

The University of East Anglia

April 2009

Annex to the report

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Introduction

A team of auditors from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visited the University of East Anglia (the University) from 30 March to 3 April 2009, to carry out an Institutional audit. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the learning opportunities available to students and on the academic standards of the awards that the University offers.

Outcomes of the Institutional audit

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

- confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the academic standards of the awards that it offers
- confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students.

Institutional approach to quality enhancement

The University recognises that enhancement can be achieved through teaching and learning activity and deploys a number of approaches in this area, including: Awards for Excellence in Teaching, Teaching Fellowships, links with the Higher Education Academy and professional development events. It supports staff through its Centre for Staff and Educational Development. The Dean of Students' Office, and within it the Learning Enhancement Team, provides effective support for students aimed at improving the learning experience. When the Student Information System is fully operational across the University, it will have the potential to be a significant resource for enhancement. Overall, the audit team found that the University's developing approach to enhancement was effective in contributing to the systematic enhancement of student learning opportunities.

Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

The audit team found that the University's Code of Practice for Research Degrees represented a sound framework for institutional arrangements for research students. The overall approach both secures the assurance of academic standards and provides for the enhancement of the students' learning opportunities. The research environment and postgraduate research student experience meet the expectations of the section of the *Code of practice, for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)*, published by QAA on postgraduate research students.

Published information

The audit team found that reliance could reasonably be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the University publishes about the quality of its educational provision and the academic standards of its awards.

Features of good practice

The audit team identified the following areas of good practice:

- the University's systematic approach to plagiarism and the work of the school plagiarism officers, which together provide comprehensive institutional regulations and guidance (paragraph 43)
- the specification and application of the framework for student involvement in quality assurance throughout the University, which afford significant opportunities for students to express their views to the University (paragraph 74)

- the integrated approach, led by the Information Services Directorate, to the management and development of its library and information technology provision, which contributes to the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 92)
- the strategic management of student support services by the Dean of Students' Office, which promotes the provision of comprehensive and coordinated support to students (paragraph 109)
- the arrangements for the operation of collaboration provision, particularly the work of the central Partnerships Office, which support the sound management of academic standards and the enhancement of quality in the partner institutions (paragraph 138)
- the provision through the Transitions initiative of an extensive and student-focused training programme for postgraduate research students, which develops a range of skills directly relevant to the students' programmes of study and also prepares them for employment (paragraph 154).

Recommendations for action

The audit team recommends that the University consider further action in some areas.

Recommendations for action that the audit team considers advisable:

- to specify the limits of acceptable variability in practice at school level, with particular reference to nomenclature for key committees and to roles and responsibilities for the provision and accuracy of information for students, including the content of handbooks (paragraphs 16, 40, and 164)
- to further to the advice provided in the QAA Institutional audit report of 2004, give priority to the systematic calibration of the University's provision, against the guidance provided by the FHEQ on the matter of levels (paragraph 22)
- to assure itself that the application in practice of policy and procedures for extensions to submission deadlines, and for extenuating circumstances, does not result in inequitable treatment of students (paragraph 42)
- to revise the guidance for the conduct of assessment boards, to establish and secure University-wide specifications for minimum attendance and quoracy (paragraph 46)
- to review the policies, procedures and published information relating to the admission of postgraduate research students, to establish clarity of requirement (paragraph 145).

Recommendations for action that the audit team considers desirable:

- to formalise the expectations for the training and ongoing support for postgraduate research students who teach, to ensure they are adequately prepared for the role (paragraph 114)
- to reappraise the current approach to peer observation of teaching, to establish consistent practice across the University (paragraph 118).

Section 1: Introduction and background

The institution and its mission

1 The University was one of seven new universities created in the 1960s and received its Royal Charter in 1964. In the academic year 2007-08, 14,854 students were registered for the University's awards. The University's mission is 'to understand, empower and act to enhance the lives of individuals and the prospects of communities in a rapidly changing world'. The University has 23 schools of studies and a range of research centres; the schools are assigned to one of four faculties. There are eight central service and support divisions.

The information base for the audit

2 The University provided the audit team with a briefing paper and supporting documentation, including that related to the sampling trails selected by the team. The index to the Briefing Paper was referenced to sources of evidence to illustrate the University's approach to managing the security of the academic standards of its awards and the quality of its educational provision. The team had hard copy of all documents referenced in the Briefing Paper; in addition the team had access to the University's intranet.

3 The Union of UEA Students produced a student written submission setting out the students' views on the accuracy of information provided to them, the experience of students as learners and their role in quality management. The audit team is grateful to the students for a well-researched, comprehensive and informative document.

4 In addition, the audit team had access to:

- the report of the previous Institutional audit in January 2004
- reports of reviews by QAA at the subject level since the previous Institutional audit
- reports produced by other relevant bodies (for example, Ofsted and professional, statutory and/or regulatory bodies (PSRBs))
- the institution's internal documents
- the notes of audit team meetings with staff and students.

Developments since the last audit

5 The Institutional audit of 2004 found that broad confidence could be placed in the soundness of the University's current and likely future management of the quality of its academic programmes and the academic standards of its awards.

6 The audit report made recommendations for action that was desirable in relation to; student participation in quality management; student feedback on their experiences and the provision of information technology and computing services. The present audit team found that the University had given due consideration to the recommendations and had taken action in response.

7 The audit report also proposed a number of recommendations for action that was advisable in connection with: the University' approach to distributed and distance learning; marking conventions; responses to external examiners; the collection and use of management information; and the use of externality in routine monitoring and review processes. The University was also advised to review its use of levels in relation to progression.

8 The Briefing Paper described the University's progress in responding to these recommendations. Discussion with staff and a review of documentation confirmed that a review of the undergraduate Common Course Structure was in train but also that the review might not be completed until the academic year 2011-12. The University has also installed a new student information system (SIS) to gather and analyse a range of data. The University describes this as an 'ambitious project' with some time to completion and, at the time of the audit, there was still a variety of approaches across schools to analysis and use of data. The audit team found that, notwithstanding the protracted timetable for the latter two matters, the University had given serious consideration to the recommendations of the previous audit and had responded in a pertinent manner to the advice. There remains some work to be undertaken in the area of levels, and this is discussed later at paragraph 21.

9 The previous audit also identified a number of features of good practice and the University has continued to develop these. The provision of research training for postgraduate research students and the opportunities the latter were given to undertake undergraduate teaching after suitable training were found to be noteworthy in the previous audit. While the present audit also found features of the training provided to postgraduate research students to be good practice, the approach to support for such students who teach was found to be variable. Further detail may be found at paragraph 112.

10 There have been significant developments since the previous audit. The University has published a revised Corporate Plan (2008-12). The Plan is supported by seven strategies, including 'Empowerment Through Education' that focuses on increased quality, number and range of applicants and provision of a student experience that is 'second to none in the UK'. The implementation plan clearly defines responsibilities for the quality of education and confirms the pivotal role of the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) in maintaining academic standards and enhancing academic quality. The LTC oversees the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy, which is part of the Education Strategy, itself nested in the University Code of Practice: Assuring and Enhancing Teaching Quality.

11 Student numbers have increased through the development of new courses at undergraduate and postgraduate level, higher levels of international students, and new partnership arrangements. There has been investment in the University's infrastructure, including a library extension, new buildings for the Medical School and for an academic building (Academic East), and refurbishment of teaching and learning spaces. The University has increased its support for students provided through the Dean of Students' Office.

Institutional framework for managing of academic standards and learning opportunities

12 Council is the executive body of the University; it has a number of subcommittees including the Student Affairs Group and the Information Strategy and Services Committee both of which have student representation; there is also a Recruitment Admissions and Marketing Committee.

13 Senate is the ultimate academic body of the University responsible for the management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. Of the five committees that report to Senate, the most relevant to the audit are the LTC, the Senate Discipline Committee and Senate Appeals Committee. Boards of schools report to Senate. The LTC is delegated by Senate to oversee the quality of academic provision and the academic standards of awards.

14 The LTC has a number of subcommittees that report to it, including the University Campus Suffolk Joint Academic Committee (JAC), Joint Boards of Study (JBoS) in respect of partner institutions, the Student Experience Committee, and the faculty learning, teaching and quality committees (LTQCs). There are also two policy groups: the Taught Programmes Policy Group (TPPG) and Postgraduate Research Programmes Policy Group. (PgrPPG).

15 The University's Executive Team comprises the Vice-Chancellor, pro-vice-chancellors, the Registrar, Secretary and faculty deans. There are four learning and teaching directors with University-wide remits for quality assurance and enhancement and staff development, and an Academic Registrar. The Taught Programmes Director and the Postgraduate Research Degree Programmes Director take advice from the TPPG and PgrPPG, which operate as discussion and consultation groups with wide membership, including student representatives.

16 The University created a new faculty structure, retaining the existing schools, to allow for 'effective monitoring and quality assurance at Faculty and University levels'; The University emphasises the importance of the dual roles of faculty and school in quality management in that they allow for 'an increased focus on quality enhancement both bottom-up and top-down driven'. Schools have significant responsibilities for the management of student learning

opportunities within the 'framework defined by LTC in learning and teaching strategies, regulatory frameworks, CoPs [Codes of Practice], policies and procedures and monitored by the LTQCs'. LTQCs have operational responsibility for the quality of academic provision and the academic standards of awards. School boards are responsible for local management of academic provision and quality assurance processes but may delegate authority to teaching committees. There is a variety of arrangements at school level, depending on the size of the school, and where there is small provision there may be no body subordinate to the school board. At and below faculty level, the various deliberative bodies are known by a variety of designations, which has the potential to inhibit clarity of function and responsibility. Accordingly, the University is advised to specify the limits of acceptable variability in nomenclature for key committees at school level.

17 The University's executive and deliberative framework, based on the reporting structures and memberships of the LTC, the LTQCs and the school boards provides a structure that allows for systematic communication in the operation of the institution's management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities.

Section 2: Institutional management of academic standards

18 Senate delegates authority for the management of academic standards in its home provision to the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) and to Joint Boards of Study (JBoSs) for the management of academic standards in partner institutions. As the majority of the mechanisms which the University states that it uses for managing the academic standards of its awards are also concerned with the management of academic quality, those aspects most closely associated with academic standards, namely external examining; the use of the Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points in programme design, approval, monitoring and review; the assessment of students; and the use of relevant management information are dealt with under the heading of the management of academic standards; the remainder is covered under the heading of the management of learning opportunities.

Approval, monitoring and review of award standards

19 The University frames the standards of its awards in programme specifications which set out programme outcomes and ensure that through course approval the design of new courses fits within the *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and its descriptors, and takes account of subject benchmarks, the *Code of practice: for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, published by QAA, and professional statutory and regulating bodies' (PSRB) requirements. Course teams and programme review panels are also asked to check courses against the criteria for the relevant levels of the FHEQ. Students do not always see programme specifications, but are informed of programme outcomes in module handbooks.

20 The University considers that its procedures for programme approval, monitoring and review take due account of the FHEQ, but review of documentation and discussion with staff established that there was ongoing debate about the use of levels in setting academic standards. The report of the previous audit advised the University to 'review as a matter of priority whether its present use of levels in its assessment arrangements for undergraduates allows sufficient scope for its students to demonstrate progression in their attainments'. It was evident that the matter of levels was associated with the wider consideration of the undergraduate Common Course Structure (CCS) which, at the time of the audit, was under review by the LTC and Taught Programmes Policy Group (TPPG). The schedule for the review is protracted and the outcomes might not be implemented until the academic year 2011-12. External examiners were therefore asked in the academic year 2007-08 to pay special attention to progression. The TPPG also recommended limits on the free choice of modules as 'current CCS Regulations [did] not place an upper limit on the volume of credit that [could] be taken under Free Choice or the level of the

modules that could be taken'. There was evidence that the regulations on progression between levels had been revised, but it was also clear that the University maintained an essentially flexible approach to progression between levels as an aspect of its 'long standing principle of free choice'.

21 The Briefing Paper affirmed that progression between modules taken in the second year and those taken in the final year could be demonstrated in a number of ways including: the use of prerequisites; a dissertation, project or extended essay in the final year; an increasing focus on research-informed content; more 'independent' learning and deepening knowledge. Some programme specifications seen by the audit team defined progression in such ways and required the award name but not a reference to level; in other cases, the approach to progression from year two to year three was less explicit. There were examples of schools seeking to resolve issues of level and progression including, in one case, a situation where students in their final year were limited to 40 credits at Level 3 so that it was 'therefore difficult to demonstrate that progression [was] assured'.

22 Documentary evidence and discussion with staff provided clear evidence that the University had consistently considered matters relating to levels, progression and credit and that review continued in the context of the broader assessment of the CCS with an awareness of external reference points, particularly the FHEQ. The present audit team found an evident tension with respect to progression in reconciling alignment with the FHEQ with the University's approach to wide availability of free choice of modules and the fact that modules in years two and three are not defined by level of study. Therefore the University is advised, further to the advice provided in the QAA Institutional audit report of 2004, to give priority to the systematic calibration of its provision against the guidance provided by the FHEQ on the matter of levels.

23 There is evidence of the University's commitment to the use of externality in programme approval, monitoring and review. There is also 'internal' externality in course approval through the involvement of members of faculty from outside the school. External stakeholders, including representatives of PSRBs, are consulted in the development of new course proposals.

24 The University's arrangements for the approval, monitoring and review of programmes are generally effective in contributing to the management of academic standards.

External examiners

25 The Briefing Paper stated that external examiners played a critical role in the assurance of the standards and also commented more generally on the quality of provision. Roles and responsibilities of external examiners are set out in the University Codes of Practice for the External Examiner System for Awards (Taught Programmes) and for Research Degrees, which are circulated to external examiners on appointment. The University Codes of Practice are kept under regular review by LTC and are informed by the relevant sections of the *Code of practice*.

26 Procedures for the nomination, appointment and briefing of external examiners are set out in the two Codes of Practice, as are reporting requirements. School boards recommend nominations to Senate via LTC, where a designated member of the Committee scrutinises recommendations against the criteria set out in the relevant Code of Practice. There was no evident reporting of nominations to LTC; the University might wish to consider formalising the recording of approval of external examiner appointments.

27 On appointment, external examiners receive an information pack incorporating general guidance, degree regulations and relevant University policies while schools have responsibility for providing course-specific information. The University states that new external examiners are offered an opportunity to visit the University for a briefing by the relevant school or faculty to discuss the role and responsibilities, but it 'is recognised that work demands may make such an arrangement difficult.' External examiners are therefore 'strongly encouraged' to contact the relevant school or faculty if they have queries, and they may also request copies of previous external examiner reports. The audit team found no evidence of external examiners commenting

on an inadequate induction; staff confirmed that the precise character of induction of external examiners is decided by individual courses and schools. To promote consistency, the University therefore might wish to consider providing further guidance in this area; the of the *Code of practice, Section 4: External examining* may be a useful point of reference in this regard.

28 The Code of Practice for the External Examiner System for Awards (Taught Programmes) requests that external examiners comment on the academic standards of awards, the standards demonstrated by students, the appropriateness of learning outcomes, course structure and design, assessment methods and processes, marking and classification, and 'academic standards measured against those in other research-led institutions' and 'the standard of student work compared with that in other research-led institutions'. The external examiner report form also requires comment on the relationship with subject benchmark statements and PSRB reference points, the appropriateness of learning outcomes (including against the FHEQ), the quality of placements (where relevant) and examples of good practice and points to commend.

29 External examiner reports are submitted to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor via the Learning, Teaching and Quality Office. Schools are required to consider the reports and prepare a response. Whilst the University's Code of Practice does not specify a responsibility for school-level committees in this regard, there was evidence of reports and responses being considered by school boards with, for those schools that had one, teaching executives approving responses. External examiners then receive a formal response from the relevant school on what action has been taken as a result of their comments.

30 Learning, Teaching and Quality Committees (LTQCs) are required to consider school responses and report to LTC 'to confirm that all issues have been appropriately addressed', 'to monitor reports for common themes that may warrant further consideration or action' and 'to highlight examples of good practice and consider mechanisms for its dissemination.' The audit confirmed that LTQCs did undertake the role of confirming that issues had been considered, but there was some variation in practice. In one faculty, the LTQC had identified a series of generic issues arising from external examiner reports which were being addressed in the faculty and notified to LTC. In another case, based on a review of a large sample of forms and responses, it was less evident that LTQCs identified generic issues and good practice with relevant sections of response forms, including that reserved for the Director of the TPPG, rarely being completed. Given the recurrence in reports across schools of specific issues such as marking practices, assessment criteria and student referencing, the University might like to reconsider how it could promote more consistent practice across LTQCs at this stage of the process.

31 The LTC receives annual overview reports from the Director of Taught Programmes (DTP) and the Director of Research Degree Programmes (DRDP) on external examiners' reports and these are designed to identify 'matters of principle...and...specific concern(s) that...recur over time'. The example provided for the audit team considered both outcomes of external examiners' reports across faculties and processes relating to how the University handled reports. The DTP conducts a sampling exercise, taking one school from each faculty and tracking reports over a period of at least three years.

32 Student members of school and faculty committees, of LTC and of Senate, are party to the consideration of external examiners' reports and responses. The audit team did not see any evidence that staff-student liaison committees (SSLCs) received external examiners' reports and students that the team met were uncertain about the purpose of the reports.

33 The review of documentation and discussion with staff established that the University's approach to external examining allowed it to secure the requisite assurance of the academic standards of its awards. It is confirmed that the University makes strong and scrupulous use of external examiners in summative assessment, and that institutional procedures play an effective role in the management of academic standards.

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

34 The Briefing Paper stated that the University continued 'to keep abreast of the QAA's Academic Infrastructure' and that the 'QAA's CoP is used to inform any updates/revisions to existing and new UEA CoPs'. There was evidence of discussion of aspects of the Academic Infrastructure at LTC, and of response to QAA consultations and revisions to key documents, including various subject benchmark statements. Programme specifications are considered as part of the course approval process and in annual monitoring. There is a programme specification template that sets out programme aims and outcomes, and the structure of the course. The University does not publish full programme specifications, although they are provided on request, but plans to make summaries publicly available as part of the new course approvals process. Programme specifications must make reference to relevant subject benchmark statements. Annual course update, quinquennial course review and external examiner reporting all confirm the currency of courses.

35 Records of discussion at LTC showed that the University had kept abreast of the emergence of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, published by ENQA, the European Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, and other developments relating to academic standards in the European Higher Education Area, particularly in the context of the Bologna Process.

36 A number of the University's programmes are accredited by PSRBs and attention to their requirements is one of the ways in which the University manages and maintains academic standards. While responsibility for meeting PSRB requirements is formally delegated to schools and courses, University regulations, policies and procedures have been calibrated to take account of PSRB requirements. The University's claim that it had 'a sound track record' with regard to its engagement with PSRBs is confirmed.

37 Consideration of documentation, and discussion with staff, demonstrated effective use of those elements of the Academic Infrastructure related to the academic standards of awards and of other external reference points. The audit team confirmed that the University's use of the Academic Infrastructure and external reference points contributed to its effective management of academic standards, although, as noted above, there remains some work to be undertaken with respect to the FHEQ.

Assessment policies and regulations

38 The University's regulatory frameworks for assessment, including where there are variations required by PSRBs, are published in 'The Calendar'. There are separate documents covering anonymous-marking, marking criteria, provisions for marking and feedback on work submitted for assessment on the institutional website. The location of such guidance is not always obvious and it can be difficult to find information. The student written submission suggested that students would benefit from there being 'a single accessible and up-to-date home' for student regulations; the audit team concurs with this view.

39 Documentation provided showed that students had access to essential information on learning outcomes, assessment tasks, marking, and plagiarism within, variously, module outlines and faculty and school handbooks. Some documentation included explicit and comprehensive guidance on assessment criteria and approaches to marking, but it was not evident that such information was always included in material for students. One school relies on individual module handouts, with no course or school overview of the assessment regime. In meetings with the audit team, students expressed some uncertainty about the provision of assessment criteria and some indicated that the information was not always provided. Finding information on assessment can be particularly problematic for those on joint degrees, with some reporting that they tended to get less information from their second (minor course) school.

40 The student written submission referred to students being confused about which of the University's definitions of double-marking was being used in the grading of work, and suggested that the University be 'more explicit about learning outcomes, publishing and discussing marking criteria and relating subsequent feedback to it, always giving feedback that offers clear suggestions for improvement and fully explaining the systems of moderation or double-marking in operation in each School'. The audit team concluded that student uncertainty about assessment could be attributed, in part, to the absence of clear institutional guidance about where such information should be located, and it would accordingly advise the University to specify the limits of acceptable variability in practice at school level with regard to the provision and accuracy of information on assessment provided to students.

41 The University's assessment regulations delegate responsibility for determining deadlines to specific role-holders. Schedules for submission and return of work are usually published in school handbooks, although for one course, the audit team was unable to locate the relevant information in the documentation published for students. There was evidence of good practice in the School of Biology's attention to alleviating assessment overload through the production of an assessment calendar setting out submission dates across the School. Coincidence of assessment deadlines can be particularly acute for students on joint courses, as there is no formal mechanism for appraisal of the overall assessment load and requirements.

42 Regulations on submission of assessment, including with respect to late submission and extenuating circumstances, are set out in The Calendar. Requests for extensions to submission deadlines are considered by the module organiser or teacher setting the work, and then there is also 'a designated member of academic staff in the School with overall responsibility for granting of extensions to deadlines' on the basis of 'acceptable extenuating circumstances'. This second member of staff with overall responsibility is there as a 'backstop', in case the module organiser or teacher setting the work is not available to consider a request for extension. This second person is also the one to whom retrospective requests for extension are to be submitted. While the criteria for the acceptability of extenuating circumstances are not set out in the relevant policy, there is nevertheless a consistent, clear procedure for the handling of late work, where extenuating circumstances may apply. Moreover, examples of faculty and school handbooks showed that not only was the University policy reproduced but it was also, in some cases, developed to specify acceptable criteria. In discussion with staff, the audit team heard of varying practice on the ground across schools and faculties. For example, a single coursework coordinator making decisions regarding extenuating circumstances across all courses within one school, while in others decisions about the validity of claims and the length of the extension are taken by individual module organisers. Thus, there is potential for students to be treated differently dependent on their school or faculty. It would therefore be advisable for the University to assure itself that the application in practice of policy and procedures for extensions to submission deadlines, and for extenuating circumstances, does not result in inequitable treatment of students.

43 The University's regulatory approach to academic malpractice is set out in its Policy on Plagiarism and Collusion, which includes the procedure for dealing with suspected cases. The regulatory framework is reinforced by a range of measures to encourage staff and students to prevent and avoid plagiarism. The webpage for the University's Learning Enhancement Service includes a variety of plagiarism awareness resources for staff and students. The strategy is supported in schools through the appointment and work of school plagiarism officers and is translated into advice and guidance within, variously, module, school and faculty handbooks. Discussion with staff and students, and electronic and paper information, led the audit team to identify as good practice the University's systematic approach to plagiarism and the work of the school plagiarism officers which together, provide comprehensive institutional regulations and guidance.

44 Although there is a clear institutional strategy to combat plagiarism, responsibility for providing students with definitive guidance on referencing is delegated to school level, so that there is scope for diverse approaches depending on the subject heritages of courses. Academic staff acknowledged that it was a 'challenge' for students on joint courses to adjust to such variability. The audit team noted the issue being identified in a course review where the report observed that 'Students [were] sometimes unclear which style they should be using in their work' prompting the observation at the subsequent faculty LTQC that 'it [might] leave students ... confused'. The team would encourage the University to review its approach in this area, with particular attention being paid to the needs of students on joint courses.

45 In meetings with the audit team, students voiced some concern at the quality and timeliness of feedback on assessment, echoing the comments of both undergraduate and postgraduate research students in the student written submission. Nonetheless, it was evident that the University, on the basis of its analysis of National Student Survey (NSS) results and of internal surveys of student opinion, had been seeking to improve the provision of assessment feedback to students. LTC has introduced a policy specifying a 20-day turnaround for assessment and has provided additional advice on how this could be achieved. The TPPG is monitoring the impact of this change by asking faculties to ensure that SSLCs discuss the NSS; there was evidence of how schools were seeking to solve the problems of feedback with a range of strategies. While it was clear that students' concerns about assessment feedback remained, the team found that the University was pursuing strategies, at University and course level, which had the potential to improve the timeliness and quality of feedback to students on assessed work.

46 The University's expectations with respect to the conduct of assessment boards are set out in The Calendar, and accompanying advice that specifies the rights, responsibilities and membership of module, stage and final assessment boards, noting that the first two may be a 'sub-group' of the Final Assessment Board. The guidance sets out the specific responsibilities of external examiners, but does not require them to attend stage assessment boards dealing with modules that contribute to the final award. In the case of some module assessment and stage assessment boards, membership is comparatively small, comprising on occasion only three internal academic staff and an administrator. The Instructions to Examiners document specifies membership of the Final Assessment Board as 'a Chair, external examiner(s) and academic staff having a major responsibility for teaching and/or assessment', but states that membership of the subgroup of examiners 'shall include the Chair (or Deputy Chair) of the Board and at least one other internal examiner'. There is a requirement that members unable to attend an assessment board seek authorisation from the LTC for their absence in advance of the meeting. The audit team was of the view that assessment decisions could therefore potentially be taken by a small membership of such assessment boards, a situation exacerbated in the absence of a quoracy regulation. Accordingly, the team would advise the University to revise the guidance for the conduct of assessment boards to establish and secure University-wide specifications for minimum attendance and quoracy. In so doing it should reflect on the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*, which encourages institutions to consider giving guidance in respect of assessment boards on the minimum number of internal and external members who must be present for valid decisions to be taken, and what should happen if a panel or board is not quorate.

47 The Briefing Paper stated that LTC oversaw assessment regulations and there was plentiful evidence of how the Committee, through the TPPG, reviewed relevant issues such as policy on cheating in examinations, guidelines for vivae voces, and arrangements for marking of assessed work for students with specific learning difficulties. During 2008, LTC oversaw an Assessment Review that had used quantitative management information to analyse assessment-related matters, including degree classifications, assessment loads, and analysis of disability and withdrawal, and the relationship between achievement and GCE A-Level results.

48 On the basis of meetings with staff and students, and scrutiny of documentation, the audit team was able to confirm that arrangements for the assessment of students were generally effective in enabling the University to maintain the academic standards of its awards.

Management information - statistics

49 The University was frank in discussing with the audit team the difficulties it had encountered in implementation of its student information system (SIS), but, it was also clear to the team that the SIS provided management information that allowed the Executive to gain a sound sense of the academic health of the institution. The University's Corporate Plan 2008-12 lists relevant performance indicators against the University's aims and the Briefing Paper noted the intention to develop a range of performance indicators for schools and faculties.

50 The audit team confirmed the University's claim that LTC had a pivotal role in using management information to manage academic quality and standards. There was evidence of consideration of data on, for example, student withdrawals, the number of academic appeals, complaints, academic discipline, professional misconduct and/or unsuitability and academic malpractice cases, students' experiences of the academic advisory system and assessment outcomes, all of which were being used to feed into a variety of reviews and projects. In addition, the University is paying close attention to the NSS results. It has developed a 'traffic-light' risk system to monitor NSS performance across schools. NSS results are also discussed in school boards and SSLCs and influence the development of procedures at the local level.

51 There was evidence of the use of statistical reporting in internal monitoring and review processes. Proposers of new courses can be provided with data from the Market Research Unit. Documentation illustrated extensive use of relevant data in some course reviews; for example, several course reviews had been supplied with, and analysed, comprehensive data on student entry qualifications, progression and achievement, and destination. Other reviews drew on what appeared to be more locally produced and limited data. Minutes of school boards and LTQCs recorded examples of consideration, some extensive, of annual monitoring data provided by faculty teaching offices. Discussion with staff indicated that there were varying approaches to the analysis of relevant management information at course and module level, with some courses interrogating quantitative data and other relying on more qualitative evidence. Moreover, staff reported that the data that was available was of limited use. There is therefore scope for greater standardisation of approach in the analytical use of statistical management information in the management of academic standards at course and module level, to support structured comparisons across the University's provision.

52 Overall the audit team found that confidence could reasonably be placed in the soundness of the University's present and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards.

Section 3: Institutional management of learning opportunities

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

53 There is clear evidence to substantiate the University's claim that the 'QAA's Code of practice is used to inform any updates/revisions to existing and new UEA Codes of Practice'. Key policies and procedures draw on the guidance in the *Code of practice* and the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) oversees consideration of any revisions. The University reviewed its own practice and procedures against the precepts and guidance set out in the different sections of the *Code of practice* as they were published, using its own internal documents as the starting point for reflection and modifying its internal procedures and policies accordingly.

Approval, monitoring and review of programmes

54 The University framework for the quality assurance of new course proposals and of existing provision is set out in a series of documents and appendices including the University Code of Practice (CoP) on Assuring and Enhancing Teaching Quality and its appendices, and separate Guidance notes on Learning, Teaching, Quality Assurance and Quality Enhancement.

Programme approval

55 The University states that the shaping of its academic portfolio is 'primarily bottom-up', to encourage innovation and creativity within schools. School-level curriculum development is undertaken within the context of faculty executive planning, where heads of school are represented. This approach, taken with LTC's continuous monitoring of new course proposals and an annual report listing all the new course proposals considered during the previous academic session, enables the University to have effective institutional oversight of curriculum development. The vigilance of LTC in this area was demonstrated by a paper presented to the Committee in the academic year 2006-07, which not only set out new courses, but also included a brief audit of how faculties were handling, what was then, a new responsibility for course approvals.

56 Processes of programme approval fall into a number of categories dependent upon the nature of the proposal. Whatever route is followed, school representatives are responsible for consulting 'internal and external stakeholders', including employers, students and external examiners, and for developing a programme specification and accompanying background information. For joint proposals, one school is designated as the school of registration and is responsible for liaising across schools and, where relevant, faculties. Programme specifications may be produced for the combined offering, or as a separate document for each element. Programme approval processes are adapted to enable conjoint approvals with a PSRB.

57 At the time of the audit, a number of modifications to the approval processes and procedures were being piloted. The revised process and associated guidance are designed to separate consideration of the business and academic cases for new course proposals. There is also additional guidance about external input into all types of approval, stating that 'approval is unlikely to be given if "externality" is not satisfactorily addressed' and, for full new course proposals, that proposers 'require external academic advice from appropriate persons other than a current/former external examiner'.

58 There is no formal documented process for the closure or suspension of programmes; the University may wish to developing institutional guidance in this area to protect the interests of students. Documentation reviewed by the audit team provided evidence that approval procedures were operating in accordance with the guidance; at the time of the audit, it was too early for the University, or the team, to appraise the efficacy in practice of the revised approach.

Annual monitoring

59 The guidance on Programme Monitoring and Review stipulates that module monitoring be carried out 'each time a module runs' and result in a report to the School Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality who is responsible for ensuring that module monitoring takes place. There was evidence of effective monitoring by school boards and faculty learning and teaching quality committees (LTQCs) that module monitoring took place, including steps being taken to address significant levels of non-compliance with requirements. The Briefing Paper indicated that the process provided an opportunity for the dissemination of good practice; the audit team reviewed a number of summary monitoring reports and minutes of the associated discussion, which showed little attention to such matters of enhancement.

60 Course directors are responsible for ensuring that the annual monitoring and update of modules feeds into annual course update and for any consequent changes to programme specifications. Course directors also assess whether the scale of change merits the formal programme approval process; there are clear criteria to support such decision-making. Scrutiny of documentation confirmed for the audit team that annual monitoring followed the published course update process. As with the equivalent at module level, the tracking pro forma is designed to enable issues of principle and good practice to be identified at LTC; the team found from examination of documentation that, while the pro forma audited the occurrence of monitoring, there was little in the way of identification of generic matters for further attention and especially of good practice.

Periodic review

61 Course or programme review by school, is undertaken every five years and, there is an expectation of schools 'to conduct a thorough and strategic review of programmes, considering a range of issues and drawing on a range of management information'. The process draws on input from at least one external panel member and a student member, and may be undertaken in conjunction with review by a PSRB. The guidance requires that 'Schools and course teams...take a more reflective look at learning opportunities and consider whether these remain congruent with intended learning outcomes as well as academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience'. Issues requiring attention or areas for enhancement are recorded in an action plan monitored within schools. There are specified lines of responsibility through to LTC for confirming that the process has been conducted in accordance with the stated requirements. A review of a number of examples of course review reports and responses established that the process was conducted in accordance with University guidelines, but also that the relevant pro forma used by faculties to report on course reviews confirmed the occurrence of events, but infrequently provided developed coverage of generic issues arising, and of good practice, for further dissemination. By way of example, in one case the faculty LTQC, on the basis of five course reviews, reported that there were no issues to bring to the attention of LTC.

62 The audit team found that the University's arrangements for programme approval, monitoring and review were effective in maintaining the quality of students' learning opportunities. There is scope to build on the processes to contribute further to the systematic enhancement of the learning opportunities available to students.

Management information - feedback from students

63 The University's approach to student feedback is set out in the University document Student Representation and Staff:Student Liaison: A Code of Practice, which provides a comprehensive and clear set of minimum requirements oriented to ways in which 'mutually beneficial informal communication can be facilitated'. The University Code advises that schools inform students 'of the mechanisms by which they may communicate their interests and their concerns, the means by which the School will respond and where/how to access relevant information, including relevant procedures such as academic appeals and academic and non-academic complaints'. A review of a range of handbooks by the audit team confirmed that, in most cases, expectations about how students could feed back on their experiences were communicated to students, but in a few cases little or no such guidance could be located.

64 Students are given the opportunity to evaluate their experience on each module taken to feed into annual module monitoring and course update. The school teaching committee or, where schools do not have teaching committees, the school director of learning, teaching and quality is responsible for ensuring that 'any proposals, concerns and issues identified by the student representatives' are fed into annual monitoring and proposals for new courses. Undergraduate and postgraduate students met by the audit team were able to confirm that they had access to a range of opportunities to feed back on their courses. A reading of examples of documentation from the University's quinquennial course review confirmed that student feedback at module and course level was considered in the process as a matter of routine.

65 In terms of student feedback for module monitoring, schools have discretion in the methods they use to gather and consider student feedback with student questionnaires, in-class feedback sessions and staff-student liaison committees (SSLCs) being suggested as acceptable approaches. The University states that it has adopted a 'measured' approach to the National Student Survey (NSS), 'waiting to assess the benefits of the data before determining how best to manage the information'. Nonetheless, the audit team identified a number of ways in which NSS results were being employed at institutional and programme level to appraise student learning opportunities. A 'traffic-light' analysis of NSS results has been employed to identify areas for improvement in terms of schools and procedures, with a view to creating a 'sea of green'.

With effect from the academic year 2008-09, the outcomes of the NSS have been formally referred to SSLCs and outcomes are being monitored by the Taught Programmes Policy Group (TPPG). The team found that the University was taking a systematic approach to NSS results, and was using it and other external surveys to improve students' learning opportunities.

66 The University's appeals and complaints procedures are published on the website and referenced in school handbooks. The Taught Programmes Director (DTP) or the Director Research Degrees Programmes (DRDP) normally act as the Chair of Academic Appeal or Complaints Panels and, in liaison with the Academic Registrar, they are expected to identify generic issues and actions. Annual overview, evaluative, reports are produced for LTC and there was evidence of consequent discussion of results and processes, indicating an equitable and systematic process.

67 Students, representing a range of categories, met by the audit team were aware of opportunities to provide feedback on their courses and, in some cases, could point to examples of their views being acted upon and resulting in change. The University, drawing on student feedback, including the NSS, acknowledges that there are areas for improvement, particularly with respect to the student experience on joint degrees, but overall, the team affirmed that the University's arrangements for student feedback were effective in contributing to the management of learning opportunities.

Role of students in quality assurance

68 The University's Corporate Plan for 2008-12 recognises the importance of student representation, and the Student Charter (2008) is based on the 'guiding principle that students are to be active partners in their own education and in the academic development of the University'. The University's Code of Practice on Student Representation and Staff:Student Liaison (2008) outlines the formal arrangements for student representation on faculty LTQCs, school boards and SSLCs. Students are also represented at all levels in the University's central committee structure. Representatives of the Union of UEA Students and the Graduate Students' Association are members of Court, of Council and its Student Affairs Group (SAG), Equality and Diversity, Recruitment Admissions and Marketing, and Information Strategy and Services (ISSC) committees. They also sit on Senate and its LTC, Student Experience (SEC), and (where appropriate) discipline and appeals committees. There is no student representation on faculty executives, but the Academic Officer of the Union of UEA Students can attend if there are issues relevant to the student body to discuss.

69 The University established the SEC in 2005-06 to 'emphasise the importance of hearing and responding to students' views' in areas of more strategic relevance. In meetings with the audit team, student representatives spoke positively about SEC, which has an agenda set by the students and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (PVC) (Academic), and which they regarded as a formal committee that had filled a gap between the SAG and the LTC. On the basis of this discussion and other meetings and from the documentation provided, the team concurred with the University's view that the SEC was 'well-placed' to ensure that its views are taken into account at the University's central teaching committee, the LTC.

70 The SEC played a key role in the development of the Student Charter and in the policy on return of coursework and feedback, and is involved a wide range of other areas, including student induction, the academic advisory system, timetabling and reading lists, national survey results (NSS, ISB), and enhancement of library space. The SEC is complemented by SAG, which is chaired by the Dean of Students and which meets once or twice a month during semesters. The SAG considers more general student issues, including accommodation, transport, catering, visas, learning resources, welfare and careers.

71 Students are also represented on key policy groups, which report to the LTC, the TPPG and Postgraduate Research Programmes Policy Group (PgrDPPG), and two groups that report to the ISSC, the Library and Learning Resources Forum (LLRF) and the IT and Computing Forum (ITCF). On a more informal basis, the Academic Officer of the Union of UEA Students and the President of

the Graduate Students' Association occasionally meet the Vice-Chancellor to discuss specific topics and more frequently with the PVC (Academic) DTP and DPRP to cover more general issues. Students whom the audit team met confirmed that they valued these opportunities outside the formal deliberative fora to pursue matters of interest to the student body.

72 The University's Code of Practice on Student Representation and Staff:Student Liaison provides guidance for schools and faculties on how incoming students should be made aware of the opportunities to act as a student representative. At induction, schools are requested to distribute information packs on the representation system including student representation nomination forms. Training and support for student representatives is available from the Union of UEA Students and the Graduate Students' Association.

73 In addition to the formal committee structure, the University has introduced a requirement for student membership of programme periodic review panels. Students also contribute to other University reviews, for example, on assessment and on the advising system.

74 The audit team found the specification and application of the framework for student involvement in quality assurance throughout the University, which afford significant opportunities for students to express their views to the University, to be a feature of good practice in the University's management of learning opportunities.

Links between research or scholarly activity and learning opportunities

75 The University's Mission Statement includes the aspiration for the advancement of 'understanding through research, scholarly communication and research-led teaching.' This aim is also articulated in the Student Charter and in the University's Code of Practice on Assuring and Enhancing Teaching Quality, which includes the University's Education Strategy 2006-11.

76 The Briefing Paper stated that 'student access to academic staff who are engaged in research and who include opportunities for students to undertake research is an important component of our students' educational experience.' The student written submission (SWS) was supportive of this view and, commenting on the provision currently offered, stated that it was clear that 'interdisciplinarity, creativity and research-led teaching and learning [were] highly valued by UEA students'. This is consistent with the high NSS scores recorded for students at the University in regard to their courses being intellectually stimulating.

77 The LTC has supported two projects on research-led teaching and learning. An initial project, (1999-2000), was primarily concerned with student and staff perceptions and experience of research-led teaching and learning. The second project, (2004-06), had a broader remit and aimed to explore and to help to develop with staff the relationship between research and teaching and learning at the University. This project produced interim reports for the LTC in 2004 and 2005 and a final report was submitted to the LTC in May 2007 for discussion and wider dissemination.

78 The above projects identified a range of modes for research-led teaching and learning at the University, from research-informed teaching to research-led (that is, enquiry and problem-based) learning, and considered that there was 'little doubt that the majority of students at UEA experience[d] a research-rich curriculum'. The final report also concluded that the 'extent to which they know this is less certain', a view confirmed by the audit team's discussions with undergraduate and taught postgraduate students. In meetings with staff, the team was provided with examples of how research skills had been embedded into the undergraduate curriculum from year one. Research projects and dissertations are commonplace across the University in final undergraduate years and in postgraduate taught courses. Courses with placements and years spent abroad, or in industry, can also offer research and scholarship opportunities and are viewed positively by students.

79 To promote understanding and development of research-led teaching and learning, a website has been developed, which includes case-studies across different disciplines at the University. The University also promotes research-led teaching and learning through its policy and mission statements and teaching and learning strategies, and through specific initiatives. The LTC has oversight of how the student learning experience benefits from contact with research-active staff through programme periodic reviews, which include questions on how the curriculum is informed by the latest developments in scholarship and research, and by the research or professional activity of the teaching team.

80 The audit team found that the University had articulated its position on research-led teaching and learning and that it was continuing to support, promote and review developments in this area.

Other modes of study

81 The University's teaching provision includes some flexible and distributed learning. Part-time study is available as a more flexible alternative to full-time degrees in a number of schools, although the number of students involved is relatively small with the exception of professional studies, for example, Nursing and Midwifery and Continuing Education.

82 Various part-time modular certificate, diploma and short courses are offered by the Centre for Continuing Education within the School of Education and LifeLong Learning. A range of professional development and short courses are also offered by Continuing Education, the School of International Development, and the Faculty of Health, which also run study days for health-care professionals. University regulations specific to the continuing education provision are informed by the Regulations for Undergraduate Awards (Common Course Structure) and the Common Masters Framework.

83 The University has a relatively small distance-learning provision. In the Briefing Paper, the University stated that 'particular attention [was] paid to the quality of the learning experience in this mode' and that the Code of practice was used to help identify issues to be taken into consideration. The LTC is involved in the approval process for any new course incorporating distance learning: an example being the MRes in Development Practice due to commence in 2010, whose main component will be delivered through part-time, distance learning.

84 For course proposals and modifications involving distance learning and/or e-learning, additional information is required, the guidelines for which are available on the Learning, Teaching and Quality website. Advice on delivery of distance-learning components is provided to schools by the Learning, Teaching Quality Office, and the Dean of Students is also asked to comment in regard to student support on new course developments.

85 Self-service and web-based library facilities support flexible study and working practices by allowing issue, renewal and return of items at times convenient to part-time students. For continuing education students, the library provides a 'book box' of key texts at the study location. The University has been 'exploring new technology' to provide alternative learning opportunities for students both on and off-campus.

86 In most cases, the school or faculty, rather than the student, is responsible for arranging placement provision and for providing students with specific information on their placements. The SWS indicated that students 'highly value[d]' their experiences on placements but recommended that the schools should improve communication and information to students on placements. At the time of the audit, the University had recently introduced a Code of Practice on Placement Learning, which drew on the relevant guidance in the *Code of practice* and which also covered year-abroad schemes, Erasmus exchanges, work-based placements in industry, professional placements in Health and Education, fieldwork assignments, and professional doctorates. The audit team considers that comprehensive and consistent application of the University's Code will meet the concerns expressed by the students.

87 Overall, the audit team found the University's arrangements for flexible and distributed learning to contribute to the effective management of learning opportunities.

Resources for learning

88 The University, LTC, faculties and schools review the use of teaching space and other learning resources in several ways. Consideration of learning resources is integral to the approval, monitoring and review process. The revised course approval process has a specific requirement for any learning resource issues to be discussed with Information Services Directorate (ISD), library, the Dean of Students and other support services. For major teaching developments, prior approval of the Planning and Resources Committee is required. The Briefing Paper referred to an ongoing review by LTC of the use of teaching space, including the ways in which teaching is timetabled. From the documentation provided, the team was able to confirm that there were clear and effective mechanisms for the monitoring and review of learning resources.

89 In the SWS and NSS, students were generally positive about library, information technology and other learning resources at the University. In the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2008, postgraduate research students were less satisfied with their environment compared with the national average. The SWS refers to a 'close working relationship' between the library service and the Union of UEA Students; in response to a Union survey in 2007, the library service introduced longer opening hours during semesters. The SWS refers to concerns of postgraduate taught students about reduced library opening hours during the summer vacation; at the time of the audit, the library was reviewing out-of-semester opening times.

90 The main provider of centrally managed learning resources is the ISD, which is responsible for library and computing facilities, in consultation with ISSC. The ISD Strategy (2008-13) is fully aligned and cross-referenced with the objectives of the University as outlined in the Corporate Plan and includes improving the physical environment, supporting education and ensuring service availability. The ISD is responsible for the provision of software and hardware for students with special needs.

91 The ISD is involved in a wide range of projects aimed at enhancing teaching and learning at the University. There is clear evidence of the service's responsiveness to student views; taking, for example, student survey data into account in its plans to develop library provision. The audit team found that ISD was well placed to be in effective dialogue with academic staff and students through links with the ISSC, and through membership of LLRF, ITCF, SEC and SAG, the Learning Technology Group (LTG) and the Higher Education Research and Innovation Group (HERIG), which reports to LTC.

92 The ISD runs focus groups and conducts annual user surveys of library, information technology and audiovisual resources and support services. Survey outcomes are posted on the ISD website and an annual summary is provided to ISSC. Data from student module evaluations go to ISD through the annual monitoring process, and ISD members liaise with schools over particular issues. The audit identified as a feature of good practice the integrated approach, led by the Information Services Directorate, to the management and development of library and information technology provision, which contributes to the quality of learning opportunities.

93 The University's e-Learning Strategy was published in May 2007. The University recognises the need to take a 'more proactive and coordinated approach to the use of e-Learning' and that 'many HEIs [were] already far in advance of UEA.' The LTG, a joint venture between ISD and the Centre for Staff and Educational Development (CSED), was established to manage the implementation of new technologies into teaching and learning. The LTG provides support to academic staff on software issues while hardware support is faculty-based. At the time of the audit, ISD was consulting users on ways in which the Library space could be adapted to provide more flexible learning spaces in line with developments in learning technology.

Admissions policy

94 In the Briefing Paper, the University stated that admissions policy was guided by the 'Empowerment through Education' section of the Corporate Plan, where one objective is to 'continue to increase the quality, number and range of student applicants'. Admission Requirements for Undergraduate and for Postgraduate Taught Programmes, including special cases, and the University's policies on accreditation of prior learning/AP(experiential)L and Equal Opportunities for Students, the latter being under revision at the time of the audit, are published in the University Calendar, which is available online and in hard copy. The audit team confirmed that admissions policy demonstrated engagement with the relevant guidance in the *Code of practice*. The prospectus includes details of the University's flexible undergraduate admissions policy for students without formal qualifications. The University also has a foundation year for science subjects and a Medicine with a Foundation Year degree. INTO, a private-sector global education partner organisation, (University of East Anglia), provides specialist academic and English language courses to prepare international applicants for entry into University courses.

95 Admissions are overseen by the University's Director of Admissions, assisted by the Admissions and Outreach Office of the Marketing and Communications Division (MAC). The admissions process is decentralised; academic decisions and admissions' processing being devolved to Admissions Offices in faculties. The admissions process operates as a dual system, with parallel links through academic and administrative staff. Staff involved in admissions receive advice and training from the Centre for Staff and Educational Development (CSED); by way of example, at the time of the audit a recent Academic Practice event had been about handling admissions complaints.

96 The University's Recruitment, International and Outreach Office coordinates Home/European Union student outreach and recruitment activities and the international recruitment of overseas students. It is responsible for much of the University's widening participation work, from visits to schools to campus visits, including a residential summer school. The University has links with a number of local, regional and UK-wide schools and is to be a co-sponsor of a School Academy in Norwich.

97 The University works closely with 'Aimhigher Norfolk', part of the national programme for widening participation, and in addition to external events, offers a wide variety of on-campus activities. Admissions and Outreach staff will work with the University's Transitions into/within HE project to explore ways to coordinate the information given to potential students across the University schools, and to help them to understand better the admission and transitional process from school to university from the perspective of local schools.

98 Strategic direction for admissions policies is provided by the Recruitment, Admissions and Marketing Committee (RAM), a joint committee of Council and Senate with a broad membership representing the interested constituencies. RAM monitors admissions data with regard to equality of access.

99 The audit team found that the University had in place an effective system for ensuring the consistent implementation of its admission procedures for undergraduate and taught postgraduate students, and that its varied outreach activities reinforced its policy for widening access to, and participation in, its courses.

Student support

100 The SWS commented favourably on the overall student experience at the University, stating that students were 'overwhelmingly happy with the teaching, learning and academic support'. Such comments are also confirmed by the University's strong performance in the NSS. A survey conducted by the Dean of Students' Office in 2008 found that three-quarters of students were satisfied with both their academic and personal support.

101 The SWS identified some areas where there was scope for improvement including: improved communication with students in relation to placements; module choice; timetabling; reading lists; assessment criteria; and, feedback on performance. It was evident that the University was responding to these and other issues through measures taken from the academic year 2008-09, some of which were ongoing at the time of the audit. Following reviews commissioned by LTC, the University has introduced a Code of Practice (CoP) on Placement Learning and a policy on advising undergraduate and postgraduate taught students. The latter includes the provision of a minimum number of individual meetings between student and adviser per year. The audit team found that lack of information could be a particular issue for students on joint degree courses involving more than one school. The updated (2008) CoP on Student Representation and Staff:Student Liaison includes a requirement that 'joint degrees be placed on the agenda' of SSLCs 'at least once per session with students of other Schools undertaking joint programmes being represented or, as a minimum, consulted.' Other initiatives include the Student Charter and a policy on coursework turnaround times and feedback to students. An LTC Review of Assessment was scheduled to continue during the academic year 2008-09.

102 The SWS suggested that the University continue to review and improve induction in the first week of the standard semester and would like a full week for student orientation. Comments in the SWS based on the results of a 2006 survey, and audit team discussions with staff and students confirmed that the induction experience for undergraduate and postgraduate taught students was variable across schools and faculties. At the time of the audit, the University was reviewing its approach to induction through discussions at SEC and LTC. The Transitions into/within HE project has reviewed the induction process across all schools to identify good practice.

103 The Academic Advising System in Schools is central to student support at the University. Students value the system highly but reported that not all interactions between the individual student and adviser were as effective as they might be. Student concerns voiced in the NSS prompted a review in 2007 of the level of support and advice that undergraduate students received through the advising system (2007). Among the consequent changes introduced for the academic year 2008-09 was the establishment of the roles of Deputy Senior Advisor and of Disability Liaison Officer within schools to strengthen this area.

104 Support for students in faculties is provided through undergraduate and postgraduate teaching offices. The faculty offices and the Dean of Students' Office provide assistance to students considering making an academic appeal or an academic complaint, but students are also strongly advised to seek from the Union Advice Centre.

105 The employment rate for graduates is below that of other similar universities but there is evidence of some recent improvement in this area. In 2006, Senate approved a strategy for enhancing student progression and employability. Faculties submit annual reports on graduate employability to LTC and these indicate that the implementation of the employability strategy has led to the introduction of a range of career-related activities within the curriculum, and to a much closer interaction between many schools and their designated Careers Adviser in the Careers Centre. Faculty reports and the annual report to LTC from the Careers Centre have shown both an increase in the careers activities of most schools and in the proportion of students using the central careers service.

106 Student support is coordinated centrally by the Dean of Students' Office. The Dean of Students is also Director of Student Services, with managerial responsibility for the Dean of Students' Office, the Careers Centre, University Counselling Service, and Physical Education and Sport, and is the University liaison with the Medical Centre and Dental Practice. The Dean of Students is a member of Senate, the Educational Development Committee, LTC and SEC and chairs SAG. This membership of the University's major committees ensures that student support issues are discussed at the highest levels within the institution, and that the Dean of Students can contribute to the development of policy relevant to the student experience. The University's

Survey Office is part of the Dean of Students' Office, with the stated aim of more effectively targeting and coordinating feedback from students.

107 Links between student support and teaching and learning are reinforced by joint projects and collaborations between the Dean of Students and the DTP; examples include the review of the student advising system in schools and the ongoing 'Transitions into/within HE' project. All academic staff act as advisers and each school has one or two senior advisers who are also part of the Dean of Students' Office and meet regularly with the Dean of Students.

108 The Learning Enhancement Team (Quality Enhancement) within the Dean of Students' Office provides advice and tuition to students on general study skills and specifically, in maths, statistics, science and plagiarism awareness, and has a dedicated tutor for international students. The degree of interaction with the Learning Enhancement Team varies between schools and, at the time of the audit, the University was planning to strengthen such contacts.

109 Students who met the audit team spoke warmly and positively of the role played by the Dean of Students' Office in supporting students. From meetings with staff and students and from the documentation provided, the team identified the strategic management of student support services by the Dean of Students' Office, which promotes the provision of comprehensive and coordinated support to students, as a feature of good practice in the University's management of learning opportunities.

Staff support (including staff development)

110 Continuing professional development for staff involved in teaching is a component of the University's learning and teaching strategies. Such support for staff is located in the CSED, which was established in 1988 to 'promote and support good practice in all aspects' of staff development. From its inquiries in the course of the audit, the audit team agrees with the University's view that the Head of CSED, as the LTC Director of Staff Development, is 'well placed and well informed in respect of current issues and emerging training and support needs'.

111 The CSED programme of courses and events for staff is circulated annually to all staff and advertised and updated through its website. CSED's programme is 'aligned' with the objectives of the corporate plan and learning and teaching strategy. CSED submits an annual report to LTC, which includes information on enrolments for its various activities. This report informs a broader Human Resources report to Senate and Council. Since 2007, LTC has produced an annual bulletin aimed at updating and advising teaching staff about its work, and to 'alert them to changes to Codes of Practice, policies and regulations' and 'to raise any issues for discussion'.

112 The CSED runs an MA in Higher Education Practice (MA HEP), three modules (60 credits) of which must be taken by new members of academic staff with no teaching experience for whom it is a requirement of probation. The MA HEP is accredited for the University by the School of Education and Lifelong Learning and externally is an accredited programme of the Higher Education Academy.

113 There is a scheme for staff appraisal and development. CSED offers a wide range of short courses, seminars and academic practice events on teaching methods, course design and teaching skills, research and scholarship and various aspects of university management, workshops on problem solving, time management and presentation skills, and a wide range of information technology courses through the Learning Technology Group.

114 There are clear expectations that postgraduate research students who teach will receive training and the CSED offers a comprehensive programme entitled 'Developing Teaching Skills: A Training Programme for Postgraduate Teaching Assistants'. In addition, the postgraduate research student professional skills programme, 'PGR Transitions' includes a teaching component, which is designated as compulsory for research students who wish to become teaching assistants and the students also have access to the MA HEP programme. There is also an overarching

procedural document 'Teaching Undertaken by Postgraduate Research Students'.

Notwithstanding the range of training opportunities available and the statement of the University's expectations, it was evident that not all research students undertaking teaching had undertaken any training and that the University was not able effectively to monitor activity in this area. It is therefore desirable that the University formalise the expectations for the training and ongoing support for postgraduate research students who teach, to ensure they are adequately prepared for the role.

115 Peer review of teaching is an integral part of the MA HEP modules taken by probationary staff. Guidelines for peer review are available on the Learning, Teaching and Quality Office website. The audit team found that peer review of established staff occurred in some schools but not in others. Discussion between the team and staff indicated that whether peer review of all teaching staff took place was at the discretion of the head of school. Student evaluation of the modules, which feeds into the annual monitoring process, was cited in the Briefing Paper as a method by which the School Director (LTQ) could identify any training needs in the absence of, or instead of, peer review. The team is of the view that this variability in practice has the potential to disadvantage some staff, and for poor teaching to continue undetected and not redressed.

116 The University has two established schemes to recognise and reward teaching. The UEA Excellence in Teaching Awards and University Teaching Fellowships, the latter supported via HEFCE TQEF. Teaching fellows participate in the LTC's annual Learning and Teaching Day and are involved in the 'Transitions into/within HE' project. At the time of the audit, the University had recently established HERIG, which reports to LTC, with the aim of developing 'staffs' expertise, interest and enthusiasm for good teaching'.

117 The University's promotion criteria include teaching and scholarship, and staff 'can be considered for promotion on the basis of a strong performance' in these areas. The Briefing Paper referred to a review and revision of the University's promotions criteria, which was 'aimed at 'better articulation' of performance in teaching as a criterion for promotion.

118 Overall, the audit team found that the University had effective arrangements for staff support and development but considered it desirable that the University reappraise the current approach to peer observation of teaching to establish consistent practice across the University

119 The audit team's view is that confidence may reasonably be placed in the University's current and future management of the quality of learning opportunities offered to its students.

Section 4: Institutional approach to quality enhancement

Management information - quality enhancement

120 The Briefing Paper proposed that the University had an integrated approach to quality enhancement which was integral to the learning and teaching and information strategies. The Strategy for Quality Enhancement was revised by the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) in February 2009 and is included in the University's Code of Practice (CoP): Assuring and Enhancing Teaching Quality. The Quality Enhancement Strategy focuses on a number of different areas. The first of these is using the committee structures to make enhancement central to the quality mechanisms of the University; the LTC oversees this work on behalf of the University as part of a 'system of interlinking Committees and individual staff with key and defined responsibilities'. The Student Experience Committee frequently considers matters that have an effect on students' learning experiences. The University considers the strength of its approach is that it draws on all levels of the institution. The structure of the quality framework supports this aspiration, in the involvement of both faculties and schools in quality management that allows for 'an increased focus on quality enhancement both bottom-up and top-down' The audit team found that the University's framework provided opportunities for enhancement such as the UG/PGT Transitions into/within HE project and the PGR Transitions Project.

Staff development and reward

121 The University also recognises that enhancement is developed through teaching and learning. It has a number of approaches to this that include: Awards for Excellence in Teaching, Teaching Fellowships, links with the Higher Education Academy, and professional development events such as Learning and Teaching Days. It also supports staff through its Centre for Staff and Educational Development. The Centre delivers initial training for new members of staff, the MA in Higher Education Practice, Teaching Skills for Post Graduate Teaching Assistants and the PGR Transitions Programme.

Section 5: Collaborative arrangements

122 The University's approach to collaborative arrangements is measured. At the time of the audit, the focus was upon regional partnerships, although where there is 'very strong link at the level of discipline' partnerships further afield are considered. The University sees potential for further expansion internationally and, at the time of the audit, was devising an international validation handbook.

123 The extensive arrangement at University Campus Suffolk, validated jointly with the University of Essex, was not part of the present audit.

124 Overall, responsibility for partnership arrangements lies with the Partnerships Office, which is within the Learning and Teaching Quality Office. There are links at a senior level between the University and the partner institutions with shared membership of institutional committees. Other key features of the management arrangements for collaborative provision include: the appointment of an 'academic link', who will have the necessary subject expertise to work closely with the partner institution in matters relating to standards and quality, including the writing of an annual report; a Joint Board of Study (JBoS) for each partnership which deals with matters such as consideration of external examiners' reports, wider annual course monitoring, consideration of initial course proposals and staff development issues; and the Validation Handbook.

125 There is sound evidence that the formal arrangements set out by the University for the day-to-day management of collaborative provision are followed in practice. For example, minutes from JBoS recorded discussion of such things as the annual monitoring report, which is prepared by the relevant Academic Link to '[reflect] on the previous year' and sets out the agenda for the next year in conjunction with the course leaders. There was evidence of detailed discussion of external examiners' reports and the responses of the partner institution to those reports. There was further evidence that where the responses were thought to lack the necessary detail, additional consideration of the external examiners' reports was required to be undertaken. There was also evidence that completion of 'the QAA code of practice mapping exercise' was determined to be a matter of priority. Overall, the audit team found that stated policy and evidenced practice were in alignment.

126 The approval of collaborative arrangements is a two-part process. Firstly, there is an 'initial approval of potential partner organisations at institutional level'; secondly, there is course approval. The arrangements and requirements for both parts of the approval process are set out in detail in the Validation Handbook. The arrangements for the validation of the global educational partner (INTO) programme were slightly different in that this was a joint venture from the beginning, and hence created jointly and for specific purpose. Validations continue for five years and are subject to re-approval during that period.

127 The audit team found that the formal arrangements set out in the relevant documentation were being followed in practice. Extensive illustrative documentation for an approval that was relatively recent at the time of the audit demonstrated that processes for initial institutional approval were in place and that the initial validation event and subsequent report had been completed according to stated policy and sent to the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC)

with a recommendation for approval. The report showed evidence of externality and included a mapping exercise to indicate engagement with the *Code of practice*. Consideration was given to awareness of external reference points, especially the requirements of the relevant PSRB. It was evidenced, too, that issues such as continued provision of resources, (there was a particular concern with access to e-resource provision), was considered at this early stage and later minutes indicate that the issue continues to be one to which attention was being given. The process of institutional approval can be tracked readily through the LTC to Senate.

128 Extensive documentation was provided to demonstrate the process of course approval at a college partner. An external adviser had been a member of the validation panel. The validation report provided evidence that a scrutiny panel had considered carefully the proposed course and 'while recommending validation' did set out a number of conditions. Action on these conditions can be tracked through to completion and 'sign off' by the University. There is evidence too that future resource planning is in place.

129 The arrangements for ensuring the quality of collaborative provision are substantially the same as for 'home' provision. The use of external examiners, the quinquennial review of provision, the requirement for an annual monitoring report and staff development opportunities reflect consistency of practice.

130 The JBoS plays a key role as does the academic link in the monitoring and review of collaborative arrangements. The annual report from the academic link and the institution's response and other relevant documentation including external examiner reports, student feedback, details of new staff members, updated staff curricula vitae and a variety of other information inform the annual report which is considered by the JBoS. There was evidence from JBoS minutes that such a process was taking place and that the annual monitoring reports were properly considered with evidence of University-level involvement.

131 The quinquennial course review begins with a self-evaluation document prepared by the partner institution in accordance with extensive guidance provided by the University. The review panel is approved by the Director of Partnerships and includes an external subject expert, other external stakeholders as appropriate and academic members of staff from the University. The revalidation event 'normally' includes a meeting with current or previously registered students. The partner institution receives a report that outlines any conditions to revalidation. If these are not met, the matter is referred to LTC to determine the final decision, which may be to request further work and a further revalidation. There is sound evidence that these procedures are being followed: the audit team examined documentation for a revalidation in a partner institution and tracked it through the minutes of the JBoS to LTC. The team noted in particular that 'potential for enhancement' was discussed as well as confirmation of revalidation.

132 All validated courses have external examiner arrangements. Nominations for appointment are approved by the Director of Taught Programmes and examiners receive the standard external examiners' pack. The same University Code of Practice applies to external examiners appointed for the partner institutions as to those in the 'home' provision.

133 There is good opportunity for use of external examiners and consideration of external examiner reports within the partner institutions. The external examiner writes a report, which is sent to the University. This report is considered by the partner through the JBoS and a response is drafted. The response is signed off by the Director of Partnerships, but then forms part of the annual monitoring documentation, in the context of which further discussion may take place.

134 There was clear evidence that stated policy is being followed and that full use of external examiners is made within the partner institutions and opportunities for enhancement are taken. The minutes of the JBoS indicate that external examiner reports are discussed and responded to. Minutes demonstrate that there are 'responses' to examiner reports and 'revised responses'. There is evidence also that progress on action points arising from external examiner reports is monitored.

135 Students in partner institutions have the opportunity to provide feedback, both annually and as part of the quinquennial review. There is student representation on JBoS.

136 Staff at partner institutions who are involved with the delivery of the University's courses are approved by the University through the initial validation event, and through annual monitoring; have access to the University's library and to electronic resources. The University, through the academic link and other mechanisms, encourages staff in partner institutions to participate in staff development events, such as Learning and Teaching Day and the 'Regional Forum'. They are encouraged also to become involved with the relevant department, for example, by attendance at research seminars. Staff at the partner institutions have access to other staff development opportunities at the University through participation in events run by CSED. Staff in partner institutions also have the opportunity to study for formal qualification at the University at a reduced fee. Specific development needs such as marking and moderation workshops have been arranged in response to issues that have arisen during validation and annual review. JBoS minutes evidenced planning for a 'staff development week' at partner institutions and also that the 'pilot scheme ...whereby tutors were required to apply for approval as a member of University Associate Teaching Staff' was taking place. There was also evidence that points noted by external examiners which required staff development were being picked up and addressed at the relevant JBoS.

137 Students on partnership programmes have access to the University library including electronic provision. There was some evidence that access to electronic resources was not working particularly well in one instance, but, it was also clear that the University was acting to remedy the situation. There was evidence from the JBoS agendas, minutes and associated papers, and from validation documentation and annual monitoring reports that learning resources were being kept under review at partner institutions, and that where specific issues did arise these were addressed and followed up.

138 The audit team identified as good practice the arrangements for the operation of collaboration provision, particularly the work of the central Partnerships Office, which support the sound management of academic standards and the enhancement of quality in the partner institutions. There can be confidence in the University's management of this area of its work.

Section 6: Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

139 The Learning and teaching Committee (LTC) has formal responsibility for ensuring the quality of postgraduate research programmes and the Postgraduate Research Programmes Policy Group (PgrPPG) deals with day-to-day matters such as approval of examiners. In practice, a good deal of operational authority and responsibility is delegated to faculty, school and institute level. Faculties 'may choose to appoint an Associate Dean with specific responsibility for Pgr matters': in fact, at the time of the audit, all four faculties had such a post. Each faculty has a Postgraduate Research Office or equivalent that is responsible for dissemination of information, and for ensuring that University-wide policies inform faculty practice.

140 The UEA Research Degrees: The Code of Practice - 2008, a revised form of which was approved by Senate August 2008, is given in hard copy to all newly registered research students and is available on the Learning and Teaching Quality Office website. Further information is found in faculty handbooks and on faculty research office websites.

The Research environment

141 The research environment at the University is strong as indicated by the Research Assessment Exercise, 2008 results. The University submitted 26 units of assessment and 83 per cent of its eligible staff. Some 90 per cent of the research was rated at 2* or above. There are a number of research centres and institutes, while at school-level, research is organised

into groups, themes or 'projects'. There are regular research seminars and other research-related events that foster collaboration and a sense of community in which postgraduate research (PGR) students work. The University has a policy of ensuring that PGR students are admitted in areas that are represented among those of research strength within the institution.

Selection, admission and induction of students

142 In the QAA Review of research degree programmes, July, 2006 the University was invited to consider 'how admissions requirements (minimum degree class, and English language proficiency) [met] the expectations in Precept 7 of the Code of Practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes, published by QAA' (p. 2). The most recent University Code of Practice governing this area includes a section on requirements for admission which sets out a number of principles and indicates that 'Schools and Institutes are responsible for ensuring that candidates are admitted with an appropriate level of English Language competency in line with University Language Requirements set out in the University prospectus and the Calendar'.

143 The postgraduate prospectus refers to an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score of 6.5 as being a 'preferred qualification' and indicates that potential students should enquire of Schools regarding specific requirements. There is evidence that some Schools do have such specific requirements: The University's Code of Practice indicates that 'The English Language Requirements (as described in the Undergraduate Admission Requirements section of the Calendar) were adopted by Senate in June 2000 as a minimum for postgraduate study'. This entails a minimum IELTS score at 6, but emphasises that this is a minimum and that schools may set higher requirements. The audit team found that there was some lack of clarity regarding English language proficiency requirements for students wishing to study at the University but, that potential applicants would be able to access the relevant information through the schools.

144 The University's Code of Practice indicates that 'each Faculty must have approved admissions procedures'. Four documents, one from each Faculty, were reviewed. The audit team formed the view that the 'admissions policy' document presented for Arts and Humanities was less than fully clear as a general policy for admissions, but related rather to the specific case of selection of students being put forward under the Arts and Humanities Research Council's block grant provision. The document from Social Sciences stated that applicants had to meet the specified entry requirements 'which included 'a good Masters level qualification in a relevant subject area.' Examination of documentation suggested that this stipulation was not observed throughout the faculty.

145 The audit team came to the view that the requirements for admission to research degrees at the University were not clearly spelt out. Specifically, there was inconsistency between the stated University requirements that 'each faculty must have approved admissions procedures' and the documentation provided by Arts and Humanities, and there was evidence of variability in practice at faculty level, in that stated faculty policy was not in accord with school-level documentation. The University is therefore advised to review the policies, procedures and published information relating to the admission of postgraduate research students, to establish clarity of requirement.

Induction

146 Schools are responsible for the induction of PGR students. Students whom the audit team met confirmed that induction had taken place and that it was well structured and directed towards their needs. The faculty handbooks in particular and the faculty research websites more generally provide significant detailed information for students relating to PGR requirements, expectations, responsibilities and roles.

Supervision

147 The University Code of Practice for Research Degrees lays out clear guidelines on the nature and extent of supervision for PGR students and students confirmed that the requirements were met in practice. The students also reported that, while the University set a minimum frequency of supervision for full-time students of once every four months or equivalent, this requirement was always met and was frequently exceeded.

148 The University's Code of Practice sets the maximum number of students for which a member of staff may act as primary supervisor at six, (which may be exceeded only with the prior permission of the Director of Research Degree Programmes). At the time of the audit, the University was engaged in discussion about the maximum number of students to be allowed per supervisor. Arrangements for supervision of students in the event of an extended period of absence on the part of the primary supervisor are clearly spelt out in the University's Code of Practice and were understood by supervisors and students.

149 The University Code of Practice sets out the requirements for the training of PGR supervisors. The audit team noted that 'Developing Best Practice in Research Supervision' was the subject of an all-day training event offered by the Centre for Staff and Educational Development (CSED). The University's Code states that all staff who are new to supervision at the University 'must' attend the appropriate briefing session, and CSED issues a statement to the effect that all staff who are engaged in supervision are 'urged' to attend this training session.

Progress and review arrangements

150 The University Code of Practice stipulates that the first supervisory meeting take place within three weeks of arrival and that within three months (six months for part-time students) there should be agreement on a working title for the thesis, the working objectives of the project and a timetable for completion. PGR students confirmed that they understood these requirements and that they had been discussed at initial supervisory meetings.

151 There is an annual review of PGR student progress that is conducted by the supervisory team and papers from that meeting are lodged with the Faculty Research Office. These are reviewed by the Associate Dean (PGR) who picks up and pursues any issues of concern. The PGRPPG receives faculty-level documentation relating to annual review of PGR students and there is evidence of discussion of issues that arise. The PGRPPG also receives a summary of all external examiners' reports.

152 The process for moving from MPhil to PhD is spelt out in the University's Code of Practice. A review panel, which includes not more than one member of the supervisory team, is responsible for reviewing the documentation and conducting a meeting to assess PhD potential. Advice for students preparing for this panel is available via CSED and/or a DVD. The recommendation of the panel is submitted to the school board or to the Institute. PGR students confirmed that they understood the nature and purpose of annual review and the requirements for upgrade in status from MPhil to PhD.

153 The University keeps track of its completion rates for PGR, which it has benchmarked against national averages. There is evidence of discussion of these data at the PGRPPG.

Development of research and other skills

154 The 'Transitions Programme', funded through Roberts money, is the principal means by which PGR students receive training for research and other skills and is run by the CSED. In addition, at the time of the audit, there had been recent discussion about providing faculty-based research and skills training provision that was more discipline-specific to supplement the generic training offered centrally. The Transitions programme is extensive and PGR students clearly have

access to a significant range of research and other skills development opportunities. There was good evidence from the minutes of the PGRPPG, which includes student representation, that the Transitions programme is monitored and that enhancement opportunities are taken. An annual report on the Transitions programme is received by the learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) and that report again indicates that the programme is self-evaluative and aware of enhancement issues. Students are also alerted to relevant external opportunities for development of research and other skills. There is a 'Transitions programme steering group', which reports in to PGRPPG. Students spoke very positively about the training arrangements provided via Transitions. The audit team identified as good practice the provision through the Transitions initiative of an extensive and student-focused training programme for postgraduate research students which developed a range of skills directly relevant to the students' programmes of study, and also prepared them for employment.

Feedback mechanisms

155 In 2008, the University took part in the PRES survey and noted that participation was 'disappointingly low'. Nonetheless, there is clear evidence that the University has made use of the limited information that PRES delivered in 2008. There was clear evidence too that preparations for PRES 2009 were put in place. It is clear that the University pays significant attention to the NSS outcomes and the documented and evidenced indications are that PRES similarly will be discussed at appropriate fora within the University structures and inform practice.

156 The University also collects feedback via the annual review process, including the review of the Transitions programme, the results of which are discussed at PGRPPG, which reports to LTC. Student participation on PGRPPG secures continuous and immediate feedback from students. Examiners' reports are reviewed by the Director of Research Degree Programmes and a summary goes to PGRPPG and through to LTC. There is clear evidence that this happens regularly and that attention is paid to matters of institutional significance, including those with enhancement potential.

Assessment

157 Assessment and learning outcomes of research degrees at the University are in alignment with the FHEQ. The expectations and requirements in relation to assessment are communicated to PGR students in a number of ways including via a training session provided by CSED as part of the Transitions programme. PGR students are examined by a minimum of two examiners, at least one of whom will be external to the University. Where the candidate is a member of staff, all examiners are external. Examiner nominations are approved by the Director of Research Degree Programmes. The audit team found that the arrangements for assessment were rigorous and operating as intended.

Complaints and appeals

158 The system in place for students to lodge complaints and/or to request a change of supervisor is clearly spelt out in the University Code of Practice. Students confirmed that they were aware of these mechanisms and that they could, if they wished, request a change of supervisor. The system for appeals is also clearly spelt out in the University Code of Practice.

159 The audit team found that, overall, the University's arrangements for its postgraduate research students were sound, were operating as intended and met the expectations of the *Code of practice, Section : Postgraduate research programmes*.

Section 7: Published information

160 The Publications Office within the Marketing and Communications Division is responsible for the publication of undergraduate and postgraduate prospectuses and other corporate material. The accuracy of the information is checked at a number of stages and there is a formal sign-off from the authorised editor. The student written submission reported that the information received prior to students commencing their studies was a 'fair reflection' of their actual experience at University. International students praised the information they received before their arrival.

161 At the time of the audit, the University had recently set up a web steering group reporting to the ISSC with a remit to provide strategic direction for web development. Its terms of reference include 'policy relating to design, accessibility, content and structures' across the extranet and intranet, the Portal and other UEA hosted sites'. Its membership includes one member of each faculty so that decisions can be shared between central and faculty management.

162 Web content is contained in the Content Management System. The accuracy of the content of all University websites is governed by the principle that 'operational units are responsible for ensuring that 'content initiation, editing and approval were handled effectively'. Faculties are responsible for developing appropriate safeguards for course material produced by schools. Responsibility for supervision of web material lies with the faculty admissions offices and postgraduate research offices; they carry out an annual review of the accuracy of the web pages and compare them with print copies. School staff approve course entries. The University plans to appoint web managers in faculties to work with associate deans on the accuracy of information.

163 In terms of collaborative provision, as part of the validation process the Partnership Office provides guidance on publicity protocols, aligned to the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*. Publicity materials are sent to the University for approval and the relevant joint committee monitors them for accuracy.

164 Students have access to course and support information, not only through websites and the intranet, but also through school, and/or faculty handbooks in hard or electronic format. Handbooks are checked by relevant members of academic staff and by the school director (LTQ). The SWS drew attention to variety of practice between faculties in the way that they offered information to students. In particular, there is a range of electronic means that affect students studying interdisciplinary courses across schools. In the SWS, some postgraduate students reported errors and inconsistencies, but the postgraduate research students whom the audit team met confirmed that the information that they received was accurate and they had received handbooks. Taught students whom the audit team met confirmed the overall accuracy of information, but referred to a range of means of dissemination. Not all students had received a handbook and some sought information from school websites. The response from students supports the SWS view that information provided to students, though generally accurate, does not adhere to any defined format. The team found that there was no systematic and uniform approach to compiling and monitoring course information available to students and considers it advisable that the University specifies the limits of acceptable variability for the provision of information provided to students, including the content of handbooks.

165 The audit team found that, overall, reliance could reasonably be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the University published about the quality of its educational provision and the academic standards of its awards.

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

Tel 01425 557000

Fax 01452 557070

Email comms@qaa.ac.uk

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