QAA

University of Leeds

March 2008

Annex to the report

Contents

University of Leeds

Introduction

A team of auditors from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visited the University of Leeds from 10 to 14 March 2008 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 of the University.

Outcomes of the institutional audit

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

- confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the academic standards of the awards that it offers

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

Institutional approach to quality enhancement

The audit team found that the University takes deliberate actions at the institutional level to improve the quality of the learning opportunities available to students. The team formed the view that the development, consistent use and presentation of the Strategy Map as a tool for enhancement were features of good practice. The team also identified the desirability of the University considering improving its ability to use key themes extracted from reviews and reports and use them to enhance practice across the institution.

Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

Research degree programmes, and the students registered on them play a major part in the new vision and strategy for the University to secure a place in the top fifty universities worldwide. The audit team concluded that the University's procedures for the support, assessment and supervision of research degrees align with the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice), Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes.*

Published information

The audit team established that the University provides an extensive and accessible range of published information for prospective and current students both electronically and in hard copy. The team concluded that reliance can reasonably be placed in the integrity and reliability of the information that the University publishes about its educational provision.

Features of good practice

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

- the development, consistent use and presentation of the Strategy Map as a tool for enhancement (paragraph 13)

- the varied mechanisms for making research-led teaching increasingly a distinctive feature of the University (paragraphs 20, 131, 204)

- the importance given to teaching as well as to research in the University's appointment and support of academic staff (paragraphs 20, 206)

- the development of mechanisms across the University for the consideration and publicising of responses to National Student Survey results (paragraphs 117, 142).

Recommendations for action

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

Recommendations for action that the audit team considers advisable:

- ensure that learning outcomes contained in programme specifications are, as the University expects, specific to each programme (paragraphs 47, 50)

- check Codes in order to ensure compliance with its expectations, where, through school Codes of Practice and in order to reflect disciplinary differences, it permits variation in practice in assessment (paragraphs 57, 58).

Recommendations for action that the audit team considers desirable:

- where, to reflect disciplinary differences, it permits variation in practice in personal supervision, check that variation in order to ensure that it is still within the University's expectations and in order to facilitate the spread of good practice (paragraphs 22, 160)

- improve its ability to use key themes extracted from reports and reviews, and use them in order to enhance practice across the institution (paragraphs 23, 42, 192)

- consider its methods for ensuring that it has a clear, comprehensive overview of the current status of practice with regard to changes in the Academic Infrastructure (paragraphs 76, 79)

- enhance, through greater provision of study space and facilitation of shared training across faculties, opportunities for research students to meet other postgraduate research students in their own and other disciplines (paragraphs 147, 254, 256).

Section 1: Introduction and background

The institution and its mission

1   The University of Leeds received its Charter as an independent University in 1904, although it can trace its origins back to the founding of the Leeds Medical School in 1831, and it is now one of the largest British universities. During the current academic year, over 26,000 full-time and 4,100 part-time students are studying on a total of 550 undergraduate and 320 postgraduate award-bearing programmes of study. The University has nearly 8,000 staff and over 1,800 research postgraduate students. The University is also a major research institution.

2   Following the appointment of the present Vice Chancellor in 2004, the University renewed its strategic direction with a new vision that is encapsulated in a strategic plan and a 'Strategy Map' that underpin all decision-making. A key goal is that 'By 2015 our distinctive ability to integrate world-class research, scholarship and education will have secured us a place amongst the top 50 universities in the world". Being 'world-class' is the vision set at the top of the University's Strategy Map.

3   The Strategy Map provides a succinct statement of agreed purposes, aims and values. The four key themes of the Strategy Map are to:

- translate excellence in research and scholarship into

- learning opportunities for students

- deliver excellent and inspirational learning and teaching

- provide an exceptional student experience

- increase participation of those who can benefit.

4   A crucial element in the University's definition of excellence is the integration of learning and teaching with research. The aim is that learning and teaching should take place in a research-intensive environment in which programmes are constantly refreshed by new research findings, and students learn about the research process and how new knowledge is created.

5   The University has a long history of regional collaborative arrangements with a small number of higher and further education colleges. The University's overseas collaborations comprise a small number of distance-taught programmes with some support from the overseas partner, and articulation agreements which allow students advanced entry onto specified programmes on the Leeds campus where the curricular match is appropriate.

6   The University has reviewed its strategy for collaboration; in the new Strategic Plan it has taken the decision to withdraw from all validation arrangements and not consider any new validation or franchise arrangements. It is now seeking to focus on faculty-based collaborations that make use of or complement existing expertise. The University has ambitions for more international collaborations, but plans are still being evolved, and it is not yet entirely clear what form these collaborations might take.

The information base for the audit

7   The information available to the audit team included the following documents:

- the Institutional Audit Report published in March 2004.

- the Collaborative Audit Report published in March 2006.

- the Special Review of Postgraduate Research Programmes published in July 2006.

- the Overseas Quality Audit Report on Oman published in 2005

- the Foundation Degrees Review of the York St John College published in 2005.

8   The University provided the audit team with a range of documents and information including:

- a helpful and informative Briefing Paper with hyperlinks to a range of supporting material

- intranet access to a wide range of internal and published documents including:

- audit trails of two recent programme-level reviews.

- additional documentation requested by the audit team during the visit

9   The audit team was grateful to representatives of Leeds University Union who produced a student written submission that included detailed analysis of data relating to student opinions.

Developments since the last audit

10   The University has taken action on two advisable and three desirable recommendations for action appearing in the last Institutional Audit Report (2004). The University has revised consultation processes and thinks that they now work in a satisfactory way. The audit team saw evidence for this in the way that the new Strategic Plan and Strategy Map have been developed. The University has also revised its periodic review processes, including the integration of reviews of taught and research provision, and feels that there has been an improvement. The team saw an example of the revised process in operation and it appeared to be functioning effectively.

11   Information for students has been improved by provision through the 'Student Portal', and the University continues to work with the Leeds University Union to develop this. Although there was some evidence in the student written submission of problems with information about modules, and the audit team heard of some other information problems from students whom they met, the team formed the view that students are now largely satisfied with the information provided to them.

12   The University has restructured support for learning and teaching, but believes that further development would be beneficial. The University accepts that there is still need to continue work on variations in practice. The audit team recognised current activity and shared the University's view that more work is needed; there is further comment on specific areas later in this report.

13   In its Briefing Document, the University drew the attention of the audit team to several other recent developments. The University views the new Strategic Plan and supporting Strategy Map, developed in consultation with staff and students, as particularly important developments. The team was told that the Strategy Map and the values in it underpin all decision-making and inform strategic activities, and that the development, consistent use and presentation of the Strategy Map form a tool for enhancement. The team found that the Strategy Map was well presented on the website, and that staff and students were well aware of the map and referred to it as important. The Learning and Teaching Strategy has been revised in the light of the Strategy Map, and enhancement priorities are set within it. The team was also told of various ways in which the map informed developments within the University, such as the focus on the integration of learning and teaching with research. The team formed the view that the development, consistent use and presentation of the Strategy Map as a tool for enhancement were an example of good practice.

14   A partnership agreement for learning and teaching has been drawn up between the University and taught programme students. This sets out succinctly the respective responsibilities of the University, the schools and the students. Significant consultation went into the drawing up of this document, and the team heard support for it from both staff and students. However some concerns were expressed by students that more could be done to publicise the document, and the University sees work on publicizing and implementing the Agreement as continuing

15   At institutional level a strategic initiative, 'Leeds for Life', is being developed. This project is in its early stages, and is intended, amongst other things, to increase student awareness of skills, to develop support for students, and to assist with employability. A new purpose-built student centre due to open in 2008 will bring together student administration and support facilities.

Institutional framework for managing academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities

16   Following a review of corporate governance by the University's governing body, the Council in 2005, a tier of committees was removed. The current structure was clearly explained in the briefing document. The Senate holds ultimate responsibility for academic matters, but in practice day-to-day responsibility is delegated to the University Learning and Teaching Board), which is chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching). There are separate research and graduate boards. The Learning and Teaching Board has subcommittees that include standing groups on collaborative provision, widening participation and study abroad.

17   To help to ensure effective integration of the deliberative and executive structures, the Pro-Vice-Chancellors for Learning and Teaching and for Research are also members of the Faculty Management Group and the Vice Chancellor's Executive Group. Integrated planning is reinforced in various ways, for example there is an annual one-day event for faculties to present their strategies to the Executive Group, with representatives of service areas present.

18   Membership of the Learning and Teaching Board includes Pro-Deans for Learning and Teaching from all faculties, and representatives of support services are in attendance. The Learning and Teaching Board is responsible for monitoring and making recommendations on strategy, operational management and implementation in learning and teaching, and developing, monitoring and reviewing policies and procedures. The audit team saw agendas, minutes and papers illustrating these functions, and showing issues being referred between the Learning and Teaching Board and faculty and school learning and teaching boards.

19   There are nine faculties within the University, and each has faculty and school learning and teaching committees. The faculty learning and teaching committees have responsibility for quality assurance for all taught programmes within the faculty, including the approval and monitoring of programmes, review of all external examiners' reports and review of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies' reports. Each faculty Learning and Teaching Committee is chaired by the Pro-Dean for Learning and Teaching. A faculty Management Group coordinates the work of the faculty. Structures within faculties vary, but all arrangements include school Learning and Teaching Committees, and the chairs of these committees sit on the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee. The audit team saw various examples of policies and issues being referred up and down through the Learning and Teaching Committee network, and also heard examples of how the Pro-Deans for Learning and Teaching can work together to spread good practice.

20   The new Learning and Teaching Strategy is seen by the University as being very important in developing the management of academic standards and learning opportunities. The Learning and Teaching Strategy focuses on providing cutting edge programmes and a stimulating environment, and developing outstanding graduates. Research-led teaching and the importance given to teaching as well as research are seen as important elements of this strategy. The audit team heard many examples from both staff and students of how research was informing teaching, and found this to be a good and distinctive feature of what the University offered students. The team also heard of a variety of ways in which good teaching was a prominent criterion in the appointment of staff and academic developments.

21   The University manages the standards of its academic provision and monitors the effective discharge of its degree awarding powers through policies and procedures which are available electronically. A single set of Ordinances, Regulations and Rules for Award applies to all taught programmes. Detailed standard procedures and templates are used for processes such as the approval of programmes and modules, and the approval of new collaborative arrangements. The team saw examples of these standard forms being used effectively.

22   In some areas there is less prescription, with the University providing a central policy, but allowing schools to provide detail to meet local needs. This is intended to allow for disciplinary differences. There is, for example, a model template for a Code of Practice on Assessment, but schools are free to choose a format relevant to their discipline, as long as this includes the necessary core information. The University affirms that it is confident about oversight being maintained through processes such as periodic review and review by the Learning and Teaching Support Unit, and that it is satisfied that it is achieving an effective balance between the need for an institutional framework and appropriate flexibility to allow for disciplinary differences. The audit team saw some examples of review. These tended to focus on problems that had arisen, and in some areas the team found quite wide variations in general approach and in detail that were not clearly justified by the needs of a discipline, for example in personal supervision. The student written submission made some comments on variance of practice, and the team heard from students of variations in practice concerning both personal supervision and the use of personal development plans. These variations could be confusing for students, and opportunities to make best use of good practice are missed. The University accepts in its briefing document that it may not yet have achieved the best balance between local responsibility and oversight by central University authorities. The team agrees with the University that more work is desirable in managing and overseeing variation.

23   A significant administrative structure supports the management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. The Learning and Teaching Support unit coordinates the activities of the central teams which monitor and support learning and teaching, and it has direct contact with all schools through its role in providing the administrative support for the Learning and Teaching Board, the faculty learning and teaching committees, the Pro-Deans for Learning and Teaching, and for Student Academic Experience Review teams. It also oversees the

external examiner system and the provision of staff development. It assists in monitoring the effectiveness of the University policies and in identifying areas where development is necessary. The Academic Quality and Standards Team has a contact in each faculty, and it works with the Pro-Deans and chair of the Affiliated Institutions Committee to collate comments from reports on undergraduate and postgraduate provision in order to provide summaries for presentation to faculty learning and teaching committees. The audit team saw samples of the summaries prepared, and heard from staff who judged the support provided by the Learning and Teaching Support Unit to be good. The team formed the view that, while there was good administrative support and summaries were helpful, it would be desirable for more to be done to extract key themes from reports and reviews, and to use them in order to enhance practice across the institution.

24   The Graduate Board is chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research. The Board oversees policy and procedures for all research degrees and higher doctorates. The Pro-Dean for Research from each faculty or the appropriate individual specifically appointed to chair the Faculty Graduate School Committee for each faculty are members. The audit team saw minutes showing supervision of students and consideration of policies.

25   The University offers a wide range of joint honours programmes. The audit team heard from both staff and students that the opportunities provided were attractive to students. The team was told that a Centre for Joint Honours was responsible for management of cross-disciplinary programmes, with interdisciplinary provision being managed by relevant faculties. The responsibilities of the Centre for Joint Honours included matters relating to admissions, support and assessment. The team learnt from the student written submission and from talking to staff and students that some difficulties were experienced by some students on cross-disciplinary programmes, who, for example, did not always feel that support in areas like personal supervision was as coherent as for students working within a single faculty. The University informed the team that it had initiated a review of the cross-disciplinary portfolio, and that it anticipated that the outcome of this review would address the concerns raised.

26   Academic standards for collaborative provision are the responsibility of the Learning and Teaching Board, through the Standing Group on Collaborative Provision. There are comprehensive procedures for the approval of new programmes, and these are available on the intranet; the audit team saw examples of the procedures in use. The team was told that the monitoring of collaborative provision was carried out using the same methods as were used for internal programmes.

27   It was the view of the audit team that the framework for the management of academic standards and learning opportunities adopted by the institution was well designed, clear and operated in an effective way.

Section 2: Institutional management of academic standards

Approval, monitoring and review of award standards

28   The University states that it manages the standards of its academic provision through its policies and procedures, which have been developed with careful note having been taken of external reference points. Typically, policies and procedures are defined at university level, while responsibility for applying them is devolved to school, or sometimes faculty level. Local interpretation and adaptation by schools is allowed, as long as University policy is not contravened.

29   The standards of the University's taught awards are set at approval and are primarily monitored through annual health checks, programme reviews and periodic reviews known as student academic experience reviews. As the majority of these mechanisms are also concerned with the management of academic quality, those aspects most closely associated with academic standards, namely the use of external reference points in programme design, approval,

monitoring and review; programme specifications; the assessment of students; external examining; and the use of relevant management information are dealt with under the heading of the management of academic standards; the remainder are covered in Section 3, Institutional management of learning opportunities.

30   With respect to the management of academic standards, the University's collaborative provision is not subject to procedures and processes different from those described here.

31   The Learning and Teaching Board is responsible for the oversight of the academic standards of taught awards on behalf of the Senate, while it is the Graduate Board that oversees the management of standards of the University's research degree provision. Also, research degrees are governed by a separate ordinance from that which governs taught programmes. Owing to these significant differences, all aspects of the University's management of research degree programmes are therefore covered in Section 6, Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students.

External examiners

32   The University regards external examiners as an essential part of its quality assurance mechanisms. At least one external examiner is appointed to each of the University's undergraduate and postgraduate taught programmes. In some disciplines, a number of cognate programmes may be combined within the remit of a single external examiner. Additional external examiners may be appointed for specific modules, especially where the subject is broad and specialist expertise is required, or where the number of students is high.

33   External examiners are responsible to the Senate through the Learning and Teaching Board and the faculty learning and teaching committee appropriate to the subject. Heads of school submit nominations for the appointment of external examiners to the Academic Quality and Standards Team, which seeks the approval of the chair of the relevant faculty learning and teaching committee on behalf of the University.

34   The University's normal expectation is that external examiners will be of the rank of Professor, Reader or Senior Lecturer. However, the possibility is not excluded of appointing individuals of lecturer grade. Where a nominated external examiner has no previous experience of external examining, a serving external examiner is allocated as a mentor to the new examiner on appointment. Mentors are formally appointed by the University and receive an additional fee for this additional role. Those receiving mentoring are asked for feedback.

35   The procedures for external examiners of taught programmes are available to staff on the Academic Quality and Standards Team website, and they are sent annually to external examiners in the form of a booklet. The booklet also contains other relevant information, such as extracts from ordinances and information on the classification of degrees. A dedicated website is provided for external examiners.

36   External examiners are encouraged to write their reports on a standard form available on the website. The form invites external examiners who are completing their term to reflect on their experience and to comment on any changes they have witnessed with respect to standards and enhancement during their tenure. Completed forms are sent to the Academic Quality and Standards Team, which maintains oversight of external examining of all taught programmes.

37   External examiners' reports are sent to the school or department for consideration and for a response to be made to the external examiner. The annual health check for each school considers all external examiners' reports and the responses made to them. The appropriate faculty learning and teaching committee, which has two student representatives, monitors that issues raised by external examiners have been dealt with effectively. The University's briefing paper notes that from 2008-09 schools will be asked to ensure that external examiners' reports are considered at a meeting attended by student representatives.

38   Summary reports of issues for the faculty are prepared by the corresponding Pro-Dean and the Academic Quality and Standards Team for consideration by the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee. The Team produces an annual overview of undergraduate external examiners' reports, which is presented to the Learning and Teaching Board.

39   The audit team found that the University makes the role of external examiners and University colleagues very clear through its publications. All aspects of the procedures for the external examination of taught programmes are compatible with the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 4: External examining*. A scrutiny of external examiners' reports over the last three academic years revealed a noticeable increase in external examiners' satisfaction with the support that they receive.

40   As the University's policy states, external examiners are usually senior academics from other universities. Some external examiners are from universities abroad, which is consistent with the international elements of the University's Strategy Map. The external examiners' reports seen by the audit team were overwhelmingly approving. Problems raised by external examiners were adopted as items for action by schools. Written responses to external examiners engaged with all aspects of their reports, whether positive or negative. The team confirmed that, in addition to being used in annual health checks, external examiners' reports and responses to them are used in programme review. The team also learnt that external examiners' reports are normally sent to the programme leader for consideration by the whole programme team.

41   While there is clear evidence that the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee has oversight of responses to external examiners' reports and receives the summary reports noted above, the minutes evince little discussion of common themes arising from the reports. Similarly, the minutes of the February 2008 meeting of the Learning and Teaching Board, which discussed the overview report mentioned above, do not generally record that identification of good practice to disseminate had occurred. The minutes do record, however, the need to share good practice and potential problem areas with faculty learning and teaching committees, without noting specific issues that might be most pertinent to the University.

42   The audit team concluded that the University's approach to external examining was making a significant contribution to the security of the academic standards of its awards. However, the team also concluded that it would be desirable for the University to improve its ability to use key themes extracted from reports and reviews in order to enhance practice across the institution.

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

43   The University publishes a composite listing of learning outcomes and level descriptors for taught programmes. As the Briefing Paper notes, these descriptors are based upon *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ).

44   The University requires that subject benchmarks be used in the approval of new programmes and in the periodic Student Academic Experience Review process. External reviewers are asked specifically to comment on alignment with relevant subject benchmark statements. When new or revised subject benchmarks are published, they are sent to the appropriate school with the expectation that they be used. The audit found that subject benchmarks are used effectively in programme approval and during periodic review.

45   Professional, statutory and regulatory body requirements are also taken into account during programme design and review. Accreditation reports, and responses to them, are overseen by faculty learning and teaching committees, while summaries go to the Learning and Teaching Board. External examiners are asked to comment on provision in the light of professional and disciplinary requirements. The audit team found that the University engages effectively with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies in meeting the requirements of those bodies.

46   Separate forms are used for the proposal of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. Each form embodies the relevant subset of the University's level descriptors. The approval process culminates in the production of a signed copy of the programme specification, which is held by the Academic Quality and Standards Team. Strict control is exercised over versions of programme and module specifications, which are held in a programme catalogue and a module catalogue respectively. Both catalogues are easily accessible online through the University's intranet.

47   The audit team found that many undergraduate and postgraduate programme specifications have generic learning outcomes, which have not been tailored to be subject-specific, despite the University's requirement to do so. Consequently, quite dissimilar programmes list identical learning outcomes in their programme specifications. Where this happens, the repetition also tends to apply to assessment, such that it is frequently not possible to determine from the programme specification any subject-specific assessment strategy. Online module specifications are specific with respect to subject matter and assessment plan.

48   In addition to the use of external expert opinion in its approval and review processes, the University is exploring the possibility of comparing programmes more widely, such as using evidence from employers or seeking the views of experts from non-UK European institutions. This aspiration was confirmed by the meeting with the Vice-Chancellor. As noted above, some external examiners are based abroad. The audit team also heard examples of how employers inform the curricula.

49   The University engages with the Bologna Process in a variety of ways. Its combined diploma supplement and transcript was praised by a Department for Education and Science publication presented to the Bologna Ministerial Conference in May 2006. A Bologna Group of the University reports significant developments to the Learning and Teaching Board and Graduate Board. Members of this Group engage in events that relate to the Bologna Process.

50   Overall, the audit team found that the University makes effective use of external reference points in its management of standards. However, the team advises the University to ensure that learning outcomes contained in programme specifications are, as the University expects, specific to each programme.

Assessment policies and regulations

51   The University regards assessment as an integrated and beneficial part of student learning, which, to be effective, requires that assessment methods and processes be valid and transparent and have integrity. The University's Code of Practice, which is appended to the University's Learning and Teaching Partnership Agreement, states that: 'The University will provide for all students and staff access to the Ordinances and Regulations and clear and transparent Rules for Award for all programmes of study'. The Code of Practice goes on to say that 'Schools must have, and update annually, a code of practice on assessment which provides clear information for students and staff on all school assessment policies and practices'. All school codes are required to provide clear information on assessment requirements and deadlines. The University also publishes a minimum requirement template for codes of practice on assessment. All should cover management of the assessment process; module assessment and examination; conduct of students in assessment; appeals; and course-specific details.

52   The University provided the audit team with an example Code of Practice from one school in each of the nine faculties. While some of these documents were similarly structured and followed the template closely, others were less obviously aligned. Mandatory areas were largely, but not always covered, in varying degrees of detail.

53   Assessment policy and practice is most accessible to students through their handbooks. Although the format of these handbooks varies considerably, examples seen by the audit team covered assessment policy and practice well. Students met during the course of the audit

confirmed that they knew what was expected of them, through their course handbooks, and through explanations from their tutors when assignments were set. The conduct of assessment is covered well in handbooks. The University's policies on late submission and plagiarism, for example, are consistently treated in documentation. Some variation in tightness of control over extensions to deadlines was evident from the Codes of Practice.

54   The partnership agreement states that schools will provide systematic and timely feedback on students' work. Codes of Practice and handbooks refer to specific practice at the discipline level. A number of Codes express the endeavour to return feedback sheets within two weeks. The University has focused on improving feedback given to students as part of its response to the results of the National Student Survey. Students confirmed to the team that the speed of assessment turnaround had improved and that they were largely satisfied with the quality and timeliness of feedback.

55   The University defines the terms of reference and responsibilities for school boards of examiners. The appropriate faculty learning and teaching committee approves membership of boards. Mitigation is handled in accordance with the University's regulations. Central university oversight of the operation of examination boards is provided through several mechanisms. The Academic Quality and Standards Team publishes guidance for the minuting of examination boards through its website. The minutes of all examination boards are sent to this team and are provided for scrutiny in programme review and also form part of the evidence for periodic review. The Student Performance Analysis Reporting and Classification System highlights anomalies to boards and faculties. The profile of awards across all undergraduate programmes is considered annually by the Learning and Teaching Board with a view to identifying trends.

56   Professional, statutory and regulatory body requirements for assessment are built into the design of programmes and assessment strategies. These are routinely monitored through review and through visits by the accrediting body.

57   The University's Code of Practice states that 'The School Code of Practice on assessment will be considered annually by the student:staff committee'. It also states that it is the Deans' responsibility to ensure that school Codes comply with the University's Code. The audit team was variously told that it was the responsibility of Pro-Deans for Learning and Teaching or that it was done through annual health checks. The team saw one annual health check where checking of the Codes was an agenda item; however, this is not a standard item on the suggested agenda on the Academic Quality and Standards Team website. The team found little explicit evidence to confirm that Codes of Practice are routinely formally revised and checked against the University's template.

58   The audit team found that the University's assessment policies and regulations make an effective contribution to its management of standards, and that they are consistent with the precepts of the *Code of practice, Sections 4, 5 and 6, External examining, Academic appeals and student complaints on academic matters*, and *Assessment of students.* However, the team advises the University to ensure that it checks its internal codes in order to ensure a match with its expectations, where, through School Codes of Practice and in order to reflect disciplinary differences, it permits variation in practice in assessment.

Management information - statistics

59   Student statistics are used in a variety of ways and at various levels. Data are principally derived from the University's student record system. Summaries of such measures as student numbers, student achievement, student progression and retention are routinely prepared at levels appropriate to school, faculty and university level committees. Each of the University's review processes uses supporting data on student progression and achievement. These statistics are centrally provided by the Academic Planning and Performance Office.

60   Management information derived from student statistics is used in several ways. The annual Integrated Planning Exercise, during which school and faculty strategic plans are considered, relies on key performance indicators, which include student recruitment, admissions, retention, progression and achievement. The University instigated a retention project in April 2007, with a view to improving the retention of undergraduate students. An interim report was presented to the Learning and Teaching Board in February 2008. That report contained an analysis of retention by school, together with a comparison with competitors.

61   It was clear to the audit team that the University makes effective use of management information in its management of the academic standards of its awards.

62   The audit team found that the University's systems for the management of academic standards were robust and operating as intended. In particular, there is strong and scrupulous use of external examiners in summative assessment, and those examiners are well supported. The University makes effective use of external input in approval and review processes in the establishment and maintenance of the academic standards of awards. Management information is used routinely in the management of standards. All of these features support a judgement of confidence in the soundness of the University's current and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards.

Section 3: Institutional management of learning opportunities

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

63   The University considers that its policies and procedures take good note of external reference points such as the *Code of practice* and benchmark statements, the requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies and international developments such as the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. The University reports that its quality framework is kept under review and is updated as necessary to take account of external changes. The University intends that by working within its evolving framework, schools will meet these external benchmarks and can concentrate on ensuring that they meet discipline requirements, such as the subject benchmark statements, published by QAA, and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies' requirements.

64   As an example of this approach, the Partnership Agreement developed between the University and the Leeds University Union specifies responsibilities for both staff and students. The University sees this as providing a clear framework that ensures parity of treatment for students, and allows it to be confident that it adheres to relevant external expectations.

65   The audit team learnt that the Academic Quality and Standards Team refers revised sections of the *Code of practice* to the most appropriate University group of the Learning and Teaching Board or administrative service to review the changes and ensure that the University's policy and procedures remain appropriate. The Pro-Deans for Learning and Teaching report to the Learning and Teaching Board on these matters in April each year. Changes resulting from the development of the Bologna Process are kept under review by another University group, while the Academic Quality and Standards Team prepares a summary of points from professional, statutory and regulatory bodies' reports.

66   The audit team established that revisions to various individual sections of the *Code of practice* had been reviewed, with modifications made to practice as the University deemed necessary.

67   Having made recent enhancements to practice, the University is confident that it meets the QAA's precepts on the selection, admission, induction and supervision of research students in the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes.* In particular, the regulations for eligibility for research degree supervisors make explicit reference to the revised *Section 1,* and the Faculty of Biological Sciences Research Postgraduate Training Guide gives the QAA web address for this section. Detailed adherence to the *Code of practice, Section 1* is analysed later.

68   The University has detailed arrangements for the consideration and management of all collaborative arrangements and is confident that these arrangements meet the requirements of the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning).* During 2007, a full accreditation review of the two validated institutions led to agreement to develop new agreements with each institution that were informed by the *Code of practice* as revised in 2004. The final versions of the agreements were signed by the institutions in 2007.

69   The University reported in its Briefing Paper that it has reviewed its distance learning activity in the light of the *Code of practice, Section 2.* It is also engaged in the Higher Education Academy/JISC e-Learning Benchmarking Project, which has enabled the University to review its capacity to support through e-learning students who are studying off-campus. However, the University's current guidance on e-learning dates from 2002. The audit team was told that, because no new e-learning programmes had been proposed, the guidance had not been updated in the light of the *Code of practice, Section 2,* as revised in 2004.

70   The University provides a range of support for students with disabilities. These are in line with the *Code of practice, Section 3: Students with disabilities.*

71   The University receives an annual report on student complaints. It has explored whether its research student appeal procedures need revision in the light of the publication in 2007 of the revised section of the *Code of practice, Section 5: Academic appeals and student complaints on academic matters.*

72   In the light of the publication in 2007 of the revised section of the *Code of practice, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review,* the University adopted a policy on the withdrawal of programmes of study.

73   The University's policy on careers education, information and guidance was drawn up in the light of the *Code of practice, Section 8: Career education, information and guidance* (which has not yet been revised). The policy requires the Director of the Careers Service to report twice a year to the Learning and Teaching Board, specifically covering activities under this section of the *Code of practice.*

74   The audit team learnt that the newly revised section of the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning* was being considered by the Standing Group on Study Abroad (since the revision had moved study abroad into this *Section* of the *Code of practice* from *Section 2*) and by the Careers Service. Revised documents on study abroad were being drawn up in the light of the newly revised *Section* and would be considered by the Learning and Teaching Board.

75   The University's Undergraduate Admissions Policy (approved by the Learning and Teaching Board in January 2006) makes no reference to the *Code of practice.* Guidance on admissions issued to colleges by the University states explicitly that they should ensure that they meet the precepts of the *Code.* However, this refers to the original *Section 10* issued in 2001 rather than the revision issued in September 2006. Learning and Teaching Board minutes published after September 2006 make no reference to any review of the University's Undergraduate Admissions Policy in the light of the publication of this revision.

76   Staff who met the audit team explained that they regarded the Academic Quality and Standards Team as an authoritative source of advice on matters such as the impact of revisions to individual sections of the *Code of practice,* and the range of activity described hitherto suggests that the Team would possess all or most of the necessary information. However, as noted earlier, the team was also told that guidance on e-learning had not been updated in the light of the publication of the revised section of the *Code of practice, Section 2.* Since continuing e-learning programmes may need advice on the impact of the revised *Code, Section 2,* the team considered that a more active approach to this revision would be desirable.

77   More generally, the audit team could not locate an overview of activity following revisions to individual sections of the *Code of practice.* A document 'Review of Compliance with the *Code of*

practice ', available on the Academic Quality and Standards Team website, refers only to the original sections, except for the revised Section 4 on *External examining*. This entails the risk that staff may rely on this outdated document as authoritative rather than seeking updated advice directly from the Academic Quality and Standards Team.

78   The audit team found no explicit reference to the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* in the University's procedures for programme approval and review, even though the University does offer Foundation Degrees, and staff who met the team answered questions about this qualification benchmark in terms of subject benchmarks.

79   The audit team concluded that the way in which the University reviews changes in the Academic Infrastructure through different specialist groups generally ensures that such changes receive well-informed consideration for incorporation into revisions to the University's framework of policies and procedures, where these changes are then transparent to staff. However, as shown by the matters outlined in the preceding paragraphs, this approach has not ensured that the impact of such reviews is fully communicated nor that there is complete coverage in revising the framework of policies and procedures. The team therefore considers it desirable that the University should develop methods to ensure that it has a clear and comprehensive overview of its current status of practice with regard to each aspect of the changing Academic Infrastructure.

Approval, monitoring and review of programmes

80   Procedures for programme and module approval, revision and review are set out in detail in a document Quality Assurance Procedures 2007-2008, which is available on the University website. The Learning and Teaching Board has also issued a document 'Supplementary Guidance on the Approval of Programmes of Study involving Distributed Learning'.

81   The Learning and Teaching Board has delegated authority from the Senate of the University to approve the teaching portfolio. Much of the detailed consideration at both programme and module levels is undertaken by school and faculty Learning and Teaching Committees on behalf of the Board, applying procedures for approval in accordance with University policy. The Graduate Board is responsible for administering research degree programmes, in consultation with the Learning and Teaching Board for professional doctorates that contain a taught element.

82   At the annual planning meeting and the annual health check, schools inform the faculty of any plans they may have for the development of their existing programmes or changes that they wish to make to the overall portfolio, through either adding new programmes or withdrawing existing ones. The report of the discussion at the annual health check is forwarded to the Faculty Executive, the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee and relevant central offices. Information on proposed developments is forwarded to the Student Marketing and Recruitment Team for advice and support on market opportunities, and to the Academic Planning and Performance Office to inform student number planning.

83   The Faculty Executive is responsible for considering the level of risk associated with the proposal and determining the level of market research and strategic detail needed. The Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee is responsible for considering the academic coherence and academic viability of the proposal and for ensuring that appropriate strategic and management consideration has been given. Staff who met the audit team said that the Pro-Dean became involved in new proposals at an early stage and would advise the Dean on them.

84   Following discussion at the annual health check, schools or faculties wishing to develop a new programme of study seek 'in principle' approval. This confirms that there is both strategic and academic support for the development and allows the programme to be entered into the prospectus and advertised to potential students. However, the complete programme proposal must be submitted and approved before students may be registered and the programme may be delivered.

85   If it is intended to include a work placement, schools seek advice from the Careers Centre, while for study abroad they seek advice from the Study Abroad Office. Schools must not enter into an agreement of any nature with any other institution or organisation without seeking approval for the arrangement from the relevant University Committees. In particular, collaborations with institutions overseas require approval from Council.

86   Additional guidance, developed in consultation with the University's World University Network partners, is available for the development and approval of new programmes offered by e-learning delivery. Support is also available on more technical aspects from staff implementing the new virtual learning environment.

87   The University is currently exploring the possibility of comparing its programmes in a wider context, for example using evidence from employers where appropriate, or using external reviewers from international institutions. As noted earlier, it already uses some external examiners from outside the UK.

88   The procedures for approval of new programmes include a common form used across the University for the submission of a new programme; consideration using a learning outcomes approach, regardless of the form of delivery or the subject-matter; consideration against University-level descriptors that amplify the FHEQ; the use of a single set of University curricular regulations for all undergraduate awards and postgraduate taught awards; external review, during which proposals are considered against the subject benchmark statements and professional requirements, where appropriate; and consideration of the academic coherence and appropriateness of the curriculum by the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee.

89   All new programmes are sent for external review, the report from which forms part of the consideration for approval. Schools are required to address any concerns raised by the reviewer, and the proposal must have the support of the external member of the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee to ensure effective process and comparability across faculties (with the Learning and Teaching Board as arbiter if issues cannot be resolved locally). These features offer means to assure uniformity of practice and conformity with the University's requirements, although as noted earlier, some matters such as the form of the programme specification do not receive consistently thorough checking.

90   Major amendments to programmes are treated in the same way as new programmes. Minor amendments to programmes are approved by the school learning and teaching committees and forwarded for approval by the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee. Exceptionally, schools may seek approval from the Pro-Dean for a student to transfer to a personalised programme in recognition of special personal circumstances. Exceptionally, schools may seek from the relevant faculty Learning and Teaching Committee, through the Academic Quality and Standards Team, temporary variation of a programme for a particular cohort of students in recognition of a change in circumstances.

91   A proposal to withdraw a programme is forwarded to the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee, following discussion at the annual health check and endorsement by the Dean of the faculty. The University expects that all remaining students will complete their studies normally. If this is not possible, the matter must be referred immediately to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Learning and Teaching.

92   The University has clear procedures for ensuring that when programmes are closed, the interests of the remaining students are carefully protected. This has been necessary, in particular, to handle the cessation of the validation agreements with accredited and affiliated institutions. When the degree of Doctor of Public Management was withdrawn, arrangements were made to transfer some students to another university to complete their degree, while others continued at the University of Leeds, having passed all the taught components and the transfer assessment to full degree registration. In another area, the audit team saw a report explaining that an external examiner had been asked to provide a more complete report on a programme that was being

'taught out', even though only one student remained. Overall, the team formed the view that the University handles the withdrawal of programmes carefully with proper regard to the interests of enrolled students.

93   Before any collaborative programme may be considered for outline approval, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Learning and Teaching must authorise the programme's development to ensure that it is in the strategic interest of the University to pursue the proposal. The Pro-Vice Chancellor may seek the views of the chair of the Standing Group on Collaborative Provision, members of the Learning and Teaching Board, and other office-holders. The procedures for outline and full approval are then broadly similar to those for other programmes, supplemented by evidence of satisfactory due diligence investigations of the prospective partner and a suitable memorandum of agreement. The Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee forwards details of proposed programmes involving collaborative arrangements to the Learning and Teaching Board; the Collaborative Provision Standing Group of the Board considers the proposal in detail and may authorise a site visit to the prospective partner institution on its behalf.

94   Modules must have their own learning outcomes, syllabus and assessment schedule. The School Learning and Teaching Committee and the relevant faculty learning and teaching committee approve new or substantially changed modules. The Academic Quality and Standards Team forwards the module to the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee, once all necessary information is available and all relevant bodies have been consulted. Following approval by this Committee, the Academic Quality and Standards Team authorises the module being made live in the catalogue. Minor amendments to modules may be approved at school level and reported to this Committee. Schools may amend trivial corrections such as typographical errors without approval by the School Learning and Teaching Committee but must maintain a record of the changes. Where necessary, a new or amended module may be approved 'in principle', but must be fully approved by the School Learning and Teaching Committee and the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee before it is taught. If there is any doubt about whether a change is 'minor', 'major' or 'substantial' the final decision lies with the Pro-Dean for Learning and Teaching.

95   The School Learning and Teaching Committee approves withdrawal of a module and reports this to the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee. Where a module is an integral part of a programme, the school must propose suitable amendments to the programme and give details of alternative modules. If students have registered for a module, the School Learning and Teaching Committee must consult the Pro-Dean for Learning and Teaching. The module may be withdrawn only after evidence has been supplied that all such students have been notified and have made satisfactory alternative choices. A module that is part of a programme owned by another school may be withdrawn only with approval of the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee and after discussion between the schools.

96   The online module and programme catalogues are the definitive source of information on all the University's teaching portfolio, and provide information to a number of systems. All details of modules and programmes must be entered into the catalogues during the approval process or whenever the module or programme is amended. Schools and faculties are responsible for ensuring that the catalogue information is accurate and complete, and that information provided to staff and students by other means is consistent with that in the catalogue. Once information is supplied, it is 'locked down' to ensure that any changes are properly authorised.

97   The annual health check is a review process that also initiates programme approval, as noted earlier. It receives from the Academic Quality and Standards Team, documentation that includes external examiners' reports and school responses; any relevant programme reviews undertaken; National Student Survey results and subsequent action plans; statistical information on student progress provided by the Academic Planning and Performance Office; and the previous annual health check report. It covers issues from these various reviews and reports, risks identified by the school or faculty; an overview of the teaching portfolio including its currency; the fit with

research strengths; planned developments for new and amended programmes and modules; and areas for enhancement and action in response to enhancement initiatives. The Academic Quality and Standards Team prepares a brief report of the annual health check meeting.

98   External examiners are explicitly invited to comment on the fitness of the provision in their disciplines in the light of professional and discipline requirements. Thus, through the annual health check, the University ensures that all recommendations from external examiners are considered by the school, and acted upon suitably. The University thereby receives assurance annually that the curriculum and learning opportunities continue to be appropriate.

99   Programme and module reviews seek to monitor the student experience; maintain the currency and research focus of programmes; address concerns raised by students, external examiners, or professional bodies; meet the precepts of the *Code of practice*; identify areas in need of enhancement; and identify good practice worthy of wider dissemination. School procedures are scrutinised as part of periodic review and, where significant weaknesses are identified, comprehensive formal annual module and programme review may be required.

100   Programme reviews receive as inputs student feedback through university-organised programme review; student feedback on individual modules and through course representatives; National Student Survey results; external examiners' reports; data on student performance; reports of external reviews; and requirements of, and feedback from, professional and statutory bodies.

101   The arrangements for module review are the responsibility of schools, which may either review their modules annually or review only modules where there is evidence of a higher risk of an issue arising. Staff who met the audit team confirmed that this policy allowed them to review modules annually when they were first introduced but less frequently once they were running more routinely. Irrespective of the approach adopted, University policy is that every module must be reviewed at least once every three years to ensure that the learning outcomes and curriculum remain current and that the teaching and assessment methods remain fit for purpose. This policy applies whether or not the module has been delivered since it was last reviewed. Any module that is not reviewed for three years is deemed obsolete and approval is withdrawn. The team saw documentation confirming a detailed and thorough process of module review within a school.

102   University policy is that every programme must be reviewed at least once every two years. Schools may develop their own review process provided that it includes proper consideration of statistical information on student progress and achievement; the views of the external examiners; the views of students from all levels of the programme; the views of the staff teaching on the core and major optional modules for the programme; and the reports of any accreditation or other external reviews. Schools must maintain an audit trail for the process. Each review results in a summary of the key findings and difficulties, the action proposed to address any difficulties, and a report of the effectiveness of previous action. This summary is forwarded to the Academic Quality and Standards Team as a major element for discussion at the school's annual health check.

103   The new Student Academic Experience Review process concerns all taught programmes. Among other things, it reconsiders whether they remain relevant, with advice from the external member of the panel in relation to QAA subject benchmark statements and any specific discipline requirements. The reports from this process feed into the faculty management as well as into the learning and teaching and graduate school structures. The process was piloted during session 2006-07 in History and is being implemented across the University from the start of 2007-08. Graduate Schools will undertake for research students the same role as the faculty learning and teaching committees for taught programme students in being responsible for ensuring that recommendations are acted upon. They will also facilitate the sharing of good practice identified in the reviews. Student academic experience reviews will in future be timed so that the reports will feed into the strategic quinquennial review process.

104   The profile of awards across all undergraduate programmes, including those offered through collaborations, is considered annually by the Learning and Teaching Board. This provides

the opportunity to identify trends in the award of qualifications at institutional, faculty and school levels. Similarly, the Graduate Board oversees postgraduate programmes; in one case seen by the team, a faculty was reminded that its independent annual reviews of the taught elements of a professional doctorate within the learning and teaching framework did not exempt it from its reporting requirements to the Programmes of Study and Audit Group in relation to research degree programmes.

105   The review processes also monitor the efficacy of local practices within the University's framework. The University acknowledges the need both for flexibility to ensure that suitable provision is available across the range of disciplines, and for controls to ensure that any variability is within the agreed framework. The University is satisfied that it is increasingly achieving an effective balance between these needs. The University accepts that it is important to ensure that students understand the rationale for such differences, and with this in mind is working increasingly closely with the Leeds University Union on communication themes. The University does not claim to have this balance between local responsibility and central control right in all cases.

106   The audit team saw reports of annual health checks and programme reviews that clearly showed reporting through to faculty from schools and the Lifelong Learning Centre. There was also evidence that faculties pay good attention to the reports, for example where a faculty Learning and Teaching Committee agreed the need for a formal structure to ensure that suggested improvements were being made. The team also heard that staff find the annual health check very helpful because it is a dialogue that is beginning to focus on enhancement rather than an 'inquisition'.

107   Responsibility for monitoring the University's processes and their implementation rests with the Learning and Teaching Support Unit, which coordinates the activities of the central teams that monitor and support learning and teaching. This Unit has direct contact with all schools through providing the administrative support for the faculty Learning and Teaching Committees and the Pro-Deans for Learning and Teaching, for the Learning and Teaching Board and its groups, and for student academic experience review teams as well as through the provision of staff development. The University argues that together with overseeing the external examiner system, this puts the Learning and Teaching Support Unit in a pivotal position to monitor the effectiveness of the University's policies and to identify areas where further development is necessary.

108   The audit team confirmed that reports of the various review processes are passed upwards through the committee system. However, the University does not always take opportunities to benefit from this information (as noted earlier in respect of overview reports on external examining). For example, the pilot Student Academic Experience Review of History commended the school's use of student interns, but in the report of the process at the Learning and Teaching Board, this feature was not commended to other schools for them to consider for adoption (although staff who met the team confirmed that schools were aware of the intern scheme and hoped to emulate it).

109   Overall, the audit team concluded that the University has a comprehensive set of policies and procedures for programme and module approval, revision and review that are operated effectively. As such, they serve to ensure the continuing provision of programmes of study that help students to achieve the intended learning outcomes of their programmes and attain their awards.

Management information - feedback from students

110   Feedback from students is an element in the University's Strategy Map and is afforded high priority. Three or four times each year the Vice-Chancellor holds an open meeting at which he answers questions from students. He meets the Leeds University Union Executive monthly. Student representatives confirmed that at university level there is real consultation with the Union in what they describe as a 'tight partnership', and say that they feel that the University genuinely tries to make student representation more than a token.

111   The University asserts that it takes very seriously the views of its students as expressed through the National Student Survey. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Learning and Teaching, working with the Pro-Deans, coordinates procedures to discuss with students the issues raised by the results. The outcomes were used to inform the new Learning and Teaching Strategy and the subsequent strategic initiatives. At faculty and school levels, focus groups are used to elicit student views.

112   For 2007-08, the University introduced a new procedure for considering and responding at school level to feedback on students' perceptions of the quality of their academic experience. Matters considered included national and internal surveys of student satisfaction, internal quality reviews of modules and programmes and external examiners' reports. Through open discussion with the student body, each school is required to develop an annual action plan in response to the survey results and other pertinent feedback. Action plans are published on a dedicated website to let students know the issues that they have highlighted, and how schools and similar units intend to respond. The action plans are also considered by faculty learning and teaching committees to identify common issues and solutions. Progress in implementing the action plan is discussed during the school's annual health check. Responsibility for the efficacy of this process rests with the Pro-Deans for Learning and Teaching, assisted by the Academic Quality and Standards Team.

113   School action plans are scrutinised by the Learning and Teaching Board, which may refer them back for revision; in one case it did so because the plan was not addressed to students as the primary audience. The Board also sees documentation that, for the benefit of schools, highlights key actions across the institution. The audit team also learnt that schools check action plans on the dedicated website in order to see, and possibly copy, the means by which other schools are addressing common difficulties. Students who met the team were aware that the outcomes of the National Student Survey are discussed in school and university committees.

114   Until recently, the views of students were not sought at the programme level in any systematic way that would allow comparison across the University; however, individual schools had their own ways of collecting such feedback. A University programme survey was piloted during the last semester of 2006-07, complementing a university-level student experience survey undertaken earlier that year. Although it has found that the data from these surveys have been very valuable, the University has set up a group to look at alternative ways to obtain useful information across the University while reducing the burden on students. Good practice in relation to module surveys is also being disseminated. Nevertheless, a programme-level survey will be held in 2007-08.

115   In response to feedback from mature students which suggests that they can sometimes feel isolated or overwhelmed in a University dominated by younger students, and can be anxious about their academic abilities, the Lifelong Learning Centre has extended some of its services to mature full-time undergraduates. The University is aware that the scope and range of the needs of non-standard students, such as full-time mature undergraduates and part-time postgraduates, are not fully recognised. The University continues to keep the matter under review.

116   The University has various arrangements for obtaining and acting upon formal feedback from research students. A bi-annual student questionnaire is supplemented by focus groups in alternate years. Research students were included in the 2006-07 Student Experience Survey and some schools now run exit surveys of leavers' perceptions of their experience as research students. Other sources of formal feedback include the Research Councils, external examiners, and the outcomes of appeals and complaints hearings. The information is considered and reviewed by both the Graduate Board and Faculty Graduate Schools. The information is broken down for discussion at school level. The Graduate Board is considering the possibility of participating in the 2008 Higher Education Academy Postgraduate Research Experience Survey.

117   The audit team found evidence for widespread systematic collection and discussion of feedback from students. In particular, the team noted the use of the dedicated website where

schools and other units are required to report clearly and publicly on how they are responding to the points raised in student feedback. Students appreciate the website as a sign that their concerns are taken seriously, and staff appreciate it as a source of ideas on how to enhance their practice. The team considered that the development of mechanisms across the University for the consideration and publicising of responses to National Student Survey results is a feature of good practice.

Role of students in quality assurance

118   Students' views are sought on modules taken, and these views are considered as part of module review in schools. Students are also represented on Learning and Teaching Committees at all levels where decisions on policy and procedures are made. This policy is monitored: in one periodic review, the audit team saw an action point that a school must include a student representative on the School Learning and Teaching Committee. Schools are also required to have a student-staff consultative body (the 'Student:Staff Forum'). Schools are required to discuss with students the action plans arising from surveys of student opinion, and the implementation of the University's Codes of Practice that underpin the Partnership Agreement. In one case, the team saw evidence that a school had a dedicated email address for students to communicate with the Student:Staff Forum.

119   Leeds University Union sabbatical officers attend learning and teaching committees at university level, and other students act as representatives on programme-level bodies. For each faculty, three Union Academic Representatives are elected by the students to represent undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students. These representatives attend the relevant faculty Learning and Teaching Committee and Faculty Graduate School Committee meetings as full members. The Union Academic Representatives also meet regularly with the Leeds University Union at their Education Assembly, a forum for discussing issues affecting the student experience. The Representatives provide a further consultation mechanism with students and a means for students to raise difficulties, either directly through the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee or through the Union.

120   The Leeds University Union has a dedicated Democracy Team that provides training for student representatives and individuals. In addition to this central provision, training is provided in some schools. Training is supported by a joint Union and University handbook for representatives.

121   As noted above, there are procedures to discuss with students the issues raised by the results of the National Student Survey. A website allows faculties to address directly students' concerns, as registered through both the National Student Survey and other feedback mechanisms, and to comment on the effectiveness of measures taken. At faculty and school levels, focus groups are used to elicit student views.

122   Individual schools have had their own ways of collecting programme-level feedback. A University programme survey of student views was piloted during the last semester of 2006-07, complementing a student experience survey at the university level earlier in the year. Good practice in relation to module surveys is disseminated. A programme-level survey was to be run again later in 2007-08.

123   Students are represented on groups considering new developments such as the virtual learning environment and on the steering groups for initiatives such as Leeds for Life. Their views are seen as important in decision-making. However, student academic experience review panels do not include student representatives.

124   Students who met the audit team were generally content with student participation in the University's deliberative structures, whether by themselves or by others. They were clear that the system of Leeds University Union sabbatical officers and Union Academic Representatives worked well above school level thanks to a relatively small group of committed students, while representation at programme level within schools involved many more students in sometimes less structured ways. Students with no roles as representatives were clear about how their school

representatives acted, while school representatives were clear about how they took part in faculty or university processes. Research students who met the team were broadly content, but felt that some schools should improve their processes.

125   The University has widespread systematic representation of students in the committee system and in other less formal mechanisms for quality assurance. Students were generally well aware of the processes, at least at school level, and were generally satisfied. The audit team concluded that the University's mechanisms for engaging students in quality assurance make a significant contribution to the quality of the learning opportunities provided.

Links between research or scholarly activity and learning opportunities

126   The University regards the effective integration of learning and teaching with research of international quality as an essential element in developing outstanding graduates and scholars who can make a major professional impact. Hence this integration is a key aim of the University's mission and of the Learning and Teaching Strategy.

127   Staff and students have discussed the meaning of the integration of research with learning and teaching through the committee structures and the Learning and Teaching Bulletin. The University's definition of this integration is that all programmes at the University should involve students at all levels in learning that is inspirational through being facilitated by programme teams involving teaching staff who are engaged in world-class research and innovative professional practice; informed by curricula that are current, reflecting recent and likely future developments in the discipline; and engaged with a culture of enquiry and challenge that encourages the development of research skills.

128   Schools and faculties are encouraged to consider this broad model of the research-teaching nexus, which incorporates elements from enquiry-based pedagogy; the content of the curriculum; and ensuring that all teaching staff are energetically engaged in research and scholarship. The Briefing Paper listed major developments in faculties that have resulted from the above approach, all serving to enhance students' learning opportunities. These developments include curriculum revision, undergraduate research internships, involvement of research groups and their research directly in teaching, and undergraduate presentations through an e-journal and through presentations on their dissertations.

129   The University uses various means to ensure effective integration of research with learning and teaching. In order to gain outline 'in principle' approval for a new programme the Dean of the faculty must confirm that the programme is judged to be informed by the research of the school. Staff who met the audit team reported that new professors are expected to take a role in teaching undergraduates, including giving keynote lectures to first-year students. Staff were also clear that the University expected research to contribute to teaching, and in that context referred to the role of the Strategy Map in giving direction and making the desired integration clear. They gave an example where the University had funded a proposed research centre only on condition that the proposal broadened the remit to include teaching, and another where research students help to present 'Master classes' for final-year undergraduates. Research students also gave examples of how they were encouraged to integrate their research into teaching. As noted earlier, Graduate Board reminded one faculty to report not only on the taught elements of a professional doctorate but also on the research element.

130   In reading, and talking to staff and students, about the integration of teaching and research, the audit team formed the view that teaching and research were held in comparable esteem. The University pursues integration with research in order to enhance teaching, with no suggestion that it sees research as more important.

131   The audit team found that a concern to integrate research and teaching pervaded many of the documents read and audit meetings held, where the enthusiasm of individual staff and

students for this approach was evident. This integration is a key feature of the Strategy Map. The Strategy Map is implemented effectively through a variety of means which include programme approval, programme review and financial incentives, thereby serving to improve learning and teaching. The team accordingly concluded that the varied mechanisms for making research-led teaching increasingly a distinctive feature of the University are a feature of good practice.

Other modes of study

132   Few students study at a distance from Leeds, and the collaborative programmes are mostly local. Most of the students who study away from Leeds are taught off-campus by University staff using the model developed for the School of Education's programmes in Oman. The University and the Oman Government commissioned a number of reviews of the arrangements, which were adapted as necessary. The arrangements were also reviewed positively as part of a QAA overseas audit.

133   Use of technology to enhance teaching and learning is currently a priority in the University's Teaching and Learning Strategy. The University has recently invested heavily in a new virtual learning environment to help meet its vision for providing an inspiring and exciting blended learning environment to support students. A comprehensive implementation plan will not only ease migration of material from the old virtual learning environment to the new one but also help staff to address the vision for use of the virtual learning environment agreed by the Learning and Teaching Board. Developments in online learning are monitored by the recently established Blended Learning Futures Group, which reports to the Learning and Teaching Systems Steering Group.

134   The University has few programmes provided purely by e-learning (as opposed to blended learning). Two of these were developed in collaboration with the University's World Universities Network partners, although one is now offered by the University of Leeds alone. The programmes have been developed to ensure that effective support is provided for students, and this is monitored through the programme reviews. The University hopes that involvement in a Higher Education Academy e-learning benchmarking project with some of its UK World Universities Network partners will prove useful to inform future provision of e-support for all students.

135   The University has a small but important group of part-time undergraduate students. The Lifelong Learning Centre provides tailored support for them through programmes and services at the University's sites in Leeds and Wakefield. The Centre provides a welcoming 'home' and a specialist staff team. Faculty-based part-time students 'parented' by the Centre are each allocated a personal adviser to supplement faculty-based personal tutor arrangements. Undergraduate students who met the team spoke positively of the support from the Lifelong Learning Centre and from other parts of the University, such as a quota allowance of free postal loans from the Library. Part-time postgraduate students were also content with the support that they received.

136   In response to feedback from mature students, the Lifelong Learning Centre has extended some of its services to mature full-time undergraduates. The University is aware that the scope and range of the needs of non-standard students, such as full-time mature undergraduates and part-time postgraduates, are not fully recognised and continues to keep the matter under review.

137   The University has a sizeable international exchange programme that involves 12 per cent of students at some time during their degree programme. The Study Abroad Office manages undergraduate student exchanges at Leeds. It supports schools by coordinating exchange placements and advising on good practice in study abroad activities, including the creation of new programmes and selection of partners. The Office helps build relationships with exchange partners and coordinates monitoring and preparatory visits. Staff advise outgoing exchange students on practical matters related to the study abroad experience, and coordinate pre-departure and re-entry events as well as managing the admissions process for incoming exchange students.

138   The University runs split-site PhDs in which students based at overseas universities spend periods of time in Leeds. One such student who spoke to the audit team praised the experience in Leeds, except for difficulties in finding suitable short-term accommodation. The team found that the University is well aware of this problem and that Graduate Board has asked the Accommodation Manager to improve matters by providing more flexible accommodation.

139   The audit team saw evidence that the University supports its students well while they engaged on placement study abroad. The University has succeeded in bringing effective aid to students when they are faced with difficulties in the host location.

140   The University has a wide range of arrangements and support tailored for specific groups of students in addition to those for 'standard' full-time home students on campus in Leeds. The audit team concluded that these arrangements work well, to the overall benefit of the learning opportunities of the relevant groups of students.

Resources for learning

141   Overall responsibility for ensuring that learning resources meet the needs of students lies with the Learning and Teaching Board and faculty Learning and Teaching Committees, working with the Vice Chancellor's Executive Group and the Faculty Management Group through integrated planning. Integration is assisted by staff responsible for resources sitting on or attending key committees. An annual corporate services review includes the library, information systems services and estates. Resources are also considered as part of periodic review.

142   Student views on resources for learning are provided through a Student Experience Survey which provides feedback on a range of resources and services. Programme experience surveys also include questions on resources. The Library and the Careers Centre also conduct separate surveys on the services that they provide. Feedback from the National Student Survey is also used to inform planning for resources. The provision of resources is a specific point in the Partnership Agreement. Students who met the audit team were positive about the resources available to them.

143   The University expresses the view that its library is 'world class' through its strategic management of acquisitions, access, use, and the effective management of the collections. The Deputy Librarian is increasingly being integrated into the Learning and Teaching processes, being a member of the Learning and Teaching Support Unit and having full membership of the Learning and Teaching Board. The faculty is represented on all faculty Learning and Teaching Committees by the relevant faculty team librarians. The library provides a range of services, including induction sessions, an extensive programme of information literacy training courses, and tailored subject-specific training for students provided within their courses by faculty team librarians. All the students who met the audit team were very positive about the resources and service provided by the library.

144   Information Systems Services is the central information technology and information services provider for the University. It provides systems on the campus and for remote access, and backup services such as a Helpdesk, printed and online documentation, and free information technology training courses. All new students are issued with a user name, which enables them to use any web-enabled PC on or off-campus to access email, the Portal and the virtual learning environment. Students the audit team met expressed satisfaction with the information technology facilities available.

145   A new virtual learning environment has been purchased by the University, and there are plans for it to be used across the full range of programmes provided by the University. There is a detailed plan for implementation, with a view to providing blended learning as the norm by 2012. This is part of a range of technologies used by staff to support learning, including weblogs, collaborative software, a voting system in the lecture theatres and podcasts. Developments in online learning are monitored by the recently established Blended Learning Futures Group, which

reports to the Learning and Teaching Systems Steering Group. The Assessment and Learning in Practice Settings Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning has pioneered the use of mobile technologies in assessment and their experience is informing developments elsewhere across campus.

146   In the briefing document, the University stated that a programme of refurbishment of teaching space was continuing. As they are refurbished, the computer clusters and other teaching rooms are fitted with the latest enabling teaching tools including interactive whiteboards and computer-linked audiovisual technology. The majority of teaching rooms are now centrally timetabled and students are provided with a personal timetable on registration. Efficient use of space has necessitated more moving round the campus, but students the team met did not voice any significant problems in this regard.

147   Postgraduate research students met by the team expressed some mixed views about the facilities available to them. All were content with library and computer facilities. The majority of students, especially those in science-related subjects, had desks and common rooms and were entirely happy with these resources. Research students in more arts-oriented areas felt that the provision of desks and some common areas for them would help to foster more strongly the feeling of being part of an academic community.

148   The audit team was told that students in collaborative provision arrangements all had full access to the library and to information technology facilities to the same extent as students on campus. Learning resources need to be reviewed as part of the approval of a collaborative arrangement, and the team was told that they were reviewed as part of the five-year review programme, though any significant problem should be picked up earlier by an annual health check.

149   On the basis of the information provided and talking with staff and students the audit team found that the institution's arrangements for the provision, allocation and management of learning resources were effective in relation to maintaining the quality of the student learning opportunities.

Admissions policy

150   The University has a central Admissions Policy for undergraduate students. Following a review by an external consultant, a University Admissions Committee has been set up to consider policy and maintain oversight. This will report to the Learning and Teaching Board, which currently considers trends. Statistics on admissions are monitored by the Faculty Management Group. Faculties and schools take local responsibility for admissions, and admissions requirements for each programme are approved by the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee when a programme is approved, being reconsidered at periodic review. A central Student Recruitment Team provides support, including training for Admissions Tutors. There is a Recruitment Forum for academic and administrative staff. Applications for Research Degrees are monitored by the Research Degrees and Scholarships Office.

151   Clear information on admission requirements for each programme is available to students on the website. The University has a policy on Accreditation of Prior Learning. The University takes the view that the new 14 to 19 diplomas will encourage more young people to progress into higher education, and it is keen to accept students who come up through this route. All Schools, and particularly those in relevant subject areas, have been asked to define their admissions requirements for diploma applicants alongside A and AS level requirements.

152   It is part of University strategy to widen participation, and the University sees having a diverse student body as a strength. The Standing Group on Widening Participation reports directly to the Learning and Teaching Board. The University seeks not only to encourage applications to Leeds from under-represented groups but also to work proactively to raise the aspirations of those students who would not otherwise have considered attending a university. In 2005, the University established its Lifelong Learning Centre, which works with the Access and Community Engagement Team to offer outreach activities in the community. A revised Widening

Participation Strategy will build on initiatives such as the Access to Leeds Scheme, which provides for a system of 'alternative' entry offers to students, and local schemes such as the progressive route for under-represented groups into medicine.

153   The University has a number of schemes to encourage applications from international students, including articulation arrangements for the delivery of programmes overseas. There is also a wide range of exchange arrangements, as well as an International Foundation Year. International students are supported by pre-sessional and in-session language courses.

154   The student written submission, and students who met the audit team, were generally happy with admission information and procedures, though some minor problems relating to induction were raised. Problems with registering for modules had been addressed by online registration, but some new students still felt that more information on module choice could be available. Some postgraduate students said that induction might be partly central and partly by Schools, and that this could lead to variations.

155   From what it read and heard, the audit team formed the view that the University has a clear admissions policy that is effectively and consistently implemented, and that it has a positive commitment to widening participation.

Student support

156   It is the University's view that its students should have easy access to high quality support, while accepting that the support required for students is inevitably diverse and varied, and this is a challenge which the University seeks to address proactively. The University has a variety of policies relating to academic guidance and support, for example on personal tuition and on the use of personal development plans. General oversight is the responsibility of the Learning and Teaching Board, but implementation is generally carried out at faculty and school level. The audit team were told that oversight of local implementation is normally carried out through the periodic review process.

157   The briefing document said that at the time of the audit visit student support facilities were scattered around the campus. However, a new student services building is being built on a major walkway near the entrance to the campus, the Leeds University Union building and the Equality Unit. Due to open in 2008, it will bring key student services together and incorporate student administration. Counselling will deliberately be provided elsewhere, but with clear signage.

158   Some schools have their own student support offices, but all are part of the Student Support Network. This network has a membership of well over 700 staff with responsibility for supporting students, including service providers, academics, administrative and clerical staff. The network provides a lunchtime training programme and an annual conference. At an administrative level, the University Learning and Teaching Support Network provides a forum to share good practice among administrative and support staff in faculties and schools and to promote dialogue between such staff and the central administrative offices. This network focuses on systems and processes in areas such as admissions, assessment, programmes, and records.

159   The University sees personal tutoring as fundamental to the student experience, and it is part of the Partnership Agreement. Policy is outlined in a Code of Practice on Personal Tutoring, and in the briefing document the University stated that front-line responsibility was with the schools so that provision could be appropriate for students and their disciplinary circumstances. Training is provided for personal tutors, including a DVD illustrating how particular situations might be addressed. Examples of local personal tutoring policies shown to the audit team tended to comply with general university policy, and included examples of good practice, but there were many variations in the type and amount of information given to staff and students, often without any clear disciplinary justification. The student written submission raised some concerns about variations in practice on personal tutoring, and this was echoed by some students that the team met. Students also told the team that staff were often available informally, and that mentoring for first-year students was helpful.

160   The audit team were told that compliance with the University policy was monitored at periodic review, now the Student Academic Experience Review, but examples of review seen by the team tended to address any difficulties that had arisen rather than carry out a review of practice. Overall, the team formed the view that while personal tutoring was generally adequate and could be good, the current degree of variation was confusing to students, was not always clearly justified by disciplinary differences, and failed to identify and spread good practice as effectively as it might. The Leeds for Life project is considering the possibilities for greater consistency in personal tutoring, and a common timetable. Overall, the team formed the view that it is desirable where the University permits variation in practice in personal tutoring to reflect disciplinary differences, it should check the variation in order to ensure that it is still within the University's expectations, and in order to facilitate the spread of good practice.

161   The University has long involvement in using the Personal Development Plan to assist students in identifying and developing their skills. Central policy on the use of these plans is implemented locally, and the use of personal development plans has been incorporated into the Partnership Agreement. The audit team were told that the use of these plans is considered as part of periodic review. The team saw a variety of approaches from integration into modules to simply making the plans available. Some students the team met had used personal development plans but others had not. The use of these plans is being reviewed as part of the Leeds for Life project, which is aiming to establish ways in which students can get academic guidance on their University experience as well as getting a range of support to assist employability.

162   There is no central university policy on the provision of feedback to students on their work, though the provision of systematic and timely feedback on assessed work is part of the Partnership Agreement. Appropriate implementation is left to schools, and the Staff and Departmental Development Unit provides examples of good practice. The students the audit team met were generally positive about the support they received from staff, but also said they were aware of significant variations in the amount of feedback given. There could also be problems with content, so that it was not always clear how to get a good mark, or how to make work better. There was a feeling that much depended on the individual tutor.

163   Postgraduate research students whom the audit team met were generally very positive about the support and supervision that they received. However, they commented on differences in the research skills and other training available to them, saying the opportunities seemed to vary, and it appeared necessary to pay for training provided by another faculty. Students also said that they would welcome more opportunities to forge interdisciplinary links. The team was told by staff of plans to develop interdisciplinary master classes but felt that it was desirable that the University enhance the opportunities for research students to meet other postgraduate research students in their own and other disciplines through the provision of appropriate space and facilitating of shared postgraduate training across faculties.

164   The Careers Centre offers a wide range of services to all students and schools. Its staff help students to decide on options to pursue, and on the acquisition of skills and experience. Provision includes generic and bespoke modules, workshops and talks, and individual advice and guidance. The Centre maintains an Information Room where students can research future careers. Professional careers consultants are linked to each faculty and provide a wide range of activities at faculty, school and programme level. The Centre provides the focus for institutional employer engagement, and seeks to provide good-quality work experience.

165   The University offers a wide variety of placements in connection with the programmes that it offers. Placements are often managed by schools, but there is also support from the Careers Centre. The University provides quite a wide range of options for students to work or study abroad in connection with their programmes of study. This is overseen by the Standing Group on Study Abroad which reports directly to the Learning and Teaching Board. Support for students is provided by the Study Abroad Office, which manages all aspects of undergraduate student exchanges. The Office supports schools by coordinating exchange placements and advising on

good practice in study abroad activities including the creation of new programmes and selecting and building relationships with partners. Advice relating to the study-abroad experience is provided for both outgoing and incoming exchange students. Students studying abroad have a personal tutor, study-abroad tutor, and a named local contact, with phone or email support as required. Students whom the audit team saw were happy with their experience on study abroad and felt that help would be there if needed. The team were given examples of how the University had acted quickly and effectively to address problems relating to study abroad. As noted earlier, the team also found that the University had taken rapid and wide-ranging actions in response to difficulties abroad.

166   A Student counselling service provides a confidential professional service for individuals and groups. The service is engaged in liaison with, and training for, staff. Resources are kept under review to meet increasing demand. The Leeds University Union also provides welfare services that include providing information, advice and representation for current and prospective students. The service provides specialist advice on finance, housing, immigration, academic matters and University procedures, with appropriate publications and website support.

167   There is a variety of support for different types of students, and the university accepts the need for ongoing work to support non-standard students. The Disability Service of the Equality Unit provides a range of learner support for disabled/dyslexic students. These include an academic writing course, workshops on a range of topics and individual support sessions.

168   Support for part-time undergraduate students is provided through the Centre for Lifelong Learning. The Centre provides programmes and services from pre-entry through to graduation, including pastoral and special needs support, and a separate common-room and facilities. There is also support for mature students returning to study after a break in their formal education. Each student is allocated a personal adviser to supplement faculty-based personal tutor arrangements. The centre provides a three-day programme of induction events for mature and part-time students and, throughout the year, organises social events, newsletters, workshops, a new 'buddy' scheme, and support for students in forming their own networks. The audit team heard from part-time and mature students who were appreciative of the services offered by the Centre.

169   The International Student Office provides specialised advice and guidance for international students. This includes advice on immigration and visas, an International Meet and Greet welcome service, and support for international students' families. The Office arranges many social and other activities, and works in liaison with the Leeds University Union welfare services. A week-long special induction is provided for international students. Language classes are provided for students needing assistance with English, though they can be oversubscribed. The team met international students who were very happy with their experience at Leeds and the services offered, though there was some feeling that there could still be some problems in adjusting to cultural differences and accommodation.

170   The audit team was told that arrangements for the support of students under collaborative provision were the same as or very similar to the arrangements for other university students. The team saw documents that confirmed that support arrangements were considered as part of approving a new collaborative arrangement, and heard that provision would be reviewed as part of the periodic review process.

171   On the basis of the information available to it, and evidence gained from meetings with staff and students, the team was satisfied with the overall effectiveness of the institution's arrangements for student support in relation to maintaining the quality of students' learning opportunities.

Staff support (including staff development)

172   The University recognises the strategic importance of staff support and development to assure the quality of learning opportunities provided to students, and describes it as one of the main enablers of the Strategy Map process.

173   The University has a human resource strategy and the audit team found very good evidence of human resources procedures, covering appointment, induction and appraisal, clearly described and communicated to all categories of staff. The Human Resources Office website provides comprehensive information on these topics as well as training and development opportunities provided by the Staff and Departmental Development Unit and the Graduate Training and Support Committee.

174   The audit team established, in discussions with staff, that human resources procedures were made available to them, and the Staff Review and Development Scheme was held by these staff to be effective in supporting them in their roles and in enhancing the academic provision of the University. Discussion of the team with staff identified that implementation was consistent across the institution. All staff, regardless of the nature of their employment contract, fall under the Staff Review and Development Scheme. The scheme was revised in 2006-07 to ensure that all staff have clear objectives. Staff informed the team that they are provided with clear objectives in the scheme, and that these are reviewed annually, but that reviewers and those being reviewed meet more frequently. Individual developmental needs identified in the Staff Review and Development Scheme are combined and considered by heads of school and services and allow them to prioritise allocations for training. Personal objectives defined in the process support school and university goals.

175   There are induction and probation procedures, and information on them is easily available to staff. Appointees are allocated an adviser who sets objectives, and guides and monitors the appointee through to completion of the University's probation period. The probation arrangements are detailed comprehensively, and the University also differentiates between the Staff Review and Development Scheme and the institution's separate procedures for dealing with performance and capability issues.

176   External examiners employed by the University are supported by the Academic Quality and Standards Team and have their own dedicated website. Less experienced external examiners have a mentor appointed by the school. The Briefing Paper states that this system of mentoring has been recently formalised, with the University now appointing mentors and paying them an additional fee for these duties.

177   The audit team noted that the Learning and Teaching Support Unit plays a pivotal role in the management of staff support because of its contact with all faculties by virtue of its provision of the administrative support for faculty Learning and Teaching Committees, Pro-Deans for Learning and Teaching (who chair annual health check panels), the Learning and Teaching Board and its subgroups and the Student Academic Experience Review process, as well as oversight of the external examiner process. All of these elements identify examples of good practice and issues of concern which can inform the annual programme of developmental training provided by the Staff and Departmental Development Unit.

178   The audit team established that Academic Quality and Standards Team extracts features of good practice and topics for possible improvement from all review reports including those from professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, a role previously fulfilled by Learning and Teaching Board's Standing Group on reviews. The team was also informed that the Staff and Departmental Development Unit also works directly with faculties to identify development needs, including their involvement with annual health checks. These two offices liaise with the other component offices of the Learning and Teaching Support Unit in management meetings, and these discussions then inform the development of the Unit's annual programme of training and development.

179   The University has an extensive programme of staff development facilitated by the Staff and Departmental Development Unit, which they list on their website. This covers learning and teaching, research and research supervision, enterprise and knowledge transfer, leadership and management, and personal and professional development.

180   The University provides a range of continuing professional development opportunities in learning and teaching and academic practice which are credit-bearing and can lead to master's level qualifications. One is the University of Leeds Teaching Award (ULTA-2), which is accredited by the Higher Education Academy. This course is compulsory for staff deemed new to teaching and requirements for attendance on the course are agreed during interviews.

181   Directors of Learning and Teaching and Pro-Deans are provided with access to the Tomorrow's Leaders and Senior Leaders leadership development programmes and there is a Leading and Managing in an Academic Environment programme for other academic and professional staff.

182   Institutional oversight of human resources policies and procedures is commissioned by the Human Resources Office and by virtue of the human resource strategy.

183   Staff informed the audit team that colleagues from collaborative institutions have full access to the University's programme of training and development in addition to the electronic resources provided by the University. The team was informed that several members of staff from Trinity and All Saints have undertaken short courses in preparation for teaching. Staff from collaborative institutions are invited to the annual Learning and Teaching conference and other activities.

184   The audit team found that the University provides a wide range of opportunities to support staff in development of learning and teaching and supervision of postgraduate research students. This is influenced by two elements, firstly the identification of training needs within faculties by means of the Staff Review and Development Scheme and secondly the role of the component offices of the Learning and Teaching Support Unit and the liaison and support they provide to faculties. The team concluded that the University's approach to staff support and development is planned and effectively delivered and contributes to the management of the quality of learning opportunities available to students.

185   The audit team found that the University's systems for the management of learning opportunities were broad in scope, fit for purpose and operating as intended. Curricula are kept up to date and informed by research. There is effective student representation at all levels, backed by systematic collection of student feedback and response to it. Students are well provided with resources for learning and other support, while staff are prepared for their role in teaching and learning and supported in it. These features support a judgement of confidence in the soundness of the University's current and likely future management of learning opportunities.

Section 4: Institutional approach to quality enhancement

186   The Briefing Paper described the University's interpretation of enhancement as the deliberate and systematic process of change that leads to improvement. The Briefing Paper provided examples of deliberate steps which have been taken to facilitate systematic enhancement across the University: restructuring of the central services supporting learning and teaching by creation of the Learning and Teaching Support Unit; introduction of 'ULTA-2', as a programme that all staff new to teaching must take; development of a vision for blended learning and a detailed implementation plan for promoting effective use of the new virtual learning environment; and development of annual health-checks as a forum for discussing enhancement.

187   In the development of the Strategy Map and the Learning and Teaching Strategy, the University has identified a number of strategic priorities under the theme 'inspire our students'. Oversight of these is provided by a steering group which is chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for

Learning and Teaching and includes senior representatives of the academic community and the services. The audit team was informed by senior staff that these initiatives are regarded as key to enhancing the student experience.

Management information - quality enhancement

188   The first enhancement priorities identified were integrating research with learning and teaching; refining assessment practice; improving academic feedback; and use of technology to enhance learning and teaching. The University explains that because priorities such as these cannot be achieved within one session, the Learning and Teaching Board will decide annually whether they should be changed or endorsed for a further year. Indeed, at its first meeting of the 2007-08 session, the Learning and Teaching Board endorsed the current enhancement priorities and agreed to continue with them for 2007-08.

Good practice

189   The audit team noted the development and consistent use made by the University of its Strategy Map in the systematic management of change. In several meetings with staff the key position of the Strategy Map as the driver for enhancement was emphasised to the team. The team formed the view that the development, consistent use and presentation of the Strategy Map as a tool for enhancement were features of good practice

190   The Learning and Teaching Support Unit was established for the start of session 2006-07 with the remit to coordinate all central learning and teaching support needs including quality assurance and enhancement; staff and student development for learning and teaching; and e-learning and online resource support and development. It consists of four teams: Academic Quality and Standards Team, Learning and Teaching Support Office, the Staff and Departmental Development Unit, Learning and Teaching Team and the Library Academic Skills Group.

191   In discussions with staff and from the University's statements in the Briefing Paper, it became apparent to the audit team that the Learning and Teaching Support Unit has direct contact with all schools. This is through its role in providing the administrative support for the faculty learning and teaching committees and the Pro Deans for Learning and Teaching, for the Learning and Teaching Board and its groups, and for Student Academic Experience Review teams, as well as through the provision of staff development and oversight of the external examiner system.

192   The audit team noted that the creation of the Learning and Teaching Support Unit with its component teams may become significant in the institutional promotion of enhancement. The Unit has inherited the role of the the Learning and Teaching Board Standing Group on Reviews in reviewing all review reports. In discussions with staff, the audit team established that the Academic Quality and Standards Team is responsible for summarising the good and weak practice outcomes of the University's review processes for consideration by faculty learning and teaching committees and by colleagues in the Learning and Teaching Support Unit and the Staff and Departmental Development Unit. While summary papers on external examiner and periodic review reports are presented to the Learning and Teaching Board, the team could find little evidence of systematic discussion of these topics by the Board at university level, or of evaluation and implementation of the issues identified across the institution, if appropriate. The team found that the University may be missing opportunities for potential enhancement because of this less intensive discussion, although the team did note some recognition by the Learning and Teaching Board of the potential benefit of analysis of issues identified in periodic review processes. The team believed it desirable that the University consider improving its systematic ability to use key themes extracted from review reports and to spread them to enhance practice across the institution.

193   The Briefing Paper stated that students play a key role in assisting in the identification of areas for development as well as in identifying good practice. They are involved in the monitoring of provision and in quality assurance and enhancement generally through their

representation on all faculty learning and teaching committees and the Learning and Teaching Board. Student:Staff Forums play a role in this context, as schools are required to discuss their action plans arising from surveys of student opinion with students prior to publication.

194   Student involvement in representation was confirmed by the audit team in meetings with students. The students were appreciative of the University's efforts in addressing their feedback in the school action plans.

195   The University differentiates between the deliberate and systematic enhancement actions that it takes and mechanisms for dissemination of good practice. The audit team found that the latter were numerous and consistent with the statements made in the Briefing Paper.

196   Good practice in the University is shared through both the committee structure and other means such as the Annual Learning and Teaching Conference, informal networks, topical events, newsletters and Higher Education Academy Subject Centres and HEFCE Centres of Excellence for Learning and Teaching. In discussions with staff, it became apparent that informal networks are important for dissemination of good practice. In particular, National Teaching Fellows, Pro-Deans and other staff informally disseminate good practice.

197   Dissemination of good practice is not solely restricted to within the University. In meetings with staff active in collaborative partnerships, the audit team established that collaborative partner staff are involved in the dissemination of good practice. They are invited to attend the annual Learning and Teaching Conference and have access to university instruments of dissemination such as the Learning and Teaching Bulletin and the Learning and Teaching Support Unit good practice website.

198   The Learning and Teaching Support Unit supports many of the channels for the dissemination of good practice and has also developed its learning and teaching website to ensure that as well as providing information and a reference to useful resources it is also a means of publicising good practice. Good practice in quality assurance is also provided on the Unit site.

199   The University produces a Learning and Teaching Bulletin three times a year. The Bulletin provides information on forthcoming events and activities, and includes articles to disseminate good practice and promote discussion of learning and teaching theory and practice. Staff discussed the Bulletin and the Learning and Teaching Support Unit website with the audit team, concluding that both are valuable.

200   The University provides funding to support individual projects which further the priorities identified in the Learning and Teaching Strategy. Funding is allocated following competitive bidding. This funding from the University's Academic Development Fund supplements HEFCE Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund money which is being used to fund projects directly in support of the implementation of the new virtual learning environment. Recipients of funding are required to report their progress through the Learning and Teaching Support Unit and build into their proposal details of how the outcomes of their project will be effectively disseminated both across the University and more widely. The audit team found evidence of this feedback process working effectively.

201   The University is involved in externally-funded initiatives to promote enhancement. Examples given in the Briefing Paper are the University's hosting of two of the Higher Education Academy Subject Centres (Bioscience, and Philosophical and Religious Studies), which provide a valuable internal resource as well as disseminating within the discipline community, and the University's activity in five centres of excellence for teaching and learning.

202   In discussions with staff involved in collaborative partnerships, it became apparent to the audit team that collaborative partner staff are involved in the enhancement processes of the University. The Affiliated Institutions Learning and Teaching Committee has a standing agenda item on enhancement, and collaborative staff involvement on University committees fosters

dissemination of good practice. The team was informed of one example of good practice at a collaborative partner that had been adopted by the University. It involved video-based assessments developed by the Addiction Unit.

203   The University runs an internal Teaching Fellowship Scheme, which allows participants to undertake projects, the outputs of which are disseminated, and to meet as a forum to discuss learning and teaching issues. University nominations for the National Fellowship scheme flow from this internal scheme, and the University has had significant recognition at the national level. The Briefing Paper states that 12 staff members have received the award of National Teaching Fellow.

204   The effective integration of research with learning and teaching is one of the key aims of the University's mission. The Learning and Teaching Strategy and the Briefing Paper cited examples of major developments which have fostered enhancement of the students' learning opportunities. The Briefing Paper defined the University's expectations of academic staff that all academic staff involved in teaching also engage in scholarship or research of a high standard. This reflects the University's key strategic aim that learning and teaching should take place in a research-intensive environment. The audit team's scrutiny of documents and its meetings with University staff confirmed the energy and success of policy in this area.

Staff development and reward

205   The University has used the national introduction of role profiles as an opportunity to review its promotion criteria for academic staff as they relate to learning and teaching, research and scholarship, enterprise and knowledge transfer, and academic management. The University is developing new promotion procedures which will enhance further the recognition of excellence in teaching and learning, and in scholarship. The proposed procedures illustrate the different combinations of activities that allow promotion, and the audit team saw evidence that teaching-related criteria were as prominent as research-related criteria for academic roles.

206   The Vice-Chancellor, senior staff and student representatives told the audit team that the University held teaching and research in comparable esteem. The team observed that this ethos of parity of esteem is evident in the importance attached to teaching as well as to research in the University's appointment, promotion and support of academic staff and believed it to be a feature of good practice.

207   The audit team found evidence of institutional consideration and decision-making on the enhancement of the learning opportunities of students. The Strategy Map provides evidence of consideration by senior management. Key themes for enhancement themes are identified in the Strategy Map and within the Learning and Teaching Strategy, and are reviewed periodically. The audit team found evidence of the University taking deliberate steps to improve the quality of learning opportunities.

Section 5: Collaborative arrangements

208   The University states that it has detailed and well understood arrangements for the consideration and management of all collaborative arrangements and is confident that these provide assurance as to the security of the University's awards and the appropriateness of the learning opportunities of students. The Collaborative Provision Audit in March 2006 identified good practice as regards planning, change and enhancement. In response to recommendations in that audit, procedures for collaborative activity have been reviewed and revised, including defining roles and improving oversight. The full extent of the University's collaborative activity is recorded in its Collaborative Register within defined categories.

209   The Standing Group on Collaborative Provision is responsible for maintaining oversight of the University's arrangements for assuring the quality of its provision and securing the

maintenance of standards. It includes representatives from all faculties and reports to the Learning and Teaching Board, which has ultimate responsibility. The Standing Group oversees the approval of new proposals, periodic review and other matters referred to it. All overseas collaborations are referred to Council. The University has plans to increase international collaborations, but did not have detailed plans for this at the time of audit.

210   Having reviewed strategy in this area, the University is now focusing on faculty collaborations. Faculty-level collaborative arrangements are managed by School Learning and Teaching Committees reporting to the relevant faculty Learning and Teaching Committee in accordance with the University's internal policy and procedures. Precise arrangements vary depending upon the nature of the collaboration. The range of types of provision include articulation agreements, jointly developed programmes, jointly delivered programmes, approved specialist programmes, and programmes taught by Leeds University staff off-campus.

211   The University has clear procedures in place for approval of programmes to be offered in collaboration. These involve site visits, due diligence surveys, investigations of prospective partners and detailed consideration of the curricula. In light of the University's international ambitions, the Standing Group on Collaborative Provision has undertaken a thorough review of the procedures for approving new international collaborations and the support available. The University is confident that these are fit for purpose and will ensure the University becomes involved only in secure arrangements of strategic value. The audit team reviewed the procedures for approval and saw examples of them in operation. The team formed the view that the procedures were effective.

212   The University also has clear procedures for managing the end of collaborative partnerships. During 2007, a full review of the accreditation agreements with York St John University and Leeds Trinity and All Saints College was undertaken. The reports were considered by the Learning and Teaching Board and it was agreed to develop new agreements with each institution. The University is now implementing agreed exit strategies with these institutions, which will remain in place as these institutions gain and operate their own taught degree awarding powers. The University will maintain a relationship with these institutions, and will continue to be the awarding body for research degrees offered by both. The audit team saw documents relating to these procedures and they appear to have been managed constructively.

213   The University's minimum expectations for the management of collaborative provision are set out. Day-to-day management is usually undertaken by a programme team, or equivalent group, that comprises representation from both the University and the collaborative provider, and often includes an academic link manager. The audit team met managers who seemed to be clear and positive about their function.

214   The Standing Group on Collaborative Provision has responsibility for oversight of periodic review. Affiliated institutions have an annual health check meeting, on the same model as those for University schools. The audit team were told that from this year annual health checks will be carried out by the relevant faculty, with a report being considered by school and faculty Learning and Teaching Committees and by the partner institution. The annual health check includes areas such as resources. The team did not see examples of review, but was assured that the process is the same as for internal reviews. Accredited Colleges have an annual review meeting chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Learning and Teaching. Faculty-based collaborations, often small-scale, are reviewed in accordance with the school's normal
review procedures.

215   The University approves the appointment of all external examiners for collaborative arrangements following consultation between the discipline head in the partner institution concerned and the University. The University receives all external examiner reports. The audit team was told that, where appropriate, the same external examiner and final board are used as for internal students.

216   The audit team learnt that students under faculty-based collaborative provision are registered students of the University and hence have the same access to University resources and facilities, including library and information technology facilities, and complete the same student surveys. Students at the affiliated institutions and the accredited colleges have access to the University's resources that depends on the specific arrangement agreed with the partner institution. Adequacy of resources at the affiliated institutions and the accredited colleges is considered at the annual health check or annual review meeting, and during periodic review.

217   Staff teaching on collaborative courses have access to University staff training, and the University tries to be responsive to their needs. The audit team was told of good practice being shared with collaborative partners, for example as regards assessment by video, and it is intended that partners should have a similar approach to research informed teaching. The team met some students on collaborative provision programmes and they expressed themselves to be happy with their experience.

Section 6: Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

218   Research degree programmes, and the students registered on them, play a major part in the new strategy of the University to secure a place in the top 50 universities worldwide and the University enunciates two dimensions to the relevance of the arrangements: improving the students' experience, and the significance of the work of research students within the overall research effort of the University. The University's strategy has research degree programmes and research students as a central element.

219   The key features of the arrangements for the support and supervision of research students are detailed within the Ordinances, Regulations and Programmes of Study for Research Degrees; the Research Student Handbook; the Guide for Research Degree Supervisors; the Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidatures and faculty codes; and the institutional structure, policy and arrangements created by the Graduate Board. The audit team found these documents to be accessible, and students informed the team that they felt well informed as to their obligations and entitlements during their study.

220   The Graduate Board has responsibility for postgraduate research student matters, advised by subgroups, which include the Examinations Group, the Bologna Group and the Programmes of Study and Audit Group. In 2006-07, the Graduate Board endorsed the formation of Graduate Schools and the appointment of Academic Directors for Graduate Schools in all faculties. The Research Degrees and Scholarship Office website provides support and information for both research students and staff.

221   All faculties now have Faculty Graduate Schools and Faculty Graduate School Committees. These committees provide a forum for discussion of postgraduate issues including quality assurance. They are empowered by the Graduate Board to ensure the research training and supervision of postgraduate and research students, and to provide a faculty code of practice for research degree candidatures. This code must be consistent with the University's Code of Practice. Faculty graduate school committees are also responsible for taking actions in response to student academic experience reviews and reviewing and monitoring the performance of postgraduate and research candidates and their supervisors.

222   Each faculty or school has at least one Postgraduate Research Tutor appointed by the Faculty Graduate School Committee on the recommendation of the Head of the School. Tutors are responsible for advising supervisors and research students on the administrative and organisational requirements for research degrees. Additionally, they have general responsibility for coordinating admissions and pastoral care, monitoring the progress of all students including the transfer process for assessment for full degree registration, and ensuring that written records are

kept and that the University Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidatures is followed. Students may also discuss matters of concern with the Postgraduate Tutors.

223   From discussions with students, the audit team established that the Postgraduate Research Tutor scheme was working well in faculties and that students were well aware of the role of postgraduate and research tutors and their ability to access them if needed. Students confirmed that annual meetings with the tutors were occurring although they all believed their first point of contact was their supervisors. They were satisfied with the performance of their supervisory teams.

224   The University states that the development of the new integrated Student Academic Experience Review process for taught and research students should provide the opportunity for Faculty Graduate Schools to take increased responsibility for the research student experience. The audit team recognised that few Student Academic Experience Reviews have been commissioned to date, and therefore the efficacy of the new procedure cannot be fully gauged. The team recorded that at least one report has been received and considered by a faculty graduate school committee.

225   The Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidatures was subject to review in 2006-07 after consultation took place with the Postgraduate Assembly of the Leeds University Union and the faculty graduate school committees, with particular reference to the development of the Partnership Agreement for taught students. The Code of Practice was retained as it described the detailed and specialised arrangements for research students and the responsibilities of the students and the University. However, the introduction to the Code of Practice was expanded to comply with the spirit of the Partnership Agreement.

226   Faculties have their own codes of practice for research degree candidatures which allow some variation from the University Code of Practice to accommodate discipline diversity. The University commissioned a review of these faculty codes of practice in 2006-07. A recommendation was made to Graduate Board to create a uniform template for faculties so that they might illustrate how the University code is implemented within them. The rationales for this were to ensure faculty codes are consistent with the University's code and address all necessary issues and to reduce annual effort in reviewing faculty codes.

227   During 2005-06, a review of the University's existing split-site arrangements for PhD study took place with details of the profiles of students, time to submission and success in the examination being considered. This review concluded that action was required to strengthen the structure of the degree programme and the support offered to international students. Admission to the existing programmes was suspended and new models for split-site PhD study, which have clearly defined rigorous arrangements and longer periods of study in Leeds, were launched in 2007.

228   The audit team established in meetings with students that problems with accommodation for split-site students had arisen because of the short duration of study at the University. The team noted that this issue has been discussed by the Graduate Board and the Research Degrees and Scholarship Office and Residential and Commercial Services Office requested to address it.

229   The University has an online application system which allows central monitoring of applications prior to faculty consideration and which was introduced in response to one of the recommendations of the 2006 Review of research degree programmes. Minimum entry requirements are stated in the Ordinance and Regulations for research degrees. Each application is normally considered by the Postgraduate Tutor and the potential supervisor, and always by at least two members of staff.

230   Supervisors are appointed by the Graduate Board on the recommendation of the Faculty Dean, Director of Faculty Graduate School or Head of School. Where co-supervisors are appointed, one is identified as the main supervisor. The Graduate Board requires members of staff to attend a course on research degree supervision organised by the Staff and Departmental Development Unit before being recommended for appointment as a supervisor.

231   In discussions between the audit team and students, induction arrangements were found to be satisfactory, although the methods differed between faculties. There is a requirement that students undertake a school or faculty-defined induction session, and students confirmed that they had experienced these events.

232   Full-time students are entitled to at least 10 supervision meetings per year and part-time students five. Supervisors are responsible for ensuring written records of these meetings are kept. There is also an expectation of an annual meeting with the student (in the absence of the supervisor) with either the Post Graduate Tutor or Head of School to discuss and review progress and provide an opportunity for the student to comment upon the nature of supervision received, and identify any topics of concern.

233   The audit team established that the responsibilities of students and supervisors are well documented in the University Code of Practice. The students who met the team confirmed that they were satisfied with the regularity of supervisory meetings, although these varied slightly between discipline groups. Students had the opportunity to meet with their Faculty Postgraduate tutor in the absence of their supervisor. They found this invaluable to review progress over the year.

234   The University's Briefing Paper stated that the Code of Practice requires that there are consistent processes for individual progress review in all schools and faculties, and that all students must be informed of problems in their progress expeditiously.

235   The University clearly prescribes its requirements for arrangements for the transfer of research students from provisional registration categories to specific degree categories, and the process includes an interview before an Assessment Panel.

236   Two types of supervision records are stipulated by the University: individual supervision meeting records; and formal reports from the supervisor on the student's progress which are considered by faculty graduate school committees, school postgraduate research committees or other channels adopted by the faculty or school. The University defines clearly its record management requirements including retention periods.

237   The Graduate Training and Support Committee commissioned a review of postgraduate research student training and development in 2006-07, which resulted in the Graduate Training and Support Group of the Graduate Board endorsing a University postgraduate research student training and development Strategy, which includes consideration of impact measures as well as a Postgraduate Research Student Training and Development Policy and Framework. The review led initiatives for 2007-08, including the enhancement of communications with research students and staff through a new website, and the creation of a new Guide to Training and Development Opportunities for Research Students. Information is provided to students on the University's Researcher Training and Development website as well as an extensive list of training for postgraduate and research students provided by the Staff and Departmental Development Unit. The University also hosts the Yorkshire and North East Hub of the UK GRAD programme.

238   Research students undertake a training needs analysis with their supervisors within one month of commencing their studies. The analysis ascertains training needs in the light of the planned programme of research, and regular reviews of these needs are undertaken thereafter. Supervisors agree in writing a training plan with research students, and the former are responsible for initiating this process which aims to assist students in acquiring sufficient expertise in generic and subject and professional skills. A copy of the training plan must be retained by the registration unit in the student's file, and the student's portfolio record must illustrate evidence of a training needs analysis, a record of training and development undertaken in the light of the analysis, and records of official supervisory meetings.

239   In discussion with postgraduate and research students, the audit team established that training needs analyses were commissioned when students started their research, and were recorded and reviewed periodically.

240   The Briefing paper discussed the use of postgraduate and research students for teaching and the effect that this has on the learning experience of students on taught courses. The University has a Code of Practice for this, and the University is undertaking a review with a revised code to be issued in 2008-09. The University's Code defines terms and conditions and the basis upon which allocations of teaching hours should be made. Training requirements for students are defined, and responsibilities for ensuring that it occurs are allocated to schools. The Staff and Departmental Development Unit provides an introductory training course.

241   The audit team established that the University provides extensive training opportunities to postgraduate and research students in order to satisfy the requirements of the Ordinances and Regulations for Programmes of Study for Research Degrees 2006-07.

242   The Briefing Paper describes how the University has considered its arrangements for obtaining and acting upon formal feedback from current and former research students and from staff acting as research supervisors particularly in the light of the recommendations of the Review of research degree programmes 2006. The bi-annual student questionnaire is still used, but is now supplemented by focus groups in alternate years. Research students were also included in the 2006-07 Student Experience Survey and some schools are now running exit surveys to obtain the views of graduating students.

243   Postgraduate students are represented on the Graduate Board and on Faculty Graduate School Committees. The new Student Academic Experience Review process involves meetings of postgraduate and research students with review panels and the reports of this process are considered by Faculty Graduate School Committees.

244   In discussion with students the audit team established that the engagement of students with feedback mechanisms varies across faculties, and that students are aware of the methods available in their faculty.

245   The University stated that the key features of research degrees assessment continue to be adherence to the Ordinances and Regulations; the clear guidance provided to examiners; the use of independent external examiners, the mandatory training courses provided for internal examiners, and the detailed monitoring of the reports from the examiners undertaken by the Examinations Group of the Graduate Board.

246   The Graduate Board prescribes arrangements whereby the criteria, regulations and learning outcomes for the award of different types of research degrees are clear, rigorous and widely available. The Board also publishes eligibility criteria for the appointment of examiners. As a minimum, two appropriately qualified examiners are appointed for each candidate, with at least one examiner being external to the institution.

247   The audit team established that the assessment of postgraduate and research students is assured by rigorous external examiner procedures and that the Examination Group of the Graduate Board monitors the reports of examiners. The team found the assessment arrangements to be sound and well understood by students met during the audit.

248   The Graduate Board requires its Examinations Group to monitor and review all aspects of an examination, including the selection of examiners, the implementation of the procedures, the nature and details of the reports and the overall performance of candidates and staff within schools and faculties.

249   The audit team established that the Examination Group monitors all aspects of examinations and related policy. The Group also monitors feedback from external examiners, and holds an annual policy meeting to discuss themes raised.

250   The University has one complaints procedure for all students, but a separate appeals process for postgraduate and research students. The Briefing Paper stated that improved consistency in the experience of students has been promoted by replacing school-level

consideration of appeals by faculty-level consideration in certain circumstances, for example appeals relating to any matter excluding the final examination stage.

251   General issues arising from the Appeal Group are considered by the Graduate Board, and some of these have led to revisions to the University Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidatures, other relevant documents, and advice to students, staff and examiners.

252   The audit team saw evidence of regular review of University and faculty Codes of Practice including reference to the sections of the *Code of practice*. The University's regulations on eligibility for research degree supervision make specific reference to the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes* and the audit team established that the Graduate Board reviews sections of the *Code of practice* relevant to postgraduate and research students.

253   The audit team concluded that the University's procedures for the support, assessment and supervision of research degrees align with *Section 1* of the *Code of practice.*

254   The student written submission describes how overall responses to the research student surveys show general satisfaction with most aspects of the postgraduate and research experience, but also highlights the extent to which this can vary depending on individuals' supervisors or school. Inadequate postgraduate and research workspace and a lack of a sense of discipline community, or feelings of isolation, were frequently mentioned by respondents, suggesting that postgraduate research students in general would benefit from Graduate Schools which provide physical communal space as well as fulfilling administrative functions. These sentiments were strongly expressed by postgraduate and research students who met the audit team. Several complained of a lack of desk space in their discipline accommodation and the consequent feelings of detachment and isolation deriving from lack of a fixed base. Students also believed that more opportunities to interact, both socially and professionally, with students from other disciplines would be beneficial.

255   Training and development were also mentioned by students in their discussions with the audit team. While all had experienced a training needs analysis and the regular, prescribed reviews of this, the students stated that they were often unaware of training opportunities in other faculties that they might have been interested in undertaking.

256   In the light of the contents of the student written submission and discussions with postgraduate and research students, the audit team felt that it would be desirable for the University to consider the provision of increased study space for postgraduate and research students located within their discipline accommodation and the greater facilitation of shared training across faculties. The team believed that this might lead to the development of a greater sense of discipline community and enhanced opportunities for postgraduate and research students to meet their peers from not only within their own faculty but also from other faculties.

Section 7: Published information

257   The audit team examined a range of published information, including university-wide policy and procedural documentation, departmental documentation, course handbooks, regulations, the University's website and intranet, the undergraduate prospectus and committee minutes. The team established that the University provides an extensive and accessible range of published information for prospective and current students and staff both electronically and in hard copy.

258   The University's electronic information provision and communication with students is through a University website, an Intranet Campus Web and a Student Portal. The University's Communication team are responsible for publicity materials while the Campus Web Team and Student Portal Team (a library team from within the Learning and Teaching Support Unit) have responsibility for their respective sites. Schools and faculties have their own web pages within the University's overall site, and heads of school are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of the

information on these websites. School sites contain information on taught and research degrees, administration details and links to other resources. Students who met the audit team emphasised the efficacy of the Student Portal, particularly in allowing them to access their timetables.

259   The University's Briefing Paper explained that responsibility for maintaining the accuracy and completeness of information on the regulatory framework for taught awards rests with the Academic Quality and Standards Team and for research awards with Research Degrees and Scholarship Office. Both offices provide this information on their websites, updating the information to reflect changes in the University's regulations, policies and procedures originating from the Senate, the Learning and Teaching Board and Graduate Board. The Academic Quality and Standards Team has additional responsibility for information on collaborative activity, information for external examiners and the Taught Student Guide.

260   Further information is provided to students by Central Student Administration, and information on appeals, complaints and faculty special cases committees is published by the Office of Academic Appeals and Regulation although the Briefing Paper states that responsibility for the accuracy of this information rests with the Learning and Teaching Board.

261   The audit team recognised that efforts have been made by the University to facilitate student comprehension of their rights and obligations and those of the University. Manifestations of this are the Partnership Agreement, which is made accessible to all students, and the re-drafting of the Taught Student Guide into a more readily comprehensible format.

262   Information is provided for undergraduate and postgraduate students on taught awards and postgraduate research students on courses, their rights and obligations, academic regulations, facilities and support services. The audit team found the information to be both accessible and comprehensive. Information and guidance on the University's policies, procedures and governance, for example committee minutes, are provided on the University's web pages and in paper documents; for example, prospectuses and programme specifications, including module descriptors, are made available on the University's website.

263   The audit team met student representatives who confirmed general satisfaction with the usefulness of the information provided by the prospectus and the website during the application and admissions stages. The students also confirmed to the team that they found the information provided to them to be accurate and complete for their needs. This included information on the aims and outcomes of their course, regulatory matters, curriculum content and learning, teaching and assessment methods; student support and programme and module descriptors.

264   The audit team examined course handbooks for undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses, and found them to be comprehensive and to contain relevant and accurate information about course structure, assessment and the range of support services available to students.

265   The audit team also established that information on appeals, complaints and academic infringements is clearly documented in the relevant handbooks for taught awards and postgraduate research students, and that these are easily accessible to students.

266   The Briefing Paper stated that, prior to the closure of the national Teaching Quality Information website in December 2006, the information provided by the University was reviewed annually by the Learning and Teaching Board. The audit team established that the Board is considering the implications of the launch of the replacement Unistats website and the effects of this on students. The Academic Planning and Performance Office is charged with verifying the accuracy of the data on the site.

267   The Briefing Paper stated that school learning and teaching committees consider external examiner reports through special subgroups at which a student representative is present. The University asserts that during the next academic session it will ensure that external examiner reports are considered at a meeting attended by student representatives.

268   Programme specifications are made available electronically to students through the programme catalogue, from which dynamic links to the constituent module details for the current session are provided, thus ensuring that the published specification is up-to-date, rather than as it existed when the programme was last formally approved. Previous versions of the programme specification are available from the catalogue archives.

269   The Briefing Paper described the University's procedures for ensuring the accuracy of the two separate modules and programmes catalogues which it stated are published only on the institutional website. The Catalogue Team control the 'locked down' catalogues, and, while trained faculty staff may change the underlying databases, these changes are not represented on the website until the Catalogue Team makes them after verifying from the Academic Quality and Standards Team that the changes have been approved by the relevant faculty learning and teaching committee in line with the University's module/programme approval and amendment procedure.

270   The audit team concluded that reliance can reasonably be placed on the integrity and reliability of the information that the University publishes about its programmes.

271   The Leeds University Union student written submission states that in the surveys upon which its submission is based, there are few data about the accuracy of information that the University publishes about itself. However, there was information on the availability and usefulness of information provided, and thus the student written submission concentrates on these aspects.

272   The 2004 and 2006 Research Student surveys recorded that the majority of respondents felt that they were well informed about facilities and support from both the University and their school. This reflected the views of postgraduate and research students who met the audit team who were satisfied with the information provided by the University and who informed the team that they were aware of their rights and obligations on research degree programmes.

273   Undergraduates surveyed in focus groups by the University's Induction Working Group in 2006 wished to receive more information on electives prior to arrival. Students reported that information on programmes and modules provided by schools was of variable quality. Students surveyed felt that they should receive concise information on electives and how to register for them.

274   The student written submission concluded that at undergraduate level there is sometimes inconsistent pre-arrival information, and that pre-arrival information on programme and module content is not sufficient to enable informed decisions by undergraduates. However, students did not raise the issue of difficulties in selecting their electives in discussions with the audit team and were content with pre-arrival and post-arrival information and their ability to select their elective modules.