



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

January 2009

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1 Introduction

1.1 The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's (QAA) 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 2008-09 requires QAA to provide a detailed account of audit and review activity for the academic year September 2007-August 2008.

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 (starting with the report due on 31 January 2009) 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. Distinguishes between different groups of HEIs and different groups of FECs, using such categories as may be relevant for the purpose.
- f. 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.
- g. 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.'

1.4 QAA's contract with HEFCE includes the activities of institutional audit and collaborative provision audit, the review of directly-funded higher education provision

in further education colleges, and the development and piloting of the Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER) method for higher education in further education colleges. 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 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.

1.7 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 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 quotes from participants are also included within this report.

1.8 Based upon review activity during 2007-08, 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 (see References, page 39).

Summary of outcomes

1.9 QAA conducted 28 institutional audits during 2007-08. In all 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, limited confidence was placed in the likely future management of the academic standards of the institution's collaborative provision, and in another, the judgement of limited confidence applied specifically to standards in relation to postgraduate taught provision.

1.10 No separate or hybrid collaborative provision audits were undertaken. Where appropriate, collaborative provision was considered within the scope of the institutional audit. The outcomes of institutional audit are presented in section 2.

1.11 Following the evaluation pilot of the Integrated quality and enhancement reviews (IQER) method during 2006-07 the handbook was revised and additional guidance was provided for colleges. The main IQER programme was implemented during 2007-08 with 30 Developmental engagements. These reviews result in evaluation rather than judgements, and the reports are not published.

1.12 The Developmental engagements found that colleges display a strong commitment to enhancing the higher education they deliver. In all Developmental

engagements the review team reported examples of good practice. For all but one college recommendations for improvement were categorised as advisable and/or desirable. Only one college received an essential recommendation. The findings of the reviews are described in section 4.

1.13 Only two academic reviews of directly-funded higher education programmes delivered by further education colleges were undertaken. This completed the cycle begun in 2002. In both cases, the reviewers had confidence in the academic standards, and teaching and learning and learning resources were considered commendable. In one case student progression was approved and in the other the reviewers concluded that this was commendable.

1.14 With reference to Foundation Degrees, in two audits it was suggested that the institution could provide clearer information about transfer and progression from a Foundation Degree to honours level study. Through IQER there was evidence to demonstrate the effective links between colleges and employers in the design of programmes and in relation to the opportunities for work-based learning.

1.15 Various examples of good practice in relation to postgraduate provision were identified in institutional audit. Specific examples included support provided for postgraduate research students, through training and conferences, and more general academic support arrangements. The recommendations focused on ensuring that postgraduate research degree students had access to appropriate support and supervision, and that those students with teaching responsibilities were provided with the appropriate training.

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 In summer 2008 there was discussion in the media and in Parliament of a number of possible areas of public concern about aspects of the students' learning experience and the application of quality assurance practices. QAA is currently conducting a major project to explore a number of key themes in relation to these concerns. The outcomes of this work may lead to further developments in audit and review activity.

1.18 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

1.19 Through the peer evaluation of quality and standards in higher education in England, review and audit teams identified extensive good practice and made recommendations to institutions and colleges in respect of areas for development or improvement. However, a common theme to emerge 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. The emerging findings from audit and review activities highlight the following themes.

1.20 **Information.** 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, 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 and other arrangements, to include progression and transfer.

1.21 It was also suggested that greater use could be made of **management information** in review, monitoring and planning. There was limited information derived through QAA's investigations about how the outcomes of the National Student Survey are being used by institutions in informing their quality assurance, monitoring and enhancement activities at institutional or school level.

1.22 Extensive good practice was identified across institutions and colleges regarding the arrangements in place for the **management of quality and standards**. 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. One specific area for improvement related to the internal mechanisms in place within institutions for the dissemination and sharing of good practice.

1.23 Audits confirmed examples of good practice in **enhancement in over a third of institutions**. Specific examples were cited where enhancement had been targeted and informed by a needs assessment. Developmental engagements, by their very nature, are intended to support enhancement within colleges.

1.24 Although there was evidence to demonstrate that institutions and colleges were effectively **engaging with industry and employers**, it was also, however, an area identified for improvement through the recommendations. Evidence showed that employers were often engaged in the design of the curriculum, but there were further opportunities for engagement in delivery and assessment and ensuring the vocational relevance of programmes. Scope for development was noted in respect of liaison with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) and with other industry and skill sector representative groups. 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.

1.25 Many examples of good practice in **student support** were also identified. However, there was suggestion through audit that support for postgraduate research degree students could be improved. In addition, opportunities for improved academic support for students were identified through audit and review activities. This, however, should not detract from the extensive good practice and student support arrangements that were in place and operating effectively across much of the higher education provision reviewed.

1.26 A notable feature of QAA's activities over the last two years has been support for greater **student engagement**. The 2007 Liaison Conference held by QAA focused on approaches to student engagement. During 2007-08, QAA undertook a consultation on student involvement in quality assurance and student observers were included on audit teams. Although audit and review activities resulted in a series of

recommendations to institutions and colleges related to encouraging and developing systems for student engagement, there were many examples identified of where developments had taken place and arrangements were working effectively. All respondent groups identified a series of benefits to the institution and the student learning experience as a result of the engagement.

1.27 Through the **evaluation** of audit and review activities, QAA confirmed that those involved in the process, either as a reviewer or auditor, or as 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.

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 had 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 2006*¹ documents the revised process.

2.4 During 2007-08, 28 institutional audits were undertaken (see Appendix 1). These were subject to evaluation in accordance with normal QAA processes. In addition, during the spring 2008 institutional audit visits, QAA undertook a pilot project to include students acting as observers of six audit teams. The purpose of the project was to gather feedback from the observers and auditors involved to assess the feasibility of including students as full members of audit teams. The findings of the pilot are presented at section 7. The feedback has informed the steps being taken by QAA to include students as full members of audit teams, as part of its approach to student engagement.

What we found

2.5 In all 28 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' for on-campus provision. In one audit, limited confidence was placed in the likely future management of the academic standards of the institution's collaborative provision, and in a further audit, the judgement of limited confidence applied to standards only in relation to postgraduate taught provision.

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	26	1	1
The soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students	28	0	0

N=28

Table 1: institutional audit (2007-08)

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/institutionalAudit/handbook2006/handbookComments.asp

2.6 In all 28 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'. Examples of good practice were identified in relation to the internal processes in place for validation, approval, monitoring and review.

2.7 Good practice was also recorded in over one-third of the audits in relation to institutional approaches to enhancement, ultimately leading to the enhancement of the quality of student learning opportunities on an integrated and institution wide basis. Where enhancement activity was identified it was typically considered to be structured and focused, with a clear strategic approach to need identification and the subsequent targeting of activity. In two institutions, the role of quality enhancement officers was commended.

2.8 Student engagement was another area which was identified in over one-third of audits. It was evident that institutions had taken significant steps to improve the arrangements for student engagement in matters pertaining to quality and standards. Good practice examples included coordinated approaches to student engagement and representation, with effective mechanisms in place for gathering feedback from students.

2.9 In around a quarter of audits, the links with industry and other external and professional bodies were cited as good practice. This was particularly evident in the case of specialist institutions, which are actively involved with the professional community through professional practice. This was noted as contributing to the overall student learning experience and the curriculum, through external professional representation on relevant committees.

2.10 As in previous years, arrangements for student support were highlighted. Examples included the role of student advisers and the academic and pastoral support available through specific centres and departments within institutions.

2.11 Reference to collaborative provision in six audits included good practice in the arrangements for the management of partnerships and the mechanism in place for maintaining oversight of programmes delivered by partners.

2.12 Good practice identified in respect of postgraduate provision was varied. Examples included support provided for postgraduates, through training and conferences, and more general academic support arrangements.

2.13 Audit teams also made a series of recommendations arising from their investigations. These were based around:

- the internal process for quality assurance, namely approval, monitoring and review
- the use of management information in planning and internal review and monitoring processes
- ensuring consistency in policy for the provision of information and in the responsibilities for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of public information, particularly in respect of collaborative partners
- assessment strategies and policies, in ensuring comparability in standards and consistency in application across the institution, including partner colleges

- student support, including access to personal tutors and supervision for postgraduate students
- the approach to enhancement and the mechanisms in place within institutions to facilitate the dissemination of good practice
- the opportunities available to students to provide feedback and be involved in student representation, as part of the institutions approach to quality and standards.

2.14 With specific reference to postgraduate research students, the recommendations focused upon the need to:

- ensure all postgraduate students with supervisory or teaching responsibilities are trained appropriately
- ensure that sufficient support is available to postgraduate research students, and that they have access to personal tutors and supervision, as appropriate.

2.15 With specific reference to collaborative provision, it was recommended that institutions regularly review their partnership arrangements and ensure that roles and responsibilities between partners are clarified. In addition, it was recommended that institutions seek to ensure comparability and consistency in the application of processes, strategies, access to resources and the student experience across partners.

2.16 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.

- Communicate and implement a formal and comprehensive routine programme-monitoring process.
- Develop a formal mechanism to ensure that full consideration is given to external examiners' reports; the outcomes of the consideration, including action taken, is recorded; and that external examiners are provided with a formal considered response to their comments and recommendations and the actions taken.
- Develop an assessment policy that clearly specifies assessment principles, procedures and processes, and disseminate this to staff, students and external examiners.
- Review the operation of delegation within its committee structure to ensure that all committees operate within their terms of reference; decisions are appropriately recorded; and that the Academic Board can exercise its full responsibilities for the security of academic standards and the quality of students' learning opportunities.
- Devise and implement a means of ensuring independent oversight of all credit derived from summative assessment within collaborative provision which contributes to an award.
- Establish, implement and monitor such a systematic set of institution-wide processes and reporting systems as will ensure the effective oversight of all aspects of its collaborative provision.

Outcomes of the evaluations

2.18 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	110	105	95%
Audit secretary	28	25	89%
Institution	19	16	84%
TOTAL	157	146	93%

Table 2: response rates

2.19 Comments were received from audit teams and HEIs. The vast majority of auditors and audit secretaries completed an evaluation questionnaire following their audit (95% and 89% respectively) and 16 out of 19 institutions returned completed questionnaires. 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 – 94 per cent
- Audit secretary – 100 per cent
- Institution – 94 per cent

2.20 Overall, the evaluations revealed that audit teams and institutions were satisfied with the institutional audit process. There were, however, some areas that emerged as areas where improvements were recommended. The institution's briefing paper and the students' written submission were identified by the audit teams as requiring further consideration. In some cases, the institution's briefing paper was not considered to be sufficiently evaluative and problems were noted with referencing in a number of documents. In respect of the students' written submission, there was a perception that the documents, although a useful source of evidence for use by the team, were not sufficiently analytical. These are areas where there may need to be further guidance for institutions and student bodies.

2.21 Key findings from the evaluation:

- the *Handbook for institutional audit: England and Northern Ireland 2006* is clear and useful to the auditors
- the training is informative and effective
- generally, team members and institutions feel that the process works well
- there is scope for improvement in the institutional briefing papers and student written submissions: these documents are not always evaluative.

2.22 Respondents identified a series of benefits for the institution as a result of the audit. These included:

'An opportunity to review practice and progress in a structured manner.'

'Independent external review of quality assurance procedures and processes.'

'Opportunity for reflection and external comment.'

'Opportunity to reflect on our own policies and procedures.'

'Identification of good practice and issues for further consideration.'

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

'To help provide confidence in the validity of their student experience.'

'It increases the chances that their institution will recognise their rights as learners and respond to their needs.'

'The student voice is heard in a very explicit way. Students have an opportunity to reflect on their experience around key guided questions. It provides an opportunity to work collaboratively with staff on an important activity.'

'Further opportunity to engage with the University and influence its development.'

Summary

2.24 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. Mid-cycle follow-ups require institutions to comment upon progress that they have made in addressing the recommendations.

2.25 Only two of the 28 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. Recommendations made by teams primarily focused upon the need to ensure greater consistency within institutions in relation to the processes in place for the management of standards, use of information, the strategies and policies in place and the equity of the student experience in terms of access to support.

2.26 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 internal processes in place for the management of quality and standards
- focused, targeted and institution-wide approaches to enhancement
- the mechanism in place for student engagement, representation and gathering feedback
- engagement with industry and professionals
- the arrangements for student support.

2.27 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.

2.28 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.

2.29 QAA has responded to the desire to have greater student involvement in the audit process and has established an internal working group with a specific remit for preparing a student engagement strategy and for exploring student representation and involvement in audit and review activities. Students acted as observers on six institutional audits during spring 2008. The evaluation of this pilot programme confirmed the viability of the proposals for student membership of audit teams (see section 7).

2.30 In response to the work of the former Quality Assurance Framework Review Group and through QAA's own activities, agreement has been reached in principle between Universities UK, GuildHE, The Higher Education Funding Council For England and QAA on the following changes to institutional audit:

- the introduction of an approach to the audit of collaborative provision which will include, as appropriate, within-audit, hybrid audit, or separate collaborative audit activity
- the inclusion of student members on audit teams.

2.31 QAA is currently consulting on the proposed revisions to the audit method, for introduction in 2009-10.

3 Mid-cycle follow-ups

3.1 The mid-cycle follow-up is an integral part of the overall institutional audit process and supports the same aims. It serves as a short health check, for the institution and for QAA, on the institution's continuing management of academic standards and quality of provision, normally some three years after an institutional audit. It is an opportunity to reflect upon developments made in the management of standards and quality within the institution since the previous institutional audit, and, in the context of the findings of that audit, for QAA to advise the institution of any matters that have the potential to be of particular interest to the team that conducts the institution's next audit.

3.2 An institution may, if it wishes, use the mid-cycle follow-up to seek an external view of changes made, or proposed, in the management of standards and quality. While it is not appropriate for QAA to act as a consultant in such matters, it will nevertheless be prepared to discuss changes and proposals in general terms.

3.3 The mid-cycle follow-up takes the form of a paper-based exercise conducted by two senior QAA officers. It is based on existing institutional documentation with the intention of making as little demand as possible on institutions. The timing will have been agreed with each institution as part of the institutional audit schedule.

3.4 A draft of QAA's report is sent to the institution for comment. The final report is sent to the institution and to HEFCE but is not published. The mid-cycle follow-up is not a peer review process conducted by an audit team. The report of the follow-up cannot, therefore, result in a recommendation or a decision that the judgements of the previous audit team are modified or revised, but it will be used as part of the evidence base for the next engagement by QAA with the institution. The institution is not asked to make a formal response to the report, although it may do so if it wishes.

What we found

3.5 During 2007-08, 30 mid-cycle follow-ups were undertaken. The follow-ups demonstrated that institutions had largely taken cognisance of the recommendations emerging from the institutional audit. The follow-ups identified areas, specific to each institution, which the audit team might like to follow up as part of their considerations in the next audit.

Outcomes of the evaluations

3.6 In accordance with normal QAA evaluation practices, the mid-cycle follow-ups were subject to evaluation. The evaluation sought to examine the experience of and challenges posed by the process from the perspective of those institutions involved in the process.

3.7 Responses and comments have been received from the vast majority of institutions, who each completed an evaluation questionnaire following their mid-cycle follow-up. Overall, the findings from the evaluations were very positive. The majority of institutions felt that the mid-cycle follow-up had achieved its aim of serving as a short health check.

3.8 Overall, the evaluations revealed that the institutions were generally satisfied with the mid-cycle follow-up process. There were, however, some areas where the responses were not wholly positive. It was felt that the handbook could provide

further information/guidance to assist in producing the briefing paper. Not all respondents considered that the report was more than 'partially' useful for the institution and a large number also felt that the preparations for the follow-up were no more than 'partially' useful.

3.9 Key findings from the evaluation:

- the means for communicating with QAA were effective and the communication was useful
- the *Handbook for institutional audit: England and Northern Ireland 2006* is clear in describing the purpose and scope of the mid-cycle follow-up process
- the amount of documentation required for the process is felt to be about right
- preparing the briefing paper for the process provides an opportunity for institutions to reflect on progress since the last audit
- there could be more clarity regarding the information and documentation required for the mid-cycle follow-up.

3.10 Respondents identified a series of benefits for the institutions as a result of the mid-cycle follow-up process. These included:

'Encouraging further reflection on progress made since the last audit.'

'A clear identification of emerging themes for future audit.'

'Provides a further check on the progress of follow-up action.'

3.11 Respondents also identified a series of challenges of the mid-cycle follow-up process for the institutions. These included:

'Ensuring that progress is made against any recommendations given all the other demands.'

'The process of preparing the mid-cycle follow-up paper isn't naturally an inclusive one for institutions.'

'Fitting it in!'

Summary

3.12 Overall, the mid-cycle follow-ups were considered to be a useful health check and will assist institutions and audit teams in preparing for their next institutional audit.

4 Review of higher education provision in further education colleges

4.1 Integrated quality enhancement and review (IQER) is the first QAA review method to be developed specifically for higher education in further education colleges. The overarching aims of 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.

4.2 The outcomes and approach are similar to institutional audit so that public information is available in a similar form for reviews of higher education in higher education colleges and further education colleges.

4.3 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 core themes and are published on the QAA website.

4.4 This peer review process is planned to take place over a five-year cycle. All colleges will have a Summative review, and most will have one Developmental engagement. Some colleges will have a second Developmental engagement because they meet one or more of the risk criteria set out in the IQER handbook (paragraph 96) and there is provision in the method for colleges with low enrolments (fewer than 100 full-time equivalents funded by HEFCE) to opt out of a Developmental engagement.

4.5 IQER embraces the principles of the Higher Education Regulation Review Group (HERRG) (and the Better Regulation Review Group), and seeks to minimise the information burden upon colleges through the use of existing information and the sharing of information with other stakeholders. Full details of the IQER method can be found in *The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review*².

4.6 During 2006-07, 15 pilot IQER reviews were undertaken in England and subject to an external independent evaluation. The evaluation concluded that IQER achieved its aims and was an effective form of review, integrating assurance and enhancement, while not placing excessive burden upon providers or awarding bodies. The evaluation identified some aspects of the review method for clarification. This, along with the experiences gained from undertaking the pilot and QAA's own internal evaluation, informed minor revisions to the process which were subsequently endorsed by HEFCE.

² www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/IQER/handbook08

4.7 IQER was implemented in 2007-08. Thirty five method Developmental engagements have been completed as well as one Summative review which could not be completed within the pilot project. The first Developmental engagements for each college focus on student assessment because of the significance of assessment in academic standards, and because assessment was the area identified as most in need of improvement in earlier methods of review.

4.8 Developmental engagements are intended to support colleges in reviewing and improving the management of their higher education provision, for the benefit of students. They foster good working relationships between colleges and awarding bodies, for the benefit of students, and within the context of the colleges' agreements with their awarding bodies. Developmental engagements result in evaluation rather than judgements, and the report is not published. An action plan resulting from the Developmental engagement is included within the report, and forms part of the evidence base for the subsequent Summative review.

What we found

4.9 Through the 30 Developmental engagements, numerous examples of good practice in assessment were identified by the review team. 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.

4.10 One of the primary areas of good practice identified through the Developmental engagements related to the provision of information for students, typically in the form of course/programme handbooks and assignment briefs. The clear articulation of the intended learning outcomes, assessment tasks and schedules, and the grade criteria were cited as particularly helpful.

4.11 Other examples of good practice reported relate to the quality assurance processes in place within colleges, in relation to assessment. Examples which could be shared within and between colleges included:

- assessment moderation and standardisation processes
- external examiners and the consideration of external examiners' reports
- approval and validation
- review and monitoring
- approaches to ensuring the accuracy of published information
- effective partnerships between colleges and their awarding bodies.

4.12 Reviewers also noted the links that colleges have established with employers and industry and their involvement in the design of assessments. The opportunities for work-based learning and the use of work-related case studies were also cited as examples of good practice.

4.13 In over half of the Developmental engagements, feedback given to students on assessment was commented on positively. Feedback was considered to be high quality, timely, constructive and useful, typically delivered as written feedback, supported by oral comments.

4.14 Other examples of good practice repeatedly cited by reviewers included:

- the variety and nature of assessment types/tools
- student support
- the opportunities for placements and work-based learning.

4.15 Review teams also made a series of recommendations for action by colleges. These recommendations are graded as desirable, advisable and essential, and are subsequently used to inform the action plan for the college resulting from the Developmental engagement. Only one college received an essential recommendation as a result of the reviews.

4.16 The primary area upon which the recommendations focused were in relation to the provision of information, typically for students. Specific issues cited by the review teams included the need to:

- provide clear programme/module handbooks for students
- provide students with sufficient information about assessments, detailing the timetabling of assessments and the grade criteria
- provide clear information for students about the link between assessment and intended learning outcomes.

4.17 Feedback to students on the outcomes of assessment also repeatedly emerged as an area for action by some colleges. Specific reference was made to the timeliness, quality and usefulness of feedback. In a number of cases, it was suggested that standard feedback forms or templates could be developed and used consistently across the colleges' higher education provision.

4.18 Review teams also highlighted the need to ensure that appropriate mechanisms and opportunities were available for staff development and the associated dissemination of good practice of higher education assessment and the management of assessment.

4.19 Other recommendations made by review teams included the need to:

- review the processes in place for assessment, moderation and improve the processes for dealing with/responding to external examiners' summaries
- increase colleges' engagement with external frameworks and reference points, and, in particular, the Academic Infrastructure
- increase employer involvement in the design of the assessment strategies
- increase opportunities for work-based learning and work-based assessments
- improve tutorial support for students.

Outcomes of the evaluations

4.20 Overall, the IQER Developmental engagement process was well received by colleges, awarding bodies and students. The process was generally deemed to have operated smoothly, and respondents welcomed the fact it was supportive and enhancement-focused. All respondent groups identified a series of benefits for the college, the awarding body(ies) and students as a direct result of IQER.

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

- raising the profile of higher education in colleges
- a formal chance to discuss aspects of quality management with both QAA reviewers and awarding bodies in order to make improvements
- bringing together all staff teaching on programmes of higher education
- strengthening links between the colleges and their awarding bodies
- giving a college an understanding of its current position in relation to its higher education provision and areas for improvement in a non-threatening way
- an opportunity to share good practice between colleagues delivering higher education courses
- preparing the college for the Summative review.

4.22 Benefits to awarding bodies, as identified by respondents included:

- encouraging partnership working
- helping in the understanding of the complexity of higher education in further education colleges
- providing external confirmation of the appropriateness of the management of higher education
- giving an opportunity to review the service they provide to colleges.

4.23 Benefits to students, as identified by respondents included:

- bringing the different groups of students together and helping to create a 'higher education culture'
- giving greater consistency of treatment in which students benefit from the identification and sharing of good practice
- helping students to understand more about the quality assurance of higher education provision
- an opportunity for students to raise issues in an internal/external forum with a high profile and where college responses will be monitored
- contributing to the improvement of the college's higher education provision
- showing students that their higher education programmes are quality assured and giving them confidence in their qualifications from the college.

4.24 There were also a number of strengths and areas for improvement identified through the process. Strengths identified by respondents included:

- the focus on staff development for staff delivering higher education level programmes
- the aiding of development of higher education within colleges
- the supportive nature of the process.

4.25 A variety of areas for improvement were also identified. These can broadly be placed under two subheadings - roles and review activities. In respect of roles, greater clarification was requested through training of the different roles within the review teams and the role of the awarding body within the review process.

4.26 In relation to review activity, the evaluations highlighted the need to provide greater clarity on the relationship between lines of enquiry and core themes. All respondent groups noted that the timescales associated with conducting the review method were challenging. Greater clarity was requested about the process in which conclusions are reached and the report drafted. In addition, it was felt that further advice and guidance could be made available to students in preparing the student

written submission, perhaps through the provision of pre-prepared questions for students.

Academic review

4.27 During 2007-08, two academic re-reviews of subjects were undertaken. This draws to a close the cycle of academic review. In both cases, the reviewers had confidence in the academic standards. In both cases, teaching and learning and learning resources were considered commendable. In one case, student progression was approved and in the other the reviewers concluded that this was commendable.

4.28 In June 2008, QAA published *Learning from academic review of higher education in further education colleges in England 2002-07*³. The report provides an overview of the findings of the academic reviews of HEFCE's directly-funded and consortium-funded higher education programmes in further education colleges (colleges) in England between September 2002 and July 2007. It considers the development of higher education in colleges and identifies key messages for colleges and all stakeholders.

4.29 From 2002-07, QAA conducted 310 academic reviews in 232 colleges, which looked at programmes delivered within 20 different subjects, as defined by the HEFCE unit of review.

4.30 Each review resulted in judgements on academic standards. The reviewers had confidence in the standards of around 94 per cent of the provision. Five per cent of reviews resulted in a judgement of no confidence and one per cent of reviews in a judgement of limited confidence. The proportion of confidence judgements on standards remains broadly consistent across the cycle. Judgements were also made on the quality and effectiveness of learning opportunities. The quality of learning opportunities was found to be commendable or approved in 98 per cent of reviews and one per cent of reviews resulted in a failing judgement for all or part of the provision.

4.31 The report concluded the following.

- Colleges' engagement with, and use of, the Academic Infrastructure to inform the development and delivery of their higher education provision has demonstrably increased during the review cycle, although there remains room for further improvement.
- Generally, programmes prepare students well for future employment.
- Student assessment remains an area in need of further enhancement in most colleges.
- In general, there is an effective use of formative assessment across all subjects.
- Colleges place considerable emphasis on developing and enhancing students' study skills to help them with the transition to higher-level study.
- The proportion of students progressing to further study has improved over the review period.
- Colleges' close links and good liaison with employers are seen as key to helping students obtain subject-related employment.

³ www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/academicReview/learningfromAR

- Colleges are making an important contribution to widening participation in higher education, which has increasingly featured as a strength of college provision.
- Colleges frequently provide staff development and training for those who have no formal teaching qualification or experience.
- There is clear evidence of development in the provision of learning resources over the review period.
- In general, the reviewers found quality assurance and enhancement systems to be strong and effective.
- The reviewers also note the scope for more systematic and evaluative annual review of programmes and more effective monitoring and recording of action planned and taken.

Summary

4.32 The cycle of academic review of subjects has generated a wealth of intelligence about the standards of academic awards and quality of learning opportunities for higher education delivered in further education colleges. The outcomes of the full cycle of academic review have been formally reflected upon in the QAA publication *Learning from academic review of higher education in further education colleges in England 2005-2007*⁴.

4.33 Academic review identified a substantial amount of good practice as well as areas for development in higher education programmes in colleges, which has led to significant improvement and enhancement in this provision over the last five years. Many areas for development are concerned with the assessment cycle, from initial design of assessment tasks to measuring outcomes and assuring sufficient rigour and integrity in the implementation and monitoring of assessment processes. This has led to a focus on enhancing assessment processes in the Developmental engagement stage of the IQER method.

4.34 The 30 Developmental engagements undertaken as part of IQER identified much good practice and areas for development. The main items include:

- feedback to students on the outcomes of assessed work, in relation to quality, timeliness and usefulness
- engagement with employers
- the provision of information to students about their programme of study, in particular the arrangements for assessment, to include schedules, and grade descriptors.

4.35 The evaluation confirmed that IQER was operating effectively. All participant groups identified a series of benefits to the college, awarding bodies and students as a result of the Developmental engagement. One of the primary strengths of Developmental engagements was the constructive nature of the activity and the development of an action plan for colleges to improve and enhance the student learning experience, and the internal processes in place to effectively achieve this, specifically in relation to assessment. The action plan forms part of the evidence base for future review activity, particularly the Summative review.

⁴ www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/academicReview/learningfromhelnFe08

5 Higher education strategies pilot 2007-08

5.1 During 2007-08, HEFCE, supported by QAA, carried out a pilot to appraise the higher education strategies (HESTRAT) of further education colleges (colleges) and of partnerships of colleges. This pilot study enquired principally into whether a college is addressing strategic themes, and was not concerned with formally approving the overall content of the strategy. Twenty-six volunteer colleges and three partnerships (two led by universities) submitted strategy statements (Appendix 3).

5.2 The volunteer colleges were asked to address in their strategy statements criteria expressed as questions, for example 'Does the HE strategy meet identifiable needs locally, regionally and/or, if appropriate, nationally?' The questions were in the areas of:

- overall: aims, objectives, rationale
- regional, local and, where appropriate, national priorities
- strategic management of HE
- academic standards and quality assurance in HE
- effectiveness of academic staff in HE
- the HE student experience.

5.3 Two appraisers (a HEFCE officer and a colleague from a college or university-level institution) analysed the college responses. For each of the questions or criteria, appraisers indicated whether the college was fulfilling the criterion followed by detail and evidence for the judgement. In the part of the project managed by QAA, appraisals were then moderated for evenness of approach and template use by a coordinator. Each coordinator worked with six appraisers, and the coordinators met to discuss consistency of approach in editing the work of appraisers. All 29 appraisals were finally moderated by the QAA Assistant Director overseeing the project.

What we found

5.4 Most college HE strategy statements set out aims, objectives, and a rationale for current provision and intended developments. Strategies stress: expansion of programmes and student numbers; enhancement of programmes; increasing student achievement; improving partnerships; student progression; vocational relevance; increasing recognition for the college; local and regional economic needs; and employer engagement.

5.5 The better-presented strategies provide clear aims and list specific objectives. The more elaborated strategies gave detail on the college's current position and operational imperatives, and they described the relationship between HE and further education strategies, aims and objectives.

5.6 A college's HE strategy usually meets identifiable needs locally and regionally. Most colleges have ambitions to address local and regional needs.

5.7 Many colleges emphasised Foundation Degrees and employer engagement. Most strategy statements take account of widening participation, and of other government and HEFCE priorities. The strategy statements generally placed strong emphasis on partnerships with employers, lifelong learning networks, regional development agencies, and with other stakeholder bodies.

5.8 Within the strategy statements, high-level aspirational statements were easier to appraise when accompanied by some detail on themes such as discipline development, proven economic needs, student support plans, or the college's capacity for expansion. More detailed strategies included figures (student and programme numbers), timescales, SMART objectives or action plans.

5.9 Most of the pilot study colleges had a clear HE development strategy which is consistent with overall institutional strategy and local/regional economic and training needs. HE management mechanisms were very varied, but frequently contained an HE manager role distinguished from further education operations. Some colleges described multi-level discussion mechanisms for internally agreeing and updating the HE strategy.

5.10 Strategy statements typically emphasised how colleges seek to enhance student progression.

5.11 Most HE strategies gave consideration to the development of higher level skills. The college usually had a strategy that provided for close and direct responsiveness to employers in the provision of higher level skills and in employability. Most HE strategies addressed flexibility in provision including work-based learning.

5.12 The survey also found that some colleges cited an intention to seek Foundation Degree awarding powers. Likewise, it was evident that colleges were increasingly taking account of the *Code of Practice* and of QAA's Integrated quality enhancement review (IQER).

5.13 Well-presented strategy statements detailed and even quantified arrangements for providing staff with opportunities for continuing professional development and scholarly activity.

5.14 More detailed statements addressed varied dimensions of continuing professional development, for example pedagogy, academic progress, professional practice outside education, monitoring and mentoring practice, educational management, and engagement with partners and the Higher Education Academy.

5.15 HE strategies typically addressed the provision of a HE learning environment. Many statements mentioned planned or recently created 'HE Centres' and/or campus buildings as devices for fostering a HE culture among students.

5.16 The HE strategy usually covered provision of learning resources, which may include accommodation, consumables, technologies, library and electronic media, and staffing. Many statements cited flexible-mode and electronic study as important to the HE strategy. However, the areas for development section (below) indicated that traditional book and journal resources, and staffing levels, generally received minor emphasis in the strategy statements.

5.17 Student progression (into, within, and beyond the college), social inclusion and diversity, and student support were strong themes in many strategy statements.

5.18 The study also identified a series of areas for development in respect of the HE strategies submitted by colleges. An area for development identified was in relation to setting out aims, objectives, and a rationale for current provision and intended developments. It was considered that in some cases the rationale for

current provision is often largely descriptive or missing. In addition, in some strategy statements the rationale for development is more implicit than explicit.

5.19 In relation to regional, local and, where appropriate, national priorities, partnership strategies (colleges/university, or a group of colleges) tended to lack an account of how individual college strategies mesh together and avoid competition. The appraisers identified that in five cases the college's HE strategy did not demonstrably add value in respect of addressing local and regional priorities.

5.20 In the area of the strategic management of HE, academic standards and the quality of programmes, the study found that statements gave relatively little mention to the contribution of universities and partner colleges to the management of HE. Some strategy statements were considered to lack detail on the contribution of teaching staff and students to the management of HE programmes.

5.21 In relation to the effectiveness of academic staff in HE, some strategies were found to contain statements of simple intentions for staff development without convincing supporting material. In three cases the HE strategy did not address scholarly activity.

5.22 The strategy statements that are less developed in the area of enhancing the HE student experience tended to rely on simple statements of intent without supporting evidence. Traditional book and journal resources, and staffing levels, receive minor emphasis in the strategy statements.

Summary

5.23 The HESTRAT project was subject to full evaluation by HEFCE rather than by QAA, which conducted more informal evaluation of its role only.

5.24 In the main, the study found much good practice in the HE strategies developed by colleges. However, there were clear areas for development and improvement for colleges in developing their HE strategies.

6 Development and enhancement

6.1 QAA has responsibility for the 'stewardship' of the Academic Infrastructure (AI). First proposed in the 1997 Dearing Report and developed by QAA between 1997 and 2000, the AI is used across the UK higher education sector as a set of shared reference points that provide a basis for the setting of academic standards and the management of quality. The AI is designed to provide a sound and explicit basis for public and specialist confidence in an HE system that is essentially self-regulating.

6.2 The AI has four components; three are mainly concerned with setting standards (*The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), subject benchmark statements, and programme specifications⁵) and one (the *Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*⁶) is concerned with the management of quality.

6.3 Maintaining and updating the AI is core to the work of QAA. During 2007-08 this activity included:

- reviewing and, where necessary, revising individual components of the AI, to ensure currency and applicability to evolving and emerging practice in HE
- providing events and publications, mostly for the HE sector, to support and promote the AI and its effective implementation
- working with stakeholders to ensure that the AI 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 and in Europe.

Reviewing and revising individual components of the Academic Infrastructure

6.4 The review and revision of the FHEQ involved a substantial amount of work throughout 2007-08. The FHEQ was the subject of wide-ranging discussions and consultations with the sector and key stakeholders. These discussions reflected the changing contexts of HE since the FHEQ was first published in 2000, and in particular the effects of the Bologna Process on the development of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The work on the FHEQ was closely linked to the work of the Credit Issues Development Group (see 6.7 below).

⁵ *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) provides a set of generic qualifications descriptors for the main higher education qualifications. It sets out the general expectations about what the main UK degrees and other HE awards represent in terms of the knowledge, understanding and abilities that graduates should possess.

Subject benchmark statements are written by subject specialists and set out what they consider to be important aspects of university study in their subject areas (disciplines). Programme specifications are written by each university or college and set out the details of the particular courses offered.

⁶ The *Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* has 10 sections. Each covers a different topic of importance to the management and assurance of key activities associated with academic quality and standards.

6.5 In addition to a general updating of the FHEQ, the work was also a prelude to a self-certification exercise against the Framework for Qualifications of the EHEA (FQ-EHEA). This exercise was undertaken at the request of the DIUS, the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) and the Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland (DEL) and was completed in autumn 2008.

6.6 A European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF) has been developed by the European Commission and endorsed by ministers in 2008. The Commission's view on the precise relationship between this and the Bologna Process with a different group of countries and its own qualifications framework for HE is not entirely clear. A UK EQF Coordination Group has been established to oversee the referencing of the individual qualification (and credit) frameworks in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland to EQF. QAA is represented on this group. During 2008-09 QAA and key stakeholders will consider the merits of referencing the FHEQ to EQF.

6.7 Following 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 *Higher education credit framework for England: guidance on academic credit arrangements in higher education in England* and an overview statement, *The frameworks for higher education qualifications and credit: how they relate to academic standards* were both published during August 2008.

6.8 The England HE credit framework is based on the same general principles as those in Wales and Scotland, but whereas these credit frameworks are integrated into a general national qualifications and credit frameworks covering all learning, a separate qualifications and credit framework (the QCF) for the reform and regulation of vocational education and training in England, Wales and Northern Ireland has been developed in 2007-08. Working through the Joint Forum for Higher Levels QAA has been instrumental to the development of a set of overarching principles and shared operational criteria for a common approach to credit between the vocational and HE sectors in England.

6.9 QAA has provided advice and guidance on matters relating to the 'levels' of qualifications, both in comparisons between country's (different) qualifications frameworks (through the '5 countries' work - UK plus Ireland - to update the 'rough guide' *Qualifications can cross boundaries* and, in England, with regard to the Equivalent and Lower Qualifications (ELQ) government policy withdrawing funding from those undertaking lifelong learning that is not directed at progressing to a qualification at a higher (framework) level than any qualification already held.

6.10 The review and revision of two sections of the *Code of Practice* - Section 5 (Academic appeals and student complaints about academic matters) and Section 9 (Work-based and placement learning) was completed in 2007-08. The review and revision of a further two sections - Section 3 (Students with disabilities) and Section 8 (Careers advice and guidance) - began in 2007-08. In each case the review and revision has been assisted by an advisory group drawn from across the HE sector and key stakeholders. The review and revision of Section 3 and Section 8 will be completed in 2008-09. Once concluded, all sections of the *Code* will be in their second edition.

6.11 In keeping with QAA's remit to ensure the currency and applicability of the AI to evolving and emerging practice in HE, during the latter part of 2007-08 we offered to open discussion with the sector about the necessity of re-visiting Section 2

6.12 Subject benchmarks are written by the relevant subject communities. QAA's work in this area is supported by the Steering Group for Benchmarking, 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, 28 revised benchmark statements have been published. Two new statements (Osteopathy; Early Childhood Studies) have progressed to publication through the Benchmark Recognition Scheme.

6.13 Following previous discussions on the need for master's level benchmark statements, a draft 'master's degree characteristics' document was produced during 2007 with the help of an external development group. The draft was discussed at an event held with the sector in December 2007 and a further document has since been produced which will be finalised for consultation in 2008-09. The document will not be an integral part of the AI but will offer additional guidance to the master's qualification descriptor of the FHEQ.

6.14 During the course of 2007-08, two meetings were held with various PSRBs to discuss concerns over external recognition of UK qualifications under the Bologna Process. The first was with representatives of medicine, dentistry and veterinary science, and the second was with representatives of chemistry, physics, maths and engineering. For medicine, dentistry and veterinary science, a decision was reached to identify that these long first degrees reach master's level within the revised FHEQ.

6.15 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 that the development of the Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) should take place alongside the commitments made by QAA and partners to review and revise the personal development planning (PDP) element of the *Guidelines for HE Progress Files*⁷.

6.16 A review and revision of the PDP element of the *Guidelines for HE Progress Files* began in 2007-08. We expect that a second edition, entitled *Guidelines for Personal Development Planning*, will be published in 2008-09.

Providing events and publications to support and promote the Academic Infrastructure and its effective implementation

6.17 The Academic Infrastructure (AI) was developed 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

⁷ www.qaa.ac.uk/academicinfrastructure/progressFiles/guidelines/progfile2001.asp

external quality assurance of those standards and the quality of the study programmes leading to the awards.

6.18 While evidence on the applicability and effectiveness of the AI can be gleaned from thematic scrutiny of audit and review reports (through, for example, the *Outcomes...papers*, see paragraph 6.19 below) and from the discussions and consultations associated with the ongoing programme of review and revision of the various components of the AI, and other 'intelligence gathering', a formal evaluation of the AI as a whole has not yet been undertaken. Within a continuously evolving HE context it was decided that such a review should be undertaken, and this is planned for 2008-10. As a prelude to this, a pilot project was undertaken in 2006-07 and regional seminars (held in England) provided opportunities for particular groups of users to discuss and share experiences and opinions about the value and effectiveness of the AI and its components. A second pilot project was completed in 2007-08 with a small sample of English HEIs, which aimed to assist in the detailed design and implementation of what will be a major UK-wide project carried out over the next 18 months. It is anticipated that this will inform any necessary or desirable revisions to the bases and procedures used setting out and securing the standards and quality of UK HE.

6.19 During 2007-08, QAA continued to use the intelligence derived from Institutional audit to support quality enhancement and improvement. Series 1 of *Outcomes from institutional audit* concluded with the publication of a *Closing overview* and *Summaries*. Eleven Series 2 papers were published in 2007-08 and will continue in 2008-09. *Outcomes... papers* published in 2007-08 were:

Series 1

The self-evaluation document in institutional audit	October 2007
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Series 1: Closing overview	February 2008
Series 1 summaries	February 2008

Series 2

Initial overview	March 2008
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Learning support resources (including virtual learning environments)	March 2008
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Progression and completion statistics	March 2008
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Institutions' frameworks for managing quality and academic standards	March 2008
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Work-based and placement learning, and employability	April 2008
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Institutions' arrangements to support widening participation and access to higher education (entitled <i>Institutions' support for widening participation and access to higher education</i> for series 1)	April 2008
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Collaborative provision in the institutional audit reports	May 2008
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External examiners and their reports	June 2008
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Assessment of students	June 2008
Arrangements for international students	June 2008
Recruitment and admission of students	June 2008
Institution's work with employers and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies	August 2008
Institutions' support for e-learning	August 2008

6.20 At the end of 2006-07, the *Outcomes...* team carried out an initial analysis of the reception and impact of the published *Outcomes...* papers in Series 1. From this analysis it is clear that *Outcomes...* papers had a wide UK and international readership. Further information from a variety of search engines showed that a number of institutions in the UK were subjecting the papers to systematic analysis to extract information for use in their internal quality arrangements and as evidence of the approaches taken by comparators and competitors. This impact analysis contributed to the change in the way in which the prefaces and some of the content in the papers in Series 2 is presented.

6.21 One of the aims of *Outcomes...* papers 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, *Outcomes...* papers frequently raise questions for others as well as for QAA.

6.22 Following expressions of concern in the media about degree standards and other quality-related matters in June 2008, QAA proposed a programme of work to look into these. An action plan was approved by QAA's Board of Directors on 17 July, immediately following a meeting of the IUS Select Committee which took evidence from QAA's Chief Executive on the topics raised. HEFCE agreed to provide funding for the part of the action plan which comprised thematic enquiries into the elements of concern particularly highlighted by the media. The details of these concerns have been developed into a proposal for a suite of enquiries that will take place in 2008-09.

6.23 The *Outcomes...* team regularly reminds readers of *higher quality* and attendees at conferences that it is willing to analyse the institutional audit reports, the collaborative provision audit 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 through 2007-08 and enquiries have included requests for information on techniques of module evaluation; approaches to the appraisal of academic staff; attendance monitoring for first year students (as part of a developing retention strategy); and good practice in writing and managing formal agreements in educational partnerships.

6.24 The various discussion, consultation and dissemination meetings and conferences hosted by QAA provide discussion fora, and all, in one way or another, seek to support QAA's strategy for enhancement and continuous improvement in the AI and associated guidance, and their application. A total of 12 open public meetings were arranged in 2007-08 with nearly 1,000 registered delegates.

Working with stakeholders to ensure that the Academic Infrastructure is understood and used effectively

6.25 Staff from across QAA take part in a formal liaison scheme with HEIs in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Over the course of 2007-08 QAA undertook, in collaboration with the Higher Education Academy, and with the support of HEFCE, a major project to assess the extent to which higher education institutions in England and Northern Ireland are changing their quality assurance structures and processes, in order to focus more explicitly on quality enhancement. Over 70 institutions participated in the project, with data collected through QAA's institutional liaison scheme. The project outcomes took the form of a published report and a national conference, held on 11 June 2008.

6.26 Activity through the liaison scheme over the year involved:

- 71 interviews contributing to the enhancement survey (England)
- 15 visits/meetings were carried out separately to the enhancement survey email interaction with eight institutions
- a total of 78 institutions across England, Wales and Northern Ireland were involved in the liaison scheme for the year.

6.27 QAA also maintains a liaison scheme with the Higher Education Academy's subject centre network. A third 'Working Together' meeting was held on 26 June 2008 with 11 QAA staff and 17 Higher Education Academy staff representing 15 Subject Centres and the generic centre attending. This annual meeting provides a venue for discussion of our various activities and for exchanging intelligence on developments within the HE sector.

6.28 During 2007-08, particular priority has been given to work relating to: student engagement (reported separately in section 7), employer engagement (including employer bodies, and lifelong learning networks), and widening participation and progression between the vocational education and training and HE sectors (including with QCA and partners, and the Joint Forum for Higher Levels).

6.29 Regular discussions are held with key employer bodies including sector skills councils and various 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 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.

6.30 A PSRB forum was established in 2007-08; its first meeting attended by 32 representatives from a wide range of professions. Initially it will promote discussion about improving efficiency and effectiveness in the ways in which the various (and sometimes overlapping) quality assurance responsibilities can be addressed.

6.31 This and other work, in particular with various lifelong learning networks and skills pathfinders, has informed the Board's strategy on standards and quality assurance and standards of HE learning linked through the UK government and English funding council priorities regarding employer engagement and workforce development. The statement released at the Subscribers' meeting has been very well received by the relevant parts of the sector and their key stakeholders.

Undertaking special projects, in both the UK and in Europe, to identify effective quality assurance practices, and support their evolution and innovation

6.32 During 2007-08, QAA staff were invited participants in a wide range of international activities and asked to provide expert advice to numerous international working groups, commissions and review panels. These activities, covering work in more than 20 countries, included ENQA reviews of agencies; audit/accreditation reviews of institutions and programmes; think tanks and workshops for governments, agencies and rectors' conferences; and taking the lead in the ENQA (Bologna-wide) Quality Procedures Project.

Summary

6.33 In terms of the main roles and development and enhancement activities, the year's key themes may be summarised as:

- review and revision of the Academic Infrastructure:
 - the review of the FHEQ for its (minister-requested) self certification against the FQ-EHEA; and, linked with this, provision of essential support for the finalisation of a Credit Framework for HE in England
 - Completion of Phase 1 of the review and revision of subject benchmarks (Phase 2 is coming to completion); the Recognition Scheme for subject benchmark is working well
 - two sections of the *Code of Practice* (3 and 8) were under review; they will complete an initial review of all parts of the *Code*.
- providing events and publications, mostly for the HE sector but also key stakeholders, to support and promote the Academic Infrastructure and its effective implementation:
 - discussions ('round table') meetings and conferences focused on development and enhancement activities were almost always oversubscribed and well received
 - in addition to the formal (consultation) documents published in relation to the review and revision of the AI, significant resources were committed to the *Outcomes...* series. These have attracted wide attention across the HE sectors both in the UK and abroad, and some reports have also been the subject of wider interest among key stakeholders, including the national media
 - increasing attention and resource was committed to promoting a better understanding of the AI and its use in FECs.
- working with stakeholders to ensure that the Academic Infrastructure is understood and used effectively:
 - particular time and attention was given to working with organisations and staff involved in developing and delivering key government and funding council priorities. In particular, this relates to employer engagement and manpower planning, and widening participation and progression. Both areas extend the boundaries of traditional HE and thus provide the greatest risk for standards and quality, and a clear understanding and proper application of the shared bases of standards and quality is essential.

- undertaking special projects, in both the UK and in Europe, to identify effective quality assurance practices, and support their evolution and innovation:
 - the 'Quality assurance/quality enhancement' discussion undertaken through the HE liaison scheme was a major (joint with HEFCE and the Higher Education Academy) project during 2007-08. The substantial commitments made by more than 70 HEIs, including insights into their approaches to policy development, provided a wealth of information. The project illustrated the value that institutions now place in working with QAA on matters that are concerned with standards and quality, but that are not directly linked to audit or review.
 - staff have contributed to a number of international projects which had, or will have, significant impacts, including work concerned with doctoral and postdoctoral students and staff; student assessment; and a major comparative review of quality procedures across the whole of the 'Bologna area'.

7 Working with students

7.1 The *Strategic plan 2006-11*⁸ identifies students as having a key interest in the safeguarding of academic standards and in the continuous improvement of 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.

7.2 During 2007-08, extensive work has been undertaken 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. Likewise, QAA recognises the importance of student involvement in quality assurance processes.

7.3 Throughout 2007-08, QAA has continued to strengthen links with students and student representative bodies. Activities included student participation in the audit and IQER processes, through the students' written submission, and meetings with audit teams. An extensive consultation on approaches to student involvement in quality assurance, and a further consultation on proposals to include students as members of institutional audit teams were also carried out.

Student engagement in QAA activities

7.4 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. They repeatedly commented that the audit and review processes would ultimately enhance the student learning experience within institutions and welcomed the opportunity to provide an input, either through a student written submission or through meetings with the review teams, or both.

7.5 Benefits identified by students of involvement in IQER included:

'Driver for change. Opportunity for student views to be aired. Improve quality of HE provision.'

'An opportunity to air frustrations and improve the courses in the future. It provides for a moderation process and sets [college name] and its courses in context.'

'Highlight areas of improvement and process that are currently working well.'

7.6 Challenges reported by students of their involvement in IQER included:

'Lack of awareness i.e. students not knowing what this process is about – communication.'

'Engaging with students. Persuading students to become involved in the process. Outlining the benefits of the QAA for students.'

⁸ www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/strategicPlan/2006

7.7 Analysis of the material provided to institutional audit teams through the student written submission showed the research methodology and content to be highly variable between institutions. In the main, the submissions were structured around the four key themes suggested by QAA:

- How accurate is the information that the institution publishes about itself, such as prospectuses, programme descriptors and advertisements?
- Do students know what is expected of them in order to be successful?
- What is the student experience as a learner like, including teaching and learning opportunities, support received and access to learning facilities?
- Do students have a voice in the institution and is it listened to?

7.8 In preparing the student written submission the majority were informed by bespoke primary research. However, extensive use was made of existing information sources, to include meeting minutes and the National Student Survey. Not all submissions were paper based, with two institutions submitting a DVD.

7.9 From an analysis of the student written submissions for audit, in the main, students generally concluded that there were variations in practices and experiences within their own institutions. Typically, concerns raised included feedback on assessment, access to learning resources, and the quality of teaching accommodation and learning spaces. Students were generally positive in their feedback about student committee representations, student support and teaching quality.

7.10 QAA has continued to work with the NUS to provide training and support materials for students seeking to participate in audit and review activities. The Quality Takes Time initiative has been rebranded Quality Matters and the scope of events has been broadened to cover a wider range of issues related to quality and standards. Eighty-six students attended events in 2007-08 and QAA staff attended a number of NUS events and conferences to provide training, information and run workshops. QAA also has board membership of the Students' Union Evaluation Initiative.

7.11 During 2007-08, QAA has also sought to improve student engagement in developing the Academic Infrastructure and their understanding of its role and purpose. The Subject Benchmarking Steering Group has agreed to proposals to engage students in the development and review of statements, and students have been represented on advisory groups for reviewing the framework for higher education qualifications and sections of the *Code of Practice*.

Student membership of audit and review teams

7.12 In 2007-08 QAA initiated consultations with the HE sector in England about including students as members of audit and review teams. We initially asked for comments from the main representative and funding bodies about the principles driving such a change. Following their responses, QAA agreed to conduct further research and analysis into the potential role of students, their capacity to contribute to audit activities and the experience of other agencies and HEIs that have supported students in this way.

7.13 During spring 2008, a number of students observed institutional audits and provided feedback to QAA on their perspective of the contributions that a student could make to the process and their training and support needs.

7.14 Evidence was also gathered from HEIs that include students on internal periodic review teams, from the Enhancement-led institutional review method where review teams include a student member, and from European quality assurance agencies that include students on their review teams.

7.15 This evidence was gathered, published and presented to the sector at a conference in July 2008, and formed the basis of discussions about student membership of institutional audit and review teams. The discussions and feedback received after the conference were generally positive. QAA is currently undertaking a formal consultation with the sector on changes that are required to the institutional audit handbook.

Consultation on QAA approaches to student engagement

7.16 During March and April 2008, QAA sought the views of the higher education sector, students and other stakeholders on QAA's approaches to student engagement. The four aims, underpinning the approach to student engagement, were:

- work, with others, to provide clearer information on quality and standards for students
- build partnerships to improve student engagement in quality assurance and enhancement
- work with HEIs to develop the role of students in institutional quality management
- support greater involvement of students in QAA quality assurance and enhancement processes.

7.17 Overall, the response to the consultation was highly positive, with respondents expressing broad support for the four aims proposed in the strategy. Respondents considered that student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement was important, and that this process should be continuous. Students were seen as active participants who should have a voice in their education. Respondents repeatedly agreed that the approach to student engagement proposed in the consultation process was the right approach:

'This process will be of great advantage to students if as it seems it gives them a greater control of their education. It will though need to be clear, effective and transparent. If they give answers and assist in this process they need to know it will make a difference and be able to see how. Then it will be effective.' (Student representative.)

- 94 per cent of respondents fully supported the proposal that QAA should work, with others, to provide clearer information on quality and standards for students.
- 92 per cent of the respondents fully supported the proposal to build partnerships to improve student engagement in quality assurance and enhancement.
- 89 per cent of the respondents fully supported the proposal to work with HEIs to develop the role of students in institutional quality management.
- 80 per cent of the respondents fully supported the proposal to support greater involvement of students in QAA quality assurance and enhancement

7.18 Respondents supported QAA's role in the provision of information and support for student engagement. However, it was felt that a partnership approach should be adopted, whereby QAA, the Higher Education Academy, the NUS, students' unions, institutions and students work together to facilitate and support student engagement, through training, briefings, guidance and the provision of information. These comments sit neatly with the cross-sector meetings QAA has established between QAA, UUK, GuildHE, NUS, HEFCE and the Higher Education Academy.

Other information

7.19 An internal working group has been established to coordinate the activities across QAA, with the aim of bringing more coherence to our work with sector and national bodies, to support capacity building within HEIs for student involvement in quality, and to improve provision of information for students and potential students.

7.20 In February 2008, the QAA Board appointed its first student member.

7.21 QAA staff meet regularly with the officers and staff of the NUS and the National Postgraduate Committee.

Summary

7.22 During 2007-08, QAA has made significant progress in respect of student engagement. As a direct result, QAA is currently consulting on proposed changes to the institutional audit method to include full student membership of teams.

8 QAA evaluation and monitoring

8.1 During 2007-08, 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.

8.2 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.

8.3 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

8.4 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.

8.5 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 aims and had generated tangible benefits for the institution, and subsequently the student learning experience.

Evaluation of other activities

8.6 During 2007-08, 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 roadshows for providers of higher education and awarding bodies
- round table discussion events
- annual subscribers conference
- focus groups
- review method-specific conferences, supporting reviewers' and auditors' continued professional development

- thematic conference events with an emphasis on the dissemination of pertinent information.

8.7 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.

8.8 Feedback gathered through the evaluation questionnaires across all training and briefing events and conferences was overwhelmingly positive.

8.9 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.

8.10 In June 2008, QAA and the Higher Education Academy held a joint conference on institutions' views of assurance and enhancement, and the links between the two.

8.11 The QAA Subscribers' meeting was held on 4 June 2008 at the City Inn, Manchester. It was attended by 132 delegates. Delegates considered the Subscribers' meeting to be of a high standard with 81 per cent of responses recorded as good or very good. Respondents commented favourably on the format and content of the event.

8.12 During July 2008, QAA hosted a conference to discuss the proposed student membership of institutional audit teams. The purpose of the event was to update delegates on progress regarding student involvement in quality assurance activities, and receive feedback on the proposals from the delegates. The event also sought to disseminate the findings of case study examples of student involvement, from both the English and Scottish perspectives, and to hear direct feedback from the students who had participated in recent institutional audits as observers. Respondents considered the event to have been highly useful and informative in respect of the information provided and the opportunities for open discussions.

Summary

8.13 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.

8.14 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.

9 Summary and recommendations

9.1 The evidence in this report indicates that the 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. Where problems are identified, institutions respond rapidly and comprehensively to ensure that the quality of learning opportunities are secured. The engagement with QAA provides a focus for the development of quality assurance processes and for supporting the continuous improvement of academic practice.

9.2 However, recent comments in the media and elsewhere about the experience of students in higher education have raised questions about the effectiveness of QAA's procedures and the sufficiency of the quality assurance framework as a means of providing public assurance of the quality and academic standards of higher education programmes. The arrangements that were put in place in 2002, to replace universal subject review, were based on an acknowledgement of institutional responsibilities for the standards of awards and the quality of provision, and a role for QAA in oversight of institutional arrangements through the audit process. Over the past five years the audit and review programmes have been delivered to specification and have made a significant contribution to assuring standards. In general, this supports the view that there are no major systemic problems in the quality of higher education.

9.3 Analysis of the outcomes from audit has, nevertheless, identified a number of areas where there is scope for improvement in current practice and highlighted issues that are of significance to the sector more generally. These matters, together with comments in the media about higher education, identify an agenda for improvement that stretches beyond the current scope of audit and review.

9.4 QAA's response has been twofold. In the first instance, the principal issues of concern have been identified and a programme of research has been initiated to gauge the extent and nature of the problems. These 'thematic inquiries' are focused on five key issues:

- student contact hours and the level of student support
- recruitment practices for international students and their levels of competence
- the role and function of external examiners
- the practice of assessment in higher education
- grade inflation and the classification of degrees.

9.5 The research programme is due to be completed by the end of 2008-09. The outcomes will provide a basis for further action to improve the quality of the student experience and inform audit and review activities.

9.6 The second response has been a comprehensive review of the methods currently used by QAA and discussion about future directions in audit and review. The current cycle of institutional audits is due to be completed by July 2011, and IQER by July 2012. This offers an opportunity to consider alternative models of review which could identify and comment on issues of public concern and engage with institutions in ways that will support their commitment to continuous improvement.

9.7 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. These include:

9.8 **Student engagement.** QAA has agreed to include students as full members of institutional audit teams from 2010 onwards and is 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.

9.9 **Employer engagement.** QAA has identified good practice in employer engagement through its review activities and has supported the development of employer involvement through revisions to sections of the *Code of Practice*. There is a commitment to provide continuing support for the development of high quality learning opportunities for students in the workplace and appropriate arrangements for the involvement of employers in teaching, learning and assessment.

9.10 **Public information.** 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. Employers and others have also identified the need for clear and comprehensive information about the content of programmes and about the skills and competencies of graduates.

9.11 **National Student Survey.** 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.

9.12 **International activities.** The growth in international student recruitment and the expansion of higher education provision through partnerships with institutions and organisations in other countries has raised concerns about the security of qualifications and the quality of provision. These matters have been addressed by QAA to date through its programme of overseas audits and by advice and guidance offered in the *Code of Practice*. Although this activity does not involve public funding for students outside the European Union, there are nevertheless issues to do with the standards and reputation of higher education that fall within the remit of QAA. A UK strategy for the quality assurance of transnational education is currently being developed by QAA. This will include proposals for a revised approach to reviewing and publicly recognising the security of quality and standards of UK provision offered overseas.

References

Learning from Academic review of higher education in further education colleges in England 2005-07 (QAA 250 05/08)

www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/academicReview/learningfromhelnFe08

Handbook for institutional audit: England and Northern Ireland 2006 (QAA 112 06/06)

www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/institutionalAudit/handbook2006

The handbook for Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (QAA 214 01/08)

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

Student membership of audit and review teams. Feedback from student observers and audit team members

www.qaa.ac.uk/events/smart08/StudentPaper3.asp

QAA approaches to student engagement

www.qaa.ac.uk/students/studentEngagement/approaches.asp

QAA consultation on the proposed changes to the Institutional audit process

www.qaa.ac.uk/news/circularLetters/CL1008.asp

www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/institutionalAudit/draftHand08/students.asp

QAA Causes for Concern procedures

www.qaa.ac.uk/causesforconcern/concernguide.asp

Appendix 1: Institutional audit

Institutional audit (2007-08)

Higher Education Institution
Anglia Ruskin University
Bath Spa University
University of Bradford
University of Brighton
University of Cambridge
Institute of Cancer Research
University of Chichester
University College for the Creative Arts
University of Essex
University of Exeter
University of Keele
University of Leeds
Leeds College of Music
University of Lincoln
University of the Arts, London
London Business School
London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
Loughborough University
University of Reading
Roehampton University
Royal Academy of Music
University of Salford
University of Sheffield
University of Southampton
Central School of Speech and Drama
University of Sussex
Trinity Laban
University of York

Appendix 2: IQER

Developmental engagements (2007-08)

College
Askham Bryan College
Bolton Community College
Bridgwater College
Calderdale College
Carlisle College
Carshalton College
Central Sussex College
Henley College Coventry
Dudley College of Technology
Herefordshire College of Technology
Hopwood Hall College
Kingston College
Lakes College
Lewisham College
Loughborough College
Matthew Boulton College
North Hertfordshire College
The College of North West London
Park Lane College
Highbury College Portsmouth
Richmond Upon Thames College
Rotherham College of Arts and Technology
South Tyneside College
Sparsholt College
Swindon College
West Cheshire College
West Hertfordshire College
Westminster Kingsway College
Wigan and Leigh College
York College

Appendix 3: HESTRAT

HESTRAT pilot colleges (2007-08)

College
Barnet College
City College Birmingham
Blackpool and the Fylde College
Burnley College
Castle College Nottingham
City College Norwich
College of NW London
City College Plymouth
Dearne Valley College
Exeter College
Gateshead College
Greenwich Community College
University of Hull
Kidderminster College
Kingston Maurward College
Leeds College of Art and Design
Loughborough College
Mid Kent College
Northbrook College
Orpington College
Ruskin College Oxford
South Tyneside College
University of Teesside
Trafford College
Wakefield College
West Herts College
Wigan and Leigh College
Wiltshire College
Worcester College of Technology