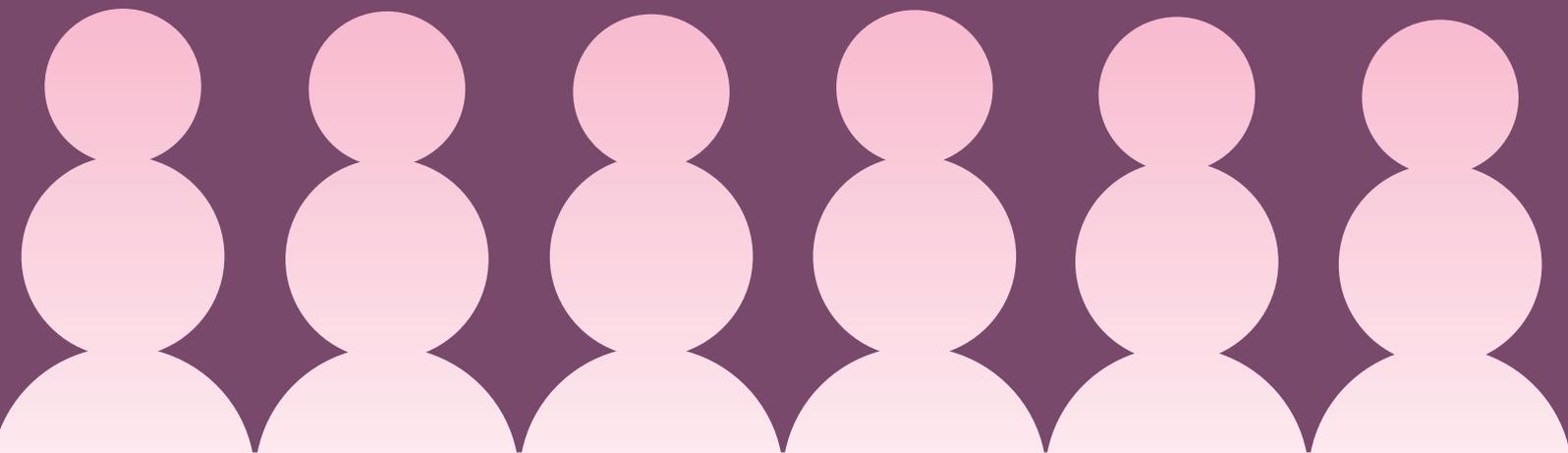




QAA

**Outcomes from institutional audit
Specialist institutions
Second series**



Sharing good practice

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2009

ISBN 978 1 84482 970 5

All QAA's publications are available on our website www.qaa.ac.uk

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Summary

Consideration of the 59 audit reports published between December 2004 and August 2006 shows that 15 relate to institutions which define themselves as 'specialist' in their missions. These institutions vary considerably in size, and include institutions which are specialist by function as well as by subject. A small number of the institutions had degree awarding powers in their own right, but most worked with one or more awarding institutions or were constituent colleges of the University of London.

The frameworks, structures and procedures which support the management of quality in specialist institutions are not significantly different from those in the rest of the sector. The audit reports indicate that the institutions were making efforts to meet the challenges posed, for example, to effective committee operation, by having only a small number of staff or a distinctive organisational structure.

A number of the audit reports discuss the institutions' recognition of the potential for insularity resulting from their specialist nature and the steps taken to counter this. These include ensuring the involvement of external peers in programme design, approval and review, the active involvement of professional practitioners in aspects of teaching and learning and the provision of opportunities for placement and work-based learning within the curriculum. However, in a small number of cases, the audit reports note that institutions had been very slow to engage with elements of the Academic Infrastructure.

A collegiate culture and a strong commitment to the professional development of staff is characteristic of specialist institutions. The audit reports also describe a commitment to hearing and responding to the student voice, often associated with the effective use of informal systems for gathering feedback, as a feature common to many of the institutions. This is also reflected in the levels of academic and personal support and guidance available to the students.

The distinctive learning experience and environment is often supported by specialist learning resources which reflect the professional and vocational orientation of many of the specialist institutions.

The audit reports indicate that on the whole, specialist institutions have appropriate arrangements in place for maintaining academic standards and managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities provided for students. The institutions are responding to the challenges posed by their specialist nature and their often small size, as well as capitalising on the opportunities presented by their distinctive nature and ethos.

Preface

An objective of institutional audit is 'to contribute, in conjunction with other mechanisms, to the promotion and enhancement of high quality in teaching and learning'. To provide institutions and other stakeholders with access to timely information on the findings of its institutional audits, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) produces short working papers, describing features of good practice and summarising recommendations from the audit reports. Since 2005, these have been published under the generic title *Outcomes from institutional audit* (hereafter, *Outcomes...*). The first series of these papers drew on the findings of the audit reports published between 2003 and November 2004. This paper is based on the findings of the institutional audit reports published between December 2004 and August 2006. It includes a brief section at the end of the paper which compares its key features with those of its predecessor in the first series of *Outcomes...* papers.

A feature of good practice in institutional audit is considered to be a process, a practice, or a way of handling matters which, in the context of the particular institution, is improving, or leading to the improvement of, the management of quality and/or academic standards, and learning and teaching. *Outcomes...* papers are intended to provide readers with pointers to where features of good practice relating to particular topics can be located in the published audit reports. Each *Outcomes...* paper therefore identifies the features of good practice in individual reports associated with the particular topic and their location in the main report. Although all features of good practice are listed, in the interests of brevity not all are discussed in this paper. In the initial listing in paragraph 7, the first reference is to the numbered or bulleted lists of features of good practice at the end of each institutional audit report, the second to the relevant paragraphs in Section 2 of the main report. Throughout the body of this paper references to features of good practice in the institutional audit reports give the institution's name and the paragraph number from Section 2 of the main report.

It should be emphasised that the features of good practice mentioned in this paper should be considered in their proper institutional context, and that each is perhaps best viewed as a stimulus to reflection and further development rather than as a model for emulation. A note on the topics identified for the first and second series of *Outcomes...* papers can be found at Appendix 3 (page 27).

As noted above, this second series of *Outcomes...* papers is based on the 59 institutional audit reports published by August 2006 and the titles of papers are in most cases the same as their counterparts in the first series of the *Outcomes...* papers. Like the first series of *Outcomes...* papers, those in the second series are perhaps best seen as 'work in progress'. Although QAA retains copyright of the contents of the *Outcomes...* papers, they can be freely downloaded from QAA's website and cited, with acknowledgement.

Introduction and general overview

1 This paper is based on a review of the 59 institutional audit reports published between December 2004 and August 2006 (see Appendix 1, page 23). During this period, 15 audit reports were published for institutions which may be considered specialist, a quarter of the total corpus (see Appendix 2, page 26). A note on the methodology used to produce this and other papers in the *Outcomes...* series can be found in Appendix 4 (page 29).

2 In the audit reports analysed in this paper, each institution describes itself as specialist within its mission. The institutions vary considerably in size, specialism and function. The number of reports considered in this paper form a similar proportion of the total corpus as those analysed in the parallel paper in the first series of *Outcomes...* However, they are more varied in nature, simply as a result of the way in which institutional audit activity was distributed across the periodic cycle. Therefore, they are distinctive in comparison to each other as well as in comparison with the wider higher education sector.

3 Four-fifths of the 15 institutions were specialist by subject: four in aspects of the creative and performing arts; three in aspects of science, engineering or medicine; five specialised in other discipline areas. The remaining three institutions could be described as specialist by function. For example, one institution enabled students across the world to obtain degrees through distance learning via its 'external system' and another institution focused on providing opportunities for part-time study.

4 Four were small institutions with fewer than 1,000 students and a further six had between 1,000 and 4,000 students. On the other hand, the largest institution had over 34,000 students. A third of the institutions specialised wholly or primarily in postgraduate study, while others had little provision at this level. A significant proportion were strongly research-oriented with their research focus contributing to their specialist nature. A small number of institutions had a proportion of further education provision alongside their higher education programmes. One institution was 'unique [in its] confederal structure comprising institutional partnerships between [itself] and its seven affiliate schools', each of which were legally and artistically autonomous and had a relationship with an awarding institution.

5 In many respects, the small size of many of these institutions has a greater influence on the distinctive features and themes that emerge from the audit reports relating to the experience and circumstances of these institutions than their specialist nature. Nevertheless, even for the larger institutions, the audit reports demonstrate that specialism by subject or function poses challenges as well as opportunities.

6 For about a third of the 15 institutions, the audit report analysed in this paper reflects their first engagement with institutional audit for a variety of reasons. At the time of the audit, the majority of the institutions did not have their own degree awarding powers. Six of the institutions were constituent colleges of the University of London, although one of these had full degree awarding powers in its own right but held them in abeyance. In one case, the institutional audit was combined with scrutiny for taught and research degree awarding powers. One institution had full degree awarding powers and two others had powers to award taught degrees. The remainder all worked with one or more awarding institutions.

Features of good practice

7 The focus of this *Outcomes...* paper is determined by the nature of the institutions concerned rather than by a particular theme. Features of good practice were identified in all of the 15 institutional audit reports and cover a wide range of topics. All the features of good practice identified in the 15 audit reports have been listed here, grouped by theme. These features of good practice are also listed and discussed in the relevant thematic paper in *Outcomes...* Series 2.

Quality frameworks, structures and procedures

- the institutional recognition of the value of the periodic review process as an effective quality management tool [Cranfield University, paragraph 196 ii, paragraph 54]
- the joint venture with Kingston University which allows transfer of good practice in quality assurance through joint membership of committees and shared procedures and practice [St George's Hospital Medical School, paragraph 188 i, paragraphs 33, 35, 38, 43, 85 and 158]
- the effective use of curriculum mapping to ensure the integrity of programme learning outcomes within a modular scheme [Harper Adams University College, paragraph 189 i, paragraphs 32 and 55]
- the careful and considered way in which the Curriculum Delivery Review was developed and implemented, and the way in which its impact is being monitored [Harper Adams University College, paragraph 189 iv, paragraphs 51, 52 and 91]
- the inclusive and collaborative approach to the development of the [Conservatoire for Dance and Drama] quality framework [Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, paragraph 134 i, paragraph 26]
- EISA's [External and Internal Student Administration Division] proactive role in the enhancement of the External System's processes and procedures [University of London External System, paragraph 145 first bullet, paragraph 29]
- the role of EISA in its administrative support of the student lifecycle [University of London External System, paragraph 145 third bullet, paragraph 94]
- the robust and reflective process of review undertaken by the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee (TLAC) [London School of Economics and Political Science, paragraph 37]

Engagement with external stakeholders

- the active engagement of Industrial Advisory Panels in quality management and course development [Cranfield University, paragraph 196 i, paragraphs 47, 55, 76, 125, 137 and 145]
- the widespread use of the University's research environment and links with industry to enhance the quality of learning opportunities [Cranfield University, paragraph 196 iv, paragraph 94]

- the use of a broad range of external peers, including industrialists and academic staff from institutions in Europe, in periodic review of undergraduate programmes [Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine, paragraph 302 i, paragraph 67]
- the College's approach to outreach activity, exemplified by the INSPIRE [Innovative Scheme for Post-docs in Research and Education] project and the collaboration with Thames Valley University [Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine, paragraph 302 iv, paragraphs 149 and 151]
- the role and use of professional advisers, and links with employers and professional bodies [Harper Adams University College, paragraph 189 iii, paragraphs 36, 56 and 61]
- the strong engagement of the College with industry, as evidenced through the involvement of employers in curriculum design, delivery and review [Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies, paragraph 229 v, paragraphs 70, 71, 101, 02]

The professional development and quality of teaching staff

- the provision of opportunities for the professional development of academic staff [Cranfield University, paragraph 196 iii, paragraph 89]
- the effective integration of sessional lecturers into the life and work of the College [Birkbeck College, University of London, paragraph 177, paragraph 74]
- the effectiveness of SOLE [electronic student on-line evaluation system] which has the potential to contribute to quality assurance and enhancement. The audit team noted, in particular, the engagement of students with the process and the use of results in the Personal Review and Development Planning and promotion processes [Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine, paragraph 302 ii, paragraphs 96, 103 and 112]
- the recognition accorded to teaching, especially in the promotions exercise [Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine, paragraph 302 iii, paragraphs 114 and 117]
- the cohesive and comprehensive approach to staff development through: the linking of departmental staff development coordinators with the Staff Development Officer in Human Resources; the linking of staff development to strategic objectives; the participation of St George's senior staff in collaborative activities such as the Sunningdale Action Learning Programme and the Coaching, Action Learning and Mentoring Network for Higher Education [St George's Hospital Medical School, paragraph 188 ii, paragraphs 93, 97, 98 and 183]
- the integrated approach to the pedagogic development of all members of faculty [Henley Management College, paragraph 213 iv, paragraph 104]
- the ways in which the [Conservatoire for Dance and Drama] has facilitated the opportunities for staff to refresh and extend their professional practice [Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, paragraph 134 iv, paragraph 79]

Outcomes from institutional audit

- the effectiveness of the disability project in raising disability awareness in staff at all levels within the affiliates [Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, paragraph 134 v, paragraph 80]
- the staff development days organised by the departments of Fashion and Business Studies [American InterContinental University - London, paragraph 217 iv, paragraph 111]
- the effective links between programme monitoring reports and the identification of staff development needs [Heythrop College, paragraph 200 ii, paragraph 102]
- the ways in which the substantial and recent agenda for change has been achieved both through consensus and the enthusiastic engagement of the College's staff [Heythrop College, paragraph 200 iii, paragraph 105]
- the clear information on the School's requirements given to candidates for interim and major review and by the guidance and support offered by convenors, mentors, senior colleagues and the [Teaching and Learning Centre] [London School of Economics and Political Science, paragraph 49]
- the embedding of staff development in the institution, as evidenced by the wide range of opportunities and the high level of participation by all categories of staff [Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies, paragraph 229 iii, paragraphs 117 and 121]
- the ways in which the College engenders a commitment among staff and students to its particular ethos, specifically through the thoroughness of its processes for staff appointment and student admissions, including arrangements for induction [Dartington College of Arts, paragraph 176 ii, paragraphs 78 and 91]
- the provision of staff development linked to the strategic priorities of the institution [The Arts Institute at Bournemouth, paragraph 211 iii, paragraph 116]

Student focus, representation and opinion

- the immediacy of response to student feedback provided through the student representative system and workshop evaluations [Henley Management College, paragraph 213 iii, paragraphs 76 and 78]
- the organised and thoughtful approach, including that for the compilation of course material, to the assurance of the student learning experience from recruitment to qualification [Henley Management College, paragraph 213 v, paragraph 112]
- the way in which the College's student-focused approach supports a positive learning experience [Harper Adams University College, paragraph 189 vi, paragraphs 82 and 89]
- the staff-student consultative committees in affiliates, especially where they provide access to senior management and where regular progress reports are provided to students [Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, paragraph 134 iii, paragraph 63]
- the success of the informal and formal course evaluation mechanisms in responding to student opinion [Courtauld Institute of Art, paragraph 152 i, paragraphs 33, 68 and 108]

- the introduction of an innovative form of student representation by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine [University of London External System, paragraph 145 second bullet, paragraph 66]
- the high level of collaborative commitment of academic and support staff to the achievement of the College's aims, leading to the enhancement of the student experience [Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies, paragraph 229 iv, paragraph 121]
- student involvement as advisers in teaching staff appointments [The Arts Institute at Bournemouth, paragraph 211 i, paragraph 105]

Academic and personal support and guidance for students

- the quality of support for students offered through the Counselling Service [American InterContinental University - London, paragraph 217 i, paragraph 128]
- the well-integrated support systems, including the Study Support Centre, which give all students the opportunity to realise their full potential [Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies, paragraph 229 i, paragraphs 136, 174 and 210]
- the student academic support systems operating through academic advisers and research supervisors which are successfully combined with informal channels of support developed through the good and productive relationships existing between staff and students [Dartington College of Arts, paragraph 176 iii, paragraph 96]

Learning support resources and professionally-oriented learning experiences

- the approach to preparation of, and support for, students in the Department of Physics undertaking a year of study abroad [Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine, paragraph 302 vi, paragraph 235]
- the provision of the inter-professional programme in year one of all degree programmes with the use of personal tutors to lead case-based learning [St George's Hospital Medical School, paragraph 188 iii, paragraphs 96, 110 and 171]
- the provision of the e-Library, which is notable for highly relevant and carefully selected material to support students' learning [Henley Management College, paragraph 213 vi, paragraph 120]
- the way in which industrial placements for students at the College are managed, supported and integrated within the curriculum [Harper Adams University College, paragraph 189 v, paragraphs 73, 88, 113, 116 and 145]
- the opportunities for students to participate in collaborative events between affiliates which have improved the student experience and employment prospects [Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, paragraph 134 ii, paragraph 29]
- the support provided for a wide range of internships offering professional experience to students [American InterContinental University - London, paragraph 217 ii, paragraph 124]

Outcomes from institutional audit

- the success of the Centre for Learning Technology (CLT) and the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC) in supporting learning and teaching [London School of Economics and Political Science, paragraphs 50 and 57]
- the organisation of placement activity, and the support for students prior to, during and subsequent to their placements [Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies, paragraph 229 ii, paragraphs 137-138]
- the organisational and support arrangements underpinning the contextual enquiry project pursued off-campus (in the UK or overseas) by students at stage 3 of the undergraduate programme [Dartington College of Arts, paragraph 176 iv, paragraph 98]
- the Institute's recognition of the contribution of technician tutors to student learning [by the demonstration of techniques within specialist areas] [The Arts Institute at Bournemouth, paragraph 211 ii, paragraphs 109 and 136]
- the provision of library services, and especially the role of the subject librarians [The Arts Institute at Bournemouth, paragraph 211 iv, paragraphs 121-122]

Assessment, assessment feedback and external examiners

- the effective use of automated testing and [continuous assessment tracking engine] to provide rapid feedback to students in the Department of Computing [Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine, paragraph 302 v, paragraph 222]
- the work of the Assessment Regimes Working Party in the development and documentation of assessment practice [Henley Management College, paragraph 213 i, paragraph 33]
- the College's approach to external examiners and their reports [in particular, the way in which an institutional overview of their work is achieved] [Henley Management College, paragraph 213 ii, paragraphs 54-69]
- the provisions for constructive feedback to students on assessed work [Henley Management College, paragraph 213 vii, paragraphs 122 and 156]
- the careful use of assignment briefs, moderation and marking criteria to assist in measuring the attainment of standards and providing effective feedback to students [Harper Adams University College, paragraph 189 ii, paragraphs 34, 112 and 156]
- the development of templates for the formative assessment of dissertations in the Department of Fashion [American InterContinental University - London, paragraph 217 iii, paragraph 167]
- the composite report of issues raised by external examiners, considered by Academic Board, as an effective vehicle for developing opportunities for enhancement [Heythrop College, paragraph 200 i, paragraph 66]
- the successful efforts made, through briefing and feedback sessions, to engage external examiners in the wider aspects of their role, extending beyond their formal responsibilities in connection with assessment boards [Dartington College of Arts, paragraph 176 i, paragraph 52]

Themes

8 A number of themes are suggested by clusters of recurring matters among the features of good practice and recommendations in the 15 institutional audit reports analysed in this paper. Several of these themes reflect aspects of the distinctiveness of specialist institutions, while others are matters common across the higher education sector. This paper aims to draw out what emerges from the audit reports which is particular to, or especially characteristic of, specialist institutions, rather than to discuss in detail themes which are dealt with fully, including the evidence of the 15 reports for specialist institutions, in other *Outcomes...* papers (a list of the titles of other papers in the second series of *Outcomes...* can be found in Appendix 3, page 27).

9 The following themes all relate to matters which reflect, in various ways, the particular character, nature or circumstances of specialist or small institutions:

- quality frameworks, structures and procedures
- engagement with external stakeholders
- the professional development and quality of teaching staff
- student focus, representation and opinion
- academic and personal support and guidance for students
- learning support resources and professionally-oriented learning experiences.

10 One further theme, assessment and external examiners, is discussed in brief in this paper as, although there is a cluster of features of good practice and recommendations in this area in the 15 audit reports, it does not raise any matters particular to specialist institutions.

Quality frameworks, structures and procedures

11 This is a broad heading which embraces the effectiveness of committee structures, the locus of responsibility for quality management, the operation of institutional procedures, the use of progression and completion statistics, and development of approaches to quality enhancement. These topics gave rise to both recommendations and features of good practice in the 15 institutional audit reports. There are also a number of features of good practice identified in this area which suggest strengths which are not specific to the specialist nature of the institutions, particularly in relation to programme approval, monitoring and review (see further discussion in the forthcoming *Outcomes...* paper *Validation and approval of new provision, and its periodic review*).

Committee structures and locus of responsibility

12 The committee structures outlined in the institutional audit reports indicated that, on the whole, those of the smaller specialist institutions were not significantly different from those of the larger ones, or of other institutions in the sector, although more functions might be grouped under the terms of reference of a single committee, rather than divided among a series of specialist sub-committees. On the other hand, it was noted in the audit reports that smaller institutions tended to be characterised by the involvement of a wide range of staff in committees, flat management structures and a

strong collegiate culture. For example at one institution, the report noted that 'committee functions had been carefully designed to...provide an opportunity for a significant proportion of staff and student representatives to be involved in the management of quality and standards'. This inclusive approach was linked in the report to well understood and embedded policies and procedures. At another small institution, where key committees traditionally involved most academic staff, the report noted that this resulted in wide understanding and involvement in quality frameworks, but with an associated danger of 'overwhelming academics' research and teaching commitments'. A similar difficulty was noted in several other reports, where the demand on staff time of committee involvement was seen as problematic or becoming problematic. Thus, one institution was recommended 'to take the necessary steps to improve the level of participation by members of [a sub-committee of the academic board with responsibility for academic standards], thereby enabling it to exercise its delegated responsibilities as the institution's principal quality assurance committee'.

13 Several audit reports discussed other potential challenges which could result from structures built around small numbers of staff. For example, a flat management structure could mean that the locus of responsibility and reporting lines were not always clearly identified. A number of reports noted that even if in practice within institutions possible problems had not been missed, there remained a danger that they could be, or that engagement was reactive rather than strategic. However, it was evident from the reports that a number of the smaller specialist institutions were already taking steps to move from less formal to more formal structures, from an inclusive to a representational approach to committee membership and, with it, more clearly defined roles and responsibilities. The reports indicated a number of reasons why this was necessary. For example, one institution was recommended to clarify the responsibilities of staff and reporting lines of committees to ensure 'consistency across all academic programmes by establishing appropriate management committees with clearly defined functions'. Another institution, which was further in the process, was recommended 'to complete the rationalisation of the committee structure so that it is fit for purpose for the size of institution and operates effectively with clear lines of communication'. In another case, it was suggested that the institution identify a senior member of staff 'to sustain the momentum already established in developing quality assurance systems, and to monitor, and drive the quality and standards agenda'.

14 However, the review and refining of committee structures and responsibilities was not confined to the smaller specialist institutions. The general process of evolution was reflected elsewhere in the audit reports. At one moderately-sized institution it was suggested that 'the [institution's] framework for the management of quality and standards would be enhanced if it were to clarify and codify the relationships between informal working groups and formal deliberative bodies'. In another, larger, institution, the report noted the need for the institution to expedite 'the planned review of its committee system to ensure the effective and efficient conduct and minuting of business' and to clarify 'the location of ultimate responsibility for quality [management] and [academic] standards'.

15 Particular challenges were faced by institutions which are specialist by function and consequently have distinctive management structures. For example, one institution with a large and complex portfolio of provision was recommended to

'review the way the [academic board] operates to ensure that it can more effectively and speedily fulfil its role as the committee with collective responsibility for the management of quality and standards'. Another institution faced a particular challenge in establishing a committee system that added value to those of its partners and did not add unnecessary duplication.

Progression and completion statistics

16 As the *Outcomes...* paper on *Progression and completion statistics* demonstrated, institutions across the sector are making steady progress in achieving fully effective collection, collation and use of statistical data and other management information although much work remained to be done. A number of the specialist institutions considered in this paper also faced challenges in connection with student data, student records systems and the ways in which data are effectively utilised and embedded within procedures to inform quality assurance and contribute to quality enhancement. In most respects, such difficulties did not appear to be linked to the specialist nature of the institutions. In a small number of institutional audit reports, institutions were recommended to make greater use of comparative information internally, for example, 'to inform comparison of student performance across and beyond the institution'. In another case, the audit report noted that 'use of statistical data was adequate to confirm academic standards but its approach could be developed to contribute to quality enhancement'.

17 On the other hand, effective use was being made of statistical information in some institutions although it did not result in formally identified features of good practice. One audit report noted that an institution was making good use of statistical information at course, subject and institutional levels and emphasised how data was used to inform decision making. Another report noted that data was used to monitor attendance, with students who were not attending being followed up, and that the institution used progression and completion statistics at module, programme, school and institution level to support its admissions policy.

18 Nevertheless, in relation to the validity of comparison of statistical data, some questions specific to specialist institutions were raised in the audit reports. Several reports noted that the institution faced a particular challenge in using statistical information to benchmark or compare performance due to the nature of what makes them specialist, because comparable data were not readily available. For example, in one report the institution's own belief in its distinctiveness was reported to have led it to be 'disinclined to attempt comparisons with other institutions, thereby reducing its capacity to contextualise the interpretation of statistical information'. It was suggested that the institution use the reporting potential of the new student information system to enable it to compare its performance 'to that of other higher education institutions in order to identify benchmarks that might be used to inform institutional strategies'.

Approaches to quality enhancement

19 Most of the institutional audit reports indicate that the specialist institutions had developed, or were developing at the time of the audit, a considered and conscious approach to quality enhancement. In some cases, suggestions were made in the report for further development of a more systematic and strategic approach. At one

Outcomes from institutional audit

institution, for example, the audit report noted that while a culture of continuous improvement was evident, the approach to enhancement was not as strategic and the review of the committee system could provide it with a clearer focus. At another institution, the report described it as having 'yet to exploit to the full' the information gained from internal reviews and external examiners. The institution was recommended to review its current understanding of quality enhancement, 'as a step towards developing a formal and coordinated quality enhancement strategy'. In another report, the institution was encouraged to consider how 'locally generated enhancement initiatives...[could be evaluated] so that they can be developed in accordance with the [institution's] quality framework'.

20 Strengths in terms of quality enhancement practice can be found in a number of the audit reports and were also drawn out as features of good practice in some cases. At one institution, a range of initiatives and activities were identified and particular examples of good practice noted in discipline audit trails. Attention was drawn to the range of evaluation mechanisms planned and an existing online student evaluation system was identified as effective and as having 'the potential to contribute to quality assurance and enhancement' [Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine, paragraph 103]. At another institution, 'a high level of enthusiasm for and commitment to the [institution's] aims' was noted as a feature of good practice to contribute to the enhancement of the student experience [Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies, paragraph 121]. It was also noted that 'enhancement, broadly defined' featured 'prominently in the [institution's] priorities'. In a further example, the composite report of issues raised by external examiners, which was considered by the academic board, was identified 'as an effective vehicle for developing opportunities for enhancement' [Heythrop College, paragraph 66].

21 A number of recommendations were linked to the encouragement to ensure that the quality enhancement benefits of quality assurance processes were realised. For example, one audit report noted that 'a more evaluative approach to the consideration of the [annual monitoring] reports...would also contribute to the [institution's] processes for the quality assurance and enhancement of its provision' and another institution was asked to consider increasing the circulation of the full version of review reports in order 'to capture more effectively the enhancement potential of periodic review'.

Engagement with external stakeholders

22 The high level of engagement of specialist institutions with external stakeholders was identified as a strength within many of the institutional audit reports. This engagement took a number of forms: industrial liaison panels; external membership on senior academic committees; external advisers or panel members involved in programme approval (or for those without degree awarding powers, in the internal process leading to submission for approval by the awarding institution); and external involvement in periodic subject or programme review. The audit reports also noted that a vocational and professional focus was reflected in the direct involvement of employers and representatives from industry and the professions in the curriculum in a number of the institutions. On the other hand, the reports indicate that the response of specialist institutions to external reference points varied.

External involvement in programme design, approval and review

23 The institutional audit reports noted that due to their small size and strongly specialist nature, several institutions had recognised that they had fewer opportunities for 'internal externality', by including panel members from other disciplines and departments in internal procedures, particularly in processes of programme approval and review or re-approval. Therefore, the institution needed to engage with external advice more actively in order to ensure they did not become insular. One audit report, summarising the institution's view as expressed in its self-evaluation document, stated 'that in order to avoid the possibility of isolation from broader developments in the sector and because of its single-subject focus, [the institution] incorporates extensive external scrutiny of all aspects of teaching and governance' into its approval, monitoring and review procedures. Another institution was reported to have acknowledged 'that being a monotechnic requires particular efforts to bring externality into the institution'. As a whole, the audit reports indicate that specialist institutions recognised the need for external input in programme approval and review. Thus, the involvement of one or more external academic advisers in programme approval and in periodic review was usual and the involvement of a representative of industry or professional practice also not uncommon.

24 Furthermore, the depth and range of external input into formal processes of approval and review in specialist institutions was emphasised in the audit reports. At one institution the report described 'the careful way in which the panels...were constructed to reflect a breadth of external expertise both through academic and industrial and professional representation' and identified the role of professional advisers, to act as external reference points on quality, standards and student achievement as a feature of good practice [Harper Adams University College, paragraph 61]. At another institution, periodic review reports were presented to the relevant industrial advisory panel and the 'engagement of the expertise available' was noted in the report as making 'a significant contribution to overall quality enhancement'. Periodic review at another institution involved four external assessors, two from UK institutions, one from a European higher education institution and one from industry who each produced a report that was considered at institutional level. This use of 'a broad range of external peers, including industrialists and academic staff from institutions in Europe', in periodic review of undergraduate programmes was identified as a feature of good practice in the audit report [Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine, paragraph 67].

25 However, the audit reports indicate that there is potential for some specialist institutions to increase the level of external involvement in their procedures. In one case, the report noted the possibility of greater engagement with external advisers, particularly in programme approval processes. The report also noted 'limited engagement with peers' outside the institution and that 'academic standards appeared to be internally referenced'. Another institution was reported to have not made the requirement for external involvement in programme approval compulsory for reasons of market competitiveness, but in practice the 'active role of the Industrial Advisory Panels in course development' was a feature of good practice [Cranfield University, paragraph 47].

26 Those institutions which did not have degree awarding powers and consequently had programmes formally approved by an awarding institution still drew on external advice within their internal approval processes.

Relationships with employers and industry

27 Another way in which specialist institutions engaged with external stakeholders was through a strong professional input into the curriculum and, in some instances, to student assessment. Some institutions placed a particularly strong emphasis on the role of industrial advisory committees. At another institution, professional advisers were involved alongside traditional external examiners in assessment boards and had 'particular responsibilities with respect to student achievement of professional skills'. In another audit report, the involvement of employers in assessment is noted as 'enabling the vocational relevance of programmes to be tested' in addition to the well-established consultation of representatives from industry and use of industrial liaison groups during programme development [Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies, paragraph 69].

28 It is clear from the audit reports that many of the specialist institutions were 'proud of...links with employers and of the long-standing relationship between courses and the workplace' and placed a 'strong emphasis on vocational relevance, professional standards and practitioner skills'. The specialist professional or vocational focus and close engagement with industry, including through the employment of practitioner tutors, resulted in a responsiveness of institutions to industry in the currency of their curricula, which was noted in a number of reports.

External reference points

29 The engagement of specialist institutions with the Academic Infrastructure was described in the institutional audit reports as mostly being well embedded in relevant documentation, policies and procedures. The locus of responsibility for overseeing an institution's use of external reference points was generally clearly designated to particular committees or individuals. However, there are examples in the audit reports where responsibility had not been clearly defined, or the nature of the institution's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure had been partial or reactive rather than systematic. For example, one institution was recommended to clarify 'the locus of responsibility for ensuring consistent engagement with the Academic Infrastructure'. In another report, it was suggested that the institution review the effectiveness of the 'map' used as a 'key mechanism for providing institutional oversight of the implementation of procedures such that their consistency with the *Code [of practice]* can be clearly demonstrated'.

30 In addition, the audit reports identified that a small number of specialist institutions had been very slow to respond to national external reference points. In some cases, this is attributed to the nature of the institutions, either their particular historic traditions or culture (for example, not being in receipt of public funding) or some degree of insularity or isolation from the wider sector. One institution was noted in the audit report to be still in the process of approving programme specifications for its postgraduate provision and of reconciling programme structures with the notion of academic progression inherent in *The framework for higher education qualifications in*

England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) some years after the expected adoption of these elements of the Academic Infrastructure across the sector. Another institution was noted to be only in the process of considering a common awards framework to ensure alignment with the FHEQ, with the consequent systematic remodelling of individual degrees intended to be completed by 2009. Progress towards full engagement with the Academic Infrastructure was described as 'unnecessarily slow'.

31 Elsewhere, effective use of elements of the Academic Infrastructure was noted in the audit reports. Programme specifications were, for instance, noted to be used to good effect in a number of institutions, with those at one institution described as 'well designed, regularly reviewed and used very effectively'. Attention is drawn in the report for another institution to its 'sophisticated use' of 'several subject benchmark statements and the requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies as reference points for innovative curriculum areas'.

The professional development and quality of teaching staff

32 A commitment to the professional development of staff is noted as a strength in many of the 15 institutional audit reports. More than two-thirds of the audit reports for specialist institutions identify a feature of good practice in this area, with only a small number containing a recommendation on the topic. Some features of good practice referred to particular activities, while others concerned the overall, often strategically linked, approach to professional development. For example, 'the provision of staff development and links to the strategic priorities of the [institution]' was identified as a feature of good practice in one report [The Arts Institute at Bournemouth, paragraph 116] and the 'cohesive and comprehensive approach to staff development...[and] the linking of staff development to strategic objectives...' in another [St George's Medical School, paragraph 98].

Opportunities for staff development

33 In a number of institutional audit reports both the opportunities for development provided for staff and the level of participation in such activities were noted with approval. In one audit report, the institution was noted to have provided a wide range of opportunities for staff development for all categories of staff, and that these were enthusiastically supported [Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies, paragraph 121]. At another institution, the provision of a range of opportunities for the professional development of academic staff and 'the universal recognition of their value' was identified as a feature of good practice [Cranfield University, paragraph 89]. A further institution had drawn upon its composition as a group of affiliate bodies to facilitate 'opportunities for staff to refresh and extend their professional practice' [Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, paragraph 79]. In a final case, an institution was noted to have 'an inclusive collegial approach to the development of all its employees' and its 'integrated approach to the pedagogic development of all members of faculty through activities centred upon the practical application of learning and development' was identified as a feature of good practice [Henley Management College, paragraph 104].

34 Elsewhere in the audit reports, institutions were encouraged to continue work already initiated in providing professional development opportunities and facilitating staff engagement in scholarly activity and research.

Appointment and induction processes

35 Mechanisms to help ensure the quality of teaching staff are emphasised in a number of institutional audit reports. Teaching was assessed as part of the appointment processes in several institutions, through presentations and workshops. The involvement of students in the process of academic staff appointments was noted as a feature of good practice in one audit report [The Arts Institute at Bournemouth, paragraph 105]. Another report described how teaching appointments involved 'discussions with staff and students and a practical demonstration of approach through a teaching or workshop session involving students whose feedback contributes to the final decision [on appointment]'. At another institution, the report noted that teaching performance was important to the confirmation of appointment and 'the recognition accorded to teaching by the College, especially in the promotions exercise' [Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine, paragraph 117] was identified as a feature of good practice. The 'clear information...[and the] guidance and support offered by convenors, mentors, senior colleagues and the [Teaching and Learning Committee]' as part of formal staff review was seen as a feature of good practice at another institution [London School of Economics and Political Science, paragraph 49].

36 Most of the institutions provided induction sessions on aspects of teaching, learning and assessment and had established opportunities for less-experienced teaching staff to undertake postgraduate certificates in learning and teaching. Where an institution was not able to run its own postgraduate certificate, the audit reports note that a number of institutions had negotiated access to those provided by their awarding or another institution. Where no such opportunity was provided, one institution was recommended 'to find means of creating the opportunity for staff inexperienced in teaching in [higher education] to take recognised courses or qualifications in teaching and learning as part of their personal, professional development'.

Student focus, representation and opinion

37 A strong student focus and student involvement in institutional life was characteristic of the majority of the specialist institutions considered. The effectiveness of both formal and informal systems for feedback was commented upon in the institutional audit reports, as was the responsiveness of institutions to their students. While the audit reports do contain recommendations concerning aspects of student representation and the opportunities available for students to provide feedback, the ways in which the concern of the institution for their students enhances the student learning experience is drawn out in the features of good practice.

38 The strong student focus resulting from the distinctive culture of the specialist institution was noted in a number of audit reports with regard to its potential to enrich and benefit the learning experience. For example, in one case 'the [institution's] student-focused approach supports a positive learning experience' was identified as a feature of good practice [Harper Adams University College, paragraph 82]. In another

report, the 'manifest commitment to sometimes implicit but clearly well-understood goals and criteria for the provision of effective support for learning and individual learners...within networks of staff whose concern is the support of students' is reflected in one of the features of good practice which noted the 'organised and thoughtful approach...to the assurance of the student learning experience from recruitment to qualification' [Henley Management College, paragraph 112].

39 Typically, students at specialist institutions were involved on key committees at institutional level, at departmental level (where relevant) and at programme/operational level. At one institution, the self-evaluation document described how 'student participation in all aspects of academic decision making' was central to its approach to the assurance of quality and standards, and the audit report quotes the students' view in their written submission that 'invariably student views are listened to and taken on board'. The 'good relationship between the student representatives and the [senior management team]' is noted in another report.

40 In a small number of cases, suggestions were made for ways in which institutions could improve their student representation arrangements to enhance quality. For example, at one institution the audit report noted that students were well-represented, with ample opportunities for their opinions to be heard. However, it was suggested that the institution 'take steps to incorporate explicit information on student representation into course and [institution] materials'. Elsewhere, concerns related to consistency across an institution: in one report it was noted that while students had the opportunity to make their views known, 'the student contribution to assurance of quality and standards could be improved further if a standard model of representation was adopted'. In another case, the report noted that there was evidence of effective collection of student feedback, but the institution was encouraged to 'consider ways of ensuring that its intentions that all modules are evaluated is fulfilled'.

41 At institutions which were specialist by function, student representation was acknowledged to be more of a challenge due to the nature of the institutions, but the introduction of 'an innovative approach to student representation' was seen as a useful response to this issue in one case and was identified as a feature of good practice [University of London External System, paragraph 66]. In contrast, one of the larger specialist institutions, whose provision was mostly by distance learning, was noted in the audit report to be seen by their students as 'remote' and 'unable to create a sense that they are part of its student community'.

Interaction between staff and students

42 Interaction between staff and students was noted to happen through informal as well as formal channels in many of the institutions, and this was highlighted and valued by the students whose views are recorded in the audit reports. One report described the importance of 'informality and collegiality...to the [institution's] quality assurance processes and culture...characteristics [which] are valued by staff and students alike, and are sustained by factors which include size, tradition, [and] single discipline orientation' and noted the 'prevailing culture of formal and informal interactivity between students and tutors, a characteristic of the [institution] as a whole which is universally understood and valued'. These characteristics were reflected in a feature of good practice which noted 'the success of the [institution's]

informal and formal course evaluation mechanisms in responding to student opinion' [Courtauld Institute of Art, paragraph 33].

43 Staff were recorded as being seen by students as approachable and accessible in a number of the audit reports. For example, at one institution, 'students praised the open-door policy of the majority of the staff, including the Principal'; at another institution, the combination of informal channels of support developed through the good and productive relationships existing between staff and students and formal academic support systems was noted as a feature of good practice [Dartington College of Arts, paragraph 96]. Another audit report recorded that students had 'praised the level of support they had experienced as well as the accessibility and openness of the staff', a sentiment repeated in other reports.

Feedback from students

44 The audit reports show that many of the institutions were clearly responsive to concerns raised by students. At one institution, '[the] immediacy of response to student feedback provided through the student representative system which has demonstrable effects on the quality of the student learning experience' was identified as a feature of good practice [Henley Management College, paragraph 76]. The smaller institutions in particular were characterised by close relationships between staff and students, embedded student representation and a close attention to student opinion. Informal mechanisms for feedback were, in some instances, sufficiently effective for some shortcomings in more formal systems (such as poor participation by students in committee activities) to not concern significantly students whose views are recorded in the audit reports. In many cases, matters raised by students informally were being addressed and, as noted in one audit report 'these informal mechanisms appeared...to be effective, and frequently to lead to timely actions that benefit students sooner than would be the case with formal mechanisms'. In another report, effective systems for feedback at each level - institutional, subject and programme - were noted to exist alongside informal mechanisms, which were valued by students and provided 'an appropriate response to matters of concern'.

Academic and personal support and guidance for students

45 In general, students were noted in the institutional audit reports as expressing satisfaction with the services and academic and pastoral support available to them. There were three features of good practice identified in this area in the 15 audit reports, as well as many other very positive observations. It is clear from the reports that specialist institutions of all sizes had made efforts to ensure that an appropriate range of services were available to their students and that those services were matched to the needs of their particular student body as far as practical. For example, at one institution it was noted that overall 'the concern for personal support services is embedded in the culture of the institution' and 'the well-integrated support systems...which give all students the opportunity to realise their full potential' was identified as a feature of good practice [Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies, paragraph 136]. However, it is evident that the smaller institutions faced a challenge in consistently providing the range and availability of services needed, which is reflected in a number of recommendations in this area.

Nevertheless, a number of institutions had come to arrangements with others to provide the necessary services or, in the case of the constituent colleges of the University of London, had arranged to draw on central provision.

46 The development of a more strategic and coordinated approach to student support services was recommended in a number of audit reports. For example, one institution was recommended to 'develop a comprehensive and integrated approach to the provision of its student services' and it was suggested that another institution should ensure 'the timely achievement of more coordinated provision of academic and personal support services for students'. In some institutions, it appears that there was a shift underway from a student-focused but informal approach, to something more systematic. Informal processes were, in general, being supplemented and supported by coordinated and more centrally overseen approaches as notions of consistency and equity for all students have become more important across the sector. This is reflected in a recommendation to formalise 'practice for the provision of academic and personal support arrangements to ensure consistent and equitable treatment of students'. Another institution was encouraged 'to consider...establishing minimum expectations for the personal support of students' and a third to reduce 'the significant variations in the level of tutorial support offered' to students.

47 A few audit reports noted the need to adapt services to the changing nature of the student intake as, for example, in a recommendation to review the institution's provision of learning skills support 'in the context of an increasingly diverse student intake'. In another case, an institution was recommended 'to formulate a clear and documented policy for career education, information and guidance which is informed by data on graduate destinations'.

48 There are a number of examples in the audit reports of positive descriptions of provision for students with particular or specific support needs and of a student-focused approach to support. One institution provided universal screening for specific learning difficulties during induction, and it was noted that the students in their written submission had described 'good academic support for students in general, and for dyslexic students in particular'. This was achieved in part by gathering the views of specific groups of students, for example from overseas, on whether the support available was appropriate. At another institution, a student services committee was established following a students' union initiative, chaired by the students' union president. In most cases, the reports indicate that specialist institutions were committed to enhancing the student learning experience through student support and record that students were positive about the support they received and the services available.

Personal and academic tutors

49 The audit reports indicate that most of the institutions operated a personal tutorial system and many also provided one-to-one academic support. One institution had recognised the importance of technicians to the student experience in its specialist area and had formalised this in the creation of technician-tutors, and this was identified as a feature of good practice [The Arts Institute at Bournemouth, paragraphs 109, 136]. At another institution, it was noted that staff 'had undertaken

listening skills courses to assist them in identifying when a student may be experiencing more difficult problems than they are, at first, able to acknowledge'. Students met by the audit team at that institution were reported as praising the support they received, noting in particular that 'personal tutors are helpful, proactive, supportive for settling in, and easily contactable...[and] generally gave "fantastic support"'. In a third institution, the report noted that the 'one-to-one tutorials within every module remains a distinctive feature of the teaching provision...and are highly valued by staff and students alike'.

Learning support resources and professionally oriented learning experiences

50 A large majority of the specialist institutions whose institutional audit reports are analysed in this paper provided specific vocational or professional education. Most of the audit reports highlight the strong links these institutions had developed with the relevant industry or professional practice and the importance of this for students in terms of the learning opportunities provided (see paragraphs 22-28). Many of the institutions had developed distinctive features within their curricula to enrich the student learning experience and, in particular, provide vocational and professional opportunities. Moreover, the nature of many of the specialist institutions meant that they had developed, or were custodians of, specialist learning resources and this, in combination with a strong research and industry-oriented culture, was acknowledged in several audit reports as contributing towards exceptional and particular learning environments, resulting in the identification of features of good practice in two-thirds of the reports.

Specialist learning environment

51 Examples of the distinctive nature of the learning environment available to students included, at one institution 'research-led teaching...[that] offers postgraduate students exceptional learning opportunities' together with 'internationally renowned galleries and specialist libraries' with which 'the presence of internationally renowned scholars on the teaching staff and the participation of outside scholars in regular public lectures and seminars enhance the quality of the student experience'. The specialist library at another institution was reported to contain 'one of the most extensive theology and philosophy collections in the UK, including a significant number of historic and rare books'. One of the principal learning resources at another institution was the farm, and the way this supported learning and the curriculum was noted in the audit report to be regarded by students as 'particularly useful...[and] an invaluable practical resource... well used for teaching'.

Placements and work experience

52 Student placements and direct work experience were noted in the institutional audit reports to be integral to the learning opportunities provided by many of the specialist institutions and gave rise to several features of good practice. One institution featured an industrial placement (usually 11 months' duration) as part of all its undergraduate programmes. The audit report noted that students were well supported before and during placements, which were vetted as necessary, and 'the way in which industrial placements for students at the College are managed, supported and integrated within the curriculum' was identified as a feature of good

practice [Harper Adams University College, paragraph 116]. Similarly, work-based learning, placements and work experience were embedded in the curriculum of most programmes at another institution and the 'organisation of placement activity, and the support for students prior to, during and subsequent to their placements' was also identified as a feature of good practice [Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies, paragraph 138]. Effective support for placements through dedicated staff, student handbooks and processes were also noted as features of good practice in other reports.

53 As well as placements, the provision of other opportunities for professional learning by specialist institutions were identified as features of good practice. For example, one institution offered an inter-professional programme in the first year of all degree programmes [St George's Hospital Medical School, 110]. In another case, 'the opportunities for students to participate in collaborative events between affiliates' were noted to have improved the student experience and employment prospects [Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, paragraph 29]. Moreover, in the specialist institutions concerned with the creative arts, the use of current practitioners as visiting or sessional staff was noted as a particular feature.

ICT provision

54 The only area of learning support resources provision which led to recommendations in the 15 institutional audit reports considered in this paper was information and communications technology. Virtual learning environments (VLEs) had been developed, at least in part, in many of the institutions, but it was noted that implementation or take-up in some cases was variable and not always backed by an institutional strategy or a defined timetable. However, challenges of this nature are not specific to specialist institutions (see the *Outcomes... papers Institutions' support for e-learning and Learning support resources (including virtual learning environments)*). Moreover, in some institutions, provision was well developed and included virtual or e-libraries. At one institution with a large proportion of part-time and work-based learners, the audit report noted that particular attention had been paid to the development of resources that would be accessible to students off-campus and the e-library and the 'highly relevant and carefully selected material to support students' learning...was a feature of good practice in effective support for...open and student-centred learning' [Henley Management College, paragraph 120].

Assessment and external examiners

55 The institutional audit reports contain a number of features of good practice and recommendations on the topics of assessment and external examiners, but in terms commensurate with practices and recommendations in the sector in general. The topics are outlined in brief in this paper and further discussion can be found in the *Outcomes... papers Assessment of students and External examiners and their reports*.

56 Most recommendations in the audit reports in the area of assessment concerned the need for internal rigour, consistency, and equity in the treatment of students. For example, it was recommended that one institution review 'assessment policies and procedures to ensure clarity and consistency of application'. However, at another institution, the use of detailed assessment briefs which made clear the demands of

each assessment were identified as a feature of good practice [Harper Adams University College, paragraph 34].

57 The provision of feedback on assessment to students was identified as a strength in several audit reports. One institution had developed templates to enable feedback on formative assessments to be given against a set of clearly articulated criteria [American InterContinental University - London, paragraph 167]. Another institution had introduced electronic methods for assessment and tracking student progress, which facilitated rapid feedback on submitted work [Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine, paragraph 222].

58 A number of audit reports comment positively on how external examiners were briefed on their role and the ways in which their reports were used to identify opportunities for enhancement across the institution. However, in one report it was noted that the institution should ensure that responsibility and timescale for following up actions from external examiners' reports was clear.

The findings of this papers and of its counterpart in the first series of *Outcomes...* papers compared

59 The findings of this paper are broadly comparable with those of the parallel paper in the first series of *Outcomes...*, notwithstanding the more varied nature of the specialisms of the institutions concerned. Similar strengths can be identified in the areas of student representation, academic and personal support and guidance for students and the provision of learning support resources, all of which may be taken to reflect elements of the distinctive nature of specialist institutions. As in the first paper, the institutional audit reports indicate that, on the whole, specialist institutions have appropriate quality management frameworks in place, but there is potential for the locus of responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement to be more clearly identified. It is notable that the present paper identifies more examples of engagement with external stakeholders and reference points by the specialist institutions.

Conclusion

60 Consideration of the 15 institutional audit reports for specialist institutions indicates that, on the whole, they have appropriate arrangements in place for maintaining academic standards and managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. The institutions are responding to the challenges posed by their specialist nature and their often small size, as well as to the questions facing the higher education sector as a whole. In addition, the specialist institutions are capitalising on the opportunities presented by their distinctive nature and ethos.

61 Particular strengths can be identified in the opportunities provided for the professional development of staff and for involving students in the life of the institution. The level of engagement with external stakeholders and reference points is especially notable, as this reflects recognition on the part of the specialist institutions of the need to guard against insularity and isolation.

Appendix 1: The institutional audit reports

Note

In the period covered by these papers, a number of institutions underwent a variety of scrutiny procedures for taught degree awarding powers, university title and research degree awarding powers. Reports of the individual scrutiny processes were provided to QAA's Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers, and its Board of Directors, and formed the basis for advice to the Privy Council on the applications made by the respective institutions.

In most cases, the scrutiny processes also provided information which, in the form of a bespoke report, QAA accepted as the equivalent of an institutional audit report. Only those reports which conform to the general pattern of the institutional audit reports are included in the list below.

2004-05

City University

Cranfield University

University of Hull

University of Leicester

University of Newcastle upon Tyne

University of Nottingham

The Queen's University of Belfast

University of Surrey

University of Ulster

Goldsmiths College, University of London

Queen Mary, University of London

Royal Holloway and Bedford New College (Royal Holloway, University of London)

University of London

University College London

Birkbeck College, University of London

Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine (Imperial College London)

St George's Hospital Medical School

University of Derby

De Montfort University

University of Gloucestershire
University of Hertfordshire
Sheffield Hallam University
University of Huddersfield
Kingston University
London Metropolitan University
Leeds Metropolitan University
Liverpool John Moores University
University of Luton¹
University of Northumbria at Newcastle
Oxford Brookes University
University of Plymouth
Staffordshire University
London South Bank University
University of Sunderland
University of Teesside
University of East London
University of the West of England, Bristol
University of Westminster
Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College²
Canterbury Christ Church University College³
University of Chester
Liverpool Hope University
University College Winchester⁴
Henley Management College⁵
Harper Adams University College

¹ Now the University of Bedfordshire

² Now Buckinghamshire New University

³ Now Canterbury Christ Church University

⁴ Now the University of Winchester

⁵ Now merged with the University of Reading

Conservatoire for Dance and Drama

American InterContinental University - London

2005-06

University of Manchester

Courtauld Institute of Art

Heythrop College

University of London External System

London School of Economics and Political Science

The University of Bolton

Thames Valley University

University of Central England in Birmingham⁶

University of Worcester

Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies

Dartington College of Arts⁷

The Arts Institute at Bournemouth

⁶ Now Birmingham City University

⁷ Now part of the University College Falmouth

Appendix 2: Reports on specialist institutions

2004-05

Cranfield University

Birkbeck College, University of London

Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine (Imperial College London)

St George's Hospital Medical School

Henley Management College

Harper Adams University College

Conservatoire for Dance and Drama

American InterContinental University - London

2005-06

Courtauld Institute of Art

Heythrop College

University of London External System

London School of Economics and Political Science

Birmingham College of Food, Tourism and Creative Studies

Dartington College of Arts

The Arts Institute at Bournemouth

Appendix 3: Titles of Outcomes from institutional audit papers, Series 2

In most cases, *Outcomes...* papers will be no longer than 20 sides of A4. Projected titles of *Outcomes...* papers in the second series are listed below in provisional order of publication.

Outcomes... papers currently available can be found on QAA's website at www.qaa.ac.uk/enhancement

Titles

Institutions' frameworks for managing quality and academic standards

Progression and completion statistics

Learning support resources (including virtual learning environments)

Assessment of students

Work-based and placement learning, and employability

Programme monitoring arrangements

Arrangements for international students

Institutions' work with employers and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies

Recruitment and admission of students

External examiners and their reports

Collaborative provision in the institutional audit reports

Institutions' arrangements to support widening participation and access to higher education

Institutions' support for e-learning

Specialist institutions

Student representation and feedback

Academic guidance, support and supervision, and personal support and guidance

Staff support and development arrangements

Subject benchmark statements

The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Programme specifications

Arrangements for combined, joint and multidisciplinary honours degrees programmes

The adoption and use of learning outcomes

Validation and approval of new provision, and its periodic review

The self-evaluation document in institutional audit

The contribution of the student written submission to institutional audit

Institutions' intentions for enhancement

Series 2: concluding overview

Appendix 4: Methodology

The analysis of the institutional audit reports uses the headings set out in Annex H of the *Handbook for institutional audit: England (2002)* to subdivide the Summary, main report and Findings sections of the institutional audit reports into broad areas. An example from the main report is 'The institution's framework for managing quality and standards, including collaborative provision'.

For each published report, the text is taken from the report published on QAA's website and converted to plain text format. The resulting files are checked for accuracy and coded into sections following the template used to construct the institutional audit reports. In addition, the text of each report is tagged with information providing the date the report was published and some basic characteristics of the institution ('base data'). The reports were then introduced into qualitative research software package, QSR N6®. The software provides a wide range of tools to support indexing and searching and allows features of interest to be coded for further investigation.

An audit team's judgements, its identification of features of good practice, and its recommendations appear at two points in an institutional audit report: the Summary and at the end of the Findings. It is only in the latter, however, that cross references to the paragraphs in the main report are to be found, and it is here that the grounds for identifying a feature of good practice, offering a recommendation and making a judgement are set out. These cross references have been used to locate features of good practice and recommendations to the particular sections of the report to which they refer.

Individual *Outcomes...* papers are compiled by QAA staff and experienced institutional auditors. To assist in compiling the papers, reports produced by QSR N6® are made available to authors to provide a broad picture of the overall distribution of features of good practice and recommendations in particular areas, as seen by the audit teams.

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000
Fax 01452 557070
Email comms@qaa.ac.uk
Web www.qaa.ac.uk

QAA 296 06/09