

# **University of Leeds**

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MARCH 2006

## **Preface**

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) exists to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education (HE) qualifications and to encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of HE.

To do this QAA carries out reviews of individual HE institutions (universities and colleges of HE). In England and Northern Ireland this process is known as institutional audit. QAA operates similar but separate processes in Scotland and Wales. For institutions that have large and complex provision offered through partnerships, QAA conducts collaborative provision audits in addition to institutional audits.

## **The purpose of collaborative provision audit**

Collaborative provision audit shares the aims of institutional audit: to meet the public interest in knowing that universities and colleges are:

- providing HE, awards and qualifications of an acceptable quality and an appropriate academic standard, and
- exercising their legal powers to award degrees in a proper manner.

## **Judgements**

Collaborative provision audit results in judgements about the institutions being reviewed. Judgements are made about:

- the confidence that can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of the academic standards of its awards made through collaborative arrangements
- the confidence that can reasonably be placed in the present and likely future capacity of the awarding institution to satisfy itself that the learning opportunities offered to students through its collaborative arrangements are managed effectively and meet its requirements; and
- the reliance that can reasonably be placed on the accuracy, integrity, completeness and frankness of the information that the institution publishes, (or authorises to be published) about the quality of its programmes offered through collaborative provision that lead to its awards and the standards of those awards.

These judgements are expressed as either **broad confidence**, **limited confidence** or **no confidence** and are accompanied by examples of good practice and recommendations for improvement.

## **Nationally agreed standards**

Collaborative provision audit uses a set of nationally agreed reference points, known as the 'Academic Infrastructure', to consider an institution's standards and quality. These are published by QAA and consist of:

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)*, which includes descriptions of different HE qualifications
- *The Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*
- subject benchmark statements, which describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects

- guidelines for preparing programme specifications, which are descriptions of the what is on offer to students in individual programmes of study. They outline the intended knowledge, skills, understanding and attributes of a student completing that programme. They also give details of teaching and assessment methods and link the programme to the FHEQ.

### **The audit process**

Collaborative provision audits are carried out by teams of academics who review the way in which institutions oversee their academic quality and standards. Because they are evaluating their equals, the process is called 'peer review'.

The main elements of collaborative provision audit are:

- a preliminary visit by QAA to the institution nine months before the audit visit
- a self-evaluation document submitted by the institution four months before the audit visit
- a written submission by the student representative body, if they have chosen to do so, four months before the audit visit
- a detailed briefing visit to the institution by the audit team six weeks before the audit visit
- visits to up to six partner institutions by members of the audit team
- the audit visit, which lasts five days
- the publication of a report on the audit team's judgements and findings 22 weeks after the audit visit.

### **The evidence for the audit**

In order to obtain the evidence for its judgement, the audit team carries out a number of activities, including:

- reviewing the institution's own internal procedures and documents, such as regulations, policy statements, codes of practice, recruitment publications and minutes of relevant meetings, as well as the self-evaluation document itself
- reviewing the written submission from students
- asking questions of relevant staff from the institution and from partners
- talking to students from partner institutions about their experiences
- exploring how the institution uses the Academic Infrastructure.

The audit team also gathers evidence by focusing on examples of the institution's internal quality assurance processes at work through visits to partners. In addition, the audit team may focus on a particular theme that runs throughout the institution's management of its standards and quality. This is known as a 'thematic enquiry'.

From 2004, institutions will be required to publish information about the quality and standards of their programmes and awards in a format recommended in document 03/51, *Information on quality and standards in higher education: Final guidance*, published by the Higher Education Funding Council for England. The audit team reviews how institutions are working towards this requirement.

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## Summary

### Introduction

A team of auditors from the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) visited the University of Leeds (the University) from 21 to 24 March 2006 to carry out a collaborative provision audit. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the programmes offered by the University through collaborative arrangements with partner organisations, and on the discharge of the University's responsibility as an awarding body in assuring the academic standards of its awards made through collaborative arrangements.

To arrive at its conclusions the audit team spoke to members of staff of the University, and read a wide range of documents relating to the way the University manages the academic aspects of its collaborative provision. As part of the process, the team visited three of the University's partner organisations in the UK where it met staff and students.

The words 'academic standards' are used to describe the level of achievement that a student has to reach to gain an award (for example, a degree). It should be at a similar level across the UK.

'Academic quality' is a way of describing how well the learning opportunities available to students help them to achieve their awards. It is about making sure that appropriate teaching, support, assessment and learning resources are provided for them.

The term 'collaborative provision' is taken to mean 'educational provision leading to an award, or to specific credit toward an award, of an awarding institution delivered and/or supported and/or assessed through an arrangement with a partner organisation' (*Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)* - September 2004, paragraph 13, published by QAA).

In a collaborative provision audit both academic standards and academic quality are reviewed.

### Outcome of the collaborative provision audit

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

- broad confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the University's present and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards made through collaborative arrangements
- broad confidence can reasonably be placed in the present and likely future capacity of the University to satisfy itself that the learning opportunities offered to students through its collaborative arrangements are managed effectively and meet its requirements.

The audit team also concluded that reliance could reasonably be placed on the accuracy, integrity, completeness and frankness of the information that the University publishes and authorises to be published about the quality of the programmes offered through collaborative provision that lead to its awards and about the standards of those awards.

### Features of good practice

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

- the arrangements for the support of collaborative institutions in implementation of changes to the basis of relationships with the University: the approach is characterised by structured forward planning and a primary concern to protect the interests of students registered for awards of the University
- the inclusion of 'enhancement', as a standing item led by the partner institutions, on the agenda for the Affiliated Institutions Learning and Teaching Committee thereby promoting systematic identification and dissemination of good practice.

- the University's approach to its articulation arrangements, in particular the preparation of students for transfer to the UK
- the rigour and candour of the periodic review of collaborative provision which supported the University's evaluative reappraisal of its approach to collaborative arrangements

### **Recommendations for action**

The audit team also recommends that the University consider further action in a number of areas to ensure that the academic quality of programmes and the standards of awards it offers through collaborative arrangements are maintained.

Recommendations for action that is advisable:

- revise the University's approach to institutional level involvement in collaborative arrangements to establish a requirement for periodic meetings of staff at the most senior level from both institutions to consider formally the operation of the partnership arrangement.

Recommendations for action that is desirable:

- as the University moves to expand its portfolio of faculty based collaborations, the audit team considers it desirable that the University review its existing policies and procedures to: establish greater consistency in the reporting lines and structures at faculty level; define the roles and responsibilities of link persons involved in the arrangements; secure continued effective central oversight of the operation of such arrangements
- in developing its strategy for collaborative provision, the University should establish clear definitions of distance and distributed learning and the associated policy and procedural requirements. The University may find the section of the *Code of practice* on collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning) a useful reference document in this respect.

### **National reference points**

To provide further evidence to support its findings, the audit team also investigated the use made by the University of the Academic Infrastructure which QAA has developed on behalf of the whole of UK higher education. The Academic Infrastructure is a set of nationally agreed reference points that help to define both good practice and academic standards. The findings of the audit suggest that the University was making effective use of the Academic Infrastructure in the context of its collaborative provision.

# **Main report**

## Main report

1 A collaborative provision audit of the University of Leeds (the University) was undertaken from 21 to 24 March 2006. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the programmes offered by the University through collaborative arrangements with partner organisations, and on the discharge of the University's responsibility as an awarding body in assuring the academic standards of its awards made through collaborative arrangements.

2 Collaborative provision audit is supplementary to institutional audit of the University's own provision. It is carried out by a process developed by QAA in partnership with higher education institutions (HEIs) in England. It provides a separate scrutiny of the collaborative provision of an HEI with degree-awarding powers (awarding institution) where such collaborative provision was too large or complex to have been included in its institutional audit. The term 'collaborative provision' is taken to mean 'educational provision leading to an award, or to specific credit toward an award, of an awarding institution delivered and/or supported and/or assessed through an arrangement with a partner organisation' (*Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice), Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)* - September 2004, paragraph 13, published by QAA).

3 In relation to collaborative arrangements, the audit checked the effectiveness of the University's procedures for establishing and maintaining the standards of its academic awards; for reviewing and enhancing the quality of the programmes leading to those awards; for publishing reliable information about its collaborative provision; and for the discharge of its responsibilities as an awarding institution. As part of the process, the audit team visited three of the University's partner organisations in the UK, where it met staff and students.

## Section 1: Introduction: the institution and its mission as it relates to collaborative provision

4 The University of Leeds (the University) has its origins in the Leeds School of Medicine, founded in 1831 and the Yorkshire College of Science and Technology founded in 1874. It gained its charter in 1904. The University is mostly housed on its main campus in Leeds city centre where most schools are located. Additionally, it has the Bretton Hall Campus near Wakefield and the Wakefield Centre which offers programmes from the Lifelong Learning Centre and the School of Healthcare.

5 In its Mission Statement the University states that it is:

'...an international institution which also serves the nation and local and regional communities'

6 The University has a long history of regional collaborative arrangements: many of the early collaborations developed as part of its responsibility for awards in former colleges of education and health in north and west Yorkshire. As these colleges have extended and diversified the range of their educational provision, the University's role has been one of validation of courses which lead to a University of Leeds award.

7 At the time of the audit the number of students on University of Leeds collaborative programmes was: Accredited Colleges 11,527, Affiliated Institutions 1,505 and Faculty-based collaboration 1,215, giving a total of 14,247.

8 At the time of the audit, the University defined its collaborative arrangements under three groupings:

- Accredited Colleges
- Affiliated Institutions
- Faculty-based collaboration.

9 Accredited colleges: two colleges of higher education with which there has been a long history of collaboration; at the time of the audit one of these colleges had recently gained its

own taught degree awarding powers. In the accredited colleges authority for quality assurance matters is largely devolved within a framework agreed by the University. Students in accredited institutions are students of the college rather than the University.

10 **Affiliated institutions: specialist further (FE) and HEIs.** At the time of the audit there were five such arrangements whereby the University validated named programmes operated by the colleges. While the affiliated institutions have their own mechanisms for quality assurance, the University maintains a closer degree of involvement in quality assurance processes than is the case with the accredited colleges. Students in affiliated institutions are students of the college rather than the University.

11 **Faculty-based collaborations:** these arrangements facilitate access to some of the University's own programmes or provide specialist input. Management of such collaborations is undertaken by the relevant school of the University employing standard university procedures. All University of Leeds overseas collaborations fall into this category. Students on faculty-based collaborations are students of the University.

12 More detail of the University's approach to each of the types of collaborative arrangement may be found from paragraphs 25 to 35.

### **Background information**

13 The published information available to the audit team included:

- the report of the institutional audit of the University (March 2004)
- the report of the overseas audit of the University's collaboration with the Ministry of Education (Oman) (March 2005)
- reports of reviews by QAA at the subject level for the University and its collaborative partners for the five years preceding the audit.

14 The University provided QAA with the following documents:

- the self-evaluation document for collaborative provision (CPSED)
- Collaborative Provision in Learning and Teaching - Policy and Typology Document
- the University's Register of Collaborative Provision
- report of the Internal Review of the Institutional Arrangements for Collaborative Activity (November 2004)
- response and Action Plan for the Internal Review
- documentation relating to the partner organisations visited by the audit team.

15 In addition, the audit team had access to a range of the University's internal documents in hardcopy or on the University's website, including the intranet. The team is grateful to the University for the ready access it was given to this information.

### **The collaborative provision audit process**

16 Following the preliminary meeting at the University in April 2005, QAA confirmed that between the briefing and audit visits there would be three visits to partner organisations. QAA received the CPSED in November 2005 and documentation relating to the three partner organisations in January 2006.

17 The University's students were invited, through their Students' Union, to contribute to the audit process in a way that reflected the Union's capacity to represent the views of students in partner organisations offering the University's awards through collaborative arrangements. At the briefing visit, the audit team was able to meet an officer of the University of Leeds Student's Union as part of a wider student group.

18 The audit team undertook a briefing visit to the University from 6 to 8 February 2006 with the purpose of exploring with senior members of University staff, senior staff from

partner organisations, and student representatives, matters relating to the management of quality and standards raised by the CPSED and the linked documentation. At the end of the briefing visit a programme of meetings for the audit visit was agreed with the University. It was also agreed that certain audit trails would be pursued through specific case-studies prepared by the University.

19 During its visits to the partner organisations the audit team held meetings with senior staff, teaching staff and student representatives of the partner organisations. The team is grateful to the partner organisations for their help in furthering its understanding of the University's processes for managing its collaborative arrangements.

20 The audit visit took place from 21 to 24 March 2006 and involved further meetings with University staff and students. The audit team is grateful to all those who participated in meetings.

21 The audit team comprised Professor R Davis, Professor N Goddard, Mrs S Powell, and Prof J Turner. The audit secretary and Miss E Smith. The audit was coordinated for QAA by Mrs S Patterson, Assistant Director, Reviews Group.

### **Background and developments since the institutional audit of the awarding institution**

22 In March 2004, the University was subject to institutional audit by QAA, resulting in a judgement of broad confidence in the soundness of the University's current and future management of the quality of its programmes and its capacity to manage effectively the security of its awards. Also in 2004, the University appointed a new Vice-Chancellor with an explicit plan to concentrate on the development of the University as a 'world class research intensive institution' and set as an objective the securing of a place among the top 50 universities in the world by 2015.

23 The redefinition of the University's strategic priorities led it to conduct an Internal Review of the Institutional Arrangements for

Collaborative Activity. In response to the findings of the review a formal decision was taken by Senate in June 2005 to withdraw from validation activity with the affiliated institutions over a phased period of time, with the last student cohorts being enrolled in September 2006. (Further detail of the internal review may be found at paragraphs 67, 68 and 69). In the light of the important changes in the institutional view of collaborative provision and its strategic importance, the audit team gave particular attention to the University's approach to changes in the basis of relationships with collaborative partners, including the management of the transitional arrangements for termination of partnerships.

24 In 2004 QAA conducted an overseas audit of the collaborative arrangement between the University and the Ministry of Education, Oman. The findings of the audit supported a conclusion of confidence in the University's stewardship of academic standards and oversight of the quality of the student experience.

## **Section 2: The collaborative provision audit investigations: the awarding institution's processes for quality management in collaborative provision**

### **The awarding institution's strategic approach to collaborative provision**

25 The CPSED outlined the background to the development of the University's collaborative provision which has been shaped by its previous responsibility for the awards of local former colleges of education, its support for a number of regional specialist FE and HE providers, and its more recent development of UK and overseas specialist collaborations.

26 The University's strategy for assuring the academic standards and quality of programmes delivered through collaborative arrangements is determined by its categorisation of collaborative arrangements into the three

categories mentioned earlier in this report (paragraph 5):

- Accredited colleges
- Affiliated institutions
- Faculty-based collaborations.

27 At the time of the audit the University was in the process of implementing the recommendations of the Internal Review of the Institutional Arrangements for Collaborative Activity. In meetings the audit team heard that some affiliated institutions had been disappointed at the decision to cease validation activity in view of the benefits that the institutions and the students derived from the collaboration; in particular, the students valued a University of Leeds award. From review of documentation and discussion with staff and students from both the University and affiliated institutions the team was able to concur with the University's emphasis that the decision to withdraw from the affiliated arrangements did not arise from concerns about academic standards or quality but rather reflected the change in strategic focus within the University to become more research-intensive. At the time of the audit the University was developing a revised strategy for collaborative provision to reflect the changes in its approach.

### **Accredited colleges**

28 At the time of the audit the University provided both taught and research degree awards for two accredited colleges. The CPSED confirmed that the University did not intend to increase the number of accredited colleges.

29 Under the accreditation arrangements, students are enrolled with and supported by the colleges for their academic and pastoral needs. Courses are devised by the colleges but are approved by the University. The audit team found that both the colleges and the University adhered to the principle that ultimate responsibility for both the standards of the awards and the quality of the programmes lay with the University. The assurance of the quality of taught programmes is largely devolved to the colleges and operates within a framework

agreed by the University. A similar approach applies to research programmes: in the early stages of the collaborations, supervisory teams for research students were required to comprise both accredited college and University staff. In recognition of the maturity of the accredited colleges, supervision is now normally undertaken entirely by college staff who are subject to the same vetting, training and monitoring by the University as its own staff.

30 The University and the accredited colleges have defined carefully specified arrangements whereby the latter may themselves enter into collaborative arrangements with other institutions. A review by QAA of one such arrangement concluded that 'the robust quality assurance and enhancement of the provision was underpinned by the University's framework for Collaborative Provision, which defines quality assurance linking the University, the College and its centres of delivery'.

31 The CPSED stated that the University's main aim in relation to the accredited colleges was to 'help them to develop as independent higher education institutions'. The audit team considered the approach to the relationship with the accredited colleges through review of documentation and meetings with staff and students. The team noted favourably the arrangements and active support of one of the accredited colleges in its application for taught degree awarding powers in its own right. The accredited college and the University devised a joint migration strategy prior to formal submission of the application for taught degree awarding powers, allowing the implementation of a phased programme for transfer of taught degree awarding powers to be implemented on successful completion of the scrutiny.

### **Affiliated institutions**

32 At the time of the audit, the University had affiliation agreements with five FE and HEIs each of which had a validation agreement with the University whereby the latter validated named programmes judged to be appropriate for a University award. Affiliated status represents a recognition by the University that partners have well developed quality assurance

procedures and approaches to course delivery; the University exercises much greater involvement, including moderation of all assessments, in the monitoring of quality and standards than is the case for the accredited colleges.

33 The University and the affiliated institutions have established exit strategies whereby support for students is of paramount importance. The audit team viewed documentation and discussed with staff the exit strategy for one of the affiliated institutions. The team considered the oversight by the relevant college panel (see paragraph 44) of the transfer of the provision to a new validating agent to be careful and scrupulous; of particular note were the determination of both the University and the college to maintain academic standards and to monitor and improve the provision and the punctilious way in which both partners had handled management and governance issues. The process has been monitored throughout by the external member of the college panel.

#### **Faculty-based collaborations**

34 The University considers that it gains clear strategic advantage from its faculty-based collaborations, which take several forms:

- articulation arrangements, particularly for overseas students, provide defined entry routes into University programmes
- Collaborative Programme Delivery allows students on University-based degrees to follow specialist modules provided by a partner organisation
- Programme Approval mode is where programmes are devised and delivered by partners but are approved by the University and are subject to the quality assurance procedures of particular faculties
- Joint Programme Delivery involves students on master's courses taking modules from both the University and another HEI.

35 For all faculty-based collaborations, students are registered with the University, giving them full access to all of its facilities. The CPSED signalled the University's intentions to focus in the future on faculty-based collaborations where they demonstrably advance the University's 'world class aspirations'.

36 On the basis of review of documentation and discussion with staff and students, the audit team concluded that the University's strategic approach to its collaborative provision was appropriate to its mission and institutional strategy. The audit team considered the arrangements for the support of collaborative institutions in implementation of changes to the basis of relationships with the University to be a feature of good practice in the strategic management of its collaborative provision. The team found that the approach was characterised by structured forward planning and a primary concern to protect the interests of students registered for awards of the University.

#### **The awarding institution's framework for managing the quality of the students' experience and academic standards in collaborative provision**

37 The CPSED identified the Learning and Teaching Board (LTB), acting on behalf of the Senate, as the body responsible for maintaining oversight of all the University's arrangements for the quality of its provision and securing the maintenance of standards for taught awards. The Graduate Board fulfils similar responsibilities for research provision. A Standing Group on Collaborative Provision (SGCP) supports the LTB by considering strategic and wider operational issues concerned with collaborative provision and the initial approval and ongoing monitoring of faculty-based collaborations.

38 At the time of the audit the University had recently concluded a review of governance of the University in response to a recommendation from the QAA institutional audit that the University 'reflect on the balance between consultation processes and the timely implementation of policies and procedures'.

The review led to the removal of a tier of committees intended to separate management and academic decision-making processes. Staff whom the audit team met had a good understanding of the revised committee structure in relation to the operation of collaborative provision.

39 The Quality Management and Enhancement Unit (QMEU) plays a pivotal role in the quality management of collaborative provision. Key University committees concerned with taught provision in accredited colleges and affiliated institutions, and the committees responsible for faculty-based collaborations, are serviced by officers of QMEU. The QMEU also provides a central point of reference for all quality matters within and outwith the University. All documentation for securing the quality and standards of collaborative provision by the University is developed by or in collaboration with QMEU and is made publicly available by the Unit. The audit team noted favourably the significant support provided by QMEU to those involved in the management and delivery of collaborative provision.

40 In 2002, the University introduced a common degree classification system in the accredited colleges and affiliated institutions, following its establishment in the University in 2000. The CPSED noted that the process of introduction had presented challenges in some subject areas and partner institutions but confirmed that the University had determined that the common system should apply to all University of Leeds awards wherever delivered. A subsequent review of the approach to classification re-affirmed the principles on which the system was based, with only minor modifications.

41 A significant development in the past three years has been the development of a single set of Ordinances and Curricular Regulations, and a common set of Rules for Award which apply to all the University's programmes of study. The CPSED indicated that the introduction of these regulatory provisions had followed consultation with the accredited colleges and affiliated institutions.

While not all the staff from the partner institutions whom the audit team met were aware of such consultation having taken place, there was an endorsement of the outcomes and agreement that common regulations and processes aided the University's oversight of the maintenance of standards.

### **Accredited colleges**

42 Senior members of University staff are appointed as members of the major decision-making committees of each college, including the boards of governors. The University also appoints University Subject Representatives (USRs) to each discipline within the colleges to act as a first point of contact for staff within the discipline. USRs are expected to provide reassurance to the University that the college is acting in accordance with the Accreditation Agreement and University policy generally. USRs are required to meet college staff at least annually, to participate in college internal reviews and to produce an annual report for the LTB.

### **Affiliated institutions**

43 In response to the Internal Review of the Institutional Arrangements for Collaborative activity (paragraph 20), the former Collaborative Provision Learning and Teaching Committee (CPLTC) and Affiliated Colleges Forum (ACF) were combined to form the Affiliated Institutions Learning and Teaching Committee (AILTC). The work of the AILTC is focused on the maintenance of academic standards and the operation of quality assurance and enhancement in the affiliated institutions; the membership includes senior representatives from the affiliated institutions and from University faculties, and student representatives.

44 For each affiliated institution there is also a college panel which includes a member external to both the University and the college; the college panels report via their chairs to the AILTC. The CPSED stated that '[e]xternal representative reports on College Panels suggest[ed] that the role and remit of panels [were] clearly articulated and understood and that the Panels provide[d] a highly effective forum for dialogue and exchange between the

University and the Affiliated Institution in respect of the validated provision'. From its review of reports from external members of college panels, the audit team would endorse the University's view of the effectiveness of the panels and the contribution of the external representatives to the assurance of quality in collaborative provision in the affiliated institutions. The CPSED stated that the AILTC had 'strengthened the focus on the validated programmes as they [were] taught out'. The team saw clear evidence in documentation relating to the termination of arrangements with the affiliated institutions of the contribution of the AILTC to the assurance of the quality of the student experience as the provision was transferred to other validating agents.

45 Within the affiliated institutions experienced members of University academic staff act as moderators to the collaborative programmes. The duties of the moderators are set out in the University's Guidance for Validated Programmes document. The CPSED described the role as 'a watching brief over the general quality, standards and educational experience provided by the validated programme'. It is obligatory for moderators to have a meeting with students as part of their annual duties. Moderators complete an annual programme review report which is considered by the college panel and the AILTC, to the chair of which moderators may also submit a confidential report if there are matters requiring particular and urgent attention. There is an expectation that moderators be involved in assessment processes, perhaps as second-markers or assisting in the setting of examinations. The CPSED stated that the role was 'complementary to that of the external examiner'. A summary of progression and achievement statistics is provided in the programme annual report from the affiliated institutions.

46 The University Affiliated Institutions Examination Committee meets annually to consider awards recommended by college examination committees. The audit team found clear evidence that the principles and precepts of the *Code of practice*, with particular reference

to assessment and placement activity, were integrated into normal practice. The CPSED stated that the purpose of this committee was to ensure that 'all colleges [were] operating consistently and that students [were] treated equitably across the programmes'. The audit team noted that this aim was not included in the terms of reference for the committee; the University may wish to consider making this aspect of the Committee's work more explicit in its terms of reference.

### **Faculty-based collaborations**

47 Although the University defines a framework for the management of faculty-based collaborations, the audit team observed some variation in aspects of its implementation with differing subcommittees and lines of accountability in place according to the determination of each faculty learning and teaching committee. Faculty-based collaborations have a designated member of University academic staff acting as a link person and the title and role of such individuals varies according to the nature of the collaboration. During partner visits the audit team noted the significant role played by such members of staff in ensuring the effective day-to-day operation of programmes. In the view of the team there is potential for the success of the linkage in faculty-based collaborations to be overly dependent on individual commitment and involvement. The University may wish to consider defining the responsibilities and requirements of the role of link person; the audit team considered this to be particularly important where the link person was responsible for ensuring that the quality and standard of placement provision was appropriate. The team noted that there was no provision or requirement for meetings between the University and staff from the collaborative institution at institutional level to discuss the operation of the partnership; in the view of the team the establishment of such meetings would provide an opportunity for appraisal and discussion of the effectiveness of arrangement and establish a systematic central overview of the provision.

48 In meetings with senior staff the audit team learnt of recently instituted annual 'health checks' for faculty-based collaborations which are additional to the annual review reports from the relevant school to the faculty learning and teaching committee. The health checks consist of two hour meetings which are developmental in purpose and result in a report, prepared by QMEU, which identifies themes and issues across faculties and the University. The audit team considers that these meetings represent a useful mechanism for strengthening central oversight of faculty-based collaborations in view of the University's declared intention to expand this type of provision.

49 From review of documentation and meetings with staff of the University and its collaborative partners the audit team concluded that the University's framework for managing the quality of the student experience and the maintenance of standards in its collaborative provision was well-established and secure. The revised committee structures provide for more focused discussion and timely action planning. USRs, moderators and faculty link tutors play an important role in safeguarding standards and quality in collaborative provision.

50 The audit team gave consideration to the implications for the University's central oversight of its collaborative provision of the move to extend faculty-based collaborations which are largely managed at faculty level. Given the potential strategic importance of such arrangements, the team considered that periodic meetings of central staff from both parties to the arrangement would provide for institutional level appraisal of the provision and early identification of possible difficulties in the operation of the arrangement. Accordingly, the team advises the University to review its approach to institutional level involvement in faculty-based collaborations to establish a requirement for periodic meetings of staff at the most senior level from both institutions to consider formally the operation of the partnership arrangement. In this context the team also considers it desirable, as the University moves to expand its portfolio of faculty based collaborations, that it review its

existing policies and procedures to: ensure that they remain fit for purpose; define the roles and responsibilities of all staff involved in the arrangements; and secure continued effective central oversight of the operation of such arrangements.

51 Overall, the University's arrangements for the assurance of quality and academic standards in its collaborative provision are fit for purpose and are in alignment with the relevant precepts of the Code of practice.

### **The awarding institution's intentions for enhancing the management of its collaborative provision**

52 The CPSED claimed that the University was continually seeking ways in which it could formalise 'the mechanisms for enhancement of practice in relation to learning and teaching. The CPSED went on to cite a number of means by which the University disseminated good practice, by way of example through the publication of the learning and teaching bulletin and the annual Learning and Teaching Conference which is open to and attended by staff from partner institutions. The CPSED signalled the University's intention to link approaches to enhancement outside its formal processes in a more systematic way to the outcomes of reviews to feed into the development of the University's strategy in this area.

53 The AILTC has replaced the former Affiliated Colleges Forum which was considered by the university to provide an enhancement function in consulting on University practice and allowing representatives from affiliated institutions to put forward suggestions on learning and teaching policy from their own institutions. The AILTC agenda includes a standing item, led by the partner institutions, on enhancement and the audit team saw evidence of the effectiveness of this approach in sharing innovative practice. The team concluded that the AILTC provided a secure forum to ensure that enhancement matters would not be overlooked as the provision was transferred to other providers.

54 The audit team concluded that the University had given careful consideration to its approach to enhancement of its collaborative provision, drawing upon the findings of the Internal Review of the Institutional Arrangements for Collaborative Activity. The team considers the inclusion of enhancement, as a standing item led by the partner institutions, on the agenda for the AILTC to be good practice in promoting systematic identification and dissemination of good practice.

### **The awarding institution's internal approval, monitoring and review arrangements for collaborative provision leading to its awards**

#### **Institutional approval**

55 The Pro-Vice Chancellor for Learning and Teaching takes a lead in deciding whether a proposed collaboration is in the strategic interest of the University, consulting the senior managers from the Vice Chancellor's Executive Group as necessary. Institutional implications of the arrangement are considered by the SGCP concurrently with discussion of academic issues by the relevant school and faculty. Due diligence enquiries are undertaken by the University's Legal Department which has devised a questionnaire to obtain information about the legal and financial standing of the proposed collaborative institution. A memorandum of agreement is devised which specifies a framework of expectations for the particular features and risks of a collaborative programme. The CPSED indicated that memoranda specified the individual conditions for the operation of individual arrangements in accordance with the University's typology of collaborations. Previously there was no standard memorandum of agreement or template thereof, resulting in considerable variation in the content and coverage of the partnership agreements examined during the audit visit. The University now has a standard template for agreements which provides additional assurance of consistency of approach in the operation of collaborative arrangements.

56 The University has a Collaborative Proposal Form for recording details of proposed collaborative ventures which is designed to collate all the information necessary to assess the nature, management and potential risk of the proposed collaboration. Normally, a site visit is undertaken by representatives of the SGCP; where the venture is deemed to be potentially of higher risk a working party may be convened to undertake a more detailed examination of relevant issues. The CPSED noted that no such proposals had been submitted in recent years.

57 Proposals for articulation arrangements which allow guaranteed direct entry onto specified University programmes, are subject to the normal institutional approval processes. Overseas articulation arrangements must advance the University's international strategic objectives. Unlike other international collaborations, they do not need the approval of University Council, but must be endorsed by the Pro-Vice Chancellor for International Affairs. The audit team noted that the University had conducted a review of its articulation arrangements which resulted in an evaluative report, identifying strengths and limitations of the University's current policies and procedures. The team considered the conduct and outcomes of this review to provide evidence of the University's careful approach to the operation of its articulation arrangements.

#### **Programme approval**

##### **Accredited colleges**

58 Proposals at the programme level are considered in each college by a committee which must include representation from the University. The University requires new programme proposals in the colleges to be subjected to external review as part of formal approval. The USR plays an important role in supporting the accredited colleges in preparing programmes for approval through involvement in initial local consideration and submission of comments to feed into the approval process. Recommendations for new and revised programmes are considered by the LTB and may be approved in principle to allow the

courses to be marketed. The USR must confirm that any conditions attached to the approval have been met before students can be enrolled on the programmes. From a review of documentation and discussion with staff, the audit team concluded that procedures for the approval of programmes for delivery in the accredited colleges were robust and operating as intended.

### **Affiliated institutions**

59 The CPSED reported that no further programmes would be considered for validation in the affiliated institutions in accordance with the University's decision to withdraw from all such arrangements. A number of proposals that had received initial approval for development prior to the decision to cease such activity were approved through the CPLTC in accordance with the University's Guidelines for Validated Programmes whereby college panels were responsible for considering the detailed programme proposals. The audit team considered the decision to proceed with the approvals to be evidence of the University's careful approach to the implementation of changes to the basis of relationships with its partner institutions. The audit team viewed documentary evidence of the initial and subsequent approvals of provision in the affiliated institutions and confirmed that the process was rigorous and had operated as intended.

### **Faculty-based collaborations**

60 Programme approval in faculty-based collaborations is undertaken by school and faculty teaching and learning committees in accordance with the University's own internal procedures for programme approval. The audit team viewed documentary evidence of the procedures for approval of faculty-based collaborations and concluded that the process was operating as intended.

61 In the CPSED the University set out revised procedures for approval of collaborative arrangements which had come into effect from the academic year 2005-06. The CPSED explained that the changes to procedures were

intended to 'maximise the efficacy of the process'. The audit team reviewed documentation relating to approval procedures and found it to be comprehensive and helpful to the University in defining working frameworks and risk factors. In meetings with staff of the University and its partners, the team encountered clear evidence of an understanding of the procedures which are set out in comprehensive documentation made available via the QMEU website. The team concluded that the information provided in the CPSED about the approval of collaborative arrangements was accurate and reliable and that procedures were in alignment with the relevant precepts of the *Code of practice*.

### **Annual monitoring**

62 A system of annual programme review is in place for all collaborative programmes with the procedures being defined by the category of collaboration.

### **Accredited colleges**

63 Under the terms of operation of the arrangements, all programmes offered in the accredited colleges are subject to annual review by the college. The review includes scrutiny of student and staff feedback, progression information, USR and external examiner reports and responses to the previous review. The reviews are discussed with the USRs who include any matters arising from the reviews in their annual reports to the University. The accredited colleges both submit annual reports to the University on the operation of the collaborative arrangement as a whole. These formal reporting mechanisms are complemented by annual meetings between a small team from the University led by one of the Pro-Vice Chancellors and college staff, to discuss issues raised in reports. Research student matters are discussed at a separate annual meeting of the chair of the Graduate Board with relevant college staff.

### **Affiliated institutions**

64 The University sets out its expectations for annual review of its programmes in affiliated institutions in the Guidance for Validated

Programmes document. A condition of affiliate status is that the institutions have their own internal review processes and the University stipulates the material to be considered and included in the reports. It is open to affiliated institutions to use the University's own reporting template, but, in practice and in recognition of the diversity of provision, a variety of formats is accepted provided that the specified information is provided. College panels consider the annual review reports in tandem with external examiner and moderator reports and are responsible for oversight of the action planning in response to the reviews. Minutes of the relevant college panel meetings are considered by the ALTC.

#### **Faculty-based collaborations**

65 Procedures for annual review of faculty-based collaborations follow the standard University procedures which were confirmed through the institutional audit to be appropriate and working well. The Programme Management Team, which includes University and partner representation, undertakes the detailed monitoring of the provision and is responsible to the school and faculty learning and teaching committees.

66 In the CPSED the University did not offer an explicit view on the overall effectiveness of its procedures for annual review of its collaborative provision but the audit team found that the information set out in the CPSED concerning the operation of the process was both accurate and reliable. The team concluded that the University had a comprehensive and effective system of annual monitoring and review, with requirements clearly set out in guidance documentation. Responsibilities for individuals and committees in this process are clearly defined. Procedures are tailored to, and appropriate for, the different types of collaborative link. Processes are regularly revised to improve quality management and enhancement and account is taken of issues raised in previous reviews. There is a reciprocal flow of information between the University and partner institutions.

#### **Periodic review**

67 The Internal Review of the Institutional Arrangements for Collaborative Activity was undertaken to 'consider the continued effectiveness of the activity, the efficacy and robustness of the quality management procedures to assure and maintain standards, and the provision for the continued enhancement of the quality of the student experience'. The panel for the review included two external members from other HEIs.

68 The review evaluated the different types of collaborative arrangement in the context of the University's strategic planning and wider aspirations. The process took account of the maturity of the different institutions involved and their evolution as providers of higher education qualifications. It was recognised by the review panel that many of the arrangements were historical in nature arising from former institutional obligations to the local and regional community but were now of declining utility and costly in resource terms. The review concluded that faculty-based collaborations represented the form of relationship most appropriate to furthering the University's revised strategic direction. The audit team was provided with a copy of the review report and details of action in response to the report. The team considers that these documents exemplify the open and evaluative approach adopted by the University in relation to its collaborative provision and found them most useful points of reference in the conduct of the audit.

69 The audit team considered the rigour and candour of the Internal Review of the Institutional Arrangements for Collaborative Activity which supported the evaluative reappraisal of the University's approach to its collaborative arrangements to represent a feature of good practice in the University's approach to oversight of its collaborative provision. The team concluded that the report of this review, and its subsequent follow-up report, had provided the University with a clear basis for the development of a revised strategy for the future direction of its involvement in collaborative provision.

### Accredited colleges

70 The University has supported its accredited colleges in the development of their internal systems of periodic review. These are conducted at the discipline level and the University requires that panels include both a member of the University staff, normally one of the USRs and a member external to both the college and the University. Reports are submitted to the University via QMEU, and are included in discussions at the annual meetings. Key issues and good practice are fed into the University Standing Group on Review to inform development of policy and procedures.

71 The CPSED emphasised the contribution of the good relationships between the University and its partners to the smooth working of the process, while indicating that it intended to use the periodic review process to identify refinements and improvements that could be made to the process itself.

72 Periodic reviews for research degree arrangements at the accredited colleges follow those for University schools.

### Affiliated institutions

73 The University's Guidance for Validated Programmes sets out the requirements for periodic review of validated programmes in the affiliated institutions. The AILTC is responsible for the conduct of the reviews which normally take place on a five-year basis. Review panels must include external representation, subject specialists and a library representative; a self-evaluation document (SED) compiled to a standard University template provides the basis for discussions with staff and students, in conjunction with visits and scrutiny of further documentation. There is provision for review of programme documentation and specific arrangements for revalidation, including consideration of rationale, assessment and currency of the curriculum.

74 The review report and the college response are considered by the LTB. There is provision for a review to be brought forward if there are concerns about the operation of the provision. The audit team saw evidence of such

a review following concerns raised through a QAA report at the subject level in a partner institution and of effective action in response to the findings of the review.

### Faculty-based collaborations

75 Consideration of the revised section of *Code of practice* on collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning led the University to instigate specific periodic reviews for faculty-based collaborations. Previously such collaborations had been reviewed through the internal review cycle, but the University recognised that the approach had not adequately covered all types of faculty-based collaborations. Review teams must now include external representation, a member of the faculty concerned and a library representative. The review team considers a SED written to a standard University template and meets staff and students from the provision. In addition, on occasion, the review will draw on reports of site visits undertaken on behalf of the SGCP. Review reports are considered by the SGCP, and follow-up action is monitored by the relevant faculty. At the time of the audit the first cycle of these specific periodic reviews was almost complete and was being used to inform the maintenance of the University's Register of Collaborative Provision as well as the review of each agreement.

76 The CPSED stated that the University had refined its procedures for periodic review in recent years to keep pace with the development of the Academic Infrastructure and its own policy and procedures. The University's internal procedures identified that monitoring of follow-up action to periodic reviews had not been as effective as it might have been and accordingly a follow-up event for periodic reviews was established to improve the process of addressing and implementing recommendations. In documentation and meetings with staff, the audit team found evidence that this approach had strengthened the response to periodic reviews in all categories of provision.

77 The audit team found that the CPSED presented an accurate and complete account of

the University's approach to periodic review of its collaborative provision. The team saw documentary evidence of thorough consideration by the relevant committees of the findings of periodic review reports. From documentary evidence and meetings with staff of the University and its partner institutions the team concluded that the University's approach to periodic review of its collaborative provision was rigorous and operating as intended and was in alignment with the relevant precepts of the *Code of practice*.

### **External participation in internal review processes for collaborative provision**

78 The CPSED emphasised that the University's procedures required external input into consideration of new programme proposals and periodic review in collaborative provision. The selection and appointment of external panel members and representatives are undertaken by the University except in the case of the accredited colleges where responsibility has been devolved to the colleges. Periodic reviews of provision in the accredited colleges include at least one member on the panel external to both the University and the college.

79 Nominations for external membership of review panels for affiliated institutions and faculty-based collaborations are channelled through the chair of the relevant committees for initial consideration; nominations are subject to final approval from the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Learning and Teaching. While external examiners' opinions are canvassed on programme developments, members of approval and review panels are not drawn from the pool of external examiners.

80 The audit team found that the outline given in the CPSED of arrangements relating to external participation in internal review processes was accurate and reliable. The team concluded that the University's effective use of external representation in its internal periodic review processes supported judgements of broad confidence in the soundness of the University's present and likely future management of the

academic standards of its awards made through collaborative arrangements and in the present and likely future capacity of the University to satisfy itself that the learning opportunities offered to students through its collaborative arrangements were managed effectively and met its requirements.

### **External examiners and their reports in collaborative provision**

81 The CPSED stated that 'significant importance [was] given to the role of external examiners in ensuring that the University's awards [were] comparable with those of other UK HEIs'. In line with the University's practice for its in-house provision at least one external examiner is appointed for each programme offered through a collaborative arrangement. The CPSED went on to state that, as the University did not franchise its programmes to other providers and none of the validated courses were directly comparable to those of the University in content, the University did not consider it 'appropriate' for the same external examiner to be appointed for both University and validated programmes. The CPSED also indicated that the policy would be reviewed by the Standing Group on Standards in the light of the QAA overseas audit report on the University's provision in Oman.

### **Accredited colleges**

82 For Accredited Colleges, the University approves the college requirements for the appointment and responsibilities of external examiners. Each programme or subject area has an external examiner and, because the colleges have many joint honours and combined programmes, each operates a final award board with a chief or procedural external examiner present. This board determines the final classification of awards based on marks previously confirmed by the subject boards in the presence of subject external examiners. The appointment of external examiners is authorised by the designated member of the college and the University representative on the college Academic Standards Committee. Details of all

external examiner appointments are forwarded annually to QMEU and are included in the documentation for the annual reviews.

83 Each college provides a handbook for its external examiners, which is supplemented by University documentation; the college handbooks are provided annually to QMEU for information. Any other information sent to external examiners by colleges is scrutinised by the USR and may be the subject of comment in the latter's annual report; issues raised through USR reports are discussed at the annual meeting between the college and the University. The outcomes of such discussions are reported to both the University's Learning and Teaching Board and the college's Academic Board.

84 Each external examiner reports directly to the college, but they also have the option of writing in confidence to the Vice Chancellor of the University should they wish to do so. The colleges submit copies of all external examiner reports to QMEU, the Director of which reads all of the reports and draws the attention of the Pro-Vice Chancellor to any serious issues raised. The CPSED noted that such action had not been necessary in recent years, emphasising the confidence of the University in the capacity of the colleges to respond appropriately to any concerns raised by external examiners. A summary of external examiner reports for the colleges is submitted annually to the LTB

85 The audit team saw clear evidence of the University's maintenance of oversight of the operation of the external examiner system in the colleges; by way of example, on occasion when a relatively inexperienced external examiner has been appointed, the University has arranged for a mentor to provide additional support. The team concluded that the approach to external examining of the provision in the accredited colleges was rigorous with a defined division of operational responsibility with University maintaining firm control over academic standards.

#### **Affiliated institutions**

86 The University takes full responsibility for the appointment of external examiners for the

programmes in the affiliated institutions. College panels submit nominations for appointment as external examiners to the AILTC. The moderator plays an important role in advising on nominations; the audit team learnt of an example in which a moderator had deemed a nomination to be inappropriate resulting in a more suitable alternative nomination being submitted to the University. Moderators also monitor information sent to examiners by the affiliated institution, reporting, as necessary on matters raised in their annual reports.

87 QMEU communicates directly with the external examiners on behalf of the University, providing appropriate documentation, including the Guidance for Validated Programmes, which sets out the University's expectations in respect of external examining. The colleges also provide examiners with programme-specific documentation and guidance on local assessment practices.

88 Immediately after the assessment period, the external examiners provide a report to the University for scrutiny by the QMEU and the chair of the AILTC. The reports are forwarded to the college, drawing the attention of the Principal to any issues requiring particular attention. The colleges respond to the reports as part of the annual review process; the response is also considered by the college panel. The audit team concluded that the University's requirements for external examining of provision in the affiliated institutions was sound and provided for clear oversight by the University of academic standards in the colleges.

#### **Faculty-based collaborations**

89 External examining and reporting arrangements for all faculty-based collaborations are identical to those for in-house programmes and remain as discussed in the 2004 institutional audit report. The present audit team concurred with the findings of the institutional audit team that the procedures were robust and operating as intended.

90 The University does not offer generic training for external examiners, but provides detailed guidance in the form of a

comprehensive handbook and accompanying CD. Accredited colleges and affiliated institutions supplement this material by providing more detailed programme-specific information, which is subject to University approval. In the case of faculty-based collaborations information is provided jointly by the partner and the relevant faculty or school. When programmes are provided jointly by the University and another higher education institution with degree awarding powers, external examining arrangements are specified in the memorandum of agreement.

91 From scrutiny of documentation and discussion with staff, the audit team was able to confirm that the University's procedures for external examining were rigorous and in alignment with the relevant precepts of the *Code of practice*. The team concluded that the University's use of external examiners in summative assessment was strong and scrupulous and supported judgements of broad confidence in the soundness of the University's present and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards made through collaborative arrangements.

### **The use made of external reference points in collaborative provision**

92 The CPSED stated that the University had assessed its practice against the *Code of practice* and *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), published by QAA, and expressed the University's confidence that its practice was 'in general accordance' with the precepts. The approach taken by the University to the use of external reference points in its management of collaborative provision has been to develop policies and procedures that take account of the elements of the Academic Infrastructure and other relevant reference points: in implementing the University's requirements, its partner institutions also operate in alignment with the Academic Infrastructure. The accredited colleges have reviewed their own policies and procedures against the precepts of the *Code of*

*practice* for report to the University and the University is confident that the colleges are operating in accordance with the guidance in the *Code of practice*.

93 The University provided a series of bespoke staff development workshops for staff in collaborating partners to promote a clear understanding of the elements of Academic Infrastructure. The workshops covered level descriptors, programme specifications, learning outcomes, flexible learning, special educational needs, assessment and research student supervision.

94 During the academic year 2002-03, the University revised its approach to programme approval to ensure that all programmes, including those offered through collaborative arrangements would meet the requirements of the Academic Infrastructure. The process involved approval of programmes and programme specifications referenced against the FHEQ. The University has formally approved a variation of the programme specification template which meets the particular requirements of the accredited colleges.

95 USRs, moderators and school-level directors of learning and teaching monitor the implementation of the Academic Infrastructure in the partner institutions. The University maintains central oversight of observation of its policies and procedures, and thus with the Academic Infrastructure, through the periodic review process, annual reviews of accredited colleges, the work of college panels and the annual reviews and health check of faculty-based collaborations.

96 From review of documentation and discussion with staff of the University and its partner institutions, the audit team was able to confirm the account in the CPSED of the University's use of external reference points in collaborative provision. The team concluded that the University's approach to the application of the elements of the Academic Infrastructure to its management of its collaborative provision was thorough and fit for purpose.

### **Review and accreditation by external agencies of programmes leading to the awarding institution's awards offered through collaborative provision**

97 The CPSED indicated that the University had had a policy of supporting its partners in their preparation for external reviews 'as requested'. The University has always worked closely with partner HEIs preparing for engagements with QAA at the institutional level and, in some cases, has met the audit team to discuss the collaborative arrangement.

98 Formerly the involvement of the University in external review of provision at the subject level in collaborative institutions was less systematic than is now the case and was largely confined to receipt of reports or consideration through the annual meetings of the AILTC. Consideration of outcomes of a review at a partner institution led the University to identify 'a dislocation' between the periodic review procedures and the programme re-approval arrangements. The University revised its procedures to ensure that periodic review and programme re-approval were undertaken at one event. The CPSED indicated that the report had alerted the University to the need to take a more pro-active role in external review at the subject level in partner institutions. The audit team saw clear evidence that the University was now fully engaged in all stages of preparation for external reviews of all of its programmes offered through a partnership arrangement.

99 Accreditation reports from professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRB) for provision within the accredited colleges are considered at departmental level in the college in discussion with the USR. The report and associated departmental responses are then discussed by college committees which include University representation. The reports and associated responses form part of the documentation for the annual review of the accredited college and are considered at the annual meeting. Professional body accreditation reports for faculty-based collaborations are

considered by the partner organisation and, within the University, by the relevant school. The report and responses are monitored by the faculty learning and teaching committee. Central oversight is maintained through consideration of all PSRB reports by the Standing Group on Review to promote dissemination of good practice and identification of emerging trends and themes. At the time of the audit none of the programmes offered through the affiliated institutions was subject to PSRB accreditation.

100 From review of documentation and discussion with staff the audit team confirmed that the CPSED presented an accurate account of the University's approach to the review and accreditation by external agencies of provision offered through partner organisations. The team concluded that the institutional overview of the outcomes of such external reviews was secure and that the University made effective use of the findings of the reviews to enhance its approach to the management of its collaborative provision.

### **Student representation in collaborative provision**

101 The CPSED indicated that arrangements for representation of students in the University's partner organisations differed according to the type of collaborative arrangement involved. Students in the accredited colleges and affiliated institutions are members of the individual colleges, rather than the University and are represented locally on college committees by their own student representatives and Students' Union. The University Students' Union represents the general student interest on the LTB and Senate but does not have any formal relationship with the college student bodies. The AILTC includes a student representative from each of the affiliated institutions. Students enrolled on programmes delivered through faculty-based collaborations are students of the University and are represented through the normal provision for in-house students, including representation through the University Students' Union on central University committees.

102 The CPSED stated 'although the University does not always have direct representation on its committees by students from the Colleges, it is satisfied that it is appropriate for students to have representation at the more local level within their own institution. There has been no suggestion by any of the students met by University representatives as part of their work that they would welcome any additional representation'. Students whom the audit team met were generally satisfied with the level of representation afforded to them in respect of the University programmes on which they were registered.

103 From the reading of documentation and discussion with student representatives from the University and partner institutions the audit team concluded that the University's arrangements for student representation were appropriate to its overall approach to collaborative provision and were operating as intended.

### **Feedback from students, graduates and employers**

104 The CPSED stated that the University required all partner institutions to have mechanisms for collecting and acting upon student feedback. Students at collaborative institutions provide feedback at both module and course level through questionnaires. Students whom the audit team met were not always clear about how the questionnaires were considered at local or University level but did confirm that action was taken in response to issues raised in student evaluations.

105 Feedback gathered in the accredited colleges and affiliated institutions is reviewed by the USRs and moderators and feeds into annual and periodic review processes. At the time of the audit, the University had recently introduced a requirement that moderators meet students at least annually to discuss matters of interest to the student body. Moderators report to AILTC on issues relating to the general quality, standards, and educational experience of the students.

106 The University does not have a standard approach to collecting feedback from employers of students from its collaborative provision. The accredited colleges routinely gather such information for their own purposes but there is no requirement for it to be passed to the University. Some faculty-based collaborations are supported by industrial advisory panels that include members from local employers, trades unions and students. The University's collaborative provision in the areas of health also has employer panels.

107 At the time of the audit the University did not collect information from graduates from its collaborative provision in accredited colleges and affiliated institutions although this is collected by the partner institutions for its own purposes. Feedback from graduates from faculty-based collaborations is collected through the University's standard procedures.

108 The audit team found that the University's procedures for gathering student feedback on provision offered through collaborative provision were fit for purpose. The University should ensure that students are aware of the processes used to analyse and act on student views collected through module and course questionnaires.

109 The CPSED did not provide any information about the University's approach to gathering feedback from employers and graduates in its collaborative provision. There was evidence that feedback from employers was gained through various advisory panels at the course level. The University may wish to consider whether it could make more systematic use of information gained through such bodies and also from graduates from its partner institutions in its management of its collaborative provision.

### **Student admission, progression, completion and assessment information for collaborative provision**

110 In accordance with the University's standard approach to collaborative provision

the approach to compilation and use of statistical data varies according to the category of collaborative arrangement. The accredited colleges collect data on admissions, progression and achievement for their own quality assurance purposes and include them in annual reports. The USR is expected to comment on trends emerging from the statistical data with reference to comparable data for cognate programmes delivered at the University.

111 The University's Guidance for Validated Programmes sets out the requirements for the compilation of statistical information in the affiliated institutions. In annual programme review the provision of programme progression and achievement data, and a comparison of module entry and performance data, are minimum requirements. The accompanying annual module review process requires information on entry qualifications, enrolments, assessment attempts, student performance and a comparison with other modules in allied subject areas. Templates are available for these reviews to promote consistency of approach. The reports are considered by the college panels who report on the data to the AILTC.

112 Faculty-based collaborations complete module and programme review reports in accordance with the requirements for internal programmes of the University. Reports are considered by faculty learning and teaching committees which in turn report on the data to the LTB.

113 Review reports at programme level are all received by the QMEU which provides central oversight of statistical information. The present audit team noted that the report of the institutional audit in 2004 encouraged the University to continue its ongoing work to formalise the regular monitoring of performance statistics. In meetings with staff of the University, the team was told that the University sought continually to improve its use of data, with particular attention to the development of performance indicators. The CPSED included reference to the use of performance data to map trends in classification.

114 From scrutiny of documentation and discussion with staff the audit team concluded that, the University was able to draw on comprehensive statistical datasets to inform its quality management of all modes of collaborative provision. Documented guidance and reporting templates promote consistency of approach in collecting data. There was evidence of analysis of statistical information in programme approval and re-approval. The team formed the view that the University made appropriate use of statistical data in its overall management of quality and standards in its collaborative arrangements.

### **Assurance of quality of teaching staff in collaborative provision; appointment, appraisal, support and development**

115 The University has different degrees of involvement in staffing at its collaborative partners depending on the category of collaboration.

#### **Accredited colleges**

116 The University receives an annual update on academic staffing at each of the colleges. University staff may participate in college staff appointment panels where senior posts are involved, but in recognition of confidence in the stringency of local procedures the University is not routinely involved in staff appointments at the colleges. Staff induction and development are the responsibility of the accredited colleges with the effectiveness of these activities being considered during monitoring of the accreditation agreement.

#### **Affiliated institutions**

117 Appointment of teaching staff in the affiliated institutions is the responsibility of the institution but the University retains an interest in recognition of the need to confirm the calibre of staff involved in delivery. Staff curriculum vitae (CVs) are considered by the University at the beginning of each collaborative relationship and thereafter collaborative partners are required to forward the CVs of new staff involved in the collaborative provision on appointment.

Moderators maintain a watching brief over staffing for individual programmes. Staff induction and development are the responsibility of the college and are appraised during periodic review.

### **Faculty based-collaborations**

118 Assurance of quality of teaching staff in faculty-based collaborations is subject to the University's normal internal requirements. Teaching is delivered either by staff from the University or the partner with clear definition of roles and responsibilities. CVs of staff, including those delivering programmes on articulation arrangements are scrutinised and approved by the University.

119 Staff in partner institutions engaged in faculty-based collaborations are awarded the title of 'Honorary Tutor' by the University. This title recognises the close association with the University of the staff involved, and also provides access to University facilities, such as the library and information technology (IT) network. Staff in faculty-based collaborations participate in the University's Peer Assessment process for observation of teaching which applies to all academic staff.

120 Beyond the formal provisions for the assurance of quality of staff the University makes available an extensive programme of development activities to staff from collaborative organisations, supplementing the partners' own provision. Information on University staff development events is circulated to partners, and applications to attend are handled in the same way as for University staff. Staff from partner institutions may also participate in the University's Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education. Bespoke events in response to partner demand or issues identified by the University are provided where appropriate. Staff from partner organisations are invited to take part in discipline-specific events, for example research seminars, organised by University schools. The University also facilitates an annual Learning and Teaching conference, which is highly regarded by staff from the collaborative partners, some of whom are regular presenters at this event.

121 Staff from all partner institutions are eligible to register as part-time students for a higher degree with the University and support arrangements are developed by the University to suit the needs of each candidate and research topic.

122 From review of documentation and discussion with staff from the University and collaborative institutions the audit team formed the view that the CPSED provided an accurate account of the University's approach to assurance of the quality of teaching staff in its collaborative provision. The team concluded that the University's policies and procedures in this area were fit for purpose and operating as intended.

### **Assurance of the quality of distributed and distance methods delivered through an arrangement with a partner**

123 The University defines as Distance Teaching a collaboration where it makes arrangements for delivery of its programmes of study by its own staff, usually supported by local tutors, the premises for delivery being organised by the local partner, typically overseas. Under this arrangement the programme and modules are those of the University and the relevant school and faculty learning and teaching committees are responsible for the programme following standard University procedures for quality assurance. Responsibilities relating to distance teaching are clearly set out in the University's policy paper Collaborative Provision in Learning and Teaching Guidelines. The LTB provides guidance on the approval of programmes of distributed learning including those involving a new collaborative partner; in such cases the proposed programme is considered by the SGCP.

124 While the University delivers a range of in-house distance-learning courses its approach to distance learning in collaborative provision has been cautious being limited, at the time of the audit, to three programmes. There are also programmes delivered through a mixed-mode of part-time and distance-learning format which have proved popular for the healthcare professionals who comprise the key clientele.

125 The University has an accessible and user friendly virtual learning environment known locally as 'Bodington Common' in support of distance learning. There is also a designated distance-learning librarian which students, whom the audit team met, found helpful in support of their studies.

126 The audit team encountered some ambiguity in its discussions with staff, both in the University and in the course of its visits to partner institutions, as to the classification of the delivery mode for some collaborative arrangements. Some of the programmes did not appear in the University's list of distance-learning programmes, but it was clear to the team that the programmes contained significant distance-learning elements and were referred to as such by teaching staff; they were also described in a periodic review report as 'flexible, distance-based [and] part-time'. The team considers that this lack of clarity has the potential to lead to confusion in students and other stakeholders.

127 In meetings and documentation the audit team noted the University's plans to expand its collaborative distance learning through its engagement with the Worldwide Universities Network consortium. The audit team considers it desirable therefore that, in developing its strategy for collaborative provision, the University establish clear definitions of distance and distributed learning and the associated policy and procedural requirements. The University may find the *Code of practice Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*, published by QAA, a useful reference document in this respect.

### **Learning support resources for students in collaborative provision**

128 As with other aspects of collaborative provision the University's requirements for the provision of learning support resources differ according to the category of collaboration.

### **Accredited colleges**

129 The CPSED stated that the accredited colleges were responsible for ensuring that appropriate resources were in place for the support of their programmes. The University monitors the provision of resources through its review processes and through student satisfaction surveys. Arrangements for access to the University library are made on an individual student or college basis depending on geographical location. USRs provide oversight and advice on learning resources on an ongoing basis.

### **Affiliated institutions**

130 In the affiliated institutions provision of learning resources is also the responsibility of the individual colleges. The CPSED indicated that '[t]ypically these resources [were] highly specialist in content, and while they [might] not necessarily match those of the University, they [were] generally seen as adequate with respect to the demands of the specialist programme and the size of the institution'. All students at affiliated institutions have reading rights to the University library; the CPSED indicated that 'borrowing rights [could] be negotiated either by an individual, or by a college on behalf of its student body collectively'. The adequacy of resources is assessed during the approval process, monitored by the moderator, and revisited during periodic review.

### **Faculty-based collaborations**

131 Students on faculty-based collaborations are students of the University, and as such have access to all the facilities available including full access to the library and IT facilities. The University has a small number of faculty-based collaborations taught at a distance from the University for which individual arrangements for access to resources are made according to the nature of the partnership. In meetings with the audit team students from faculty-based collaborations confirmed that they had full access to the University library and IT facilities.

132 From review of documentation and meetings with staff and students the audit team confirmed that the CPSED provided an accurate account of the University's approach to the assurance of the adequacy of learning resources in its collaborative provision. The team concluded that the arrangements for the monitoring and oversight of learning support resources for collaborative provision by partner institutions were generally working well, as confirmed by staff and students whom the team met in the course of its visits to partner institutions.

### **Academic guidance and personal support for students in collaborative provision**

133 The University's requirements for personal and academic support for students studying for its awards through collaborative arrangements differ according to the type of collaborative arrangement.

#### **Accredited colleges**

134 The CPSED stated that in the accredited colleges arrangements for personal and academic tutoring were the responsibility of the individual college but that they had been considered by the University during the accreditation process. The University gathers feedback from students on academic and personal support as part of periodic review and, more informally, through meetings.

#### **Affiliated institutions**

135 The CPSED emphasised the University's recognition that academic guidance and personal support were important to the quality of the student experience and the expectation that the affiliated institutions have 'appropriate' systems in place. Students at the affiliated institutions receive tutorial support from college staff. In meetings with students, the audit team heard these tutors referred to variously as 'year tutors' or 'course tutors'. In meetings with the audit team, the students confirmed they had adequate means through which personal and academic issues could be raised and addressed.

136 The University appraises the academic and personal support systems for students at the affiliated institutions through its internal review and monitoring procedures and through consideration of the reports of external reviews. The CPSED noted that 'in general, reviews [had] concluded that student support services [were] highly effective and that the relatively small and intimate environment provided for students [was] an asset...'. There is also a requirement that moderators meet students at least annually to discuss their experience, including the support and guidance afforded to them.

#### **Faculty-based collaborations**

137 The CPSED stated that all students on faculty-based collaborations had access to a personal tutor 'according to the practice in the particular school concerned'. There are special arrangements for students studying off-campus to ensure that they have access to local staff who can handle urgent issues; such students also have contact points in the University where any issues can be raised directly

138 The University has a number of articulation arrangements which operate under the category of faculty-based collaborations. Schools and departments provide in-country briefings to prepare students for transfer to the UK and to the University, including information on scholarships, accommodation and registration processes. After the students arrive at the University there are local induction processes which depend on the type of articulation. In addition the University's International Centre provides a range of support services during an orientation fortnight, including 'meet and greet' schemes at local airports, information sessions and social events. Students on articulation arrangements are allocated to a personal tutor who is normally responsible for all the articulation students within the school to ensure consistency of support. In meetings with the audit team students who had progressed to the University from a partner institution overseas confirmed that they had received good support and effective induction both prior to and after arrival at the University.

139 The CPSED did not offer an explicit evaluation of the University's overall approach to the provision of academic and personal support and guidance in its collaborative provision but indicated the University's confidence in the approach obtaining in each type of arrangement, based on the outcomes of monitoring and internal and external review processes. In meetings with the audit team, students confirmed that they received appropriate levels of support, including specialist support, for example in the area of dyslexia. The team found that arrangements in the accredited colleges and affiliated institutions met the University's requirements with small cohort groupings enhancing their effectiveness. Students from faculty-based collaborations also expressed satisfaction with their access to personal and academic support and guidance through the University's normal internal procedures. The team concluded that the University's procedures for the academic support and guidance of students in its collaborative provision were fit for purpose, operating as intended and consonant with the relevant precepts of the *Code of practice*. The team considered the University's approach to its articulation arrangements, in particular the preparation of students for transfer to the UK to be a feature of good practice in the University's management of its collaborative provision.

#### Thematic enquiries

140 The audit team did not select any areas for thematic enquiry.

### **Section 3: The collaborative provision audit investigations: published information**

#### **The experience of students in collaborative provision of the published information available to them**

141 The CPSED stated that the University considered it appropriate that students on validated programmes identify with the delivering institution rather than the

awarding body. Accordingly, with the exception of research students, all students on validated programmes receive information about their programmes of study from their institutions, rather than the University. The University's Guidance for Validated Programmes contains approved wording to describe accurately the nature of the relationship with the University. Prospectuses from the accredited colleges and affiliated institutions are forwarded to QMEU annually and in the case of the latter are submitted to the college panels for formal review.

142 Colleges are required to integrate information on the University's appeals procedures into material given to students. The audit team reviewed a range of handbooks and module materials provided to students in the accredited colleges and affiliated institutions and found them to be comprehensive and in alignment with the relevant guidance in the *Code of practice*.

143 The University confirms the accuracy of published material in accredited colleges and affiliated institutions through monitoring and review processes and more directly through meetings with students. In meetings with staff of the University and its collaborative partners, the audit team found the processes for approving publicity material to be well understood. The CPSED described an instance of a misleading representation of the nature of the relationship between an institution overseas and one of the University's collaborative partners and of action taken to correct the relevant publicity material. There was clear evidence of vigilance in this area to ensure the accuracy of such material published overseas. Students from affiliated institutions whom the audit team met reported information provided on such matters as complaints procedures, assessment and marking criteria to be comprehensive and helpful although the terminology employed was not always 'student friendly'.

144 Students on faculty-based collaborative programmes receive the same information as other students of the University. The report of

the institutional audit in 2004 found that while students considered school module and programme handbooks to be helpful, the University's Taught Student Handbook was lacking in clarity and too lengthy; the institutional audit team formed the view that the student experience of published information would be enhanced if the clarity of information available was reviewed. The present audit team noted that the University had undertaken a review of the Taught Student Handbook resulting in a revised version being issued for the 2005-06 academic year. In meetings with the audit team, students on faculty-based collaborations indicated that they received comprehensive, reliable and accurate information and were confident that they could access information regarding regulations, complaints and appeals.

145 The CPSED stated that award certificates for accredited colleges were prepared according to a University template which made it clear that the student had undertaken a programme of study at the college rather than at the University. Colleges are responsible for the preparation of transcripts to a format agreed by the University.

146 Award certificates for students at affiliated institutions are prepared by QMEU for conferment at a degree ceremony organised by the University. The colleges produce transcripts which are forwarded to the University. The CPSED indicated that the University planned to introduce a common template for transcripts.

147 The Internal Review of the Institutional Arrangements for Collaborative Activity concluded that publicity and recruitment materials needed to be more closely monitored than was then the case, although it did not find any indication of poor practice. On the basis of the documentation available and meetings with staff and students the audit team reached the view that there were adequate mechanisms in place to ensure the accuracy of the information provided to students in the University's collaborative provision.

### **Reliability, accuracy and completeness of published information on collaborative provision leading to the awarding institution's awards**

148 The University is required to make available on the Teaching Quality Information (TQI) site summaries of external examiners' reports and a programme specification for all awards made in its name. The University's standard template for external examiners' reports includes a section for a summary of strengths or distinctive features of individual programmes for external audiences. With effect from the academic year 2005-06, the University is responsible for publishing TQI data from the affiliated institutions and had made appropriate arrangements for posting the relevant information once the relevant site becomes available. The accredited colleges are responsible for publishing their own data independently.

149 The audit team concluded that the University was aware of its obligations in relation to the reliability, accuracy and completeness of published information relating to awards offered through collaborative provision and was moving in an appropriate manner towards fulfilling its obligations in this respect.

# Findings

## Findings

150 A collaborative provision audit of the University of Leeds (the University) was undertaken from 21 to 24 March 2006. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the programmes offered by the University through collaborative arrangements with partner organisations, and on the discharge of the University's responsibility as an awarding body in assuring the academic standards of its awards made through collaborative arrangements.

### **The effectiveness of the implementation of the awarding institution's approach to managing its collaborative provision**

151 The University places each of its collaborative partnerships in one of the following three categories:

- Accredited Colleges
- Affiliated Institutions
- Faculty-based collaborations.

The approach to the management of the provision is determined by this categorisation.

152 The Learning and Teaching Board, acting on behalf of the Senate, is the body responsible for maintaining oversight of all the University's arrangements for the quality of its provision and securing the maintenance of standards for taught awards. The Graduate Board fulfils similar responsibilities for research provision. A Standing Group on Collaborative Provision (SGCP) supports the Learning and Teaching Board by considering strategic and wider operational issues concerned with collaborative provision and the initial approval and ongoing monitoring of faculty-based collaborations.

153 In November 2004, the University undertook a periodic review of its institutional arrangements for collaborative activity. The report from the review defined the purpose of the review as being to 'consider the continued effectiveness of the activity, the efficacy and robustness of the quality management

procedures to assure and maintain standards, and the provision for the continued enhancement of the quality of the student experience'. The review evaluated the different types of collaborative arrangement in the context of the University's strategic planning and wider aspirations. The review concluded that faculty-based collaborations represented the form of relationship most appropriate to furthering the University's strategic direction, resulting in a decision to discontinue validation activity for the affiliated institutions. At the time of the audit the University was developing a revised strategy for collaborative provision in the light of the findings of the review.

154 Following the periodic review of collaborative provision in 2004, the University revised its committee structure for the oversight of its collaborative provision. The new structure was designed to streamline systems and define responsibilities for strategic development and risk assessment. The Quality Management and Enhancement Unit (QMEU) plays a pivotal role in the quality management of collaborative provision, providing a central point of reference for all quality matters within and outwith the University. The audit team noted favourably the significant support provided by QMEU to those involved in the management and delivery of collaborative provision.

### **Accredited colleges**

155 The two accredited colleges are mature higher education institutions with which the University has a long history of collaboration; at the time of the audit one of the colleges had recently gained its own taught degree awarding powers. In the accredited colleges authority for quality assurance matters is largely devolved within a framework agreed by the University. Students in accredited institutions are students of the college rather than the University and follow programmes devised by the colleges but approved by University as appropriate to lead to one of its awards. The agreements cover both taught and research degrees.

156 Accreditation is a recognition by the University that the partner has a suitable infrastructure for the development, delivery and

quality assurance of University-approved programmes. There is a strategic framework that ensures that ultimate responsibility for both academic quality and standards lies with the University. The University monitors the provision through active University representation on the key college bodies for the maintenance and enhancement of quality and standards, such as the Board of Governors, the Academic Board and its committees and subject-based departmental committees. University Subject Representatives (USR) are University staff appointed by the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) who act as the principle point of contact at a subject level, including involvement with examination boards. USRs report annually to the University's Learning and Teaching Board. The accredited colleges also report annually to the University drawing on periodic and annual review; accreditation, external audit and review reports, including those from professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs); annual reports from USRs and external examiner reports. Reports from the accredited colleges are considered at meetings of senior staff from both institutions.

157 The audit team concluded that the University's framework for the operation of its collaborative arrangements with the accredited colleges was well defined and fit for purpose. From review of documentation and meetings with staff and students, the team came to the view that the systems were implemented rigorously and provided for explicit division of operational responsibility for the quality of learning opportunities with the University retaining ultimate responsibility for academic quality and standards.

### **Affiliated institutions**

158 The affiliated institutions are specialist further and higher education institutions. At the time of the audit there were five such arrangements whereby the University validated named programmes operated by the colleges. While the affiliated institutions have their own mechanisms for quality assurance, the University maintains a closer degree of involvement in quality assurance processes than

is the case with the accredited colleges. Students in affiliated institutions are students of the college rather than the University.

159 There is a well-developed strategy for the maintenance of quality and standards of University courses offered by the affiliated institutions. The University Affiliated Institutions Learning and Teaching Committee (AILTC) is responsible for oversight of quality and standards in the affiliated institutions and reports to the Learning and Teaching Board. The membership of the AILTC includes senior staff representatives from the University and the affiliated institutions and a student representative from each of the affiliated institutions. For each affiliated institution there is a college panel, composed of staff from the University and the college institution and a further member external to both institutions. College panels are charged with detailed oversight of arrangements for validated programmes and report to the AILTC. In each college, the University also appoints moderators who are University staff whose primary function is to monitor the quality of the programmes and academic standards. They are members of the relevant college panel, to which they submit annual reports which are also considered by the AILTC. At the time of the audit the University had recently introduced a requirement that moderators meet annually with students in the colleges.

160 The audit team found that the approach to the delivery of programmes through collaborative arrangements with the affiliated institutions provided the University with the requisite assurance of academic quality and standards, while accommodating the variety of provision and institutions. From review of documentation and meetings with staff and students, the team concluded that the arrangements were operating effectively and as intended.

### **Faculty-based collaborations**

161 Faculty-based collaborations either facilitate access to some of the University's own programmes or provide specialist input to programmes. All of the University's overseas collaborative arrangements fall into this category.

While many are devised and delivered jointly by the University and the partner institution, some are designed and delivered entirely by the partner with support from a cognate school or faculty. The students are registered as students of the University and have the same access to facilities as students based at the University.

162 Faculty-based collaborations are managed by schools of the University and are monitored by the relevant faculty learning and teaching committee in accordance with internal policies and procedures. Although the University defines a framework for the management of faculty-based collaborations, the audit team observed some variation in aspects of its implementation with diverse arrangements and lines of accountability in the faculties. There is a designated member of University academic staff acting as a link person and the title and role of such individuals varies according to the nature of the collaboration. The audit team noted the significant role played by the link persons in supporting the day-to-day operation of programmes and formed the view that a clear definition of the responsibilities associated with the role, which would apply across the institution, would provide consistency of approach and mitigate the potential for overreliance on individual commitment. The team noted that there was no provision or requirement for meetings between the University and staff from the collaborative institution at institutional level to discuss the operation of the partnership.

163 In coming to its conclusions the audit team drew extensively on the report of the University's Internal Review of the Institutional Arrangements for Collaborative Activity and the consequent action planning. The team considered the rigour and candour of the periodic review of collaborative provision which supported the evaluative reappraisal of the University's approach to its collaborative arrangements to represent a feature of good practice in the University's approach to oversight of its collaborative provision. The team concluded that the report of this review, and the follow-up report, had provided the University with a clear basis for the development of a revised strategy for the future direction of its involvement in

collaborative provision. The team considered that these documents exemplified the open and evaluative approach adopted by the University in relation to its collaborative provision

164 The audit team reviewed documentation relating to the exit strategies for the provision in affiliated institutions and to the migration strategy for the transfer of taught degree awarding powers to one of the accredited colleges. The team also discussed the University's approach with staff and students from the University and the colleges and came to the view that the arrangements for the support of collaborative institutions in implementation of changes to the basis of relationships with the University were a feature of good practice in the University's management of its collaborative provision: the approach is characterised by structured forward planning and a primary concern to protect the interests of students registered for awards of the University.

165 The audit team gave consideration to the implications for the University's central oversight of its collaborative provision of the move to extend faculty-based collaborations which are largely managed at faculty level. Given the potential strategic importance of such arrangements, the team considered that periodic meetings of central staff from both parties to the arrangement would provide for institutional level appraisal of the provision and early identification of possible difficulties in the operation of the arrangement. Accordingly, the team advises the University to review its approach to institutional level involvement in faculty-based collaborations to establish a requirement for periodic meetings of staff at the most senior level from both institutions to consider formally the operation of the partnership arrangement. In this context the team also considers it desirable, as the University moves to expand its portfolio of faculty-based collaborations, that it reviews its existing policies and procedures to: ensure that they remain fit for purpose; define the roles and responsibilities of all staff involved in the arrangements; and to secure continued effective central oversight of the operation of such arrangements.

### **The effectiveness of the awarding institution's procedures for assuring the quality of educational provision in its collaborative provision**

166 Following the periodic review of collaborative provision in 2004 the University revised its committee structure for the oversight of its collaborative provision. The new structure was designed to streamline systems and define responsibilities for strategic development and risk assessment.

167 The Pro-Vice Chancellor for Learning and Teaching takes a lead in deciding whether a proposed collaboration is in the strategic interest of the University, consulting the senior managers from the Vice Chancellor's Executive Group as necessary. Institutional implications of the arrangement are considered by the SGCP concurrently with discussion of academic issues by the relevant school and faculty.

168 Proposals for articulation arrangements which allow guaranteed direct entry onto specified University programmes, are subject to the normal institutional approval processes. Overseas articulation arrangements must advance the University's international strategic objectives. Unlike other international collaborations, they do not need the approval of University Council, but must be endorsed by the Pro-Vice Chancellor for International Affairs. The audit team noted that the University had conducted a review of its articulation arrangements which resulted in an evaluative report, identifying strengths and limitations of the University's current policies and procedures. The team considered the conduct and outcomes of this review to provide evidence of the University's careful approach to the operation of its articulation arrangements.

169 There is a detailed Collaborative Proposal Form for recording details of proposed collaborative ventures and designed to collate all the information necessary to assess the nature, management and potential risk of the proposed collaboration. Normally, a site visit is undertaken by representatives of the SGCP; where the venture is deemed to be potentially

of higher risk a working party may be convened to undertake a more detailed examination of relevant issues.

170 Due diligence enquiries are undertaken by the University's Legal Department which has devised a questionnaire to obtain information about the legal and financial standing of the proposed collaborative institution. A memorandum of agreement is devised which specifies a framework of expectations for the particular features and risks of a collaborative programme. The self-evaluation document for collaborative provision (CPSED) indicated that memoranda specified the individual conditions for the operation of individual arrangements in accordance with the University's typology of collaborations.

171 The audit team found the processes for the selection and approval of partners to be robust. Previously there was no standard memorandum of agreement or template thereof, resulting in considerable variation in the content and coverage of the partnership agreements examined during the audit visit. The University now has a standard template for agreements which provides additional assurance of consistency of approach in the operation of collaborative arrangements. The University operates rigorous mechanisms for collaborative programme approval and review and re-approval. The audit team reviewed documentation relating to approval procedures and found it to be comprehensive and helpful to the University in defining working frameworks and risk factors. In meetings with staff of the University and its partners, the team encountered clear evidence of an understanding of the procedures which are set out in comprehensive documentation made available via the QMEU website. The team concluded that the information provided in the CPSED about the approval of collaborative arrangements was accurate and reliable and that procedures were in alignment with the relevant precepts of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)* published by QAA.

172 There are different arrangements for programme approval depending on the category of collaborative arrangement.

173 In the accredited colleges proposals are considered by a committee which must include representation from the University; new programme proposals must be considered by the USR and be subjected to external review before proceeding to formal approval. Recommendations for the introduction of new and revised programmes are considered by the Learning and Teaching Board.

174 The University's decision to withdraw from all its affiliated arrangements means that no further programmes will be considered for approval but the University did proceed with the consideration of proposals that were at the early stages of approval prior to the University's periodic review of collaborative provision. Approvals operated in accordance with the University's Guidelines for Validated Programmes whereby college panels are responsible for considering the detailed programme proposals. The team considered the decision to complete these approvals to be evidence of the University's careful approach to the implementation of changes to the basis of relationships with its partner institutions.

175 Programme approval in faculty-based collaboration is undertaken by school and faculty teaching and learning committees in accordance with the University's own internal procedures for programme approval.

176 A system of annual programme review is in place for all collaborative programmes. In accredited colleges this feeds into the College's annual report. In the affiliated institutions the college panels consider annual review reports, reporting into the AILTC. School and faculty teaching and learning committees at the University have oversight of annual programme review in faculty-based collaborations. Consideration of annual programme reviews has recently been complemented by the introduction of annual 'health checks' that consist of discussions between senior University representatives and programme staff.

177 The University has an established system of quinquennial periodic review for the accredited colleges and affiliated institutions with provision for reviews to be brought forward in special circumstances. All periodic review panels include external representation.

178 The University has recently revised its approach to the periodic review of faculty-based collaborations. Previously these had been considered within the University's internal periodic reviews but the University identified a need for more explicit consideration of provision offered through faculty-based collaborations. At the time of the audit the University had almost completed the first cycle of the periodic reviews for faculty-based collaborations.

179 The University's own internal systems identified a need for more structured monitoring of action in response to periodic review. Accordingly the University has introduced a follow-up event for periodic reviews to ensure that recommendations are addressed and implemented effectively.

180 The audit team viewed documentation for approvals, annual monitoring and periodic review in all categories of collaborative provision and concluded that the University's systems were robust and operating as intended.

181 The University requires all partner institutions to have mechanisms for collecting and acting upon student feedback, gathered at module and course level through questionnaires. Students, whom the audit team met, confirmed that action was taken in response to issues raised in student evaluations. Feedback gathered in the accredited colleges and affiliated institutions is reviewed by the USRs and moderators and feeds into annual and periodic review processes. At the time of the audit, the University had recently introduced a requirement that moderators meet students at least annually to discuss matters of interest to the student body. Moderators report to AILTC on issues relating to the general quality, standards, and educational experience of the students.

182 The University does not have a standard approach to collecting feedback from employers of students from its collaborative provision. The accredited colleges routinely gather such information for their own purposes but there is no requirement for it to be passed to the University. Some faculty-based collaborations are supported by industrial advisory panels that include members from local employers, trades unions and students. The University's collaborative provision in the areas of health also has employer panels.

183 At the time of the audit the University did not collect information from graduates from its collaborative provision in accredited colleges and affiliated institutions although this is collected by the partner institutions for its own purposes. Feedback from graduates from faculty-based collaborations is collected through the University's standard procedures.

184 The audit team found that the University's procedures for gathering student feedback on provision offered through collaborative provision were fit for purpose. In meetings with the audit team some students were unsure about how the questionnaires were considered but they were satisfied that action was taken in response to issues that they raised. The University should ensure that students are aware of the processes used to analyse and act on student views collected through module and course questionnaires.

185 The CPSED did not provide any information about the University's approach to gathering feedback from employers and graduates in its collaborative provision. There was evidence that feedback from employers was gained through various advisory panels at the course level. The University may wish to consider whether it could make more systematic use of information gained through such bodies and also from graduates from its partner institutions in its management of its collaborative provision.

186 Arrangements for representation of students in the University's partner organisations differ according to the type of

collaborative arrangement involved. Students in the accredited colleges and affiliated institutions are members of the individual colleges, rather than the University and are represented locally on college committees. The University Students' Union represents the general student interest on Learning and Teaching Board and Senate but does not have any formal relationship with the college student bodies. The AILTC includes a student representative from each of the affiliated institutions. Students enrolled on programmes delivered through faculty-based collaborations are students of the University and are represented through the normal provision for in-house students, including representation through University Students' Union on central University committees.

187 From reading of documentation and discussion with student representatives from the University and partner institutions the audit team concluded that the University's arrangements for student representation were appropriate to its overall approach to collaborative provision and were operating as intended.

188 The University has different degrees of involvement in staffing at its collaborative partners depending on the category of collaboration. Information on University staff development events is circulated routinely to partners. Staff from partner institutions may also participate in the University's Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education.

189 The University receives an annual update on academic staff in post at each of the accredited colleges. University staff may participate in college staff appointment panels where senior posts are involved, but in recognition of confidence in the stringency of local procedures the University is not routinely involved in staff appointments at the colleges. Staff induction and development are the responsibility of the accredited colleges with the effectiveness of these activities being considered during monitoring of the accreditation agreement.

190 Appointment of teaching staff in the affiliated institutions is the responsibility of the institution but the University retains an interest in recognition of the need to confirm the calibre of staff involved in delivery. Staff curriculum vitae (CVs) are considered by the University at the beginning of each collaborative relationship and thereafter, collaborative partners are required to forward the CVs of new staff involved in the collaborative provision on appointment. Moderators maintain a watching brief over staffing for individual programmes. Staff induction and development are the responsibility of the College. Mechanisms for its delivery are scrutinised during periodic review.

191 Assurance of quality of teaching staff in faculty-based collaborations is subject to the University's normal internal requirements. CVs of staff, including those delivering programmes on articulation arrangements are scrutinised and approved by the University.

192 The audit team viewed procedural documentation relating to the University's assurance of the quality of teaching staff in its collaborative provision and saw evidence of staff development activity in support of course delivery. The team concluded that the University's approach in this area was secure and took account of the characteristics of the different types of collaboration.

193 The University defines as Distance Teaching a collaboration where it makes arrangements for delivery of its programmes of study by its own staff, usually supported by local tutors, the premises for delivery being organised by the local partner, typically overseas. Under this arrangement the programme and modules are those of the University and the relevant school and faculty learning and teaching committees are responsible for the programme following standard University procedures for quality assurance. Responsibilities relating to distance teaching are clearly set out in the University's policy paper Collaborative Provision in Learning and Teaching Guidelines. The Learning and Teaching Board provides guidance on the

approval of programmes of distributed learning including those involving a new collaborative partner; in such cases the proposed programme is considered by the SGCP.

194 While the University delivers a range of in-house distance-learning courses its approach to distance learning in collaborative provision has been cautious being limited at the time of the audit, to three programmes. There are also programmes delivered through a mixed-mode of part-time and distance-learning format which have proved popular for the healthcare professionals who comprise the key clientele.

195 The audit team encountered some ambiguity in its discussions with staff, both in the University and in the course of its visits to partner institutions, as to the classification of the delivery mode for some collaborative arrangements. Some of the programmes did not appear in the University's list of distance-learning programmes but it was clear to the team that the programmes contained significant distance-learning elements and were referred to as such by teaching staff; they were also described in a periodic review report as 'flexible, distance-based [and] part-time'. The team considers that this lack of clarity has the potential to lead to confusion in students and other stakeholders.

196 In meetings and documentation the audit team noted the University's plans to expand its collaborative distance learning through its engagement with the Worldwide Universities Network consortium. The audit team considers it desirable therefore that, in developing its strategy for collaborative provision, the University establish clear definitions of distance and distributed learning and the associated policy and procedural requirements. The University may find the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)* published by QAA a useful reference document in this respect.

197 In accordance with the University's overall approach to its collaborative arrangements, the requirements for the provision of learning

resources are governed by the category of provision. The accredited colleges are responsible for ensuring that appropriate learning resources are in place for the support of the programmes of study. The University monitors the provision of the resources through its review processes and through student satisfaction surveys. In the affiliated institutions provision of learning resources is also the responsibility of the individual colleges. The adequacy of resources is assessed during the approval process, monitored by the moderator, and revisited during periodic review.

198 Students on faculty-based collaborations are students of the University, and as such have access to all the facilities available including full access to the library and information technology (IT) facilities. The University has a small number of faculty-based collaborations taught at a distance from the University for which individual arrangements for access to resources are made according to the nature of the partnership.

199 From review of documentation and meetings with staff and students the audit team confirmed that the CPSED was an accurate account of the University's approach to the assurance of the adequacy of learning resources in its collaborative provision.

200 The University's requirements for personal and academic support for students studying for its awards through collaborative arrangements differ according to the type of collaborative arrangement. In the accredited colleges arrangements for personal and academic tutoring are the responsibility of the individual colleges but were considered by the University during the accreditation process. The University gathers feedback from students on academic and personal support in the course of its periodic review process. Students at the affiliated institutions receive tutorial support from college staff and the University appraises the academic and personal support systems through its internal review and monitoring procedures and through consideration of the reports of external reviews. Students from faculty-based collaborations have access to a personal tutor 'according to the practice in the particular school concerned'.

201 The University has a number of articulation arrangements which operate under the category of faculty-based collaborations. Schools and departments provide in-country briefings to prepare students for transfer to the UK and to the University, including information on scholarships, accommodation and registration processes. After the students arrive at the University there are local induction processes which depend on the type of articulation. In addition the University's International Centre provides a range of support services during an orientation fortnight, including 'meet and greet' schemes at local airports, information sessions and social events. Students on articulation arrangements are allocated to a personal tutor who is normally responsible for all the articulation students within the school to ensure consistency of support. In meetings with the audit team students who had progressed to the University from a partner institution overseas confirmed that they had received good support and effective induction both prior to and after arrival at the University. The audit team considered the University's preparation of students for transfer to the UK to be a feature of good practice in the University's approach to its collaborative provision.

202 In the CPSED the University expressed its confidence in its policies and procedures for the assurance of the quality of its educational provision, citing the growing evidence base from internal and external reviews endorsing its approach.

203 The University has made major strategic changes in its approach to collaborative provision since the institutional audit in 2004. The audit team found that the University had expended considerable effort and care into the continuing assurance of quality during the changes to the basis of its relationships with a number of collaborative institutions.

204 The audit team concluded that the University's procedures for the academic support and guidance of students in its collaborative provision were fit for purpose, operating as intended and consonant with the relevant precepts of the *Code of practice*.

205 The audit team found that the University's procedures for the initial approval of collaborative partnerships and ongoing monitoring and review processes were fit for purpose, operating as intended and were consonant with the relevant precepts of the *Code of practice*. The team noted that the University placed emphasis and value on the contribution of external members to its management of collaborative provision both in approval and review and also in the ongoing stewardship of the provision, as evidenced by the use of external representatives on college panels.

206 From review of documentation and meetings with staff and students, the audit team formed the view that the University's procedures for assuring the quality of educational provision in its collaborative arrangements were effective and responsive to the different types of partnership arrangement. In particular, sound arrangements were in place to protect the integrity of awards and the interests of students where these partnership arrangements were to be discontinued. The team concluded that broad confidence could reasonably be placed in the present and likely future capacity of the University to satisfy itself that the learning opportunities offered to students through its collaborative arrangements were managed effectively and met its requirements.

### **The effectiveness of the awarding institution's procedures for safeguarding the standards of its awards gained through collaborative provision**

207 The University describes itself as using a framework of policies, strategies and procedures to assure the standards of its awards which apply both internally and to collaborative provision. In establishing this framework, careful attention has been paid to external reference points. A single set of Ordinances and Curricular Regulations and a common set of Rules of Award apply to both internal and collaborative programmes offered at the University and through collaborative arrangements. The University has established a common degree classification scheme for all

undergraduate programmes which was reviewed and confirmed after two years of operation by a group including representation from the accredited colleges and the affiliated institutions.

208 The audit team found that the University takes the view that involvement of its own staff in the work of collaborative partners not only facilitates understanding and communication in both directions, but is a major plank in ensuring the standards of its awards. University representatives are involved in all levels of the work of its partners. For example, there is representation on both the boards of governors and the academic boards of the accredited colleges. The key individuals involved in the collaborative work of the accredited colleges are the USRs. Their role in assuring standards includes, inter alia, attending assessment boards. Similarly, University moderators are involved in the assessment processes of the affiliated institutions and link tutors play such a role for faculty-based collaborations. Typically, they may be involved in second-marking or the setting of examination papers.

209 Statistical data on student admission, progression and achievement are collected by the University for all types of collaborative programmes. Data are included in the annual reports from the accredited colleges and USRs are expected to comment on trends or concerns, including a comparison with cognate provision at the University. The requirements for statistical information from the affiliated institutions are set down by the University, which requires data at both the programme and module levels. Data on provision at the affiliated institutions are considered by the college panels which report their findings to the AILTC. For faculty-based collaborations module and programme data are compiled in accordance with the requirements for the University's internal programmes. The data are included in annual review reports which are considered by faculty learning and teaching committees, which report thereon to the Learning and Teaching Board.

210 Central University consideration of statistical data is coordinated through the QMEU. Comprehensive statistical datasets are collected for all collaborative provision and there is consistency of approach in data collection. Analysis of statistical information is encouraged at all levels of monitoring and review and informs both programme approval and re-approval. From review of documentation and discussion with staff, the audit team learnt that the University seeks continually to improve its use of data, specifically through the development of performance indicators. The team considered that the process of evaluation of statistical information provided an effective aid to the maintenance of academic standards for all types of collaborative provision.

211 The University's approval of the appointment of external examiners, their route for reporting and the process of considering the reports depends on the type of collaboration. The accredited colleges make appointments of external examiners using University approved procedures. The University also approves their *modus operandi*. External examiners report to the accredited colleges but may also report directly to the University should they feel this to be necessary. The external examiners' reports are fully considered by appropriate committees of both the accredited colleges and the University. External examiners for provision in the affiliated institutions are appointed by and report directly to the University. The external examiner reports are scrutinised in the University and affiliated institutions through the committee system. The University has a dedicated Affiliated Institutions Examination Committee which to ensure consistency of approach and equitable treatment of students across the affiliated institutions. External examining arrangements for faculty-based collaborations are identical to those of University-based programmes as described in the report of the institutional audit in 2004. The audit team found all external examining arrangements to be rigorous and fit for purpose and in alignment with the relevant precepts of the *Code of practice*.

212 A range of the University's collaborative provision has been subject to audit and review by QAA, including an overseas collaborative link, reviews of validated programmes at subject level and institutional audit of collaborating institutions. The University was fully involved in preparations for the overseas audit and the institutional audits and was also supportively involved in the preparations by one of the accredited colleges for its successful application for taught-degree awarding powers but until latterly the University's involvement in subject level reviews has been less comprehensive. Following consideration by the University of the outcomes of a QAA academic review of a University-validated course provided by one of the affiliated institutions, it thus is now fully engaged in all stages of preparation for audit and review of its collaborative provision. The audit team reached the view that the University exercises appropriate central oversight of audits and reviews of its collaborative provision by external agencies in the context of assurance of the security of the academic standards of its awards.

213 A number of collaborative programmes are subject to review and accreditation by PSRBs and the University is involved in preparation for PSRB visits. The ensuing reports are considered by the University's Standing Group on Review to ensure that good practice can be disseminated and trends identified.

214 The audit team found that the CPSED represented an accurate account of the University's approach to safeguarding the standards of its awards gained through collaborative provision and that the University's confidence in its policies and procedures in this respect was justified. The audit team found that the body of evidence provided by the University in respect of its approach to safeguarding the standards of its awards was sufficiently strong as to support a judgement that broad confidence could reasonably be placed in the soundness of the University's present and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards made through collaborative arrangements.

### **The awarding institution's use of the Academic Infrastructure in the context of its collaborative provision**

215 The CPSED stated that the University had assessed its practice against the *Code of practice* and The Framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) and expressed the University's confidence that its approach to collaborative provision was in 'general accord' with the relevant precepts. The approach taken by the University has been to develop and implement policies and procedures so that partner institutions fulfilling the University's requirements will also meet the expectations of the Academic Infrastructure. The University has provided a range of staff development activities for its partner institutions to support the alignment of its collaborative programmes with the Academic Infrastructure. The University maintains oversight of the practical application of the Academic Infrastructure in its collaborative provision through its monitoring and review processes and the work of the college panels. From review of documentation and discussion with staff, the audit team concluded that the University was making effective use of the Academic Infrastructure in its management of its collaborative provision.

### **The utility of the CPSED as an illustration of the awarding institution's capacity to reflect upon its own strengths and limitations in collaborative provision, and to act on these to enhance quality and safeguard academic standards**

216 The CPSED provided a clear description of the University's procedures and processes for managing collaborative provision. The document was well-written and easy to follow, despite the complexity of the arrangements described. The audit team was also provided with a copy of the report of the Periodic Review of Collaborative Provision undertaken by the University in 2004 which demonstrated a clear and substantial institutional capacity for self-examination.

217 The documentation relating to the Periodic Review of Collaborative Provision was a valuable adjunct to the CPSED. The two documents taken together provide a comprehensive and thorough overview of the University's management of and strategy for collaborative provision.

218 The CPSED described a robust approach to monitoring the quality of courses delivered by the University's collaborative partners. The audit confirmed that the processes set out in the CPSED were well understood and observed. The University has demonstrated in both the CPSED and the process and reporting of the Periodic Review of Collaborative Provision that it has the capacity to evaluate effectively its own procedures and to intervene and when necessary make substantive changes as required to secure academic quality and standards.

### **Commentary on the institution's intentions for the enhancement of its management of quality and academic standards in its collaborative provision**

219 The CPSED claimed that the University was continually seeking ways in which it could formalise 'the mechanisms for enhancement of practice in relation to learning and teaching'. The CPSED went on to cite a number of means by which the University disseminated good practice, by way of example through the publication of the learning and teaching bulletin and the annual Learning and Teaching Conference which is open to and attended by staff from partner institutions. The CPSED signalled the University's intention to link approaches to enhancement outside its formal processes in a more systematic way to the outcomes of reviews to feed into the development of the University's strategy in this area.

220 The AILTC has replaced the former Affiliated Colleges Forum which was considered by the university to provide an enhancement function in consulting on University practice and allowing representatives from affiliated institutions to put forward suggestions on

learning and teaching policy from their own institutions. The AILTC agenda includes a standing item, led by the partner institutions, on 'enhancement' and the audit team saw evidence of the effectiveness of this approach in sharing innovative practice. The team concluded that the AILTC provided a secure forum to ensure that enhancement matters would not be overlooked as the provision was transferred to other providers.

### **Reliability of information provided by the awarding institution on its collaborative provision**

221 The University has strict protocols concerning the description of the nature of its collaborative provision in advertising and promotional material and the audit team saw clear evidence of effective action when these were breached. The University's Guidance for Validated Programmes contains approved wording to describe accurately the nature of the relationship with the University. Prospectuses from the accredited colleges and affiliated institutions are forwarded to QMEU annually and in the case of the latter are submitted to the college panels for formal review.

222 With the exception of research students, all students on validated programmes receive information from their institutions, rather than the University. The University confirms the accuracy of published material in accredited colleges and affiliated institutions through monitoring and review processes and more directly through meetings with students. In meetings with staff of the University and its collaborative partners, the audit team found the processes for approving publicity material to be well understood.

223 Draft student handbooks are included in the documentation required for the approval of new collaborative programmes of study. Material provided for students in support of their learning is monitored as part of the periodic review process. The exception to this general principle is in the case of research degrees where information on registration,

regulations and examination arrangements is published annually. It is the responsibility of the relevant schools of the University to provide information for students on faculty-based collaborations.

224 On the basis of the documentation available and meetings with staff and students the audit team reached the view that there were adequate mechanisms in place to ensure that information provided to students in the University's collaborative provision was both complete and accurate.

225 The University is required to make available on the Teaching Quality Information (TQI) site summaries of external examiners reports and a programme specification for all awards made in its name. The University's standard template for external examiners' reports includes a section for a summary of strengths or distinctive features of individual programmes for external audiences. With effect from the academic year 2005-06, the University has been responsible for publishing TQI data from the affiliated institutions and has made appropriate arrangements for posting the relevant information once the relevant site becomes available. The accredited colleges are responsible for publishing their own data independently.

226 The audit team concluded that the University was aware of its obligations in relation to the reliability, accuracy and completeness of published information relating to awards offered through collaborative provision and was moving in an appropriate manner towards fulfilling its obligations in this respect.

227 The audit team also concluded that reliance could reasonably be placed on the accuracy, integrity, completeness and frankness of the information that the University publishes and authorises to be published about the quality of the programmes offered through collaborative provision that lead to its awards and about the standards of those awards.

### **Features of good practice**

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

- i the arrangements for the support of collaborative institutions in implementation of changes to the basis of relationships with the University: the approach is characterised by structured forward planning and a primary concern to protect the interests of students registered for awards of the University (paragraphs 36, 59)
- ii the inclusion of 'enhancement', as a standing item led by the partner institutions, on the agenda for the Affiliated Institutions Learning and Teaching Committee thereby promoting systematic identification and dissemination of good practice (paragraph 54).
- iii the University's approach to its articulation arrangements, in particular the preparation of students for transfer to the UK (paragraphs 57, 139)
- iv the rigour and candour of the periodic review of collaborative provision which supported the University's evaluative reappraisal of its approach to collaborative arrangements (paragraph 69)

### **Recommendations for action**

The audit team also recommends that the University consider further action in a number of areas to ensure that the academic quality of programmes and the standards of awards it offers through collaborative arrangements are maintained.

Recommendations for action that is advisable:

- i revision of the University's approach to institutional level involvement in collaborative arrangements to establish a requirement for periodic meetings of staff at the most senior level from both institutions to consider formally the operation of the partnership arrangement (paragraph 50).

Recommendations for action that is desirable:

- ii as the University moves to expand its portfolio of faculty based collaborations, that it review its existing policies and procedures to: ensure that they remain fit for purpose; define the roles and responsibilities of all staff involved in the arrangements; secure continued effective central oversight of the operation of such arrangements (paragraphs 47 and 50)
- iii in developing its strategy for collaborative provision, the University should establish clear definitions of distance and distributed learning and the associated policy and procedural requirements. The University may find the section of the *Code of practice* on collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e learning) a useful reference document in this respect (paragraph 127).

## **Appendix**

### **The University of Leeds' response to the collaborative provision audit**

The University of Leeds is pleased with the positive tone of the audit report and is grateful for the endorsement of its current practice in relation to collaborative activity. The University will continue to work closely with its partner organisations to ensure the best possible student experience and to maintain the standards of its awards. In response to the auditors' recommendations for further action the University will take forward a plan of action and monitor its implementation. The action plan will take cognisance of all the findings of the report, in particular the need to ensure that its procedures remain fit for purpose as the nature of relationships develop.

