QAA

University of Surrey

March 2009

Annex to the report

Contents

Introduction

A team of auditors from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visited the University of Surrey (the University) from 2 to 6 March 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.

Outcomes of the Institutional audit

As a result of its investigations, the audit team's view of the University of Surrey 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 has achieved much in taking forward its quality enhancement agenda; not least the significant cultural change towards an increased focus on the quality of student-centred learning which was seen as a feature of good practice. Nonetheless, the slow progress within some faculties led the team to recommend as desirable that the University expedites its intentions regarding the role of faculties in quality enhancement.

Postgraduate research students

The University's arrangements for its postgraduate research students meet the expectations of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards higher education (Code of practice), Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*, published by QAA, and are operating as intended. The audit team considered that the effectiveness of the quality procedures and strength of support for postgraduate research students to be a feature of good practice.

Published information

Reliance can reasonably be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the University publishes about the quality of its educational provision and the standards of its awards.

Features of good practice

The audit team identified the following areas as being good practice:

- identifying the need and initiating an institutional drive for cultural change towards an increased focus on the quality of student-centred learning and teaching (paragraphs 117, 148, 184)

- the University's commitment to, and excellence, in professional training (paragraph 123, 127)

- the integrated approach to the resource planning and management of library resources in meeting student needs (paragraphs 128, 129, 134)

- the comprehensive nature of student induction, including the Big Guide and Project Welcome (paragraphs 151, 249)

- the effectiveness of quality procedures and strength of support for postgraduate research students (paragraph 239, 241, 247).

Recommendations for action

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

It would be desirable for the University to:

- articulate more clearly the role of faculties in the management of quality and standards (paragraphs 34, 52, 57)

- encourage further consideration of how the University defines academic standards for its own awards, in order to engage the whole institution in articulating and applying clearly and consistently expectations of student achievement (paragraphs 45, 80, 82, 89, 93, 94)

- expedite the University's intentions regarding the role of faculties in quality enhancement (paragraphs 57, 181)

- give further consideration to the University's approach to the monitoring and review of collaborative provision, particularly with respect to partnership-level quality assurance mechanisms to enhance effective University oversight (paragraphs 93, 197, 202)

- amend the annual programme monitoring template to elicit evaluation about delivery in non-associated partner institutions (paragraphs 119, 187).

Section 1: Introduction and background

The institution and mission

1   The University can trace its origins back to a late nineteenth century concern to provide greater access to further and higher education for the 'poorer inhabitants' of London. The forerunner of the University, the Battersea Polytechnic Institute, was founded in 1891 and admitted its first students in 1894. From about 1920 it began concentrating on science and technology and its students studied for degrees from the University of London. A Royal Charter was granted in 1966, which enabled the institution to award its own degrees, and it became the University of Surrey. It subsequently moved from London to its present location in Guildford, becoming fully established on its new campus in 1970.

2   Following a 20-year history of collaborative arrangements with the Roehampton Institute London, in January 2000, under the umbrella of the University's amended Charter and Statutes, the University federated with the Roehampton Institute to become the Federal University of Surrey. The federation was dissolved when, in August 2004, Roehampton Institute was granted a university title in its own right.

3   At the 1 December 2008, 13,479 students were registered directly with the University, of whom undergraduates comprised 8,192 full-time and 498 part-time students, and postgraduates comprised 2,316 full-time and 2,473 part-time students; 15 per cent of undergraduates and 45 per cent of postgraduates were from outside the United Kingdom (UK). In addition, there were 380 students taking modules as part of the Open Studies programme, 582 students taking post-registration Health and Social Care modules, and 3,093 students registered for University awards at the Associated Institutions (AIs), that is, institutions offering higher education and/or training with which the University has a relationship based upon external programme validation, or accreditation. At 1 August 2008, the University was employing 2,289 staff.

4   The Briefing Paper noted that the University aims to achieve the highest international standards in all of its areas of research, both basic and applied. A significant feature of the University is the Surrey Research Park which currently accommodates over 100 companies employing 2,500 staff engaged in research and development activities, many of which relate closely to the work of the University's departments.

5   The University has a significant range of collaborative arrangements which are changing and developing. These are discussed further in Section 5.

6   The University's strategic vision is set out in the Strategy 2007-17. This 10-year strategy aims for the University 'to work in partnership with industry, commerce, the professions and other institutions for the benefit of our world', to be achieved 'by providing scholarship attuned to the particular needs of society, leading edge research, and a rich and varied learning environment, all of which will meet the needs of our students and other stakeholders'.

7   The Strategy has six themes which embody the University's aims and values: quality, international impact, distinctiveness, collegiality, professionalism, and sustainability. Under the theme of quality, the Strategy states that in comparison with its aspirations, the University has 'underperformed in external assessments of quality' and in the National Student Survey (NSS) and, therefore, it has begun 'a programme of cultural change to develop a deeper shared understanding of the characteristics of excellent learning and teaching'. For each of the six themes the Strategy identifies measures of success which are used by the University's Planning Department as key performance indicators to evaluate progress towards achievement of the strategic objectives.

8   The Strategy also lists eight key strategic challenges, among which are the challenges of improving the student experience, increasing the attractiveness of the teaching programmes through reviewing and extending the portfolio, growing the University's activity overseas, and developing the distinctiveness that the many and various links with the workplace provide.

9   The University Strategy is supported by a number of specific strategies including ones for the student experience, internationalisation, and learning and teaching. However, a focus on eliminating weaknesses in the University's learning and teaching performance predated the cultural change envisaged in the Strategy. Since September 2005 the University has been engaged in a wide-ranging process of reform that focused particularly on assessment of students and academic feedback: the Academic Reform Programme was eventually mainstreamed within the Learning and Teaching Strategy.

The information base for the audit

10   The University provided the audit team with a Briefing Paper outlining its approach to managing quality and standards, supporting information as cited in the Briefing Paper, and sets of documents relating to the audit trails selected by the team.

11   The Students' Union produced a written submission (SWS) covering the accuracy of the information provided for students, the experience of students as learners and students' involvement in quality processes. The SWS was informed by existing statistics and publications including the NSS, supplemented with a series of small focus groups, which were held during October 2008 in conjunction with the University's Market Research Department.

12   The audit team was given full access to the University's internal documents on the intranet. It also met groups of staff and students, according to a programme agreed with the University.

13   In addition, the audit team had access to:

●   the report of the previous Institutional audit (December 2004)

●   reports of reviews by QAA at the subject level since the previous Institutional audit

●   reports produced by other relevant bodies (for example professional, statutory and regulatory bodies)

●   the institution's internal documents

●   the notes of audit team meetings with staff and students.

Developments since the last audit

14   The period since 2004 has featured major changes in structure and senior management, and a new corporate student record system was introduced, designed to improve processes, facilitate developments in planning and management information and enable the University to monitor and reduce diversity of practice.

University restructuring

15   In 2006-07, the University undertook a major restructuring exercise, reorganising the academic activities of the University into four faculties replacing the school structure that had been in place since 1997. The four new faculties were the Faculty of Arts and Human Sciences, the Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences, the Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences, and the Faculty of Management and Law.

16   The new faculty structure is seen as a means of taking forward the University's strategic goals. With an eye to the competitive market within which the University operates, the Briefing Paper described the intention to create a structure which would have 'flexibility and financial resilience' and would 'make the University more competitive' and able to respond effectively to change in the UK higher education environment. It was also designed 'to allow a reduction in support costs' and 'reduce variability in ways of working'. In moving from schools to faculties, the University was able to devolve authority especially for the allocation of resources.

New student administration system

17   The University has made a major investment in a new student record system. An implementation project began in 2004 with a major process review. The admissions part of the system went live for the academic year 2005-06, and student registration went live from 2006-07. The system has been used for programme and module-level processing, including module selection and assessment in the current academic year, 2008-09.

Senior management

18   There have been a number of changes in the University's senior management team over the past four years. A new Vice-Chancellor took up his appointment in July 2005. More recently the University has moved away from having part-time pro-vice-chancellors to full-time deputy vice-chancellors. There is now a Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor (since August 2008), a Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Academic Development (since September 2008) and a Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Enterprise (since February 2009). After a period of transition until July 2009, the pro-vice-chancellors' posts will come to an end.

Recommendations made in the previous audit report

19   The report of QAA's previous audit of the University in 2004 included an overall judgement of broad confidence in the institution's management of the quality of its academic programmes and the security of its awards, and the report recognised three features of good practice. The outcome was qualified by seven recommendations, three of which were considered to be 'advisable', the other four being 'desirable'. The University submitted action plans in response to the findings of the 2004 audit and continues to develop themes raised in the audit report.

20   One of the advisable recommendations concerned the variability in the algorithm for calculating degree classifications and the lack of standardisation in the postgraduate Pass mark. In addition to the regulatory changes that have eliminated variability, the use of a single corporate student record system, supported by the faculty structure, has provided the University with the means to monitor the implementation of this regulatory standardisation which will be tested in the current academic year.

21   The second advisable recommendation concerned the strategic oversight of enhancement. The University produced a Quality Enhancement Strategy in May 2006 which was later incorporated within the Academic Standards Guidelines (see paragraphs 174ff).

22   The third advisable recommendation was concerned with the University's quality assurance procedures for addressing the particular requirements of distributed and distance learning. The University has responded by embedding these considerations within existing quality assurance processes (see paragraph 118).

23   The first desirable recommendation concerned the development of school learning and teaching strategies, now faculty learning and teaching strategies (see paragraphs 95 and 180). The other desirable recommendations concerned the wider adoption of peer review systems, monitoring the provision of training and support for postgraduate teachers and demonstrators, the University's response to which was viewed positively by the current audit team (see paragraph 239), and the enhancement and development of programme specifications. The University was slow to adopt programme specifications, and at the time of the previous audit not all programmes had programme specifications. This has now been remedied, although it is the audit team's view that the University should give further consideration to how these are used (see paragraph 45).

Responses to other external reviews

24   Since the previous audit, the University has undergone two Major Reviews of NHS-funded healthcare provision, both of which concluded with a judgment of confidence in academic and practitioner standards, and commended learning and teaching, progression and the use of learning resources, and the University has responded to the recommendations in the reports.

25   QAA's 2006 Review of research degree programmes concluded that the institution's ability to secure and enhance the quality and standards of its research degree programme provision was appropriate and satisfactory. The University responded to the report's recommendation that it consider strengthening its student feedback mechanisms (see paragraphs 206 and 242).

The institution's framework for managing academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities

26   As noted earlier in paragraph 9, the University's Strategy 2007-17 is supported by a range of policy and strategy documents, including the Learning and Teaching Strategy, the Staff Strategy and the Equal Opportunities Policy, which are now being drawn together under the Student Experience Strategy, approved by Senate in July 2008.

27   Responsibility for the assurance of quality and academic standards rests with Senate, the University's highest academic authority with quality assurance functions covering approval of institutional academic policy, approval of General Regulations, corporate responsibility for programme approval and control over the award of degrees and other qualifications. Senate, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, is supported strategically and operationally by a system of University and faculty committees, key academic personnel, and specialist academic and administrative support units. It devolves considerable responsibility to standing committees, while maintaining an overview of their activities through the receipt of reports submitted at least on an annual basis.

28   Executive Board, also chaired by the Vice-Chancellor and comprising members of the senior executive team, has responsibility for high-level strategic planning and resource allocation. In relation to quality assurance, Executive Board is responsible for advising the Vice-Chancellor on the academic and resource implications of all new academic initiatives, including new course proposals, in the context of the University's and faculties' academic and financial plans. In this regard, Executive Board receives recommendations from the Operations and Planning Committee, which has responsibility for overseeing the University's Strategic Plan and the Annual

Planning Committee, was still subject to finalisation and approval. The General Regulations require that there be a board of studies and board of examiners for each programme or cognate group of programmes. Additionally, the Briefing Paper indicated that following restructuring all faculties have a Learning and Teaching Committee (FLTC), chaired by the associate dean (learning and teaching), and responsible for the oversight and coordination of quality assurance management, and teaching and learning development and enhancement; and a postgraduate research committee, or equivalent, to oversee provision for research degree students and their progression.

34   Documentary information provided to the audit team confirmed that these faculty structures were in place. However, a number of factors demonstrated a lack of clarity as to the role of faculties in the management of quality and standards. The Academic Standards Guidelines state that the 'requirement for each faculty to submit an annual report to Senate from its Academic Board had been suspended and is under review' although 'if they wish, faculties may continue to produce an annual report'. When asked about annual faculty reports, staff could not identify any reports that might fit that description, although they suggested that annual programme reports might be considered at faculty level. Further, the University's common design for terms of reference for faculty learning and teaching committees, which provide for the exercise of certain quality assurance functions, was still in draft stage at the date of the audit visit. In the light of these factors, the audit team concluded that it would be desirable for the University to articulate more clearly the role of faculties in the management of quality and standards.

35   The University's framework for quality management also encompasses key academic personnel. As noted in paragraph 18, at the time of the audit the University was in the process of changing the composition of the senior management team. The Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor's responsibilities include the overall management of the four faculties with the deans of faculty reporting to him. Institutional responsibility for quality assurance and learning and teaching enhancement policy and strategy was being transferred to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Development). The Dean of Students reports to the Registrar and is responsible for academic appeals and complaints procedures, provides independent oversight of support services and is a member of the key committees of Senate. The Deputy Dean of Students chairs the Academic Misconduct Steering Group, reports annually to ASQAC and advises on relevant policy and procedures. The Dean of International Relations is responsible for international strategy.

36   At faculty level, deans of faculty are responsible to the Vice-Chancellor, through the Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor, for management of the faculties. Each faculty has an associate dean (learning and teaching) and an associate dean (research and enterprise), both roles having been created since restructuring. The creation of the role of associate dean (learning and teaching) was a key element of the University's strategy to achieve cultural change by according a greater priority to learning and teaching (see paragraph 7). Hence, associate deans (learning and teaching) are charged with ensuring that the faculty learning and teaching strategy aligns with the University Strategy. They have overall responsibility within the faculty for overseeing the operation of all quality assurance procedures within a common framework laid down by the University and chair the FLTC. Faculty registrars, who are line managed by deans but also have a reporting line to the University Registrar, are responsible for student administration in each faculty. Directors of studies are responsible to the dean for individual programmes or groups of programmes, and module coordinators to directors of studies for individual modules. Postgraduate research directors, or their equivalent, are responsible to deans or associate deans for the management of arrangements for research students.

37   The University's quality management system is supported by the Quality Support Section within the Registry. Working with the Assessment and Awards Section of the Registry, this unit manages the programme approval and review processes, the appointment of external examiners and the processing of their reports. It provides administrative support for the key Senate committees responsible for quality assurance and learning and teaching, and to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Development) for the monitoring and review of the Learning and Teaching

Strategy, and is responsible for the maintenance and development of the Academic Standards Guidelines and General Regulations.

38   The University's framework for managing academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities is supported by a framework of regulation and guidance described in the Academic Standards Guidelines and the Policy Statement on Quality and Academic Standards. For the University's AIs the framework is set out in the Quality Assurance Handbook for the Associated Institutions (see paragraph 191).

39   Notwithstanding its reservations regarding clarity in the articulation of the role of faculties in the management of quality and standards, the audit team formed the view that the University's framework for managing standards and the quality of learning opportunities was effective and fit for purpose.

Section 2: Institutional management of academic standards

40   As noted in paragraph 38 above, the University's framework for managing academic standards is supported by a framework of regulation and guidance described in the Academic Standards Guidelines and the Policy Statement on Quality and Academic Standards. The audit team found the Academic Standard Guidelines, reviewed and published annually in the University Calendar, to be comprehensive, including procedures for approval, revision, monitoring and review of programmes, appointment of external examiners, conduct of examinations and other forms of assessment for taught programmes. The Policy Statement on Quality and Academic Standards provided helpful guiding principles for the procedures and practices for awards made in the University's name.

Approval, monitoring and review of award standards

Programme approval

41   New programmes developed and initially approved in faculties must obtain approval from the Faculty Policy and Strategy Committee and outline approval from the Operations and Planning Committee (OPC) and Executive Board (following consideration by an Academic Scrutiny Group (ASG), before being endorsed by Senate. Particular attention is given at outline approval stage to the proposed market, congruence with the faculty academic plan, alignment with the strategic direction of the University, compliance with the University's credit and qualification frameworks, impact on other programmes within the University, resource implications and associated business plans. Consideration by ASG, since the end of 2008, includes discussion with programme proposers. The membership of Group comprises associate deans (Learning and Teaching), representatives from Marketing and Communication, the Planning Office and Library.

42   Once outline approval is given, full proposals are developed by faculties and submitted to the Validation Board which establishes a validation panel to consider proposals including a programme specification using the University template. The panel is chaired by a member of the Validation Board and includes two University academic members external to the proposing faculty with at least one external to the University, which may be a professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) representative. The audit team was able to confirm that, on the evidence available to it, panels were configured appropriately, although it noted that the Students' Union Vice-President, Education, while invited, had yet to attend a panel.

43   The Validation Board approves programmes following a report from the validation panel, as outlined in the Academic Standards Guidelines. The Validation Board can set conditions which must be met in a specified timescale before validation approval is confirmed, and/or set recommendations which the panel would wish the programme team to consider without a specified timescale. The chair of each panel is responsible for ensuring that any conditions have

been met. Recommendations are responded to either before a programme starts or through Annual Programme Review (APR) if these are longer term in nature. The audit team saw evidence of responses to recommendations from validation panels, both directly to the Validation Board and through APR.

44   Through examination of committee minutes and papers, the audit team were able to verify that the programme approval process which took place, followed University guidelines and was a robust, critically evaluative procedure. It determined that for collaborative provision the procedure was similar with a draft Memorandum of Agreement required at the outline approval stage, developed to a full Memorandum for scrutiny by the validation panel (see paragraph 186).

45   While the programme specifications seen by the audit team were somewhat variable in how learning outcomes were expressed, the team noted that the University had responded to the previous Institutional audit report by including training for academic staff on the use of learning outcomes through the compulsory Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice for newly appointed academic staff; and the Guide to Good Practice in Learning and Teaching produced by the Centre for Learning Development (CLD). Despite this, the University noted in the Briefing Paper that presentation of learning outcomes, while improving considerably, remains an issue and continues to feature in validation and periodic review conditions or recommendations: a view with which the team would concur. The team examined the Guide to Good Practice in Learning and Teaching and found the Learning outcomes section, while helpful, did not include how the learning outcomes should be linked to the assessment criteria and how this related to different levels of learning. The team also saw little evidence of mapping of programme aims to programme learning outcomes (and hence to module learning outcomes), assignment learning outcomes or assessment criteria. As learning outcomes describe the knowledge and competencies that students are expected to achieve, and thus put the student at the centre of the learning process, the team would encourage the University in its progress in moving to a more student-centred expression of learning on programmes of study, and in doing so engage the whole institution in articulating and applying clearly and consistently expectations of student achievement. This is not to detract from the excellent examples of programme specifications seen by the team which included clear referencing to *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), subject benchmarks and PSRB requirements.

46   The Validation Board provides an annual report to Senate which draws to the attention of the University generic and/or recurrent issues arising from validation which might have broader institutional implications. The audit team was able to confirm this process through Senate minutes.

47   Overall, the process of validation was viewed by the audit team to be robust with a consistently high level of scrutiny recorded within the validation panel reports.

Programme periodic review

48   Programmes are normally approved for five years after which they are subject to periodic programme review. This process is based on that for validation with a focus on self-critical reflection and evaluation with reference to APRs, external examiner reports and, as appropriate, reports of PSRBs. The review also includes a meeting with a selection of students currently registered on the programme(s) to ascertain their perceptions of the quality of their educational experience. As with programme validation, the review panel chair is responsible for seeing any conditions are met and recommendations are responded to either immediately or through the APR process.

49   The audit team examined examples of periodic review documentation, covering from one to several programmes, including interim review and the reports to the Validation Board, and concluded that the reviews were comprehensive, covering recruitment, programme structure and content, teaching, learning and assessment, staffing, student evaluations and conclusions as

described in the Academic Standards Guidelines. Overall, the team considered the periodic review process to be a thorough procedure, with appropriate externality, that makes an effective contribution to the University's management of its academic standards.

Annual Programme Review

50   The University requires that each programme (or group of cognate programmes) is reviewed annually by the faculty board of studies using a set of standard elements including: action points from previous APRs; student recruitment data; student progression and awards data; graduate employment statistics (UK and European Union (EU) students only); changes to the programme(s); external examiner reports and subsequent actions taken; evaluation and feedback from students and the actions taken in response; and issues raised through previous validations, periodic reviews, or PSRB accreditation. APR reports are prepared by the director of studies or a small group of staff and submitted to the Quality Support Section (QSS), after sign-off with an action plan at the appropriate board of studies. QSS then prepares and presents an annual monitoring report to the Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Committee (ASQAC), in which any general trends are identified for consideration at institutional level.

51   Recognising some variability in the presentation and quality of APR reports, (despite the full specification existing in the Academic Standards Guidelines), the University introduced in 2005 a common pro forma and guidance notes. The template now includes an action plan and an identification of progress against the previous year's plan, which the audit team heard had helped staff preparing APR reports. From 2008-09, the APR template also includes a section on quality enhancement which will provide a means of identifying good practice in learning and teaching, and disseminating these within the faculty and across the institution through the monitoring report to ASQAC.

52   The audit team examined a number of APR reports and monitoring reports through the audit trails and, while there seems to be a clear route for consideration of APR reports at institutional level, the team was less clear about where APRs were discussed more widely at faculty level, other than at boards of studies, and the role of key faculty personnel such as the dean and associate dean (learning and teaching) in these processes. While accepting that faculties are still being established fully, the team recommend as desirable that the University articulate more clearly the role of faculties in the APR process and hence in the management of quality and standards.

53   The audit team noted that the overview report of APRs for 2007-08 to ASQAC indicated that most APR reports included data analysis, but not all a narrative on student recruitment, progression and awards, and the University is encouraged to continue in its work to ensure all programmes use such data and give an evaluation on that data in their annual review.

54   In light of the introduction of the single corporate student database, the University is considering linking APR with the academic planning process. The APR template has been revised with effect from September 2008, to draw out specific issues that may have a faculty and University dimension, for example, resources. Faculties will then use the APRs to identify issues that should be discussed during the central planning meetings. Further opportunities for aligning APR with planning will be reviewed once the faculty structures are fully embedded, and module-level processing using the corporate student database has been implemented in 2008-09. The audit team support the changes to the APR reporting template and the proposed link to the planning process.

55   Changes to programmes can be made within a validation period, through the 'modifications to programmes' and 'modifications to modules' templates. For changes to a current course which might be '…detrimental to the interests of a continuing student', formal agreement with the student cohort affected is needed. Where a change relates to assessment the external examiner has to be consulted and the board of studies must give approval. Where major

changes are planned such as discontinuing a course or change in mode of study, approval is needed from Executive Board and Senate.

56   Additionally, since 1994, ASQAC has conducted annual visits to faculties (formerly to schools and departments) to review quality management and enhancement processes at faculty level and to explore particular identified themes, such as research degree management, the implementation of personal development planning (PDP) and response to National Student Survey (NSS) results. All faculties were visited during 2008, with summary overview reports prepared and considered by ASQAC and senior University managers. Specifically, these visits have been to monitor how each faculty now manages quality assurance and the effectiveness of the committee structure; monitor the implementation of faculty learning and teaching strategies and associated quality enhancement activities; raise awareness of the Institutional audit; ensure that faculties have quality assurance procedures in place which are consistent with the University's Academic Standards Guidelines; identify examples of good practice for dissemination to other faculties or areas for further development either locally or institutionally; and explore other themes identified. These themes have included research degree management, implementation of PDP, professional training arrangements, implementation of the Academic Reform Programme, and faculty responses to NSS results.

57   The audit team found no guidelines on the conduct of ASQAC visits in the Academic Standards Guidelines or elsewhere. Through examination of the visit documentation and reports, the team considered that the visits provided a comprehensive review of procedures and that faculties provided detailed and full responses to be monitored through APR. The overview reports of the faculty visits, reported to ASQAC, indicated common issues of feedback times, timeliness of APR, and student attendance and representation at meetings. The team noted, however, that the visits continued to sample subdivisions of the faculty, that is, schools and departments, rather than the faculty as a single entity. This suggests that there has been limited progress towards integration of the structure and procedures within faculties for managing academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement. The team would encourage the University to define and implement the role of the faculty in the management of academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement.

58   Notwithstanding the need for a more clearly articulated role for faculties, the audit team found the approval, monitoring and review processes for programmes to be robust and made a significant contribution to securing the academic standards of awards.

External examiners

59   In the Briefing Paper, the University stated that its arrangements for external examining are well documented in its General Regulations, the 'Guidelines for the Conduct of Examinations and other forms of Assessment for Taught Programmes', and 'Notes of Guidance for External Examiners', and that these arrangements align fully with the intentions of the relevant section of the *Code of practice*. The audit team concurred that the Regulations and Academic Standards Guidelines were clear; however, it identified instances of inconsistency with other documents and practice. For example, an ASQAC audit visit recommended that the external examiners attend at level 2, level 3 and M-level boards of examiners, whereas the Regulations state that each external examiner 'will normally attend meetings of the Board of Examiners at which final examination results are to be considered and recommendations for awards determined', and gives details of arrangements for those who cannot attend.

60   Procedures for nomination of external examiners are described in the Regulations for External Examining and the Guidelines for Academic Standards. Following nomination by the board of studies, the Student Progress and Assessment Board (Taught) (SPAB(T)), has delegated authority to appoint external examiners. The audit team examined SPAB(T) minutes and confirmed that external examiners for both on-campus and Associated Institutions (AIs) programmes were appropriately approved by this Board.

61   The University provides an annual induction event for newly appointed external examiners, followed by subject induction. Faculties are expected to provide alternative induction arrangements for examiners who are unable to attend the centrally organised event. The University also provides a website for external examiners which includes links to QAA's Academic Infrastructure. The audit team saw reporting of the induction event in 2008 to ASQAC, which indicated that those external examiners who attended found worthwhile.

62   External examiner reports are submitted on a standard template to the QSS, and then forwarded to the dean of faculty along with a letter from the Assistant Registrar indicating any concerns. Reports are considered by the director of studies and the board of studies who agree an action plan. External examiners reports are presented to boards of studies, either in their original or summarised form as part of the APR process, and are thus available to student representatives. The student representatives that met with the audit team were not aware of seeing such reports, although a former representative confirmed that they had received oral feedback about them. The team noted a number of recommendations from the ASQAC visits relating to student access to external examiner reports, including that external examiner reports should not be considered under reserved business, but seen by the students. A similar view was expressed by the staff with whom the team met. The Academic Standards Guidelines, however, do not require external examiner reports to be made available to students: they 'may, if faculties wish, be considered in summary form by the Board of Studies and Boards may choose to consider sensitive issues concerning named members of staff or students under reserved business'. The team encourages the University to ensure that in a changing environment the Academic Standards Guidelines clearly reflect practice required by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) with regard to access to external examiner reports, and that all guidance for examiners is implemented consistently across the institution.

63   The audit team saw evidence through the audit trails of detailed consideration of external examiners' reports at boards of study and in annual and periodic review processes. From 2008-09 the external examiner's annual report form has been revised to include comments on assessment methods, quality enhancement, good practice and comments on previous reports. In part, these changes are to improve the link between quality assurance and enhancement and help identify areas of best practice in learning and teaching that are worthy of dissemination across the University.

64   An overview report of external examining reports for both on-campus and collaborative programmes within the AIs is prepared by QSS and presented to ASQAC annually. The reports provide a summary of recurrent themes and highlight any issues requiring consideration of the regulatory, guidance and procedural frameworks. The audit team viewed two such reports and noted the institutional-wide positive comments regarding academic standards, moderation processes and general examination board processes with some suggestions for improvements. The team considered, however, that the reports could be more effectively used to contribute to quality enhancement within the University by indicating the detail of individual subject issues, including good practice. For example, the team heard that some subjects in the Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences send the external examiner a copy of the APR, which has specific sections for external examiner comments and action plans from these comments, as a mechanism of closing the loop.

65   Overall, the audit team formed the view that the role of external examiners in securing the standards of University awards was effective; however, the University needs to ensure consistency between the Academic Standards Guidelines and expectations of implementation.

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

66   In the Briefing Paper the University indicated that it had engaged fully with the Academic Infrastructure. It reviewed its alignment with the FHEQ in 2003 and believes that it continues to meet the expectations of the framework. Award descriptors are issued to validation and review panels, and the articulation between programme learning outcomes and the descriptors is a key element of the approval and review process. The FHEQ descriptors are outlined in the Academic Standards Guidelines, and the audit team found evidence of appropriate engagement with the FHEQ across the University, including clear reference to its consideration in validation and periodic review procedures, a requirement that external examiners comment specifically on the alignment with external benchmarks, including the FHEQ, and consideration of the recent amendments to the FHEQ. Due cognisance has been taken of the Burgess Report in 2007 and appropriate changes to the University credit framework made through ASQAC.

67   The University stated that it is confident it is aligned with the expectations of the *Code of practice*. Sections of the *Code* are discussed at ASQC, with the precepts and guidance informing the University's Academic Standards Guidelines and Regulations. An extensive mapping exercise was undertaken in 2004, and the audit team saw evidence of how this has been reviewed recently and how subsequent revisions to the *Code* have also been brought to the attention of ASQAC, and what actions have resulted; for example, the mapping of the revised *Section 6: Assessment of students* in February 2008, which captured the developments in relation to guidance on formative feedback, assessment criteria and timescales for the return of assessed work; and the recent changes made to the academic appeals procedures in the light of amendments to the *Code, Section 5: Academic appeals and student complaints on academic matters*.

68   While the audit team saw evidence in ASQAC and the University Learning and Teaching Committee (ULTC) minutes and papers of recent engagement with updated sections of the *Code of practice* as described above, the team was less clear on how these changes were communicated to academic staff in faculties and schools.

69   The use of subject and Foundation Degree benchmark statements is firmly established within the University's programme approval and periodic review procedures. Documentation for programme approval is expected to demonstrate how a programme relates to the appropriate benchmark statements(s) and/or other reference points such as PSRB standards. The University expects faculties to ensure that external examiners are aware of, and have copies of the appropriate statements, and a link to the statements is also provided on the University's web page for external examiners. The external examiner's report form asks external examiners specifically to comment on the 'congruence of the award/programme with external standards established elsewhere in the HE Sector (eg, FHEQ, benchmark statement(s), comparable programmes in other HE institutions)'. The audit team examined a number of validation and periodic review documents and found mapping of the benchmark outcomes to each programme. While there was variability in how the information was presented and in the detail of the mapping, it was clear that the University engaged appropriately with benchmark statements. External examiner reports also confirmed congruence of programmes with benchmark statements.

70   As noted in paragraph 45 above, programme specifications are scrutinised at validation and periodic review, and a number of conditions or recommendations related to these documents and the articulation between learning outcomes and assessment have been reported. It also indicated that the publication of programme specifications has been further delayed beyond the original deadline of July 2005, due to the implementation of the student records system, but that at the time of the audit all University programmes have a specification in addition to programme regulations. From the evidence available to it, the audit team concur with the University's view that there is still significant variability in the quality of information included in the programme specifications. While the team did see some excellent programme specifications, such as the Master's in Teaching, the University is encouraged to proactively support staff in the development of their understanding and ability to construct student-centred learning outcomes.

71   The audit team found that staff whom they met thought that programme specifications were unsuitable for students and that the information was already available to students from programme handbooks. On examination of a selection of programme handbooks, the team did not agree with this opinion as the handbooks did not include information on what the students would achieve on completing the programme, or an informative overview of the course in terms of learning, or a mapping of course aims to course learning outcomes to module learning outcomes and assessments and hence assessment criteria. The team encourages the University to make programme specifications available to staff and students as standard and not on request.

72   The Briefing Paper indicated that a large proportion of programmes are accredited by PSRBs and that while most validations take place separately, some are integral to the University validation and periodic review processes (see paragraph 42). The audit team saw evidence of ASQAC maintaining institutional oversight of PSRB activity, including the consideration of PSRB reports and discussion of a request from a PSRB for changes to assessment regulations.

73   The University uses appropriate external input in relation to programme design, approval and review in setting and maintaining academic standards (see, for example, paragraph 42). In cases of periodic review where a group of cognate programmes are considered, the audit team identified a number of relevant external experts being used.

74   The University stated in the Briefing Paper that it does not use the *Standards and Guideline for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*, the European Qualifications Framework or the Dublin descriptors as reference points; however; it believes that, through engagement with the Academic Infrastructure, it meets the expectations of these documents. Through engagement with EUA/ENQA conferences and professional networks such as HEURO, the University keeps up-to-date with European developments. The University currently provides a student transcript which meets the higher education progress file requirements and intends to develop diploma supplements within the next two years as the student records system is implemented fully.

75   The audit team found the University to be engaging with the Academic Infrastructure in an appropriate and effective manner in setting and explicating award standards.

Assessment policies and regulations

76   In response to the previous audit, the University instigated a range of regulatory and process developments in relation to assessment including clearer specification of compensation rules; specification of Pass mark for M-level modules in first degree programmes, and level 3 modules in postgraduate programmes; clarification of postgraduate students' right to re-assessment on one subsequent occasion; revision of academic misconduct procedures and implementation of common penalties; and having two common algorithms for determining honours classification.

77   Through examination of General Regulations and the Academic Standards Guidelines, the audit team was able to verify that these changes had been implemented. The team also saw evidence of the University's continued strategic engagement with assessment issues through the Learning and Teaching Strategy (2007) which aims to 'review and where appropriate remove remaining unnecessary variability in learning and teaching practices across the University with changes to academic standards guidelines'; 'ensure procedures are in place so that competence standards, assessment strategies and delivery are considered at pre validation and validation events'; and 'ensure equity and consistency for all students including those with disabilities'.

78   Assessment is governed by the University's General Regulations and, supporting these regulations, the Academic Standards Guidelines provide additional guidance on the conduct of examinations and other forms of assessment for taught programmes; communicating with students on undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes; and the assessment of research degrees.

79   Programme-specific regulations, giving details of course credits, progression and award calculation, based on the University General Regulations, are approved during validation and periodic review and made available to students in programme handbooks. The audit team examined a number of these handbooks and were able to confirm that they contained the appropriate information.

80   The audit team noted the complexity of the General Degree Regulations and the considerable flexibility in application to programme level, but determined that the University had been active in reducing the variability in the regulations by introducing common level weightings in degree classification across the University from 2009-10; standard examination times based on credit weighting of modules, and undertaking a review of the compensation rules. The team also noted that ASQAC had agreed to review regulations further with the aim of ensuring 'robust, commonsense and consistent treatment of students; enhanced confidence in process; reduce complaints and appeals and enable efficient and timely use of the SITS'. Registry is to review existing regulations in the context of best practice by December 2009 in order to provide equity of treatment of students across the University from 2010. The team heard that these developments were seen as essential to support cultural change and that the review would be led by a project manager to be appointed in QSS. The team supports the University's intentions in these developments and encourages them to give these issues greater priority to ensure equity of treatment of students across degree programmes.

81   Assessment results are considered by a board of examiners and the SPAB(T). Minutes of the boards of examiners seen by the audit team indicated appropriate consideration of outcomes, including recommendations regarding extenuating circumstances or incomplete modules. The SPAB(T) minutes also highlighted careful consideration of students with mitigating circumstances, and the team saw evidence of this Board asking for clarification or sending back to boards of examiners recommendations regarding specific students.

82   With the move to the new corporate student record system, the audit team was informed that SPAB(T) would no longer need to check that examination regulations had been followed for each student, as these would be done automatically within the system, and SPAB(T) would cease operation. The team saw papers discussing the creation of a board in each faculty which would consider mitigating circumstances and academic offences before board of examiners meetings. The team would encourage the University to ensure any such mechanism continues to provide equity of treatment of students across the University.

83   The Briefing Paper indicated that a major driver for change in assessment practice had been the Academic Reform Programme, the aim of which was to address perceived weaknesses in learning and teaching performance identified by various reports, direct student feedback in the NSS and the University's own Student Survey, as well as league tables over a number of years. In the context of assessment, outcomes of the Academic Reform Programme included a policy of returning assessed work within four weeks (and before the subsequent assessment submission); the provision of formative feedback; guidelines on formative feedback; guidelines on good practice in determining and using assessment criteria; common module sizes of 10 credits (or multiples thereof) for undergraduate modules and 15 credits (or multiples thereof) for postgraduate modules. These outcomes were implemented through the Academic Standards Guidelines or advice produced by the CLD.

84   The Briefing Paper also noted that several recent periodic review panels had 'made conditions for approval or recommendations relating to the provision of formative feedback and the timeliness and quality of feedback'. These and the review of the Academic Reform Programme in 2008, which identified continued shortcomings, resulted in further changes being made to the Academic Standards Guidelines, including the addition of guidance on formative feedback, and a requirement that opportunities for formative feedback be identified in validation and periodic review, in addition to the establishment of a Working Group on Regulations.

More recently, a standard feedback sheet has been trialled in one faculty with a view to implementation across the University.

85   The student written submission (SWS) indicated that students considered the recommendations from the Academic Review Programme about assessment had not yet been adopted fully across the University; a view echoed in the APR overview report for 2007-08. The SWS also noted that assessment criteria were not sufficiently explicit and that students were unclear of what is expected of them. However, the students who met the audit team indicated they understood the generic and specific assessment criteria and what they were required to achieve in assessments. These students did suggest that not all staff marked to assessment criteria where they were present.

86   The audit team determined that the University requires that students receive information on 'generic marking criteria for particular standards of performance' within their programme handbooks. In meetings with staff it was confirmed that the University does not have generic assessment criteria for application across programmes and the audit team was unable to elicit a clear definition of academic standards from the staff it met. The team examined example generic assessment criteria for achievement of each award level (from First class to Fail) in two student programme handbooks which, while not entirely consistent with each other, had some common descriptors. The team encourages the University to consider further how it defines academic standards for its own awards, in order to engage the whole institution in articulating and applying clearly and consistently expectations of student achievement.

87   Timeliness and quality of feedback and use of formative feedback have been recurring themes from the NSS and periodic review. The University encourages formative feedback through the Guidelines for Formative Feedback in the Academic Standards Guidelines and the Guide to Good Practice in Teaching and Learning. Timeliness of feedback has been addressed with the introduction of a University guideline of feedback within four weeks or one week before the next assignment is due. The audit team saw evidence through the audit trails that this timeframe was being applied. The students met by the team indicated that this was not always the case and that there was considerable variability in the quantity and quality of feedback. ULTC has introduced a framework to improve the quality and consistency of feedback given to students which is being piloted in one faculty.

88   The APR overview report for 2007-08 to ASQAC indicated that common themes in external examiner reports once again were 'programmes not making full use of the range of marks, or evidence of generous or cautious grading or surprising averages'. The audit team found a number of other comments relating to assessment in the external examiners reports viewed including, length of examination for credit value, number and choice of questions, marking information for projects brief and the translation of commentary into marks not always being explicit. The team saw evidence of the University having considered some of these issues.

89   Overall, the audit team supports the developments on assessment within the University and encourages it to actively continue these in order to engage the whole University in articulating and applying clearly and consistently expectations of student achievement.

Management information - statistics

90   The audit team was informed that the implementation of the corporate student record system was proceeding on schedule and that all staff have access to the system, although evidence seen in one of the audit trails suggests that access to the data is difficult. The team was informed that delays in having suitable data sets available was due, in part, to lack of appropriate information technology support which has been addressed and that work was ongoing to develop programmes for use by staff. While recognising the difficulties of implementing a new student records system, the team would encourage the University to ensure that developments enable optimum use of the data across the institution.

91   At the time of the audit a series of data sets were being generated from the corporate student records system, including applicant analysis, student cohort profiles (ethnicity and gender), progression, retention and award data, and first destination statistics. The Briefing Paper identified a wide range of groups and committees which use data. For example, Registry prepares an analysis of undergraduate degree results by faculty, and for on-campus and AI provision, for consideration by ASQAC. Other data considered by the University, not from the corporate student record system, includes the analysis of the Student Course Experience Questionnaire and the student numbers undertaking professional training.

92   The audit team saw clear evidence of statistical data being used at programme and institutional levels, for example, in APR; examination of OPC minutes showed how the analysis of student numbers impacted on the guidance issued regarding faculty student number intake for the following year.

93   While the University uses student data effectively at programme and institutional levels for managing the academic standards of its awards, the audit team saw no evidence of data from collaborative, remote or distance-learning programmes, except for AIs, being considered within the University. The University is encouraged to ensure that data regarding these students is considered to enable an appropriate overview of the management of academic standards in this type of activity by the University.

94   Overall, the audit team concluded that confidence can be placed in the soundness of the institution's current and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards. However, the University is encouraged to consider how it defines academic standards for its own awards, in order to engage the whole institution in articulating and applying clearly and consistently expectations of student achievement.

Section 3: Institutional management of learning opportunities

95   The Briefing Paper noted that the Learning and Teaching Strategy drives the management of learning opportunities. The priority in 2007-08 was to form effective lines of communication between the University Learning and Teaching Committee (ULTC)/the Learning and Teaching Strategy Group (LTSG) and the faculties, to ensure that each faculty has a learning and teaching strategy that is consistent with that of the University, and a Learning and Teaching Committee chaired by the associate dean (learning and teaching), with terms of reference based on a common design. The audit team found that both the appointment of the associate deans (learning and teaching) and development of faculty learning and teaching strategies had been slow and, at the time of audit, there were still some strategies in draft form (see paragraphs 34, 180).

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

96   As noted in paragraph 67 above, the University considers that it has aligned fully with the intentions of the *Code of practice*. The audit team examined mapping documents and committee minutes and concurred with the University's assessment of its engagement and alignment with the *Code*. For example, due cognisance had been taken of the recently revised *Section 9: Work-based and placement learning* in relation to Professional Training provision; the Disability coordinator had implemented a plan to meet the precepts of *Section 3: Students with disabilities*. The team found that the University actively engaged with external reference points in influencing the learning opportunities for students. Examples include subject benchmark statements, professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs); and the *Disability Discrimination Act* developments, both in terms of facilities and the development of competence standards for entry to a programme.

97   Overall, the audit team viewed the University's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure and external benchmarks in ensuring the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of students' learning opportunities to be effective.

Approval, monitoring and review of programmes

98   The University requires, as specified within the Academic Standards Guidelines, that learning resources be considered in all programme approval, monitoring and review procedures. New programme proposals should include information on staffing (academic and support); library and learning resources; computing, teaching accommodation and space requirements; equipment and technical support; clinical or practical placement resources; and residential accommodation. To facilitate this, the Academic Scrutiny Group includes the Director of Library Services and representation from the Planning Office and Marketing and Communications.

99   From the evidence available to it, the audit team confirmed that resourcing implications were considered fully during these procedures and concluded that the approval, monitoring and review of programmes made a significant contribution to the maintenance of students' learning opportunities.

Management information - feedback from students

100   The Learning and Teaching Strategy (2007) states that students should have the 'opportunity for full engagement in the planning and development of their learning and teaching' and 'will be at the centre of its learning and teaching strategies' demonstrating the University's commitment to collecting and using student feedback in future learning and teaching developments. This is manifested through the terms of reference to UTLC which refer specifically to working with student representatives to ensure that student views are heard. Student feedback is gathered through a number of means: all faculties are required to monitor and evaluate students' perceptions of the quality of the taught programmes for which they are registered, although the mechanisms may vary. University requirements for student feedback on modules are described in the Academic Standards Guidelines and an ideal model is presented. The audit team saw examples of questionnaires and heard from students that there was variability in how and when evaluation was carried out. They also noted that the feedback on the outcomes of the evaluation varied from subject to subject. The team saw evidence of discussions at UTLC regarding a common module evaluation template with common elements, plus scope for local additions and the need for this to be a strategic objective. The University was, at the time of the audit, piloting such a questionnaire in one faculty. The team supports the University in this development in enabling effective comparison of student views on the quality of their programmes across faculties.

101   The audit team saw evidence of the module evaluation being used in Annual Programme Review (APR) to inform programme developments as described in the Briefing Paper and to inform the panel during periodic review. The team was also able to confirm that periodic review panels met with current students and their comments were actively considered. The team was less clear, however, if students on collaborative programmes completed module evaluation questionnaires, but found that students at the one Associate Institution (AI) completed a twice-yearly survey within their host institution, with a summary report considered through the Annual Statement to the University Validation Board (see paragraph 197).

102   A number of other student surveys are carried out including the annual student course experience questionnaire for second-year undergraduate students and taught postgraduate students undertaken by the Centre for Learning Development (CLD) and reported to ULTC; an annual survey of returning professional training students fed back to faculties via the senior professional training tutors, members of the Professional Training and Careers Committee (PTCC) and associate deans (see paragraph 125), a survey on those not taking profession training was undertaken in 2005 and 2007 with the outcomes being reported to PTCC and Senate; a biennial library survey and a more recent one-off survey of distance and remote support, with results and action taken reported back to students via the library web pages, a booklet, reports at University and faculty meetings, and discussions with the Students' Union (SU), and a careers service evaluation through focus groups, and student feedback.

103   The University regards the National Student Survey (NSS) outcomes as a critical key performance indicator and, as such, they are considered in committees at all levels within the University including Executive Board, Senate, the Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Committee (ASQAC), ULTC, faculty learning and teaching committees (FLTCs) and boards of studies. In recent years the University has produced a brief document for students advising them of the results and the University's plans to respond to feedback. A direct strategic response to the NSS outcomes in 2005 was a review of academic provision and support resulting in the Academic Reform Programme (see paragraph 83). Through examination of minutes, the audit team saw evidence of NSS outcomes being discussed in the full range of faculty and institutional-level committees. Many of the staff the team met were aware of the NSS outcomes and, while there had been improvements in the last NSS outcomes for 11 of the 18 schools, resulting from changes already made, it was made clear to the team that that further improvement was expected by the University.

104   The audit team concluded that effective use is made of management information in assuring the quality of student learning opportunities.

Role of students in quality assurance

Student representation arrangements

105   Student participation at the University in strategic and operational decision-making takes place at institutional and programme level, and through programme and module evaluation. The students are comprehensively represented by officers of the SU at University committee level on Council, Senate, Finance, Commercial Affairs, University Learning and Teaching Committee, Professional Training, Research and Enterprise, ASQAC and Student Affairs. The Vice-President for Education is invited to sit on validation boards and has been on ASQAC visits: frequent contact takes place between the SU officers and the senior management of the University. Student representatives sit on validation boards, PTCC, FLTCs, departmental meetings, boards of studies and staff-student liaison committees (SSLCs). The University's General Regulations require students in collaborative arrangements to sit on the relevant boards of studies. In addition, the SU are often invited to sit on working groups such as the Student Experience Strategy Group.

106   Staff with whom the audit team met reported that they had no difficulty in persuading students to act as student representatives, although they noted some attendance problems especially at boards of studies where the SSLC business was being repeated. Similarly, the student written submission (SWS) noted significant variance in the operation and student contribution to the SSLCs with some producing detailed minutes and action plans, and others where no documentation is produced.

107   The students with whom the audit team met stated that they collected student views prior to meetings through a variety of mechanisms including a course wiki and ULearn. They also noted that formal responses to feedback were often received from academic staff or the department by email.

108   At postgraduate level there is representation on the board of studies and SSLCs for postgraduate taught and research students. The audit team also learned of a number of other mechanisms for postgraduate research students to put their views forward, including formal student meetings and PhD lunches where issues can be raised, although there did not seem to be such arrangements in place at the relevant AIs.

109   The University has expressed its commitment to student representation in the strategic document, Surrey Student Experience. In this they intend to explicitly support the further development and implementation of the student representative system including student academic representatives, and SU involvement in University steering committees.

Briefing/training and support

110   The SU has responsibility for training student representatives and is currently redesigning their training programme, with input from the University. The SWS noted that there have been problems with the academic representation system due to sporadic communication with academic departments making it difficult for the SU to identify the student representatives to be trained. The Briefing Paper noted that the University was working with the SU to promote the role and establish better links with faculties. The SWS stated that a 'Representative Agreement' was in process of being implemented which addressed election, training and induction into committee meetings. Course representatives whom the audit team met understood their role, although they had not undertaken the training provided by the SU and not all the students saw the value in the link with the SU. Some representatives had communication from the SU by email and went to sessions provided by the SU.

111   The students who met the audit team confirmed that they were listened to by the University and were able to provide examples of action taken in response to their feedback. Some students that the team met had received information back from their course representative, although not all were aware who their representative was. The SWS was less positive about the degree to which students were heard at departmental level.

112   The audit team concluded that while there were on occasions communication difficulties, the University and the SU were trying to address the matter, and the role of students and arrangements for their participation in quality assurance mechanisms more broadly, was effective and fit for purpose.

Links between research or scholarly activity and learning opportunities

113   The University describes itself as being a research-led institution and sees its vision as working in partnership through leading-edge research; having international impact in teaching and research; maintaining the link between pure and applied research; and increasing the quality and volume of research. Through the programme of cultural change the University now places greater emphasis on research informed teaching as exemplified by the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy and a ULTC which aims to maintain a close relationship between teaching and research; the raising of the profile of teaching with funding for specific teaching related projects, although not all faculties have yet taken forward the outcomes of the Appreciative Enquiry (see paragraph 179).

114   Faculty learning and teaching strategies are seen as one of the vehicles for taking forward research informed teaching. However, as noted earlier (see paragraph 95), not all strategies are in place or have been circulated widely due, in part, to the delay in appointing associate deans (learning and teaching) in some faculties.

115   All academic staff are required to teach and the audit team saw evidence of research-led teaching required explicitly. The University values and rewards excellent teachers and provides the training, guidance and motivation for others to follow their example. Staff that met the team felt there were a number of schemes in place to encourage existing staff to develop their teaching, and that the changes in criteria for promotion reflected appropriately the greater value ascribed to teaching (see paragraph 171 and 172 respectively). They also welcomed the appointment of the new full-time Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Development) to continue to take this work forward.

116   While the SWS noted that research remains a priority for some staff, the students who met the audit team recognised that some staff made clear links between their research and teaching, particularly in modules that directly related to the module convenor's research, and were able to provide examples of academic staff giving priority to teaching students over their own research. Equally, the team heard examples from staff where research and teaching were more closely linked, particularly in final year, M-level modules and in student research projects. For example,

some leading research staff were engaging well with students and bringing research out of the laboratories into public lectures: the Festival of Science in 2008 was seen to provide a important forum to showcase how research could be linked to teaching. The team also heard that not all research departments were embracing the culture change quite as strongly as others, but that the workload model was helping in rebalancing research and teaching activities.

117   The audit team encourages the University to continue to find ways to further the links between research and teaching but, notwithstanding this, the team concluded that the University's arrangements for maintaining links between research, scholarly activity and teaching were effective and starting to contribute significantly to students' learning opportunities. The team considers that the greater link between research and teaching demonstrates the University's institutional drive for cultural change towards an increased focus on the quality of student-centred learning and teaching, which it considers to be a feature of good practice.

Other modes of study

118   The Institutional audit of 2004 advised the University 'to further develop its quality assurance procedures to address the particular requirements of distributed and distance learning'. At the time the University had intended to expand distance learning, although this is no longer the case. The University has embedded more explicit consideration of programmes delivered wholly or partly through distributed means at programme validation and periodic review. Specific areas for consideration by a validation panel include structure of the programme and schedule for the delivery of study materials and assessment; the approach for delivering teaching and learning including induction training and support for web technology; opportunities for students to engage in discourse with peers and academic staff; experience and training of staff; and administration and quality assurance, including student representation.

119   The audit team could find no requirement for the annual monitoring of programmes to include explicit identification of flexible, distributed or distance-learning programmes, and the template for APR that the team saw did not have any reference to these forms of study or the particular needs that such delivery might evince for the quality of learning opportunities in non-associated institutions. This was confirmed by the senior management team. The team recommends as desirable that the University amend the annual programme monitoring templates to elicit evaluation about delivery in non-associated institutions.

120   The University has a range of alternative modes of study including distance and blended learning using paper-based and electronic delivery systems such as ULearn, which provides structured learning activities and tutorial support. The audit team heard that assessments on part-time international learning (remote learning) were identical to those on the same taught programme at the University and used the same marking and moderation procedures. The team saw an example of a distance-learning workbook which contained appropriate coursework assignments and model answers. Assignments are submitted electronically through ULearn and a helpdesk is available in case of problems.

121   Support for those working and studying remotely is provided through a number of mechanisms: the Centre for Learning Development is the University's key resource in supporting staff; the Distance Learners' Information Service based in Library Services which supports students through special arrangements for the provision of materials in both electronic and hard copy. This Service had received positive feedback in a recent survey of distance learning. At each remote learning centre there is a dedicated administrator who is the key contact for students, and a tutor for distance learners from the University provides support via email for academic and pastoral issues on a day-to-day basis.

Student exchange

122   The number of on-campus students undertaking student exchange is relatively small, standing at around 50 in 2007-08. The audit team learned that the International Relations Office (IRO) was undertaking a review of existing arrangements, with a view to establishing clear and consistent processes and reducing any unnecessary duplication. The IRO provides general support, information and guidance, and the team noted the useful information provided for students on its website. Since returning exchange students receive credit transfer, there must be a good match with the on-campus programme. In meetings, the team heard that the overseas curriculum is checked for equivalence. On the basis of staff and student comments, the team concluded that the University's exchange arrangements provided a valuable and enjoyable educational and cultural experience for students.

Professional Training Year

123   The University Strategy (2007-17) states that enterprise culture is part of the University's distinctiveness, and a key element of this is the professional training year (PTY) where undergraduate students undertake placement in the UK or overseas for a year as part of an academic programme. The University established the Surrey Centre of Excellence in Professional Training and Education (SCEPTrE) in 2006, a Centre of Excellence in Teaching and Learning, which plays an important role in supporting both students and staff involved in the PTY.

124   There is a comprehensive set of regulations for PTY including the appointment of tutors and the assessment of the placement period in the General Regulations. A tripartite professional training agreement specifies the responsibilities of the employer, the University and the student. There is a handbook to support the training year produced by the Marketing Department, but the students who met the audit team found its use limited. There was some variability in the contribution of the PTY toward the final degree outcome. Students get credits for the year, but depending on the degree it does not necessarily count towards the degree classification. Marks are based on employer and tutor reports as well as an assessment of a placement project.

125   The SWS noted that the PTY was one of the strongest positive aspects of the University's provision, a view echoed by staff met by the audit team. Although the SWS indicated the need to further embed the PTY into the teaching and learning offered by all departments 'so that students' experience in industry has clear links with their academic study on their return to the campus the following year', the students who met the team stated that the PTY featured prominently in their decision to attend the University, and reported being well supported in preparing for the year through group briefings, an interview process and a module in professional writing. During the placement itself every student is allocated an academic tutor and with a required minimum of three tutor visits during the year, although this might be in a different form for overseas placements. A reporting mechanism is in place via a senior tutor to the Chair of PTCC should any matters be raised from the visits that require further consideration through the deliberative structures. Further student feedback is gathered through an annual survey by PTCC and results reported to individual faculties via the senior professional training tutors, members of PTCC and associate deans. The Committee also conducts an annual tutors' survey to monitor adherence to University regulations and guidelines on arrangements for professional training by departments and faculties. The team learned that the University intended to extend professional training to postgraduate research students.

126   The University has seen a decrease in student uptake of the PTY from approximately 64 per cent of the undergraduate cohort in 2003-04 to 60 per cent in 2007-08, and measures to improve the level of participation were being considered The PTCC intends to undertake further analysis of the data on the uptake of the PTY to inform the University's planning and marketing. Where students do not participate in the PTY, alternative employment experiences may be obtained through the Careers Service.

127   The audit team formed the view that the PTY provided a valuable contribution to the student experience, where undertaken, and commends the University's commitment to, and excellence in, this area as a feature of good practice.

Resources for learning

Library

128   The Briefing Paper stated that Library and Learning Support Services is responsible for supporting the work of faculties through the provision of physical learning environments and facilities suited to the diverse modes of study and learning preferences evident in the University. The University noted that in the last two years it had developed a more robust basis for funding the development of library information resources based on student numbers, inflation and sector benchmarking, the latter including the use of SCONUL and LISU statistics in each subject area and other benchmarking standards. The SWS noted that students felt there was some lack of core texts.

129   Library and Learning Support Services has appropriate representation on key University committees and groups including the Academic Scrutiny Group, ULTC, Information Services Committee, LTSG and validation and periodic review panels. At faculty level, academic liaison librarians for each subject discipline sit on faculty boards and work with faculty and departments to identify and meet library service needs. Staff that met the audit team gave very positive accounts of the involvement of the academic liaison librarians in boards of studies and SSLCs.

130   The University has introduced three initiatives to enhance library and learning support; in 2007, as part of a major reorganisation of Information Services, the University set up the Student Personal Learning and Study Hub (SPLASH) incorporating the Skills and Personal Development team with the aim of providing students with a personal and practical approach to academic study through access to group and individual learning spaces and skills training. In late 2008, academic liaison librarians were relocated to work alongside the SPLASH team to develop information skills as part of the skills provision and learning development programme, and, in 2007-08, the University piloted a peer support scheme where a team of library student helpers were employed to provide additional support to fellow students. This latter initiative was reviewed favourably by students and will be continued.

131   SPLASH also provides support for personal development planning (PDP) development and the skills development programme for postgraduate research students; an electronic portfolio facility is being piloted across faculties, and a PDP Resource Guide for staff was developed in 2006 specifying the PDP opportunities and requirements across all programmes and levels, from undergraduate to postgraduate research degrees. Since 2007, students have also had access to a Royal Literary Fellow who is a professional writer. SPLASH activity is guided by an Advisory Group set up in June 2008, reporting to ULTC and chaired by one of the associate deans (learning and teaching).

132   Library facilities receive consistently positive feedback in the NSS and Student Course Experience Questionnaire, although the SWS highlighted variability in the evaluations across the University. The students that the audit team met, identified pressure on the library study space as an issue due to the increase in student numbers and the introduction of SPLASH. However, the team heard that the University was looking at an extension to the library.

133   Further feedback from students is gathered by the library through the LibQual+ survey every two years. Results are fed back to students via library web pages and at University committees, faculty meetings and discussions with the SU. The audit team saw examples of action taken by the University to address the issues raised including all night opening, increased electronic subscriptions, the introduction of a café area and wireless access.

134   The audit team found that the University's integrated approach to resource planning and management of library resources in meeting student needs was a feature of good practice.

Information technology

135   Information technology (IT) Services, which were located in schools and central services, were combined into a single entity in 2007 in response to investigation into academic support across the University. The Briefing Paper stated that this allows for more generic services to be delivered across the institution. In 2008 the Dean of the Faculty of Management and Law reviewed the service and endorsed its current direction and funding. The postgraduate research students met by the audit team lamented the centralisation of IT services as it removed a very responsive local support and replaced it with a much slower service.

E-Learning Unit

136   The E-Learning Unit works closely with faculties and the e-learning practitioner network to provide a range of support for staff including seminars, the Teaching with New Technologies scheme run in partnership with SCEPTrE, and other electronic applications such as electronic voting systems, plagiarism identification software, podcasting, wikis and virtual worlds.

137   The E-Learning strategy is located within the institutional and faculty learning and teaching strategies. There is an E-Learning and Technology Advisory Group (ELTAG) which is a subcommittee of ULTC. The new ELTAG first met in December 2008 with terms of reference to promote communication of new technologies across faculties, and had appropriate student representation on it.

138   ULearn has been the University's managed virtual learning environment since 2003, with some 777 modules available and 630 staff trained to use it at the time of the audit. ELTAG predecessor group's annual report in 2007 recognised that uptake was variable and that a more strategic vision was required. The students who met the audit team were broadly positive about ULearn but noted there had been some technical difficulties initially, and that there was significant variance on how the facility was used by academic staff; students also commented that a lack of standardisation in the structure of the modules available could be confusing and problematic. The team noted that some faculties were still using an earlier version of a managed learning environment, Infopoint. The team heard that a working group of ELTAG were aware of the issues and were formulating action to be taken, for example, the robustness of ULearn was being reviewed for future development.

Teaching accommodation

139   The Teaching Facilities Advisory Group, chaired by an associate dean for learning and teaching, provides a forum for users for policies and operational issues. The SWS noted that the increase in student numbers alongside a reduction in staffing had impacted significantly on students. The increased intake of students without concomitant increase in teaching accommodation and facilities has meant a reduction in the time available per student to access specialist resources, particularly in relation to the Sciences, Music and Dance, and Music and Sound Recording. Students reported that some teaching accommodation was not large enough for the number of students and that there was an increased reliance on postgraduate research students to deliver teaching. The University is considering further automation of room booking, based upon the allocation of rooms using more detailed data on the numbers of students selecting a module once the corporate student record system is fully operational for module selection. The University believes that this will help to utilise space more efficiently.

140   The audit team would encourage the University in its actions to address the management of teaching and learning space in relation to the increase in student numbers. Notwithstanding this, the team concluded that the University's arrangements for the provision, allocation and management of learning resources was effective in relation to maintaining the quality of students' learning opportunities.

Admissions policy

141   The University's policy on admissions and selection procedures is available to staff and students on the website and is underpinned by a commitment to merit and academic potential alongside equality of opportunity. The policy links to the Teaching and Learning Strategy (2007) through its internationalisation, equality, diversity and disability needs strands. The admissions policy is further underpinned by the Student Experience Strategy which acknowledges the importance of being a reflective institution that continuously excels in realising the full development potential of its staff and students, and which also includes a commitment to internationalisation and support of international students. The policy is also underpinned by the Widening Access and Outreach Strategy which commits the University to encouraging and supporting new initiatives and best practice innovations.

142   Admissions staff are supported in their role by a comprehensive Undergraduate Admissions Guide for tutors. Admissions criteria are clearly displayed in a Fact File in each of the prospectuses: undergraduate, postgraduate taught, and postgraduate research. The audit team heard that each undergraduate student obtains a personalised prospectus when applying for courses at the University, which the students met by the team confirmed to be helpful.

143   Targets on admissions from the Planning Office inform the institutional and faculty-level five-year plans. The University revised its Widening Participation Strategy in 2006 and consider it is collecting more robust data to ensure that widening participation activities are targeted effectively to reach HEFCE benchmarks.

144   The University maintains an oversight of the effectiveness of its policy implementation through weekly recruitment reports on admissions which are disseminated to relevant staff, and the audit team saw evidence of appropriate consideration of this data through the University's deliberative structures.

145   The audit team formed the view that the University ensures its admissions procedures are fair, clear and explicit and implemented consistently.

Student support

146   The University has recently developed and is implementing a Student Experience Strategy. The Strategy was developed based on the data gathered from students, staff and NSS in 2007 and initiated by the Student Affairs Committee and Student Care Services.

147   The Strategy has five themes: a complete education, enabling professional preparation; a multicultural and international experience; a safe and friendly environment; and excellence. In the meeting with the audit team, the Vice-Chancellor noted that the Student Experience Strategy has signalled to staff a new focus on the student experience from admission to graduation. Although the SU President was involved in the Student Experience Strategy, students met by the team were not aware of it.

148   The audit team concluded that the University's Student Experience Strategy and its implementation exemplified the institutional drive for cultural change towards an increased focus on the quality of student-centred learning and teaching, which the team considered to be a feature of good practice.

Induction and Project Welcome

149   Project Welcome was instituted in 2008 to provide an improved welcome and induction to the University from the student's perspective, and was led by Student Care Services. The Project surveyed the experiences of new students arriving at the University, and findings from the survey highlighted potential areas for improvement which, at the time of the audit, were being put into the plan for 2009 and will provide an effective benchmark by which new student experiences can be measured. The SU considered the aim and purpose of Project Welcome to be laudable but noted that there had been a lack of consultation with them regarding the Project, and that it had been difficult for the SU to secure time with the faculties to introduce the SU to students, and that the Freshers' Fair had been adversely affected by some of the timings.

150   Associate deans (learning and teaching) meet regularly to discuss the induction of returning students and academic year calendar changes. Separate induction is provided for postgraduate research students (see paragraph 221).

151   In addition to the tailored and student-centred Project Welcome, the University provides a detailed handbook to students called 'The Big Guide' which is also available online. This comprehensive handbook contains information on everything that new students are likely to need (see paragraph 249). The audit team considered the comprehensive nature of student induction, including the Big Guide and Project Welcome, to be a feature of good practice.

Transitions and expectations

152   At the time of the audit the University had introduced a pilot transitions scheme to support students moving from school to the University, and was also involved in the Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory in Higher Education Research Consortium's project to develop a learning inventory to help students understand their approach to learning.

Personal tutoring

153   The University operates a personal tutor system for students on undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes. It is organised at faculty level and informed by the Academic Standards Guidelines and a web-based handbook which specifies the frequency of meetings, once per semester, and other examples of good practice. Training is provided to staff new to the role and there is also a Personal Tutor Liaison Group on which the SU Vice-President, Education, sits. The audit team heard from students that they had been sent an email through ULearn informing them of their personal tutor and keep the same tutor throughout their course. The SWS identified some uncertainty about the relationship between personal tutors and SPLASH and who students should approach initially. Staff that met the team acknowledged that the value of personal tutoring was dependent on the individual tutor and the student.

154   For postgraduate research students the research supervisor is also the personal tutor. The postgraduate research students commented that the level of personal support from the programme team was very good. For off-campus personal tutoring, the audit team heard that the University was working towards strengthening local student support arrangements in some collaborative provision, including overseas partners.

SCEPTrE

155   In addition to its role in supporting the professional training year, SCEPTrE also supports enquiry based learning, works closely with the Career Service and with departments to produce learning materials. The University also envisages that when SCEPTrE's funding ends in 18 months time the role will become embedded in programmes.

Central support services

156   Student Care Services offers a range of support services to students including welfare, financial hardship, disability support, health, counselling and wellbeing, multi-faith provision, residential support, registry, additional learning support, language support and support for international students and mature students. It reports through Student Affairs Committee to the Executive Board. In addition, Student Care staff work closely with other units responsible for delivery of learning support and development for students. This work includes participating in support for students with disabilities and specific learning difficulties, work which is coordinated by Additional Learning Support, and which contributes to discussions and decision-making in relation to disability, previously through the Disability Advisory Group (DAG). DAG recently merged with the Special Assessment Arrangements Committee to create the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Disability Group, reporting to ULTC and ASQAC.

157   The audit team considered a range of documents including comprehensive guidance documents, websites for the services and minutes of meetings, and concluded that the University took a proactive approach to supporting students. It provides discrete facilities such as the Assistive Technology Centre; specialist advice for specific groups of students; and is also piloting, in 2008-09 by the Validation Board, of a checklist of competence standards for entry to a programme to be used in programme design. Diagnostic testing of English language competence on entry is undertaken by all new students whose first language is not English, with the provision of pre-sessional and in-sessional support in English language, communication and study skills, although not all students attended the requisite courses. The University has embedded the *Disability Discrimination Act* in the Estates Strategy; and the PTCC provides a budget to facilitate disability support in the workplace.

158   The students who met the audit team were positive about the support services provided and considered them to be well advertised, although some felt that there was at times a lack of coordination between the services.

159   The Career Service is overseen and monitored by PTCC reporting to Senate and is accredited by Matrix. Annual reports show that operational objectives have been achieved fully. Evaluation is carried out through focus groups, feedback questionnaires and surveys. The SU supplements student support through its services. Staff with whom the audit team met gave examples of the interaction of the Careers Service with academic departments and their students and with SCEPTrE. In some departments there is a student adviser who organises events with careers.

160   The Careers Service provides an impressively comprehensive range of publications for students and employers, activities and events for taught and research students, at departmental and institutional level. Large numbers of employing organisations are represented at events which are normally well attended by students.

Dean of Students

161   The Office of the Dean of Students, reporting to the Registrar, is an important aspect of the student support services. The Briefing Paper noted that the Dean did not have line management responsibility but provided independent oversight and scrutiny of the support services in the role of a 'critical friend'. This is facilitated by the Dean's membership of key university-level committees and as the chair of the Student Care Services Committee and Special Examination Arrangements Committee. The Dean and Deputy Dean of Students are ombudsmen for student complaints, appeals and disciplinaries, and for coordinating the University's response to each case, reporting outcomes to ASQAC. The SU works closely with the Dean of Students.

162   The Deputy Dean takes particular responsibility for postgraduate student matters including student welfare and support, and chairs the Personal Tutors Liaison Group and Academic Misconduct Steering Group (see paragraph 217).

163   Overall, the audit team formed the view that the University ensures that its arrangements for student support are effective and implemented consistently in relation to maintaining the quality of students' learning opportunities.

Staff support (including staff development)

164   The Staff Strategy was reviewed in 2008 to ensure alignment with the University Strategy, particularly in the area of quality and collegiality, and the outcomes were taken forward through the Change Management Programme. The Staff Strategy has four core strategic objectives including reward, recognition and retention, and training and development. Its objectives are underpinned by detailed task objectives, key performance indicators and actions. It is monitored by the Staff Policy Committee and Executive Board. The core objective seeks to facilitate the development of all staff in the University, to enable and encourage them to fulfil their potential for the benefit of the University and themselves.

165   The results of the Staff Satisfaction Survey of April 2008, presented to the Staff Policy Committee and Executive Board June 2008, have been used in the review of human resources policies. The key findings of the Survey, which had been completed by a large proportion of the University's staff, related to leadership and management capability, communication, resourcing and workload allocation. The staff whom the audit team met were aware of outcomes of the Survey and confirmed that they had already seen improvements in communication in the University.

Appointment and induction, probation and training

166   The Staff Strategy has, as its first objective, to recruit the highest quality staff in all areas. Newly appointed staff are assisted by a senior colleague, for example, when setting assessments and marking. There is a three-year (longer for part-time staff) probationary period. Part-time staff are given an induction day, although the audit team heard that the University employed few part-time staff and those that were tended to be in relation to the development of distance-learning materials.

167   The University has, through the CLD, developed the Postgraduate Certificate of Academic Practice (PGCAP) which must be completed successfully by new staff and has been accredited by the Higher Education Academy since 2004. The audit team heard that new staff viewed the induction process and PGCAP positively.

168   One of the objectives of the Academic Reform Programme was to engage experienced teachers in continuing professional development and, to this end, CLD puts on events and seminars for established staff. The programme includes an Annual Learning and Teaching Symposium, courses for associate lecturers across the faculties, and bespoke events such as a one-week course in University teaching for staff from its Chinese partner.

169   The CLD team was extended in autumn 2008 with the appointment of four CLD-faculty scholars, one from each faculty, who promote the scholarship of teaching and learning and have a role identifying and disseminating good practice in the faculty (see paragraph 183). The audit team heard that staff were responding positively to the work of the scholars, most notably in relation to the Student Expectations Project, student feedback and with early career academic staff.

Appraisal, development and promotion

170   The Briefing Paper noted that the coordination, management and enhancement of the University's staff development programme is the responsibility of a small team within the Human Resources Department, headed by the Head of Change Management Support, working closely with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Staff and Students). At faculty level, human resource managers

support the implementation of the staff development programme, working with division and department heads who have line management responsibility for staff development. Staff development needs are identified through annual documented meetings of academic members of staff with their line manager to review and set targets, and identify personal development needs. Associate deans (learning and teaching) identify staff development needs across the faculty and report them to the FLTC.

171 Staff that met the audit team considered that there were a number of initiatives available to encourage existing staff to develop their teaching, including faculty learning and teaching away days for all academic staff, SCEPTrE fellowships, awards from CLD and project funding (see paragraph 183). More broadly, the University has introduced a performance bonus for all University staff at all levels to enhance the notion of one university. Other reward strategies include the Higher Responsibility Zone and performance related pay. Part-time staff can use the University's staff development programme to develop their academic practice and CLD is considering developing online resources which part-time staff could access.

172 The audit team heard and saw evidence that the new promotion procedures for academic staff were beginning to have an effect, with promotion to professor and reader possible through teaching excellence and scholarship in learning, and teaching and encouraging pedagogical development.

173 Overall, the University has introduced a variety of integrated measures through the Staff Strategy, which has proactively supported the drive for cultural change, and has significantly strengthened and directed staff support, and rewarded excellence in teaching, to enhance this aspect of the management of learning opportunities.

Section 4: Institutional approach to quality enhancement

174 The University's strategic framework for quality enhancement has evolved through the development and renewal of its Learning and Teaching Strategy, together with the creation of two complementary and interlinking strategies: the Quality Enhancement Strategy, 2006 (updated 2008), and the more recently adopted Student Experience Strategy (2008).

175 In response to one of the recommendations of the 2004 Institutional audit, the University developed a Quality Enhancement Strategy (QES), approved by Senate in July 2006.The aim of the Strategy was to link to the Academic Reform Programme (see paragraph 83) to significantly enhance the quality of student learning. QES objectives included consideration of processes for identifying good practice in learning and teaching; programme delivery and innovation; identification of opportunities for collegial reflection on good practice; supporting dissemination; closing the loop through effective evaluation of changes; and building on existing good practice.

176 Work on the Academic Reform Programme had begun in September 2005, the final report being published in March 2006, shortly before the adoption of the QES. The report set out agreed areas for reform relating to both the academic experience of students and the effective contribution of staff to student learning, in particular, assessment, feedback to students, peer support for teaching and the reward of excellence in teaching. The audit team found that the Programme had been implemented in a range of areas. The Briefing Paper and the most recent review of the Programme, conducted in December 2007 to January 2008, recorded action on student representation, module evaluation and the improvement of assessment practices through amendments to the Academic Standards Guidelines. In meetings, staff offered specific examples of how the Programme had brought greater consistency in assessment. Other areas, such as the creation of a programme of staff development, consultancy and workshops specifically devoted to feedback to students, to be progressed at school level as well as institutional level, appeared not to have been fully addressed.

177   In the light of continuing national debate on the nature of enhancement and following the reorganisation of the University into faculties, to include new support structures led by the associate deans (learning and teaching), an update to the QES was adopted in June 2008. This document articulates the objectives of the QES as the promotion of the goals of the Learning and Teaching Strategy through harnessing the creative capacity of staff and students so as to recognise, spread and reward excellence. Like the overarching Student Experience Strategy and the Learning and Teaching Strategy, the QES expresses an institutional aspiration to provide student-centred learning and to promote teaching excellence.

178   The University views the implementation of the QES as closely linked to achievement of cultural change in an institution that has always valued research highly, while sometimes according a lesser priority to learning and teaching. The 2008 QES update describes the University's view of quality enhancement in learning and teaching as a deliberate and systematic process of professional reflective practice operating strategically to improve student learning. In this regard, the University's aim is to become a leading exemplar of a reflective institution that realises the full potential of its staff and students. Both the QES and the supporting Surrey Guide to Good Practice in Learning and Teaching, 2006, are informed by a scholarly model of reflective practice.

179   Strategic refocusing on the enhancement of learning and teaching had been initiated earlier, before the 2008 QES update, through the Appreciative Enquiry. This was an institutional event conducted in 2007 involving 225 members of the University (117 staff and 108 students) to discuss good learning and teaching experiences, followed by an Open Space event in May 2007. The discussions set aspirational challenges for the institution, the emerging key issue being the development of a common culture of what constitutes good teaching, together with a recognition of learning and teaching as important activities, and a set of associated proposals was formulated. The audit team heard that not all faculties had taken forward the Appreciative Enquiry, although the Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences had made more progress than others. The team was told that there had been some loss of momentum, but staff reported that the profile of teaching was nonetheless being raised in their faculties. The team also noted that the apparent slowness of some faculties to build on the programme of cultural change initiated by the Appreciative Enquiry was documented in the University Learning and Teaching Committee (ULTC) update on the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy presented to Senate and Executive Board in 2008.

180   The 2004 Institutional audit recommended the development of local (at that time school level) learning and teaching strategies demonstrating engagement with the University's Learning and Teaching Strategy. The current University Learning and Teaching Strategy requires faculty learning and teaching strategies to have been put in place and presented to ULTC by October 2007. The Briefing Paper indicated that it was the responsibility of the associate deans (learning and teaching), who chair faculty learning and teaching committees, to ensure that these local strategies were in place. The audit team heard that faculties had needed time to develop their Strategies and that all but one faculty had been slow in finalising them. The team observed that at the time of the audit the strategy for the one faculty was still in draft. Staff suggested to the audit team that the slowness in appointing the associate deans was one of the reasons for a delay in developing the faculty learning and teaching strategies. The team also noted that, at the time of the audit, the University's common design for the terms of reference for faculty learning and teaching committees, which would provide faculties with useful guidance on the role of these committees on a range of matters, including enhancement, was still in draft.

181   In the light of evidence of slow progress within faculties with respect to enhancement and the cultural change agenda, the audit team considered it desirable for the University to expedite its intentions regarding the role of faculties in quality enhancement.

182   At institutional level, the University has put in place a coherent framework for driving forward cultural change. With the reshaping of the senior management team, institutional responsibility for academic development passes to a full-time Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Development). The role of the associate dean (learning and teaching) is a key element of the framework for enhancement, providing the necessary link and communication channel between faculties and central committees, units and services. The role includes work within the faculty to ensure that there is a faculty learning and teaching strategy fully articulated with the University Learning and Teaching Strategy; to work with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Development), the Centre for Learning Development (CLD), Surrey Centre of Excellence in Professional Training and Education (SCEPTrE) and other University support services to advance the University's learning and teaching activity; to represent the faculty on the ULTC and the Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Committee; and to work with associate deans in other faculties to ensure that appropriate opportunities are taken for cross-faculty working. Further support for learning and teaching developments is provided by central units such as the Student Personal Learning and Study Hub, E-Learning Unit, SCEPTrE and CLD (see paragraphs 130, 136, 155, 167).

183   A series of institutional initiatives has also served to progress the cultural change agenda and to achieve the aspiration of the QES to provide a range of coherent opportunities for learning and teaching through creative and scholarly understanding of student-centred learning. The CLD Faculty Scholar Scheme is designed to expand awareness of good learning and teaching, and promote a scholarly appreciation of excellence in teaching and learning. The Learning and Teaching Awards scheme offers learning and teaching prizes in the categories of Rising Stars (lecturers or tutors with up to six-years experience of higher education), experienced staff and support staff. The Fund for the Strategic Development of Learning and Teaching has provided funds for projects related to specific strategic initiatives.

184   The audit team concurred with the University's view that, although a good deal remained to be accomplished, much had been achieved since the last Institutional audit (2004) to promote quality enhancement in a more strategic and coherent fashion. The team commends as good practice the University's identification of the need for, and initiation of, an institutional drive for cultural change towards an increased focus on the quality of student-centred learning.

Section 5: Collaborative arrangements

Overview

185   The University's collaborative provision covers numerous categories of arrangement, described in the Guidelines on Collaborative Links published by Registry. Arrangements that were current at the time of the audit were listed in the Register of Collaborative Links, maintained by the Quality Support Section (QSS). The links comprised collaborations with Associated Institutions (AIs) for the validation of programmes leading to the University's awards, or the accreditation of institutions with programmes leading to awards of the University; remote learning agreements for the direct delivery of programmes by University staff at overseas institutions; and a recently created joint venture with a university in China. The University has a very limited number of collaborative arrangements involving partnerships with other institutions for the joint delivery of programmes, or as articulation links for the progression of students from a partner to the University. It also has an agreement with Study Group UK under which this organisation established and operates the Surrey International Study Centre.

186   Initiatives for setting up new collaborative links may begin at faculty or institutional level. The Guidelines on Collaborative Links set out the process for progressing such relationships. Initially, this entails consideration by the relevant Central Service Department: the QSS (validation, accreditation, delivery partnerships), the International Relations Office (strategic institutional alliances, direct delivery by University staff at overseas institutions) and the Student Recruitment Office (articulation links). Proposed links must have the approval in principle of the

Operations and Planning Committee (OPC), followed by submission of the Memorandum of Agreement to the QSS for approval and signature by the Registrar. The OPC maintains an overview of all forms of alliance, receives annual reports from the respective service departments and prepares an annual report on existing links for Executive Board.

Remote learning arrangements

187　Around two hundred part-time international students are registered on University MSc and MBA degree programmes delivered by remote learning in institutions through a blend of workshops and tutorials delivered by visiting University academics; online learning resources (ULearn) and a discussion forum facilitated by module tutors. Quality assurance processes, like those for full-time students, are managed through the relevant board of studies at the University. The suitability of facilities, teaching and learning arrangements, meetings with dissertation students and student issues, are monitored through module tutors' trip reports. However, the audit team was not clear as to how trip reports were considered at institutional level (see also paragraph 119).

Associated Institutions (AIs)

188　In terms of student numbers, the majority of the University's collaborative provision is delivered at its AIs, although the extent of this provision has decreased by over half since the last audit in 2004. One AI is an accredited institution with delegated authority from the University to manage programme validation and review, in accordance with University policy and practices. The other AIs, mainly further and higher education colleges and smaller institutions, deliver programmes that are validated and reviewed directly by the University.

189　Following a Registry review of AI links, which recognised that it was unclear what criteria had been applied to determine whether or not to allow an institution to become an AI, in 2007 Executive Board decided that there should be a more proactive approach to managing the AI portfolio. The Board identified seven principles with regard to the benefit to the University which should accrue from a relationship with an AI, and these principles were applied to each existing institution. The Briefing Paper explained that the outcome was a reduction in the number of AIs from 12 (in 2004) to seven. The audit team concluded that the University's review of its portfolio of AIs had established a clearer rationale for engaging with AIs, and a clearer definition of what such relationships should provide. Further, on the basis of documentation relating to the termination of the partnership with four AIs, the team was satisfied that the University had put in place appropriate strategies to maintain standards and the quality of learning opportunities for AI students completing their awards under University regulations.

Quality assurance for the Associated Institutions: policy and framework

190　Recognising and accepting its responsibilities for the standard of awards made in its name, it is the University's intention that the regulatory frameworks, underlying principles and systems applying to its AIs are consistent with those it applies to itself, and that quality assurance structures and procedures should, as far as practicable, be common or at least comparable with those in operation within the University. Accordingly, the Briefing Paper explained, key quality assurance processes are managed through the same or comparable University procedures and bodies.

191　The framework for quality assurance for the AIs is set out in the Quality Assurance Handbook for the Associated Institutions. This identifies the University staff with special responsibility for the AIs: the Quality Assurance Officer for AIs based in QSS; the Chair of the Board for the Associated Institutions, and the Dean of Students in the context of student appeals. Additionally, the Validation Board nominates and the Senate appoints a Moderator for each programme, usually from the University's academic staff or, if appropriate, from outside the University. The Handbook describes the committees with special responsibility for collaborative

provision and the AIs: the OPC, which considers applications for validation of programmes; the Board for the Associated Institutions, which has representation from the University and each AI and meets annually to consider strategic issues; the Validation Board; the Senate Progress and Awards Committee; and Senate. It is expected that each programme or group of programmes has a programme director, as well as a board of studies and board of examiners (initially chaired by a member of the University's staff) established by the AI. External examiners are appointed and paid by the University, reports are submitted to the Vice-Chancellor and received, read and acknowledged on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor by the Quality Assurance Officer (AIs) in QSS (see paragraph 59ff).

Institutional approval, monitoring and review

192   The Quality Assurance Handbook for the Associated Institutions sets out clearly the processes and procedures for validation, annual monitoring and periodic review. Approval in principal of a proposed partner institution must be gained from OPC on the basis of specified strategic considerations, such as profile and status, financial stability and complementarity of mission with that of the University. This is followed by a visit by members of the University to assess the range, level and standards of academic programmes; on-site facilities, resources and staffing; management structures; administrative support and the decision-making framework; and to ensure that appropriate quality assurance procedures are established and operate on a regular basis. Following a successful visit, the arrangement must be submitted to Senate for approval and, if such approval is forthcoming, the necessary procedures for validation of individual programmes may be initiated. If only one programme is proposed for validation, the assessment of the institution may be undertaken in conjunction with the scrutiny of the programme.

193   Procedures for programme validation at AIs are essentially the same as those applied to the University's own programmes. Proposed programmes are considered, following formal scrutiny within the AI, by a validation panel chaired by a senior member of the University and including at least one external member. The panel visits the AI to glean further information and raise any queries in meetings with staff and students. Panels must have regard to the quality assurance system operating within the AI and may choose to visit facilities such as the library, teaching accommodation and laboratory space, as appropriate to the proposed programme. The panel chair is responsible for ensuring that any conditions are met. The panel's report and recommendation are presented to the Validation Board, the recommendation then being submitted to Senate for approval.

194   The Quality Assurance Handbook for the Associated Institutions provides for the possibility of interim review to be carried out during the period of validation (a maximum of five years), to assess the strengths and weaknesses of a new programme as it unfolds. Interim review, a process that is specific to provision in AIs, entails scrutiny by a panel, including the external examiner, but is intended to be less formal than initial validation. Validated programmes in AIs are also subject to periodic review using the same process as for on-campus programmes (see paragraph 48ff). Reports and recommendations are presented to the Validation Board and the recommendations to Senate for approval.

195   From documents provided, the audit team was able to verify that institutional and programme approval was conducted as required and that programme proposals were being adequately scrutinised; the responses to conditions tracked and satisfied before proposals progressed; and that the requirement for scrutiny and approval by the Validation Board and Senate was being met. The team concluded that the University's procedures for institutional approval of AIs were robust the process for validation of programmes in AIs fit for purpose, and that interim and periodic review provided valuable mechanisms for monitoring ongoing programme delivery at AIs.

196   The processes of annual review of programmes broadly replicates those applying to the University's on-campus provision. The process is internal to the AI, with reports and action plans being submitted to the board of studies and, where appropriate, the board of examiners. Moderators undertake ongoing monitoring of the programmes, submitting annual reports to the Quality Assurance Officer for the AIs. The audit team viewed a sample of moderator reports and noted that these recorded attendance at boards of studies and boards of examiners, as well as comments on resource requirements, course monitoring, quality assurance procedures, setting of exam papers and moderation of work. The team formed the view that scrutiny at the level of the moderators appeared to be effective. However, while the team was able to establish that moderators' reports were submitted to QSS and would be available at the periodic review of programmes, there did not appear to be a mechanism to ensure that systematic consideration of moderator feedback formed part of the ongoing University oversight of programme delivery at AIs. The University will wish to consider how this might be achieved.

Institutional review

197   Each AI must submit an Annual Statement to the University incorporating sections on quality assurance, student data, examinations, actions taken to address matters raised in external examiner reports, complaints and the outcomes of any audits by national bodies or professional, statutory and regulatory bodies. Annual Statements are submitted to the Sub-Group on Annual Statements which provides an annual overview report to the Validation Board. The audit team noted that the Annual Statements available at the audit visit broadly complied with University requirements as to content. The team also observed that, in complying with the guidelines as to length outlined in the Quality Assurance Handbook for the Associated Institutions, the Annual Statements were necessarily limited in the breadth and depth of information provided and in their evaluative commentary. Further, from documentation and the evidence heard, the team concluded that the Annual Statements, written by the AIs themselves, constituted the only formal mechanism for the monitoring and evaluation of institutional quality processes and procedures at the AIs, subsequent to initial institutional approval. In view of this, and of the fact that periodic review was concerned with programmes rather than institutional quality matters, the team considered that it would be desirable for the University to give further consideration to its approach to the monitoring and review of its collaborative provision, particularly with respect to partnership-level quality assurance mechanisms, to enhance effective University oversight.

Surrey International Institute

198   In line with the University's International Strategy, it has in recent years focused on overseas alliances. In this regard, the University set up its first substantial partnership when, in 2007, it established links with a university in China. This collaboration takes the form of articulation links and direct delivery of existing University MSc and BSc programmes in Management and Computing by University staff, partner staff and international academic staff appointed by the University.

199   The programmes are delivered through the Surrey International Institute (the Institute), which is managed by a Joint Management Committee chaired by the President of the Chinese partner (when in China), or the Vice-Chancellor of the University (in the UK), with operational oversight being maintained by an Executive Group. Boards of examiners and the boards of studies for each programme are located at the University. Staff-student liaison committees for each programme or cognate group of programmes at the Institute report to the boards of studies. The Validation Board is responsible to Senate for the coordination and implementation of validation, periodic review, approval of programme regulations and curriculum and assessment changes.

200   The Dean of the Surrey International Institute is responsible for executing the decisions of the Joint Management Committee and the Executive Group, organising teaching and research activities and ensuring teaching quality. The partner institution and the University have appointed academic coordinators for the programmes. They are responsible for maintaining the academic links between the two institutions and for the articulation between the two parts of the linked programmes, and report annually to the board of studies. Directors of studies and module coordinators are nominated by the University. The existing external examiners for the University programmes are responsible for assuring standards for students studying in China, the programmes being taught and assessed in English.

201   The programmes are dual degree programmes, with students registered for the awards of both institutions. Under an articulation agreement, undergraduates complete the first two years in China and, subject to satisfying University admissions criteria including the required level of English language, progress to the Surrey International Institute to complete a further two years of study. Suitably qualified postgraduate students normally enter directly onto the University MSc programme taught in China. All students progressing to the University element of programmes may apply to study part of, or the entire programme, in the UK.

202   Since, at the time of the audit, only a small number of postgraduate students had entered the MSc programmes and the first cohort of undergraduate students had only recently progressed to level 2 at the Surrey International Institute (in September 2009), the audit team was not able to evaluate the University's oversight of ongoing quality assurance mechanisms. The team learned that the University had conducted a review of the Institute, including a review of teaching and learning provision and quality assurance, in November 2008, and noted that the management response of February 2009 recorded recommendations and actions to be taken, such as the development of study skills, possible increases in staff and library resources, and the coordination of the supply of textbooks. The team heard that the University had not determined if it would conduct future institutional reviews. In this context, as elsewhere in its collaborative provision, the team considered that it would be desirable for the University to give further consideration to its approach to the monitoring and review of its collaborative provision, particularly with respect to partnership-level quality assurance mechanisms, to enhance effective University oversight.

Study Group UK

203   The University's partnership arrangements include an memorandum of agreement with Study Group UK under which this organisation established and operates the Surrey International Study Centre, located on the University's campus, for the provision of an International Foundation Year at level 0. Successful students are offered direct entry to undergraduate degree programmes of the University. From the documents provided, the audit team formed the view that the arrangements for the quality assurance of this provision were robust.

204   The audit team concluded that the University's arrangements for the management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities in its collaborative provision were effective and fit for purpose.

Section 6: Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

205   The University offers a wide range of postgraduate research degree programmes, including practitioner doctorate programmes that combine formal taught modules and supervised research. There has been a modest increase in the number of postgraduate research students since QAA's Review of research degree programmes in 2006. The Briefing Paper indicated that 1,082 students were currently registered on research degrees at the institution and a further 20 registered at the Associated Institutions (AIs), predominantly at one institution. The audit team heard that the University envisaged significant growth in the postgraduate population in the future, with the majority coming through increased international student numbers.

206   QAA's Review of research degree programmes concluded that the institution's ability to secure and enhance the quality and standards of its research degree programme provision was appropriate and satisfactory. It made one recommendation regarding student feedback (see paragraph 242) and noted good practice in the proactive mechanisms by which the institution kept its postgraduate research provision under review, and in the institutional approach to implementing and monitoring personal development planning (PDP).

207   All research degrees are subject to General Regulations and a comprehensive Code of Practice for Research Degrees is also available to staff and students, both in the Academic Standards Guidelines and on the University portal. The Briefing Paper indicated that this code has been informed by the appropriate sections of the *Code of practice* published by QAA. Revisions to the General Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degrees are discussed by the Regulations Group, brought to the Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Committee (ASQAC) for consideration, approval and recommendation to Senate, and the audit team saw evidence of such discussion.

208   At institution level, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) currently has overall responsibility for overseeing the quality assurance of all postgraduate research programmes, and ASQAC is responsible to Senate for the General Regulations, Code of Practice and processes, and for reviewing the operation at faculty level. This responsibility will transfer to the newly appointed Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) shortly. The University Research and Enterprise Committee is responsible to Senate and Executive Board for the development and review of the institution's research and enterprise strategy and policies. The team saw evidence of detailed consideration by Senate of a proposal to establish a separate Research Degrees Committee.

209   The Student Progress and Assessment Board for Research Programmes, SPAB(R), is responsible to the Senate Progress and Awards Committee for overseeing the assessment and progression of research students, including the approval of nominations for external examiners and the chair of the viva voce examinations. The audit team was able to confirm through minutes of meetings that SPAB(R) was undertaking its responsibilities appropriately.

210   As a result of the restructuring in 2007, each faculty was required to establish a research committee, chaired by the associate dean (research), with responsibility for monitoring, supporting and developing research activity and which has representation on the University Research and Enterprise Committee. However, the audit team found variations within faculties regarding the bodies with nominated responsibility for the oversight of postgraduate research provision. The team would encourage the University to review its current structure in light of the requirement. Oversight for training, supervision and monitoring at faculty level is the responsibility of boards of studies (or similar), which exist for all postgraduate research programmes and report to SPAB(R).

211   At the time of the audit, associate deans (learning and teaching) had responsibility for all programmes, including research, on behalf of the faculty dean, The audit team heard that this responsibility will be transferred to the associate dean (research), in line with the appointment of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise). Postgraduate research directors (or similar) manage the day-to-day operation of the research programmes and chair the boards of studies. The team heard that regular meetings of faculty postgraduate research directors provided an opportunity for sharing best practice and facilitating a move towards commonality of documentation and procedures, including a common postgraduate research handbook.

212   In 2008 the Executive Board set up an ad hoc Postgraduate Research Students Group to carry out a strategic review of the postgraduate student experience and asked all postgraduate research students to respond to an online questionnaire covering all aspects of their postgraduate experience. Although there was broad satisfaction, the review report highlighted a number of issues to be addressed, The report also noted the introduction of postgraduate research graduate schools in two faculties following the best practice in another faculty, with the intention of bringing together postgraduate research students who might otherwise be working in isolation, to inform on research activities and to assist in the dissemination of good research practice across the faculty.

213   The report of the strategic review was recently received and discussed at Senate and has been forwarded to the newly created Research Degree Committee for detailed consideration, further review and action. The Postgraduate Research Students Group had discussed the report and the student representatives had sight of the recommendations. However, the Students' Union officers who met the audit team were less familiar with the survey and had not seen the report.

The research environment

214   Over 70 per cent of the on-campus postgraduate research student community is centred in two faculties. The introduction of graduate schools will facilitate further integration and sharing of research expertise and best practice, via research seminars and other informal arrangements. In contrast, research students based at collaborative partners work individually or in very small groups and there is the potential for intellectual isolation, a matter confirmed by students who met the audit team.

215   Research students have access to extensive library, electronic and information technology (IT) facilities at the University. The students who met the audit team were complimentary about the library and electronic facilities, but were concerned that IT support was less responsive since that service had been centralised (see paragraph 135). Access to University facilities is also available to research students at partner institutions. Overall, the audit team concluded that access to research facilities was a very strong feature of the provision.

216   The strategic review of the postgraduate student experience identified a lack of advice on funding opportunities, for conference attendance etc, as problematic, with less than half of the students who responded to the questionnaire being satisfied with the level of advice provided. The audit team noted that the new Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) will be asked to carry out a review of postgraduate research student funding.

217   The Dean of Students has overall responsibility for the support and welfare of students with the Deputy to the Dean of Students having specific responsibility for postgraduate research matters, including the policies for the welfare and support of research students. The Deputy advises senior management on the mechanisms of support and the provision for postgraduate research students. Pastoral support is provided by the students' principal supervisors. The students who met the audit team had not had contact with the Deputy Dean of Students but were aware of the role. They were complimentary about the personal support provided and reported that all staff were prepared to offer appropriate help and guidance.

218   The Postgraduate Association provides a range of social activities for postgraduate students to encourage integration and for 'promoting the postgraduate cause across the University'. The Association is also involved in induction at both institution and faculty level. There is a dedicated building for postgraduate research students and staff with dining and meeting facilities.

Selection, admission and induction of students

219   The University policy for the admission, registration and induction of postgraduate research students is clearly defined in the General Regulations and the Code of Practice for Research Degrees. The audit team noted that an online initial enquiry form and application process was to be introduced, together with the development of a standard pre-application information pack and specified response times, in the light of the strategic review.

220   In addition to the Code of Practice for Research Degrees and the Code on Good Research Practice, postgraduate research students receive a comprehensive faculty handbook containing detailed information on all aspects of postgraduate study, the contents of which are prescribed in the Code of Practice for Research Degrees and for which a common template is to be developed. The Postgraduate Research Student Group also recommended that future access to the handbooks should be primarily online. The audit team found that the content of the handbooks available was generally aligned with that prescribed in the Code of Practice. In addition to providing valuable information for all students, a section of the Big Guide also includes specific information for postgraduate students, with useful links for more detailed information. The research students who met the team stated that the information they received before and after admission was both useful and accurate. The faculty handbooks were considered to be a good point of reference and the information on the website was also very useful.

221   The Code of Practice for Research Degrees requires appropriate induction to be undertaken and this is provided at both university and faculty level. Where appropriate, elements of the Project Welcome for taught students were now being introduced as part of the postgraduate research student induction programme. An additional induction programme for international students is provided by the International Relations Office. The students who met the audit team confirmed that induction was compulsory and that a series of lectures, workshops and meetings with members of staff had taken place over a six-week period. They reported overall satisfaction with the induction process and the supporting documentation was extremely useful.

222   The audit team concluded that the process of selection, admission and induction of the postgraduate research students was appropriate and comprehensive.

Supervision

223   The regulations regarding the appointment of supervisors are embedded within the General Regulations for Research Degrees. The dean of faculty has overall responsibility for the appointment of up to three supervisors per student, where nominations come from boards of studies, with due consideration of the HEFCE guideline on maximum number of students per supervisor. Campus-based students are allocated a principal supervisor and normally a co-supervisor. One of these must already have successfully supervised a doctoral degree. In addition, students in collaborative provision are assigned one or more collaborative supervisors.

224   The appointment and eligibility of the supervisors are described in detail in the Code of Practice for Research Degrees. For students based at collaborative partners, the collaborative supervisor supports the University principal and co-supervisors by providing 'immediate and continuous guidance at the point where the research is being undertaken'.

225   The Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice includes three two-hour dedicated sessions on 'Issues and dilemmas in supervising and examining research students'. Co-supervisors who do not take part in the Certificate, for example Research Fellows, attend an institutional training module on research supervision. The staff who met the audit team found the course very useful, including the sessions on research supervision. The strategic review of postgraduate research student experience recommended more training for supervisors, with a requirement to attend training courses at least once every three years, with Registry being responsible for the regulatory and process training. Additional faculty-specific training was also recommended. The University noted that this would be taken up by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise).

226   Further online support for staff supervising postgraduate research students is available through the staff pages of the institutional website, with access to the Code of Practice for Research Degrees and the Code on Good Research Practice. The staff development portal provides details of additional training.

227   The students who met the audit team were very satisfied with their supervision arrangements which ranged from daily to weekly discussions. They confirmed that regular formal supervision sessions were also held with the principal supervisor. The team heard that students at collaborative partners were in regular email contact with their principal supervisors and were well supported by the collaborative supervisors. The students considered that the supervision provided was highly effective.

228   The audit team concluded that the procedures for the appointment and training of supervisors and the supervisory arrangements were appropriate and provided a sound basis for postgraduate research students to develop and progress their research projects towards a successful conclusion.

Progress and review arrangements

229   The University Code of Practice for Research Degrees requires regular meetings with the supervisor(s) in order to monitor progress; the frequency of such meetings to be agreed jointly. The Code strongly recommends that records of such meetings and the outcomes are kept. For those students based at AIs and other remote locations, the Code of Practice for Research Degrees requires that an effective method of regular contact with the principal supervisor be agreed.

230   Formal review meetings are required for all postgraduate research students at six-monthly intervals where formal feedback is provided to the student. Progress and any concerns arising from these meetings are then reported to the faculty dean (or nominee) and, if necessary, forwarded to SPAB(R) for action. Review meetings can be conducted at a distance, using a method agreed between the student and the principal supervisor, such as through video conferencing. One of these meetings forms the basis for the Annual Progress Report which must be submitted by the 31 October each year.

231   The University operates a common system for annual progress reporting using a standard pro forma which is available electronically. Prior to the review, students are required to produce a summary of their progress together with details of conferences attended, published articles, training activities, teaching duties during the previous year and further training requirements. This section of the report is submitted, together with the principal supervisor's report, to the Postgraduate Research Director ahead of the review meeting. Future objectives agreed at the review meeting are recorded and there is opportunity for both students and supervisors to make additional comments. These reports are submitted to the faculty dean (or nominee) and a list of the reviews undertaken, together with any matters arising, is forwarded to SPAB(R) for action. The Code of Practice for Research Degrees presents clear guidelines on action in the event of unsatisfactory progress. The students who met the audit team confirmed the arrangements for progress meetings, were satisfied with these arrangements and considered that the Annual Progress Report provided an excellent overview of the year.

232   The University's Academic Standards Guidelines require boards of studies to review postgraduate research programmes, including practitioner doctorates and collaborative arrangements, on an annual basis using a structured approach via a central template. The Postgraduate Research Annual Programme Review (APR) provides a comprehensive report on student recruitment, progress, completion and employment, as well as supervision and training for all postgraduate research students, including those studying under collaborative provision arrangements. Student feedback and external examiners' views are recorded and the board of studies is also required to comment specifically on the collaborative provision arrangements.

233   APR reports are submitted to the Quality Support Section where an institutional overview report is prepared for ASQAC. The audit team viewed the latest report and were able to confirm its comprehensive nature. Concerns about the inconsistent use of the revised APR template, which includes the requirement for an action plan, were highlighted; over 35 per cent of the reports lacked an action plan. The team would encourage the University to take steps to ensure that, in future, all boards of studies must use the revised template.

234   The Briefing Paper suggested that ASQAC visits provided a mechanism for monitoring the effectiveness of the quality processes and adherence to the Code of Practice for Research Degrees and General Regulations at faculty level. The audit team examined the documents provided for two visits, the visit reports, and the summary report covering all four visits during 2008 and noted that all included sections on postgraduate research provision. The summary report identified a number of recurring themes in relation to postgraduate research student experience, in particular, updating faculty documentation, more consistency and focus on student feedback in APR and improvements in the support mechanisms for supervisors. The audit team concluded that the process was comprehensive and fit for purpose.

Development of research and other skills

235   Centrally provided generic training, through the postgraduate skills development programme, is overseen and evaluated by the Researcher Training Steering Group (RTSG), in consultation with faculties, and reporting to the University Research and Enterprise Committee and the University Learning and Teaching Committee. The day-to-day coordination of all centrally provided postgraduate research training is undertaken by the Research Training and Development Coordinator who is based within the Student Personal Learning and Study Hub and is a member of RTSG.

236   The University's postgraduate skills development programme website provides extensive information on the wide range of training modules available, PDP and postgraduate regulations, and with a link to student support services information. A dedicated staff page provides information to academic staff on the operation of the programme. Although attendance at these training events is not currently compulsory, minutes of the recent RTSG meeting suggest that a large proportion of newly registered students are attending.

237   Additional language support is available via the Centre for Language Studies. The audit team was informed that all international students are tested by the Centre and assessed as to the level of training required.

238   Centralised training complements that provided at faculty level which is overseen by the boards of studies (or similar). The audit team saw evidence of a comprehensive Postgraduate Research Training Handbook for newly registered postgraduate research students, providing details of the compulsory courses which map the Research Councils' Training Requirements for Research Students.

239   The Institutional audit of 2004 considered it desirable to 'ensure there is a comprehensive mechanism in place to check that all postgraduate teachers and demonstrators have received the required training and support'. Postgraduate research students who undertake teaching duties and/or demonstrating are required, under the Code of Practice for Research Degrees and supplemented by a Policy on Student Teaching Assistants within the Academic Standards Guidelines, to attend institutional-level training. The Centre for Learning and Development (CLD) provides a series of workshops for postgraduate teaching assistants (PGTAs), and the original suite of three workshops is being extended to provide a programme leading to Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy for PGTAs. The audit team was informed that the use of postgraduate research students as teaching assistants was limited, that they were highly selective and that only senior postgraduate research students were used. The Code of Practice for Research Degrees requires faculties to maintain a record of teaching and associated duties, and a function of the ASQAC visits is to ensure that faculties are complying with these requirements. Students who met the team and who undertook teaching and related duties had attended the training and found it to be appropriate.

240   Other training resources available include library web pages to support researchers (The Researcher's Gateway and The Researchers Companion) and training sessions run by the CLD for postgraduate research students involved in teaching and demonstration.

241   The audit team formed the view that the training provided centrally and at faculty level for postgraduate research students was comprehensive. Furthermore, the team is highly supportive of the University's intention to introduce training placements for postgraduate research students. The research students who met the team had been offered a wide range of training opportunities, including the postgraduate skills development programme, and were complimentary about the provision. They reported that they were required to provide (as part of annual review) and retain a record of all training undertaken, including that associated with teaching, demonstrating, marking and laboratory supervision.

Feedback mechanisms

242   QAA's Review of research degree programmes suggested that the institution may wish to consider strengthening its student feedback mechanisms at school (now faculty) level by the use of staff-student liaison committees. The operational mechanisms for postgraduate student representation are faculty dependent. Whereas some faculties operate with dedicated postgraduate research staff-student liaison committees, others have student representatives on school or programme-level boards of studies for all but reserved business. The audit team reviewed minutes of these meeting and confirmed that, when considered together with annual progress reporting, adequate opportunity for student feedback was available. Furthermore, postgraduate research students sitting on boards of studies were involved in more strategic discussions and decision-making at programme level. Other informal arrangements exist, such as lunchtime meetings of postgraduate research students in Computer Science. The postgraduate research students who met the audit team confirmed that they had appropriate representation on staff-student liaison committees and boards of studies. The team concluded that the University had, therefore, addressed fully the issue of student representation identified in the 2006 QAA Review of research degree programmes report.

243   The Briefing Paper stated that the newly formed Research Degree Committee would continue to review postgraduate research provision, started through the Strategic Review in 2008, and would also be informed by data from the International Student Barometer survey in 2008.

Assessment

244   The assessment of research degrees and the conduct of the final examination is subject to the requirements of the General Regulations and the Code of Practice for Research Degrees. Recommendations for external examiners, internal examiners and the chair of the viva voce examinations are made by the dean of faculty, in consultation with the supervisors. The students who met the audit team confirmed that they understood what was required of them in the final assessment. The Students' Union representatives reported a perceived improvement in the assessment process by the introduction of independent chairs for the viva voce examination.

245   The audit team was satisfied that the assessment process was robust and that opportunity existed for external examiners to comment on the conduct of the examination and any other important issues.

Representation

246   Details of grievance and appeals procedures are provided in the Code of Practice for Research Degrees and faculties are also required to include these procedures in faculty handbooks. The audit team was able to confirm that this requirement was being fulfilled. The students who met the team were aware of these procedures and where they could be reviewed. They reported that, in addition to the information in the General Regulations and Code of Practice, members of staff were very helpful in providing appropriate advice on such issues as plagiarism, unsatisfactory progress, and fitness for practice etc.

247   Overall, the audit team formed the view that the arrangements for postgraduate research students were highly appropriate and met the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*. The team considered the effectiveness of the quality procedures and strength of support for postgraduate research students to be a feature of good practice.

Section 7: Published information

248   Responsibility for the accuracy of the undergraduate and postgraduate prospectuses and the recruitment and publicity material published on the University's website resides with the Marketing and Communications Department, which also coordinates the production of subject leaflets across the institution to ensure consistency and adherence to University design. Prospectuses are revised annually in consultation with faculties and with relevant sections of the support services. The checking of the accuracy of equivalent information for collaborative partners depends on the nature of the collaboration. For Associated Institutions (AIs), the responsibility lies with Registry. For other forms of collaboration, responsibility is at faculty level and undertaken by faculty marketing officers. For AIs, the Code of Practice for References to the University of Surrey by Associated Institutions governs the use of the University name, the use of and specifications for the University's corporate identity, descriptions of the relationship between the institution and the University, and procedures for approval of published text. The University does not publish programme specifications, although prospectuses set out summary information on programme structure, content and applicant profiles. Students who met the audit team confirmed that prospectuses, the website and open days had provided them with accurate information prior to entry to the University.

249   The audit team noted the extensive range of information provided in the Big Guide. This is a guide for new students, available electronically and set out in an attractive and user-friendly style. There is information on the academic year, accommodation, what to pack, stress free communal living, health care, faculties, induction, about the town, suggested recipes, money matters and the Professional Training Year, with a separate section for postgraduate students. The Big Guide, identified by students as a comprehensive and useful document, is supplemented by a series of Mini Guides, for use by all students, covering services including accommodation, additional learning support, careers, catering services and financial planning. Like the Big Guide,

the Mini Guides are presented in an attractive and accessible style. The team considered the Big Guide, along with Project Welcome, are features that contribute to the comprehensive nature of induction, which it commends as good practice.

250   The Academic Standards Guidelines set out guidelines for the content of student handbooks, specifying contents requirements together with recommendations or suggestions as to content. Similar guidance is provided to AIs in the Quality Assurance Handbook for the Associated Institutions. From the sample handbooks available, including handbooks produced in collaborative provision, the audit team concluded that the requirements were generally met. Students reported that their course information was excellent, describing handbooks incorporating general course information as well as module-specific information. Students seemed to be aware of the complaints and appeals procedures, although none reported having used these.

251   The audit team was able to verify that the University provides the type of information required for the Unistats website, and that required by Annex F of *HEFCE 06/45*. External examiner reports are now shared with students through their representatives on boards of studies (see paragraph 62).

252   The audit team concluded 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 standards of its awards.