

University of Bradford

JULY 2006

Preface

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

To do this QAA carries out reviews of individual HE institutions (universities and colleges of HE). In England and Northern Ireland this process is known as institutional audit. QAA operates similar but separate processes in Scotland and Wales. For institutions that have large and complex provision offered through partnerships, QAA conducts collaborative provision audits in addition to institutional audits.

The purpose of collaborative provision audit

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

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

Judgements

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

- the confidence that can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of the academic standards of its awards made through collaborative arrangements
- the confidence that can reasonably be placed in the present and likely future capacity of the awarding institution to satisfy itself that the learning opportunities offered to students through its collaborative arrangements are managed effectively and meet its requirements; and
- the reliance that can reasonably be placed on the accuracy, integrity, completeness and frankness of the information that the institution publishes, (or authorises to be published) about the quality of its programmes offered through collaborative provision that lead to its awards and the standards of those awards.

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

Nationally agreed standards

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

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)*, which includes descriptions of different HE qualifications
- *The Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*
- subject benchmark statements, which describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects

- guidelines for preparing programme specifications, which are descriptions of the what is on offer to students in individual programmes of study. They outline the intended knowledge, skills, understanding and attributes of a student completing that programme. They also give details of teaching and assessment methods and link the programme to the FHEQ.

The audit process

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

The main elements of collaborative provision audit are:

- a preliminary visit by QAA to the institution nine months before the audit visit
- a self-evaluation document submitted by the institution four months before the audit visit
- a written submission by the student representative body, if they have chosen to do so, four months before the audit visit
- a detailed briefing visit to the institution by the audit team six weeks before the audit visit
- visits to up to six partner institutions by members of the audit team
- the audit visit, which lasts five days
- the publication of a report on the audit team's judgements and findings 22 weeks after the audit visit.

The evidence for the audit

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

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

The audit team also gathers evidence by focusing on examples of the institution's internal quality assurance processes at work through visits to partners. In addition, the audit team may focus on a particular theme that runs throughout the institution's management of its standards and quality. This is known as a 'thematic enquiry'.

From 2004, institutions will be required to publish information about the quality and standards of their programmes and awards in a format recommended in document 03/51, *Information on quality and standards in higher education: Final guidance*, published by the Higher Education Funding Council for England. The audit team reviews how institutions are working towards this requirement.

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Summary

Introduction

A team of auditors from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visited the University of Bradford (the University) from 6 March to 10 March 2006 to carry out an audit of the collaborative provision offered by the University. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the programmes of study offered by the University through arrangements with collaborative partners, and on the discharge of the University's responsibilities as an awarding body in assuring the academic standard of its awards made through collaborative arrangements.

To arrive at its conclusions the audit team spoke to members of staff of the University and read a wide range of documents relating to the way the University manages the academic aspects of its collaborative provision. As part of the audit process, the team met with three of the University's collaborative partners, in the course of which it spoke to students on the university's collaborative programmes and to members of staff of the partner institutions.

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

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

The term 'collaborative provision' is taken to mean 'educational provision leading to an award, or to specific credit toward an award, of an awarding institution delivered and/or supported and/or assessed through an arrangement with a partner organisation' (*Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*, 2004, paragraph 13, published by QAA).

In an audit of collaborative provision both academic standards and academic quality are reviewed.

Outcome of the collaborative provision audit

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

- broad confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the University's present and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards made through collaborative arrangements
- broad confidence can reasonably be placed in the present and likely future capacity of the University to satisfy itself that the learning opportunities offered to students through its collaborative arrangements are managed effectively and meet its requirements.

Features of good practice

The audit team identified the following areas as being good practice in the context of the University

- the way in which the University's conventions for furnishing its school-level and institution-level committees with supporting information enables them to check, from primary data, that responsibilities for approval, monitoring and review of programmes and courses, including in collaborative provision, which have been delegated to departments, centres, and programme teams, have been properly discharged in line with its stated expectations
- the processes used to ensure that, in discharging their substantial duties for monitoring and supporting collaborative provision, the workloads of those who act as course coordinators (or their equivalents) across the University are monitored, and dynamically adjusted when appropriate
- the work of the University's Course Approval and Review Panel and the

approval, monitoring and review teams drawn from it, which enables experience of good practice to be shared

- the establishment by the School of Management of its School Advisory Board, the membership of which includes senior external academic peers, practitioners, and alumni from programmes offered through collaborative provision
- the steps the University has taken to ensure that members of staff of its partners in its region, who are delivering its collaborative provision, have the opportunity to become associate lecturers of the University, and to benefit from its facilities and learning support arrangements
- the measured and purposeful management by the University of the roll-out of its virtual learning environment, and the use to which this is being put in supporting collaborative, distance, and flexible learning provision
- the induction arrangements adopted by one Centre to prepare postgraduate-level students, whose first language is not English, to work to UK norms; and the steps taken by the same Centre to provide back-up learning resources on CD-ROM to compensate for difficulties with internet access
- the way in which prospectus, programme, and other information provided to students studying through partnership links, encourages their strong and positive identification with the University.

Recommendations for action

The audit team also recommends that the University should consider further action in a number of areas to ensure that the academic quality of programmes and standards of the awards it offers through collaborative arrangements are maintained. The team considers it advisable that the University should

- within its present annual monitoring arrangements for collaborative provision, enable partners to comment formally, and

independently of the course coordinator, on the annual monitoring report

- review its internal arrangements for Foundation Degrees offered with its partners, to ensure that there are no informal or unintended impediments to progression from FDs to its honours-level awards
- continue and complete its review of student representation arrangements, so as to ensure effective and equitable representation for students studying for its awards through partnership links

The audit team considers it desirable that the University should

- actively explore ways of enabling students studying through collaborative programmes in the UK and further afield to contribute in person to course continuation reviews, in order to afford for them the same level of participation in such reviews as for students based on its campuses.
- ensure that its current review of its engagement with students explicitly extends to support and other arrangements for students studying for its awards through partnership links.

National reference points

To provide further evidence to support its findings the audit team also investigated the use made by the University of the Academic Infrastructure which the Agency has developed on behalf of the whole of UK higher education. The Academic Infrastructure is a set of nationally agreed reference points that help to define both good practice and academic standards. The findings of the audit suggest that the University's response to all aspects of the Academic Infrastructure has been timely and appropriate.

In due course, the audit process will include a check on the reliability of the teaching quality information (TQI) published by institutions in the format recommended in the Higher Education Funding Council for England's document 03/51 (HEFCE 03/51), *Information*

on quality and standards in higher education: Final guidance. The published information set will include the recommended summaries of external examiners' reports and of feedback from current students for each programme. The evidence provided for the audit shows that the University has taken the necessary steps to be able to meet the requirements of HEFCE 03/51.

The audit team was satisfied that the information the University and its partners are publishing currently about the quality of its collaborative programmes and the standards of its awards is reliable and that the University is making adequate progress towards providing TQI data for its collaborative provision.

Main report

Main report

Section 1: Introduction

The institution and its mission as it relates to collaborative provision

1 The University of Bradford was established by Royal Charter in 1966. It developed from the Bradford Institute of Technology (founded in 1957), which was itself the successor of Bradford Technical College (1882). At the time of the collaborative provision audit 7,245 full-time undergraduate students and 852 full-time postgraduates were registered to study for its awards on its campuses. Programmes of study leading to these awards are delivered through the University's eight schools, which are supported by two administrative service areas.

2 At the time of this audit the University's portfolio of collaborative provision comprised a wide range of programmes delivered with seven partners in the UK (chiefly within its local region) and 17 partners overseas. A number of the University's awards were being delivered at this time in collaboration with Bradford College, although this provision and the arrangement between the partners was in the process of being discontinued.

3 The University's partner links in the UK include several leading to the award of Foundation Degrees (FDs), delivered with further education colleges in its home region and several postgraduate programmes in health care. The University's register of its collaborative provision shows that the greater part of its partnership links are overseas in the areas of undergraduate and postgraduate business and management. At the time of the audit, more than 4,000 students were registered to study for the University's awards through partnership links, of whom 154 were studying part time. Of these, almost 800 students were registered to study for the University's MBA.

4 At the time of the audit the University was actively developing its portfolio of collaborative provision as one means of fulfilling its strategic objective of 'achieving growth in student

numbers'. This objective included a number of key targets, one of which was 'developing partnerships with institutions locally, nationally and within Europe and the broader international community in order to maximise access and progression, and to make programmes available to a wider population'. The University was also in the process of implementing a number of actions as part of its response to the Institutional Audit that had taken place in 2003.

5 In December 2005, the University installed as its fifth Chancellor Imran Khan, Leader of the Pakistani Justice Movement. The University and its Chancellor have since signalled their joint intention for the future to develop additional higher education links between Bradford and Pakistan.

Background information

6 The published information available for the collaborative provision audit included the following recent documents:

- the report of an overseas collaborative provision audit conducted by QAA of a partnership link between the University and the Management Development Institute of Singapore, published in November 2002
- the report of the institutional audit conducted by QAA, published in November 2003
- the reports of an overseas collaborative provision audit conducted by QAA of a partnership link between the University and the Social Scientists' Association (Sri Lanka) published in May 2004
- the reports of Academic Reviews at the subject level in the following partner institutions linked to the University
- Bradford College: (Social Policy and Administration and Social Work), April 2002; Accountancy; Law (December 2002); Computing; Engineering (April 2003); Allied Health Professions (March 2004)
- Calderdale College: Computing, January 2003; re-visit Computing, March 2004; Art and Design, June 2004

- Wakefield College: Computing; Engineering, June 2002
- the reports of a review of Foundation Degree (FD) provision offered at Thomas Danby College leading to the University's FD award which was undertaken in February 2003 was provided for the information of the audit team
- the report of a review of FD provision offered at Bradford College, Wakefield College, Bishop Auckland College and South West Durham Training Ltd leading to the University's FD award was undertaken in February 2005 and provided for the information of the audit team.

7 The University provided a self-evaluation document (SED) produced by the University covering its arrangements to manage the quality of its collaborative provision and safeguard the academic standards of the associated awards (CPSED) and gave the audit team access to its intranet and virtual learning environment (VLE) site. It also provided, reports from recent annual course continuation reviews, annual monitoring reports (AMRs) and programme specifications for all provision included in the scope of the visits to partner links (see below).

The collaborative provision audit process

8 Following a preliminary meeting between members of QAA and the University in June 2005 it was agreed that the audit would include three partner links and that the University would support the collaborative provision audit by providing a self evaluation document (CPSED). This was received by QAA in October 2005 together with a limited amount of additional information, including its register of collaborative links, which QAA forwarded to the audit team.

9 From the CPSED and the register of collaborative links the audit team identified three partner links through which to explore the University's arrangements to support the quality of its collaborative provision and

safeguard the academic standards of the associated awards. The University provided QAA with information on the chosen partner links (two of which were outside the UK) at the beginning of January 2006. The information provided included some from internal reviews

10 The briefing visit to the University as the awarding institution took place between 24 to 26 January 2006. The audit team was accompanied for this visit by the QAA Assistant Director. In the course of the briefing visit members of the team were able to check their understanding of the University's CPSED through meetings with staff and students, including a member of the University's Students Union, and students studying with several of the University's partners in the region. The team was also able to consult a number of internal papers made available to it through the University's intranet.

11 At the end of the briefing visit, members of the audit team and the Assistant Director proposed a programme of meetings for each of the three visits to partner links and for the audit visit. For the 'virtual visits' to two of the University's partners overseas the team agreed with the University that these would be conducted using the latter's facilities in Bradford.

12 Visits to the University's partner links were undertaken in the week beginning 13 February 2006. One virtual visit was undertaken using audio conferencing, the other using video conferencing. In each case the team was able to conduct discussions with members of staff based with the partner and supporting provision leading to the University's awards, and with students registered for the University's awards. In addition to the two 'virtual visits', members of the team were able to conduct meetings with students and staff of one of the University's locally-based partners and to meet some University-based staff supporting the respective links.

13 The visit to the University as the awarding institution took place in the week beginning 6 March 2006. In the course of the visit the

audit team was able to conduct meetings with members of staff, to read papers which it had requested from the University, and to browse its intranet. The team is grateful to the University's staff, its partners and their staff, and its collaborative provision students for making themselves available to meet it in the course of the briefing, partner link and audit visits, and to the University for its assistance in arranging and supporting the briefing visit the partner link visits and the audit visit.

14 The audit team comprised Ms L Buckingham, Professor J Cowan, Dr J Hostler and Professor R J Slater, auditors, and Ms M Furness, audit secretary. The audit was coordinated for QAA by Dr DW Cairns, Development and Enhancement Group.

Developments since the institutional audit of the awarding institution

15 The University's institutional audit took place in 2003 and included in its scope its partnership link with Bradford College. The institutional audit report which was published in November 2003 expressed the judgement that 'broad confidence can be placed in the soundness of the University's current and likely future management of the quality of its programmes and the academic standards of its awards'. With respect to the University's partnership links with Bradford College the institutional audit report stated that confidence 'in the capacity of the University to manage the quality and standards of the awards in collaborative provision, the focus of which for the purposes of this audit is Bradford College (the College), is limited'. The institutional audit report also stated that 'the judgement on collaborative provision is made in the context of the need to formalise existing arrangements'. The audit report continued that in coming to both these judgements 'the team considered that the continuing validity of the statements of confidence is dependent on a fundamental review of the University's quality strategy and arrangements for quality assurance'.

16 In the institutional audit report the judgement of 'limited confidence' was linked to a recommendation that it was 'essential' that the University 'on the basis of the evidence relating to the partnership with the College, reviews and modifies monitoring processes to ensure effective oversight of its collaborative provision and secures appropriate and formal agreements with the College'.

17 In addition to the matters described above, the institutional audit report also advised the University 'without delay' to 'progress the work to define assessment levels to ensure consistent standards across the University; and to 'initiate a review of the strategy and structures for the management of quality and standards'. The University was also advised to 'review the effectiveness of the structures and processes for annual monitoring of academic provision; in collaboration with the student body, develop effective and transparent arrangements for student participation in all appropriate quality assurance processes' and 'ensure that the current review of the tutorial system delivers an effective and appropriate level of support across the University'. The institutional audit report also suggested to the University that it would be desirable to 'consider how it could improve the extent to which students feel they are informed of the outcomes of the feedback they provide and the manner in which it is employed; and consider furnishing either the Academic Policy Committee or the Quality Assurance Subcommittee with statistical analyses of student progression and completion across the full range of the University's provision, including that which is offered in partnership with other organisations'.

18 In the University's response to the institutional audit report to QAA, and in the collaborative provision self-evaluation document (CPSED) it provided for the present collaborative provision audit (CPA), it focused on the action plans it had developed to address both the matters raised by the judgement of limited confidence associated with its link with Bradford College and other recommendations.

Thus, the CPSED described the University's establishment of a Continuing Collaboration Strategy Group (CCSG) the role of which was to bring about a closer alignment of those parts of the University's and College's quality assurance frameworks which dealt with provision delivered by the College leading to the University's awards. The institutional audit report had noted the decision of the University and the College not to proceed with their planned merger. Subsequently, the University and the College also decided to end their partnership link and the University has since focused its attention on monitoring the progress of students at the College who continued to be registered for its awards. This monitoring is undertaken under the direct supervision of Senate.

19 In addition to the measures described above, following the institutional audit the University undertook a review of the costs and risks associated more generally with its collaborative provision. As a result of this review it established a Collaborative Provision Audit Committee (CPAC), reporting to the Course Planning and Review Committee (CPRC) and thence to the Planning and Budgeting Sub-Committee (PBSC) of Planning and Resources Committee (PARC).

20 In December 2004 the University approved arrangements to enter into formal agreements of association with some providers of education and training (chiefly in its home region) and to designate such partners 'associate colleges'. The granting of associate college status signifies the University's preparedness to enter into several forms of collaboration including delivery of part or all of a programme of study leading to its award, sharing of facilities, collaborative research and consultancy.

21 As noted above, the institutional audit recommended the University to consider the advisability 'without delay' of initiating 'a review of the strategy and structures for the management of quality and standards'. Through its considerations of the University's papers and its discussions with members of staff the audit team was able to establish that the

University had given this matter some consideration but had decided to eschew undertaking the 'holistic' review of its arrangements, suggested at four points in the audit report, in favour of a gradualist approach.

22 In addition to the inclusion of an element of its collaborative provision in the institutional audit, the University has also participated in a number of overseas audits of partnership links since 2002. Partnership links in India (1997) and in the Gulf States (1998) were the focus of overseas audits undertaken by the former HEQC and QAA, respectively. More recently, in 2002 the University's arrangements for one of its partnerships, in Singapore, were audited and in 2004 QAA published an overseas audit report on the University's arrangements for a link in Sri Lanka. Key comments in these more recent reports relate to deficiencies in the University's application of its own procedures; timely renewal of contractual arrangements; formal means for gathering student feedback; and the workload of course coordinators. To set against these observations, the reports also noted many positive features, including work being undertaken to strengthen the University's management of partnership links; its commitment to comparability in the students' learning experiences between its students in the UK and elsewhere; and the attachment of its students to the University, which had also been noted in earlier overseas audit reports on the University's partnership links.

23 The CPSED discussed each of the previous overseas audit reports, noting that the University 'had responded positively' to the findings of each and 'learning from them where necessary and addressing identified weaknesses'. The evidence cited in the CPSED to support this statement referred chiefly to the establishment of CPAC but also referred to a number of meetings which had been convened to address particular matters, following up particular overseas audit reports and more generally addressing the workload and role of the course coordinators. On the basis of the evidence it saw in the University's papers, and its discussions with members of the University,

the audit team came to the view that the measures the University had taken to address the difficulties identified in its arrangements with Bradford College demonstrated its commitment to rectify anomalies in the quality management arrangements between the two institutions, and to safeguard the academic standards of its awards. Likewise, there were good grounds to accept the University's view that it had taken careful note of the findings of QAA reports (including the institutional audit report) and had responded suitably to them.

Section 2: The collaborative provision audit investigations: the awarding institution's processes for quality management in collaborative provision

The awarding institution's strategic approach to collaborative provision

24 The CPSED highlighted two significant developments in the University's approach to collaborative provision, one being the cessation of its earlier plans for a merger with Bradford College, the other being its adoption of a more strategic approach towards its collaborative provision. According to the CPSED, the University's collaborative provision had formerly been 'allowed to grow organically from those areas of the University that perceived most benefit in terms of academic exchange and the generation of discretionary income'. This approach had since been replaced by a conscious desire on the part of the University to align the development of collaborative provision with objectives and priorities in its Strategic Plan. Of these, one priority was further growth in the number of student registrations and another was widening participation in higher education. In both areas the University was actively seeking to develop partnership links and elements of collaborative provision which could help it to address these priorities, while at the same time bringing to a

close a number of collaborations that were considered to be not well aligned with them, or not to be cost-effective.

25 At the time of the audit the University was implementing this approach by assessing proposals for developments in collaborative provision (both new programmes and proposals for new partnership links) against three criteria derived from its Strategic Plan. These were: whether the proposal was likely to deepen and strengthen an existing successful partnership; whether it contributed to widening participation in higher education; and whether it contributed to the development of academic links with a partner organisation which would enhance the University's reputation for high quality teaching and research.

26 Notwithstanding this newer emphasis on strategic oversight and direction, the audit team was told that the 'engine' for developing collaborative provision remained with individual schools. Throughout the audit, the team also learned that each school was seen as having developed its own distinct 'brand' and that the maintenance of the identity of these brands was considered to be important for marketing and student recruitment. Overall, the team came to the view that the University's approach to the development of its collaborative provision took the form of discipline-level initiatives managed within an institutional-level framework of strategic priorities.

The awarding institution's framework for managing the quality of the students' experience and academic standards in collaborative provision

27 The University's approach to managing the quality of the students' experience and academic standards in collaborative provision is founded on its commitment to ensure the 'comparability of the learning experience, equivalence in academic standards and the proper enforcement of the principle of Duty of Academic Care for all students registered on University of Bradford courses, wherever taught' which is set out at the beginning of the

collaborative provision section of its *Quality Assurance Handbook* (the *Handbook*). This states that the achievement of such comparability should be seen as 'the responsibility of both partners', although the CPSED commented that the balance of responsibilities between the University and the partner might vary in different partnerships.

28 The University's general approach to managing the academic standards and quality of the students' learning experience in collaborative provision was described in the CPSED as being to 'follow the practice for courses delivered on-site by the University, with amendments and extensions to existing practices only... where necessary to reflect the involvement of partners'. However the audit team learned that another factor underlying such 'amendments and extensions to existing practices' derived from the University's awareness that in comparison with provision delivered on its own campuses, collaborative provision carried additional risks. So, for example, the annual monitoring procedure for collaborative provision had been augmented by the inclusion of a formal risk assessment and the team was told by senior members of the University that any proposals for changes to its quality management procedures for collaborative provision would be informed by risk management procedures. The team considered that this approach was fully consistent with the advice of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice), Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*, published by QAA.

29 The University's deliberative arrangements for managing the quality of the students' learning experiences and the academic standards of its awards in its collaborative provision operate at several levels. At the highest level, Senate is the University's supreme authority for academic matters and the Council is responsible for resources and related matters. There are tiers of committees supporting the work of each of these bodies and the University

has established a number of joint committees of Senate and Council to bring together the consideration of resource matters and academic policy, where appropriate.

30 To assist it in discharging its responsibilities for quality and academic standards Senate has delegated responsibility for many of these matters to its Academic Policy Committee (APC), which reports directly to it. Below APC, and reporting to it, a number of committees and groups, including the Learning and Teaching Sub Committee (LTSC) and CPAC, provide it with the detailed information needed to monitor quality management and academic standards. The remit of LTSC was revised in September 2005 and relates to quality enhancement, developments in pedagogy, staff development, and learning support resources.

31 As noted earlier, CPAC was established in November 2004 and amongst other matters is charged with considering proposals for new collaborative programmes; reviewing existing agreements and discussing strategic policy issues relating to collaborative provision. The membership of CPAC includes the Deputy Vice Chancellor, the Pro Vice-Chancellor with responsibility for Learning and Teaching, a Dean, the University's Senior Assistant Secretary, the Assistant Registrar with responsibility for the quality assurance of partnership provision, a course coordinator (see below) and representatives from the University's Finance, Marketing and International Offices.

32 CPAC was established following the institutional audit and its formation was referred to in the University's response to QAA on the outcomes of the audit. The CPSED noted the University's view, however, that the establishment of CPAC should be seen as the formalisation of a pre-existing group which had considered collaborative provision initiatives on a regular basis. CPAC reports to APC, and thus to Senate and, where matters of resources are concerned, to PARC, a joint committee of Council and Senate. Although CPAC reports to PARC through several intermediaries, the inclusion of two senior officers in its

membership, who are key members of the University's Senior Management Group (SMG), enables the latter to monitor closely developments in the University's collaborative provision, including proposals for new partnership links.

33 The institutional audit report came to the view that the University's committee structure for quality assurance and academic standards matters was 'complex and strongly hierarchical', and it recommended this structure should be reviewed. The CPSED stated that, having undertaken this review, the University had simplified its committee structures by the removal of one tier of the hierarchy, the former Quality Assurance Sub-Committee (QASC) of Academic Policy Committee, with the latter largely assuming the former QASC's responsibilities. Notwithstanding this change, the audit team considered that to external observers, the structure remained complex. It also noted, however, that each of the various committees had clear terms of reference, that they seemed to work together effectively, and that their business was conducted in an orderly manner. The team found support for its view of the orderly effectiveness of the University's committee arrangements in the way in which the University's conventions ensure that school-level and institution-level committees are furnished with supporting information. This enables senior committees in the hierarchy to check, from primary data - such as external and internal examiners' reports, minutes of staff-student committees, progression and awards data - that responsibilities for approval, monitoring and review of programmes and courses, delegated to departments, centres, and programme teams, have been properly discharged in line with the University's stated expectations. In the view of the team the provision of such primary data to committees, to accompany the associated reports, constitutes a feature of good practice.

34 The CPSED explained that in addition to meetings of CPAC, LTSC and their senior committees, there were other regular meetings at which collaborative provision and its

management were considered including, for example, the University's Senior Management Group (SMG). This advises the Vice Chancellor and others with executive authority about the performance of their executive roles and helps to ensure appropriate collaboration on executive decisions and meetings. SMG also receives regular reports on the development of new proposals for collaborative provision and partner links. The CPSED also noted the contributions of the Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching) of the various schools to the management and development of provision, including collaborative provision, and that they met the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) each month.

35 From its consideration of the University's papers and from its discussions with members of staff the audit team was able to appreciate the wide-ranging responsibilities of the Associate Deans. They are expected to exercise operational responsibility for quality assurance, quality enhancement and staff development in their respective schools, and to oversee the strategies of the latter for these areas. One paper seen by the audit team described the role of the Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching) with respect to their areas of responsibility as 'pivotal' - a view from which the team would not dissent.

36 For individual partnerships the member of staff occupying the position of course coordinator fulfils a key role: the CPSED described the responsibilities of the course coordinator as undertaking 'all necessary liaison with the partner institution'. The course coordinators' detailed role description is therefore wide-ranging, and includes liaison with and between the partner and the 'home' school (in which they are normally based) and overseeing and monitoring the programme(s) to which they are attached. They are also expected to provide information, advice and guidance for the partner, and to support the development of the partnership programme and any associated staff development. The audit team was told that the role brought together functions which, for programmes

delivered on the University's campuses, were sometimes fulfilled by a team of staff, and that the central focus of the course coordinators' role was about enabling communication and mutual understanding between the University and its partners.

37 Members of the University told the audit team that one important task for the course coordinators was to help partner institutions develop their own practice and capacity to deliver higher education provision and that they were assisted in this by other University staff. From its exchanges with members of the University and from the latter's papers, the team learned that there were frequent contacts between course coordinators and other University staff with most partners at several levels. For example, in some forms of collaborative provision academic staff contributed directly to programme delivery at the partner institution, and visits by Associate Deans and Deans to partners took place from time to time.

38 Successive HEQC and QAA overseas audit reports of the University's collaborative provision have expressed concerns about the range and number of the requirements it has laid upon its course coordinators, and questioned whether the burdens that these represented could be satisfactorily discharged. Responding to these concerns in the CPSED, the University stated its view that the workload of these staff was manageable 'so long as the coordinator has access to appropriate school-level and central support'. The team was told of several ways in which practical support was provided for coordinators by schools and by central services of the University. These included support on some visits to partners by Deans, the provision of an induction by an experienced course coordinator for staff new to the role together with mentoring in their early work, again by one or more experienced course coordinators, and the development of what is to be an annual staff conference for course coordinators. Additionally, the team noted that several of the staff development opportunities being made available by the Staff Development

Unit (SDU) would be helpful to course coordinators (see also below, paragraph 138). The team came to the view that these developments provided helpful evidence of the University's intention to keep the course coordinator role under review, to provide support for this group of staff tailored to their needs, and represented a positive response to concerns expressed in earlier QAA reports.

39 The audit team was able to meet several course coordinators from a number of schools, from whom it learned that they were required to record the time they expended on fulfilling their role, so that the University could record this as a cost against the income received from the particular partnership link. The team was also told that, as the time commitment for an individual course coordinator increased (for example, as a partnership programme expanded and developed), their overall workload would be adjusted by the relevant school to reflect this. For example, through a virtual visit that the team was able to conduct with one of the University's partners, it was able to learn about the systems instituted by one school to track and coordinate all visits by its staff to partner institutions. The team considered that the course coordinators were making an important and effective contribution to safeguarding the academic standards and managing the quality of the students' learning experiences in the University's collaborative provision. It came to the view that in the instances it saw, the University was using effective means to make allowance for the course coordinators' changing commitments, and thereby to manage their workloads, and that this was a feature of good practice.

41 The work of the University's staff and committees with partner institutions, their staff and students based with partners and working for the University's awards is governed by a framework of policies and procedures which is set out in an extended section of the *Handbook* which is readily accessible (across the University and its partners) through the University's intranet. The CPSED stated that the *Handbook* was subject to continuing review and updating,

and whilst the audit team found one instance where the terms of reference for a key committee needed to be updated, overall the team came to the view that the *Handbook* and, more particularly, the section which provided guidance on quality assurance and academic standards arrangements for collaborative provision, constituted a clear and useful guide to the University's expectations and requirements. From its conversations with members of staff in partner institutions the team was also able to confirm that they had ready access to the *Handbook*. The team noted that the University had also established a dedicated web page for partner institutions with links to information on its schools, their programmes, and the University's quality assurance and academic standards arrangements, and considered this was a helpful initiative.

42 In order to safeguard the academic standards of awards towards which students in its partner links are working, the University aims to operate assessment practices that are, as far as possible, identical to those for programmes which it offers on its own campuses. For example, the CPSED stated that where students are studying on programmes which the University has franchised to a partner the associated assessments generally follow the same format as in the programme offered on campus. In such cases the results of students studying through partnership links based on franchises are considered alongside those of their campus-based peers and by the same assessment committees (see below, paragraph 119).

43 Again, the CPSED emphasised that wherever possible, the University appoints the same external examiners to be responsible for the scrutiny of collaborative and campus-based provision. From its scrutiny of a wide range of reports from external examiners from schools across the University, together with its consideration of a wide sample of annual monitoring reports (AMRs) for programmes offered through collaborative provision, the audit team was able to confirm that

assessment committees routinely receive the marks of students studying through franchised programmes in the same format, and in the same dossiers, as campus-based students on the corresponding programmes, and that these arrangements (which seemed to the team to be both effective and robust) enabled the University to maintain parity in the outcomes being achieved by students based with its partners and those based on its own campuses (see below, paragraph 91). The 2003 report came to the view that the University's assessment arrangements were operated in a manner which was consistent with the advice offered by the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*, published by QAA, and the present audit found that this continued to be the case for the University's arrangements for its collaborative provision.

44 The University's arrangements for managing the quality of students' experience in CP are described and discussed elsewhere in this report (see below, paragraph 162) but in summary they comprise arrangements for student representation, academic guidance and personal support, and provision of learning support resources. The effectiveness of these arrangements is monitored through the administration of separate questionnaires at the end of each course unit and the end of each programme stage, and by face-to-face meetings between course coordinators and students studying through partnership links. Although the University acknowledged difficulties in ensuring a sufficiently high rate of completion of the questionnaires the audit team saw several instances where student questionnaire responses were being used effectively to inform quality management and it heard of valuable contacts between course coordinators and students. From this evidence, and from other sources of data detailed in later sections of this report, the team concluded that the University's arrangements for managing the quality of students' experience were effective.

Summary

45 Overall, the audit team came to the view that while the University's quality management and academic standards arrangements for its collaborative provision remained multi-layered and complex, this did not appear to detract from their general effectiveness, and that it was for the University to determine the arrangements it wished to have in place. The institution of CPAC seemed to the team to have substantially remedied the absence in the University's former arrangements of means, at the centre, to monitor the general development of its collaborative provision portfolio, while its articulation of the need to move to a more strategic direction in the development of the portfolio - without unduly fettering the initiative it allows to its schools - seemed in accord with the University's ethos.

46 The University has reflected on the findings of the institutional audit and has worked purposefully to strengthen the alignment of Bradford College's quality arrangements with its own as it withdraws from that partnership. Likewise, the University has reflected on the findings of earlier overseas audit reports with respect to the workloads of its course coordinators, and the measures which have been taken to monitor these workloads, and to make dynamic adjustments to the overall responsibilities of the coordinators seemed to the audit team to represent a feature of good practice. Furthermore, the team took the view that the University's convention of providing its committees with data to enable them to confirm that partners, officers and committees have discharged their responsibilities in line with its expectations, was not only a feature of good practice in itself, but that it provided a sound basis for confidence in the University's present and likely future management of the quality of students' learning experiences in collaborative provision and the academic standards of the associated awards.

The awarding institution's intentions for enhancing the management of its collaborative provision

47 The CPSED described the arrangements through which the University considered it enhanced its quality and academic standards management arrangements, and stated that while the institutional audit and (to a lesser extent) overseas audit had provided opportunities for reflection and consideration, in its view, it had built 'into its standard working life reflective processes so that enhancement is continuous'. The CPSED identified the annual meetings of the University's Course Approval and Review Panel (CARP) as providing one set of opportunities for such reflective processes, but anticipated that the meetings of the newly established CPAC would provide opportunities for the evolution of management practice 'over time' in areas which would include the following:

- the development of a formal definition of the functions to be overseen or undertaken by a course coordinator, with enhanced induction for course coordinators and better mechanisms for the dissemination of good practice between coordinators
- the establishment of a working group to review the quality assurance of the University's collaborative provision. The intention being to update the University's quality assurance arrangements for collaborative provision in the light of 'the past year's reflections', the fitness for purpose of current support mechanisms, and revisions to the *Code of practice, Section 2*.
- the enhancement of institutional oversight of collaborative provision 'in its totality'
- raising awareness of collaborative provision across the University 'so that any developments of the University's [quality assurance and enhancement] processes, or developments in connection with the student experience' are undertaken with an awareness of the needs and requirements of collaborative provision

- ensuring that the place of collaborative provision is explicitly considered in the reformed annual monitoring report (AMR) process
- considering ways in which student representation and feedback from students based with its partners, and following programmes leading to the University's awards, 'may be enhanced and further facilitated'
- implementing new costing arrangements in connection with collaborative provision
- improving the use of 'key performance indicators' for collaborative provision to inform its management and monitoring
- enhancing the process of reviewing contracts for collaborative provision arrangements in particular to ensure better alignment with the University's process of course continuation review.

48 In a number of cases the audit team was able to confirm that the University's intentions for the enhancement of its collaborative provision arrangements as listed in the CPSED and cited above were being taken forward. For example, Senate had recently confirmed new terms of reference for the course coordinators and a seminar had been convened for course coordinators in January 2006 entitled 'Sharing of Good Practice in Collaborative Provision' which is intended to take place annually.

49 The audit team was also able to confirm that a working group had been established to review and update the University's quality assurance arrangements for its collaborative provision. This working group had produced an update to the *Handbook* with respect to quality assurance arrangements for collaborative provision, which had subsequently been approved by APC and Senate in October 2005. At the same meeting, Senate also approved a new version of the standard form for reports by external examiners, which had been modified to ensure that where the external examiner's responsibilities include elements of collaborative provision, the relevant return

to the University will explicitly comment on the performance of students studying through such provision.

50 At the time of the audit the University had begun work to raise 'the awareness of collaborative provision so that any developments of the University's [Quality Assurance and Enhancement] processes, or developments in connection with the student experience, are cognisant of collaborative provision'. The audit team was informed that the University was reviewing its engagement with students through Senate and that 'during the development of this process the needs of students on collaborative provision courses will be explicitly considered'. A paper submitted to Senate which discussed this matter described the outcomes of a consultation, intentions for the development of the student support framework and a work plan for the period September 2005 to September 2006. It made no reference, however to students studying for the University's awards through partnership links.

51 Since the institutional audit the University has made significant changes to its annual monitoring arrangements to devolve greater responsibility for the monitoring of taught provision to the schools (see below paragraph 61). Because the University considers that collaborative provision carries more risks than provision delivered on campus, these changes to its annual monitoring arrangements do not apply to its collaborative provision, which will continue to be monitored both at school level and at the centre. Accordingly, for the 2005-06 session, AMRs were required to identify and address any risk factors associated with individual instances of collaborative provision and when approved at school-level, and checked by the Academic Standards and Support Unit (ASSU), the relevant AMRs, together with the relevant external examiners' reports, were to be reviewed by two cross-University Annual Monitoring Teams (AMTs).

52 The University views the identification and dissemination of good practice in its schools as an important source of enhancement

information for the general improvement of programmes and their delivery. At present, the greater part of the University's expertise in managing collaborative provision, and supporting students studying for its awards through partnership links has been accumulated by its School of Management. As its Strategic Plan makes plain, the University intends to expand its portfolio of collaborative provision. While the recent introduction of seminars and conferences for key groups such as course coordinators, and the meeting noted in paragraph 48, above, provide important means of sharing information on good practice in collaborative provision, it seemed to the team that, as the University continues to develop its approaches to the enhancement of its management and student support arrangements for such provision, it might wish to consider how it could encourage its staff to make better use of the AMR and CCR processes to share information on the innovations they have introduced (see below, paragraph 63).

53 Two HEQC and QAA overseas audit reports on the University's links with partners have commented respectively on omissions in formal agreements and the need for better arrangements to ensure that such partnerships are at all times supported by valid contracts. At the time of the audit the University was looking forward to the enhancement of its processes for reviewing contracts which was to be the focus for a 'sharing good practice' session which had been arranged for March 2006.

54 Overall, it seemed to the audit team that the University had identified for itself a programme of enhancement activities well-matched to its needs and ethos, and the team encourages the University to take forward its plans. In one area, however - ensuring that the needs of students studying for its awards through partner links are explicitly addressed in its review of its engagement with its students - the evidence suggested to the team that the University's actions to date had yet to give effect to its stated intentions (see below, paragraph 105).

The awarding institution's internal approval, monitoring and review arrangements for collaborative provision leading to its awards

Programme approval

55 The University's procedure for approving new collaborative programmes is set out fully in the *Handbook* and was summarised in the CPSED. There are seven stages in all. The first two ('expressions of interest' and 'preliminary discussions') are designed to assess the suitability of the proposed partnership in the light of the University's strategic priorities (see above, paragraph 32). Stage three of the process for approving new collaborative provision ('approval in principle') is largely concerned with assessing the resources and capability of the partner to share in delivering the programme. It involves consideration of a comprehensive self-appraisal document prepared by the proposed partner, a fully-costed business plan, and reports from external agencies on the partner's financial standing and so on. When gathered, these data are considered by a series of University committees, beginning with CPAC and ending with the PARC.

56 The next two stages are part of the University's normal two-stage process for the approval of new programmes and are described further below. Stage four ('full proposal') focuses on academic aspects of the programme and is carried out largely by a Course Approval and Review Team (CART) which reports direct to APC. It involves consideration of a detailed programme proposal, a report of a site visit to the partner institution by University staff, and provision of the curricula vitae of the partner institution staff who it is intended will participate in programme delivery. For this exercise members of CARTs are drawn from the larger Course Approval and Review Panel (CARP) that provides a pool of University-wide expertise which can be called on when forming panels to carry out programme approval, monitoring and review. The membership of a CART invariably includes University staff from outside the school promoting the new

programme, as well as external experts from other institutions. Consideration of the University's papers, together with its discussions with members of staff confirmed for the audit team that when scrutinising proposals for new programmes CARTs were able to do so with a significant degree of independence and rigour.

57 The fifth stage, which follows approval of the collaborative programme, establishes a formal contractual agreement with the partner, and stages six and seven comprise the review and renewal of existing partnerships. The audit team saw several examples of the documentation required for course approval and noted that they were generally comprehensive and detailed, and included robust external comment. The team formed the view that in general the approval procedure adopted by the University was rigorous in principle and thorough in practice and that it permitted all aspects of a proposed collaboration to be considered carefully. In a few cases, however, it seemed to the team that the requirements of the approval process for collaborative provision set out in the *Handbook* - more specifically, the categories of information to be provided - were not always suited to the University's wide range of partnerships, not all of which are with educational institutions. In such instances, it seemed to the team that the requirements in the *Handbook* were too prescriptive to be helpful.

58 Senior members of the University with whom the audit team discussed this matter agreed with this view and told the team that in practice the approval procedure focused on the principle of what was needed rather than the detail of statements in the *Handbook*. In this respect, the University might therefore consider it wise to import some of the pragmatism of its practice into the guidance offered in its *Handbook*.

59 The University's course approval procedure for its collaborative provision seemed to the audit team to be complex, lengthy and time-consuming to complete. This was tacitly acknowledged by the CPSED when it stated that 'ideally' the stages of the procedure would

be followed in strict sequence, adding that 'it has sometimes been necessary for Senior Management to make a risk judgement about the relative timings of the stages if strategic opportunities are not to be lost'. It appeared to the team that the complexity and duration of the course approval process for collaborative provision was such as almost to invite executive action to short-circuit it when a rapid response is needed. One consequence of such interventions, however, is that there have been some irregularities in the finalisation of contracts. The complexity of the University's approval arrangements is compounded in that the procedure requires that there be a separate contract for each new programme, even when the University has already established a collaboration with the partner in question.

60 At the time of the audit the University was planning to simplify its approvals procedure for new collaborative provision by producing a single 'wrapping' contract when there are several existing contracts with a single partner, and by aligning stage six of its procedure (contract review) with the procedure for programme review described below. The audit team encourages the University to explore ways of further simplifying its approval procedures which will enable them to accommodate different types of programmes and partner institutions more readily without sacrificing the rigour to which they aspire.

Annual monitoring

61 As noted in paragraph 51, at the time of the audit the University had recently introduced a new procedure for the annual monitoring of programmes delivered on its own campuses, which has devolved responsibility for such monitoring to its schools. For collaborative provision, however, each programme continued to be monitored by a procedure involving AMTs, the membership of which is drawn from CARP, members of which are nominated by the Dean of each school and serve for three years, with the opportunity for re-appointment. At the time of the audit the University maintained three such AMTs, each of which reviewed programmes from a group of cognate academic schools.

62 The University's annual monitoring procedures are fully documented in the *Handbook*, and the relevant pages on the University's intranet provide templates and guidelines for those compiling AMRs and members of AMTs. The audit team was able to confirm from the University's papers that AMRs (which comprise a tabular description and evaluation of good practice, an evaluation of how aims and learning outcomes have been met, and a continuing action plan, rolled forward from year to year) are supplemented by stage evaluation questionnaire results, admission, progression, award and destination statistics, external examiners' reports and departmental and/or University responses, and include an executive summary of the business of staff-student liaison committees.

63 As noted above, AMRs are expected to provide a tabular description and evaluation of good practice. In the course of its discussions with students and staff based with the University's partners, the audit team heard of several instances of good practice in arrangements to support master's level students based overseas, for example by providing inductions to introduce them to the academic expectations of UK taught postgraduate programmes. In the context of the same link, the team also heard that students were provided with study materials on CD-ROM to provide a backup for those unable to access the University's virtual learning environment (see below, paragraph 157 et. seq.). Discussing the arrangements outlined above with the members of the University who had developed them, the team was surprised to learn that such measures were considered to be simple common sense and that it had not occurred to the staff to describe the arrangements as 'good practice' in their AMR. Reflecting on these instances, it seemed to the team that for AMRs to serve as useful and effective devices for the dissemination of good practice, members of staff may need advice and assistance from the University on how to evaluate provision for its strengths as well as its weaknesses.

64 The University now requires that AMRs for collaborative provision should include a risk assessment, the format for which is based on a model provided by HEFCE. AMRs for collaborative provision are also expected to provide details of all staff at the partner institution who have been involved in programme delivery. When completed, AMRs are discussed by school learning and teaching committees and, if approved, are submitted with the supporting documentation to the relevant AMT. Oral and written feedback on their AMRs is provided to individual schools by the AMTs, and formal reports of the AMT meetings are considered by APC.

65 In its discussions with members of the University the audit team learnt that AMRs for collaborative provision are normally drafted by course coordinators, but that it is the University's expectation that these reports will also be 'owned' by partner institutions. The team was told that the reports were not formally 'signed off' by partners, but members of the University were of the view that the extent and frequency of contact with partners meant that a consensus would be achieved. Staff based at the partners with whom the team was able to discuss this matter concurred with this view.

66 The 2002 report on the University's partnership in Singapore recommended that staff in the University's partner institutions should be more directly involved in the AMR. As the University continues to develop its portfolio of collaborative provision the audit team considered that this recommendation remains relevant and that the AMR procedure for collaborative provision could usefully be strengthened by ensuring that partners have opportunities to comment on developments in the previous session independent of the University staff supporting their particular link. The University will therefore wish to consider the advisability of enabling its partners to comment formally, and independently of the course coordinator, on the contents of the AMRs for programmes with which they are associated.

67 The University stated that a strength of its current procedures was that the membership of CARP is drawn from across the institution and that they meet together regularly to share good practice. As noted in paragraph 63, above, a weakness in the present arrangement is that AMRs do not always identify the strengths in the way the group of staff responsible for the provision have structured and manage it which, if reported and disseminated, could assist other schools and programme teams to enhance *their* provision. Nevertheless, from the materials it was able to read and the discussions it held with members of staff, the audit team came to the view that the operation of the CARP, which enables good practice in reviewing to be identified and disseminated, was itself a feature of good practice.

68 The audit team was therefore concerned by a statement in the CPSED that 'as the University develops new procedures for processes such as AMR, it is anticipated that CP will track these changes'. When discussing this point with senior members of the University, the audit team was told that there was 'no prospect' that the University would change the annual monitoring procedures for its collaborative provision. The team welcomes this statement and encourages the University to retain its current, generally robust procedures for the annual monitoring of collaborative provision, not least because of the opportunities they provide for enhancements to that provision.

69 Reviewing the University's annual monitoring arrangements for its collaborative provision the audit team noted that despite the strength of the current arrangements, there appeared to be no formal mechanism for identifying annually matters that might arise when a number of programmes were delivered in partnership with a single institution. The team considered that the practice followed by AMTs of reviewing AMRs from more than one school was undoubtedly helpful, as is the provision which has been made for a 'mid contract review' of each partnership; notwithstanding these safeguards, however,

the team concluded that there was a possibility that issues of overlap or duplication (or, indeed, discrepancies) might not be identified by the current annual monitoring procedure.

70 A recent innovation has been the preparation by ASSU staff of an overview document, identifying matters that have arisen from annual monitoring across the University. The draft report seen by the audit team related to six out of 16 AMRs for collaborative provision, whereas the University's Register of its collaborative provision suggests a somewhat larger number of AMRs might have been included in this exercise. The team was told that that this procedure and the finalised document were to be the subject of future discussions between the PVC (Learning and Teaching) and Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching). The team suggests that the University may wish to develop this arrangement further and that it might also serve as a convenient means of dealing with matters which might arise when several programmes are delivered with a single partner.

University of Bradford periodic review process: Course Continuation Review (CCR)

71 The University's preferred term for periodic review is 'course continuation review' (CCR). CCR takes place at intervals between five and six years, the precise timing being adjusted where appropriate to accord with the requirements of any associated external accreditation and aims to review and evaluate the currency and the quality of the learning experience provided by the programme(s). CCR applies to all the University's programmes, including collaborative provision but, as with annual monitoring, there are some additional requirements to reflect the particular circumstances of collaborative provision.

72 CCR commences with the preparation by the staff supporting the provision of a prescribed set of materials which comprises definitive course documents (including the programme specification); a critical appraisal of the programme written by the course team; AMRs for the period since the initial approval of the programme or the most recent CCR; and

views of the programme by external peers, the latter including any relevant reports from professional statutory, and regulatory bodies and from QAA reviews and audits. The programme team's critical appraisal is accompanied by a strategy and action plan for the future, assessing the potential of the programme in the light of student demand, employment prospects, and so on, and proposing ways in which the programme might be further developed and enhanced.

73 As noted earlier, the material gathered for CCR by the course team is scrutinised by a CART, the membership of which is drawn from the CARP. The CART meets the school department or centre staff supporting the provision to discuss the critical appraisal document and the associated information. As part of its enquiries, the audit team followed through a number of CCR reports from different schools for provision offered through partner links. It was able to confirm that the CCR processes it had tracked had generally conformed to the University's requirements and that reports with formal recommendations were produced for APC.

74 The audit team saw several examples of critical appraisal documents prepared to support CCRs: some were more descriptive than analytical; others, however, were exemplary in their evaluativeness. Discussing the role of such critical appraisals in the CCR process with senior members of the University, the team found that the former shared its assessment of the variability of the critical appraisals. It was told that the University attempted to assist staff in departments, centres and schools to prepare appropriately critical and evaluative documents by offering advice and examples informally. It occurred to the team that the provision of earlier and clearer guidance might be appropriate for staff preparing a critical appraisal for the first time, given its pivotal role in the CCR process. As with AMRs, the team also identified scope for the University to encourage staff to be more evaluative and candid when setting out the strengths of their provision, as well as any potential weaknesses.

75 The 2003 report recommended greater involvement by students in the University's quality management processes, and the audit team learned that it was now standard practice for students to participate in course continuation reviews where the provision is delivered on the University's own campuses. On this matter, the CPSED stated that 'students at off-site institutions should be given the opportunity to share their experience of the course by means of written feedback'.

76 Members of CARTs who met the audit team expressed the view that meetings with students constituted a valuable feature of CCR; the team was therefore concerned to learn that opportunities for student participation in CCR might not always extend to those studying through collaborative provision. For example, in one instance of a CCR undertaken in the current session, there appeared to have been no or very limited student participation in the review, as the CCR report itself had noted. Exploring this matter further, the team learned that meetings with students were normally included in the programme for CCRs of campus-based programmes, as noted above while, for programmes delivered through partner links, student participation in CCRs 'by means of written feedback' was more usual.

77 The audit team discussed student participation in CCRs with members of the University and was told that the latter did not think it would be possible for students at off-site locations to participate in CCR meetings with CARTs. The team found this position difficult to accept, since its own understanding of the University's collaborative provision had greatly benefited from discussions via video and audio links with students overseas and meetings in the UK which the University itself had organised. The team therefore advises the University to explore ways of enabling its collaborative provision students to contribute directly to CCRs, thus affording them the same level of participation in the process as students on campus-based programmes.

78 Overall, the audit team concluded that the University's procedures for programme approval, monitoring and review for its collaborative provision were well designed and clearly stated, although at times they tended to be overly prescriptive. The procedures the University follows in these areas are generally consistent with the advice of the Academic Infrastructure. The team saw evidence that the University's procedures were generally carried out thoroughly and, notwithstanding the descriptive nature of some of the AMRs it saw, it came to the view the University's AMR procedures were contributing to assuring the quality and safeguarding the academic standards of awards achieved via the University's collaborative provision.

79 Additionally, the audit team came to the view that staff compiling AMRs might benefit from guidance and support to enable them to identify strengths as well as areas for development in the way they handle quality management and academic standards in collaborative provision. It also considered that the way the University made use of the expertise of CARP members was a particular strength. The team concluded that, taken together, these features provided further grounds for confidence in the University's capacity as an awarding body to safeguard the academic standards of its awards and sustain and enhance the quality of its collaborative provision. Overall, it seemed to the team that the University's procedures for approving new programmes of study for collaborative provision were consistent with the advice offered in Sections 2 and 7 of the *Code of practice: (Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning) and Programme approval, monitoring and review)*.

External participation in internal review processes for collaborative provision

80 As noted above, CARP provides the University with a means of allocating 'internal external' peers to CARTs and AMTs and the University expects that the membership of

CARTs will predominantly consist of staff external to the School. In 2000 the University strengthened its approach to the appointment of external peers in course approval and review by requiring their participation and, following publication of the 2003 institutional audit report, it amended the wording of its guidance to require the participation of external peers in CART meetings thus removing the option to consult the external peer member through correspondence. The CPSED noted that this more robust arrangement had only recently been introduced and had yet to be fully evaluated. At the time of the audit it had yet to be used in the CCR of a collaborative programme.

81 External peer members of CARTs are normally appointed following consultations between the Dean of the relevant school, the chair of the CART and the Chair of APC. An external peer may be member of the academic staff of another higher education institution, a member of a relevant professional or statutory body or a representative of local industry or commerce. The University expects that external peer members of CARTs should not normally be current external examiners for provision associated with the relevant school and should not have had a connection with the relevant school for at least three years prior to their appointment.

82 University papers seen by the audit team emphasised the importance it places on securing the participation of 'experts from within and outside the institution' in the work of CARTs. From the samples of external feedback on collaborative provision the team saw, it was able to confirm the participation of external peers in the work of CARTs charged with reviewing collaborative programmes.

83 In addition to its requirement that external peer members participate in CCRs, the University's substantial portfolio of vocational provision comprises programmes almost all of which are linked in some form to professional, statutory and regulatory bodies. As noted in the CPSED, the larger part of the University's

current portfolio of collaborative provision is linked to its School of Management which in recent years has been externally reviewed by the International Accreditation Advisory Board of the Association of MBAs (June 2005); EQUIS (the European Foundation for Management Development) and by QAA through its overseas audit of the University's partnership link in Singapore, in 2002.

84 Overall, the audit team came to the view that the arrangements the University has adopted since the institutional audit to emphasise its requirement for the participation of external peers in its processes for the approval of new provision, if applied as intended to its collaborative provision, would have the effect of making its commitment to externality more clearly demonstrable.

External examiners and their reports in collaborative provision

85 The University may appoint an external examiner to be responsible for individual units (modules) or for whole programmes of study; in some cases the same external examiner performs both roles. Where the University has franchised a programme of study for delivery through a partner it is usual for the external examiner for the equivalent provision offered on the University's campuses to act as the external examiner for the partnership provision. In these circumstances, arrangements for the nomination, appointment and induction of the external examiner follow the University's stated procedures. For provision which has been developed by a partner, and validated by the University, the external examiners are nominated by the partner, the nomination is vetted by the Dean of the school associated with the programme and, if suitable, the nominee is appointed by the University.

86 On appointment, external examiners receive a comprehensive information pack which describes their role as 'key arbiters' of the quality and academic standards for the programme and/or units to which they are appointed. In a change from arrangements in place at the time of the institutional audit,

examiners are now required to consider and approve all assessment tasks in addition to reviewing student work.

87 Newly appointed external examiners are invited to attend a formal University induction event and an induction is provided by the school with which they are to work. Where the provision with which the external examiner is to be associated includes an element of collaborative provision, this will be addressed in the school-level induction. The audit team noted that in its annual report on external examining for 2004-05, ASSU had been able to cite positive feedback received from external examiners about the training and induction sessions provided for them.

88 External examiners are required to send their reports to the office of the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) from whence they are distributed - in practice by ASSU - to the relevant schools, departments and centres. The CPSED noted that most external examiners also reported orally at meetings of the board of examiners and that it was usual for an external examiner to send a copy of their report direct to the relevant school as well as to the Pro Vice-Chancellor. Where an external examiner has indicated in their report that a matter requires urgent attention this will be noted by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) and ASSU, and a specific deadline will be set for action. Action to address routine matters is usually reported through the AMR. Members of the University told the audit team that many schools were in regular contact with their external examiners outside these formal interactions.

89 ASSU prepares an annual summary report for APC, drawing out common items or themes in external examiners' reports which might have relevance across the University. The summary report for 2004-05 was based on the reports from external examiners available to ASSU at the time of its compilation, which comprised 69 per cent of reports for undergraduate programmes and 68 per cent of taught postgraduate programmes. While the

report itself noted that the external examiners' reports for some programmes were required at different times to others, the University will no doubt wish to see more external examiners' reports included in the ASSU annual summary report, to enhance its usefulness and to satisfy itself that all its external examiners' reports are being received on time.

90 The ASSU 2004-05 report identifies a number of positive comments and some concerns to which suggested responses were linked. These included that when an external examiner has raised concerns, the relevant school should write to inform her or him of the actions that will be taken to address their concerns. Comments and responses to external examiners' reports are an integral part of the AMR and, if the relevant AMT considers that a programme or a school has not satisfactorily addressed any matters raised by an external examiner, there are opportunities for it to comment. The 2003 report noted that in several cases external examiners had observed that they had not received copies of the most recent AMR for the programme for which they had responsibilities. Subsequently, ASSU assumed responsibility for ensuring that each external examiner receives a copy of the relevant AMR.

91 As noted elsewhere in this report, one of the features of the University's AMR and CCR processes and, equally, of its assessment arrangements, is that where provision has been franchised for delivery with a partner the quality and assessment information relating to the franchised provision is considered alongside information for the equivalent provision offered on the University's campuses. This makes it possible for the University to compare the progress of the provision and of students studying for the same award at each location where the provision is delivered. For information from external examiners to contribute to this process, however, it is necessary that where their responsibilities include collaborative provision they should be able to comment on each instance of provision in such a way that the partner and their

location can be readily identified. To address this need, at the time of the audit ASSU had recently recommended to APC that the standard form for external examiner reports explicitly refer to collaborative provision and, where appropriate, invite separate comments from each external examiner on provision delivered on the University's own campuses and through partner links. This seemed to the audit team to be a useful and necessary step. At the time of the audit the APC had also resolved that the standard form for external examiners' reports be revised to enable the University to meet the requirements of HEFCE 03/51 for Teaching Quality Information (see below, paragraph 180).

92 Overall, the audit team came to the view that the University was taking care to maintain and enhance the robustness of its external examining arrangements for its collaborative provision and that reports from external examiners were regarded as a key means of safeguarding the academic standards of its awards. It was also clear that responses by programme teams and schools to matters raised by external examiners in their reports were being followed up at the centre with increasing effectiveness. These findings contributed to the team's judgement on the present and likely future capacity of the University to safeguard the academic standards of awards achieved through collaborative provision.

The use made of external reference points in collaborative provision

93 The CPSED stated that the University made use of a number of external reference points in managing its collaborative provision and in safeguarding the academic standards of its awards. These included the Academic Infrastructure, comprising the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ), subject benchmark statements, programme specifications, and QAA's Code of practice, together with HEFCE 00/54, 'Higher education in further education colleges'. The University also makes reference to external reference

points issued by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies in the form of statements and guidance, as these apply.

94 For collaborative provision the most notable way in which the University makes reference to the FHEQ is when approving new provision or submitting existing provision to CCR. In each case the University requires the staff supporting the provision to demonstrate that the academic standards of achievement are in alignment with the relevant level descriptors in the FHEQ. The CPSED stated that the University was confident that in all cases academic awards gained via collaborative provision conformed to the advice of the FHEQ.

95 The 2003 report stated that for each instance scrutinised, the standard of student achievement had been found to be appropriate to the titles of the awards and to their location within the FHEQ, that the programme specifications which had been seen had set out clearly the aims and objectives of the provision, and that the learning outcomes of the programmes were clear about how they were to be achieved. Likewise, in the discipline audit trails, the 2003 report stated that the programme specifications which had been seen had been found to be consistent with the relevant subject benchmark statements. The 2003 report commented on the existence of some variations in the design and the level of detail provided in the various programme specifications which had been seen, while emphasising that most had been comprehensive and written in an accessible style. The CPSED noted that following publication of the 2003 report a working group, established earlier, had been reconvened to review the utility of the University's programme specification template and guidance.

96 As noted in paragraph 7 above, for each of the partner links included in the scope of the collaborative provision audit the University provided the audit team with a range of materials which, in all cases, included the programme specifications for the relevant

provision. Following its scrutiny of these materials the team concluded that the University was continuing to maintain the alignment of its awards with the FHEQ, to support reference to the subject benchmark statements in the programme specifications, and that the latter provided suitable information on learning outcomes, assessment criteria and methods, and progression. As evidence of the University's continuing readiness to make use of external reference points in maintaining the quality of its provision the audit team noted that in June 2005 its MBA (which is offered in Bradford and is also offered through a number of its partnership links) had been accredited by the International Accreditation Advisory Board of the Association of MBAs (AMBA) which had expressed continued confidence in the delivery of the programme by the School of Management.

97 The CPSED stated that the University had sought to align its quality assurance arrangements for its collaborative provision with published codes of practice and guidance since the former HEQC first published its 'Code of Practice for Overseas Collaborative Provision in Higher Education' in 1996. It noted that with the issuing of *Section 2 of QAA's Code* in 1999, and its revision in 2004, the University had progressively updated its own regulations and frameworks to ensure their continued alignment with QAA's *Code*. For the most recent revision, CPAC had convened a small working group to review the University's quality assurance arrangements for its collaborative provision. The proposed changes had been approved by Senate in October 2005 and, in the view of the audit team, aligned well with the precepts of the revised *Section 2*.

98 Overall the audit team came to the view that the University was continuing to make suitable reference to the individual elements of the Academic Infrastructure and that where professional, statutory and regulatory bodies provided points of reference appropriate to the University's provision, schools also made use of these reference points (see over).

Review and accreditation by external agencies of programmes leading to the awarding institution's awards offered through collaborative provision

99 The CPSED identified a number of cases where programmes leading to its awards and offered through collaborative provision had been subject to review by external agencies including QAA, AMBA (see above), and EQUIS (the European Foundation for Management Development). In all cases these reviews had resulted in judgements of confidence with respect to quality of the provision and, in the case of the QAA audits and reviews, the academic standards of the awards. In all cases where an external review had involved collaborative provision the audit team was able to see evidence of the University's responses to the reports, and to identify action plans to address recommendations..

100 A significant number of the University awards are subject to professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRB) accreditation. The 2003 report stated that the way 'in which the University engages effectively with the accreditations by external bodies and the successful combination of these events with the internal approval/review processes is an example of good practice'. None of the evidence seen by the collaborative provision audit team would lead it to disagree with this view.

Student representation in collaborative provision

101 The 2003 report advised the University 'in collaboration with the student body' to develop 'effective and transparent arrangements for student participation in all appropriate quality assurance processes' and the CPSED highlighted the consideration of 'ways in which student representation and feedback may be enhanced and further facilitated' as one of the University's planned enhancements to the quality management of its collaborative provision (see above, paragraph 47). For the present, however, it is the University's view that student

representation and feedback 'are simply different aspects of the student voice and should thus be dealt with together'. Accordingly, the section in the CPSED which addressed student representation also dealt with feedback arrangements although they are dealt with separately in this report (see below).

102 The CPSED emphasised the University's belief in the value and importance of student representation in its quality assurance arrangements, and noted the University's relations with the Students' Union and that the latter was represented all its main committees. The CPSED also observed, however that, thus far, the University had found it impractical to involve students studying through collaborative provision in its quality assurance arrangements, in the same way as it had their campus-based peers, and that there could be cultural challenges to be overcome when seeking to engage in students in collaborative provision, for example, in the work of staff student liaison committees.

103 At the time of the audit, the *Handbook* stated for the benefit of those proposing and approving new collaborative programmes that the establishment of a staff student liaison committee was a University requirement. In practice it appeared to the audit team to have been more usual for other (but not always equivalent) arrangements to have been put in place when approving collaborative programmes. The team recognises the validity of the University's position, that the establishment of an SSLC may not be appropriate in all partner links. It therefore encourages the University to revise the wording on this matter in the *Handbook*, to accord more closely with its usual and more flexible practice, while at the same time retaining the existing emphasis on the importance of establishing functioning arrangements for student representation. In the team's view this is important to enable the University to maintain the comparability of the learning experience for students studying for its awards through partner links with that of their peers on its campuses. The team also considers that the

establishment of functioning student representation arrangements in partner links is important so that, as the awarding institution, the University can continue to be confident that it is satisfactorily discharging its 'Duty of Academic Care' to students studying through such links.

104 At the time of the audit, and partly in response to the 2003 report, the University had begun to review the totality of its engagements with its students, including its representation arrangements, and a progress report had been submitted to Senate in October 2005. In the course of the briefing visit the audit team was told that a representative from the Students' Union was attending meetings of the group undertaking this work but there was no further information in the CPSED or in other University papers on how the Students' Union contributed to representation and support arrangements for students studying for the University's awards through collaborative arrangements. In the meeting with the team in the briefing visit the Students' Union was unable to shed any light on this matter.

105 From its consideration of the University's papers, including the progress report to Senate noted above, and from its discussions with members of staff, it was not clear to the audit team that the scope of the University's current review of its engagement with its students had been explicitly extended to include students studying for its awards through partner links. As the University takes forward this review of its engagements with its students it would be desirable to ensure that its scope explicitly extends to support and other arrangements for students studying for its awards through collaborative arrangements.

106 The audit team met students studying for the University's award in its local region in the course of the briefing visit and through one of its visits to partner links. It learned that students studying with the University's partners had little contact with the University's Students' Union (of which the UK-based students are, nonetheless, members). It was told that should the need arise, class

representatives in partner institutions would contact the Union for assistance and that they were confident that they would be supported. Again, for collaborative provision offered in the University's local region, elected class representatives attend programme committee meetings convened at the University, through which they can raise matters and report back to their peers. The class representatives who met the team told it that they received the minutes of previous committee meetings and an overview of student feedback. These materials had enabled them to brief fellow students and engage with matters in their 'home' Colleges and relevant developments at the University. Class representatives who met the team were unaware, however, that the University expects class representatives such as themselves to benefit from training, organised by the Students' Union, and had not received the briefing pack which the latter provides for class representatives studying on the University's campuses.

107 In meetings with students in the course of the partner link visits, and in meetings with staff at the University, the audit team discussed representation arrangements for students studying for the University's awards through partner links. It was told that students in such links overseas did not have access to advice and support from Students' Union salaried and sabbatical officers when initiating or pursuing a complaint, or an appeal against an academic decision. The team was subsequently told that the University recognised that this matter needed to be addressed. The team encourages and advises the University to continue and complete its review of student representation arrangements, so as to ensure effective and equitable representation for students studying for its awards through partnership links, and to deal with this gap in its representation arrangements at the earliest opportunity, with a view to ensuring that students studying for its awards with its partners, in the UK and overseas, benefit from student representation arrangements comparable to those available on the University's campuses (see over).

108 In its meetings with UK-based and overseas students studying for the University's awards through partner links the audit team met active and enthusiastic student representatives who had been appointed to their positions through means ranging from formal election, to self-appointment with the approval of classmates. UK-based collaborative provision students, and some overseas students were able to participate in the work of school committees at the University, and all had ready access to the relevant course coordinator.

109 Through its discussions with class representatives based in the University's overseas partners the audit team heard of a variety of formal and informal methods through which representatives consulted with their constituencies and reported back to them. Representatives in centres abroad may have meetings with the person with executive responsibility for the overseas partner, and with visiting Bradford staff at registration and on other visits. The team heard several examples of how matters raised through such channels could be dealt with quickly and effectively. From the papers provided by the University the team saw informal notes of visits kept by course coordinators, detailing matters and suggestions raised in meetings with class representatives which had been used to brief the partner and to report back to the school and the University.

110 The CPSED stated that the University had found that reliance on the student representation arrangements maintained by partner institutions might not always be appropriate and, as noted above, it views representation arrangements for students registered for its awards as an area requiring further work. As it takes forward this work, the University might find that its experience of organising 'virtual' meetings, between the audit team and students studying for its awards with its partners, assists it to view such meetings as more 'practical' for its own purposes, including in CCR, AMR, and other quality-related processes. At the same time, the University might wish to consider whether the approach described in the CPSED of viewing feedback and representation

arrangements sufficiently differentiates between the two, and encourages students studying through its partner links to view themselves as active partners in their own learning.

Feedback from students, graduates and employers

111 The audit team gave particular attention to two aspects of feedback from students, graduates and employers: first the formative function of feedback, in enabling current students to give feedback to the providers on their experiences and their concerns; second the contribution of feedback to the provider and the awarding institution to support their evaluation and longer term review and planning of the provision.

112 As noted above, the CPSED dealt with the University's student representation and feedback arrangements under one heading, emphasising the importance the University places in its quality management arrangements on collecting, analysing and responding to student feedback. The University's arrangements for collecting such feedback depend largely on questionnaires, the format of which has been relatively unchanging. In the particular context of AMR the CPSED acknowledged that the University had experienced difficulties in achieving consistently high return rates for feedback questionnaires for its collaborative provision. Information gathered by the University for its own purposes, which it shared with the audit team, showed that a number of the University's distance learning programmes had also reported low questionnaire return rates. The CPSED noted that the University was piloting the collection of feedback from distance learning students via the University's virtual learning environment (VLE).

113 The CPSED commented on the challenges experienced by the University in gathering feedback from students in some of its partner links, citing differences in cultural expectations as one reason for this, and adding that such differences needed to be addressed sensitively. The University has responded to such challenges by granting individual course

coordinators the scope to develop feedback arrangements which, while they are required to be effective, can be matched to the cultural and other circumstances of the particular partner link. In its discussions with members of staff the audit team heard of the means being followed by individual course coordinators to gather feedback from students on partner links.

114 Students studying through partner links who encountered the audit team in the course of its visits to partner links (including the virtual visits) described how they provided feedback to the University. The variety of means employed in the partner links included SSLCs (which appeared to be functioning effectively for FD students in the University's local region) and through module, stage and programme questionnaires. Students were also able to describe providing feedback to the University through informal meetings of class representatives with the course coordinator (see above), contacts with locally-based and visiting teaching staff, and e-mail. They told the team that the University provided feedback to them on their performance through meetings with members of staff and written comments on their assessed work. Where the University's partner link is with an agency or other organisation which, in addition to supporting the delivery of the collaborative provision, also employs the students, the latter and the staff supporting the provision were able to describe how additional feedback could be gathered from students by their line managers. In all cases, students who discussed their learning with the team were able to cite examples where the feedback they had provided to the University had been used by the latter, and its partners, to improve their learning opportunities.

115 The 2003 report recommended that the University should seek to close the feedback loop by reporting to students on the actions it has taken in response to their feedback. While the CPSED recognised the dimensions of this challenge, it may wish to note that none of the collaborative provision students who met the audit team doubted that their feedback to the

University and its partners had the capacity to enable matters of immediate concern to them to be addressed. In several cases the team heard of feedback which had been gathered promptly and had led to speedy action. In the papers provided by the University, the team also noted an exemplary and prompt report of feedback received from distance learning students which had been used to inform a review by Learning Support Services (LSS) in relation to the University's Distance Learning Library.

116 In considering the second aspect of feedback, namely its contribution to evaluation and longer term review and planning, the audit team studied a broad sample of AMRs and CCRs. In these it found ample evidence of the provision and use of often triangulated feedback from sources other than questionnaires to inform the University's formal evaluative processes. Where the University gathers data from students studying via partner links through questionnaires completed at the end of a stage of study the team was told that ASSU aggregated this data in order to be able to report on overall trends to LTSC from which any recommendations would be sent to APC.

117 Other than the first destination survey for home-based students, the University does not conduct large-scale surveys of its graduates or their employers but it considers that the very satisfactory employment statistics for its former students shows that it has developed employable graduates. The CPSED stated that since the greater part of the University's collaborative provision is equivalent to home provision and is vocational in nature, the demand for further collaborations from its established partner organizations, some of whom are or represent employers, is evidence, if indirect, that these graduates are equally employable. The CPSED did, however, note the establishment of 'advisory boards' by more than one school, and in the case of the Advisory Board of the School of Management the audit team noted that its members included employers and alumni. This seemed to the team to represent a feature of good practice. Overall, however, the team came to the view

that periodic surveys of graduates and employers might provide a fruitful source of information for the University to draw on as it continues to enhance the management of its collaborative provision.

Student admission, progression, completion and assessment information for collaborative provision

118 As with its collaborative provision arrangements more generally, the University seeks to ensure that 'the quality assurance mechanisms which apply to [its collaborative provision] follow the practice the courses delivered on-site by the University of Bradford, with amendments and extensions to existing practices only being included where necessary to reflect the involvement of partners'. Hence, it is the University's expectation that the same procedures and approaches will be followed in collaborative provision as in the equivalent campus-based programmes for the admission of students, for monitoring and recording their progression towards their award and the completion of their studies, and for assessing their achievements. As part of its overall enquiries the audit team sought to confirm that the same approaches are followed for collaborative and on-campus provision. Overall, it found this to be the case.

119 Data for all registered students of the University are held and administered via the University's Student Administrative Information Navigation Tracking System (SAINT), which is a key component of its management information systems. The audit team was told that there are still some difficulties to be resolved in attempting to use SAINT to provide data in connection with collaborative provision, chiefly in connection with the direct registration of multiple cohorts with different starting points within one academic session. This can give rise to misleading information with respect to total numbers on a programme of studies at certain times of the year. The team found that the University was giving this matter its urgent attention. In other respects, however, schools

routinely use (occasionally corrected) figures from SAINT to provide data for use in compiling AMRs and CCRs. In all cases, such figures and the uses to which they are put, treat students registered for University awards and studying with partners as other cohorts, while usually keeping them separate to enable their progress to be compared with that of members of other cohorts and of the same cohort but studying elsewhere (see above, paragraph 42). Some AMT papers seen by the team had noted an absence in AMRs of admission statistics; the team encourages the University to continue with its work to ensure that AMRs include such information.

Admission

120 The audit team was able to confirm the position stated in the CPSED: that course coordinators are responsible for ensuring that student admissions by partners to programmes leading to the University's awards are handled in accordance with the latter's requirements. The checks they undertake are on behalf of the Dean of the relevant school and include confirming that English language competence and any relevant professional regulatory or statutory body requirements are met. English language standards are judged by test results or, in some cases, confirmed through interviews conducted by the course coordinator. Staff who discussed this matter with the team appeared to be unaware that a University-wide policy for English language competence had been settled in 2002-03. The team encourages the University to look into the effectiveness of its communications with staff on such matters, and to work towards an effective common institution-wide approach in the interest of fairness to all its students and applicants.

121 The University's admission procedures provide for applicants to support their applications with reference to accredited prior learning (APL). None of the course coordinators for programmes offered overseas who discussed admissions arrangements with the audit team had had experience of having to deal with such an application. Course coordinators supporting FDs were, however, able to describe

circumstances where students applying for such programmes who met the University's formal entrance requirements, and had been interviewed, had nonetheless supported their application with a portfolio describing their experience. The University informed the team that an institution-wide policy for 'EU equivalence' was put in place in February 2006.

122 At the time of the audit, one School was developing a more fully stated approach to the use of APL in admitting students to its programmes, including those offered through partnerships. Members of the School told the team that as part of its developing approach to APL, it was intended that all admissions via APL would be reported for the information of its School Board. As this School takes forward these procedures, the University may wish to consider the usefulness of disseminating information on its procedures for reporting the use of APL in admissions decisions, for the benefit of other schools with developing portfolios of collaborative provision and making more widely known its policy on 'EU equivalence'.

123 Course coordinators told the audit team that the soundness or otherwise of the admissions requirements set for non-standard applicants, such as those relying on APL in their applications, could best be judged through progression statistics. The team understood how this check would reveal any laxity in procedures or how they had been applied, but could not see how such an approach would be able to identify whether the criteria which had been applied might have been overly strict.

124 For programmes leading to its FD awards, admission criteria and procedures are set by the University, and their administration by partners is closely monitored by the relevant course coordinators. The audit team noted that the report of a recent QAA FD review had advised the University to review and monitor admission procedures on the Foundation Degree in Engineering Technology. The audit team encourages the University to consider what measures might assist it to confirm the consistency of procedures followed in its schools and by its partners for monitoring

admissions and rejection decisions on non-standard applications including applications supported by APL.

Progression and completion

125 As with its other quality management procedures the University follows the same regulations and procedures for student progression, achievement and assessment in its collaborative provision as for its campus-based programmes. As noted in paragraph 119 above, it provides its boards of examiners with information which enables them to identify cohorts from different centres but following the same programme, so that the effectiveness of arrangements made by particular partners can be evaluated and so that the consistency of the academic standards of the associated awards can be maintained.

126 The 2003 report recommended that statistics and analyses regarding progression and completion, including students studying for the University's awards in partner institutions, be reported and discussed in APC or elsewhere. Progression and completion data are required information in both AMRs and CCRs and from the sample of such reports seen by the audit team it was able to confirm that these figures are subject to consideration and constructive comment. A further level of monitoring is provided by ASSU and by CPAC, part of the remit of which is to evaluate the recruitment and retention performance of existing courses, on behalf of the University.

127 In two of the student handbooks for FD programmes it saw, the audit team noted clear statements that successful students were able to progress to a designated honours degree programme and members of the University who met the team confirmed these arrangements. In the course of the audit, however, the team was told that there was either not always an appropriate degree to which FD students could progress. In such circumstances student successfully completing a University of Bradford FD could apply for a place on one of its honours undergraduate programmes with the guarantee of an interview but not necessarily an offer.

128 University papers seen by the audit team stated variously that for the University's FDs 'progression will be guaranteed to appropriate existing honours degrees at Bradford University' and that there will be 'guaranteed articulation with at least one honours degree programme', while relevant promotional material for one FD states that 'Successful completion of the Foundation Degree carries with it the opportunity to progress to the final stage of the [named award] and that for another states that a 'seamless progression from the Foundation Degree to the [named award] is possible ...'. The contractual agreements between the University and several of the partners working with it to offer FDs do not, however, include reference to articulation with the University's programmes leading to honours awards although it seemed to the team that this had been a condition of the approval for the programme. The team therefore advises the University to review its internal arrangements for FDs offered with its partners, to ensure that there are no informal or unintended impediments to progression from FDs to its Honours-level awards.

Assessment

129 The University states that the responsibility for ensuring the equivalence of assessment tasks undertaken by students studying on programmes delivered with partners and students studying on its own campuses is discharged on its behalf by its schools, its boards of examiners, its external examiners and Senate. The CPSED stated the University's confidence that the arrangements it has made through these means ensures comparability of standards of achievement between its collaborative provision and provision delivered on its campuses.

130 Responsibilities for setting and marking assessments are set out in the contractual agreement between the University and each partner. Specifications for the terms of such statements are laid down in the *Handbook*. The audit team learnt that the University takes care to ensure that where the same programme is offered through a number of partners the

associated examinations are synchronised to ensure the security of the examination process and arrangements are prescribed for moderating marked assessments. The University's award certificates do not differentiate between students who have studied with a partner and those who have studied on its campuses.

131 In each instance studied by the audit team, the assessment tasks undertaken by students had been set by University staff, in some cases in consultation with staff delivering the relevant programme with the partner. The CPSED stated that where a programme is offered at the University and with one or more partners, the University allows scope for justified variations in the associated assessment tasks, subject to the agreement of the relevant external examiner. For example, in a few instances, coursework components in modules delivered at Bradford and in other centres have been replaced by examinations. In such cases, the team considered that the University's present procedures for authorising changes in assessment tasks and formats are broadly sound, given that they are properly recorded and treated as significant amendments to the programme specification.

132 Having considered the wide sample of evidence to which it had access, it seemed clear to the audit team that students studying through collaborative arrangements undertook assessment tasks which were generally in the same format as those undertaken by their peers at the University and, that where assessment tasks were not identical, care had been taken to ensure that they were of a comparable standard. The general robustness of the University's assessment arrangements contributed to the team's broad confidence in the University's present and likely future arrangements to safeguard the academic standards of its awards.

Assurance of the quality of teaching staff in collaborative provision; appointment, appraisal, support and development

133 The CPSED stated that that the University had devolved 'detailed responsibility' for the selection of teaching staff to its partner institutions, and that it satisfied itself that a potential partner's procedures for appointing staff were satisfactory in the course of its procedures for establishing a collaborative arrangement. As part of the University's procedures for approving new programmes of study, partners are expected to provide the curricula vitae of proposed teaching staff. For collaborative programmes CARTs consider staff development and appraisal procedures for the proposed partner institution. Where changes take place to staffing in partners subsequent to initial approval, the University expects the Dean of the relevant school to check the suitability of the proposed changes with the course coordinator and other school staff and, if satisfied, to approve them on behalf of the University. In response to the 2002 report the University has adopted the policy that the partner and the relevant school should maintain a list of teaching staff to be monitored through the AMR.

134 The individual characteristics of the University's partners do not lend themselves to a single way of monitoring their staff development arrangements. In most cases, the University expects that this will be done by its course coordinators who may undertake peer observation of teaching in the partner and provide staff development to support the delivery of the provision, curriculum development and other matters, such as changes in University procedures for assessment.

135 In the course of a visit to a partner institution in the University's local region the audit team met members of the teaching staff delivering provision leading to the University's FD award. They were able to confirm that they enjoyed strong links with members of the University, and that regular meetings to moderate assessments and to explore and

develop module descriptors contributed to their staff development. As noted elsewhere in this report, the audit team considered that the recommendation in the 2002 report, that staff in partner organisations should have improved opportunities to contribute to the compilation of the AMR for their provision would provide an important developmental opportunity for such staff and should be put into effect.

136 From its conversations with members of the University and staff based in its partners and from records of e-mail and written correspondence, the audit team was able to confirm substantial levels of communication and interaction between staff at several levels, for example between the course coordinator and the programme leader in the partner, and the Dean of the relevant school and senior officers of the University, and their counterparts in partners. The development of the University's VLE has provided its own staff, and staff based in its partners (including partners overseas), with a medium for exchanging information the use of which is rapidly growing. Staff in partner institutions in the region and who are delivering programmes leading to the University's FD awards have ready access to University-developed materials through the VLE. All such staff have been identified by the University as its associate lecturers: they have full access to the University's Library and the team was able to confirm that staff in partners regularly received information from the University via email and written correspondence.

137 In addition to monitoring and encouraging development for staff delivering provision with its partners, the University has also taken steps to encourage the provision of staff development for support and administrative staff in partners in the UK and overseas. The audit team learned that some school-based administrative staff and members of ASSU were undertaking visits to work with their counterparts in partner institutions overseas.

138 As noted in paragraphs 84-91 in the 2003 report, staff development across the University and induction arrangements for teaching staff are organised by a central Staff Development

Unit. In the current session, events offered by the SDU included sessions with titles such as: 'Assuring Quality and Standards of Collaborative Provision'; 'Sharing Good Practice in Collaborative Provision'; 'Assuring the Quality and Standards of Off Site Provision' and 'Sharing Good Practice for the Annual Monitoring of Collaborative Provision'.

139 In view of the considerable responsibilities and expectations the University vests in its course coordinators the audit team inquired particularly into the staff support and development opportunities available to them. It was informed that there was no 'handbook' or 'guidelines' for the information of course coordinators; they do, however, have access to written terms of reference, and from the current session University has inaugurated an annual meeting, organised by ASSU, for all course coordinators and has begun to provide additional support (see above, paragraph 39). The University's staff appraisal scheme is described in the 2003 report. The performance of University staff who act as course coordinators is included in the scope of this scheme.

140 On the basis of the information available to it in the University's papers, and from its discussions with members of the University's staff and partner-based staff, the audit team came to the view that the University was taking suitable measures to check that its partners retain appropriately qualified staff to deliver provision leading to its awards and that the University facilitates some opportunities, at present chiefly through the course coordinators for staff development in its partners. At the time of the audit the University's VLE was already being used to support some staff development opportunities in partner institutions. For partner organisations based in the region, the University's appointment of those delivering collaborative provision leading to its awards as 'associate lecturers' together with the enhanced access this gives to its learning resources, makes a helpful contribution to their sense of identification with the University and to their staff development.

141 The audit team also noted the range of staff development opportunities available to University staff supporting the delivery of collaborative provision through the SDU and the measures being taken to improve support and staff development for course coordinators and to encourage the University's partners to support the development of their staff. The team is confident, overall, in the soundness of the measures being taken by the University to ensure that its partners take appropriate steps to support and develop staff associated with collaborative provision leading to the University's awards.

Assurance of the quality of distributed and distance methods delivered through an arrangement with a partner

142 Institutional audit reports normally include within their scope learning opportunities and tuition delivered through distributed and distance methods and the 2003 report commented on this aspect of the University's work in some detail. In collaborative provision audit, where an awarding institution has chosen to work with a partner to support distance learning, this is included in the scope of the audit. In this instance, although the CPSED provided no information on the University's work with those of its partners supporting its distance learning programmes, once the audit team had identified its interest in this area, the University helpfully assembled a selection of papers and web-based materials to support the team's work. This enabled the team to confirm that in some instances of its delivery of flexible and distributed learning via its VLE the University had adopted a 'blended' approach, whereby students' use of the VLE was being supported by locally-based staff, thereby bringing such provision within the scope of collaborative provision audit.

143 Much of the information sought by the audit team and provided by the University related to the latter's development of its VLE and its use to support collaborative provision. For that reason there is some overlap between

consideration of the VLE in this context, and in the context of the University's learning support arrangements (see below, paragraph 157). Since the publication of the 2003 report, noted above, the University has continued the roll-out of its VLE across the institution. While much of the University's efforts in this area are directed to the support of students who are studying on its campuses, from the papers the University provided for the audit team, and from its discussions with members of staff at the University and in partners, it appeared to be the case that the needs of the University's collaborative provision were providing a key imperative for the particular way in which the University was developing the VLE.

144 As noted elsewhere in this report, the collaborative provision audit process included two 'virtual' visits to partner links outside the UK and from the University's papers the team was also able to study how the VLE was being used to support a UK-based partnership remote from the University's local region. In each case, it was clear to the audit team that the University's provision of learning opportunities for students away from its campuses was becoming increasingly reliant on the VLE which, in some instances of collaborative provision, had come to be the main form of delivering and supporting learning. Staff and students studying for the University's awards overseas who used its VLE described how it was used to support students', learning and the various features provided through the VLE which they found helpful. These included access to learning support materials uploaded by staff in Bradford; previous examination papers; online discussions; and feedback on their assignments from Bradford-based tutors.

145 The collaborative provision students based in the UK and overseas who discussed their use of the VLE with the audit team were generally satisfied and confirmed that feedback on their work, via the VLE, was almost invariably forthcoming within the timescales stated in the programme and/or module handbooks. The team noted that the University had conducted

an evaluation of students' views on the VLE in 2004. While the scope of this evaluation had not been restricted to students based in partner links, one of the comments to which the University had already responded related to the cost and difficulties experienced by students away from Bradford when retrieving and uploading information to the VLE.

146 The audit team noted in the internal reports and papers the University provided that increased resources were now being made available to support the work of the Teaching Quality Enhancement Group (TQEG), but that the University was alert to the risks that support for the use of the VLE would devolve to groups of enthusiasts, rather than become a mainstream activity expected of all staff. In the minutes of one School which uses the VLE to support its collaborative provision the team noted the firm line taken to encourage staff to upload learning materials to the VLE promptly.

147 In the course of its studies of the University's use of its VLE to support its collaborative provision and its flexible, blended and distance learning, the audit team was able to establish that care had been taken at all stages to check the development of this provision for consistency with the advice of the revised Section 2 of QAA's *Code*. On the evidence available to it, the team is confident that such consistency has been achieved and that where assessment has been undertaken via the VLE that this has been conducted in a manner consistent with the advice of *Section 6 of the Code of practice: Assessment of students*.

148 The audit team noted that one of the recommendations of the University's 2004 evaluation of its VLE had been that the University revise its quality assurance procedures generally to ensure their applicability to the learning opportunities now being provided through the VLE. As the University continues to develop the use of its VLE generally, including for its collaborative provision, the team encourages it in its moves to give effect to this and other recommendations of its 2004 evaluation.

Learning support resources for students in collaborative provision

149 The CPSED stated that from the beginning of a potential partnership the University's concern is to ensure that students studying with the partner and in that location will have a learning experience which is 'equivalent to that experienced by home students'. Accordingly, one of the key activities undertaken prior to approving a proposed new partnership is a check on the availability of teaching, library, information and communication technology and other learning support resources to be made available before teaching and learning commences. The availability of adequate resources for existing partnerships is normally checked through a visit to the proposed partner by a representative of the home school and by a staff member of the University who is not directly involved in developing the proposal. What would constitute adequate resources may vary between partnerships, given the nature of the provision on which each is based. For that reason, the University's specification of what will be required in the way of learning support resources at the commencement of a partnership is particular to that partnership.

150 From its consideration of the papers of one School supporting a significant number of programmes delivered with partners, the audit team was able to establish that such checks of learning support resources were routinely conducted. In addition to scrutiny of the learning support resources available by the supporting school, the University's Director of Learning Support Services (LSS) or other relevant learning support may also be involved in the consideration of proposed new partnerships.

151 At University level the Planning and Budgeting Sub-Committee (PBSC) is responsible for ensuring that the home school has sufficient resources to support the development of the proposed collaboration. This is established through the provision of detailed costings on a standard form developed by the University, which include estimates for the support of the course coordinator.

152 Following its approval of a new partnership, and between CCRs, the University monitors the continuing adequacy of the learning support resources provided to students via reports from the course coordinator, who is expected to discuss these matters with students when visiting the partner and check on them independently. The course coordinators' findings on the learning support resources in the partnership to which they are attached are summarised and reported annually in the AMR. Information provided through student feedback questionnaires provides a further check on the adequacy of the learning support resources available to them. A draft AMT report dated February 2006, which the University made available to the audit team stated that comments on gaps or insufficiencies in learning support resources represent a theme in six of the 16 collaborations it had reviewed. The audit team invites the University to consider whether the findings of AMT suggest that a more stringent and comprehensive approach to establishing and ensuring the initial and continuing adequacy of learning support resources might be wise and desirable. It also seemed possible to the audit team that a closer involvement of the partner in the preparation of the AMR might provide opportunities for the University to communicate its views on the provision of learning support resources more clearly.

153 Students studying for the University's award who are based with one of its partners in its local region have the same rights of access and borrowing with the Library as campus-based students. FD students who met the audit team confirmed that they and their peers who were within commuting distance of Bradford were able to use the University's Library and valued their access to it.

154 Shortly before the audit visit, and as part of its routine arrangements, the University conducted an online survey of the views of students learning at a distance on the learning resources available to them, with a view to informing future developments. The results of this survey were made available to the audit team which noted general satisfaction on the

part of students with the current level of service available to them (specifically those elements provided by LSS). The team was interested to note that detailed and timely feedback had been provided for students via the VLE on the outcomes of the survey.

155 The CPSED noted that the introduction of the University's VLE had significantly changed the way in which all its students made use of the facilities offered through Learning Support Services (LSS) and that this was particularly the case for students studying at a distance, whether or not they are based with a partner organisation. Such students now have automated access to booklists and online resources through the VLE, and the University has appointed a member of staff in LSS to provide support for students studying at a distance, supplementing the support which subject specialists in the Library continue to provide.

156 In several cases, students studying for the University's awards at a distance may have limited or intermittent access to the Internet. In the case of one group of students where access to the Internet was limited to those in one or two urban centres, the audit team learned that the course coordinator and his team at the University had compiled a suite of learning resources on CD-ROM for them. The team was told by students that the contents of this CD-ROM included journal and other source materials in addition to resources available via the University's VLE. This was later confirmed by the course coordinator. The development of this learning resource, in advance of the first delivery of the provision, indicated to the team the care with which those promoting the programme had assessed the learning environment likely to be available to their prospective students. The provision of such back-up learning resources on CD-ROM to compensate for difficulties with internet access appear to the team to represent a feature of good practice.

The University's development of its VLE and use of the latter to support collaborative provision

157 The 2003 report concluded 'that the University was addressing the quality assurance

issues associated with distance learning in an increasingly coordinated and effective way' and following the audit the University undertook an internal review of its progress in embedding the use of its VLE in its activities in 2003. This report together with discussions of its contents in the Teaching Quality Enhancement Group indicated a range of views across the University about the progress which had been made, while recognising that the rapid pace of internal development of the VLE suggested that the University was 'rapidly catching up' with comparator institutions. The University's internal report noted the perception that, among some staff, 'knowledge and understanding of effective pedagogical approaches to online learning was limited, a view contested by TQEG, although it acknowledged a 'mixed level of audience pre-knowledge' at training and dissemination events in support of e-learning.

158 On the basis of the University's 2003 internal report, and the internal debate following its dissemination, the audit team came to the view that the University had undertaken a searching evaluation of its relative standing in e-learning, which had enabled it to identify the scope open to it for development in this area, and a range of actions to be taken. These included the progressive roll-out to the schools of the University's chosen VLE, and the continuing upgrading of the latter; measures to increase the effectiveness of SAINT in handling data and registrations of students studying via e-learning (see above, paragraph 119); and measures to encourage and support staff to take up the development and training opportunities available to them, and which cover technical and pedagogical matters. At the same time, the University 'revised and strengthened' its Working Group on Electronic and Distance Learning.

159 The University's determination to address the development of e-learning was consolidated and endorsed by Senate in June 2004 when it implemented the University's 'E-Learning Strategy' together with an associated 'E-Learning Implementation Plan'. These

measures provided the underpinning for the formal drafting, discussion and approval of strategies and action plans for e-learning, and the promotion of staff development in this area and associated corporate developments.

160 At the time of the collaborative provision audit, regular reports and action plans on the progress being made by each school to implement use of the VLE in support of teaching and learning, including in collaborative provision, were being received and discussed by APC and LTSC and their school-level equivalents. The audit team was told by senior members of staff that the work of the TQEG had been central to the developments since 2003 together with the active support the Associate Deans had given to the introduction of the VLE into the work of the schools.

161 Overall, the audit team came to the view that the University's learning support arrangements for students studying for its awards at a distance, including through partnerships, were broadly sound, and that the University's measured and purposeful management of the rollout of its VLE, and the use to which this is being put in supporting collaborative, distance, and flexible learning provision, represented a feature of good practice. The recent warning note sounded by an AMT report identifying difficulties with learning resources as an emerging theme in AMRs suggests the continuing need for the University to keep this area under review. The capacity of the University's AMR/AMT procedure to identify the need to attend to this matter is, however, reassuring. It might be desirable, however, for the University to adopt a more stringent and comprehensive approach to establishing and ensuring the initial and continuing adequacy of learning support resources for students studying for its awards with partners.

Academic guidance and personal support for students in CP

162 The CPSED stated that, as with learning support resources, matters to do with student support and guidance are 'a standard item in all

course approval and is summarised on the each course's programme specifications [sic]'. Part of the University's generic expectation in such matters is that students studying at a distance with a partner will have access to academic guidance and support through meetings with locally-based tutors, particularly in FDs, and with the course coordinator and other visiting staff from the home school.

163 In the course of its visits to partner links, including its 'virtual' visits, the audit team was told by students based in the UK and overseas that they enjoyed good access to locally-based staff but many also spoke of the frequency with which they were able to meet the course coordinator and other members of the University and emphasised the value they placed on these meetings which provided opportunities to seek academic advice and guidance.

164 As noted elsewhere in this report the audit team was able to meet groups of UK-based students studying with the University's partners for its FD award. Academic guidance and personal support arrangements for such students were not described in the CPSED but the team was able to establish that each FD student had been assigned to a partner -based tutor, and that each had the support of a mentor in their workplace to support the work-based learning component of their studies. College-based staff working with students on the University's FDs informed the team that their support for students was monitored on behalf of the University by the course coordinator, and that student support arrangements were also subject to monitoring through the quality procedures of their own institutions.

165 Through its conversations with students and staff based in the University's partners the audit team heard of the arrangements one Centre at the University had made with its overseas partner to provide a bespoke induction process for students who were not native English speakers and who were commencing a taught postgraduate programme to familiarise them with the norms and expectations of a UK higher degree, including the requirements of

academic writing in English. The team considered that these arrangements represented a feature of good practice. All students who met the audit team were satisfied that they had access to the academic guidance and support they might need.

166 Students based with partner organisations are entitled to make use of the University's centrally provided student services, which include student counselling and careers guidance. The scope of these services is described in the 2003 report (paragraphs 105-122). Students who discussed their access to personal support and guidance arrangements with the audit team were able to cite instances where they or other students had been able to refer matters (chiefly requests for deferments of assessment submission dates) to the course coordinator. All reported satisfaction with the way such requests had been dealt with.

167 The 2003 report came to the view that the University had established no 'institutional overview of personal tutorial support' and that it offered no 'centrally produced' guidance on this matter. It therefore recommended that the 'University should take steps to ensure that the current review of the tutorial system [which it is undertaking] delivers an effective and appropriate level of student support across the institution'. Following the institutional audit the University convened a Steering Group to review 'the University's engagement with its students'. At the time of the collaborative provision audit, as noted elsewhere in this report, the Steering Group had delivered an interim report to Senate. From the contents of that report it seemed to the audit team that there might be some risk that the University's review of its engagement with its students does not explicitly address its engagement with its collaborative and flexible and distance learning students. The University might therefore wish to consider the desirability of ensuring that its current review of its engagement with students explicitly extends to support and other arrangements for students studying for its awards through partnership links.

Section 3: The audit investigations: published information

The experience of students in collaborative provision of the published information available to them

168 The University aims to provide the same kinds of information for students registered for its awards and studying with partners as is provided for students on its own campuses in keeping with its aim to offer the former 'a comparable student experience to home provision' and its expectations in this matter are set out in the *Handbook*. This views the partner as the primary source of published information, usually provided via prospectuses and web sites, together with the University's own prospectuses and its web site and bespoke booklets and leaflets for specific programmes.

169 As part of the information provided to support the audit the University made available copies of its undergraduate prospectus and examples of promotional leaflets and brochures for FDs, together with an example of the guidance it provides for applicants for such awards, including those with National Certificate and/or Diploma Qualifications and materials for several of its overseas partnerships. The audit team was also able to browse partners' web sites for their promotional materials. Programme specifications for all provision offered with partners and leading to its awards are available on the University's web site.

170 The CPSED stated that the University relied on the Dean of the home school for each instance of collaborative provision, to check and approve all the associated promotional materials, and noted that Deans are authorised to veto publication of materials which use or associate the University's name with unapproved statements. The audit team was told that in practice this responsibility was usually exercised on behalf of the Dean by the relevant Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) advised by the course coordinators.

The team also heard that the Assistant Registrar with responsibility for collaborative provision matters periodically checked the web sites of the University's partner organisations to ensure the accuracy of statements about provision and arrangements linked to the University.

171 The content of the University's pre-enrolment literature and its manner of addressing applicants, makes it plain that students are enrolled on the University's programmes (and for validated provision on programmes leading to the University's awards) and, where relevant, alerts them to opportunities to transfer to the University for further study. The audit team saw examples of literature specifically designed to promote programmes offered via collaborative provision. Students following those programmes who met the team were able to confirm that the statements in such leaflets and brochures were generally accurate and offered a fair representation of the provision and the learning opportunities. From the content of the materials it saw and its discussions with students, it seemed to the audit team that the way in which prospectus, programme, and other information is provided to students studying through partnership links encourages their strong and positive identification with the University and is a feature of good practice.

172 A feature of the material seen was the clear emphasis for applicants that Bradford is the awarding institution: an approach which seemed to the audit team to contribute to the means by which students felt a sense of belonging to the University. The team took the view that the way in which the prospectus, programme, and other information provided to students studying via collaborative provision encourages the understanding by students of their relationship with the University and that represented a feature of good practice.

173 Once students have registered to study for the University's award they have access to information via the University's student portal to its student intranet. The information provided through this source includes course

specific handbooks and the *Handbook*, which links to programme regulations and procedures for student appeals.

174 The audit team was able to browse examples of handbooks and programme specifications on the University's intranet and to confirm the suitability and comprehensiveness of materials such as handbooks for FDs. In each of its meetings with students studying with partners the team sought to establish whether their experience of the course matched their expectations from reading the prospectus prior to entry. Generally, students who discussed this matter with the team confirmed that this was so although some FDs students suggested to the team that they had been given to understand that having successfully completed one of the University's FD programmes progression via an articulation link to an appropriate honours-level programme offered at the University might not be as straightforward as the University's promotional material had given them to understand (see above, paragraph 128). In most cases, however the team was able to establish that students studying with the University's partners knew where to locate key information - such as that setting out assessment criteria and procedures - and that information on making a complaint or an appeal against an academic decision was available to them in their programme and module handbooks.

175 Procedures for complaints and appeals are initially addressed by the partner organisation and, as noted above, are set out in programme handbooks. The 2002 report on the University's partnership in Singapore recommended that the University's arrangements for handling academic appeals from overseas students registered for its awards be changed, so that students could address an appeal directly to the University. The audit team was able to confirm that the University had made the recommended change to its procedures following an internal review in early 2003.

176 Overall the audit team was able to confirm that, in most instances, students studying for the University's awards with its partners were

provided with accurate promotional and other information and that this encouraged a strong identity between students (including students overseas) and the University. Students following the University's FDs were, however, unsure of their opportunities to progress to honours level studies on the successful completion of their FD programmes. As noted in paragraph 128 above, it would now be advisable for the University to review its internal arrangements for FDs offered with its partners, to ensure that there are no informal or unintended impediments to progression from its FDs to its Honours-level awards.

Reliability, accuracy and completeness of published information on collaborative provision leading to the awarding institution's awards

177 At the time of the collaborative provision audit the University had taken steps to ensure that information it had gathered on employers' needs and trends, and its teaching and learning strategy was available on the TQI site. The former makes no specific reference to collaborative provision, but the latter states that 'Future plans to further enhance the quality of learning and teaching are focussed on assessment, the quality of distributed learning materials to distance learners, personal tutoring, particularly to those students who are part-time remote learners, and quality enhancement in partner organisations involved in our collaborative provision'.

178 The audit team was able to confirm that the University's commentary on information based on data it had provided to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) had been completed and lodged with the TQI site, and that there is a link from the latter through which members of the public can obtain detailed statistics. As paragraphs 61-70 of this report indicate, the University evaluates its educational provision annually. Readers are informed that if 'interested in how our students progress on particular awards or in academic departments, with what sort of qualifications they join us and leave us, and how successful

they are in gaining employment or further study, then please visit our annual monitoring homepage'. From there they are directed to a link which takes them to the university's web site. At the time of the audit the link to this information appeared inoperative. It seemed to the team, therefore, that it might be appropriate in the circumstances for the University to adjust the wording it has lodged with the TQI site to make the status of this link clear to readers.

179 Periodic review reports including some examples from collaborative provision from one school have been uploaded to the TQI site. At the time of the audit, however, collaborative reviews in other subjects had not been completed, and were not available on the TQI site. As part of their reporting responsibilities external examiners provide statements for uploading to the TQI site on academic standards, performance and assessment and these include some reports from collaborative provision. The reports meet the stated requirements for TQI but at the time of the audit, the University did not provide any details from the external examiner nor an institutional commentary on the reports.

180 The audit team concluded on the basis of the evidence available to it that the University was making substantial progress towards meeting the requirements of HEFCE 03/51 for its collaborative provision but that work remained to be done in a number of areas to ensure it meets all requirements in full.

Findings

Findings

181 An audit of the collaborative provision offered by the University of Bradford (the University) was undertaken during the period 6 to 10 March 2006. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the programmes of study offered by the University through arrangements with collaborative partners, and on the discharge of the University's responsibility as an awarding body in assuring the academic standard of its awards made through collaborative arrangements. As part of the collaborative audit process, the audit team conducted visits with three of the University's collaborative partners. This section of the report summarises the findings of the audit. It concludes by identifying features of good practice that emerged during the audit, and offering recommendations to the University for action to enhance current practice in its collaborative arrangements.

The effectiveness of the implementation of the awarding institution's approach to managing its collaborative provision

182 Overall, the University's present approach to the development of its collaborative provision can be considered to take the form of discipline-level initiatives managed within an institutional-level framework of strategic priorities. The University formerly allowed collaborative provision to be developed by those in its schools and centres who have viewed academic exchanges or 'the generation of discretionary income' as advantageous. More recently the University has emphasised its intention to align the development of its collaborative provision more closely with the objectives and priorities it has set for itself in its Strategic Plan namely, to increase the number of student registrations and to widen participation in higher education.

183 In the University's more recent approach to the development of its collaborative provision portfolio, proposals for new collaborative arrangements are now assessed by

the University against the following criteria: whether the proposal is likely to deepen and strengthen an existing successful partnership; whether it is likely to contribute to widening participation in higher education; and whether it will contribute to the development of academic links with a partner organisation which will enhance the University's reputation. Notwithstanding the University's increasing emphasis on strategic oversight and direction in its collaborative provision, it continues to see the main impetus for the further development of partnership links as coming from its seven schools. The University's *Quality Assurance Handbook* (the *Handbook*) provides staff in the University and staff and students in its partners with authoritative guidance to its procedures and expectations, which is generally in line with the advice of the Academic Infrastructure.

184 At the heart of the University's approach to the quality and academic standards management of its collaborative provision is its commitment to ensure the 'comparability of the learning experience, equivalent in academic standards and the proper enforcement of the principle of Duty of Academic Care for all students registered on University of Bradford courses, wherever taught'. The University's general approach to managing the academic standards and quality of students' learning experiences in collaborative provision and the academic standards of the associated awards is therefore to 'follow the practice for courses delivered on-site by the university, with amendments and extensions to existing practices only ... where necessary to reflect the involvement of partners'.

185 Following comments in the report of the institutional audit the University is undertaking a review of the totality of its arrangements to engage with its students, although the terms of reference of this review and an interim report on progress made by summer 2005 do not make it explicit that its scope includes University's engagements with students studying for its awards through collaborative provision. In its on-campus provision the University is committed to enabling its students to play a

more visible part in its quality management arrangements, through formal representation and feedback arrangements, and through participation in the University's periodic review process: course continuation review (CCR).

186 At the time of the audit, students studying for the University's awards through partner links were able to provide feedback to the University through questionnaires and through a variety of consultative and representative arrangements. These varied from formal staff student liaison committees to formal and informal meetings with course coordinators. Not all students studying through collaborative arrangements have opportunities to participate in course continuation review, however, and the audit team considers it advisable that as it continues and completes its review of student representation arrangements the University should ensure effective and equitable representation for students studying for its awards through partnership links.

187 A central feature of the University's quality management arrangements for collaborative provision is that each programme offered through a partner link is subject to the same quality management procedures as the corresponding provision delivered at the University for its validation and approval, its annual monitoring and its periodic review, and is linked to equivalent provision in one of the University's schools, usually designated as the 'home' school. Likewise, in the measures it has taken to secure the academic standards of its awards the University has sought to ensure that pointing an external examiner the same individual oversees the collaborative provision and the counterpart offered on the University's campuses. This principle extends to the work of the University's assessment boards, in which marks for assessments completed by students studying with partners are scrutinised and moderated together with the marks of their peers studying through the same or equivalent provision at the University. All assessed work which counts towards the University's awards (including all examination scripts) completed by students studying through a partner link is

either marked or moderated by members of the University's staff in the 'home' school.

188 The University recognises that programmes of study offered through collaborative provision may pose greater risks than for provision offered on its own campuses and, whereas it has delegated much of the responsibility for monitoring and reviewing on-campus provision to each of the schools, it has maintained centrally-managed oversight arrangements for the approval of new provision and for its regular monitoring and periodic review through the Annual Monitoring Teams (AMTs), the members of which are appointed from its Course Approval and Review Panel (CARP). The University is also moving to introduce more formal academic risk management procedures at all levels.

189 In its quality and academic standards management arrangements for its collaborative provision the University's course coordinators have a central responsibility and for each partnership the course coordinator (who is normally based in the 'home' school) acts as the main channel of communication between the University and its partner. Previous HEQC and QAA reports on the University's quality and academic standards arrangements for its collaborative provision have commented on the burdens the University places on its course coordinators. More recently, the University has adopted measures to enable it to monitor and dynamically adjust the work loads of its course coordinators in keeping with their responsibilities, and has developed means to support newly appointed course coordinators by providing informal inductions and more formal mentoring. It has also started to convene annual meetings for course coordinators to exchange information, including on good practice. In addition to the course coordinators, the Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching) who are responsible in each school for the quality management of its provision and for leading its enhancement are now playing an increasingly important part in supporting course coordinators and monitoring the schools' collaborative provision.

190 The 2003 institutional audit report expressed the view that the University's arrangements for quality assurance and academic standards matters were 'complex and strongly hierarchical'. Since the publication of that report the University has removed one layer in its hierarchy of committees by disestablishing its Quality Assurance and Standards Committee. It has also, however, established a Collaborative Provision Audit Committee (CPAC) to provide an identifiable forum where matters relating to collaborative provision can be considered and through which Senate and Council and their dependent committees can be informed about developments in collaborative provision, including proposed new partnerships.

191 While the University's deliberative arrangements for overseeing the quality of its provision and the academic standards of the associated awards, including in collaborative provision, remain complex, each of its committees has clear terms of reference, conducts its business in an orderly manner and, as an ensemble, the committees appear to work together effectively. One of the University's conventions for the work of its committees is that when considering a report from a subsidiary committee they should be provided with the primary data on which the report draws. This enables senior committees in the University's hierarchy to check that responsibilities for overseeing the approval, monitoring and review of programmes and courses which it has delegated to the schools have been properly discharged. The provision of such primary data, as a matter of routine, represents a feature of good practice.

192 In the University's approach to managing the quality of students' learning experiences, responsibility is shared with its partners. In all cases, the University sees it as its responsibility to check that the learning resources students need to undertake their studies are in place at the beginning of a collaborative programme and to satisfy itself from time to time that this continues to be the case. In its view it is the partner's responsibility to provide the learning

resources the University has specified, including appropriately qualified staff. As collaborative programmes develop it is the responsibility of the course coordinators to monitor that learning resources and the agreed level of student support arrangements continue to be made available. The University through its Academic Standards and Support Unit (ASSU) has recently begun to analyse annual monitoring reports (AMRs) which address collaborative provision for common themes. This process has identified possible weaknesses in the learning resources available for students studying through collaborative arrangements. The audit team encourages the University to follow up this work and to consider the desirability of taking a more stringent and comprehensive approach to establishing and securing the initial and continuing adequacy of learning support resources for provision in partner organisations leading to its awards.

193 Overall, the audit team came to the view that through CPAC the University was developing measures to enable it to establish a more secure view of proposed new developments in its portfolio of collaborative provision and the progress of existing provision offered through partnership links. At the same time, the steps the University is taking to link the development of new instances of collaborative provision more closely to the objectives of its Strategic Plan, while continuing to welcome the development of discipline-level initiatives from the schools seemed to the team to represent a pragmatic means of balancing school-level and institution-level imperatives.

The effectiveness of the awarding institution's procedures for assuring the quality of educational provision in its collaborative provision

194 Procedures for proposing and beginning the development of new collaborative provision are set out in the *Handbook* and follow seven stages in which the first two stages provide the University with an opportunity to assess the match between the proposal and the University's strategic priorities. The third stage takes the form

of an assessment of the learning resources the partner will be able to make available to support the delivery of the provision which is informed by a self appraisal document prepared by the proposed partner, a business plan for the provision and reports from external financial scrutiny. This report is sent to CPAC which, if satisfied, presents the report and its recommendation to PARC for its formal approval.

195 Stage four of the approval process involves a detailed consideration of all academic aspects of the proposed programme, carried out by a course approval and review team (CART) the internal members of which are appointed from members of the CARP. The members of CARTs include external peers who have no recent connection to the school supporting the proposal and, if warranted, may also include members of professional, statutory or regulatory bodies if the nature of the programme warrants it. Following approval of the academic merits of the proposal at the fifth stage of the process the formal contract with the partner is drawn up and signed. Stages six and seven of the university's process relate to the review and renewal of existing partnerships.

196 The University's approval process for new collaborative provision is comprehensive and makes provision for robust external comment. From the sample of such approvals seen by the audit team it was able to confirm that procedures had generally been followed scrupulously, but it also found instances where the prescriptive details of the process were not well suited to links with commercial and other such organisations, or to the pace required by a particular development. In such circumstances the University has had to make pragmatic adjustments to its standard procedures and it might now be wise to import some of this pragmatism into the guidance it offers in its *Handbook*. Overall, it seemed to the team that the University's procedures for approving new programmes of study for collaborative provision were consistent with the advice offered in Sections 2 and 7 of QAA's *Code: (Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning) and Programme approval, monitoring and review)*.

197 In the University's approach to the annual monitoring of its collaborative provision the responsibility for drawing up the annual monitoring report (AMR) rests with the course coordinator, who is usually based in the 'home' school for the provision. The design for the AMR itself is comprehensive; it aims to describe and evaluate the provision, and to identify how aims and learning outcomes have been met and features of good practice. The standard form for the AMR calls for a rolling action plan to be attached. Partner organisations do not have a formal opportunity to comment separately on the AMR for the provision they deliver or help to deliver, although this was recommended in the QAA overseas audit report for the University's partnership with MDIS Singapore in 2002. It would now be advisable for the University, within its present annual monitoring arrangements for collaborative provision, to enable partners to comment formally, and independently of the course coordinator, on the AMR and for those comments to be made available to the AMT.

198 Under the University's newly revised annual monitoring arrangements all AMRs are scrutinised at school level. Where, however AMRs relate to collaborative provision they are additionally scrutinised by one of the University's Annual Monitoring Teams (AMTs) the members of which are drawn from the CARP. AMTs undertake rigorous and comprehensive scrutinies of AMRs formal reports of which are reported to APC. AMTs also give feedback to the schools which have provided the AMRs. It is the University's view that CARP and the work of the AMT panels drawn from it provides an opportunity to identify and share good practice a view shared by the audit team which considers this aspect of the University's quality arrangements to be a feature of good practice.

199 The sample of AMRs provided by the University to support the collaborative provision audit included some which were noticeably evaluative and others in which the approach taken was more descriptive. The standard form for an AMR provides

opportunities for programme teams to identify features of good practice in the way they are supporting and/or delivering the collaborative provision. In two of the three partner link visits the audit team conducted, it was made aware (and confirmed) instances of good practice which had not been identified in the relevant AMRs. The University plans to encourage those completing AMRs to do so in a more evaluative manner and has similar plans for those completing self-evaluations for CCRs (see below). As it seeks to encourage greater self-evaluativeness in those completing AMRs the University may wish to consider advising its staff on how to evaluate provision for its strengths as well as its weaknesses. This would enable one function of the AMR - to provide evidence of good practice for wider dissemination - to be more surely discharged and thereby increase the capacity of the AMR process to support quality enhancement.

200 As noted above, the University has recently introduced a University wide review of AMRs for collaborative provision, conducted by ASSU, which is intended to identify common themes and weaknesses. The draft report from the first such exercise was provided for the audit team and identified learning resources as a theme common to six out of 16 AMR reports for collaborative provision. As the University works to make this overview exercise more comprehensive by drawing in all AMR reports for its collaborative provision, it promises to become a valuable quality assurance and enhancement tool. As part of the university's plans to develop its quality arrangements for its collaborative provision it might also wish to consider how it might extend its existing annual monitoring arrangements so that where one partner works with the University to deliver a number of collaborative programmes matters of common interest across these programme can be more readily identified and addressed. This need will become more significant should be University's intentions for the further development of its collaborative provision lead to circumstances in which partners work with more than one school.

201 CCRs take place on a regular cycle of between five and six years, the duration of the cycle for each programme being adjusted to align with any external review requirements. As with the approval of new provision and annual monitoring, the CCR process is set out in the University's *Handbook*, which requires the programme team to support the CCR by providing a critical appraisal; the AMRs for the period since the initial approval or the previous CCR; views from external peers; and any reports from external bodies including professional statutory and regulatory bodies and QAA. This material is reviewed by a panel which includes staff drawn from CARP and external peers who may be members of professional statutory or regulatory bodies if the provision warrants it.

202 The sample of CCR reports seen by the audit team showed the same characteristics as its AMRs in that some were descriptive rather than analytical while others were exemplary in their evaluativeness, something the University has itself identified as requiring further work. In this case as with the AMRs the audit team suggests that there is scope for the University to encourage its staff to be more evaluative and candid when setting out the strengths of their provision as well as identifying any potential weaknesses.

203 The 2003 audit report advised the University to develop 'effective and transparent arrangements for student participation in all appropriate quality assurance processes'. Under its present arrangements, students who are based on the University's campuses have opportunities to participate directly in CCRs for provision with which they are associated. Comparable opportunities do not at present appear to extend to students studying for the University's awards through partnership links and it is the University's view that the logistical difficulties of enabling such participation cannot readily be solved. The audit team does not share this view particularly since the University itself was able to arrange meetings between the team and students based with partners via teleconferencing. In view of the University's

commitment to ensure the equivalence of arrangements for students based on its campuses and those who are studying for its awards through partner links, the team advises the University to explore ways of enabling its collaborative provision students to contribute directly to CCRs.

204 In its self-evaluation, the University stated that it viewed student representation and student feedback as 'simply different aspects of the student voice' and that they served the same purpose of facilitating communications between the University and its student body. As noted earlier, the 2003 institutional audit report advised the University to develop 'effective and transparent arrangements for student participation in all appropriate quality assurance processes'. The University subsequently established a review of all its engagement with its students which issued an interim report in August 2005. The terms of reference of this review do not appear to explicitly extend to students studying for the University's awards through collaborative provision; such an extension would now be desirable.

205 In each of the partner links the audit team scrutinised, student representation arrangements had been developed in line with the particular circumstances. For students studying in the University's home region for FD awards, staff student liaison committees have been established which appear to operate in much the same way as corresponding committees on the University's own campuses. In the latter, however, the University of Bradford Students' Union plays an additional and key role in student representation, through training and supporting class representatives, and through representing students in the University's senior committees. It also has an important role in supporting students who wish to make a complaint or lodge an appeal against an academic decision.

206 The University is aware that students who are based with a partner (particularly when the latter is overseas) and who may need to lodge a complaint or appeal, do not at present have access to the support of the Students' Union.

The University recognises that this matter needs to be addressed. It is also the case that class representatives for provision offered by the University through partner links do not at present receive the briefing and advice packs and training the Students' Union makes available to class representatives on the University's own campuses. The audit team therefore encourages and advises the University to continue and complete its review of student representation arrangements, so as to ensure effective and equitable representation for students studying for its awards through partnership links, so that they can benefit from student representation arrangements comparable to those available on the University's campuses.

207 The University collects feedback from students studying for its awards through partnership links largely through module, stage, and programme questionnaires. The CPSED the University provided to support the collaborative provision audit acknowledged that there had been difficulties in achieving sufficiently high return rates to its questionnaires. In response to these difficulties the University has given scope to individual course coordinators to develop and institute feedback arrangements matched to the cultural and other circumstances of individual partner links. These can include (but are not limited to) informal meetings between class representatives and the course coordinator, and e-mail contacts. Students studying through partner links who discussed feedback arrangements with the audit team were broadly satisfied that their views were communicated to the University (and where relevant to the partner) and that they were able to identify changes which had been made in response to their comments. As time and resources permit, however, the availability of direct channels of communication between students based with partners and the University of Bradford Students' Union would help to make this arrangement more robust.

208 The University does not conduct large-scale surveys of its graduates from programmes offered through partner links, or their employers,

and relies on the employment figures for its graduates for its confidence in their employability and figures from the National Student Survey. In some cases, however, schools have established advisory boards through which to engage with employers and other external stakeholders, the membership of which, in the case of the School of Management, also includes graduates from collaborative provision programmes. This is a feature of good practice which the University might wish to consider disseminating to other schools.

209 In its CPSED the University did not offer a view of the effectiveness of its current feedback and representation arrangements for its students overall, although in its intentions for enhancing the management of its collaborative provision it included the aim of considering 'ways in which student representation and feedback may be enhanced and further facilitated'. A useful first step in such enhancement and facilitation would be to ensure that the University's current review of its engagement with its students explicitly extends to its engagement with students studying for its awards through partner links. At the same time it might be helpful for the University to ensure that it affords effective and equitable representation for students studying through partner links. There is evidence that the effectiveness of the University's present approach to gathering feedback information from its students has some limitations, and it is aware that these systems require attention.

210 Overall, the audit team came to the view that the University's procedures for programme approval, monitoring and periodic review for its collaborative provision were well-designed and clearly stated, although at times the relevant regulations in the *Handbook* can be overly prescriptive. The procedures the University follows are generally in line with the advice of the academic infrastructure and, again, they are generally conducted thoroughly. On the basis of the evidence it saw the team considers that the University's approval, AMR and CCR arrangements for its collaborative provision give grounds for confidence in its capacity as an

awarding body to safeguard the academic standards of its awards and sustain and enhance the quality of its collaborative provision. The University's student feedback and representation arrangements do not at present make as strong a contribution to its quality assurance arrangements for its collaborative provision as it would wish. It would be advisable for these now to be addressed, possibly within the context of the University's existing review of its engagement with its students.

The effectiveness of the awarding institution's procedures for safeguarding the academic standards of its awards gained through collaborative provision

211 The University aims to safeguard the academic standards of its awards gained through collaborative provision by ensuring that they are of equivalent standard to awards achieved by students on its own campuses on the same or equivalent programmes. Its approach to achieving this aim is to maintain as close an equivalence in the curriculum as is possible in the circumstances, to involve the staff of the home school in marking and moderating students' assessed work, and through appointing the same external examiner (where possible) for provision offered in the home school and with partners. In all cases, for franchise provision marks for assessed work completed by students based in partner organisations are considered at the same Bradford-based assessment boards as their campus-based peers, using mark sheets which make it possible to identify the location of the student. It seemed to the audit team that the university's assessment arrangements for its collaborative provision are in keeping with the advice offered in QAA's *Code, Section 6: Assessment of students*.

212 The University views the reports of its external examiners as a key means of safeguarding the academic standards of its awards. Arrangements for the nomination, induction and appointment of external

examiners for collaborative provision follow the University's standard procedures, as set out in the *Handbook*. For provision developed by a partner which has been validated by the University it is usual for the partner to nominate the external examiner and for the Dean of the 'home' school to advise the University on whether to accept the nomination.

213 Arrangements for receiving reports from external examiners, and for addressing their comments and advice, again follow the University's standard procedures. For matters in an external examiner's report requiring urgent attention, both the nature of the matter and that action to be taken are monitored by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) and ASSU. The latter now also has responsibility for ensuring that all external examiners receive copies of the AMR which relates to the period of their most recent report, and ASSU compiles a report for APC drawing out common items or themes in external examiners reports. The first such report, for the 2004-05 session, covered 69 per cent of external examiners' reports for undergraduate programmes and 68 per cent of taught postgraduate programmes. While some of the absent reports may relate to programmes commencing at different times throughout the session, the University will no doubt wish to see more of the relevant external examiners' reports included in the ASSU annual summary report. Overall, however, it seemed to the audit team that the University's arrangements for its external examiners, and for dealing with their reports, are consistent with the advice of QAA's *Code, Section 4: External examining*.

214 As in other matters, the University expects the same procedures and approaches to be followed for its collaborative provision, for the collection and analysis of admission, progression, completion, and assessment data and information as for its campus-based provision. Data for all registered students are held and administered through the University's Student Administrative Information Navigation Tracking System (SAINT). Course coordinators are responsible for checking that students admitted to programmes leading to the

University's awards satisfy its admission requirements, including English language competence, and any relevant professional regulatory or statutory body requirements.

215 At the time of the collaborative provision audit, members of staff told the audit team that individual schools were taking the lead with respect to criteria to be followed in establishing English language competence and for the accreditation of prior learning (APL) respectively. The University subsequently informed the team that an institution-wide policy for English language competence had been settled in 2002-03 and that a policy for 'EU equivalence' had been put in place in February 2006. Since staff who met the audit team did not appear to be aware of these developments, the team encourages the University to look into the effectiveness of its communications with staff on such matters, and to work towards an effective common institution-wide approach, in the interest of fairness to all its students and applicants.

216 The University considers that the soundness or otherwise of decisions taken to admit students is best judged at the point of progression. While such checks may reveal any laxity in procedures it may not enable the University to judge whether the criteria applied have been overly strict.

217 In the case of provision leading to the University's FD awards University states that 'progression will be guaranteed to appropriate existing honours degrees at Bradford University' and offers 'guaranteed articulation with at least one honours degree programme'. Some of the information made available for the audit suggested to the audit team that it might be advisable for the University to review its internal arrangements for FDs offered with its partners to ensure that there are no informal or unintended impediments to progression from such FDs to its honours-level awards.

218 The University provides boards of examiners responsible for provision delivered through partner links with the same information as for its campus-based programmes. Following

the institutional audit, the University now provides statistics and analysis for the progression and completion of students, including those studying through partner links, for consideration by APC. It also requires the inclusion of data and statistics as part of the information provided to support annual monitoring and course continuation review.

219 Overall, the University's arrangements to safeguard the academic standards of its awards gained through collaborative provision follow closely the equivalent arrangements for its awards gained through study on its campuses, while preserving opportunities to compare the progress and attainments of students studying with partners with equivalent students studying at the University. These arrangements are generally effective and robust and command broad confidence. Measures to provide data and statistics to APC and CPAC for progression and completion, including for collaborative provision students, are likely to add to the security of these arrangements.

The awarding institution's use of the Academic Infrastructure in the context of its collaborative provision

220 The CPSED described the University's responses to each section of the Academic Infrastructure (QAA's Code of practice; the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ); subject benchmark statements; and programme specifications). It noted that in managing the quality and safeguard in the academic standards of awards in its collaborative provision the University made use of a number of external reference points in addition to the Academic Infrastructure and it observed that it expects its schools to ensure the alignment of their provision with the advice of the Academic Infrastructure when developing new provision and through CCR.

221 Programme specifications were included in the information provided to support the audit team's visits to partner links. These enabled the team to confirm the alignment of the relevant provision with the recommendations of the FHEQ and that subject benchmark statements

had been referred to when developing (or reviewing) the provision. The CPSED noted that the University has progressively updated its own regulations and frameworks to ensure their continuing alignment with QAA's *Code*.

222 Overall, the audit team came to the view that the University was making suitable reference to the individual elements of the Academic Infrastructure in managing its collaborative provision and in securing the academic standards of the associated awards.

The utility of the collaborative provision audit self-evaluation document as an illustration of the awarding institution's capacity to reflect upon its own strengths and limitations in collaborative provision, and to act on these to enhance quality and safeguard academic standards

223 One quarter of the CPSED was devoted to describing the actions the University had taken to respond to the essential recommendations in the institutional audit report and the statement of limited confidence in its arrangements to manage its partnership link with Bradford College, which is now being run out. The remaining sections of the CPSED provided a concise description of the University's collaborative provision arrangements in some parts of which were embedded evaluative comments.

224 The CPSED frankly recognised that the 'issues raised by previous audits have revolved around the institution's ability to manage the reality of collaborative provision against its stated procedures and desire for equivalence'. The University recognises that with the establishment of CPAC and the more 'active oversight' of its collaborative provision which the establishment of the Committee now makes possible, a number of changes will follow to the way it manages its collaborative provision overall.

225 The list of the University's intentions for the enhancement of its collaborative provision provided a significant pointer for

the audit team to the likely scope of such changes. While identifying some weaknesses in its arrangements, to which the University was attending, the CPSED provided little evaluation of the strengths of particular approaches adopted by individual schools to the management of their collaborative provision and the University's capacity to identify good practice in such approaches and disseminate information about it institution-wide.

Commentary on the awarding institution's intentions for the enhancement of its management of quality and academic standards in its collaborative provision

226 As noted above, the CPSED set out a substantial programme of activities which the University is undertaking to enhance its management of its collaborative provision. In a number of cases the audit team was able to confirm through its discussions in the audit visits and from the University's papers that progress was being made with these activities. For example in the interval between submitting the CPSED and hosting the visits the University had taken steps to provide course coordinators with clearer definitions of their responsibilities, with better induction and support arrangements and for the establishment of means through which course coordinators can exchange good practice.

227 The University's list of intentions for enhancement in the CPSED also included items on raising awareness of the quality assurance and academic standards management needs of collaborative provision across the University, and for enhancements to student representation and feedback arrangements for students in collaborative provision. A more ambitious aim is the enhancement of 'institutional oversight of collaborative provision in its totality', in the achievement of which CPAC is likely to play a major part.

228 Overall, the University has identified for itself a programme of enhancement activities well-matched to its needs and ethos. As it

takes forward its plans for enhancing the management of its collaborative provision, however, it should ensure that the needs of students studying for its awards through partner links are explicitly addressed.

Reliability of information provided by the awarding institution on its collaborative provision

229 At the time of the collaborative provision audit the University had taken steps to ensure that information it has gathered on employers' needs and trends and its learning and teaching strategy are available on the TQI site. The latter states that 'future plans to further enhance the quality of learning and teaching are focused on assessment, the quality of distributed learning materials to distance learners, personal tutoring, particularly to those students who are part-time remote learners and quality enhancement in partner organisations involved in our collaborative provision'. The University's commentary, on the data it has provided to the Higher Education Statistics Agency has also been lodged on the TQI site and a link from the latter provides access to detailed statistics. For visitors to the TQI site who wish to browse information on how students 'progress on particular awards or in academic departments, with what sort of qualifications they joiners and leavers, and how successfully they are in gaining employment or further study' there is a link to the university's annual monitoring home page on its web site, which was inoperative at the time of the audit.

230 Reports from CCRs conducted by one school, which have included in their scope elements of collaborative provision, have been uploaded to the TQI site but CCR reports from other schools were in progress at the time of the audit and the reports had therefore yet to be uploaded. External examiners provide statements for uploading to the TQI site on academic standards, performance and assessment and these include some reports from collaborative

provision. These reports meet the stated requirements for TQI but at the time of the audit, the University did not provide any details from the external examiner nor an institutional commentary on the reports. The University is making substantial progress towards meeting the requirements of HEFCE 03/51 for its collaborative provision but work remains to be done in a number of areas to ensure it meets all requirements in full.

Features of good practice in the management of quality and academic standards in the awarding institution's collaborative provision

231 In the course of the audit the team identified the following features of good practice in the University's arrangements for its collaborative provision:

- the way in which the University's conventions for furnishing its school-level and institution-level committees with supporting information, enables them to check, from primary data, that responsibilities for approval, monitoring and review of programmes and courses, which have been delegated to departments, centres, and programme teams, have been properly discharged in line with its stated expectations (paragraph 33)
- the processes used to ensure that in discharging their substantial duties for monitoring and supporting collaborative provision, the workloads of those who act as course coordinators (or their equivalents) across the University are monitored, and dynamically adjusted when appropriate (paragraph 39)
- the work of the University's Course Approval and Review Panel and the approval, monitoring and review teams drawn from it, which enable experience of good practice to be shared (paragraph 67)
- the establishment by the School of Management of its School Advisory Board, the membership of which includes senior external academic peers, practitioners, and

alumni from programmes offered through collaborative provision (paragraph 117)

- the steps the University has taken to ensure that members of staff of its partners in its region, who are delivering its collaborative provision, have the opportunity to become associate lecturers of the University, and to benefit from its facilities and learning support arrangements (paragraph 140)
- the measured and purposeful management by the University of the roll-out of its virtual learning environment, and the use to which this is being put in supporting collaborative, distance, and flexible learning provision (paragraph 161)
- the induction arrangements adopted by one Centre to prepare postgraduate-level students, whose first language is not English, to work to UK norms, and the steps taken by the same Centre to provide back-up learning resources on CD-ROM to compensate for difficulties with internet access (paragraphs 156 and 165)
- the way in which prospectus, programme, and other information provided to students studying through partnership links, encourages their strong and positive identification with the University (paragraph 171).

Recommendations for action by the awarding institution

232 The audit team advises the University to consider:

- i within its present annual monitoring arrangements for collaborative provision, enabling partners to comment formally, and independently of the course coordinator, on the annual monitoring report (paragraph 66)
- ii continuing and completing its review of student representation arrangements, so as to ensure effective and equitable representation for students studying for its awards through partnership links (paragraph 107).

- iii reviewing its internal arrangements for Foundation Degrees offered with its partners, to ensure that there are no informal or unintended impediments to progression from FDs to its Honours-level awards (paragraph 128).

233 It would also be desirable for the University to consider:

- i actively exploring ways of enabling students studying through collaborative programmes in the UK and further afield to contribute in person to course continuation reviews, in order to afford them the same level of participation in such reviews as students based on its campuses (paragraph 77)
- ii taking a more stringent and comprehensive approach to establishing and ensuring the initial and continuing adequacy of learning support resources for provision in partner organisations leading to its awards (paragraph 152)
- iii ensuring that its current review of its engagement with students explicitly extends to support and other arrangements for students studying for its awards through partnership links (paragraph 167).

Appendix

The University of Bradford's response to the collaborative provision audit report

The University welcomes the judgement of 'broad confidence' both in the soundness of the present and likely future management of the academic standard of our awards made through collaborative arrangements, and of our present and likely future capacity to satisfy ourselves that the learning opportunities offered to students through our collaborative arrangements are managed effectively and meet our requirements. We also welcome the acknowledgement of the features of good practice that were highlighted by the audit team. We see this outcome as a positive endorsement of our commitment to maintain the highest standards of quality and academic integrity in our arrangements with collaborative partners and to ensuring a comparable learning experience for the students undertaking study at those institutions. The outcome is a reflection of the hard work and commitment of staff at all levels throughout our own institution and those of our partners.

We are actively pursuing the recommendations for action made by the audit team, who recognised that we are already in the process of addressing some of these areas. We will prepare an action plan to present to the first meeting of the Academic Policy Committee (APC) in the autumn. The action plan will be discussed with partner institutions and with students before returning to the APC for monitoring and completion. We will also be ensuring, via the APC and the Collaborative Provision Committee, that the areas of good practice highlighted in the report are widely disseminated throughout the University and to our partner institutions.

