

**Report of the Chair of the
Higher Education Regulation Review Group
(HERRG)**

Steve Bundred

**The implementation of the
Higher Education Concordat
and the
Work of HERRG in 2006/07**

presented to

**The Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further
and Higher Education**

Bill Rammell MP

12 September 2007

Higher Education Regulation Review Group Chair: Steve Bundred

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12 September 2007

Dear Bill

It is with great pleasure that I attach my report on the work of the Higher Education Regulation Review Group (HERRG) in the year to September 2007.

As you will see, impressive progress is being made in securing better regulation of the HE sector. There are now 22 signatories to the Higher Education Concordat (compared with 16 originally) and HERRG is convinced that signatories are in general working well to deliver the undertakings set out in their Annexes to the Concordat.

But more needs to be done. And two significant issues have emerged from the work of the Group in the past year on which the report contains recommendations addressed to Ministers. The two issues relate to:

- The need for a review of the regulatory role of professional bodies and the interaction between this and the role of statutory regulators; and
- The need to clarify the role of Sector Skills Councils in accrediting higher education courses and the expectations Ministers have of the relationship between SSCs and professional bodies in this role.

HERRG is conscious too that the sector itself must play a full part in the better regulation of higher education. It must create the conditions, and demonstrate that they exist, that will enable regulators to place greater reliance on institutions' own structures and processes. The report therefore includes a challenge to universities to maintain a strong focus on the strength of their internal controls and the assurance of their data quality.

Finally, you will see that the report acknowledges and expresses appreciation of the consistent support that Ministers have given to promoting better regulation. I would like to add my personal thanks for your continuing commitment to the work of the Group.

*Yours
Steve Bundred*

Steve Bundred
Chair of HERRG

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Introduction

1. The Higher Education Regulation Review Group (HERRG) was established in the summer of 2004 to advise the Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education, on the better regulation of higher education, and to promote the better regulation of the sector more generally. For the first two years of its existence it was chaired by Dame Patricia Hodgson. A key achievement of the Group in that period was the publication of the Higher Education Concordat on quality assurance arrangements and data collection, to which 16 bodies were signatories.
2. In August 2006, the Group was reconstituted and I was appointed by Bill Rammell to chair it in succession to Dame Patricia. This appointment is personal to me and has no connection with my role as Chief Executive of the Audit Commission. The remit given to me by Bill Rammell on my appointment was fourfold:
 - Working through HERRG, to develop the Concordat by encouraging other bodies involved in the regulation of higher education to become signatories to it, or to embrace its principles in other ways;
 - monitor the implementation of the Concordat and to report on the progress made by signatories to it in delivering the specific undertakings given by each of them;
 - To chair HERRG and promote its wider work, including the work of the Group in monitoring developments in the regulation of higher education and responding to them, or providing advice to Ministers, as appropriate; and
 - To produce an annual report on these matters, and on the work of HERRG more generally, and where necessary to make recommendations.
3. Some of those who were HERRG members when it first came into being remained as members when the Group was reconstituted, and as before, the current members are drawn from practitioners within HE and those with experience of the governance of the sector. Those who have been members during the past year are listed in **Appendix 1**.
4. HERRG has been supported throughout by officials of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), now the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS). But the Group is independent – both of the Department and of the higher education sector. Its members are not bound by the policies of their employer or of any bodies within the HE sector to which they may belong.
5. This is my first annual report. It reflects the work of HERRG in the twelve months to 1 September 2007 and has been informed by the wisdom and expert knowledge its members provide. I am grateful to members of HERRG for their work over the past year. I am equally grateful to their employing organisations for permitting them to devote so much of their time to securing the better regulation of higher education.

The role and profile of HERRG

6. The origins of HERRG can be found in the establishment of the Better Regulation Task Force (BRTF) in September 1997. This was created in response to concerns about excessive regulatory burdens on businesses. Its role was to advise government on the action needed to ensure that regulation and its enforcement would accord with the Government's five Principles of Good Regulation: proportionality, accountability, consistency, transparency, and targeting. In 2002 the BRTF published a report Higher Education; Easing the Burden which in turn prompted the appointment by DfES of a Better Regulation Review Group (BRRG) chaired by Professor David Van de Linde, Vice-Chancellor of Warwick University. The interim report of this group was published in November 2003 and called for a more concerted effort to tackle excessive regulation of universities and HE colleges. It also contained proposals for a gatekeeper mechanism for new regulatory burdens in higher education. Ministers accepted the recommendations of the BRRG interim report in June 2004, and HERRG was created in response. Its remit is confined to England and its terms of reference can be found on the HERRG website <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/hegateway/hereform/improvingregulation/index.cfm> .
7. In addition to providing advice and guidance to improve understanding of essential regulatory demands and helping to enforce the Government's principles of good regulation, HERRG aims to:
 - Provide constructive challenge to policy makers in government, Hefce and other partners, both on the impact of new proposals and ways of simplifying existing arrangements;
 - Support key partners to keep regulatory demands on English higher education to a minimum, consistent with proper, proportionate and robust regulation;
 - As part of its 'gatekeeper' role, to ensure that new proposals have been effectively developed and assessed in keeping with the Principles of Good Regulation; and to
 - Make recommendations on ways in which Ministers, regulatory bodies, or institutions might contribute to the better regulation of higher education.
8. HERRG has met on four occasions under my chairmanship. The meetings were held on 19 October 2006 and on 11 January, 1 May, and 19 July 2007. On each of those occasions, in addition to discussions among members of the Group, we have held discussions with key stakeholders involved in the regulation of the HE sector. Separate discussions have also been held with key stakeholders to promote the work of HERRG. These key stakeholders include current and potential signatories to the Higher Education Concordat. Among the bodies that HERRG members have had significant direct contact with during the past year have been the following:
 - The Higher Education Funding Council for England (Hefce)
 - The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)

- The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA)
- The Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA)
- The Department for Education and Skills (DfES)
- The Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS)
- The Department of Health (DH)
- The Better Regulation Executive (BRE)
- Skills for Health
- The Health Professions Council (HPC)
- The Healthcare Commission
- Skillset
- The Home Office
- The National Audit Office (NAO)
- The Committee of University Chairmen (CUC)
- Universities UK (UUK)
- The British Psychological Society (BPS)
- The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)
- The Sector Skills Development Agency (SSDA)
- The Council of Deans and Heads of UK University Faculties for Nursing and Health Professions
- The Delivery Partnership
- The Gateways to the Professions Forum

The HERRG Secretariat has also been in contact with many other bodies on behalf of the Group.

9. In many cases, the discussions with these bodies have been on-going. As most of the work of the Group is conducted outside the formal HERRG meetings, in October 2006 Sub-Groups were established to deal with issues in relation to the data requirements of the Higher Education Statistics Agency, to conduct further discussions with bodies involved in the regulation of healthcare education, to discuss with Hefce arrangements for the implementation in higher education of the Charities Act 2006, and to examine concerns about alleged overlap between the work of the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education and Hefce's work on Leadership, Governance and Management.
10. There have also been meetings with Ministers, government officials, university vice-chancellors and others who are in a position to influence the regulation of the HE sector or to promote the work of the Group more generally. HERRG members

have been active in pursuing matters that arise between meetings, for example by commenting on consultation papers issued by other bodies, or responding to other developments as they occur. Group members also address conferences of representative bodies within the HE sector. And the Committee of University Chairmen, which is strongly supportive of HERRG's efforts to promote better regulation, has reported on the work of HERRG in the CUC newsletter on more than one occasion.

11. Despite this, there is not yet a high level of awareness within the sector of the work of the Group. In consequence, Ministers and others have not yet received the credit they deserve for the progress noted in this report.
12. It is nevertheless a tribute to the efforts of Ministers, the work of HERRG, and the supportive response of the principal regulatory bodies within the HE sector that concern within universities about the burden of regulation, at least in respect of that imposed by the principal regulatory bodies, does not appear to be as great as it once was.
13. I have found that one practical consequence of this is that concerns about over-regulation from within the sector are now often expressed only in general terms. It has not always proved easy to obtain specific examples of the continuing unnecessary burdens or inefficiencies that are alleged to exist. There are, of course, some exceptions which are referred to elsewhere in this report. But subject to these, I believe the onus now lies with the sector, and especially with UUK, to demonstrate that serious problems remain and are not being tackled.
14. HERRG has given thought to how it can more effectively communicate with the sector and how it can be made easier for matters to be raised with the Group. To this end, the HERRG presence on the internet has been refreshed and upgraded. HERRG web pages currently exist as a micro-site within the website of the Department for Children, Schools and Families¹, although this will in time migrate to the new DIUS website. In addition to key HERRG documents, the text of key speeches, and links to other relevant sites, these pages now include a brief report following each meeting of the Group and provide a mechanism whereby issues can be brought to HERRG's attention. The new website established by the Better Regulation Executive² also provides an opportunity for issues to be brought to HERRG's attention.
15. It nevertheless remains a concern that the dialogue between HERRG and the higher education sector is currently less effective than it might be. Although the Group does not believe that it should, or could, have a profile with the general public, there is a view that more could be done to communicate the work of HERRG within the HE sector and to give wider voice to the views of the Group about the progress now being made in securing the better regulation of higher education and the issues requiring further attention.

1 <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/hegateway/hereform/improvingregulation/index.cfm>

2 <http://www.betterregulation.gov.uk/>

16. One means of addressing this would be for the administrative support provided to the Group by DIUS to be extended to include part of the time of one of the department's press officers. HERRG does not at present have any resource available to it for pro-active communications. In addition to providing information to the trade press more routinely, a more pro-active approach might involve, for example, some regular communication with other opinion formers having a specialist interest in higher education or regulatory issues.

Recommendation 1: The support provided to HERRG by DIUS should include some limited provision for more pro-active communications.

17. A key milestone in promoting the work of the Group during the past year was the Concordat Workshop held on 16 May 2007. This brought together signatories to the Concordat, potential signatories, and other key stakeholders including a representative of UUK. The Group was grateful to the Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education, Bill Rammell, for delivering a keynote address to open the Workshop and to Ruth Thompson, the Director General for Higher Education within DfES (now DIUS), for chairing it. The event provided an opportunity for all those present to discuss their progress in implementing the Concordat, to identify issues still needing to be addressed, and to exchange ideas with others. A report of the Workshop can be found on the HERRG website.<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/hegateway/hereform/improvingregulation/index.cfm>

Developing the Concordat

18. There were 16 original signatories to the Concordat. They embraced all of the major bodies involved in the regulation of higher education. One of these, the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI), has since been merged with another, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted), while new bodies have become signatories to the Concordat during the past year or have expressed a desire to do so, as set out in paragraphs 38 to 42 below. In total, 22 bodies have now signed the Concordat or agreed to do so. A full list of them is contained in **Appendix 2**.
19. Acceptance of the Concordat committed its signatories to adopting the Principles of Good Regulation, referred to in paragraph 6 above, which were developed by the BRTF and are now articulated and promoted by the Better Regulation Commission and the Better Regulation Executive. This forms part of the new Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform. The principles were stated within the Concordat as follows:

"Good Regulation is proportionate, consistent, transparent, targeted and accountable. Best practice in management and governance within autonomous higher education institutions is to be encouraged and supported. Unnecessary burdens from external bureaucracy and regulation should be reduced."

The Concordat embraces a range of activities covering regulation, data collection and quality assurance. Annexes provided by each of the signatories provide details

of the specific actions they have pledged to take in pursuit of these principles, within their own areas of responsibility.

20. Although the regulatory bodies that have most impact on the work of universities, including the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education and the Higher Education Statistics Agency are already signatories to the Concordat, there are many other bodies that place demands upon universities and colleges or seek to influence them in some way. This is particularly true of professional bodies. HERRG has therefore sought to identify all the professional, statutory and regulatory bodies operating in the HE sector, other than those that have already signed the Concordat. A list of those identified so far is contained in **Appendix 3**. There are more than 75 different organisations listed, but the Group is well aware that this list is not complete.
21. In deciding how best to focus efforts on developing the Concordat, HERRG has therefore concentrated on bodies that are especially influential, or especially significant in terms of their impact within the sector. Professional bodies involved in healthcare and related disciplines fall into the latter category and there have been several discussions with such bodies. There have also been discussions within the Group about the role of the professional and statutory regulatory bodies in engineering and architecture.
22. The issues raised by the engagement of professional bodies with higher education are complex and have occupied much of my attention, and that of other Group members, throughout the year. On the one hand, many universities derive benefit from their contacts with the professions and senior academics are often also senior figures within their professional bodies. These bodies may have long-standing engagement in university education and training, sometimes enshrined in a Royal Charter, and the largest professional bodies also have a global reach. Their accreditation of courses provided by overseas universities has historically been important in the promotion of British culture, values and professional expertise internationally and continues to be so. As such, there is an economic importance to the continuing role of some of them in accrediting provision within the sector.
23. Moreover, professional bodies have a legitimate interest in the way in which universities prepare students for entry to the professions and students and potential students gain comfort from the accreditation of university courses by the relevant professional bodies. Because of this, universities use such accreditation in promotional material and some would also admit that it would be extremely difficult to recruit to the relevant courses without it. Often, universities also value the feedback they receive from professional bodies about how their courses compare with those provided by other institutions.
24. But in many discussions with senior figures within the HE sector concerns have nevertheless been expressed to me about inconsistencies in the approach taken by different professional bodies, inappropriate behaviour on the part of some of them, and occasional duplication between their role and that of statutory regulators.

25. Government is clearly entitled to prefer independent statutory regulation to what members of the public might regard as self-interested regulation by professional bodies. And there is an argument that as the nature of some of our professions changes, through advances in technology and the development of new industries and professions, the continuation of regulation based on the current narrowly defined professional disciplines may prove a barrier to future economic progress rather the driver of it that it has proved to be in the past.
26. There is also some anecdotal evidence that in the actual exercise of their regulatory functions some professional bodies are excessively prescriptive and inflexible. For example, this concern featured strongly in the presentation to the Concordat workshop in May 2007 which was delivered on behalf of UUK by Professor David Rhind CBE, FRS.
27. Rather than behaving as disinterested bodies seeking to ensure the protection of the public and to promote the reputation of the profession, on occasions some, but by no means all, professional bodies appear to be acting primarily on behalf of, and seeking to promote the narrow interests of, their members. Some seek to second guess the quality assurance arrangements that exist within demonstrably well run universities or, for example, to stipulate requirements about library provision and staff ratios that go beyond their legitimate interest in course content. At one HERRG meeting it was reported that a representative of a professional body had claimed at a meeting chaired by a Minister that its relationship with the HE sector at faculty level was very important because the body concerned was “part of the armoury of the faculty, forcing universities to help release resources for areas in which they were interested”. This is not an appropriate role for a regulatory body.
28. Not all professional bodies behave in the same way, but this too raises wider questions. The constructive, proportionate approach adopted by some throws a sharper light on the negative, overly-prescriptive approach of others. It has been put to me several times, for example, that professional bodies in engineering and law are easier for universities to deal with than some of those involved in healthcare. And even within healthcare, it is claimed that there are significant differences of approach between the different regulatory bodies that cannot easily be explained by the nature of the professions they regulate. So while there are examples of good practice in healthcare regulation, these are not universal.
29. The confusion and duplication created by the overlapping roles of professional bodies and statutory regulators and the way in which professional bodies often perceive their role is causing very real frustration. And the professional bodies and statutory regulators are often just as frustrated as universities, not least because the international dimension to this confusion has real implications for the recruitment of overseas students to UK professions and the international portability of professional qualifications.
30. HERRG will therefore continue to encourage professional bodies and statutory regulators to work more closely together and will likewise continue to encourage

both types of body to adopt the Principles of Good Regulation and to become signatories to the Concordat. But there is a role for Ministers also in tackling these problems.

31. The powers and duties of statutory bodies need to support collaborative working and the Principles of Good Regulation. But new regulators have sometimes been created by government with inflexible duties and inadequate powers. For example, it is claimed by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) that the Architects Registration Board (ARB), which is a signatory to the Concordat, has no power to delegate any of its functions to the RIBA or to enter into an agreement with the RIBA on the form of its assessment, and that this is a barrier to effective collaboration between the two bodies. It is also more widely alleged that as there is no agreement about the reliance they should place on each other, the ARB and RIBA duplicate much of each other's work.
32. Of course, in respect of architecture, there will be other views about the nature and extent of any existing barriers to a more co-ordinated approach to statutory and professional regulation, and the best means of securing this. But such problems also exist in other professional areas.
33. Ministers also have a role to play in further rationalising the number of statutory regulators. In healthcare, for example, the HPC appears to have a clear, simple and consistent approach to the regulation of the many professions that come within its remit, which makes it easier for universities to deal with. But there are many other regulatory bodies operating within the health sector and there are health related professions that are not currently subject to statutory regulation. Government could also do more to align the approaches of the different statutory regulators that already exist.
34. In addition, although the Government does not control the activities of professional bodies it does have many contacts with them and the professions take notice of the signals they receive from Ministers. Some clearer messages from government about the need for professions to ensure that their interactions with universities are appropriate to their role and to seek to avoid duplication with the role of statutory bodies would also be helpful. It is particularly important for the Government to convey these clear messages when new statutory regulators are being created in areas that have previously been subject to professional regulation only.

Recommendation 2: In each sector where statutory regulation exists, Government should

- a) **ensure that the powers of the statutory regulators are sufficiently flexible to permit collaboration and that their duties include a duty to support the Principles of Good Regulation;**
- b) **wherever possible reduce the number of statutory regulators;**
- c) **where two or more regulators will continue to exist, work to secure greater consistency of approach between them; and**

d) when new regulators are established, be clear about the implications for any continuing regulation by professional bodies.

35. All of this also points to a case for a wider review of the regulatory role of professional bodies. In view of the power and influence of the professions, and the need to avoid detriment to the positive contribution they make to our economic success, such a review would best be led by Ministers, and perhaps steered by the Better Regulation Executive. The DIUS Gateways to the Professions Collaborative Forum might also need to have a role.
36. The terms of reference of a review of this kind might include the extent, where relevant, of the obligations imposed upon professional bodies by their Royal Charter and the scope for greater flexibility; the inter-relationship between different professions and the different statutory regulators and education providers; the degree of duplication and inconsistency; and the scope for greater collaboration.
37. It would also be important to take account of the international and European dimension to all of this, especially in the context of globalisation of both the professions and higher education - with many university courses now requiring a year of the course to be spent at an overseas institution, and with UK universities unable to admit students to some higher level courses because relevant first degrees obtained at overseas universities are not recognised by statutory regulators in the UK. HERRG would be ready to make a full contribution to such a review.

Recommendation 3: There should be a review, led by Ministers, of the regulatory role of professional bodies and the interaction between this and the role of statutory regulators.

38. We were particularly pleased to be able to announce at the Concordat Workshop on 16 May 2007 that the National Audit Office (NAO) had agreed to become a signatory to the Concordat. The role of the NAO in the regulation of higher education arises from its responsibility for the audit of central government departments and various statutory and non-statutory bodies. These include Hefce and other key Concordat signatories, the research councils and statutory regulators of the professions. The NAO is required to provide assurance that taxpayers' money voted by Parliament for particular purposes has been spent only on the purpose intended. For this reason, it is sometimes argued by those to whom the expenditure of funds approved by Parliament has been delegated, that highly detailed monitoring arrangements on bodies grant aided through those funds are needed to satisfy the requirements of the NAO.
39. In fact, the NAO adopts a sensible, proportionate approach to its work. Its decision to sign the HERRG Concordat is therefore as important for the message it sends to bodies that lie within its remit as for the actions that the NAO will take directly. In the higher education context, this is particularly relevant to the requirements placed on universities by research councils. HERRG has not conducted any detailed examination of regulatory burdens imposed by research councils, but concerns

about this have been raised with us in the past. Working with the NAO and Research Councils UK (RCUK), which is also a signatory to the Concordat, the Group will therefore seek to verify that the actual monitoring and reporting requirements featuring as part of the conditions of research council grants do not unnecessarily exceed the minimum requirements of universities that are needed by the research councils to meet their accountability to Parliament.

40. Following the Concordat Workshop, the Health Professions Council (HPC), the British Psychological Society (BPS), the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) and the Student Loan Company Ltd (SLC) also all agreed to become signatories. Discussions are currently in progress with each of them about the content of the annexes to the Concordat they will provide.
41. The first three of these bodies are particularly important because of the priority that HERRG has attached to healthcare regulation. And the first two are illustrative of the overlap that can exist between professional and statutory regulation. The professional courses that are regulated by the BPS will soon also come within the ambit of the HPC. It is important therefore that there is a good working relationship between the two bodies and a clear understanding of the responsibilities they both have to avoid spreading confusion or creating unnecessary duplication of the demands they place on universities and colleges.
42. In addition, the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) has now become a signatory to the Concordat and has provided an Annex which HERRG has been pleased to endorse.
43. The Group is also discussing the possibility of becoming a signatory to the Concordat with Foundation Degrees Forward, Lifelong Learning UK, the Higher Education Academy, and Skillset. To date these discussions have not progressed to the same extent as those with the bodies mentioned above.

Implementing the Concordat

44. Since accepting the chairmanship of HERRG last year, I have been greatly impressed by the impact the Higher Education Concordat has already had in promoting the better regulation of the sector. I am encouraged both by the progress to date in implementing the specific undertakings given by Concordat signatories and by the general enthusiasm they display for the better regulation agenda. This progress has been substantial and the Concordat signatories have in all cases adopted an intelligent, constructive approach.
45. In preparation for the Concordat Workshop in May 2007, each of the signatories was asked to provide an update of their annex to the Concordat. These updates collectively provide substantial evidence of how far the better regulation of HE has advanced since HERRG was first established, and they contain a great deal of useful information about the further work in progress. Not everything that has been done to implement the Concordat will yet be noticeable to universities and

HE colleges, but some of the projects that have been set in train should make a real difference when they come to fruition.

46. Although they are now more than three months old, the updates provided by Concordat signatories for the HERRG Workshop deserve a wider audience. They have therefore been included in this report at **Appendix 4**.
47. A particular priority for the Group has been monitoring the development of Hefce's 'Single Conversation' with institutions. Its Chief Executive, Professor David Eastwood, together with the Deputy Chief Executive, Steve Egan, attended the HERRG meeting on 11 January 2007 to discuss progress and there have been further discussions with Hefce since then.
48. Hefce has put back the sector-wide introduction of the Single Conversation by a year while it absorbs the lessons learned from pilots it undertook with a number of HEIs of different kinds. This is because some smaller institutions had found it difficult to meet Single Conversation deadlines and had felt it necessary to increase staffing to do so.
49. HERRG has previously given strong encouragement to Hefce to take forward the Single Conversation and despite the initial difficulties of implementation encountered in some of the pilots we remain convinced that this is the right way forward. In the circumstances, the slippage in its implementation is both understandable and acceptable. So we do not detect any evidence of Hefce wishing to rethink its commitment to the Single Conversation and would be alarmed if this were to happen. Instead we have encouraged Hefce to do more to articulate the benefits and to communicate them to the sector.
50. In HERRG's view, the real gains will be achieved from persuading other regulators to use the data collected through the Single Conversation, rather than pursuing their own information requests as at present. We will therefore encourage this in our separate discussions with other bodies.
51. Hefce has been working towards the better regulation of the higher education sector for a number of years. It has streamlined special funding. It has adopted a more targeted programme of audit visits, which have also been reduced in length. It has developed memoranda of understanding with several of the other key regulatory bodies operating in the sector. It is working closely with HESA, so that it is able to make maximum use of HESA data. It is seeking to develop a new approach to the formula funding of university teaching, in ways that are fully consultative but also reflect commitment to the BRTF Principles. And it has worked closely with UUK and Guild HE to improve the quality assurance framework. Its commitment to the implementation of the Concordat is therefore not in doubt.
52. HERRG has also been impressed by the extent to which the QAA has taken forward the undertakings it gave in signing the Concordat. Subject review has given way to institutional audit, saving the sector around £30m annually. There is better joint working with Ofsted, so that arrangements for the regulation of HE courses taught in FE colleges and of FE courses taught within HEIs are now clearer and more

streamlined. QAA has memoranda of understanding with a number of professional bodies and statutory regulators and is pursuing others. HERRG endorses this. And the Major Review of NHS-funded healthcare programmes the QAA undertook under contract from Skills for Health was in HERRG's view a model of how the responsibilities of one regulatory body might best be fulfilled by placing reliance on the work of another. This is notwithstanding the fact that the Major Review itself was in HERRG's view neither proportionate nor risk-based and the Group is pleased that it is to be discontinued.

53. HERRG believes that HESA is likewise making good progress. The Group remains very supportive of HESA's Higher Education Information Database for Institutions (HEIDI) and it was pleased to note that HEIDI was launched on schedule on 16 April 2007, with 112 out of 168 HEIs subscribing. HESA has also delivered on schedule its promise to introduce web-based data collection, and this has been well received by institutions. The revised student record has similarly been delivered as promised; and discussions with the Department of Health and others about the alignment of specifications for data collection across the NHS have begun.
54. But HERRG has heard a range of views from within the sector about whether more might be done to limit the data requirements placed upon universities. The view of the Group is that HESA already plays a useful role in this regard. It acts as a buffer between what might otherwise prove to be insatiable demands by policy makers for more and better data to inform decision making, and the limited ability of institutions to respond to requests of this kind. HESA prevents the proliferation of ad hoc requests direct from government to universities and it has made a positive contribution to promoting better data quality.
55. HESA also has a complex operating environment. Its remit is not confined to England so the agreement of all the funding councils is normally needed before dropping particular data requests. It also has statutory customers within government whose requirements are real and must be met. HESA argues that the data collection that universities most complain about is often a requirement imposed by these statutory customers.
56. HERRG decided to test this by asking its members to identify the data submitted to HESA from within their own institutions that was not required for any internal management purposes. In truth, this exercise revealed some but not a great deal of seemingly superfluous data collection. But the exercise did appear to confirm that statutory customers were the source of these requests. A particular area of concern for the Group was the requirement to submit data on term-time addresses and on the level of educational attainment of the parents of students or applicants for student places. We consider that the reliability of data in both cases is likely to be so poor that it would be unwise to base policy decisions on it. We therefore discussed this issue with the DIUS official responsible for this area of policy.
57. While HERRG fully understand that knowing more about the level of educational attainment of the parents of university students might help government

understand more about the success of its widening participation policies, the Group believes there are better ways of obtaining this information. Alternative approaches might serve both the key aims of producing more reliable data for use by Ministers and their officials, and reducing the burden imposed on universities in collecting it. HERRG was not convinced, for example, by the DIUS response that sampling would prove inadequate. The Group has therefore asked the Department to think again about this issue.

58. A particularly good example of an approach that fully embodies the principles of the Concordat is provided by the Training and Development Agency for Schools. It has a memorandum of understanding with Ofsted which conducts inspection of initial teacher training on its behalf and has reduced the average length of inspections by 40 per cent compared with the position five years ago. It places reliance on the work of Hefce to meet its accountability for funding. It has worked closely with HESA on the development of HEIDI, which is expected to save the average institution around £50,000 per year. And it is working with both Hefce and HESA on the Assessment of Burdens and Constraints Underlying Statistics (ABACUS) project.
59. HERRG has also been encouraged by the Ofsted response to the Concordat. There is general support within the sector for its new approach to the inspection of further education provision within HEIs. There is now better co-ordination with the QAA, especially over the timetabling of visits to institutions. And it is working closely with the QAA and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to ensure that documents produced by universities, such as plans, strategies and arrangements for quality assurance, that are needed for each of their respective assessments are shared between them, so that they are provided by institutions only once.
60. More detailed information about the progress made by these and other signatories to the Concordat can be seen in Appendix 4. This clearly confirms that signatories are delivering on their promises. There has been slippage in some areas, but only for good reasons. And in the areas of most significance, where slippage has occurred the position is likely to be retrieved.

Promoting better regulation generally

61. At each of its meetings, and in between them, members of HERRG have given consideration throughout the year to new regulatory burdens facing universities and HE colleges and to other matters within our remit. This is an important element of the work of the Group and has proved to be the most demanding of the time of Group members. HERRG's role in this respect includes the provision of advice and comment to other bodies, often in response to consultations issued by them.
62. Among the many matters that HERRG has considered and commented upon, or dealt with in other ways, during the course of the past year have been:

- The guidance issued to HEIs by the Disability Rights Commission on their new duties under the Disability Discrimination Act;
- The Government's response to the Oakleigh Consulting Review of the Leadership Foundation for Higher Education;
- The implications for HEIs of the Charities Act 2006;
- The Ofsted consultation on inspection of FE courses in HE institutions;
- The Hefce consultation on HE provision in Further Education colleges;
- The DfES Simplification Plan;
- The Department's consultation on a metrics-based research assessment and funding system to follow the Hefce Research Assessment Exercise;
- Hefce's Better Regulation Action Plan;
- The Robson Rhodes report for the Office of Science and Innovation on the implications of the move towards full economic costing for Research Council funding;
- The QAA consultation on its 'causes for concern' procedure;
- The possible implications of additional requirements for Criminal Records Bureau checks on staff as a result of the new Vetting and Barring Scheme;
- The BRE consultation on revising the Regulatory Impact Assessment;
- Changes to the student finance delivery system;
- Burgess Group consultations on degree classification and the credit framework;
- The LSC consultation on applying performance indicators to HEIs with substantial LSC funded provision;
- JISC's annual Stakeholders Survey;
- The role of the Higher Education Safety and Health Forum in tackling over-regulation of health and safety legislation;
- The potential implications for higher education of the Energy White Paper;
- The Research Councils UK approach to good research practice and the governance framework for research conduct; and
- The accounting implications for universities with substantial numbers of students from the United States of the requirements of the US Federal Student Aid scheme.

This list is far from comprehensive but it does provide a useful pointer to the scope of HERRG's work and the range of issues on which it is necessary to be able to provide, often at quite short notice, an authoritative voice on the better regulation of higher education. It is equally a pointer to the complexity of management roles within the sector. And it is also a sobering reminder for me of the limitations of my

own expertise in this field and of the debt that I owe to the members of HERRG and the institutions that employ them.

63. I have been reassured by the way in which others have responded to concerns expressed by HERRG. It is indicative of the extent to which the message about the need for better regulation is now being heard throughout the sector and by most of the regulatory bodies that deal with it, that when issues have been raised by the Group, it has normally been possible to resolve them relatively easily.
64. An example of this is the concern referred to at paragraph 9 above relating to possible overlap between the Leadership Foundation and Hefce's work on Leadership, Governance and Management. Hefce responded well to HERRG's concerns on this issue and the Group is satisfied that there is now no such overlap. The greatly improved co-operation between Hefce and the Leadership Foundation that now exists appears in part to be due to the positive follow-up of the Oakleigh Consulting report on the Leadership Foundation, to which HERRG had made a contribution.
65. Hefce has also responded well to concerns expressed by HERRG about race equality monitoring. Both Hefce and the institutions it funds have positive duties under the Race Relations Act. Hefce believes it cannot comply with its duty without monitoring what is happening in the sector, and hence without requiring substantial quantities of data to be supplied to it by all HEIs on an annual basis. HERRG's view is that annual data collection is unnecessary and that it is possible for Hefce to place greater reliance on the measures taken by universities in recognition of their own duties under the Act. HERRG members therefore believe that, while acknowledging the need for Hefce to undertake monitoring exercises of some kind, its data requirements are excessive.
66. Although this issue, in respect of which there are legitimately held genuine differences of view, remains unresolved, our discussions with Hefce have been constructive. The concerns expressed by HERRG are understood by Hefce, which is anxious to address them if it can. I am confident that if Hefce can be convinced that it is possible to reduce its data collection requirements while still complying fully with its duties under the Act, it will do so.
67. A major area of concern that it has not yet been possible to make real progress on is the emerging role of the Sector Skills Councils and the perceived overlap between their role and that of professional bodies and statutory regulators in relation to professional education. HERRG has discussed these issues with the Sector Skills Development Agency and with individual Sector Skills Councils. We are aware that Hefce is also in discussion with individual SSCs with a view to developing a better understanding of the HE sector among SSCs, streamlining data collection requirements, and collaborating on workforce development and new funding streams. But more needs to be done.
68. In part, the problem arises from the fact that the role of Sector Skills Councils is still developing, following publication of the Leitch review in December 2006. This is therefore an issue in which Ministers could contribute more to the better

regulation of the sector. HERRG does not doubt that SSCs have a role to play in articulating the future needs of employers. But it should be possible to do this in greater collaboration with the relevant professional bodies. And where it is necessary for SSCs to have a direct engagement with universities rather than acting through partnership with other bodies, that engagement needs to be proportionate and risk-based.

69. Ministers could therefore helpfully clarify their expectations of the engagement that SSCs should have with individual universities and HE colleges. In doing so, they might also address the respective roles of SSCs and professional bodies, as the increasing engagement of SSCs in the accreditation of university courses is adding to the confusion described at paragraphs 22 to 34 above. Greater clarity from Ministers might also help to dispel misunderstanding of the role that SSCs will have in relation to higher level qualifications. The objective of such clarification should be to encourage SSCs to place greater reliance on the work of others.

Recommendation 4: Ministers should clarify the role of Sector Skills Councils in accrediting higher education courses and their expectations of the relationship between SSCs and professional bodies.

70. There are particular issues in relation to the Sector Skills Council role within health. As the NHS is a dominant employer within this sector, and as the bulk of healthcare education within higher education is not funded through Hefce grant but instead commissioned directly by the NHS, the NHS has a role in relation to the articulation of employer requirements that is partially fulfilled by the SSC in other sectors. So universities have in the past found themselves dealing directly with Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs), and occasionally with more than one. In recognition of the potential for duplication this entails, Skills for Health, which is the relevant SSC, has been working with its partners on a new framework for quality assurance (EQuIP) to replace Major Review, which ceased at the end of 2006. EQuIP has been developed on behalf of SHAs and is envisaged as a replacement of existing SHA systems. Its introduction is strongly supported by the Department of Health and is expected to result in a more proportionate approach.
71. The Government is committed to the creation of a new Commission for Employment and Skills to take the place of the Sector Skills Development Agency. We expect the new body to adopt the Principles of Good Regulation and to become a signatory to the Higher Education Concordat. Ministers could also help in this regard.
72. An issue raised within HERRG on several occasions has been the new Home Office visa requirements and other potential barriers to entry for overseas students. The income of a growing number of universities is heavily dependent on the ability to attract overseas students and the Group is aware of concerns that for understandable reasons, the Government is tightening border controls in ways that will make it more difficult for overseas residents to enter the UK for the purposes of study, and may therefore act as a deterrent to some potentially well qualified students. We have discussed these issues with the Home Office's Border

and Immigration Agency. We have concluded, however, that in a risk-based approach to regulation it must be acknowledged that risks can increase as well as reduce, and that this is an area of public policy in which the risks to national security have seldom been greater.

73. HERRG has suggested to the Better Regulation Executive that there is a need for simplification of arrangements for redundancy payments to staff in the former polytechnics and colleges sector. The issue concerns HEIs that were incorporated under the Education Reform Act 1988 and whose staff were employed on local government terms and conditions. The BRE response to date has been helpful and HERRG's concerns are being discussed with the relevant government departments, although the matter remains unresolved at present.
74. We have also taken an interest in the work of the Delivery Partnership in improving the procedures for admission of students to universities. HERRG is supportive of the proposal that feedback should be provided to applicants. This is clearly good practice. But we were concerned that it might prove burdensome for academic staff, depending upon the degree of detail required. Members of the Group also had some detailed observations in relation to the adjustment period for the introduction of the new system. We therefore discussed these issues with Sir Graeme Davies, the Chair of the Delivery Partnership, at our July 2007 meeting. We were reassured by his response and commend the approach which the Delivery Partnership has taken.
75. Finally, we have reflected as a Group on the messages from the Concordat Workshop on 16 May 2007. The messages for HERRG are embodied in this report and in our ongoing programme of work. The key messages for government in relation to the role of professional bodies and Sector Skills Councils, and the need to exercise greater economy as a statutory customer of HESA have also been addressed above. But there were also messages for regulators.
76. Universities recognise that things have improved. But they expect even greater mutual dependence among the regulatory bodies they deal with and better synchronisation of their activities. They also believe that professional bodies could usefully develop a different approach to their role, potentially contributing more to the culture of HEIs and the strength of internal controls than is currently the case.
77. And finally, there were important messages for universities themselves. These are set out in more detail below.

The contribution of universities to better regulation

78. A recurring theme in the work of HERRG throughout the past year has been the contribution that universities themselves must make to the better regulation of the sector.

79. Universities need to be more challenging of the matters that cause them concern, including the role of some professional bodies. But they must at the same time be more able to provide specific examples of these concerns when called upon to do so. Without this, it is difficult for bodies such as HERRG to engage in meaningful dialogue with others in ways that are likely to change behaviours. And the sector has at times been slow in responding to requests to support the work of HERRG in this way.
80. In arguing for a more risk-based approach to regulation, which HERRG has done and which universities support, universities must also acknowledge that their own actions will have a significant influence on perceptions of risk.
81. Regulatory bodies will feel less need to visit and inspect the providers of higher education if they feel able to place greater reliance on the data supplied by them and the quality assurance arrangements that apply within the provider bodies. This in turn requires that universities and HE colleges should maintain strong internal controls, including quality assurance arrangements and complaints handling, and should attach importance to assuring the quality of the data they produce.
82. Most vice-chancellors and chairs of university councils understand that their own decision making is enhanced by access to reliable, up to date information. But not all universities recognise the strategic importance of strengthening internal controls and assuring data quality. And regulators have told the Group that they are not confident in the ability of all institutions to demonstrate the same consistently high standards in these areas. For example, in some universities internal audit does not have the strength or influence that is typical of this function in other sectors.
83. These are important aspects of university governance. And although there is little doubt that the governance of higher education has improved over recent years and that positive work is being undertaken in this area by the Leadership Foundation, Hefce's Leadership, Governance and Management initiative, and the Committee of University Chairmen, HERRG believes that the focus on these issues needs to be maintained.
84. There are therefore matters that the CUC and UUK need to address together, and with renewed vigour, if university councils and senior managers within the sector are to exercise their responsibilities in ways that would be expected of directors of globally competitive business spending many millions of pounds.

Recommendation 5: As part of the sector's contribution to the better regulation of higher education, enabling regulators to place greater reliance on institutions' own structures and processes, universities should continue to attach importance to strengthening their internal controls and assuring their data quality.

Conclusion and recommendations

85. In conclusion, the Government's commitment to better regulation is having a positive impact on higher education. Considerable progress has been made. Some of this is already being felt and acknowledged as progress by those working within the sector; but there is substantial work under way which should lead to even greater recognition of improvement over time. The key regulatory bodies are fully committed to this agenda and are approaching it with energy, enthusiasm and imagination. And when HERRG has raised concerns about specific issues, either with government officials or with those involved in the regulation of the HE sector, we have generally (but not always) been reassured by the response.
86. But more needs to be done. Better regulation is an attitude of mind and a set of values. It is a mode of travel not a destination. So as long-felt irritations are dealt with, new challenges emerge.
87. In the course of the past year it has become apparent that real challenges exist in relation to clarifying, and perhaps where necessary modernising, the role that professional bodies should play in the regulation of higher education. There is an urgent need too for Ministers to be more specific about how they intend the functions of Sector Skills Councils to develop and how this will impact upon the respective roles of professional bodies and statutory regulators.
88. Mindful of these issues and of the need to maintain a continuing focus on better regulation if the real progress made to date is not to be placed at risk, I make the following recommendations to Ministers:
- 1: The support provided to HERRG by DIUS should include some limited provision for more pro-active communications.*
- 2: In each sector where statutory regulation exists, Government should*
- a) ensure that the powers of the statutory regulators are sufficiently flexible to permit collaboration and that their duties include a duty to support the Principles of Good Regulation;*
 - b) wherever possible reduce the number of statutory regulators;*
 - c) where two or more regulators will continue to exist, work to secure greater consistency of approach between them; and*
 - d) when new regulators are established, be clear about the implications for any continuing regulation by professional bodies.*
- 3: There should be a review, led by Ministers, of the regulatory role of professional bodies and the interaction between this and the role of statutory regulators.*
- 4: Ministers should clarify the role of Sector Skills Councils in accrediting higher education courses and their expectations of the relationship between SSCs and professional bodies.*
89. But I believe the sector itself needs to demonstrate its recognition of the role that

HE institutions must play in promoting the work that HERRG was established to take forward. I therefore also put forward the following recommendation for consideration by university vice-chancellors and the chairmen of university councils.

5: As part of the sector's contribution to the better regulation of higher education, enabling regulators to place greater reliance on institutions' own structures and processes, universities should continue to attach importance to strengthening their internal controls and assuring their data quality.

90. Finally I must record that none of the progress noted in this report would have been possible without the strong support that exists within government for the efforts of HERRG and for better regulation more widely. And foremost in this regard has been the support of the Minister of State for Lifelong Learning, Further and Higher Education, Bill Rammell, to whom this report is addressed.
91. Members of HERRG are enormously grateful to Bill Rammell for his continued encouragement and for the active interest he has shown in our work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Bundred', written over a horizontal line.

Steve Bundred
Chair, HERRG

12 September 2007

Appendix 1

Membership of HERRG in 2006/07

92. The following persons were HERRG Members during the year to which this report relates. Philip Harding has since resigned his membership.

- Steve Bundred (Chair) - Chief Executive of the Audit Commission
- Jayne Aldridge - Head of Student Support Services, Thames Valley University
- David Allen, Registrar and Secretary, Exeter University
- Jonathan Baldwin – Registrar, University of Warwick
- Alan Clark – Administrative Secretary, University of Cambridge
- Karen Everett – Director of Finance, Southampton Solent University
- Philip Harding – Finance Director, University of Westminster
- Ron Haylock – Chairman of Council, University of Nottingham (1996-2003), Chairman of CUC (2000-2003)
- Steve Igoe - Pro Vice-Chancellor (Resources) Edge Hill University
- Sally Neocosmos - Registrar and Secretary, University of York
- Maxine Penlington – Secretary and Registrar, University of Central England
- Jeremy Rayner – Pro Dean for Learning and Teaching, Faculty of Biological Sciences, University of Leeds
- Kathryn Southworth – Vice Principal, Newman College of Higher Education

In addition, a representative of the Better Regulation Executive attends HERRG meetings as an observer.

93. Administrative and Secretarial support has been provided by John McLaughlin, Toby Sims, Sarah Rennie and Humphrey Fordham of DIUS. Andrew Battarbee the DIUS Deputy Director for Higher Education Sector Shape and Structure also attends HERRG meetings and the Group has benefited greatly from his advice.

94. I am grateful to all of those named above for their support.

Appendix 2

Current signatories to the Higher Education Concordat

95. The following bodies are those that are signatories to the HERRG Concordat, or have clearly indicated their willingness to become so, as at 1 September 2007:
- Architects Registration Board
 - British Psychological Society
 - Department of Health
 - Department for Innovation Universities and Skills
 - Health Professions Council
 - Higher Education Funding Council for England
 - Higher Education Statistics Agency
 - Information Centre for Health and Social Care
 - Institution of Engineering and Technology
 - Joint Information Systems Committee
 - Learning and Skills Council
 - Managing Information Across Partners
 - National Audit Office
 - Nursing and Midwifery Council
 - Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted)
 - Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
 - Research Councils UK
 - Skills for Business Network
 - Skills for Health
 - Student Loans Company Ltd
 - Training and Development Agency for Schools
 - Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
96. In some instances, discussions are still continuing about the detail of the Annexes to the Concordat that these bodies will provide. When finalised, these annexes will be available on the HERRG website.

Appendix 3

Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies Operating in the Higher Education Sector

97. The following is a list prepared for HERRG by DIUS officials of bodies, other than current Concordat signatories, that have a role in seeking to exert influence over the way in which universities are managed, the courses they provide, or the way in which they go about their teaching and/or research. In some instances, such as the statutory regulators or the sector skills councils, this influence derives from a duty imposed on the body concerned or on the HE sector by Parliament or by Ministers. In other instances universities are theoretically free to resist the influence of the bodies concerned, although there would often be considerable disadvantages to them in doing so. In many instances universities acknowledge that they derive value from their relationship with these bodies.

- Accounting Standards Board
- America's Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business
- Association of Accounting Technicians
- Association of Authorised Public Accountants
- Association of Chartered Certified Accountants
- Association of Clinical Scientists
- Association of Masters in Business Administration
- Association of Operating Department Practitioners
- Bar Council
- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy
- British Association for Occupational Therapy
- British Computer Society
- British Dental Association
- British Institute of Architectural Technology
- British Medical Association
- British Psychological Society
- British Sociological Association
- Broadcast Council for the Training of Journalists
- Chartered Institute of Building
- Chartered Institute of Environmental Health

- Chartered Institute of Landscape
- Chartered Institute of Management Accountants
- Chartered Institute of Marketing
- Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development
- Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy
- Chartered Institute of Physiotherapy
- Chartered Insurance Institute
- Cogent
- College of Occupational Therapists
- ConstructionSkills
- Creative & Cultural Skills
- Degree Awarding Body for Chartered Engineers
- Direct Marketing Society
- Engineering Council UK
- e-skills UK
- European Quality Improvement System
- Financial Services Skills Council
- Foundation Degree Forward
- General Chiropractic Council
- General Dental Council
- General Optical Council
- General Osteopathic Council
- General Social Care Council
- General Teaching Council for England
- Higher Education Academy
- Healthcare Concordat Information Working Group
- Health Professions Council
- Institute of Actuaries
- Institute of Chartered Accountants In England and Wales
- Institute of Chemical Engineers
- Institution of Civil Engineers

- Institute of Management
- Institute of Physics
- JISC
- Joint Board for Accounting Education
- Lifelong Learning UK
- Market Research Society
- National Council for the Training of Journalists
- National Institute for Clinical Excellence
- National Youth Agency
- Nursing and Midwifery Council
- Quality Management Institute
- Registration Council for Clinical Physiologists
- Royal Academy of Engineering
- Royal College of General Practitioners
- Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists
- Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
- Royal Economic Society
- Royal Institute of British Architects
- Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors
- Royal Pharmaceutical Society
- Royal Society of Chemistry
- Royal Statistical Society
- Royal Town Planning Institute
- SEMTA
- Skillfast-UK
- Skills for Care and Development
- Skills for Justice
- Skillset
- The Solicitors Regulation Authority

98. It is far from likely that this is a complete list. In preparing its October 2003 report *Independent Regulators* the Better Regulation Taskforce attempted to identify all

the independent regulators including Non-Ministerial Departments and professional bodies. It was able to list over 100 but reported that it could not identify them all. HERRG's experience has been similar, simply in relation to those bodies impacting upon a single sector. This is an indication of the complexity involved in rationalising the regulation of higher education.

Appendix 4

MAY 2007 UPDATE OF THE CONCORDAT

on quality assurance arrangements and data collection for higher education institutions in England

99. Each organisation which signed the Concordat produced an Annex committing themselves to its principles and setting out where their organisation sat in trying to meet them, the obstacles to progress and what steps they would take to address these obstacles. As part of their annual review, the signatories have now reported on progress and have set out their proposals for further simplification in the coming years. These Annexes will form the basis of discussion at the workshop on 16 May 2007 and are set out below.

DfES	Department for Education and Skills	P27
DH	Department of Health	P29
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council for England	P30
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education	P36
TDA	Training and Development Agency for Schools	P40
Ofsted	Ofsted	P44
LSC	Learning Skills Council	P47
RCUK	Research Councils UK	P50
Skills for Health	Skills for Health	P54
The Information Centre	The Information Centre for health and social care	P60
SfBn	Skills for Business network	P62
MIAP	Managing Information Across Partners	P64
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency	P68
ARB	Architects Registration Board	P72
IET	The Institution of Engineering and Technology	P75

Department for Education and Skills Annex to the Higher Education Concordat, updated for May 2007

Current position

1. Key points of our strategy for HE are: increased public funding for teaching and research, reflecting the contribution of HE to the economy and society; asking graduates (where they can afford it) to bear more of the costs of HE provision; an emphasis on the diversity of contemporary HE, with encouragement for institutions to play to their strengths; developing the contribution of HE to the nation's higher skills needs; widening participation in HE for students from underrepresented backgrounds; and boosting the international status of our HE.
2. The Department has very few direct interactions with HE institutions, so the primary focus for us as a signatory is in our role of strategic leadership of the system – ensuring that the Concordat and deregulation principles are understood and embraced across HE.
3. At the time that the Concordat was launched, it seemed likely that there would be a new chair of HERRG, along with a “Concordat Czar”, who would hold signatories to account for performance against the commitments made in their annexes, and approving updated annexes for future years. However, there was concern that separating HERRG from the Concordat could lead to confusion within the sector. When approached about chairing HERRG, Steve Bundred echoed this concern, and volunteered to chair HERRG, with the job of holding signatories to account being part of his role.
4. In addition, the original HERRG came to the end of its allotted 2 year lifespan in summer 2006. Ministers agreed that HERRG should be reconstituted for a further two years, continuing as a gatekeeper group with the ability to review and influence developments that might impact on the HE sector. The reconstituted group included some members of the original HERRG, along with a number of high quality new additions, including the chairs of both AHUA and BUFDG.
5. DfES continues to provide secretariat and funding support for HERRG. The Deputy Director for HE Shape and Structure attends HERRG meetings, and provides advice and support to the chair and secretariat between meetings.
- 6. Future developments**
7. DfES will continue to provide secretariat support and senior-level advice, whilst respecting the independent nature of HERRG. **Ongoing.**
8. When providing advice to Ministers, DfES officials will continue to screen policy proposals for potential bureaucratic burden. **Ongoing.**
9. DfES will continue to ensure that any data collected by HESA on behalf of the

Department is limited to what is needed for policy development purposes.

Ongoing.

10. DfES will discuss with HESA a support service for PQ responses, updating our current memorandum of understanding with HESA to a new-style contract parallel to the contracts with funding bodies. **Contract fully agreed by December 2007**
11. DfES will discuss with HESA and HEFCE the role of HESA in respect of its statutory customers, with a view to ensuring unnecessary demands on HEIs are identified and abolished and necessary requirements make the minimum possible demands on institutions. **Ongoing**
12. DfES will continue to ensure its NDPBs and the other bodies it funds minimise the bureaucratic burdens they place on universities and colleges through its use of annual remit letters, key performance indicators and discussions with the bodies about their strategic and business plans. **Ongoing**
13. DfES will continue to actively support the MIAP process and, in particular, will ensure that its HE Directorate is fully engaged and helps to promote the appropriate use of MIAP across universities and colleges. **Agreement with MIAP SRO by September**
14. DfES is establishing an Information Standards Board involving our major partners within the education and children's services sector. This will provide effective governance of information standards on a system-wide basis across the whole of the sector. **The Board will be operating by the end of 2007**

The Department of Health Annex to the Higher Education Concordat, updated for May 2007

1. The Department of Health continues to support the HERRG Concordat.
2. We do not collect data directly from higher education institutions, we do use information collected by the Information Centre for Health and Social Care from UCAS and HESA to inform policy decisions. It is also used to inform workforce planning and the commissioning of courses in higher education. The streamlining of data collection processes will be a positive contribution.
3. *Skills for Health* lead on the development of new partnership-based arrangements for quality assuring health care education as part of the Service Level Agreement with the Department. We are content that the principles applied by *Skills for Health* are compatible with HERRG's approach to better regulation.
4. HERRG reviewed the Department's progress in taking forward its commitments under the Concordat in January 2007, and expressed itself content.
5. There are arrangements in place to liaise with *Skills for Health* on a regular basis. There is also Department of Health representation at meetings which are informing the development of a Quality Assurance framework for healthcare education. We regard the identification of key principles which have been incorporated into the Multi Professional Education and Training (MPET) contract framework for use by Strategic Health Authorities as good progress.
6. The Department of Health will provide ongoing commitment and involvement throughout the development, consultation and implementation period as required in *Skills for Health's* action plan and timetable.

HEFCE Annex to the Higher Education Concordat, updated for May 2007

Update: Action we have taken

1. We have
 - published the results of the consultation on T-funding
 - developed TRAC for teaching in collaboration with institutions
 - consulted on the application of TRAC principles to costing and the move from premiums to allocations. There will be a report on this to the December meeting of the HEFCE Board.
 - worked with HESA so they are able to incorporate our web-based HESA-HESES data reconciliation as part of their data validation processes.
 - used HESA data as the basis for additional funding allocations for science
2. We established a review group with UUK and Guild HE to report on costs and potential improvements to the quality assurance framework, including
 - QAA institutional audit (Phase 1) – completed 2005
 - Teaching Quality Information and the National Student Survey (Phase 2) – completed 2006, proposals out for consultation at present include removal of requirement for institutions to provide summaries of external examiners reports on the TQI website
 - Collaborative audit (Phase 3) – due to report December 2007

Current Position

3. Our vision is that institutions should have such excellent governance and management processes that they can easily demonstrate to their stakeholders, including HEFCE, proper accountability for the use of funds. This vision has been embodied in the HEFCE Strategic Plan 2006-11 which explains that we aim to maintain institutional autonomy and identify policies and funding methods which are not burdensome, but will help secure the long term sustainability, vitality and excellence of higher education.
4. The Strategic Plan is consistent in its approach to this throughout. However, one of the Strategic Aims, 'Sustaining a high quality HE sector', is particularly pertinent and includes a key performance target 'to provide annual assurance to Parliament that internal control, corporate governance and risk management in the sector are effective, and that value for money is being achieved. To do this while reducing the cost of accountability by 20 per cent between 2004 and 2007, and by a further 10 per cent by 2011'.
5. On data collection, we believe we should wherever possible, trap data error and

embed the data validation rules within the HESA data collection process before data is finally submitted. We have also initiated a project with HESA and the TDA to examine how institutions go about making their returns to HESA and other bodies with a view to identifying and sharing good practice and enabling us to better understand how burdens are created.

6. HEFCE currently rely on HESA as far as possible for data collection. Two key areas where we seek data directly are the HESES return and financial information (eg final accounts). HEFCE have recently consulted with institutions on making more use of HESA data for funding purposes, in place of HESES. However, we did not receive clear support for this proposal. We will nevertheless continue to look for ways in which we can minimise the data burdens on institutions. One example of this is the work which we have been doing with Her Majesty's Treasury to rationalise the system of data collection and maintenance for Exchequer Interests.
7. Common definitions for post compulsory education data have been developed by the Management Information Across Partners Group to enable data sharing and are being adopted in HE by HESA and UCAS. The DfES Information Standards Board will be fully established by the end of 2007 to oversee data definitions across the whole of education in a gatekeeper role. UCAS is working with MIAP in their development of the Learner Registration Service incorporating the assignment of a Universal Learner Number (ULN). The intention is the ULN will replace the plethora of learner numbers used by the education and training sector, enabling data sharing. For data sharing arrangements to be effective, however, it would be helpful for all institutions to use this universal student identifier. It is hoped that services for students might also be improved as a result.
8. Whenever possible we seek to use administrative data collected by other bodies rather than collect data from institutions even if this does not exactly meet our needs. This relies upon other agencies willingly sharing their data with us and issues around data protection, confidentiality, commercial interests and the use to which the data is put can inhibit this. The data concordat deals primarily with the use of HESA data, but DfES and other agencies such as UCAS and LSC hold individual level data which is not captured on the HESA return but can be used to enhance its value and utility for research and policy analysis. The MIAP initiative may ultimately provide a framework for effective data sharing covering the whole of post-compulsory education, but it will be some time before these benefits are realised.
9. In respect of quality assurance, we place reliance on the work of the QAA which we commission.

Further Changes

10. In respect of the use of data, HEFCE keeps the funding methodology under review. Over time, and subject to consultation with the sector, it is our intention to move the basis of the funding calculation increasingly from HESES data to HESA data, although the sector has indicated that it is not yet ready for funding to be driven

substantially from HESA data. Whatever we do, it will still be necessary to collect in year aggregate data on student numbers for DfES planning purposes. These will be few and simple and would in any case be needed internally by any well managed institution.

11. In respect of inspection, we hope that other funding agencies may be able to place reliance on the work which the QAA undertakes, in line with this concordat. We have been discussing this with other agencies and have the support of the NAO to try to achieve this. HEFCE and the QAA are also developing a revised approach to quality assurance of HE in FE, which will require further data sharing with other key organisations.

Issues and Obstacles

12. The different funding bodies in the UK have differing requirements which may add to the complexity of HESA data.
13. HESES is currently the only source of in-year data. A record of in-year activity will always be required for planning, monitoring and budgeting purposes. The DfES requires this information in order to plan future growth and budget for student support.
14. It is likely that some information will continue to be collected directly by HEFCE, for example Annual Monitoring Statement information. However, as we continue to pursue better regulation, we are continuing to look at ways of reducing and simplifying our requirement, using exception reporting wherever we can.
15. In the early stages of development of the Higher Education Business and Community Interaction survey, HEFCE have collected the data. Once the data requirements stabilise, it is our intention to hand this function over to HESA. The changing policy environment, and in particular the funding related elements will determine when this can be done.
16. For Access to Learning monitoring returns we use HESA data as much as possible but it is unlikely that HESA would collect all this data on our behalf because it is very specific to the administrative and regulatory framework set by the DfES on a year by year basis. It serves no purpose other than to monitor the distribution of these funds for English institutions including FE colleges and it is simply more efficient for HEFCE to collect this data directly rather than go through HESA.
17. The most difficult issue in respect of quality assurance is to obtain the acceptance of the various professional bodies to the concordat approach.

Timescales expected

18. The HESA record has been reviewed for the 2007-08 student return. The data for 2007-08 is likely to be available in December 2008. Although the sector did not support our plan to base teaching funding solely on HESA data, we have nevertheless sought to ensure that any changed data requirements arising from

the review of our teaching funding method (particularly in relation to the activity completed by students who do not complete their full study intentions) can be collected through the HESA record. The 2007-08 HESA data will be available to inform funding for 2009-10.

19. It is our intention to pursue discussions with HESA to test out the viability of transferring the collection of HEBCI survey data to HESA for 2008-09. However the survey and dataset are still evolving and this is likely to be the earliest date by which policy issues will be settled and the transfer practical.
20. During 2005-06, following the recommendations of the first phase of the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF review), a revised institutional audit method was developed by the QAA in consultation with HEFCE and the sector. This was published in 2006 and will be used between academic year 2006-07 and academic year 2010-11.
21. The institutional audit method replaced the previous subject review method. The costs of the subject review to the sector were about £30m annually. As a 'whole institution' method, institutional audit examines the effectiveness of an institution's internal quality assurance structures and mechanisms and assumes that the institution uses these to ensure that its provision is of satisfactory quality.
22. This is less burdensome than the previous subject-level method, and means that an HEI receives only one visit during a six-year cycle, rather than several visits to different departments. The recent revisions have streamlined the audit process further; in particular, discipline audit trails, which were perceived to be over-burdensome, have been removed. The estimated costs of the revised QAF following the review, excluding TQI/NSS costs, would be £5m pa ie a saving of £25m pa.
23. During 2006, HEFCE and the QAA discussed the development of a new method of assuring the quality of HE in FE colleges, Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (IQER). A draft handbook for this new method was published for consultation with the sector and changes made accordingly. A pilot phase of the new method is currently underway and, following a satisfactory evaluation and the agreement of the sector, the full method will be in use from academic year 2007-08.
24. Like institutional audit, IQER focuses on a whole-institution approach to HE rather than separate subjects, and thus represents the same benefits in terms of lessening burden. The method also gives HE in FECs greater parity with that delivered in HEIs, as IQER judgements are intended to be analogous to those of institutional audit.
25. In 2006, the second phase of the QAF review evaluated the Teaching Quality Information (TQI) and National Student Survey (NSS) initiatives. This review made a number of recommendations which will improve these components of the QAF and which will be implemented during 2007-08. The recommendations aim to make the TQI site more useful to its target audience of potential students.

26. A key recommendation was that the qualitative information provided on the site, which users did not find useful, should be removed. This reduces the burden on HEIs of providing this information; instead, HEIs are recommended to ensure that relevant information which they are already producing should be made publicly available. This is estimated to have roughly halved the cost of TQI/NSS resulting in a saving of around £3.5m pa.
27. The third phase of the QAF review will commence in June 2007. This phase will review the impacts, benefits and costs of reviews of collaborative arrangements on higher education institutions. The QAF review group will report its outcomes in early 2008.

Timescale for Review

28. We intend to review the Concordat annually.

Comments and Complaints

29. We welcome comments from any who may have constructive suggestions to offer. If you have any comments please contact: p.moynihan@hefce.ac.uk or HERRG.sec@dfes.gsi.gov.uk
30. We recognise that sometimes criticism or complaint may be appropriate. Hefce does operate a formal complaints procedure. Full details can be found at <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/aboutus/complain/council.htm>).

Action Plan

	Action	Responsible	Timescale
1.	Publish results of second consultation on T-funding	Chris Taylor and Anna Sherratt	June 2007
2.	Collect 2006-07 TRAC data for teaching to inform a review of price groups and their weightings.	Anna Sherratt and Heather Williams	February 2008
3.	QAF Review Group established with Universities UK and Guild HE to start Phase 3 of its work, assessing the impact of reviews of collaborative arrangements on higher education institutions.	Emma Creasey	Work to begin in June 2007 ; QAFRG to report in early 2008 .
4.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new accountability framework is due to be announced in May 2007 following the single conversation. The single conversation will apply in December 2008 for the HEI financial year August 2007 to July 2008. 	Paul Greaves Paul Greaves	New accountability framework in respect of HEI financial year August 2007- July 2008: from December 2008

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The single conversation will be complemented by the HEFCE's new style Assurance review which is a one day audit visit replacing the three day exercise undertaken from 2002-03 to 2006-07. The form of the capital investment framework will be finalised and announced in June 2007; and will operate for capital funding from April 2008. The HEFCE is committed to an independent re-assessment of the cost of the accountability burden to reflect the various developments in recent years. Given the timescale for the new accountability framework this will not be undertaken until 2008-09.. 	<p>Ian Lewis</p> <p>Paul Greaves</p>	<p>October 2007</p> <p>March 2008</p> <p>Final proposals to be agreed by HEFCE Audit Committee March 2008</p>
5.	Publish a report from the data efficiency and burdens project and commence implementation of any recommendations	Ian Parry	<p>April 2008</p> <p>August 2008</p>
6.	With HMT and sector agreement, rationalise the system of data collection and maintenance for Exchequer Interests	Ian Parry	Exchequer Interest balances as at 1 August 2006 to be agreed with each HEI by 31 July 2007.
7.	Transfer data collection for the Higher Education Business and Community Interaction survey to HESA	Alice Frost	2008-09 at the earliest

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education Annex to the Higher Education Concordat, updated for May 2007

Introduction

1. QAA is proud to be a signatory to the HERRG Concordat and remains fully committed to its implementation. We will continue to play a full part in the rationalisation of higher education regulation in relation to both quality assurance and data collection. We have incorporated this aim as one of our five strategic themes in our Strategic Plan 2006-11.
2. We have been working hard to implement the actions we outlined in our Annex to the Concordat since its publication in May 2006. We also made a commitment to review our Annex by May 2007.
3. This new action plan sets out our commitments under the Concordat for the next year.

Working with HEFCE, QAFRG and DfES

4. We have had continuing discussions with the Quality Assurance Framework Review Group (QAFRG), representing our funders (funding councils and institutional representative bodies), about the review methods we use.
5. During 2006-07 we undertook a programme of 30 audits of HEIs' collaborative provision. These produced information and evidence which will provide a sound foundation for a more integrated approach in future, possibly removing the need for separate audits of all but the largest and most complex collaborative arrangements. QAA envisages that information gained through Institutional audit in HEIs, Integrated quality and enhancement review (IQER) of higher education in Further education colleges, and a revised approach to the quality assurance of overseas provision (see below), may well be sufficient for the large majority of institutions. This area of quality assurance is currently under review by QAFRG.
6. In 2005-06 QAA was asked by Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to carry out a one off review of postgraduate research degree programmes in England and Northern Ireland. The outcome of the review indicated that there were generally good internal quality assurance arrangements, and that these provided a good basis for integrating this area of an institution's provision within the overall Institutional audit process. .
7. By developing and adapting our existing processes to accommodate a wider range of quality assurance requirements and so serve multiple purposes, QAA seeks to achieve both better and less regulation of the higher education sector.
8. This aim also underpins our other work commissioned by HEFCE. In relation to

Foundation Degrees, we have shared data which contributed to the issues paper *Foundation degrees Key statistics 2001-02 to 2006-07* – and so avoided duplicate collection. A similar exchange has taken place with Foundation Degrees Forward which will result in a publication later in 2007. QAA has been asked by HEFCE to report periodically on Foundation Degrees, drawing on the evidence base from Institutional audit and Integrated Quality Enhancement Review (IQER). Again, this is an example of our policy of adapting existing processes to serve multiple purposes.

9. QAA is currently reviewing the effectiveness of the way it serves UK HEIs as providers of higher education in other countries. To this end it is starting a dialogue to see if there is support in the sector and more widely for a voluntary and self-financing Trans-national Certification Scheme (TNCS) that would certify the soundness and reliability of an institution as a provider of high quality trans-national higher education. Implementation of TCNS would mean that we would end the overseas audit programme that we have run each year since 1997 and which is now offering diminishing returns to participants. TCNS would be both more comprehensive (in that we would expect that most providers would wish to have their provision certified) and also more selective and proportionate (in that those institutions that did not provide education overseas would not have to contribute to the costs of an overseas audit programme).
10. Both the revised Institutional audit and IQER methods underwent a Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) as part of their development. IQER has been purpose built for the review of Higher Education in Further Education, but draws on the principles of Institutional audit to promote synchronicity between methods and thereby creating better regulation. The pilot of IQER will be evaluated independently, and modified as a result to ensure fitness for purpose and a proportionate level of demand on the FE colleges (summer and autumn of 2007). We are also working with HEFCE to identify what data they can share with us to inform planning for the IQER reviews which would otherwise have to be provided by institutions (summer 2007).
11. With the passing of new legislation QAA is likely to be asked by DfES to develop criteria that would allow FE colleges to be granted the powers to award Foundation Degrees (FDAP). For this purpose we will build on our existing DAP procedures and ensure that the question of better regulation is to the fore.

Working with other regulators

12. We have made significant progress in the last year in working more closely with Ofsted, both in the exchange of information and scheduling of review activity. The Ofsted-QAA joint planning group will continue to meet on a regular basis (approximately four times per year) throughout the coming year. This has been an invaluable mechanism, as we jointly seek to develop better regulation for HE in FE, FE in HE (arrangements now agreed), Initial Teaching Training (ITT) and HE in schools.

13. We will continue to work with increasing effectiveness with the Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) as we have done over the past year. We intend to pursue a joint pilot project in one HEI during the autumn of 2007, in an attempt to align ITT inspection and QAA Institution audit, as a basis for development of further reduction of regulatory demand.
14. In addition to the existing agreements we have with a number of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory bodies (PSRBs), we intended to pursue the establishment of Memoranda of Understanding with a further five PSRBs by July 2008. This action is intended to generate a 'critical' mass of relationships with these bodies and so enable us to use our links as a whole to increase further information-sharing and 'event' co-ordination and so create a more rational regulation system. Progress in operational developments with PSRBs has proved difficult without sufficient numbers to generate a critical mass.
15. Except for our continuing work with the General Osteopathic Council, QAA is no longer directly involved with the quality assurance of healthcare education. As the lead UK body for quality assurance in higher education, we do, however, wish to maintain our relationships with relevant organisations in health care education and we will continue to be involved in the Healthcare Concordat as an associate signatory to the extent possible. The QAA Major Review of NHS-funded healthcare programmes represented a substantial improvement on the heterogeneous inspection regime which pre-dated it. We are concerned that any new system should not retreat from the gains made in the past three years in this area.

Managing the impact of European and international developments

16. One of QAA's growing roles is to act as a buffer between regulatory requirements and developments at an International and European level, and the regulatory framework in the UK.
17. In the next year, at the request of DfES, QAA will seek to undertake the self-certification of *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, as part of the Bologna process, and so verify that the national higher education framework is compatible with that of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). An effective articulation between the two frameworks should ensure that no additional regulatory burden is placed on institutions.
18. QAA will continue to work closely with the European Association for Quality Assurance for Higher Education (ENQA) to ensure that the UK continues to have a voice in developments at the European level. QAA is also intending, during the course of 2008, to undergo a review against the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (European Standards and Guidelines or ESG), and so fulfil this condition of its membership of ENQA. The review will assess QAA against the European standards expected of quality assurance agencies.
19. With the continuing development of a points-based migration system in the UK, QAA is working with the Home Office to ensure that, so far as is possible, no extra

regulatory requirements are imposed on publicly-funded HEIs seeking to attract international students.

Timetable

Action	Target dates
<p>Working with HEFCE, QAFRG and DfES</p> <p>Revised approach to the quality assurance of collaborative provision</p> <p>Independent evaluation of IQER and revision of method</p> <p>Information relevant to IQER planning received from HEFCE</p> <p>New criteria for the granting of degree awarding powers for Foundation Degrees (FDAP) to FECs</p>	<p>Continuing throughout 2006-08</p> <p>Summer/Autumn 2007</p> <p>Summer 2007</p> <p>December 2007</p>
<p>Working with other regulators</p> <p>Ofsted-QAA joint planning group</p> <p>ITT pilot project</p> <p>Five Memoranda of Understanding in place with PSRBs</p> <p>QAA action plan for work with PSRBs</p>	<p>Continuing throughout 2007-08</p> <p>Autumn 2007</p> <p>Initial conversations by December 2007</p> <p>Memoranda in place by July 2008</p> <p>July 2008</p>
<p>Managing the impact of European and international developments</p> <p><i>Self-certification of The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland</i></p> <p>ENQA member review of QAA</p> <p>Contribution to the development of a points based migration system in the UK</p>	<p>November 2008</p> <p>Continuing throughout 2008</p> <p>Ongoing 2007-09</p>

TDA Annex to the Higher Education Concordat, updated for May 2007

1. TDA is pleased that HERRG recognises our achievements to date in reducing burdens on the higher education sector. In 2007-08 we will take a number of steps to ensure that our quality assurance, funding, data and communications requirements are modified further to minimise burdens on HEIs.

Quality Assurance

2. The inspection of all initial teacher training (ITT) providers in England is conducted by Ofsted and that this impacts on 74 HEIs. The TDA has a memorandum of agreement with Ofsted that details the way in which they conduct ITT inspection to meet our needs. We require robust evidence on the quality of this vocational training. However, all our thinking on inspection is underpinned by the consideration that it must be proportionate, accountable, consistent, transparent and targeted.
3. We have made many changes to inspection over recent years, including the changes to short inspections and single secondary inspection. This reflected our wish to focus inspection on the providers most at risk of delivering lower quality provision. It meant that, on average, ITT providers are visited by inspectors for 40 per cent fewer days than five years ago. In 2007-08, we will consider further the ways by which assessment of institutional risk can be built into our inspection system, to reduce the volume of material considered by Ofsted.
4. We are committed to ensuring that institutions have their own robust self-evaluation procedures. We are working to ensure that providers do not 'gold plate' these. Following the 2005 DfES and Quality Assurance Framework Review Group's report "The Costs and Benefits of External Review of Quality Assurance in Higher Education", we are working with QAA to identify the potential for ITT inspection to consider evidence generated under institution's own self-audit for QAA. However, in all this, we must remember that the core objective of ITT – to ensure the quality of teacher training – is distinctly different from the aim to improve the management of the quality of higher education.

Funding and assurance processes

5. In 2006-07 we worked closely with Hefce on the accountability process for ITT funding. We are happy to continue to use Hefce's expertise wherever possible, whilst remembering we must maintain our own need to be accountable for public money.
6. We have been an active participant in Hefce's work to consider the accountability requirements and the burden they place on HEIs. We meet with Hefce on a termly basis to share information. This helps reduce the need for the TDA to contact the sector. One significant change in 2006-07 was that lead accounting officer

responsibility transferred from TDA to Hefce for those institutions where the TDA provides the majority of institutional funding. This means that Hefce will lead on ways in which to reduce the burden of funding, and accountability for it in the sector.

7. The TDA has a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Hefce that sets out a framework by which Hefce and the TDA can help meet their respective accountability responsibilities. The MOU is based on the principles of better regulation in that we wish to minimise the accountability burden placed upon the HE sector. The scope of the MOU primarily covers funding information, audit and assurance information, risk management and non-compliance with the financial memorandum. In the year, we will develop a new MOU to take account of the evidence emerging from Hefce's accountability framework project.
8. We recognise that the way in which we make disbursements to HEIs can be improved. We are working to streamline internal processes so that our largest funding streams are all paid in the same way, at the same time. We aim to make one payment per month for ITT funding, minority ethnic recruitment work, plus, where appropriate, money for the student associate scheme and post-graduate professional development courses. We would also form a central, first point of call, for all funding enquiries. This centralisation will provide an improved level of service to our providers by offering them consistency in approach across all grant funding streams.
9. In addition, we have implemented a web-based financial package with the capability of electronic distribution of grant profiles and remittance advice. This provides potential to expedite payments and improve the ability of HEIs to manage information on TDA payments. We will liaise with the sector during 2007-08 with the view to moving to electronic distribution of such documents starting from 2008-09. We will also ask the sector to make their annual financial returns, including audited financial statements and trainee numbers, electronically from November 2007. This again will improve the flow of information to and from TDA. We will rely on institution's audited accounts to demonstrate HEIs expenditure in core funding streams, allowing us to remove the annual 'earmarked funding' exercise. This will save the sector duplicating similar activity.

Data

10. Again, we recognise that we can improve how we manage ITT information internally and with our partners.
11. We have aligned our collection dates for the profiles data with HESA and continue to work closely with them to ensure that there is one point of collection for student level data.
12. We will establish a team to make available key data sets for ITT providers, to aid their benchmarking and self evaluation activities. In effect this will be the equivalent of what schools receive to aid their inspection.

13. In 2006-07 we have been involved with the HESA managed Higher Education Information Database for Institutions (HEIDI) project. The aim of this is to implement a new web-based management information tool that will reduce the burden on HEIs of extracting and manipulating data for planning and reporting purposes. In its first year of operation HEIDI is expected to save participating institutions an average £45k each in staff time and in-house software development. TDA will provide data on ITT in England will enter into an agreement to provide data on an annual basis and seek to obtain as much information from this source as possible in the future.
14. We will run a joint project with GTCE to use HESA data collection processes to meet our census needs and GTCE's data needs. This work has arisen partly from the need to reduce the current burden of data collection on HEIs and partly due to the requirements for provisional registration. (From September 08 all ITT providers will be required to register their trainees with the GTCE before the trainee starts their ITT programme). In order to do this HEIs will need to provide some core data to the GTCE. Clearly it would be helpful if HESA data was used to the maximum potential in this process.
15. We will also work with Hefce and HESA on the Assessment of Burdens and Constraints Underlying Statistics (ABACUS) project. This will provide us with evidence on the burdens that arise in HE institutions in meeting the data requirements of funding bodies and government departments through HESA returns. The project will then consider the operational barriers that need to be overcome in institutions in order to improve the efficiency and timeliness of the process.

Communications

16. Finally, we will continue to improve our communications activity and ensure that it continues to be as clear and concise as possible. In 2007-08 we will run one ITT conference a year, as opposed to separate events for ITT funding, recruitment and development. This is a significant change and will reduce the amount of time required by the HE sector to gather headline material from us on ITT issues.
17. We will make improvements to our stakeholder database, and are committed to delivering e-communications to all stakeholders, including HEIs.

TDA 2007-08 Reducing Burdens Deliverables for HERRG

- With Ofsted, ensure a tailored and risk assessed approach to inspection is in place by **30 September 2008**.
- With Ofsted and QAA, evaluate the impact of the procedures for the sharing of information including inspection programmes, reports and grades, information and of attendance at training events by **30 September 2007**.
- With Ofsted and QAA, design a pilot for joint working on inspection / audit by **31 November 2007**.

- Agree a new MOU with Hefce taking account of the evidence from the accountability framework project, by **31 July 2007**.

Streamline the payment processes for TDA funding, improve the flow of information electronically to and from HEIs and abolish the earmarked funding return by **30 December 2007**.

- Provide an ITT data package to inform benchmarking and self evaluation activities by **31 January 2008**.
- With HESA, agree how and when to provide annual data for HEIDI by **31 July 2007**.
- With GTCE, consider how to use HESA data collection processes to meet TDA's census needs and GTCE's data needs by **31 March 2008**.
- With Hefce and HESA, manage the ABACUS project to overcome data constraints in HEIs, by **30 September 2008**.
- Improve communication channels to HEIs by **31 March 2008**.

OFSTED Annex to the Higher Education Concordat, updated for May 2007

Consultation

1. A letter was sent on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector to HEIs, HERRG and other stakeholders outlining Ofsted's proposed approach to inspection of further education provision based in HEIs and asking for their views on our proposals. Our proposals are in line with Ofsted's strategic drive to ensure that inspection is proportionate to risk. A secure risk assessment determines the timing and level of inspection required. A copy of the letter is attached at Appendix A.

Responses from the sector

2. Feedback, mainly in the form of telephone calls and emails, was received from institutions and stakeholders. The responses were positive in support of our approach. It was especially pleasing to have such good support from the Quality Assurance Agency which has become our firm partner in this work and also from Universities UK and GuildHE.

Working in partnership

3. We have rapidly formed strong working relationships with QAA. We are meeting regularly with the Learning and Skills Council to support them in progressing their work on performance data for this provision.
4. The QAA/ Ofsted Joint Planning and Development Group has been established with an agreed remit and has met three times. This involves senior staff from both organisations and meets regularly to review progress in relation to the HERRG concordat. Inspection and audit scheduling timetables have been shared between the two organisations with a view to avoiding unnecessary burden, where possible, on HEIs. This group represents Ofsted's full remit for work in higher education, encompassing Further Education, Initial Teacher Training and Further Education Teacher Training inspections.
5. One HMI who is a member of the Planning and Development group is also a member of the QAA group that is evaluating IQER (Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review); the review method specially devised for higher education in further education colleges. It is our intention to ensure that there is as much congruence as possible between the methodologies used in both these types of inspection. This is especially important given the plans outlined in the latest White Paper on FE regarding degree awarding status and FE colleges.

Piloting the new inspection approach

6. The first pilot assessment visit to inspect FE in an HEI has taken place. This was a one day assessment visit by 2 HMI to Writtle College. The team fed back their

findings verbally and in writing and these findings have been welcomed by the HEI. There are four further pilot inspections planned for the spring term 2007. All of these pilots will be evaluated and feedback from them will inform the next stages of development of the inspection programme. We plan to bring representatives from the pilot HEIs together for a one day review conference in the summer term to enable us to fully reflect their experiences and evaluations in our development of the methodology.

Reducing paperwork and sharing information

7. There is a firm commitment from Ofsted to ensure that as far as possible we gather information once and use it across as many of our remits as possible. Currently, discussions are underway with a view to enabling QAA to use the electronic portal system (the Provider Gateway) currently jointly used by the LSC, Ofsted and FE colleges to store and retrieve performance data and self assessment documentation. This would allow HEIs to electronically place relevant documentation for both audit and inspection in one location and it would facilitate the sharing and use of documents between Ofsted and QAA.

Barriers to developing this work

8. In terms of commitment to the work, partnership working and the engagement of the HEIs, it is safe to say that these are all progressing well. The greatest barrier to further developments is the difficulty in accessing accurate and timely performance data on FE provision in HEIs. This data is needed in a format which makes it possible to compare FE provision in HEIs with similar work in FE colleges and national averages for success rates. This information is essential in order to make sound judgements in terms of risk assessment. Discussions are underway with the LSC who hold this data alongside HESA. In our opinion, this aspect of the work needs to be progressed much faster.

Action Plan

Develop and introduce a tailored and risk assessed approach to Ofsted inspection of Initial Teacher Training (ITT)	Christine Brown	Introduction in September 2007
Evaluate the impact of the procedures for the sharing of information with QAA, including inspection programmes, reports and grades, information and of attendance at training events	Christine Brown Christine Dick Harriet Harper	From September 2007
QAA and Ofsted design a pilot for joint working on ITT inspection/audit ³	Christine Brown	Pilot from Autumn 2007
Implement new lighter touch inspection methodology for FE colleges	John Landeryou Paul Curry	From September 2007
Evaluate pilot one-day assessment visits to HEIs with FE provision	Wilf Hudson Harriet Harper	By October 2007
Taking into account evaluation and risk assessment, extend one-day assessment visits to HEIs and begin to apply lighter touch inspection activity where appropriate	Wilf Hudson Harriet Harper	From October 2007
Continue to hold discussions with QAA to further co-ordinate inspection activity	Wilf Hudson Harriet Harper Christine Brown Chris Dick	Ongoing

³ An action that remains outstanding from previous action plan.

LSC Annex to the Higher Education Concordat, updated for May 2007

Vision

1. The LSC's *agenda for change* prospectus published in August 2005, set out our vision for radically streamlining the way in which information is used in the sector, by only collecting the data which providers need to manage their own businesses, creating a consistent set of data definitions and management information reports, and introducing a Unique Learner Identifier and a record of learning for each individual.
2. The white paper "*Further Education: Raising Skills, Improving Life Chances*", published in March 2006, set out the government's support for the plans described in agenda for change to adopt common standards for data and reporting across the sector. It set out the intention to:
 - establish a single mechanism or gatekeeper for setting information standards and data and reporting requirements
 - set up an operational body or data agency to implement these requirements. As suggested by Sir Andrew Foster, this could include giving the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) new responsibilities for post 16 data or simplifying the current LSC arrangements through a strong annual information agreement between colleges or providers and key data users.
3. The LSC believes that streamlining information flows is only possible if all of the relevant agencies involved in the collection and use of data work together to harmonise requests and reduce bureaucracy. This approach is already well embedded through the Managing Information across Partners (MIAP) programme led by the DfES, which is being delivered on behalf of partners by the LSC.
4. The LSC continues to fully support the principles set out in the Concordat, and recognises that it is very much in the spirit of the data and quality themes of the LSC *agenda for change*, as well as the MIAP programme.

Current position

5. The LSC has a longstanding reciprocal arrangement with HESA covering data collection for individualised learner data from HEIs and FE Colleges. HESA collects individualised learner data from HEIs about all their provision and then shares it with the LSC. The LSC does the same for FE Colleges with HE provision.
6. The LSC has reached agreement with a small number of HEIs which deliver a large amount of FE provision, to return ILR type data to the LSC so that quality measures can be calculated and the provision at the institution can be benchmarked with other similar provision in the area. This allows the LSC to fulfil its planning role.
7. In addition, the LSC asks HEIs to complete an annual forward budgeting and

planning document, which is similar to other institutions receiving FE funding, as part of the annual planning and funding cycle.

8. The LSC will assure the quality of Further Education provision in HEIs through its normal annual review process and risk assessment, as part of the annual planning cycle. When carrying out such reviews it will minimise unnecessary burdens on HEIs. Information for such quality assurance reviews will be gathered in the way outlined in other parts of this annex. Information regarding the effectiveness of quality systems will be gained through the QAA assessment. However, in particular circumstances, inspection visits may be necessary by OfSTED in order to discharge statutory responsibilities and address perceived risks. Any intervention will be clearly risk-based and in proportion to the volume of Further Education provision.

Progress since May 2006

9. The LSC annex to the HERRG concordat set out two related strategies to streamline the use of data and information:
 - The implementation of common data definitions and a Unique Learner Number (ULN) as part of the MIAP programme.
 - In the FE system, to bring together the information needs of all the organisations who request information from the sector and agree what will be required from all providers, based on common standards.
10. Good progress has been made on taking forward implementation on both strategies, as described below, although HE institutions will not yet have seen a direct impact.
11. A pilot Unique Learner Number (ULN) registration service has been running since September 2006 supporting a number of initiatives, such as the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF), and involving a range of organisations including UCAS. The programme includes a business change project to ensure widespread adoption of the ULN throughout the FE sector. In January 2007 LogicaCMG were awarded the contract to design, build and run the MIAP system. The ULN will enable delivery of services to learners and underpin data sharing between organisations which are part of the MIAP group.
12. Progress has been made in implementing the gatekeeper for setting information standards and data and reporting requirements described in the FE white paper. The board of the FE Information Authority has been established and met twice. It includes representation from those wishing to use FE sector data, including HEFCE, and learning providers that create these data. It authorised the FE individualised learner record specification for 2007/08.
13. The DfES have asked the LSC to run a pilot FE sector Data Service from August 2007 to December 2008 to allow evaluation of the benefits of establishing an operational body or data agency as described in the FE White paper. The LSC is developing plans for this pilot.

Timescales

- The ULN registration service will be operational from **September 2007**. Adoption of the ULN will be **progressive from that date**.
- The Secretariat to the Information Authority will be established by **September 2007**. The Information Authority will progressively authorise standards for a range of data across the FE sector.
- The pilot Data Service commences in **August 2007**. Evaluation of it is planned for **Autumn 2008**. This evaluation will inform decisions about the nature and arrangements for the Data Service in the long term.

Research Councils UK Annex to the Higher Education Concordat, updated for May 2007

1. Research Councils UK (RCUK) is the partnership between the UK's seven Research Councils. Through RCUK, the Research Councils work together to champion the research, training and innovation they support. The Research Councils are non-departmental public bodies, funded by the Science Budget through the Department of Trade and Industry.
2. RCUK was created to increase the collective visibility, leadership and policy influence of the Research Councils; to stimulate multi-disciplinary research that encourages collaboration; to provide a single focus for collective dialogue with stakeholders and to encourage greater harmonisation of internal operations.
3. The partnership is led by the RCUK Executive Group, which meets monthly and comprises the chief executives of the seven Research Councils. The Group is currently chaired by Professor Ian Diamond, Chief Executive of the Economic and Social Research Council.
4. The seven UK Research Councils are:
 - Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC);
 - Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC);
 - Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC);
 - Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC);
 - Medical Research Council (MRC);
 - Natural Environment Research Council (NERC);
 - Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC).

The Concordat

5. The Research Councils fully subscribe to the principles of better regulation and endeavour to minimise any bureaucratic obligations placed on HEIs.
6. The Research Councils note that this Concordat has been specifically developed to address quality assurance and data collection relevant to the educational role of HEIs and does not therefore mention other aspects, such as research or knowledge transfer. The Research Councils' interactions with HEIs reach well beyond their educational role. Therefore, the Research Councils signed the Concordat specifically within the context and parameters of its current scope and will endeavour to follow its principles in relation to quality assurance and data collection concerning the educational role of HEIs.

Current Position

7. RCUK will welcome discussion from HERRG or other stakeholders on a complementary Concordat focusing on research activity and the exploitation of research in due course.
8. Research Councils continue to be a statutory customer of HESA. EPSRC leads in promoting regular interaction with HESA and arranging for all councils to contribute to the annual statutory customer visit by HESA. The Research Careers and Diversity Unit of RCUK represents Councils on HESA's Statutory Customer Board; Research Councils have co-operated with HESA on the longitudinal survey of the 2003 graduating cohort and RCUK has funded HESA to collect data for all of their students within this survey.
9. As part of the long-term strategy to link Research Council and HESA databases, HESA has agreed to create a data-field which specifically captures Research Council funded studentships. The Research Councils are working with other studentship funders who are not statutory customers of HESA (e.g. Wellcome Trust) to improve the identification of the students they fund within HESA's data.
10. The Research Councils receive public money to support and sustain the research base. It is therefore important that they are able to demonstrate what they have achieved and the benefits of their research to the UK. The Research Councils also have a formal obligation to provide performance data to the Office of Science and Innovation and Treasury. This is not information that is amenable to a sector wide, HESA-like approach and therefore it is not practicable for the Research Councils to commit to asking HESA every time they require information from HEIs. The Research Councils are committed to ensuring that the performance management system does not impose excessive burdens on HEIs.
11. The Research Councils will be tendering a major cohort-based study of the career paths of their researchers. The project is currently in outline planning phase and RCUK is continuing its dialogue with OSI economists, HESA, Wellcome Trust and other funders. Adherence to the principles of the HERRG Concordat will feature explicitly in the design and implementation of this survey.
12. As part of a review of the end of award reporting process the Research Councils are currently defining their requirements from HEIs. The group taking this forward aim to ensure recommendations for the development of the final reporting process result in optimum efficiency for both Councils and their communities and plan to liaise with external organisations to ensure satisfaction with any proposed final reporting systems. High-level principles to guide any new system should be reported in July 2007.
13. The Research Councils have been working closely with the Funding Councils, particularly HEFCE, to identify where activities might be commissioned jointly to reduce the need for duplicate demands to be placed on HEIs. For example, the Research Councils and Funding Councils have been discussing and sharing data on the health of the research base and workforce development.

14. The Research Councils are developing a programme for a Quality Assurance and validation of TRAC at universities as reported in the Robson Rhodes report to the Office of Science and Innovation, Research Councils and Funding Councils in May 2006. This process is being developed in consultation with the universities, the Funding Councils and other relevant stakeholders. It is intended to offer universities the opportunity to self-assess their level of compliance with TRAC requirements and submit their returns to the Research Councils. A series of follow up visits to selected research intensive universities will then take place. Details of the approach are under development and it is currently expected that the project will be completed by the end of 2008 with a report produced by the end of March 2009.
15. In parallel with this, Councils are developing a strategy for a new Funding Assurance Framework. This will develop and build upon the approach previously adopted for Dipstick Testing and incorporate assurance mechanisms covering implementation of Full Economic Costing in universities. It will retain the light touch approach adopted by the Research Councils to date.
16. Over 300 Research Organisations have now registered to use the Joint Electronic Submission (Je-S) system. In January and February 2007 the functionality to capture student details through the Je-S Student/Researcher data portal was expanded to cover four Research Councils (BBSRC and NERC have joined EPSRC and MRC). Additional functionality for the capture of student nominations through Je-S is planned for implementation in 2007 for those Councils that require it. This will result in information about students supported by the Research Councils being collected from HEIs in a single system. In the future, it will also provide a single system for studentship proposals. This Je-S project has resulted in some harmonisation between Councils which will further simplify procedures for the Higher Education sector in regard to postgraduate funding.
17. The implementation of electronic peer review is planned for Councils in June 2007, following the pilot of the system through an ESRC directive mode call in March 2007.

Future arrangements in line with the Concordat

18. The Research Councils intend to build on their partnership with HESA in a number of areas such as longitudinal analysis of student destinations or studies of post-doctoral populations. It will be important in this to work with HESA to improve the quality of its data.
19. QAA is concerned with academic standards in teaching, but not in research and the Research Councils do not presently look to QAA to provide comments on research quality or other aspects of their business.
20. The Research Councils are committed to exploring areas where they cannot yet obtain data from QAA or HESA. The Research Councils are happy to participate in the Concordat process and, through that process, discuss with the other signatory bodies whether HESA, QAA, or other bodies can develop their activities to meet

any of the Councils' needs. Data must fully satisfy the standards required by the Councils, i.e. sufficient to fulfil formal reporting requirements including those to Council stakeholders such as Government, and be available at a reasonable cost.

21. The Research Councils see an opportunity for the Concordat's objective of minimising the bureaucratic demands on HEIs to be extended beyond the current scope. The Research Councils will be happy to work with HERRG to explore the scope for developing a complementary Concordat which would seek to apply these principles to the provision of data concerning research activity and the exploitation of research. This will be discussed and developed in conjunction with the appropriate organisations involved in research.
22. Six Councils are now integrated with the Je-S system. MRC plan to join fully in line with the introduction of one back-office system in 2009. Councils will then provide one interface for research organisations.

Plans for 2007/08

23. The Research Councils will, in line with the principles of the Concordat, continue in their endeavours to:
 - review end of award reporting processes and take forward the most appropriate format(s) for all stakeholders. High-level principles for any new systems to be reported in **July 2007**;
 - seek assurances on the management of research conduct at HEIs and Independent Research Organisations. RCUK plan to discuss with other key stakeholders the potential for an overarching framework in **December 2007/ January 2008**;
 - ensure Quality Assurance and validation of TRAC at universities through, a report on compliance with TRAC requirements is scheduled for **March 2009**;
 - continue to work with HESA to improve the quality of their data and its fit for Research Council use;
 - implement Je-S Studentship functionality for all remaining Research Council schemes to simplify processes both for applying for postgraduate funding and for the return of student details;
 - ensure implementation of cross-Council electronic peer review **in 2007**.

Skills for Health Annex to the Higher Education Concordat, updated for May 2007

Introduction

1. *Skills for Health* was established in April 2002 and licensed by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) as the UK Sector Skills Council for health in May 2004. It is part of the NHS but with its own Council, Board and management. *Skills for Health* covers the whole health sector – NHS, independent and voluntary employers. It is funded through the four UK health departments, the Sector Skills Development Agency, the Education Act regulatory bodies and the sector itself. Its role is UK-wide.
2. *Skills for Health* was pleased to be an initial signatory of the HERRG Concordat in May 2006. Discussion to date with HERRG, and with the Better Regulation Review Group before it, had already served to identify the high degree of compatibility between the principles applied in *Skills for Health's* work and HERRG's approach: both derive from the Cabinet Office principles for better regulation.
3. HERRG reviewed *Skills for Health's* progress in taking forward its commitments under the Concordat in January 2007, and expressed itself content.

Context

4. There is wide acceptance in the healthcare and healthcare education community that the arrangements for the quality assurance (QA) of healthcare programmes in HEIs require a rather different (but complementary) approach to that applied in other HE subject areas. This is because:
 - The specifically contractual basis of NHS-commissioned programmes differs from the HEFCE block-grant environment, and presents additional requirements for accountability
 - Health programmes have a high – typically 50%, and sometimes more – mandatory practice placement component which needs to be fully reflected
 - Public safety issues arise in an immediate (and potentially life-threatening) form given students' direct access from an early stage in their pre-registration programmes to patients
 - Health is a subject area where HEIs' offer needs to be particularly responsive to fast changing service and policy needs
5. The rationale for a Partnership Quality Assurance Framework (PQAF) was set out in *Quality Assuring Health Care Education – Purpose and Action* (Department of Health (England), 2001). This rationale, which remains applicable, may be summarised as being to:
 - Drive quality enhancement

- Ensure accountability
- Support choice by providing information to employers, public, students and potential employees;

and in doing so, where possible, reduce burden by fulfilling multiple needs through common streamlined processes, in line with better regulation principles.

6. *Skills for Health*, with partners, has been developing new partnership-based arrangements for quality assuring health care education, assuming this role under the terms of a Service Level Agreement with the Department of Health. The arrangements will apply to England, but will be based upon *Skills for Health's* role, as the Sector Skills Council, in promoting the exchange of information about good QA practice with the other UK nations and internationally.
7. *Skills for Health* acknowledges the need for the emerging QA framework for healthcare education to complement the framework of QA at HEI institutional level which the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) applies, adapting to this as it develops over time, and to draw wherever possible upon the information resources of the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). In respect of quality assurance, *Skills for Health* is working with its healthcare education partners towards systems which reduce overlap and duplication, as far as possible utilise information already available or developed by other bodies, and where additional information is sought only where this is essential to meet statutory, regulatory, contractual or policy responsibilities.
8. Historically, the focus of *Skills for Health's* QA activity has been on credit-bearing programmes in nursing, midwifery and the allied health professions, principally those commissioned by Strategic Health Authorities (Workforce Development Directorates). This encompasses provision valued at more than £1.5BN, delivered in more than 80 HEIs (and partner healthcare providers) to more than 75,000 students.
9. *Skills for Health's* partners were originally the Strategic Health Authorities (SHAs), the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC), the Health Professions Council (HPC), and the DH. (The responsibilities and boundaries of the SHAs were revised in 2006). There was in addition extensive consultation, both national and local, with a wider set of stakeholders, including representatives of the HE sector and individual HEIs.
10. Partnership arrangements for QA of healthcare education were reviewed in 2005/06 and new structures, with a wider membership (continuing however to include the original partners), were introduced. The new partnership arrangements, which take the form of a Partners Forum facilitated by *Skills for Health*, fully recognise the statutory obligations of individual partners including regulators, not all of which obligations will necessarily be channelled through the partnership. Universities UK, Guild HE, the Council of Deans and HERRG are all represented on the Partners Forum.
11. A national reference group (the Quality Assurance Stakeholders Development

Group (QASDeG)) exists, and normally meets quarterly. QASDeG has a number of Higher Education members. Local reference groups are also maintained as a two-way source of information and advice on both the principles and the practical application of QA for healthcare education.

Wider policy context

12. In England, arrangements for quality assuring health care education, when finalised, will be incorporated as a national QA Framework into the formal requirements of the national MPET (Multi-Professional Education and Training) contract framework for healthcare education. The framework is being implemented under an agreement between the Department of Health (England) and representative bodies for Higher Education.
13. Given that effective QA of healthcare education necessarily involves scrutiny of practice placements as learning environments, *Skills for Health* in 2006 signed the Concordat of the Healthcare Commission, which seeks to streamline the impacts upon healthcare providers of audit, review, inspection and quality assurance agencies.

Recent developments and current activity

14. A number of task or 'cluster' groups are currently (April 2007) working to define elements of the new Framework, and a residential workshop to ensure the emergent Framework is consistent and fit for purpose (including full compliance with 'better regulation' principles) will be held in July 2007. Individuals from HEIs are playing a valued role in each of the cluster groups.
15. At the same time, and linked to the cluster groups, a feasibility/scoping study is being carried out to examine the possible contribution a web-based tool could make to streamlining access to evidence sources and thereby simplifying for education and healthcare providers the process of satisfying different agencies' QA requirements.
16. Whilst the details of the overall architecture of QA Framework and arrangements have yet to be finalised, a number of key principles have already been incorporated into the agreed MPET contract framework (see an earlier section), and are being applied widely by SHAs:
 - *Minimisation of burden* on practice placement and education providers, consistent with assuring quality
 - Emphasis on quality *enhancement* as much as quality assurance
 - Parity of *practice-based* with academic education
 - *Self* evaluation by education and practice placement providers as a starting point for action planning
 - Use of *existing* evidence sources and QA processes wherever possible

- *Publication* of findings from QA processes, including examples of good practice
 - Clear *action plans* for remedying short-comings where they are identified
17. In addition, there is full recognition by *Skills for Health* of the need for the Framework to reflect the Cabinet Office better regulation principles, in particular that the approaches adopted should be targeted, proportionate and risk-based.

Future plans and timescales

18. The following table, using the format and headings of the HERRG Action Plan which *Skills for Health* published last year and on which it reported in January 2007, is a high-level summary of activities recently completed and planned over the next 12 months.
19. Cumulatively these will further reduce the administrative burdens on HEIs, while ensuring continued assurance that quality of healthcare education is maintained and, wherever possible, improved. The timescales remain subject to revision as *Skills for Health* and its healthcare education partners continue development work.
20. It is important to note that delivery of the action plan is dependant upon the continued funding of the core activity by DH through it's SLA with Skills for Health and the willingness of partners to work collaboratively with Skills for Health and with one another on this agenda

Activity	Stages	Timescale
Decide what should follow current cycle of Major Review	End of current cycle of Major Review	December 2006 (completed)
	Publish commissioned (from Quality Assurance Agency) review of trends from Major Review	March 2007 (completed)
	Consider form in which independent external scrutiny should take in future (integrally linked to new QA Framework)	Spring 2008 (in context of emergent wider Framework)
Develop and decide overall architecture of QA Framework and arrangements on general principles which adapt Cabinet Office better regulation principles to the healthcare education context	Publish information for learners and service users	June 2006 (completed); further material summer 2007
	SfH Interim Standards for QA (with fewer standards and significant streamlining from earlier prototyped version) start to be used for 2006/07 academic year	September 2006 (achieved)

Activity	Stages	Timescale
	Working groups develop details of new QA Framework, leading to a residential workshop to integrate, maximising opportunities to meet partners' needs through common, streamlined approaches	July 2007
	Initial results from extension of National Student Survey to NHS-funded students	Summer 2007
	Publish review of the value and potential future role of the current Benchmark Statements used in defining and monitoring HE programmes in NHS-funded areas of healthcare; and a literature review of the relationship between quality in healthcare education and quality in patient care	Summer 2007
	Publish consultation document (to include Regulatory Impact Assessment) on future QA Framework. The consultation will be supported by a number of regional reference groups /consultation workshops	September – December 2007
	Agreement on future QA Framework	April 2008 (subject to discussion with DH (England))
	<i>Skills for Health</i> identifies training and support requirements for implementation of new Framework	Summer 2008
	Beginning of implementation of new Framework from academic year 2008/09	September 2008
	Establish new Partners Forum for QA of healthcare education, with wider (including HE) membership	CEO level meetings of QA partner organisations to support development of protocols, terms of partnership and membership, leading to establishment of a new Partners Forum for QA of healthcare education

Activity	Stages	Timescale
	<p>Take delivery of a feasibility/scoping study for development of a Web-Based tool to support evidence-sharing between partner agencies across healthcare education</p> <p>Development of the Web-Based Tool, subject to the findings of the feasibility/scoping study</p>	<p>Summer 2007</p> <p>Autumn 2007 – Summer 2008 (subject to partners’ agreement and funding)</p>
	Publish agreed Forum products – mapping of Forum members’ QA standards, mapping of Forum members’ QA processes, a Statement of Common Principles	Summer 2007
	Extend Forum membership to UK-wide basis	March 2008
HERRG Concordat	2nd Annual Review and Action Plan	March 2008

The Information Centre for Health and Social Care Annex to the Higher Education Concordat, updated for May 2007

About Us

1. The Information Centre for health and social care (The IC) was created in April 2005 out of the former NHS Information Authority and the Department of Health Statistics Unit.
2. The IC works to co-ordinate and streamline the collection and sharing of data about health and adult social care. We are providing an important service to front line healthcare staff, by reducing the time they spend on data collection - allowing them more time to concentrate on providing care to patients.
3. Information is our business, and information used effectively in the field of health and social care has a lasting impact on all of our lives. As a young organisation, we are planning to be the leaders in collecting, analysing and distributing facts and figures for the various health and social care communities in the UK.
4. Quite simply, we are putting information at the heart of decision making. By doing so, we enable informed decisions to be made across the many services and agencies we serve.

Our current involvement with HEI data

5. Currently, the main use of HEI data within The IC focuses on people studying for courses related to healthcare. We receive an annual extract of HESA data which provides us with information on the number of students on each of the courses of interest. We also make use of the 'Destination of Leavers Survey' which allows us to monitor outcomes six months after graduation from a healthcare related course. This issue has received much media coverage in the past year, particularly in the nursing profession, and the HESA data is one of the few independent accurate sources of information on the subject.
6. We look forward to data soon to be available which will track students for 3 years after graduation.
7. We now have data coded for academic years 2002-03, 2003-04, 2004-05 and 2005-06. We have tables on the numbers of starters, total students and graduates from 27 subject areas including medicine, dentistry and social work.

Our relationship with The Concordat

8. Last year, we established and built up relations with colleagues in the Department for Education and Skills who also utilise HESA data on healthcare courses. This relationship has helped promote consistency in how queries on healthcare courses

are answered. We hope to build these relationships further **in the coming year**.

9. In using the HESA data for some detailed lower level queries, we have become aware of a number of competing sources. As one of our main commitments to the concordat in 2007-08, the IC wishes to gain a much greater understanding of the local level flows of information regarding students and HEI's. We hope to do this for several reasons:
- To establish any duplication of effort and associated unnecessary burden
 - To promote a standardised way of providing NHS organisations with HEI data where possible, in order to reduce burden on HEIs
 - To locate alternative data sources which could be used in the initial HESA validation checks.

To fit in with the IC's organisational priorities, the information we utilise must be reliable down to a local level, and we look forward to working with HESA to try and ensure that this is so, and improve some areas of present concern.

10. Within the health and social care environment, the IC has responsibility for the management of the Review of Central Returns (ROCR) and Strategic Information Group on Adult Social Care (SIGASC) processes, covering collections from the NHS and Local Authorities respectively.
11. We are responsible for the regulation of all requests for information from the NHS and LA's by the Department of Health (DH), its associated Arms' Length Bodies and others (particularly Healthcare Concordat members, a group of 20 regulatory bodies such as the Healthcare Commission, NAO and Audit Commission), other government departments, professional bodies and the private sector. Our primary remit is to minimise the impact of information requirements on the NHS and Social Care organisations by collecting information only once and in the most efficient manner.
12. The ROCR and SIGASC processes ensure that central collections of information are appropriate to their purpose, do not duplicate existing collections, and minimise the burden of gathering and submitting the data. We hope that our experience in this process can be of benefit to the HERRG concordat, which has very similar aims and objectives."

Skills for Business network Annex to the Higher Education Concordat, updated for May 2007

1. The principal development for the Network since joining the Concordat process has been the publication of Lord Leitch's Report, *"Prosperity for all in the global economy"*. This highlighted - amongst other things - that, despite 260,000 new graduates entering the world of work each year, there remains a strong likelihood that the UK will fall behind its competitors at degree level and above unless action is taken to ensure that Universities produce the graduates that our economy needs, with the skills employers value.
2. This means employers' needs have to be placed centre stage and ambition in the demand for skills needs to raise significantly. The SSDA, working with the SfBn, its employers and key partners across the sector is focussing attention and efforts on both these crunch points.
3. For instance, in September a paper on Higher Level Skills went to the SSDA Board and a Skills for Business Chief Executive's HE working group has now been set up which is chaired by Maggie Pearson, Deputy VC and Keele University and SSDA Board Member.
4. The Network is aware that differences across regions and in existing structural arrangements continue to act as barriers; employer engagement with the HE sector remains variable and is further undermined by a lack of a common language to describe the higher level skills required both now and for the future. This all means that employers are unable to build effectively on any concordat, to inform and influence delivery across HE institutions; in turn, HEIs are unable to make their courses more responsive to employer and learner needs.
5. To address this, the Network's HE working group - with the help of Deian Hopkins, Chair of the UUK Skills Task Force, and David Melville, Chair of Lifelong Learning UK, both of whom are also Vice Chancellors - has been considering an HE strategy and action plan. This strategy and action plan is designed to enable the SfBn to make significant advances on behalf of both the demand and supply side, by providing employers and HEIs with the support to develop a common language and tools to promote and ensure clear and consistent communications. It should also enable the SfBn to influence key policy areas and encourage better articulation and more responsiveness where needed - for example:
 - achieving new flexibilities which allow the current system to
 - ☐ be less risk averse and
 - ☐ accommodate in-and-out, workplace and bite-size learning; and
 - enable the Funding Councils to apply a greater equity in their future funding decisions.
6. The SfB network remains extremely willing and keen to work with and assist HE to respond to the Leitch ambition and challenge. It is already taking significant steps

to this effect, outlined above. However, one of the key recommendations of Lord Leitch's report is the setting up of the UK Commission for Employment and Skills, whose Board will meet for the first time in Autumn 2007. This is a major undertaking and the new organisation will build on the work of the Sector Skills Development Agency and the National Employment Panel, which will both cease to exist independently.

7. Given the complexities of these developments and the many unknown factors which we will be facing, this update is only an interim one, pending more work on the fine detail and a fuller understanding of the future role of the new Commission and its impact on the Skills for Business network. With current timescales, this means we will have further discussions with HERRG about a new action plan in the Autumn, with a view to completion before the end of 2007.
8. In the meantime, the SfB network and SSDA will continue to work with SSCs to maintain the momentum and progress made to date and seek to apply the Concordat principles promoting movement towards a less burdensome, more proportionate approach to quality assurance and data collection in dealings with the HE sector. We will also encourage the individual SSCs to do so and, for those Councils that have significant engagement with Universities, encourage them to join the Concordat in their own right.
9. We would also encourage HERRG to consider an early approach to the Commission once it exists to suggest they too become a signatory to your Concordat.

ACTION PLAN

- Engage with HERRG about the content of a revised Action Plan for the Network.
By Autumn 2007
- Finalise the new Action Plan. **By end of 2007**

Managing Information Across Partners Annex to the Higher Education Concordat, updated for May 2007

1. The Managing Information Across Partners programme (MIAP) is about streamlining how post-14 information on learners and learning is shared across the education sector and used by individual learners so that excellent services are made available to individuals, employers and communities. The programme of improvement to data collection and sharing will be introduced over several years and is being led by the Department for Education and Skills and delivered by the Learning and Skills Council. Following extensive consultation, Ministers and the MIAP Stakeholder Group have endorsed a programme of work that will simplify the way information about learners and providers is collected, handled and shared.
2. MIAP will:
 - Provide a life long record of all post 14 participation and achievement (and retention and destination within education) for every learner;
 - Enable the provision of:
 - ☐ Accurate and timely aggregated learner information (anonymous and not);
 - ☐ Accurate and timely aggregated and individual learning provider information;
 - ☐ Improved and tailored services to learners and learning providers to inform learner choice; and
 - Reduce the burden of bureaucracy on learners, data providers, and other organisations.
3. MIAP will introduce common data definitions to be used across the education and skills sector, a Unique Learner Number for every person undertaking education and training and mechanisms that will allow information on learners and providers to be collected once, used many times and used by all. It will enable appropriate national and local agencies to share information reducing bureaucracy for learners, schools, colleges, work based learning providers, universities, awarding bodies and employers.

Achievements so far:

4. Work has been already been completed to develop common data definitions and recommendations on data standards and a range of XML schemas. The definitions are already being adopted in the FE and HE sectors (in HE by HESA and UCAS). The DfES Information Standards Board, through Becta, is considering their further development and dissemination.
5. A UK Register of Learning Providers is already accessible through the web:

www.ukrlp.co.uk and already contains information about 17 thousand providers, including Higher Education Institutions. The ambition here is to develop a single route through which individuals, employers and other stakeholders can access information about providers: who they are, what they do and how well they do it.

6. In January 2007, LogicaCMG was appointed through competitive dialogue as the contractor to design, build and operate the MIAP information service.
7. Tests and trials are currently underway in a variety of education and training scenarios, including with UCAS, for the introduction of a Learner Registration Service for post -14 learners, incorporating the assignment of a Unique Learner Number. The intention is that the Unique Learner Number will replace the plethora of learner numbers used by the education and training sector and will act as an enabler for data sharing.
8. Details of the MIAP programme are available through the web: www.miap.gov.uk.

What is planned over the next 2/3 years:

9. From September 2007, the learner registration service will be available. This service will assign unique learner numbers to individuals over the age of 14 and confirm with them the arrangements for sharing their data. The service will hold the number and enable other organisations to access the number and contain it in their systems, enabling third party to third party transactions about learners to be made much more easily. This service will directly support a number of Government's key education strategies:
 - 14-19 diplomas (which will comprise of a combination of achievements including GCSEs, A Levels and applied learning, awarded by different awarding bodies and delivered in a range of different institutions and locations),
 - the Qualifications and Credit Framework, which will provide a new way of recognising achievement from achievement of single units to full qualifications, and
 - a demand led system in FE. It will give learners control, through learner accounts, over the publicly funded learning provision they can access to raise skills levels; in line with the direction of travel proposed by Lord Leitch in his report on skills.
10. From September 2008, MIAP will enable individuals to access information held on them about their school and FE learning participation and achievement in the form of a learner record, which can be shared with frontline organisations. Initially the learner data interface will rely on data extracts from the Department of Education and Skills' National Pupil Database and the Learning and Skills Council's Individual Learning Record. The aim is to add other sources of data over time to cover lifelong learning, e.g. information direct from awarding bodies, from universities.

11. This system will also provide a data query service which will enable registered stakeholders to access information at different levels of detail about the progression of groups of individuals through their education, enabling better policy making.

MIAP and HE

12. A business change programme is underway to ensure that the services provided by MIAP are understood and taken up, and that the benefits it offers are realised. This includes three strands of activity: communications, stakeholder engagement and benefits realisation.
13. HE partners are core stakeholders in the MIAP. Robin Sibson, HESA is a member of the MIAP Programme Board and led the work on Common Data Definitions for MIAP. UCAS is one of the partners in the Learner Registration Service Test and Trials. MIAP meets with JISC to ensure appropriate linkages. A special communications meeting has been held with other key partners: HEFCE, QAA, UUK to discuss how communications with the sector can be improved, and HEFCE is the lead HE partner on the MIAP communications group.
14. The Home Office Immigration Service is considering the possible use of UKRLP and ULN to minimise the bureaucratic impact on HEIs of planned new immigration and overseas student sponsorship arrangements.

MIAP impact on learners, employers and learning providers/institutions:

15. Learners -
 - i) MIAP will give learners ready access to information about their learning participation and achievement record and allow them to control who has access to this information. This will ease learner interaction with education agencies and institutions eg at registration/enrolment.
 - ii) Better sharing of learner information, given appropriate learner permission, will enable learning providers to improve and personalise the services they give learners.
 - iii) By having access to individual learner records and better information about learning providers, IAG providers will be able to improve the services they can provide individuals.
 - iv) The MIAP Unique Learner Number will enable units and credits to be awarded. The ULN will directly support the achievement of 14-19 Diplomas and the Qualification and Credits Framework.
16. Employers -
 - i) Employers (and the brokers advising them) can already access the UK Register of Learning Providers to verify the legal status of a provider and, through links, access further information about publicly funded learning provision, such as inspection

results.

- ii) Eventually, learners will be able to share verified information about their participation and achievement with employers through MIAP. This will improve recruitment practice and save costs.
17. Providers -
- i) The Unique Learner Number and the Learner Record will help reduce enrolment administration by allowing ready access to a learner's previously registered details and achievement information
 - ii) MIAP will allow easier data sharing and will enhance provider collaboration.
 - iii) The Unique Learner Number will help provider communications with Awarding Bodies and make the linking of records and administration easier.
 - iv) Tests and trials in FE have shown that the Unique Learner Number can improve resource and course planning and help the tailoring of the curriculum to meet learner and employer needs.

Summary of Plans

- **September 2007**, the learner registration service will be available. This service will assign unique learner numbers to individuals
- **September 2008**, MIAP will enable individuals to access information held on them about their school and FE learning participation and achievement in the form of a learner record
- **By end 2007**, completed discussions with key partners involved in HE on improving communications with the sector and identifying how the sector might benefit from MIAP

HESA Annex to the Higher Education Concordat, updated for May 2007

Performance against commitments in 2006 Annex

1. ***Longitudinal DLHE introduced in 2006/07 on 2002/03 cohort***
First collection complete, target response rate of 40% achieved. Independent analysis commissioned. Future of survey will be determined by HESA Statutory Customers in the light of this. **Issue closed.**
2. ***DLHE web-based collection service 2006/07 (subject to approval)***
Approved by HESA Board and implemented for 2006/07, went live as planned. Well received by institutions, will be maintained into the future. 47 institutions using system for mid-2007 collection round. **Issue closed.**
3. ***Formalisation of burden assessment – work begins June 2006***
Kick-off meeting with HEFCE and TDA on 16 June 2006, followed by a detailed project planning meeting on 28 February 2007. **Carried forward, see below.**
4. ***Revised student record and associated changes 2007/08***
Record development completed and specification released on schedule by end of July 2006. Extensive training programme for HE sector and software houses delivered October/November 2006 (8 seminars country-wide, over 300 participants). Consultancy arrangements (part free, part paid) being put in place to support software houses and institutions with in-house software. The new record implements a major move to data exchange standards including the use of XML and the adoption of the Common Data Definitions agreed through the DfES Managing Information Across Partners Programme. **Issue closed.**
5. ***Work with DH/NHS on alignment issues May 2006***
Kick-off meeting on 3 May 2006, work ongoing and has impacted on 2007/08 student record design, but much more remains to be done. Meeting with Denise Lievesley (Director of Information Centre for Health and Social Care) and staff of IC 6 March 2007 to scope future work. **Carried forward, see below.**
6. ***Integrated HE/FE data collection decision June 2006
... and, if agreed, first impact of integrated collection 2007/08***
Ministerial decisions within DfES have led to the setting up of a pilot FE Data Service within LSC. Performance of this will be evaluated in late 2008, and might lead to a review of arrangements; if so, a tendering process for alternative suppliers could follow. Should HESA choose to tender, itself an open question, the earliest date at which a HESA service could be in place is 2011/12. In the context of an annual update, this is over the horizon. **Issue closed.**
7. ***HEIDI becomes operational April 2007***
Service launched on schedule on 16 April 2007 with 112 (out of 168 across the UK) HEIs subscribing, well beyond initial target levels (targets were 50 at launch date, 92 to meet budget for first full year). Six training seminars for institutional HEIDI

administrators organised across the UK in April/May 2007. Future governance and resourcing of HEIDI has been agreed by the HESA Board. **Original issue closed, follow-on issue see below.**

8. **Enhanced IP service building up following the release of HEIDI**
Planning must be informed by an initial evaluation of the success of HEIDI in meeting institutional requirements. **Carried forward, see below.**
9. **PQ service to DfES mid-2006 (subject to agreement)**
DfES have not taken this forward as yet, but the opportunity continues to be open and HESA is ready to respond when and if DfES are ready. Carried forward, see below.

Ongoing and new commitments (with delivery dates)

10. **Formalisation of burden assessment: the ABACUS project**
HESA, HEFCE, and TDA are now planning a jointly-funded project, Assessment of Burdens And Constraints Underlying Statistics (ABACUS). The initial aim of the project is to provide real evidence on the burdens that arise in institutions in meeting the data requirements of funding bodies and government departments through HESA returns, and on the operational barriers that need to be overcome in institutions in order to improve the efficiency and timeliness of the process. The scope of the project is limited to the student return in order to provide a clear focus and permit work to be completed over a relatively short period of time; the student return is the most critical of the HESA returns as regards usage, and there is no obvious single step that would achieve major improvement in the present position, so it is a natural first priority.
11. The project will commence with a analysis by HESA of the pattern of data submissions for the student return over a three-year period. This will provide a body of evidence that can be used to identify good practice, and at the other extreme to identify the nature and impact of data submission problems, and the way that these have historically been resolved. This analysis will then inform the selection of a limited number of institutions that will be invited to participate in case-studies to provide a detailed understanding of their data management processes. Consultants will be appointed to carry out the case studies, and this will form the bulk of the work of the project.
12. The project will have the specific aim of identifying, and determining how to overcome, obstacles to the earlier closure of the student data collection. Achieving this will increase the extent to which the data can meet the needs of an increasingly diverse range of customers – including those within the HE sector itself – and thus reduce or eliminate their need to make separate demands on HEIs.
13. The project will be managed by a Steering Group chaired by a Vice-Chancellor, and is expected to report **by the end of 2007**. It constitutes the first substantive step in formalising the assessment of data collection burdens.
14. **Data collection mechanisms for Destinations of Leavers**

It is generally recognised that the initial (6-month) destinations survey creates a high workload for institutions. Data users are currently highly resistant to changes (such as reducing the target response rate, using sampling, or conducting the survey less frequently than the present annual pattern) that they perceive as compromising the fitness for purpose of the data. Reductions in burden must accordingly be sought through improving the efficiency of the process and redirecting the workload away from institutions. The introduction by HESA of a web-based data collection process is a step in this direction. The high-impact possibility is the introduction of a centralised collection service. The use of centralised collection for the National Student Survey, and now also for the 'longitudinal' (3½-year) destinations survey provides a basis of evidence about the potential and the costs of this approach.

15. HESA will work with the Agency's Statutory Customers to assess the potential for centralised data collection, with a view to reporting **by the end of 2007** on the feasibility and costs/savings of introducing such a service and the possible timescale for doing so.
16. **Health service data**
The establishment of the Information Centre for Health and Social Care provides for the first time a stable and professional point of contact for HESA with DH/NHS. Following a meeting with the Director of the IC, HESA has been alerted to major discrepancies between data returned to HESA by institutions, and data reported by the Strategic Health Authorities. HESA will work with IC to understand how these discrepancies arise and to put in place steps to bring them under control. This is a pre-requisite for the more extensive use of HESA data within the NHS, since at present the SHAs do not have confidence in HESA data. We plan to achieve significantly improved data quality **for the 2007/08 round** of data collection (data released to Statutory Customers by **1 December 2008**), the year in which the new student record is introduced; improvements for 2006/07 will be made where opportunities can be identified that are compatible with our change management procedures.
17. **Services to the HE sector**
HESA is committed to maintaining and developing the HEIDI service up to 31 July 2012, with a review during 2011/12 to determine the future of the service beyond that point. The new commitment is to implement a development project, heidi2, to enhance the capabilities of HEIDI; further development projects will follow. The planned launch date for Version 2.0 is **1 August 2008**, and the annual cycle will follow that pattern thereafter, in alignment with the academic year; there are likely to be maintenance releases at intermediate dates. The priorities for heidi2 will be determined by the reconstituted Advisory Group and User Group, but will include progressive integration with the 'Patterns' series of volumes published annually by Universities UK and GuildHE, so that a major part of future volumes can be constructed using HEIDI, and also so that electronic 'customised' access by individual institutions can be channelled through HEIDI.
18. The launch of HEIDI will radically enhance the service that HESA provides to HE

data users within institutions and approved stakeholders, and is expected to achieve many of the objectives that HERRG originally envisaged arising from a more pro-active role for the HESA Information Provision service – for example, institutions will easily be able to generate their own customised analyses of HESA data by using HEIDI as an ‘expert system’, rather than asking IP either to do this for them or to supply data from which they could do it for themselves. The pattern of sector requests to IP is likely to change as a result, and proposals will be taken to the HESA Board **during 2007** to enhance the skill set of IP by recruiting some statisticians and developing new offerings involving more sophisticated approaches to data analysis.

19. **Services to DfES**

HESA stands ready to formalise the provision of services to DfES, and specifically a support service for PQ responses, through the updating of what is currently a MoU between HESA and DfES to a new-style contract parallel to the contracts with funding bodies. The timescale for this is in the hands of DfES not HESA. In practice there is almost continuous dialogue between HESA and DfES, reflecting an active working relationship.

Summary of major deliverables

- Report from the Assessment of Burdens and Constraints Underlying Statistics (ABACUS) project to be received **by end 2007**
- Report on the feasibility of a centralised destinations data collection service to be received **by end 2007**
- Improvements to data quality for NHS **for 2007/08** collection (data delivery by **1 December 2008**)
- heidi2 release **1 August 2008**

Architects Registration Board Annex to the Higher Education Concordat, updated for May 2007

Preface

1. In 2006, the Architects Registration Board (ARB or the Board) warmly welcomed the Higher Education Regulation Review Group's invitation to become a signatory of the Concordat on Data Protection and Quality Assurance.
2. Since signing up to the Concordat in May 2006, ARB has remained committed of finding ways to assist Higher Education institutions which are seeking to gain professional recognition of their awards.

Current Position

3. ARB's position in terms of its statutory obligation to prescribe qualifications, its Procedures for the Prescription of Qualifications (<http://www.arb.org.uk/education/ARB-Prescription%20Procedures.pdf>) and its Criteria (<http://www.arb.org.uk/education/arb-criteria/Prescription%20of%20Qualifications%20ARB%20Criteria.pdf>) remain as outlined in sections 2-6 of its original Annex.
3. However, in July 2006, ARB reviewed the operation of its Procedures, as it does annually, taking into account, amongst other things, the principles of the Concordat. In particular, the following themes, as outlined within its Annex, were addressed:
 - The administrative impact on institutions and ARB and how, if at all these can be reduced;
 - The costs to institutions of submitting applications to ARB and how, if at all these can be reduced;
 - The best use by ARB and institutions of material/data collection by other signatories, in particular QAA and HESA, in securing ARB's confidence to prescribe a qualification;
 - Advice and guidance to institutions on sourcing relevant existing and available material;
 - Best use of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) Visiting Board reports, with a view to encouraging the RIBA to adopt an approach complementary to ARB in its validation of courses and to adopt the principles of the Concordat;
 - Enhancement of the risk based-approach to prescribing qualifications.
4. In line with its commitments under its Annex, ARB took action and achieved the following key outcomes during 2006:
 - Round table feedback meetings were held with institutions which applied to

renew prescription/applied for ARB prescription for the first time, to discuss how the administrative and financial impacts might be reduced.

- ARB introduced electronic and on-line facilities to enable institutions to submit material to ARB more efficiently, including allowing institutions to use links to existing electronic material, i.e. institutional websites etc.
 - An on-line Good Practice Handbook, which includes advice and guidance and examples of good practice for institutions making applications to renew or seek ARB prescription, has been published and will be updated annually.
 - Institutions are advised and strongly encouraged to submit existing material to ARB as part of their applications for prescription. Those institutions renewing prescription for the second time under ARB's Procedures are being encouraged to submit 'top-up' applications, i.e. building upon material which has already been submitted to and is held by ARB.
 - In June 2006, ARB staff members met with representatives of HESA to discuss the creation of unique HESA codes for ARB-prescribed qualifications. From 2007/2008, HESA should be able to collect course specific data and institutions wishing to use this data as part of their applications for prescription will be able to do so.
 - ARB staff members met with representatives of the QAA in August 2006 and discussed the ways in which the reports resulting from the QAA's revised method of conducting institutional audits, where institutions decided to include these in their submissions to ARB, could assist ARB in having the necessary confidence to prescribe a qualification. The QAA agreed, that as far as possible, it would take Professional and Statutory Body Reports into account as part of its institutional audit process.
 - Discussions between ARB, the RIBA and the Standing Conference of Heads of Schools of Architecture began and continue to take place to determine whether it might be possible to develop a common benchmark statement/set of criteria covering qualifications at Part 1 and Part 2 level.
 - ARB staff members met with RIBA counterparts in June and October 2006 and provided the RIBA with a copy of the Concordat for consideration.
 - ARB continued to encourage institutions to 'self-regulate' through planning meetings and through enhanced on-line guidance.
 - ARB agreed to be listed in the Annex to the QAA's 'Handling causes for concern in English Higher and Further Education institutions.'
5. A more detailed summary of ARB's achievements under the terms of its Annex is available on ARB's website (www.arb.org.uk).

Future

6. ARB continues to be committed to reviewing the operation of its Procedures **annually**.
7. The principles of the Concordat will continue to inform the annual review process.
8. As well as continuing to make progress in relation to the themes included in sections 7 and 8 of ARB's original Annex, ARB will explore the following theme **within the next annual review**:
9. The approaches that ARB could consider taking in order to create a more flexible, risk-based approach to the prescription of qualifications, before formally reviewing its Procedures in **2008/2009**.

The Institution of Engineering and Technology Annex to the Higher Education Concordat, updated for May 2007

Update

1. Since our Annex was produced, last year, we have:
 - visited the Architects Registration Board to look at their processes and share best practice.
 - begun to align our academic accreditation visits to coincide with internal reviews. This included a visit made to Manchester University on 9 November, where this approach was very well received.
 - implemented a University training session during which we highlighted the opportunity to align accreditation with internal validation.
 - established a Working Party currently addressing reducing the burden of paperwork required for accreditation, where possible, by using existing documentation. We expect the Working Party report in early Q2 2007.
 - been in discussion with the IMechE and BCS and have agreed to rationalize the amount of additional paper required for joint visits.

Action plan

2. The IET remains committed to the aims of the Concordat and, as you know, is working on a number of initiatives that aim to reduce the administrative burden for Higher Education providers.
3. With this in mind, the Annex itself only needs to be adjusted to account for recent developments and work continues on a number of fronts. A summary of the changes follows:

Paragraph	Original Text	Replacement Text
2	welcomes the opportunity to become a signatory	welcomes the opportunity to remain a signatory
3	It has main offices in the UK, Hong Kong, America and China, and plans to open an office in India in 2006	It has main offices in the UK, Hong Kong, America, China and India
5	approximately 700 programmes each year	approximately 1000 programmes

7	The IET is redesigning its accreditation procedures to place more emphasis on the achievement of output standards and departments have been consulted on this.	The IET has redesigned its accreditation procedures to place more emphasis on the achievement of output standards and work continues on a continuous improvement basis to refine these.
9		Delete paragraph 9

New timescales:

Within six months: The IET will enter into discussion with relevant HEIs, the QAA and the ECUK to consider what new initiatives might be instigated as a result of new initiatives such as the QAA’s Causes for Concern register.

After twelve months: The IET will review this Annex against progress made and, where reasonable, add new objectives and revised timescales.