

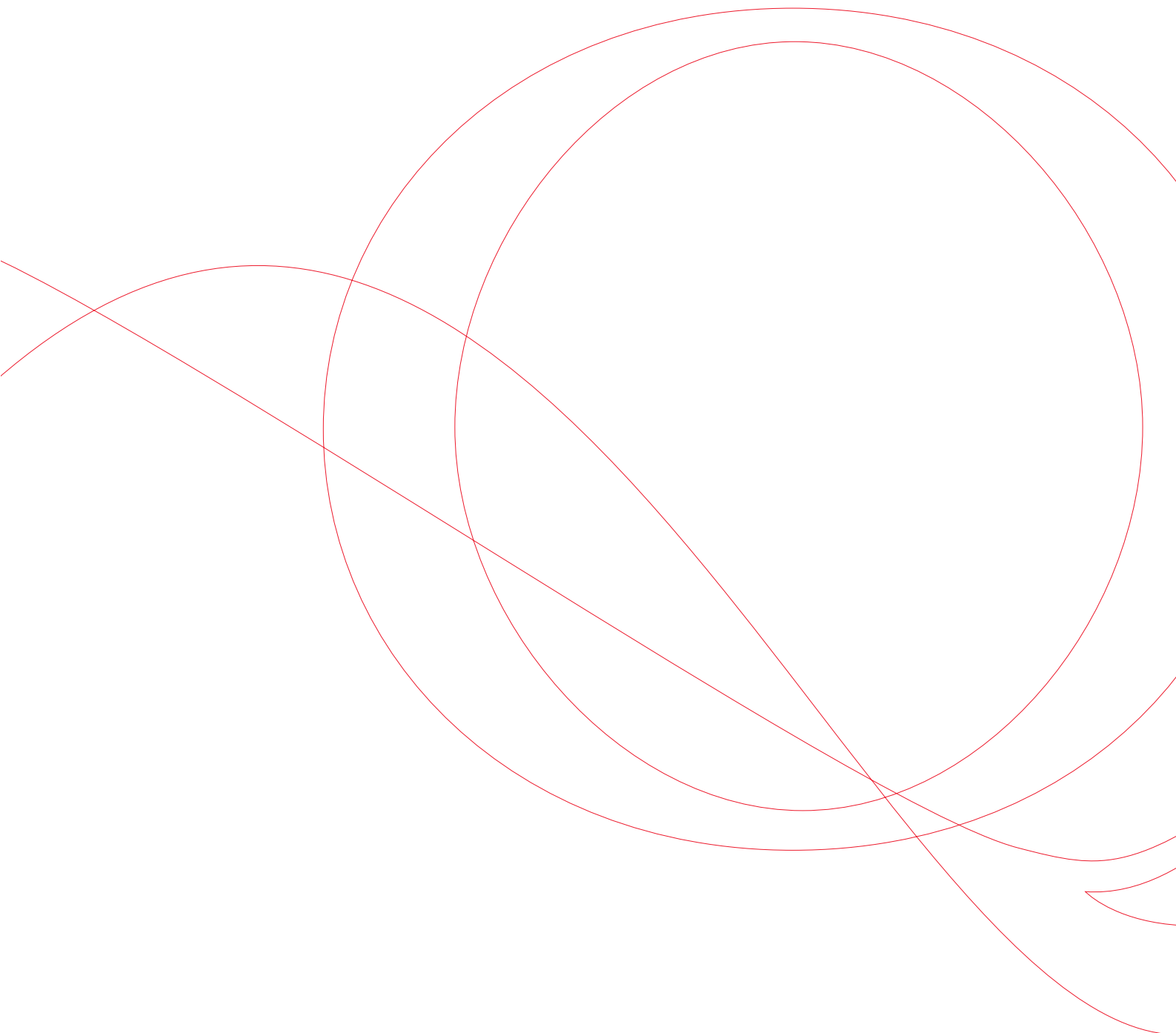
The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000
Fax 01452 557070
www.qaa.ac.uk

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**The Quality Assurance Agency
for Higher Education**



Evaluation of academic review in Wales 2002

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Southgate House
Southgate Street
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Tel 01452 557000
Fax 01452 557070
Email comms@qaa.ac.uk
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Adamsway
Mansfield
Nottinghamshire NG18 4FN

Tel 01623 450788
Fax 01623 450629
Email qaa@linneydirect.com

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Introduction

1 This report outlines the findings of the evaluation of the academic review of subjects in Wales, conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (the Agency) in 2002-03. The reviews, known as subject engagements, were conducted in fourteen higher education institutions (HEIs), addressing 19 subject areas at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. As the individual review reports are confidential to the HEI and the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), this report has been published to disseminate the results and learning from the 2002 engagements.

2 This evaluation report begins by setting the context for these engagements, the review method and the outcomes. The evaluation process is briefly described, before outlining the key issues and learning points from the experiences of participants in 2002.

3 This report has been written primarily for colleagues who are involved in higher education and those who have an interest in the standards and quality of higher education programmes. The results of the evaluation contribute to the discussions and consultation that are taking place in the first part of 2003 in relation to the development of the new process of institutional review.

Background to the subject engagements

4 The plans for quality assurance in Wales were suspended in March 2001. This came about when the UK-wide arrangements were dissolved and new methods were considered in England. As the first HEFCW cycle of quality assessment was a considerable distance from the likely implementation of new methods for quality assurance, interim arrangements were needed. The circular WO1/90HE updated the higher education sector on a range of issues related to higher education (Appendix 1). The document stated that every institution would undertake from one to three engagements at subject level, with the key purpose of assisting institutions to develop their procedures and processes to reflect Agency mechanisms.

5 The engagements were based on the *Handbook for Academic Review 2000* (the *Handbook*) but were intended to be a substantially lighter burden of assessment on the HEIs. As the aim of the engagements was developmental, the outcomes of the reviews are confidential to the HEIs concerned

and to the HEFCW. The Agency developed a document entitled *Academic Review in Wales 2002* (Appendix 2). This document outlined a method that was greatly restricted in terms of the time required, the judgements made and the overall burden placed on subject providers. The judgements were focused on academic standards (intended outcomes, curriculum, assessment and student achievement), on student progression, including the quality of student support arrangements, and on the quality of the learning resources supporting the programmes of study. In addition, the reviewers were asked to provide a commentary on the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the subject. The institutions were required to prepare a self-evaluation document (SED), incorporating programme specifications, for each review.

6 Teams of three Subject Specialist Reviewers (SSRs) normally carried out the reviews. Management of each review and liaison with the institution was the responsibility of a Review Coordinator (CR). The team was normally in the institution for a maximum of two and a half days. The reviewers analysed the self-evaluation documentation and any other materials provided by the institution off-site, and then normally visited the institution for two and a half days.

7 As Agency officers started to work with institutions, it became clear that some additional explanation of the method of engagement would help institutional staff. Two briefing seminars were held on 26 April and 7 May 2002. HEFCW officers and at least two representatives from each institution attended. The briefings were planned to help subject providers understand the requirements of the engagements. At these seminars, an additional synoptic paper was distributed (Appendix 3). This addressed operational issues and the implementation for the processes for the engagements. The participants evaluated both sessions positively.

The outcomes of subject engagements

8 The range of subject engagements

Subjects	Number of engagements	Number of SSRs involved in engagements
Single reviews		
Computing	5	15
Law	2	6
Sports Science	2	6
Architecture	1	3
Theatre Design	1	3
Nursing	1	3
Archaeology	1	3
Occupational Therapy	1	2
Business and Management	1	3
Social Policy	1	3
Aggregate reviews		
Computing/Electrical Engineering	1	4
Business/Accounting	1	4
IT/Business and Management	1	3
Total	19	58

The outcomes of the subject engagements

Academic Standards	Confidence in standards	19
Quality of Learning Opportunities		
Student progression	Commendable	17*
	Approved	2
	Failed	0
Learning resources	Commendable	13*
	Approved	6
	Failed	0

*including the identification of **exemplary features** in Student Progression in one institution and **exemplary features** in Learning Resources in another.

Evaluation approach

9 The evaluation is based on the established Agency evaluation framework and draws upon a number of sources:

- postal evaluation questionnaires;
- visit support monitoring logs: these are records made by Agency officers when attending the reviews;
- minutes/notes of meetings including the briefing seminars;
- oral feedback from participants;
- the Agency's web folders: these are electronic files of the review visits including documentation created by the review team;
- the evaluation seminar in January 2003;
- review judgements and reports.

10 The evaluation questionnaires were sent to the three key groups involved in each engagement: the HEIs, including the Institutional Nominee (IN); the CRs and the SSRs. The percentage returned was 74 per cent, 53 per cent, and 72 per cent respectively, with an overall total return of 69 per cent.

11 Most of the responses are given in a four-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The analysis provides insights into the level of agreement between the three groups and the level of satisfaction with the different aspects of the review. The majority of responses were positive, either 3 (agree) or 4 (strongly agree), 79 per cent for the HEIs, 86 per cent for the CRs and 88 per cent for the SSRs.

Evaluation results

The Handbook

12 The participants had four documents for reference: the *Handbook for Academic Review*, the Circular WO1/90HE, the *Academic Review in Wales 2002* document and the synoptic paper. This number of documents increased the likelihood of staff, particularly at subject level, becoming confused and this happened in some institutions. The evaluation data indicated that HEIs would have benefitted from more preparation and support from the the Agency for writing SEDs.

13 Dissemination from the briefing seminars was more effective in some HEIs than others. This had some effect on the standard and structure of SEDs. A few of these reflected the process of subject review in England 1998-2000. In these

cases, HEI staff had not fully understood the shift from evaluating the quality of student experience through a grading system (1998-2000) to one of consideration of standards and quality against self-evaluation and external reference points. The majority of HEIs considered the seminars helpful and relevant. The evaluations taken at the end of both events confirmed a high level of satisfaction with the content and approach of the briefings.

Schedule of visits

14 The HEIs were offered three possible modes for the engagement: an intensive visit of two and a half days, with the final half day devoted to meetings to confirm team judgements which were then conveyed to the institution in an informal oral feedback; or two days then a later half day for the meetings about judgements; or two and a half days used flexibly within a four-week period. The first two approaches had the advantage of brevity and less disruption for the institution and the last provided both the subject staff and the review team with greater opportunity to reflect upon and consider the information shared.

15 The number of HEIs that chose each of the modes was nine, six and four respectively. Most HEIs preferred a concentrated period of peer review activity.

Self-evaluation documents

16 These varied in quality and comprehensiveness. The evaluation feedback indicated that institutions were less than satisfied with the guidelines for the reviews (Appendix 2). This may have been linked to the multiplicity of documents, some published and some not. For future methods of review, a single published document, widely available to the HE sector and subject communities, will be preferable. Several institutions took the opportunity to directly reference key institutional and departmental level documents in the SED. This worked very well in practice as these references enabled reviewers to find documentation and evidence quickly and efficiently.

17 It soon became clear to the Agency that if HEIs supplied additional documentation with the SED, this would help the reviewers to prepare prior to the visit(s). Where institutions were careful and focused in their choice of additional material and where their SED had clear and direct references to materials, the whole process was more efficient and less intrusive.

18 Several HEIs made very good use of information technology to provide reviewers with information, for example, CD-ROM and web-based materials.

Engagement activity, process issues

19 The analysis of the questionnaires showed that the majority of participants were positive and satisfied with the process. The institutions generally found that the review teams were constructive and understood the developmental nature of the engagements. The approach of peer review against a critical and evaluative SED was clearly successful. The feedback indicated that the HEIs found this process more collegial than their early experiences of external quality assurance.

20 The length of time (2.5 days) for the engagements was sufficient for the review. The CRs and the SSRs expressed a high level of satisfaction in the evidence they gathered and the judgements they made. Institutions were satisfied with the communication between the review team and the HEI.

21 The HEIs provided the reviewers with materials that were adequate and appropriate to inform the judgements and the commentary on the maintenance and enhancement of quality. The material was particularly helpful if it reflected the SED and was focused in nature. This element of control and restraint was also important in the sample of student work provided by the institution. HEIs and review teams worked best when the sample was relevant and contained no more examples of work than were necessary to demonstrate the process of assessment, and the students' achievement of the required standard for the award.

Review teams

22 Review teams were normally composed of three reviewers in each subject area, selected to reflect the broad Joint Academic Coding System (JACs) codes of the subject. Each institution identified the key aspects that they were concerned that the review team should reflect and had an opportunity to comment on the proposed team membership.

23 Institutions varied in the extent to which they requested that review teams had an awareness of higher education in Wales. Wherever possible, at least one member of the team had direct experience of working in an HEI in Wales, or indirect experience such as validation panel member or external examiner. Many institutions thought it more important that the ethos of the HEI was reflected, for example, research-oriented institution, rather than direct experience of providing higher education in Wales.

Review Coordinators

24 CRs manage reviews and liaise with the institution, they do not act as subject specialists. The Agency introduced CRs to the key issues of engagements in Wales at the twice-yearly conferences which the Agency arranges. All CRs received the three guidance papers (Appendix 1.2.3). An Agency Assistant Director and an administrator were named contacts for the engagements. Fifteen CRs managed the 19 reviews. Their coordination of the reviews was generally well received by institutional staff and reviewers, but there were some concerns about the consistency of the conduct of the engagements. This was particularly the case where more than one engagement took place in an HEI and where each CR adopted a different approach. In each case, the guidance in the *Handbook* was followed, but the interpretations of the scope of the role varied.

Institutional Nominee

25 This role was introduced in the later stages of planning the engagements (Annex D, Appendix 2). The role was optional for the HEI. The person nominated was expected to have a thorough knowledge of their institution, its protocols and regulations as well as extensive knowledge and experience of HE and quality assurance. The Agency provided written briefing materials for INs and, in addition, the majority of INs attended the briefing seminars. All HEIs chose to have an IN, but the extent of their involvement in the engagement and particularly at judgement meetings varied. This was partly due to the interpretation of the role by some CRs. This was sometimes a reflection of their anxiety about that level of involvement of a member of the HEI in the process of the engagement. This individual interpretation of such a role needs careful risk assessment and management for future review processes in Wales.

26 The analysis of the questionnaires and other feedback found that the IN role was considered a very positive aspect of this activity and well received by review teams and institutions. In the briefing seminars, participants were not sure that INs should be present at the meetings when reviewers were discussing and confirming judgements. The main reasons given concerned the potential impact of the IN on the process of making judgements. Secondly, some participants considered that the IN would be under considerable pressure from colleagues in their institution both before and after judgements, particularly if the judgements were negative. The evaluation shows that where the HEIs and the review teams followed the written guidance

provided by the Agency, the predicted problems of the INs' attendance at judgement meetings were not realised.

Reports

27 In all 19 engagements there was confidence in standards. There were 17 judgements of commendable for student progression and two approved. There were 12 judgements of commendable for learning resources. The reviewers also noted two exemplary features, one in student progression and one in learning resources, each at a different institution. As the subjects and programmes reviewed were so diverse, no conclusions can be reached about the standard or state of subjects.

28 The comments below are drawn from an analysis of the reports:

Academic standards

29 The intended learning outcomes specified by subject staff were usually clear and relevant, informed by external reference points. The outcomes were generally well communicated to students and other stakeholders.

30 Review teams found that curricula are generally current and supported by research and other scholarly activities of staff. The programmes were considered to have appropriate content for the level of the awards.

31 Reviewers found that assessments are well matched to outcomes, with assessment strategies and activities that are rigorous and secure. Some review teams commented that feedback to students could be improved and/or be more consistent in terms of rigour and helpfulness to the students. Several reports also commented that internal moderation strategies, including second marking, could be improved. Where good practice was evident in such strategies, this was of a particularly high standard.

32 Student achievement demonstrated added-value for many students. This aspect of standards was generally good, being at an appropriate level for most programmes.

Student progression

33 There was wide spread evidence of good practice of supporting students from their entry to the completion of their programmes of study and

beyond. This positive outcome concerns both academic and pastoral support. Students reported that staff are consistently accessible, positive and helpful.

34 A clear message from the reports on the engagements is that HEIs in Wales are actively engaged in widening participation. The reviewers found that staff understood the importance of support tailored to the needs of students from non-traditional backgrounds and met these needs well.

35 The reviewers raised questions about the effectiveness of the management information systems in several HEIs. Reviewers found that HEIs need to improve the quality and breadth of the statistical information on students, and to enable both subject staff and the institutional administrative staff to share and use the information more effectively. This ability to provide clear and accurate information is important for the institutions' own management of standards and quality, as well as for future review processes.

Learning resources

36 The reviewers commented positively on staff qualifications and expertise. They reported that academic, administrative and other support staff are suitably qualified and knowledgeable. Generally, HEIs are able to provide support for staff development, promoting professional as well as educational development.

37 There are mixed messages about the learning resources of libraries and computing in the HEIs. While all institutions have a challenge to maintain and improve the quantity and quality of library stock, some institutions succeeded while others did not meet their students' needs as well. There was no discernable pattern within subjects or institutions as to why the level and quality of provision was so variable. Information and communication technology also varied, both for the students' direct use and when supporting teaching and learning processes.

38 The reviewers clearly identified pressure on staff and technical resources in several HEIs. They attributed this pressure to the increasing numbers of students in many subjects, and the lack of a corresponding increase in staffing and other resources.

Summary of key issues and recommendations arising from the engagements

39 The engagements in Wales consistently identified many positive messages about the standards and quality of higher education programmes in Wales. All subjects received judgements of confidence in standards and commendable or approved in the quality of the learning opportunities.

40 The programmes reviewed demonstrated considerable strengths in relation to learning outcomes, curriculum, assessment and achievement, and particularly to widening participation. Assessment remains the area of standards where the reviewers identified the most scope for improvement. In particular, the reviewers highlighted the need for improvements in second marking or internal moderation.

41 The reviewers found consistently very good levels of academic and pastoral support for students. Increasing student numbers continues to be a challenge for some HEIs, especially where there has not been a corresponding increase in staffing and other learning resources. In these cases, staff are under pressure to sustain this very good level of academic and pastoral support.

42 The overall commentary on maintenance and enhancement of quality and standards was positive and the HEIs were well aware of their responsibilities. Some institutions are advised to review their management information systems to ensure that programme and subject staff as well as administrative staff receive information which helps and supports them to achieve their institution's mission.

43 The reviewers find the use of references in SEDs very helpful. Where HEIs also cross-referenced to documents available on the institutions' web sites, CD-ROM and intranet or in the workroom for reviewers, the engagements with their external peers worked particularly well.

44 The role of the IN was welcomed by most reviewers and HEIs. Many recommended that this or a similar role should be included in future methods of review.

45 Preparation for the method of Institutional Review in Wales needs to be thorough and tailored to meet the needs of HEIs in Wales. The participants at the evaluation seminar recommended: workshops to assist with the preparation of SEDs; more guidance on documentation to be provided by the

HEI both before the review and during the process; and more preparation for the role of the IN including training shared by reviewers and INs, with the benefit of ensuring a greater appreciation of the Wales higher education context during training.

Conclusion

46 The subject engagements in Wales were approached with a mix of some reservations and some enthusiasm by the HEIs. The aims for these activities were realised and achieved; the HEFCW, the Agency and the HEIs worked together to ensure that the subject engagements in Wales were a positive experience. This report has highlighted the key issues and learning points arising from the reviews and evaluation. There are lessons which are applicable to the new method of Institutional Review under development.

47 The successful completion of the process is in great part due to the hard work and enthusiasm of the HEIs' subject staff and students, and of the review teams.

Appendix 1

Academic Review in Wales, 2002

To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales

Summary: This Circular updates the sector on a range of issues related to quality assurance in higher education.

Reference: W01/90HE

Publication date: 30 October 2001

Response by: No response required.

Further information: Celia Hunt
e-mail: huntc@elwa.ac.uk
Telephone: 029 20 682224

Address: HEFCW
Linden Court
The Orchards
Ilex Close
Llanishen
Cardiff CF14 5DZ

Introduction

1 This Circular updates the sector on a range of issues related to quality assurance in higher education.

Background

2 The HEFCW's plans for taking forward the Quality Assurance Agency (Agency's) UK wide proposals for quality assurance within Wales were suspended in March 2001. This followed the announcement of new arrangements to be implemented in England and recognised the possible impact on quality assurance within higher education (HE) in Wales.

3 Subsequently, a consultation paper was published related to arrangements to be taken forward in England from September 2002 onwards. This document is available on the Agency website www.qaa.ac.uk/public/newmethod/newmethod.htm

4 Given the lengthy gap between the completion of the first HEFCW five-year cycle of quality assessment in Wales and the likely implementation of new arrangements, it was necessary to address interim arrangements for 2001/02. This circular gives some information about those interim arrangements and also reports back on a number of related issues which have been delayed since March 2001.

Interim arrangements for 2002

5 After some discussion, and following the publication of Circular W01/65HE (27 July 2001), the HEFCW has now formally agreed with Higher Education Wales (HEW) interim arrangements for the quality assurance of HE in Wales in 2001/02.

These interim arrangements have several purposes: they

- meet the requirement of the National Assembly for Wales for an end to the continuing delay in the implementation of a new method of assuring quality and standards in higher education provision in Wales;
- assist institutions in re-engaging with processes and procedures developed by the Agency, following wide consultation with institutions, as set out in the Agency *Handbook for Academic Review*;

and, most importantly, they will

- assist institutions in developing their processes and procedures to fit the Agency mechanisms.

They should be seen in the context of assisting the maximisation of quality enhancement rather than in the negative sense of the imposition of quality control.

6 Arrangements have been agreed as follows:

- That each institution should undertake one to three engagements at subject level with the Agency in 2001/02. The number of engagements will depend upon the size of the institution and will be agreed between the institution, the Council and the Agency;
- These engagements should be based upon (but not be bound by) the subjects proposed by institutions for scrutiny by the Agency during 2001/02 in the Agency's scope and preference survey;
- The arrangements for the engagements will be based upon the processes and procedures set out in the Agency *Handbook for Academic Review* but will see a substantially lighter burden of assessment on institutions during 2001/02. They will not be full subject reviews as previously conceived;
- In a revision to the circular W01/65HE, the period during which these engagements should take place has been extended to December 2002 (ie they should take place during the calendar year 2002);
- Because the aim of these engagements is developmental (viz; to enable institutions to re-familiarise themselves with Agency practices and expectations), the outcomes will be confidential and made available only to the institutions concerned and to the HEFCW.

7 Attached to this circular is a description of the method to be adopted by the Agency, entitled *Academic Review in Wales 2002*. Any queries relating to this method should be addressed to the Agency. Any institution wishing to opt for the full Agency subject review method is free to do so.

8 Within the overall position set out above, the Agency will aim to be flexible in its dealings with institutions, in terms of both the timetable for assessments and the structure of the arrangements. Each individual higher education institution will be sent a letter shortly which sets out the subjects currently agreed with the Agency for inclusion in the new arrangements and any subsidiary queries which will need to be addressed, for example, the extent of Welsh Medium provision being put forward for assessment.

Arrangements after December 2002

9 The HEFCW will await the outcome of the consultation in England and the development of new arrangements, planned for introduction in September 2002 or soon after. It has encouraged institutions in Wales to respond to the consultation. It will then determine the approach to be adopted in Wales, in consultation with the sector. Institutions responding to the consultation have been asked to copy their responses to the HEFCW and these will be taken into account in the development of consultation proposals in Wales. It is expected that details of the arrangements for England will be available before the end of December 2001 and HEFCW officers will be involved in the development of these proposals where possible.

Other issues

10 A number of related issues have been delayed since March 2001.

a The assessment of higher education in further education (FE) institutions

11 A consultation was conducted in 2000 on the processes to be adopted by the Council for the assessment of HE in FE institutions. The outcome of this consultation was overtaken by events just prior to publication. This will be published in the near future, updated to reflect the establishment of the new National Council for Education and Training for Wales.

12 However, given the delays in the publication of this outcome, it is not expected that FE providers of HE courses will wish to be involved in the interim arrangements set out in this circular for 2001/02. They should, however, plan for involvement in the new Agency framework from 2002/03, in consultation with the Agency. It is likely that the arrangements for the HE sector, arising from the current consultation with in England, will draw heavily upon the Agency's Institutional Review process for higher education institutions. Given that FE providers will not be involved in institutional review within Agency procedures, it is expected that the arrangements for subject review, as set out in the Agency's Handbook for Academic Review, will continue to apply to HE provision in FE institutions for the remainder of the current cycle.

13 However, formal liaison has been established between the HEFCW, Agency and Estyn and the scope for joint working is under consideration.

HEFCW officers will continue to encourage the reduction of duplication between the Agency and Estyn on these matters wherever possible.

b The inclusion of a institutional response in quality assurance Reports

14 The Council conducted a brief informal consultation with HE institutions on the above in 2000. The purpose of the consultation was to ascertain whether institutions would prefer to retain the option, utilised by HEFCW in the first cycle of assessment, whereby they were permitted to include a formal response to the interim teaching quality assessment report in the final version to be published.

15 Nine institutions responded and all indicated that the option should be retained. Reasons given for this included that it allowed institutions to comment on significant action taken as a result of the review; it enabled institutions to demonstrate the responsiveness of their quality systems and their commitment to continuous improvement; it promoted quality enhancement; it improved information available to potential students; and it helped to close the quality loop. Discussions with Agency officers had finalized arrangements for the inclusion of such a response, based upon an action plan developed by the institution in answer to issues raised in the published report.

16 These matters were, of course, held up by the delay in implementation of the new Agency framework. This option will not be available as part of the interim arrangements in 2001/02, since it is not intended that reports should be made public. However, given the unanimous response in favour of this option, the Council will consider this matter again when developing the arrangements to be implemented in Wales from 2002/3.

c The rewarding of the audit

17 Proposals for new arrangements for the reward of quality were discussed by the Council at its meeting in May 2001, taking account of recommendations from its Quality Assessment Committee. These will involve a focus upon the enhancement of quality, via the submission of expanded Learning and Teaching Strategies, rather than the direct reward of 'excellent' outcomes. A consultation is planned regarding these proposals, which have also been temporarily suspended, given the uncertainty surrounding the new arrangements.

18 A paper detailing these proposals will be circulated in the near future and institutions will be invited to comment on the proposals put forward.

d Quality assessment committee

19 Simultaneously, the Council considered proposals for a restructuring of its Quality Assessment Committee (QAC), which has a statutory role in advising it on quality assessment matters. The proposals considered included the introduction of a new larger, and more broadly focussed, Learning and Teaching Committee, of which members of the the QAC would form a subset, whilst retaining their separate status for statutory purposes.

e Agency liaison in Wales

20 The Council has agreed the establishment of a Liaison Officer for Wales, currently Mike Laugharne, within the terms of its Service Level Agreement with the Agency. The arrangements also include funding for a capacity for dealing with Welsh Medium enquiries. Institutions are encouraged to make use of the Liaison Officer whenever queries arise regarding Agency processes and procedures. It is noted that, despite the uncertainties regarding quality assurance processes and procedures in Wales over the past few years, very few institutional queries have been passed either to Council or Agency officers.

Queries

21 Any queries regarding the content of this circular should be directed to Ms Celia Hunt, e-mail: huntc@elwa.ac.uk, tel: 02920 682224.

Appendix 2

Academic Review in Wales, 2002

'Engagements' with Welsh Higher Education Institutions

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Subject Level 'Engagements'

Introduction

1 This booklet describes a method for conducting subject level 'engagements' in Wales during the calendar year 2002. It should be used in conjunction with the Handbook for Academic Review published previously by the Agency. The duration of the overall review schedule has been agreed with the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW). The precise timing of reviews will be subject to negotiation between the Quality Assurance Agency (Agency) and the individual Welsh higher education institutions.

2 Although the method described below is based on the same principles and practices as those already described in the *Handbook for Academic Review*, it is greatly restricted in terms of the time required, the judgements made and the overall burden placed on subject providers. It is most certainly not subject review by another name and does not include judgements on the quality of teaching and learning. However, the units of review remain the subject categories already devised by the Agency and outlined in Annex K of the *Handbook*. Subjects will not normally be aggregated for the purposes of this schedule.

3 A self-evaluation document, incorporating programme specifications, will be required for each review and should be prepared in accordance with the guidance in paragraphs 24-26, 28-30 and Annex C of the *Handbook*. Institutions will also find it helpful to use Annex E of the *Handbook* (the *Aide-Mémoire* for subject review) for the purposes of constructing a self-evaluation. Even though this academic review method does not permit reviewers to scrutinise all aspects of provision directly, it is expected that institutions will provide information about quality and standards in full, not least because it is difficult for them to give an adequate account of these matters without covering all aspects. It is intended that the self-evaluation document will form the basis for the report of the restricted external review, albeit modified by the reviewers' observations.

4 The judgements to be made will be focused on academic standards (intended outcomes, curriculum, assessment and student achievement), on student progression, including the quality of the student support arrangements and on the quality of the resources supporting the programmes of study. The *Aide-Mémoire* at Annex A in this booklet provides guidance on the questions likely to lead to

the collection of the evidence necessary to make these judgements.

The Method

5 Subject providers should set out clearly the broad aims of their programmes in their programme specifications and provide a statement of the overall aims of the provision at the start of the self-evaluation document. Such statements should indicate, in general terms, what the subject provider is seeking to achieve and how these aims relate to external indicators (such as the qualifications framework, subject benchmark statements, professional body requirements, and employer expectations). These broad aims will provide the context in which the review takes place.

6 These reviews will normally be carried out by small teams of three subject specialists, whose main responsibility is to read, analyse and test the self-evaluation produced by the institution, and to gather whatever further evidence they need to make the judgements described later in this booklet. Management of each review and liaison with the institution is the responsibility of a review coordinator.

7 The review team will normally spend a maximum of two days visiting the institution, preceded by an off-site desk-based analysis of the self-evaluation document and any other materials supplied by the institution. Such materials normally comprise only a prospectus and location maps, although it is possible that a review coordinator **may** request that copies of the student handbook are supplied in advance of the visits to the institution. Documents needed during visits will be requested at the time. If further information is required following the visit to enable the report to be completed, this will be requested by telephone or email. The two days' direct observation may be consecutive or separated by a period for reflection by the reviewers, according to the preference of the institution. In either event, the review must be completed within a period of four weeks.

8 The review coordinator will make initial contact with the subject provider to agree an outline programme for the review and to establish the:

- pattern of visits;
- range of student work which can be made available for scrutiny, and the extent to which this constitutes a representative sample of student achievement in the subject;

- nature of relevant documentation held by the institution and its availability for scrutiny by reviewers;
- timing of any related visits by professional or statutory bodies;
- probable agenda and timing of meetings with academic staff, students and former students;
- other practical arrangements for the review.

9 The views of students are important, but should be treated as one source of evidence among several. Meetings with students enable reviewers to establish the students':

- understanding of the overall aims and intended learning outcomes;
- views on the curriculum and the assessment methods used;
- views on academic support and the resources available;
- views on feedback and representation arrangements.

Arrangements for meetings with students are set out in Annex C of this booklet.

Where appropriate, and if time permits, reviewers may also see the views of former students, their employers, and representatives from relevant industries or professions.

The Evidence

10 Reviewers will seek to establish that:

- intended learning outcomes are clearly expressed by the subject provider, and reflect appropriately the qualifications framework, relevant subject benchmark statements and the overall aims of the programme;
- there is effective communication to staff and students, so that learners and teachers know what is expected of them;
- curricular content supports the intended outcomes, and assessments measure appropriately their achievement;

11 Reviewers will seek to establish, by reference to subject benchmark statements where appropriate, that the design and content of the curriculum facilitate:

- acquisition of knowledge and understanding;
- acquisition of cognitive skills;

- acquisition of subject-specific skills, including practical and professional skills;
- acquisition of transferable skills;
- progression to employment and/or further study

12 Reviewers will seek to establish that:

- there is an appropriate overall strategy for academic support;
- there are effective arrangements for admission and induction;
- learning is promoted by academic guidance, effective feedback and careful supervision;
- students' progression towards successful completion of their programmes is facilitated.

13 Finally, reviewers will also seek to establish that:

- the collective expertise of the academic, technical and administrative staff is suitable for effective delivery of the curricula;
- there is an overall strategy for the deployment of learning resources;
- suitable accommodation, equipment and other learning resources are available.

The Judgements

14 A single, threshold judgement is made about academic standards. Having regard to all the matters listed below, reviewers will decide whether they have confidence in the academic standards of the provision under review. A '**confidence**' judgement will be made if reviewers are satisfied both with current standards, and with the prospect of those standards being maintained in the future. If standards are being achieved, but there is doubt about the ability of the institution to maintain them into the future, reviewers will indicate '**limited confidence**' in the academic standards achieved. If, in relation to any of the matters listed below, reviewers feel that arrangements are inadequate to enable standards to be achieved or demonstrated, then their overall judgement will be that they have '**no confidence**' in the academic standards of the provision under review.

15 Reviewers will judge, for each programme, whether there are clear learning outcomes, which appropriately reflect applicable subject benchmark statements and the level of the award. Subject benchmark statements represent general expectations about standards in an academic

discipline, particularly in relation to intellectual demand and challenge. The qualifications framework sets expectations for awards at a given level more generally. Reference points are thereby provided to assist reviewers in determining whether provision is meeting the standards expected by the academic community generally, for awards of a particular type and level. If the intended learning outcomes are found not to match those expectations, it would be unlikely that reviewers could have confidence in the standards of the provision. An example of potential failure would be if a postgraduate programme has learning outcomes set at an undergraduate level only.

16 Reviewers will judge whether the content and design of the curriculum are effective in achieving the intended programme outcomes. It is the curriculum that ensures that students are able to meet the intended outcomes of the programme. Providers should be able to demonstrate how each outcome is supported by the curriculum. 'Curriculum' for this purpose includes both the content necessary to develop understanding and the acquisition of knowledge, and the opportunities to develop practical skills and abilities where these are stated as intended outcomes. If significant intended learning outcomes are found to be unsupported by the curriculum, it would be unlikely that reviewers could have confidence in the standards of the provision.

17 Reviewers will judge whether the curriculum content is appropriate to each stage of the programme, and to the level of the award. Providers should be able to demonstrate how the design of the curriculum secures academic and intellectual progression by imposing increasing demands on the learner, over time, in terms of the acquisition of knowledge and skills, the capacity for conceptualisation, and increasing autonomy in learning. Reviewers will have regard to the guidance on programme design in the section of the *Code of practice* on programme approval, monitoring and review.

18 Reviewers will judge whether assessment is designed appropriately to measure achievement of the intended outcomes. Providers should be able to demonstrate that achievement of intended outcomes is assessed, and that, in each case, the assessment method selected is appropriate to the nature of the intended outcome. There must also be confidence in the security and integrity of the assessment process, with appropriate involvement of external examiners. An assessment strategy

should also have a formative function, providing students with prompt feedback, and assisting them in the development of their intellectual skills. There should be clear and appropriate criteria for different classes of performance, and these criteria should be communicated effectively to students. If significant intended learning outcomes appear not to be assessed, or if there are serious doubts about the integrity of the assessment procedures, it would be unlikely that reviewers could have confidence in the standards of the provision. Reviewers will have regard to the section of the *Code of practice* on assessment of students.

19 Reviewers will judge whether student achievement matches the intended outcomes and level of the award. Reviewers will consider external examiners' reports from the three years prior to the review, and will themselves sample student work. The balance between reliance upon the reports of external examiners and direct sampling of student work will depend on the confidence that reviewers have in the external examining arrangements of the institution. Regard will be had to the section of the *Code of practice* on external examining.

20 Where programmes are offered at more than one level, separate judgements will be made in respect of each level, if there are significant differences between them. In all cases, reports will contain a narrative commentary on strengths and weaknesses in relation to each aspect of the standards judgement.

21 Judgements about student progression and learning resources are made against the broad aims of the provision and the intended learning outcomes of the programmes. They normally cover all provision within the scope of the review, but if performance is significantly different in a particular programme or at a particular level, separate judgements will be made. These judgements will place student progression and learning resources in one of three categories, '**failing**', '**approved**' or '**commendable**', made on the following basis:

- '**failing**' provision makes a less than adequate contribution to the achievement of the intended outcomes. Significant improvement is required urgently if the provision is to become at least adequate;
- '**approved**' provision enables the intended outcomes to be achieved, but improvement is needed to overcome weaknesses. The report of the review will normally include a statement containing the phrase '**approved, but**';

which will set out the areas where improvement is needed;

- 'commendable' provision contributes substantially to the achievement of the intended outcomes, with most elements demonstrating good practice.

22 In making judgements about student progression, reviewers will judge whether an appropriate strategy for the academic support of students is in place. Such support should include written guidance consistent with the student profile and the overall aims of the provision. It commences with recruitment, admission and induction arrangements; these should be thoroughly understood by academic staff and should be transparent to applicants and to the students recruited. Throughout their programmes of study, students' learning should be facilitated by proper academic guidance, prompt feedback on performance and effective supervision. Reviewers will consider these features in general and in the context of the arrangements made for academic tutorial support. Reviewers will judge whether these support arrangements are understood by staff and students, and whether they are effective in facilitating student progression towards successful completion of their programmes.

23 In order to make the judgement about student progression, reviewers will scrutinise subject or programme handbooks, student questionnaires or summaries thereof, internal review documents, recruitment data and progression data. They will discuss related matters with staff and with students.

24 In making judgements about **learning resources**, reviewers will judge whether the minimum resource necessary to deliver each programme is available. Consideration will be given to the use of equipment (including IT), accommodation (including laboratories), and the library (including electronic resources). Effective utilisation of academic, technical and administrative staff will be considered, as will the matching of the qualifications, experience and expertise of teaching staff to the requirements of the programmes. Reviewers will judge whether or not resources are adequate to support achievement of the intended learning outcomes of the programme under review, and will look for clear evidence of an overall strategy which ensures effective deployment. They will expect to see evidence that the teaching accommodation, the book and periodical stocks and the equipment and IT facilities bring about effective student learning.

The Reports

25 At the end of each 'engagement', a report that describes the findings of the team of reviewers will be produced. It is the main documented outcome of the review process and provides the main feedback to the institution and its subject provider. For the purposes of the 2002 reviews in Wales, the reports will not be published and will remain confidential to the institution, HEFCW and Agency. The reports will include:

- a brief description of the review method;
- the overall aims of the subject provider as stated in the self-evaluation document;
- an evaluation of the academic standards achieved and of student progression and learning resources;
- the conclusions reached and the judgements made;
- a one-page summary of the main conclusions.

26 Reporting on standards takes the form of a narrative commentary which addresses strengths and weaknesses by reference (where appropriate) to the relevant sections of the Code of practice, subject benchmark statements, and the qualifications framework, and leads to the overall threshold judgement. The narrative may identify matters for particular commendation or matters of concern. Reporting on student progression and learning resources also takes the form of narrative commentary on strengths and weaknesses, and leads to graded judgements about their quality.

27 Draft reports are sent to the institution for comment on matters of factual accuracy. Feedback on the review is provided to the institution through the draft report.

Annex A

Aide-Mémoire for Academic Review in Wales

Introduction

1 This *Aide-Mémoire* consists of questions and prompts to assist academic reviewers and institutions. It may be used in:

- analysis of the self-evaluation prior to the review;
- collection of evidence during the review;
- preparation and compilation of the report of the review.

2 The *Aide-Mémoire* covers the main features of the review process, but it is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. The provider's self-evaluation, the statement of aims, and the intended outcomes of programmes may all raise issues peculiar to the provision under scrutiny.

3 Specific prompts for reviewers are set out under a series of headings. The process of review focuses on the setting of academic standards by the subject provider, student progression and student achievement and the quality of the learning resources provided. The *Aide-Mémoire* provides questions and prompts about:

- aims and outcomes;
- curricula;
- assessment;
- student progression;
- learning resources.

4 Key points of reference for reviewers will include the relevant sections of the *Code of practice*, the qualifications framework, relevant subject benchmark statements, and the overall aims of the subject provider. Notice should also be taken of the requirements of professional and statutory bodies in respect of programmes that they accredit.

5 The *Aide-Mémoire* is divided into sections that help to set the parameters for the review. Each section comprises:

- a set of questions, to gather information;
- the key issues for evaluation;
- an indication of likely sources of information;

- an indication of the types of activity likely to be undertaken during a review;
- the judgements that should be made.

Section i - Aims and outcomes

Evaluation of the intended learning outcomes in relation to external reference points and to the broad aims of the provision

6 Reviewers should ask:

- what are the intended learning outcomes for a programme?
- how do they relate to external reference points including relevant subject benchmark statements, the qualifications framework and any professional body requirements?
- how do they relate to the overall aims of the provision as stated by the subject provider?
- are they appropriate to the aims?

They should then evaluate the intended learning outcomes against relevant external reference points and against the aims of the provision as described in the self-evaluation.

Potential sources of information will include the self-evaluation (and its appended programme specifications), curricular documents, subject benchmark statements, the qualifications framework and details of professional body requirements.

Review activities may include an analysis of programme content and benchmark statements, discussions with members of the teaching staff.

7 As a result of these activities reviewers should be able to judge:

- whether the intended learning outcomes are clearly stated;
- whether they reflect appropriately relevant benchmark statements, other external references, and the overall aims of the provision.

The means by which the intended outcomes are communicated to students, staff and external examiners

8 Reviewers should ask:

- how are the intended outcomes of a programme and its constituent parts

communicated to staff, students and external examiners?

- do the students know what is expected of them?

They should then evaluate the way in which subject providers convey their expectations to staff, students and external examiners.

Sources of information will include programme or subject handbooks and curricular documents such as module or unit guides.

Review activities may include discussions with teaching teams, students and external examiners.

The main outcomes should be judgements on the adequacy of arrangements within the subject for communicating intended learning outcomes.

Section ii - Curricula

Evaluation of the means by which the subject provider creates the conditions for achievement of the intended learning outcomes

9 Reviewers should ask:

- do the design and content of the curricula encourage achievement of the intended learning outcomes in terms of knowledge and understanding, cognitive skills, subject specific skills (including practical/professional skills), transferable skills, progression to employment and/or further study, and personal development?

They should then evaluate the design and content of the curriculum for each programme in relation to its potential for enabling students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Sources of information will include subject or programme handbooks and curricular documents, such as module or unit guides, practical or placement handbooks, and further study and employment statistics.

Review activities may include evaluation of curricular documents and discussions with staff and students.

The section of the *Code of practice* dealing with programme approval, monitoring and review will provide an important point of reference.

As a result of these activities reviewers should be able to judge whether the intended learning outcomes are adequately supported by the curricula.

10 Reviewers should ask:

- Is there evidence that curricular content and design is informed by recent developments in techniques of teaching and learning, by current research and scholarship, and by any changes in relevant occupational or professional requirements?

They should then evaluate whether the curriculum is adequately informed by such developments.

Sources of information will include subject or programme handbooks, validation or re-validation documents, and professional and/or statutory body accreditation reports.

Review activities may include discussions with staff and external examiners, discussions with professional and/or statutory bodies, and discussions with employers (where relevant and possible).

As a result of these activities reviewers should be able to assess the currency of the curricula.

Section iii - Assessment

Evaluation of the assessment process and the standard it demonstrates

11 Reviewers should ask:

- does the assessment process enable learners to demonstrate achievement of the intended outcomes?
- are there criteria that enable internal and external examiners to distinguish between different categories of achievement?
- can there be full confidence in the security and integrity of assessment procedures?
- does the assessment strategy have an adequate formative function in developing student abilities?

They should then evaluate whether the overall assessment process and the particular assessment instruments chosen are appropriate and effective.

Sources of information will include assessment criteria and guidance to markers, external examiners' reports and procedures for monitoring and recording achievement.

Review activities may include discussions with teaching teams, students and external examiners and the analysis of the methods for recording progress and achievement.

The sections of the Code of practice dealing with assessment of students and external examining will be important points of reference.

As a result of these activities, reviewers should be able to judge whether assessment processes can adequately measure achievement of the intended programme outcomes.

12 Reviewers should ask:

- what evidence is there that the standards achieved by learners meet the minimum expectations for the award, as measured against relevant subject benchmarks and the qualifications framework?

They should then evaluate whether student achievement meets such expectations.

Sources of information will include external examiners' reports, examination board minutes, and samples of student work.

Review activities may include discussions with teaching teams and external examiners, and observation of examination boards where possible.

Relevant subject benchmark statements and the level descriptors of the qualifications framework will be important points of reference.

As a result of these activities, reviewers should be able to judge whether appropriate standards are being achieved.

Section iv - Student Progression

Evaluation of the quality of the learning opportunities offered by the subject provider:

student progression and academic support

13 Reviewers should ask:

- is there an appropriate overall strategy for academic support, including written guidance, which is consistent with the student profile and the overall aims of the provision?
- are there effective arrangements for admission and induction which are generally understood by staff and students?
- how effectively is learning facilitated by academic guidance, feedback and supervisory arrangements?
- are the arrangements for academic tutorial support clear and generally understood by staff and students?

They should then evaluate whether the arrangements in place are effective in facilitating student progression towards successful completion of their programmes.

Sources of information will include subject or programme handbooks, student questionnaires, internal review documents, recruitment data, and progression data.

Review activities will include discussions with admissions staff, discussions with teaching staff, and discussions with students.

As a result of these activities, reviewers should be able to judge the effectiveness of the recruitment arrangements, the strategy for student support and the progression of students.

Section v - Learning Resources

Evaluation of the quality of the learning opportunities offered by the subject provider: learning resources and their deployment

14 Reviewers should ask:

- is the collective expertise of the academic staff suitable and available for effective delivery of the curricula, for the overall teaching, learning and assessment strategy, and for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes?
- are appropriate staff development opportunities available?
- is appropriate technical and administrative support available?

They should then evaluate the effectiveness of the deployment of academic and support staff in support of the intended learning outcomes.

Sources of information will include staff CVs, internal review documents, external examiners' reports, and staff development documents.

Review activities may include discussions with teaching teams, and discussions with students.

As a result of these activities reviewers should be able to judge whether there are appropriately qualified staff who are contributing effectively to achievement of the intended outcomes.

15 Reviewers should ask:

- is there an overall strategy for the deployment of learning resources?

- how effectively is learning facilitated in terms of the provision of resources?
- is suitable teaching and learning accommodation available?
- are the subject book and periodical stocks appropriate and accessible?
- are suitable equipment and appropriate IT facilities available to learners?

They should then evaluate the appropriateness of the learning resources available.

Sources of information will include equipment lists, library stocks, and internal review documents.

Review activities may include direct observation of accommodation and equipment, discussions with staff, and discussions with students.

As a result of these activities, reviewers should be able to judge how effectively the learning resources are deployed in support of the intended outcomes.

Annex B

Documentation for Academic Review in Wales

Institutional documents

1 Apart from the self-evaluation, academic reviewers will not normally expect documents to be prepared especially for review. Subject providers should direct reviewers, in the self-evaluation and/or by means of a separate list, to the availability and relevance of documents which might assist them to test and verify the statements made in the self-evaluation or which are relevant to the judgements they will make.

2 The following documents will be required in advance of the review:

- the self-evaluation, with the programme specifications annexed;
- relevant prospectuses;
- a location map.

3 The availability and relevance of further documentation will be discussed through the initial contact between the review coordinator and the subject provider. The following documents are likely to be relevant to the review:

- subject or programme handbooks;
- curricular documents, module or unit guides;
- subject or programme monitoring reports, including those from external sources such as professional and/or statutory bodies, if these are available;
- external examiners' reports for the previous three years.

The following documents may also be relevant, but this list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive:

- minutes of examination boards;
- practical or placement handbooks;
- programme approval, validation and re-validation documents;
- academic staffing list and short profiles
- There is no requirement or expectation that documents will be assembled in a 'base room' for the use of reviewers. If reviewers wish to see a document, they will ask for it.

Student work

4 Reviewers will expect to see a sample of student work. The range and nature of student work to be made available to the reviewers will be discussed during the initial contact between the subject provider and the review coordinator. Reviewers will look at student work to evaluate whether:

- student achievement matches the intended outcomes of the programme(s);
- assessment is designed appropriately to measure achievement of the intended learning outcomes;
- the assessment instruments provide an adequate basis for discriminating between different categories of attainment;
- the actual outcomes of programmes meet the minimum expectations for the award.

Reviewers will not duplicate or 'second-guess' the work of external examiners and will not normally expect to see work which is currently under consideration by external examiners.

5 Academic reviewers will need to see a broad sample of student work that demonstrates use of the full range of assessment instruments deployed in both formative and summative assessments. To enable them to gain a full understanding of the assessment strategy, reviewers may need to see marking guides or other assessment criteria, and any guidance on providing feedback to students through assessment. They will use external examiners' reports to triangulate with their own observations of work from each level/year of study, samples of work from core modules and specialist options and from a representative range of attainment. Samples of work may include, for example:

- coursework of various types;
- practical, laboratory or workshop notebooks;
- projects and/or dissertations;
- examination scripts.

Annex C

Agenda for Meeting with Students

Introduction

1 Meetings with students enable reviewers to establish student views on the issues being considered. These meetings provide an opportunity not only to hear the direct views of those present, but also to establish more generally whether there are effective arrangements for student feedback and representation.

2 The meeting is normally chaired by the review coordinator, who will introduce the subject specialist reviewers and provide a brief summary of the review method. S/he will outline the purpose of the meeting and will emphasise the importance of transparency of the review process. The dialogue with students will normally start with a question to establish on what basis the students were selected to attend the meeting.

The curriculum and intended learning outcomes

- are students made aware of the intended learning outcomes by programme specifications or other means?
- what is the match between the expectations of students, the intended learning outcomes and the curricular content?
- does the curricular content encourage the development of knowledge and skills?
- what is its relevance to further study and prospective employment?
- are timetables and workloads appropriate?

Assessment and achievement

- do students understand the criteria for assessment and the methods employed?
- is assessment formative as well as summative?
- what feedback is there? Is it prompt and effective?
- in their experience, have the intended learning outcomes been achieved?
- do academic staff discuss student achievement with students?
- are further study and career aspirations likely to be satisfied?

Student progression

- what admission and induction arrangements are in operation?
- what are the arrangements for academic support?
- do these arrangements extend to work experience, placements, study abroad and other off-site experiences?
- what skills are acquired? Do they enhance employability?
- do students receive effective support?

Learning resources

- How good are the library services in terms of opening hours, access, user support, availability of books and journals?
- what IT support is there? Are opening hours, access, user support and availability of work stations and software appropriate?
- are there suitable programme-specific materials?
- are the accommodation and equipment adequate?

Annex D

Institutional nominee

Introduction

1 Each institution may nominate a member or members of staff (normally no more than three) to take on the role of institutional nominee, although there is no requirement to do so. The purpose of this is to provide the opportunity to the institution to observe the process in order to gain a full understanding of the engagement and to ensure that the team obtains accurate and comprehensive information about the educational provision and its institutional context. In due course, the experience gained by the institutional nominees in dealing with engagements in several departments should enable them to help subject providers prepare for these events, disseminate good practice within the institution, and highlight areas for improvement identified by each engagement. Institutional nominees will be briefed for their role by the Agency through written materials.

2 Institutional staff who wish to act as institutional nominees should possess:

- thorough knowledge of the structure, policies, priorities, procedures and practices of their institution;
- extensive knowledge and experience of working in HE at a senior level;
- extensive experience of quality assurance procedures;
- knowledge and understanding of the Agency's review method for Wales;
- qualifications and experience in a subject area other than that being reviewed;
- an ability to maintain confidentiality.

It is also preferable that nominees have either direct experience of teaching in HE or experience as a senior administrator in an HE institution.

3 If the institution puts no nominee forward, a designated member of staff will normally take on the liaison functions described in this annex from the academic department under review who will not attend the team meetings.

Role of the nominee

General matters

4 Organisation and management of the engagement is the responsibility of the review coordinator (CR). Responsibility for ensuring that the review team is provided with appropriate evidence to allow it to reach its judgements lies primarily with the subject provider. The provider will identify a principal subject contact with whom the CR will liaise. Part of the nominee's role is to observe the channels of communication between the two and ensure that they work effectively. Discussions between the subject contact and review coordinator should ensure that the subject provider is aware of issues being addressed by the team and the evidence needed to clarify them. It would be helpful if HE institutions could supply review coordinators with brief outlines of nominees' previous experience and current institutional roles.

5 Throughout the course of an engagement, the nominee may help the reviewers to come to a clear and accurate understanding of the structures, policies, priorities and procedures of the institution. S/he may wish to bring additional information to the attention of the team and may seek to correct factual inaccuracy. Assistance in understanding the subject provision is provided by the subject contact. It is for the reviewers to decide how best to use the information provided. The nominee is not a member of the team and will not make judgements about the provision.

6 The role requires the nominee to observe objectively, to communicate clearly with the team where requested, to respect the protocols on confidentiality outlined below, and to establish effective relationships with the review coordinator and the team, as well as with the subject staff. Nominees should refrain from acting as advocates for the subject provision under review. However, they may legitimately:

- provide advice on institutional matters.
- identify the location of evidence
- assist the institution in understanding issues of concern to reviewers;

Activities preceding engagements

7 Institutions may find it helpful to involve nominees fully in preparation for a subject engagement, including the initial meeting with the Agency to discuss the scope and form of the event.

The nominee with responsibility for an engagement should receive copies of all correspondence between the Agency and the institution, and may attend the first private meeting of the team or be briefed about it by the review coordinator.

Activities during engagements

8 The extended pattern of engagement requires nominees to fulfil two main functions in addition to the general information role outlined above. First, they should monitor the pattern of visits by academic reviewers. If it appears that there is a departure from the agreed pattern, the matter should be discussed immediately with the review coordinator.

9 Second, nominees may attend all the following:

- team meetings, including those in which judgements are being discussed by the team of reviewers;
- formal meetings held between the reviewers and the institution to investigate matters specific to standards and quality, except those with current and former students;
- 'progress' meetings held between the review coordinator and subject staff.

Nominees will not attend review team meetings with students or employers.

10 In addition, the nominee should be kept informed of the regular telephone and/or email contact between the review coordinator and the subject contact.

Confidentiality

11 Nominees will observe the same conventions of confidentiality as subject specialist reviewers. In particular, no information gained during an engagement shall be used in a manner that allows individuals to be identified. Nominees must exercise care when reporting back to subject or institutional staff to maintain the confidentiality of written material produced by reviewers for the initial team meeting, or at other times during and after the engagement. However, nominees may make their own notes on team discussions in order to help the institution understand the issues addressed by reviewers. This can contribute to the enhancement of standards and quality within the institution.

The QAA
16 October 2001

Appendix 3

Quality Assurance Agency Engagements in Wales 2002

A synoptic paper addressing operational issues and the implementation of the processes described in the HEFCW paper (WO1/90HE) and the Agency Academic Review in Wales 2002 Guidance, including Annexes A to D.

The rationale and broad process for the engagements in Wales for 2002 are set out in the HECWE circular WO1/90HE and the Academic Review in Wales 2002 Guidance including annexes A to D. Every Institution had a copy of this documentation (except for Annex D) in December 2001. Annex D is a draft outline of the role of Institutional Nominee that will be developed over the next year

Together, these three papers should enable HEI and Agency staff/representatives to work together and ensure subject staff and review teams successfully undertake this developmental peer review process.

Scope

The scope of the review has been discussed and provisionally agreed through a range of meetings between the Agency and the Higher Education Institutions involved. Any changes or concerns can be discussed with the Assistant Director, Programme Review Directorate (PRD), contact details below. Final confirmation will occur at the preliminary meeting between the Review Co-ordinator and the Institutional staff.

Self Evaluation Document (SED)

This needs to reflect the provision under scope. The Document should follow the guidance set out in Annexes C and E in the Agency Handbook for Academic Review 2000. All elements including teaching and learning should be addressed in the evaluation. The

SED will normally be submitted to the Agency (3 copies) two months prior to the start of the review (Day One when the review team and the subject staff meet). The Agency will be responsive to institutional requests, please agree any changes with the Assistant Director PRD before revising dates for submission of the SED.

Once the review team has been agreed, the Institution needs to send the SED to each reviewer (the Review Co-ordinator receives one of the three copies sent to the Agency).

Review Team

This will normally involve three subject specialist reviewers plus a review co-ordinator. In this peer review process, the reviewers should be credible to the Institution's subject staff as competent to comment on the range of programmes provided. However, the review teams cannot reflect every Joint Academic Coding System (JACs code) and the intention is to reflect the nature of the provision and the Institution, as well as subject area. Each Institution will have opportunity to discuss and agree the proposed reviewers.

The Agency will try to arrange that one of the reviewers either works in Welsh Higher Education or has had experience of the Welsh HE system. Institutions need to inform the Agency Assistant Director if they do not wish this to be arranged.

Since no bilingual or Welsh-medium programmes are being offered for review, the Agency will not be seeking to appoint specifically bilingual reviewers.

Preliminary Visit

The Review Co-ordinator will arrange for a preliminary visit to agree arrangements (approximately four weeks prior to Day One) and the range of documentary evidence that will be required. The intention is always to make these requirements as minimal as possible and for reviewers to only request relevant, live documentation when necessary. On some occasions, a Agency officer will join this meeting to help answer queries that the Institution may raise about the method of engagement.

At this meeting, the Institution needs to confirm whether they wish to use the role of Institutional Nominee and who will undertake it. The Review Co-ordinator completes the record of the preliminary meeting by noting who is the Institutional Nominee, where relevant.

Pattern of an Engagement

Although teaching and learning does not receive a separate judgement, it is certainly expected that the review team and subject staff will engage with this element. Reference will be made to teaching and learning in sections of the report, (see below) where appropriate.

Whatever the preferred pattern, it is the intention that review team activity in all subject engagements will not normally extend beyond four weeks (this does not include the preparation of the report). The Review Co-ordinator will guide the reviewers to use the Agency Academic Review in Wales's 2002 guidance in full when visiting the institution.

The Review Co-ordinator will provide oral feedback. The exact timing will depend upon the pattern of the engagement, but will be agreed by the Institution with the Review Co-ordinator. The feedback will be brief and outline the judgements in relation to standards and quality of learning opportunities, only key issues supporting the judgements will be noted. The judgements will be confirmed in writing within three weeks of the judgement meeting.

The pattern will be either a two one day visits to the institution, preceded by a one-day desk-based analysis and followed by one day report drafting, or an intensive visit of two days, preceded by desk-based analysis and followed by one day report drafting. The Institution and the Review Co-ordinator may agree to use the report writing time by staying at the institution for 'Day Three' and agreeing judgements and providing oral feedback at that time. This is an optional approach, more reflection may be needed prior to the final judgements being made by the team. The Review Co-ordinator will make sure the Institution knows when both judgements have been reached and when the oral feedback will be provided. The oral feedback may be face to face or by telephone if that is agreed.

Each reviewer has five days allocated, each Review Co-ordinator has ten days allocated per review.

Report

These reports are Agency copyright. The report will be confidential to the Institution, the Agency and the HEFCW, the report will not be published. The report will include all judgements and sections as laid out in the Academic Review Handbook 2000, EXCEPT teaching and learning.

The reports will follow the standard Agency approach of a first draft being sent to the Institution for checking for factual accuracy by Week 7. The Engagement report will normally be finalised by week 18 following the judgement meeting.

In 2002, it will be the decision of the Institution was to whether an action plan in response to the report findings is produced.