HEIs displayed much commonality (see Section 2 and 3 for specific methods). In the main, areas of good practice identified by students included:

- the support for students in their learning
- learning support resources available to students
- published information, to include information provided for students about specific programmes of study (to include information on assessment)
- feedback on assessment.

6.27 However, students expressed variability in experience both within and between institutions. As such, inconsistency and variability in experience at programme level was one of the main areas of dissatisfaction raised by the students within the context of their submission.

6.28 Other areas for improvement identified through the student written submissions included the:

- consistency in the arrangements for feedback within institutions (format, detail and timeliness)
- scheduling of assessment deadlines
- access to core texts and other specialist resources
- information about expectations and course-specific information for students
- access to/availability of staff
- sufficiently detailed and accurate public information to include arrangements and opportunities for progression, course costs (associated with specific materials required), and location of study.

6.29 As may be expected, symmetry emerges between the findings of the National Student Survey and the identification of themes within the student written submission. Both reflect the views and perceptions of current students. Within the context of the student written submission, not only did students reflect upon their 'experience', as with the National Student Survey, but also their 'expectations'. This symmetry is not as evident in relation to the emerging recommendations and good practice from audit, but draws some symmetry to the findings from IQER. This is a factor for consideration for the identification of priorities for enhancement activities and the selection of themes (the latter in relation to the proposed themes for Institutional review).

Summary

6.30 During 2009-10, QAA has continued to make significant progress in respect of student engagement. As a direct result of work to date, QAA has produced a series of bespoke information resources (including films); held student-centred events (in conjunction with partners) and has successfully deployed students as full members of audit teams.

7 Feedback and evaluation from other activities

7.1 During 2009-010, QAA undertook the evaluation and monitoring of the various audit and review activities and training and briefing events. All evaluation and monitoring activity took place in accordance with QAA's evaluation policy and strategy. This section provides an overview of feedback from, and the evaluation of, QAA's activities and events.

7.2 QAA is committed to reflecting on its processes by undertaking a formal evaluation of all its audit and review activities. Evaluation serves a variety of purposes, not least of which is reporting to HEFCE and other stakeholders as part of QAA's contractual requirements. The systematic evaluation of activities allows for the identification of good practice and highlights aspects of activity where there is scope for further development as part of the process of continuous improvement.

7.3 The continual monitoring and internal reporting on evaluation activities has provided a valuable mechanism for the early identification of good practice and problems, so facilitating early resolution. QAA is confident that participant groups are broadly satisfied that the audit and review processes, and training and briefing events, have achieved their intended aim and met the expectations of those involved.

Process evaluation

7.4 Following the completion of all review and audit activities, formal evaluation was undertaken by means of questionnaire surveys and focus group activities. The evaluation involved all relevant participant stakeholder groups - student representative bodies, institutions and reviewers/auditors.

7.5 Across all methods, response rates were high and feedback was highly positive. In the main, respondents agreed that the review/audit activities had met the stated aims and had generated tangible benefits for the institution, and subsequently the student learning experience. Around 90 per cent of all those involved in IQER agreed that the review had achieved its aim. The remaining 10 per cent generally considered that it was too early to say.

Evaluation of other activities

7.6 During 2009-10, QAA ran a number of training and briefing events, and a wide range of conference, discussion and dissemination events. One of the strategic themes within the *Strategic plan 2006-2011* is that of offering expertise. This is embedded in the support and contribution that QAA staff make to other UK and international conference events as presenters of papers, session convenors and chairs. QAA additionally provides extensive information, through publications and formal visits, to other international agencies involved in higher education and quality and standards of such education systems.

Examples of activities include:

- auditors and reviewer training
- briefing events and road shows for providers of higher education and awarding bodies
- roundtable discussion events
- focus groups for the evaluation of the Academic Infrastructure
- Annual Subscribers' Conference
- Annual Liaison Conference
- focus groups as part of review and audit method evaluation

- review method-specific conferences, supporting reviewers' and auditors' continued professional development
- events aimed specifically at students and student representatives
- thematic conference events with an emphasis on the dissemination of pertinent information
- events with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies
- events with NUS.

7.7 All conference, training and briefing events delivered by QAA are subject to evaluation, so facilitating a reflective approach to both content and delivery. The continuous cycle of evaluation of events has ensured that any areas identified by respondents as requiring further attention or provision of information can be addressed for the future.

7.8 Feedback gathered through the evaluation questionnaires across all training and briefing events and conferences was overwhelmingly positive. Particular reference was made by delegates to the format of delivery, content of events and the overall usefulness of events for training and disseminating information.

7.9 In order to ensure that events are as useful as possible to delegates, QAA seeks to ensure external input. This provides an opportunity to hear reflections and examples from others within the higher education sector, through updates on reflective case studies and experiences. Delegates at training, briefing and conference events repeatedly highlight case study examples as a highly positive feature of such events.

7.10 Over 120 delegates from subscribing institutions and UK higher education representative bodies attended the Annual Subscribers' Meeting held in Cardiff on 2 June. The theme for the day was 'Future Directions' and it was opened by Anthony McClaran who set out QAA's strategic direction for the future. This was followed by a keynote session delivered by Professor Philip Gummatt, Chief Executive of the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), who outlined the challenges for the future of higher education in Wales.

7.11 In the afternoon's keynote session, Professor Steve Smith, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Exeter and President of Universities UK, explored the current issues facing higher education institutions. Delegates also attended smaller discussion groups which focused on the challenges facing UK higher education and QAA's response to these challenges. The event concluded with a lively 'Question Time'-style panel debate chaired by broadcaster and journalist Mike Baker.

7.12 The Annual Subscribers Meeting was well received by delegates, who were very positive in their feedback.

7.13 During July 2010, QAA hosted the Sixth Annual Liaison Conference. The theme of the conference was 'The changing nature of HE'. The event aimed to provide delegates with an opportunity to reflect on the changing nature of higher education, and the implications of current developments for the future management of academic standards and quality. It also asked how QAA should best respond to changes and developments to support the HE sector.

7.14 During 2009-10, QAA hosted and contributed to a wealth of UK-based and overseas events, as part of its responsibilities and strategy for disseminating information pertaining to quality assurance and enhancement in higher education. One particular event was the IQA Seminar for the ENQA Internal Quality Assurance Group, focusing on enhancing a quality culture as part of internal quality assurance arrangements. The event

was jointly posted by QAA and ENQA, and attracted delegates from across Europe. The event was very well received, and provided a valuable opportunity for the dissemination of approach to internal quality assurance and the sharing of experiences.

7.15 QAA has continued to work with other organisations to ensure that pertinent information is disseminated in a timely and accessible format to a variety of audiences.

Summary

7.16 QAA continues to deliver a variety of external events with the primary aim of the dissemination of information about specific aspects of QAA work or providing training for those involved in the work of QAA. As confirmed by the current and previous evaluations, such events are well received by delegates in terms of their content, organisation, delivery and usefulness.

7.17 As with previous years, evidence has suggested that case study information, presented by those outside QAA who are directly involved in activities, is particularly useful to delegates in supplementing the information disseminated by QAA. As such, QAA has taken steps to ensure that case studies are included in training, briefing and other dissemination events, as appropriate. In addition, role play scenarios have been well received by delegates at training events, as these are considered as helpful in preparing for audit and review.

7.18 QAA has developed a range of e-materials in the form of podcasts and short films, to exploit the opportunities of social media as a tool for consultation and dissemination. Not only does the use of such new media and other technology increase accessibility to resources and information, they also help to minimise impact of QAA activities on the environment, while ensuring that pertinent information is disseminated as appropriate. QAA has increased the use of podcasts and short films to share information with those stakeholders unable to attend events.

7.19 In relation to environmental and financial sustainability, and accessibility to QAA, greater emphasis is being placed upon video conferencing and the use of wider information and communications technology (ICT) to support meetings with stakeholders and other review and audit activities. The use of ICT and videoconferencing in respect of Institutional audits (some meetings) has been evaluated in relation to cost savings - both financially and in respect of the carbon footprint.

8 Concerns about academic standards and quality

Introduction

8.1 The Causes for Concern scheme was introduced in England in 2007, following discussion and agreement with the Quality Assurance Framework Review Group, the then Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills and the Higher Education Funding Council for England. A similar scheme was introduced in Wales in August 2008.

8.2 The scheme is designed to provide a rapid and authoritative response to matters of concern about the standards and quality of higher education, which may be raised by any individual or organisation or by QAA itself on the basis of its work in other areas (such as Institutional audit) or in response to public concerns. The scheme is, therefore, complementary to the systematic review of institutions conducted by QAA and contributes to meeting public expectations about the security of academic standards and the reputation of higher education awards.

Activity during 2009-10

8.3 In 2009-10, QAA received 24 formal applications to the scheme and 21 other enquiries which it dealt with through that process (for the sake of brevity these shall be referred to as 'applications'). This represented an increase of 11 on the previous academic year.

8.4 Of the 45 applications in 2009-10:

- 42 related to institutions in England and three to Wales
- 44 were from members of the public (including staff and students) and one was from HEFCE
- 39 related to HEIs, three to private providers, one to an FEC, one to an Access Validating Agency and one to an institution which the applicant did not identify

8.5 Eleven applications led to a preliminary enquiry. Seven of these cases ended at this stage (that is, they did not proceed to a full investigation) while two are pending and a further two continuing. Further information about these cases is available on request.

8.6 In addition to the 45 applications outlined above, QAA initiated two cases itself on the basis of other work. Neither case proceeded to a full investigation; preliminary enquiries determined that the two institutions had identified and dealt with any risks. During 2009-10, QAA also published a report of a Cause for Concern investigation which began in 2008-09.

Revisions to the scheme

8.7 Between December 2009 and March 2010 we reviewed the Causes for Concern scheme in the light of experience since 2007, the public discussion of QAA's role in handling complaints, the resource and time implications of the scheme, any legal implications, and the work of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator and other bodies.

8.8 We undertook a further review in summer 2010, this time to reflect on the implications for the scheme in the light of our ambitions to develop a more service-led approach to our work and manage our resources more strategically. The review found that the scheme should be clearer and more transparent, operate more quickly and be more accessible, particularly to individual staff and students.

8.9 In consequence of both reviews, we have adopted a number of changes to the scheme, as follows.

- The scheme has been renamed 'Concerns about standards and quality in higher education'. This reflects our perception that 'Causes for Concern' is an ambiguous title, which may be preventing those with legitimate concerns from accessing the scheme.
- The process for investigating concerns has been streamlined from three stages to two, to ensure a faster response to concerns.
- All cases which progress to stage two, known as a full investigation, will result in a published statement, regardless of whether the concern is upheld or shown to be unjustified.
- The subject of the concern will be notified in all cases, regardless of whether QAA can investigate. This is to ensure the subject of the concern is aware of it. We may also pass information on to another relevant organisation (such as a professional, statutory or regulatory body) where we think the concern may warrant its attention.

8.10 Further information can be found on the complaints and concerns procedures web page at: www.qaa.ac.uk/candc/default.asp.

9 Equality and diversity

Introduction

9.1 QAA is committed to equality and diversity and this commitment is reflected in the contract for services with HEFCE. QAA collects information for monitoring the recruitment and deployment of QAA staff and auditors and reviewers. QAA has reported annually on ethnic monitoring for staff, reviewers and auditors since 2004-05 and reports are published on the public website, fulfilling our statutory obligation. Equality information is collected during the recruitment process, and for auditors and reviewers is captured on the central database (QMIS) and for QAA staff is collected by the Human Resources team. As QAA operates on the basis of an academic year, monitoring is undertaken accordingly (August to July).

9.2 Although QAA doesn't fall within the list of public bodies identified by the Equality Bill, it is still keen to comply with the requirements and wants to proactively promote equality of opportunity and good relations between different diversity groups, encourage participation of all diversity groups in QAA's work, and eliminate unlawful discrimination. In 2008, QAA's Executive Committee endorsed proposals to develop a Single Equality Scheme (SES). The scheme will apply to QAA as an employer and as a service provider through its work with the sector and other stakeholders in order to actively promote good practice.

Single Equality Scheme

9.3 Advisers were appointed in spring 2010 to help QAA develop a SES, and all staff have been encouraged to engage with the development of the scheme through meetings, events, electronic communications and on an ad hoc basis. The QAA Board discussed the scheme at their awayday in October. Interviews were also conducted with a sample of stakeholders to gauge perceptions of QAA's approach to equality and diversity.

9.4 The report received from the external advisers has been used to inform an action plan. The action plan will outline equality objectives and equality priorities for QAA over the next five years and identify activities which will support the embedding process. An online training package was launched for staff in autumn 2010, which takes an in-depth look at each of the main pieces of legislation currently in place.

Outcomes of monitoring

9.5 In considering the outcomes of the monitoring activity, QAA direct employees (staff) are considered separately from auditors and reviewers.

Reviewers and auditors

9.6 As reviewers and auditors are not direct QAA employees, QAA has no formal policies regarding grievance or disciplinary procedures relating to them. Formal procedures exist in respect of recruitment, selection and allocation to reviews and audits. Auditors and reviewers are recruited to a pool of individuals and subsequently allocated to reviews and audit activities. They are allocated to reviews and audits using specific criteria, to include experience and subject specialism. Training is a prerequisite to undertaking activity on behalf of QAA, therefore all auditors and reviewers will have completed specific training modules. Additionally, QAA invites all auditors and reviewers to participate in feedback events, and further details on feedback received during 2009-10 are provided elsewhere in this report.

9.7 During the academic year 2009-10, QAA received applications from 260 individuals to undertake review or audit work. From this pool of 260 applications, 101 were successful and were appointed.

9.8 Due to the small numbers in each category, the data has been aggregated to white, other and unknown. From an analysis of all applications it was found that:

- 78 per cent of applicants stated their ethnicity as white
- 4 per cent gave an ethnicity as 'other'
- 18 per cent did not provide ethnicity information.

9.9 An analysis of all those appointed for review or audit work found that:

- 57 per cent of those appointed stated their ethnicity as 'white'
- 2 per cent of those appointed stated their ethnicity as 'other'
- 41 per cent of those appointed did not provide ethnicity information.

9.10 Following the recruitment process, individuals are held as part of a pool, from which they are subsequently allocated to an activity. Individuals may remain within the pool indefinitely, and within any given year be used for multiple or no activities. Allocation to an activity is based upon a series of predefined criteria to include activity type; experience; availability; conflict of interest; and subject specialism.

- During 2009-10, 682 individuals were held in the pool.
- 1 per cent stated that they were from an ethnic group other than white.

9.11 During 2009-10, a pool of 294 individuals were involved in 203 separate review/audit-related activities. It should be noted that one individual may have undertaken a number of review/audit-related activities and therefore within the total of 203 activities an individual may appear more than once. The average number of activities undertaken was three.

9.12 Not all individuals appointed during the 2009-10 period may have yet been involved in any review/audit activities. Additionally, those individuals involved in audits/reviews during 2009-10 may have been appointed during a previous period.

9.13 As individuals can apply for multiple roles, they may have been counted more than once. Therefore, data is presented relating to the 294 individuals deployed (at least once) and the 203 activities that were undertaken.

9.14 Due to the small numbers in each category, the data has been aggregated to white, other and unknown. Ninety nine per cent of activities were undertaken by those who classified their ethnicity as white.

Staff

9.15 During 2009-10, 503 applications were made for employment with QAA (15 posts, excluding internal posts).

- Equal opportunities information was available for 472 of the 503 applicants.
- 8 per cent of applicants for which information was available described their ethnicity as other than 'white'.

9.16 For the 15 posts, 67 candidates were invited for interview. Not all applicants however, provided information of ethnicity.

- Equal opportunities information was available for 63 of the 67 candidates invited for interview (15 posts).
- Of the candidates invited to interview for which information was available, 3 per cent described their ethnicity as other than 'white'.

9.17 There were 17 new employees recruited during 2009-10, including recruitment to internal posts. Due to the relatively small numbers involved, QAA does not externally report on the demographic characteristics of starters.

9.18 During 2009-10, 17 staff ceased employment with QAA. Again, due to the relatively small numbers involved, QAA does not externally report on the demographic characteristics of leavers.

9.19 During 2009-10, 162 staff were employed by QAA. This figure is based on headcount and includes full-time and part-time employers. In addition, the figure also includes all staff employed by QAA during 2009-10 and includes all new starters and leavers during the period.

9.20 Ninety-six per cent of staff described their ethnicity as 'white' and four per cent as other than 'white'. Due to the relatively small numbers, no data is available in respect of categories of ethnicity other than 'white'.

9.21 Of the 162 staff employed, 147 undertook formal training during 2009-10. The number of training sessions undertaken by staff ranged from one to 11. More than 92 per cent of staff, who were trained, undertook between one and five training activities. A total of 391 individual training sessions took place across 61 separate training events over the 12 months. Five per cent of staff who were trained and for which information was available described their ethnicity as other than 'white'.

9.22 Due to the small numbers involved, which may lead to the identification of individuals, it is not possible to publish information on the basis of race in relation to:

- benefit or suffer from performance appraisals
- grievances
- disciplinary action
- termination of service (for whatever reason).

The future

9.23 QAA has been engaged with external consultants in the development of a single equality scheme. Following the receipt of the report and recommendations, QAA has developed and will implement a single equality scheme in the near future.

10 Summary and recommendations

10.1 The evidence in this report indicates that providers of higher education in England generally have robust arrangements for the management of quality and academic standards. External audit and review processes are effective in commending good practice and in recommending areas for improvement in individual institutions. The engagement with QAA provides a focus for the development of quality assurance processes and for supporting the continuous improvement of academic practice.

10.2 During 2009-10, QAA has further demonstrated the centrality of students to the management of quality and standards within higher education, through the successful introduction of student members of audit teams. Feedback derived through the audit evaluation questionnaires from all stakeholder groups demonstrates the value of student membership of teams to the process, and the development opportunities afforded to those student members in relation to personal development and employability.

10.3 In addition to assurance activities, QAA has continued to support the maintenance and development of the quality of the learning opportunities and standards of awards within colleges. QAA has continued to progress work arising from the thematic enquiries and developed and implemented plans of action for addressing these concerns.

10.4 Specific areas where work has focused has included the effectiveness of current arrangements for external examining, and the information that is made available for prospective students, employers and others about what is on offer in higher education. Both of these now form strands of work which will contribute to the reform of quality assurance arrangements. QAA is fully supporting these developments. The work undertaken in both areas is currently feeding to a series of HEFCE expert working groups.

10.5 The outcomes of QAA's activities and developments in respect of the findings of the Browne Review and Comprehensive Spending Review have informed QAA in framing a new agenda for quality assurance in England. The consultation on the proposals for Institutional review in HEIs in England and Northern Ireland has recently closed, and QAA is currently consulting stakeholders on proposed revisions to the Academic Infrastructure. The revised arrangements for the Institutional audit method, Institutional review, will be introduced in September 2011. Aligned to this, QAA is exploring the development of a common review framework.

10.6 In addition, there are other areas relating to quality and standards where further work by QAA could contribute, along with other organisations, to the enhancement of current practice.

10.7 The new agenda for quality includes a number of priorities which will help to shape QAA's strategic plan for 2011-14 and will underpin developments following the publication of the White Paper on the future of higher education. These include:

- protecting student interests
- provision and verification of public information
- responding efficiently and effectively to concerns about quality and standards
- protecting the reputation of UK HE.

Protecting the interests of students

10.8 The new arrangements for the funding of higher education will change the relationship between students and higher education providers. QAA looks forward to the

political debates that will follow the publication of the Government's strategy on higher education.

10.9 QAA has been promoting greater student involvement in quality assurance activities. During 2009-10 we introduced students as full members of Institutional audit teams and we are looking at arrangements for their inclusion in other review methods. The work on student engagement also includes support for the development of student representation within institutions and the greater involvement of students, at all levels, in quality assurance activities. QAA has continued to work closely with partners and student representatives to provide accessible information to student representatives to highlight the work of QAA and provide useful information to support preparations for involvement in audit and review activities.

Provision and verification of public information

10.10 QAA recognises that improvements in the provision and accessibility of information about the quality and standards of academic programmes are a necessary development to inform students, parents, employers and others about the relative merits of individual institutions and programmes and to provide assurance about the returns on student investment. Higher education providers have the primary responsibility to provide comprehensive and accurate information. This matter is the subject of the current consultation being conducted by HEFCE on behalf of HE stakeholders. QAA's role is to check that the production of information is being handled appropriately and that the material placed in the public domain is correct and fit for purpose. This will be achieved through existing review methods and by the development of new monitoring activities.

10.11 The other aspect to these developments is the provision by QAA of information that is both relevant and accessible. Our public engagement strategy is focused on the provision of reports and other publications that meet public expectations and which are presented in a format that is relevant to current users. Developments in e-learning resources and social networking offer models for communication that could significantly enhance the value of QAA's outputs.

10.12 Currently, Institutional audit and IQER both include coverage of public information, but it is recognised that this is an area where more could be achieved. The National Student Forum has identified a need to improve the quality and accessibility of information about programmes to allow students to make informed choices about their higher education studies. QAA is investigating the use of new media and stakeholders' information needs in order to ensure that public information is available to inform potential students and other stakeholders about quality and standards and the higher education learning experience. This will be developed during 2010-11.

Responding to concerns about quality and standards in HE

10.13 Revisions to QAA's Causes for Concern scheme represent a shift in emphasis away from dealing with individual grievances and complaints to investigating issues that impact on the quality and standards of provision. This is designed to ensure that if systemic problems are identified in the management and delivery of higher education provision they can be addressed speedily and effectively. Under the revised scheme the outcomes of investigations will be published and any necessary follow-up action will be progressed through subsequent review activities.

Protecting the reputation of higher education

10.14 The status and reputation of UK higher education are generally very well regarded both within the UK and overseas. This derives from the accumulated experience of students and the activities of institutions in research, scholarship and knowledge transfer. Reputation is secured through the commitments to quality and standards of individual institutions and by the collective security of the sector in supporting quality assurance activities, peer review and external examining. It is critical to the future success of higher education in the UK not only to meet the expectations of students and employers but also to secure the UK's position in the global market for HE. Over 500,000 students currently study for UK degrees - either in the UK or in country representing 20 per cent of the total student population.

10.15 QAA has a role to play through its review and enhancement activities and through the publication of reports to provide evidence to underpin the reputation of individual institutions

National Student Survey

10.16 Public information is one aspect of the quality assurance framework. The findings of the National Student Survey provide a wealth of information for institutions and colleges that can be used to inform assurance and enhancement activity. QAA suggests that benefits might arise from exploring how institutions use the outcomes of the National Student Survey as part of their quality assurance and enhancement activities, alongside other sources of information, as highlighted in the Institute of Education report to the Higher Education Public Information Steering Group.

International activities

10.17 QAA continues to be a member of the UKBA PBS stakeholder group and to respond to queries from the Sponsor Licence Unit. Changes to Section 2 of the *Code of practice* on collaborative arrangements take into account the responsibilities of institutions offering awards to international students in collaboration with private providers in the UK.

10.18 During 2009-10 QAA conducted an overseas audit of UK higher education awards offered in partnership with providers in Malaysia. The audit involved 11 partnership links and a number of supporting case studies. An overview report based on the evidence collected was published in September 2010.

Employer engagement

10.19 QAA has identified good practice in employer engagement through its review activities. Employer engagement and employer-responsive provision was explored through the QAA Annual Liaison Theme in 2008-9. QAA continues to work alongside the Higher Education Academy in matters relating to employer engagement. QAA also continues to support developments in this area through the provision of guidance and a review of existing external frameworks, namely the Academic Infrastructure, and is in the process of developing and implementing an employer engagement strategy, under the broader stakeholder strategy.

Recommendations

10.20 QAA continues to work in partnership with institutions, students and other stakeholder bodies, to assure the quality and standards of higher education. During 20010-

11 we will continue to strengthen our work and start to develop a new strategic plan from 2011, providing a clear statement of our future aims and objectives.

10.21 On the basis of the findings of an analysis of the emerging patterns and trends from QAA's enquiries, and within the context of a dynamically changing higher education landscape, the following recommendations are proposed to HEFCE for QAA's activity in the future.

- 1 Support for institutions in the preparation of information for the thematic element of Institutional review and the publication of a thematic report to disseminate good practice across HE providers.
- 2 Further support for the development and implementation of Foundation Degrees. QAA will discuss with *fdf* ways in which aspects of *fdf*'s activities could be continued by QAA.
- 3 Explore ways of promoting and sustaining a commitment to quality enhancement in FECs offering HE programmes. This will feed in to the development of a revised review method for HE in FE that will not include funded Developmental engagements.
- 4 Assist HEFCE in the development of procedures for the assessment and review of private HE and FE institutions that successfully acquire designation status for HE programmes and access to the student funding arrangements.

References

Handbook for Institutional audit: England and Northern Ireland 2009

www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/institutionalAudit/handbook2009/InstitutionalAuditHandbook2009.pdf

Strategic plan 2006-11

www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/strategicPlan/2006/Strategicplan06-11.pdf

The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review

www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/IQER/handbook08/Handbook2008.pdf

Complaints and concerns

www.qaa.ac.uk/candc/default.asp

Appendix 1: Institutional audit

Institutional audit, including hybrid (2009-10)

Birkbeck College
Bishop Grosseteste University College Lincoln
Brunel University
Buckinghamshire New University
Canterbury Christ Church University
Conservatoire for Dance and Drama
Cranfield University
Edge Hill University
Guildhall School of Music and Drama
Harper Adams University College
Imperial College
Institute of Education
King's College London
Liverpool John Moores University*
London South Bank University
Manchester Metropolitan University
Staffordshire University
Teesside University
University of Bedfordshire
University of Chester
University of Derby
University of East London
University of Gloucestershire
University of Huddersfield
University of Newcastle upon Tyne
University of Northumbria at Newcastle
University of Nottingham
University of Plymouth
University of Ulster
University of Westminster

*Report not yet published

Audit of collaborative provision (2009-10)

Coventry University
Nottingham Trent University
University of Bradford
University of Central Lancashire
University of Essex

Appendix 2: Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER)

Developmental engagements (2009-10)

Amersham and Wycombe College
Barking College
Barnet College
Barnfield College
Bedford College
Bexley College
Bicton College
Bishop Auckland College
Blackburn College
Bournville College of FE
Bracknell and Wokingham College
Burnley College
Castle College Nottingham
Cirencester College
City College Birmingham
City of Bath College
City of Sunderland College
City of Westminster College
City of Wolverhampton College
Cornwall College
Derby College
Ealing, Hammersmith and West London College
East Berkshire College
East Durham College
Eastleigh College
Easton College
Epping Forest College
Estover College
Exeter College
Fareham College
Gateshead College
Greenwich Community College
Halesowen College
Harrow College
Hugh Baird College
Itchen College
Joseph Priestley College
Kendal College
Kensington and Chelsea College

Kirklees College
Knowsley Community College
Lambeth College
Leeds City College (Park Lane, Thomas Danby, Leeds College of Technology)
Leeds College of Art
Leicester College
Macclesfield College
Mid-Cheshire College of Further Education
Moulton College
New College Stamford
New College Swindon
New College Telford
Newham College of Further Education
North East Surrey College of Technology
North Warwickshire and Hinckley College
Norton Radstock College
Oxford & Cherwell Valley College
Plymouth College of Art
Runshaw College
Ruskin College Oxford
South Cheshire College
Southport College
SURF Leek College
SURF Newcastle under Lyme College
SURF South Staffordshire College
SURF Stafford College
SURF Stoke on Trent College
SURF Walford & North Shropshire College
TEESSIDE HEBP (one combined DE to cover Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesbrough, Redcar, Stockton Riverside)
Telford College of Arts & Technology
The Solihull College
Tresham College
Truro & Penwith College
Warrington Collegiate
Warwickshire College
West Kent College
West Nottinghamshire College
West Thames College
Weymouth College
Wiltshire College

Summative reviews (2009-10)

Abingdon and Witney College
Aquinas College
Ashton-under-Lyne Sixth Form College
Aylesbury College
Basingstoke College of Technology
Birkenhead Sixth Form College
Bishop Burton College
Boston College
Bradford College
Bridgwater College
Brockenhurst College
Brooklands College
Brooksby Melton College
Cambridge Regional College
Canterbury College
Capel Manor College
Carlisle College
Carmel College
Chelmsford College
Chichester College
City College Coventry
City College Norwich
City of Bristol College
College of North West London
Croydon College
Dearne Valley College
Derwentside College
Dudley College of Technology
Guildford College of Further and Higher Education
Hackney Community College
Hadlow College
Havering College of Further and Higher Education
Hereford College of Arts
Hertford Regional College
Highbury College
Hopwood Hall College
John Kitto Community College
Kidderminster College
King George V College
Lancaster and Morecombe College
Leeds College of Building

Lewisham College
Myerscough College
Newcastle College
Newham Sixth Form College
North West Kent College of Technology
Petroc
Reaseheath College
Riverside College Halton
Rotherham College of Arts and Technology
Salford College
Somerset College of Arts and Technology
South Devon College
South Downs College
South Leicestershire College
South Thames College
South Worcestershire College (was Evesham & Malvern Hills College)
Southampton City College
St Vincent College
Tameside College
The College of West Anglia
The Sheffield College
Tyne Metropolitan College
Walsall College
Westminster Kingsway College
Wirral Metropolitan College

Appendix 3: Comparison data 2007-08 and 2008-09

Institutional audit

Judgements

Judgement	Confidence	Limited confidence	Limited confidence restricted to certain provision
The soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards	28	0	2
The soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students	30	0	0

Institutional audit (2009-10)

N=30

Judgement	Confidence	Limited confidence	Limited confidence restricted to certain provision
The soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards	37	1	2
The soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students	38	0	2

Institutional audit (2008-09)

N=40

Recommendations

Judgement	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Desirable	77 (2.75)	121 (3.03)	88 (2.93)
Advisable	69 (2.46)	104 (2.6)	100 (3.33)
Essential	6 (0.21)	5 (0.13)	2 (0.07)
Total audits	28	40	30

Recommendations per year

Note: the figure in () denotes the average number by review

Integrated quality and enhancement review

Judgements

	Judgement on academic standards	Judgement on quality of learning opportunities	Public Information
Confidence	66	66	
Limited confidence	0	0	
No confidence	0	0	
Reliance			65
No reliance			1

Summative review (2009-10)

N=66

	Judgement on academic standards	Judgement on quality of learning opportunities	Public Information
Confidence	22	23	
Limited confidence	1		
No confidence	1	1	
Reliance			23
No reliance			1

Summative review (2008-09)

N=24

Recommendations

Judgement	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Desirable	126 (4.20)	279 (4.23)	352 (4.46)
Advisable	57 (1.90)	119 (1.80)	158 (2.00)
Essential	0	4 (0.06)	1 (0.01)
Total reviews	30	66	79

Developmental engagements

Note: the figure in () denotes the average number by review

Judgement	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Desirable		79 (3.29)	244 (3.70)
Advisable		48 (2.00)	128 (1.94)
Essential		2 (0.08)	5 (0.08)
Total reviews	1	24	66

Summative reviews

Note: the figure in () denotes the average number by review

Appendix 4: Features of good practice and recommendations, by method

Excludes features and recommendations made only in respect of Foundation Degrees through Summative reviews.

Features of good practice

Area of good practice	Institutional audit	IQER: DEs	IQER: SRs
Academic Infrastructure	1%	1%	3%
Assessment	1%	37%	8%
Employer engagement	3%	8%	9%
Institution's quality management	35%	12%	31%
Public information	7%	15%	9%
Staff development	8%	5%	10%
Student experience	45%	21%	28%
Total	115	497	350

Recommendations

Area of recommendations	Institutional audit	IQER: DEs	IQER: SRs
Academic Infrastructure	8%	2%	6%
Assessment	8%	38%	6%
Employer engagement	1%	5%	3%
Institution's quality management	58%	13%	38%
Public information	4%	18%	19%
Staff development	4%	5%	12%
Student experience	17%	18%	15%
Total	190	511	364

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2011

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000
Fax 01452 557070
Email comms@qaa.ac.uk
Web www.qaa.ac.uk

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786