



**QAA**

# **Report on the review of research degree programmes: Wales**



**Sharing good practice**

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## Executive summary

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the findings from the review of research degree programmes (RDPs) in 2005-06. In general, the findings provide a picture of overall confidence in the management of RDP provision by higher education institutions (HEIs) in Wales. The findings also include examples of good practice and identify areas for improvement in the institutional management of the quality and standards of RDPs.

In all cases the reviewers found that, overall, the procedures in place to secure and enhance the quality and standards of RDPs were appropriate and satisfactory. This is not to say that the reviewers found every aspect to be appropriate and satisfactory, but that, on balance, any concerns identified were not sufficient to threaten the overall management of quality and standards of RDPs.

There was widespread evidence that HEIs have approached the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice) Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes* in a positive and constructive manner and were generally meeting the expectations of the *Code*.

An evaluation of the review method, feedback from institutions, suggested that the most positive aspect of the review was the opportunity it provided for institutions to reflect upon, and where necessary, change their policies and procedures in line with the precepts of the *Code of practice* (see Appendix A).

The overall conclusions can be found in paragraphs 49-53.

## The purpose of the review of research degree programmes

1 The main purpose of the review was to ensure that all HEIs receiving funding for RDPs from the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) have policies and procedures in place that are robust and effective in securing and enhancing the quality and standards of RDPs. The review was announced in the HEFCW publication, *Postgraduate research degree programmes: minimum standards and funding (HEFCW WO4/64HE)* as part of a broader strategy for securing the quality of RDPs.

2 In September 2004, QAA published a revised *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes* (the precepts of the *Code* are included as Appendix C). The review of RDPs was intended to gauge the extent to which the policies and procedures of HEIs are in alignment with this section of the *Code*.

3 The review applied to all HEIs in Wales in receipt of funding from HEFCW (Appendix D). Within institutions, the review included all RDP students registered for a PhD (including the New Route PhD and PhDs awarded on the basis of published work), and all forms of taught or professional doctorate and research master's degrees where the research component (including a requirement to produce original work), is larger than the taught component when measured by student effort.

4 The review of RDPs was a one-off exercise. All further consideration of the quality of RDPs will be part of the institutional review process. The reports produced as a result of this process will form part of the evidence base for institutional review.

5 An identical review process was conducted in England and Northern Ireland. For further details see the QAA website ([www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/postgraduate](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews/postgraduate)).

6 An evaluation of the review method was undertaken by the QAA and the findings have been summarised in Appendix B.

## Learning from the review of research degree programmes

### Institutional arrangements

7 The institutional arrangements associated with precepts 1 to 4 of the *Code of practice* were judged to be appropriate and satisfactory by the review teams for nine of the 10 institutions in Wales for which the research degree provision was reviewed. In the one exception, the review team considered that the clarity and accessibility of institutional and departmental regulations to staff and students were in need of improvement.

8 Several of the institutions participating in the review are currently in the process of reviewing and revising, where necessary, their procedures in response to the decision by the University of Wales (UoW) to devolve authority for quality and standards, to the member institutions, and to change from a federal to a confederal structure. The move from operating within the external regulations formerly provided by the UoW to managing internally all aspects of the regulation of research degree provision has reached various stages in the institutions.

9 The institutions all manage their RDPs through a research degree committee, variously titled, which reports to the Senate or Academic Board. Much of the responsibility for the maintenance of quality and standards is delegated to schools, faculties, research institutes or departments. Review teams noted the mechanisms, particularly common committee membership, by which the central and local committees maintain contact. In several institutions new appointments to manage the administration of research degrees have been put in place as a consequence of the shift of responsibility from the UoW.

10 Institutions explain their quality assurance and related processes to students through a code of practice or, in some cases, a quality assurance handbook. Several reports drew attention to the updating of codes of practice to ensure that they are meeting the expectations of the revised *Code of practice*. Research degree regulations, in some institutions forming part of the local code of practice, are also made available to students either as part of the admissions process or at induction. For those institutions affected, the change in the relationship with the UoW has been the need to recast and extend the institutional regulations, a process which has reached various stages in different institutions. Generally, review teams could only report on the current state of the regulations and analyse the position at the time of the review. In several cases, however, it was noted that the effectiveness of the new processes could not yet be judged and in other cases the processes were not yet fully implemented. Consequently, this is a matter that future institutional review teams may want to explore with HEIs.

### The research environment

11 Review teams reported that all the institutions had in place arrangements to ensure that the research environment in which students were placed was appropriate and satisfactory and aligned with Precept 5 of the *Code of practice*. In one case it was

noted that there was a possible inequality of facilities between students in different parts of the institution and the report suggested that consideration should be given to establishing a consistent set of minimum standards across the institution. No specific issues relating to Welsh-medium provision were highlighted by any of the institutions.

12 The research environment differed markedly between the institutions because of their different backgrounds in research programmes, staff experience and research income. Those with a long history of research, good Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) grades and a high proportion of research active staff are able to delegate quality and assurance procedures to faculties, schools, research institutes or departments and assure the suitability of the research environment provision by central monitoring processes. Several smaller institutions have identified research active groups of staff within which the environment for students is satisfactory and only allow research students to be recruited within such identified groups. For example, one report noted that associating students with research clusters ensures that '[these] students are working in an area of strategic importance to the University in an environment that facilitates contact with other researchers'.

13 Several of the institutions which have less extensive research experience encourage academic staff to develop their research experience, for example by allocating time specifically for research projects and enabling staff to study for a PhD in a part-time mode. Within the smaller institutions staff engaged in research are grouped together to provide a critical mass and a suitable research environment for students; such groupings may be based on research topic or location.

14 The review teams all report favourably on the facilities available to students, including work space, information technology (IT) and libraries. Several reports noted the opportunities provided at institutions for students to exchange and develop ideas by enabling them to attend and give research presentations in seminars and at conferences. Particular note was made in one case of the use of the UoW facility at Gregynog for research-focused events. Another report suggested that the institution may wish to consider whether the facilities available to part-time students provided them with an equivalent research environment to that of full-time students.

15 One institution was noted as having a central Graduate Centre, working with (Research and) Graduate Schools to provide a full research training programme and reporting annually to the university. Another has provided such a Centre on each of its campuses. In other institutions, students are clustered within smaller units for training purposes. A feature of good practice noted in one such case was the use of local Graduate Centres to prevent isolation of students.

### **Selection, admission and induction**

16 The five precepts, 6 to 10, covered by this section of the *Code of practice* refer respectively to admissions procedures, student qualifications, admissions decisions, communications with students and information provision to students. Seven of the institutions were judged by the review teams to be meeting the expectations of the

*Code of practice*. However, in three cases it was suggested that consideration needed to be given to alignment with particular precepts. In one institution, an example of good practice was identified in the area of admissions.

17 The admissions procedures vary among the institutions, with strong central control operating in some and a greater degree of delegation in others. Some reports noted the information available to prospective applicants, which usually covered the admissions process itself and the regulations under which the research student would be working. Most institutions make the information available through their website, although in one case an institution still had further changes to make to the website before that would be possible. One report raised a concern about a lack of consistency between departmental handbooks on the procedures and advice for students and the review team suggested that the institution may wish to consider reviewing the information available to RDP students to ensure it is clear and consistently applied.

18 All institutions have a minimum standard for admissions on to a RDP which equates to that suggested under Precept 7 of the *Code of practice*. Some institutions have defined more closely the concept of prior professional practice or learning, for example by specifying a minimum number of years for such experience. Institutions apply additional requirements in the case of international students, usually based on a minimum International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score of 6.0 for non-English speakers. Some institutions offer a possible route into PhD studies through an MPhil programme. In one case, the review team suggested that the institution should give further consideration to the qualifications required of students entering through this route and in another case the report noted that the institution's regulations differed from those of the UoW under which students were supposedly being admitted.

19 Admissions decisions are based in all cases on at least two staff members being involved. Most institutions require an interview to be part of the process, although this might be by telephone or even, in the case of some international students, omitted. Care is taken to ensure that there are suitable facilities and research expertise available for the proposed research. The procedure in one small institution with research facilities only in limited areas of requiring a senior faculty member to liaise with the applicant to confirm the suitability of the resources and expertise in place was cited as an example of good practice. Selectors generally receive guidance and training for their role but, in one institution, the training programme is yet to begin, leading the review team to recommend that it should be implemented as soon as possible.

20 Successful applicants receive formal offers, usually from a central admissions point. In one institution where offer letters are currently sent directly from schools, consideration is being given to centralising the process. Institutions provide detailed information to students either with the formal offer letter or at a reasonable time before registration. The pack normally includes the regulations under which students will be studying, student handbooks, guides, details of support services and information about initial arrival at the institution and induction processes.

21 All the institutions provide induction events, in some cases centrally organised and in others organised by schools, faculties or departments. In some institutions separate induction events are organised by libraries and other service providers. One report noted the difficulty which the institution found in providing equivalent induction processes for part-time students and others referred to the provision of ongoing language support for international students.

## Supervision

22 There is some variation between the institutions in the way that they manage supervision and in three cases review teams qualified their judgements of appropriate and satisfactory alignment with precepts 11 to 14 of the *Code of practice*.

23 Institutions all expect supervisors to be suitably qualified. The reports included reference to supervisors being research active or having successfully supervised a number of students (in one case only one) to completion. All institutions provide some training for supervisors, though there is some variability in how this is made available for new supervisors. One institution included supervision within its Postgraduate Certificate in University Teaching and Learning, compulsory for new staff, whereas others have specific training for new supervisors. The review teams also identified the mentoring of new staff by more experienced colleagues as well as the training and support provided for new supervisors as examples of good practice. Ongoing training is also provided by institutions for existing supervisors, but the take-up and monitoring is variable. The review teams suggested to one institution that it may wish to consider whether its supervisor training programmes are fully aligned with Precept 11 in the *Code* to ensure all supervisors have the appropriate expertise for their role.

24 While students always have one specified main supervisor, institutions have different approaches in respect of using supervisory teams. Some institutions always identify at least two supervisors and inform the student at the time of registration. One has recently started to move away from individual supervisors to supervisory teams. There is some variability between institutions in the way supervisory teams are established and managed and in one case there is variability within the institution. A particular issue identified for one institution was the arrangements for supervising students working away from the institution, which the review team noted may need consideration in the light of Precept 12 of the *Code of practice* so that any students have a clearly identified point of contact.

25 Students and staff are made aware of their responsibilities through the provision of handbooks, guides or codes of practice and also during the student induction or staff training. Several review teams noted requirements for minimum numbers of student/supervisor meetings and, in addition, some institutions expect records of such meetings to be kept. The handbooks also contain information on what students should do if the relationship with their supervisor breaks down. In some cases the contact point is within, for example, the Faculty. In others, a member of the institution's administrative staff should be contacted.

26 Several institutions impose clear restrictions on the number of students a member of staff may supervise, usually six full-time equivalents but in one case six to eight, while others leave this to local judgement such as by a Dean of Faculty or Head of Department. For one institution the review team suggested that the institution may want to consider ensuring that the quality of supervision is not put at risk as the result of an excessive workload on those with supervisory responsibilities.

### **Progress and review arrangements**

27 Review teams judged that the processes used by all the institutions for monitoring and reviewing student progress were appropriate and satisfactory. Comments relating to progress and review arrangements included reference to clear, comprehensive and integrated arrangements. Accordingly, the processes used are satisfactorily aligned with precepts 15 to 17 of the *Code of practice*. In the case of one institution the review team noted that some significant changes had been put into effect too recently for it to make a judgement on their effectiveness. Another institution intends to review its practice to ensure adherence to the *Code* following changes to the responsibility for annual monitoring. In both cases, the effectiveness of these changes will be followed up through the institutional review process.

28 Typically, although there are some variations, student progress is monitored by formal reporting procedures after six months of study and then at the completion of each year of study. This is done centrally in some institutions but within smaller units in others. In the latter case the units usually provide an annual report for central monitoring purposes. Most commonly, students and supervisors submit separate reports, enabling possible difficulties to be identified. All the institutions have in place defined processes for dealing with any difficulties which arise in student-supervisor relations.

29 In some institutions the student's report is expected to include a substantial piece of written work so that those not directly involved with the student can make a better judgement on the progress being made. Also, some institutions require the written notes of supervisory meetings to be submitted with the reports. In most cases review teams reported on the detailed procedures used for dealing with students whose progress is unsatisfactory, usually involving consideration by more senior staff.

30 In addition to using student and supervisor reports to ensure satisfactory progress, some institutions have formal transfer processes, for example for changing from MPhil to PhD, at specified times during the course of study. The transfer processes always involve consideration by a defined panel and clear requirements for the student's level of progress, usually assessed by consideration of a piece of written work and in some cases involving an interview.

### **Development of research and other skills**

31 There are considerable variations among institutions in the way that students' development needs are identified and satisfied. Precepts 18 to 20 of the *Code of practice* refer respectively to opportunities for, identification and review, and recording

of personal and professional development. The differences among institutions reflect both the wide spread in the number of research students and the way that research is managed. Review teams identified four institutions where further consideration needed to be given to current processes in order to bring them into alignment with the precepts. The teams also identified two examples of good practice.

32 In addition to the *Code of practice*, the provision by institutions for the personal and professional development of research students is informed by the Research Councils UK Joint Skills Statement. This statement is specifically referred to in some of the reports where it is seen to guide the provision. The use of Research Councils UK Career Development and Transferable Skills Training (sometimes referred to as Roberts Money) is also specifically mentioned in some reports.

33 With two exceptions, institutions provide training opportunities for research students covering both research and transferable skills. These are usually organised by the institutional research administration through graduate schools or centres or by research offices. The training may take the form of attendance at certain undergraduate or taught postgraduate courses, specific research training courses spread over a period of time, concentrated activities in conference format (sometimes residential), e-learning and personal tutorials. For one institution the review team 'found no reference to the joint skills statement of the research councils or any mandatory coverage of generic and subject-specific skills' and suggested that the institution may wish to consider further its arrangements in this respect. In a second institution research institutes are expected to organise the seminar and training programmes and the review team reported that 'the institutional submission does not mention skills training or other aspects of students' personal development' and questions whether the institution meets the expectations of the *Code of practice* in this respect. In contrast, the programme of generic and subject-specific research training at another institution has been updated in the light of best practice.

34 An important part of research student training and personal development is the opportunity to attend and present seminars. Such opportunities form an integral part of the provision of a suitable research environment and, as noted in paragraph 14, above are available to students in most of the institutions.

35 Review teams report great variation in the manner in which students' development needs are identified and reviewed. There was no indication of how this is done in several institutions and, in some others, procedures such as a learning needs analysis have only just been introduced and as such are too early to be assessed. In one case, appropriate processes were in place but not used across the whole institution. The review teams identified many recent developments and considered that in general institutions may wish to monitor and evaluate these new developments in the area of transferable skills training and personal development planning. One report noted a process fully aligned with Precept 19, where skills needs are identified and agreed during induction and regularly reviewed although this is only at a pilot stage. Several other reports refer to skills self-assessment and student-supervisor discussions with no indication as to the timing of when this will occur.

36 The recording of personal progress, to which Precept 20 of the *Code of practice* refers, is also variable. Personal development portfolios are currently being rolled out in some institutions and although records are kept and reviewed, in others it is not clear that students are expected to maintain their own records. Some reports indicate that on-line provision for students to maintain records is being developed.

37 The overall conclusion is that the review teams have identified a number of weaknesses for this aspect of RDP provision. It would appear that some institutions are only now adapting to the changing expectations of the development of research and other skills on RDPs.

### Feedback mechanisms

38 Precept 21 of the *Code of practice* is concerned with the collection, review and response to feedback from students, staff and examiners. Review teams reported that, in most institutions, the procedures were appropriate and satisfactory but, in two cases, recommended that further consideration may want to be given to the matters raised.

39 As noted in the section on supervision, institutions have in place procedures for handling feedback directly related to the supervisory process. In addition, where students complete their own section of annual report forms independently, committee consideration of the forms will give information about the effectiveness of interactions between supervisors and students. For more general feedback, institutions rely primarily on student representation on research and related committees. In addition, there are many examples of institution-wide or locally-based staff-student committees. However, in one case the review team suggested that the institution may want to consider making the feedback system more robust by expanding student representation.

40 Questionnaires, student satisfaction surveys, exit surveys and course evaluation forms for training programmes are also used to obtain students' comments on the provision. In one institution, the variety of opportunities for the student voice to be heard was considered by the review team to be a feature of good practice.

41 Feedback from supervisors also occurs through the annual report process and through their attendance at research and progress committees. In some cases supervisors have opportunities to provide feedback during revision training sessions. Some institutions collect feedback from other stakeholders such as employers by using advisory panels. Feedback from external examiners is obtained by their being encouraged to make comments regarding the research programme when completing their report form. Such comments are usually considered within the teaching unit and by institution committees. In one institution, comments from external examiners and other stakeholders are not collected at present but it is intended to do so when research degree awarding powers are granted. The review team suggested in this case that collecting and analysing feedback should be kept under review as the research degree environment changes with time.

## Assessment

42 The assessment of research degrees follows the standard UK procedure, consideration by examiners of a written thesis or similar body of work followed by an oral examination. Review teams judged the processes to be appropriate and satisfactory and aligned with precepts 22 to 24 of the *Code of practice*, except at one institution where the examiners' report process was questioned.

43 The review teams found that institutions document the examination process and the relevant regulations clearly, and ensure that students and examiners are aware of them. The standard thesis length is indicated as part of the guidance to students. One review team viewed as good practice the more stringent requirements laid down by one institution for critical commentaries accompanying practice based research involving the production of artefacts and similar original work. The documentation issued includes advice to students on thesis preparation and submission, and definitions of the criteria to be used during the assessment process. The oral examination is conducted by two or, in special circumstance three examiners, at least one of which must be external to the institution. The examiners' report(s) are then considered by a research committee before approval is given for the award.

44 Institutions are particularly careful about the appointment of external examiners. They are required to be experienced in the speciality of the thesis and in the examination process. Nominations originate at the supervisory level but must be approved at a senior level within the institution. Internal examiners must not include members of the supervisory team. In several, but by no means all of the institutions, the oral examination is chaired by a senior, independent member of staff.

45 In most cases, examiners prepare reports on the thesis prior to the examination and then produce a joint report after the examinations, with a recommendation about the award of the degree. In addition, external examiners are asked to complete a report form giving their view of the conduct of the examination and the information and guidance they have received. It is this form which gives them the opportunity to provide feedback to the institution on the examination process. The review team suggested in one case that the institution 'may wish to consider the introduction of a pre-viva report as part of the detailed examination process'. Finally, there are some differences between the institutions regarding the feedback given to students, in some cases the student receives a copy of the examiners report, in others the feedback is verbal.

## Student representations, complaints and appeals

46 Precepts 25 to 27 of the *Code of practice* refer to how institutions manage concerns which students may wish to bring to them about their course through informal representations, formal complaints or appeals against decisions. The review teams found that institutions were mostly reported to have complaints and appeals procedures which were appropriate and satisfactory.

47 Complaints procedures are clearly defined, well documented and readily available to students. Most have a tiered approach in which it is attempted to deal with the issue at the lowest possible level, typically research group first, faculty or department second and institution third. Where numbers of complaints were mentioned in submissions they were negligibly small. Review teams identified cause for possible further consideration in two institutions, one where it was suggested that an indicative timetable for resolving complaints should be considered and another where there was concern that the procedure defined possible complaints too closely and was not sufficiently flexible to deal with all eventualities.

48 Institutions have formal appeals procedures against decisions by examiners and at an earlier stage against progress or transfer decisions. They are well documented and readily available to students. Only one review team noted a cause for possible further consideration, again suggesting that an indicative timetable might enhance the procedure.

## Conclusion

49 Notwithstanding the limits to a desk-based exercise, particularly in relation to commenting on the effectiveness of institutional policies and procedures, the review was able to: identify gaps in institutional policies and procedures; and identify features of good practice and areas for further consideration.

50 Ultimately, the responsibility for the management of quality and standards of RDPs rests with the institution. The findings from the report confirm that, by and large, institutions are managing their RDPs in a satisfactory and appropriate manner and it is clear that institutions take their responsibilities seriously.

51 The reports found evidence of good practice in nearly all the categories covered by the *Code of practice*. However, because of the relatively small number of institutions involved it did not allow for broad themes of good practice to be identified.

52 The areas for further consideration identified within the report included the need for: consistent application of policies and procedures that are clear and explicit; clear information which is accessible to all potential audiences; support for staff so that they are able to fulfil their roles and responsibilities; the monitoring and evaluation of policies, procedures and practices to ensure their effectiveness. One area that a number of reports identified as requiring attention concerned the development of research and other skills.

53 In terms of developing the external quality assurance framework in Wales, the reports from the review of the RDPs will provide additional evidence to institutional review teams and a focus for a team's engagement with an individual institution. Where a matter has been identified as deserving of further consideration by the review team in the review of RDPs this may provide a focus for future institutional review teams.

## Appendix A: Review methodology

1 The RDP review method was primarily a desk-based exercise. It involved an evaluation by reviewers of an institution's response to a questionnaire about the extent to which the institution had aligned its policies and procedures with the revised *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*. When completing the questionnaire, institutions were asked to provide supporting evidence to substantiate the claims made in their response to the questionnaire. On the basis of the evidence submitted by the institution, review teams were asked to form a judgement about the extent to which the institution's approach to the management of its RDPs was appropriate and satisfactory.

2 The reviewers worked in teams, with the work of each team coordinated by a review coordinator. The review coordinators helped ensure consistency both within and across the review teams. A QAA Assistant Director assumed overall responsibility for the management of the review, providing guidance and support as and when required.

3 The reviewers were selected by QAA from nominations made by awarding HEIs. Existing institutional auditors for England and Northern Ireland and reviewers in Wales and Scotland, who met the criteria, were also invited to participate in the review. For a list of participating reviewers please see Appendix E.

4 The outcome of each institutional submission was a report to the institution and HEFCW. The individual reports identified areas for further consideration and features of good practice.

## Appendix B: Evaluation of the review of research degree programmes methodology

1 Following the review of postgraduate research degree provision, all participating institutions were asked to complete an evaluation questionnaire. Out of the 10 institutions participating, QAA received seven responses.

2 The questionnaire provided the opportunity for respondents to comment upon:

- the information available about the review process
- the review team
- the operation of the review activity, to include information requirements
- communication
- judgements and findings.

3 Institutions were also asked to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the review process, and to identify specific ways in which the review findings would be of specific benefit to the institution in respect of postgraduate research degree provision.

4 The findings of the evaluation were positive. The majority of those who responded to the evaluation questionnaire agreed that the desk-based review of postgraduate research degree provision had achieved its aim.

### Most positive features of the review

5 Positive features of the review process identified by institutions included:

- the identification of areas of good practice and areas where further developments are needed.
- the opportunity provided by the review for institutions to collate all relevant information and documents. Institutions considered that this provided them with an opportunity to assess internal processes, procedures and regulations. The review enabled the institution to revisit internal documentation and cast a critical eye over it.
- the opportunity for the electronic format for submitting our report.
- the opportunity to comment on the draft report.

### Least positive features of the review

6 The least positive features of the review identified by institutions included:

- the additional burden generated by the review in relation to staff time taken for the completion of the questionnaire and the collation of existing information and documentation to support the review. The review activity was reported to have generated a significant burden upon staff resources.
- there was a view that there was some overlap between the questions, making the report somewhat repetitive. Additionally, there was some uncertainty and a lack of clarity regarding what evidence to provide to support questionnaire response.

## Appendix C: The precepts

### Institutional arrangements

- 1 Institutions will put in place effective arrangements to maintain appropriate academic standards and enhance the quality of postgraduate research programmes.
- 2 Institutional regulations for postgraduate RDPs will be clear and readily available to students and staff. Where appropriate, regulations will be supplemented by similarly accessible, subject-specific guidance at the level of the faculty, school or department.
- 3 Institutions will develop, implement and keep under review a code or codes of practice applicable across the institution, which include(s) the areas covered by this document. The code(s) should be readily available to all students and staff involved in postgraduate research programmes.
- 4 Institutions will monitor the success of their postgraduate research programmes against appropriate internal and/or external indicators and targets.

### The research environment

- 5 Institutions will only accept research students into an environment that provides support for doing and learning about research and where high-quality research is occurring.

### Selection, admission and induction of students

- 6 Admissions procedures will be clear, consistently applied and will demonstrate equality of opportunity.
- 7 Only appropriately qualified and prepared students will be admitted to research programmes.
- 8 Admissions decisions will involve at least two members of the institution's staff who will have received instruction, advice and guidance in respect of selection and admissions procedures. The decision-making process will enable the institution to assure itself that balanced and independent admissions decisions have been made, that support its admissions policy.
- 9 The entitlements and responsibilities of a research student undertaking a postgraduate research programme will be defined and communicated clearly.
- 10 Institutions will provide research students with sufficient information to enable them to begin their studies with an understanding of the academic and social environment in which they will be working.

## **Supervision**

- 11 Institutions will appoint supervisors who have the appropriate skills and subject knowledge to support, encourage and monitor research students effectively.
- 12 Each research student will have a minimum of one main supervisor. He or she will normally be part of a supervisory team. There must always be one clearly identified point of contact for the student.
- 13 Institutions will ensure that the responsibilities of all research student supervisors are clearly communicated to supervisors and students through written guidance.
- 14 Institutions will ensure that the quality of supervision is not put at risk as a result of an excessive volume and range of responsibilities assigned to individual supervisors.

## **Progress and review arrangements**

- 15 Institutions will put in place and bring to the attention of students and relevant staff clearly defined mechanisms for monitoring and supporting student progress.
- 16 Institutions will put in place and bring to the attention of students and relevant staff clearly defined mechanisms for formal reviews of student progress, including explicit review stages.
- 17 Institutions will provide guidance to students, supervisors and others involved in progress monitoring and review processes about the importance of keeping appropriate records of the outcomes of meetings and related activities.

## **Development of research and other skills**

- 18 Institutions will provide research students with appropriate opportunities for personal and professional development.
- 19 Each student's development needs will be identified and agreed jointly by the student and appropriate academic staff, initially during the student's induction period; they will be regularly reviewed during the research programme and amended as appropriate.
- 20 Institutions will provide opportunities for research students to maintain a record of personal progress, which includes reference to the development of research and other skills.

## **Feedback mechanisms**

- 21 Institutions will put in place mechanisms to collect, review and, where appropriate, respond to feedback from all concerned with postgraduate research programmes. They will make arrangements for feedback to be considered openly and constructively and for the results to be communicated appropriately.

## **Assessment**

22 Institutions will use criteria for assessing research degrees that enable them to define the academic standards of different research programmes and the achievements of their graduates. The criteria used to assess research degrees must be clear and readily available to students, staff and external examiners.

23 Research degree assessment procedures must be clear; they must be operated rigorously, fairly, and consistently; include input from an external examiner; and carried out to a reasonable timescale.

24 Institutions will communicate their assessment procedures clearly to all the parties involved, ie, the students, the supervisor(s) and the examiners.

## **Student representations**

25 Institutions will put in place and publicise procedures for dealing with student representations that are fair, clear to all concerned, robust and applied consistently. Such procedures will allow all students access to relevant information and an opportunity to present their case.

## **Complaints**

26 Independent and formal procedures will exist to resolve effectively complaints from research students about the quality of the institution's learning and support provision.

## **Appeals**

27 Institutions will put in place formal procedures to deal with any appeals made by research students. The acceptable grounds for appeals will be clearly defined.

## **Appendix D: A list of institutions that participated in the review of research degree programmes**

Aberystwyth, University of Wales

Bangor, University of Wales

Cardiff University

Cardiff, University of Wales Institute

Glamorgan, University of

Lampeter, University of Wales

Newport, University of Wales

North East Wales Institute

Swansea Institute

Swansea University

## **Appendix E: Review of research degree programmes: a list of reviewers**

Professor Pamela Abbott

Professor John Beeby

Professor Nick Brewin

Professor Anne Curry

Professor Tony Davies

Dr Phil Garnsworthy

Professor Jean Gilkison

Professor Sally Glen

Professor Ian Haines

Dr Sue Hallam

Professor Sandra Kemp

Professor Terry Kemp

Ms Ann Kettle

Dr Martin Le Voi

Professor Roger Linford

Professor Paul Luker

Professor Graham Moon

Professor Chris Park

Professor David Phoenix

Professor Hefin Rowlands

Professor Gaynor Taylor

Professor Christopher Thomas

Professor Bob Usherwood