



*Promoting higher quality*

**The Quality Assurance Agency  
for Higher Education**

 **Access**  
to Higher Education

Hampshire Authorised  
Validating Agency

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## Foreword

1 The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is responsible to the Department for Education and Skills for the recognition of Access to Higher Education courses. QAA exercises this responsibility through a national network of authorised validating agencies (AVAs), which are licensed by QAA to recognise individual Access to HE courses and to award Access to HE certificates to students. The AVAs are responsible for assuring the quality of the individual Access to HE courses which they recognise and the standards of student achievement on those courses.

2 QAA has developed a scheme for the licensing and review of the AVAs, the principles and processes of which are described in the *QAA Recognition Scheme for Access to Higher Education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*. The Recognition Scheme is regulated and administered by the Access Recognition and Licensing Committee (ARLC), a committee of the QAA Board of Directors. The ARLC appoints review teams with appropriate experience of Access to HE provision, which undertake reviews of AVAs and report to the ARLC on their findings. The *Recognition Scheme* includes the detailed criteria applied by the ARLC and by review teams operating on the Committee's behalf in reaching judgements about whether, and under what terms, AVA licences should be awarded and renewed. These criteria are grouped under the seven principles that provide the main section headings of this report.

3 Following the review of an AVA, a member of the review team presents the team's report to the ARLC. The Committee then makes one of six decisions:

- i unconditional renewal of licence for a specified period;
- ii conditional renewal of licence with conditions to be met by specified date(s);
- iii provisional renewal of licence with conditions to be met and further review visit by specified date(s);
- iv suspension of licence until specified conditions are met;
- v withdrawal of licence for operation as an AVA;
- vi temporary renewal of licence with request for further information by specified date (decision suspended).

4 This is a report of a review of the Hampshire Authorised Validating Agency (HAVA) undertaken by QAA. The Agency is grateful to HAVA and to those who participated in the review for the willing cooperation provided to the review team.

## The review process

5 The review was conducted in accordance with the process detailed in the *QAA Recognition Scheme for Access to Higher Education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*. The preparation for the review included an initial meeting between HAVA representatives and the QAA Assistant Director to discuss the requirements for the *Analytical Account* (the *Account*) and the process of the review; the preparation and submission by HAVA of its *Account*, together with a selection of supporting documentation; a meeting of the review team to discuss the *Account* and supporting documentation and to establish a draft programme for the review visit; and negotiations between QAA and HAVA to finalise the programme and other arrangements for the review visit.

6 The review visit took place on 15 and 16 May 2002. The visit to HAVA consisted principally of meetings with representatives of HAVA, including the HAVA administrator; members of the Management Committee, Business and Planning Committee, Quality Assurance Committee and Staff Development Committee; Curriculum Working Party Chairs; moderators for Access to HE programmes; Access to HE tutors; representatives from higher education; and former Access students now studying in HE.

7 The review team consisted of Dr Pete Johnston, formerly of the University of Essex, and Dr Philip Bentley, Assistant Director, Faculty of Human Sciences, Shrewsbury College of Arts and Technology. The review was coordinated for QAA by Ms Kath Dentith, Assistant Director (Access), Institutional Review Directorate.

## The AVA context

8 The Hampshire Authorised Validating Agency has its origins in the Hampshire Access Scheme, which was established in 1983. As a collaborative arrangement between the University of Portsmouth and 16 further education and sixth form colleges across a geographical area centred on Hampshire, HAVA secured a licence as an AVA in 1993.

9 The AVA was last reviewed in 1995. The report on that review by the Higher Education Quality Council (HEQC) included recommendations for further action in relation to a range of matters, including the AVA's role in widening participation in higher education, specifically through encouraging providers to specify and monitor targets; the development of systems for the collection and collation of student data; the development of HAVA's operations to include a clear structure for providing strategy and leadership, as well

as an administrative service; the development of more formal relationships with higher education institutions and other external bodies; and the development of quality assurance mechanisms. Although the *Account* for the current review did not explicitly record the AVA's response to issues raised in the HEQC report, the majority of these have, in fact, either been addressed or overtaken by subsequent events. There was, however, some continuity of concerns raised during the current review with those raised at the 1995 review, and comment on these is made in the course of this report.

10 For a period between 1993 and 1997, the Access programmes at some member colleges of the AVA were also validated by the Northern Examinations and Assessment Board, now the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA). The *Account* records that 'the AVA withdrew from that arrangement, although it has maintained a link with AQA. The AVA has retained a member of AQA as its External Advisor between 1999 and 2002'.

11 In 2001, HAVA formally decided to move towards a merger with the Wessex Access Federation (WAF), following several years of cooperation in various activities, and an outline application for an AVA licence for the new organisation to be formed from such a merger was submitted to QAA in June 2001. This was not approved for further development, however, and, as a consequence, HAVA had to revise its forward planning. The AVA considered a number of options for its future and, at a meeting of its governing body, the Management Committee, on 14 November 2001, HAVA decided to remain a separate organisation and to maintain its status as an unincorporated association.

12 At this same meeting, the Management Committee approved a revised *Constitution* and *Procedural Guide*, in which revisions had been made to the previously existing versions of these documents as a consequence of their having been reviewed during the merger discussions and through the impact of the introduction of QAA's *Principles and Criteria for the Licensing of AVAs*.

#### Pattern of provision

13 A distinctive feature of HAVA's operation is that the majority of HAVA's validated Access provision is organised and delivered through the Hampshire Scheme, which utilises a bank of common, centrally regulated subject modules. Currently, 32 single and 1 double module are available for use by providers. Individual programmes of study are composed by students with advice from the provider's staff about appropriate combinations for their intended progression route, on the basis of the selection of four approved subject modules within the limits of the

offering in the centre involved. HAVA also validates what it terms 'stand-alone' programmes to 'satisfy local needs', which are developed by, and approved for delivery in, individual centres, and are separate from the Hampshire Scheme. For 2001-02, 13 institutions were listed as delivering the Hampshire Scheme, and, of these, three also provided stand-alone programmes, this being Art and Design in each such case. Additionally, one institution provides only a stand-alone programme, in Science, giving a total of 14 institutions currently involved in the delivery of HAVA-approved Access to HE programmes.

14 The *Account* records that, since the last review, three providing institutions have left HAVA. Highbury College, Portsmouth has transferred to AQA; Reading College has transferred to the Thames Region Accrediting Consortium Open College Network (TRAC OCN); and the Isle of Wight Learning Centre has withdrawn following budgeting cutbacks by the Isle of Wight County Council. During this period, two new providers have joined the AVA, namely the Centre for Continuing Studies, University of Portsmouth, and Portsmouth College.

#### Statistics and trends

**AVA statistics 2000-01** (as provided by the AVA in its annual report to QAA for 2000-01)

15	Providers offering Access to HE programmes	15
	Access programmes available	5
	Access programmes running	5
	Access learner registrations	668*
	Access to HE certificates awarded	297**

\* *figure includes registrations of students on both one and two year programmes of study.*

\*\* *figure includes certificates awarded to students completing both one and two year programmes of study. Figures for students successfully completing the first year of a two-year programme are not included here.*

16 The AVA records the Hampshire Scheme as a single programme in its report to QAA in spite of its delivery, with different components, in 13 different centres. Given the separate validation and review of individual centres, the review team would recommend that, in future, separate centre delivery is regarded and represented in statistical returns as separate programmes.

## Trends

17 The 1995 HEQC report comments that 'overall statistics on student numbers...had not been collated in the AVA's documents'. However, some indication of the scale of activity at that time is provided by figures identified from some college annual reports for 1993-94, indicating that for full-time students across seven centres there were 644 enrolments and 473 completions (73.4 per cent).

18 In recent years, HAVA recorded a total of 668 registrations in 2000-01, significantly lower than the previous year's figure of 922, and the 1998-99 figure of 863. The *Account* refers to the significance of the transfer of Reading College in accounting for this drop, and also points to a change in the pattern of participation, with more students opting for a two-year pattern of study. Data indicates that between 70 per cent and 75 per cent of those initially registered by HAVA gain their Access certificate.

## Principle 1

The organisation has a structure, which is based on a partnership of members, including institutions that provide Access to HE programmes and institutions of higher education

### Membership

19 The new *Constitution* (see paragraph 12, above) specifies that membership of HAVA is open to any voluntary organisation, community school, further education college or higher education institution 'that delivers its validated Access courses or receives Access students', and that associate membership is available to 'any other institution and public body approved by the Management Committee', although the *Constitution* itself provides no further distinction between these categories of membership. The distinction is evident elsewhere, however, for example in a document provided for the review entitled 'Membership of HAVA and Membership Changes'. This specifies the current membership of HAVA through, first, a list of 'Delivering Members', which includes reference to 13 further education colleges and the University of Portsmouth. The document also provides the categories 'Members from HE'; (specifying individuals from the University of Portsmouth, the University of Southampton and the University of Reading); 'HE Associate Members' (specifying individuals from Southampton Institute and King Alfred's College, Winchester); and 'Associate Members' (specifying individuals from Open College Network South Central, WAF and Highbury College).

20 The inclusion in this document of additional categories of 'Moderators' and 'External Advisor', as well as the inclusion of some institutions under more than one category, and comparison with the membership specification of the Management Committee provided in the *Constitution*, indicated that the 'Membership of HAVA' document was not a definitive list of member institutions, but was, more accurately, a list of members of the Management Committee, with the names of individuals within all of these categories constituting the current membership of the Management Committee. The review team was unable to identify any other clear statement of the membership of the AVA.

21 Formal responsibility for the approval of 'new member colleges' is included amongst the terms of reference of the Management Committee, and criteria for the approval of 'centres/providers' are specified in the new *Procedural Guide*. The responsibility and processes described, however, refer to the approval of organisations to be allowed to provide HAVA-recognised Access programmes. In attempting to identify the AVA's process for admitting other organisations into membership, the review team considered the statement in the *Account* that 'initially the University of Southampton was a non-voting member. Now the University of Southampton and the University of Reading have become full voting members of the AVA Management Committee'. The AVA referred the team to the minutes of the Management Committee in March 2001 as evidence of the change of status from non-voting to voting member. The minutes record that 'discussions arose as to the necessity to elect voting HE members onto the Management Committee and the Quality Assurance Group. It was agreed that it would be simpler to co-opt members rather than elect members'. This was followed by the statement that the named individuals from Southampton University and Reading University 'were co-opted onto the HAVA Management Committee'. This minuted discussion confirmed the team's view that there was a lack of clear distinction between the membership of the Management Committee and the membership of the AVA, and the team was unable to identify a formal process through which organisations, including those which receive Access students but do not deliver courses, may be admitted to membership.

22 The *Constitution* includes a brief section about membership, including the statement that 'Members are prepared to give staff time to enable HAVA to function effectively. They expect HAVA to inform them on a regular basis of its expectations of members. HAVA in turn validates Access programmes and provides the necessary infrastructure for the delivery of successful programmes in member's institutions', but

there is no formal statement to indicate members' rights and responsibilities. The AVA's *Constitution* does not require an article of membership or any equivalent and 'members' are not required to enter into any kind of formal agreement with the AVA. In HAVA's review of its *Constitution* and procedures undertaken during merger discussions, the AVA identified that 'the relationship between representatives and members was unclear' and the *Account* records the AVA's view that this had been addressed in the new *Constitution*. The review team was unable to confirm this view.

23 The review team considered that there was currently insufficient clarity about institutional membership of the AVA, and that, while the further and higher institutions which are named through the membership of individual staff on the Management Committee are undoubtedly involved in the work of the AVA, there is no formal indication of an institutional commitment to the AVA and its aims. The licensing requirement that at least two higher education institutions are in membership of the AVA, therefore, cannot be considered to be met by HAVA at this point.

#### Premises and supply of goods and services

24 HAVA's office space is provided by the University of Portsmouth. This arrangement is specified within a contract between HAVA and the University of Portsmouth for the supply of goods and services, including computer facilities and the employment conditions and salary of the HAVA administrator (see paragraph 52, below) whereby HAVA pays for the administrator's salary and on-costs, and the costs of photocopying, printing and telephone charges. In addition to the areas of agreement indicated above, the contract further explicitly and appropriately addresses separation of responsibilities between HAVA and providers regarding delivery of HAVA Access programmes. It further explicitly and appropriately addresses respective responsibilities in the event of organisational or business collapse.

25 The current three-year contract was deemed to have commenced on 1 September 1999. The review team was informed that discussions would shortly begin regarding the renewal; that the University had no plans to change its policy of providing office space free of rent; and that the duration of the next contract would be a minimum of one and a maximum of five years.

26 The review team therefore concluded that, in order to meet the licensing criteria under Principle 1 in full, the AVA should introduce a formal membership agreement which specified the rights and obligations of members of the AVA; and that there was a need for HAVA to demonstrate that it had at least two HEIs in

formal membership of the AVA, according to the terms of such an agreement. The team also recommends that the AVA consider the influence of any changes to membership, brought about by the fulfilment of these conditions, on the definitions of 'externality' throughout the AVA's processes.

## Principle 2

**The organisation has governance structures which allow it to discharge its AVA responsibilities securely**

### Governance and committees

27 As an unincorporated association, HAVA is governed according to its *Constitution* and accompanying *Procedural Guide*, with the latter document covering financial procedures in addition to quality assurance procedures. The *Account* records that the review of the *Constitution* and *Procedural Guide* undertaken during the merger discussions 'noted several gaps'. As well as the lack of clarity about the relationship between representatives and members, the *Account* notes weaknesses in formal business planning; 'implicit rather than explicit' links between component parts of the organisation; the necessity to develop an independent staff development conference, since this had been joint with WAF from 1998 to 2001; and the need to amend the moderation system. The revised documents approved in November 2001 were designed to address these issues.

28 Under the new *Constitution*, the governing body continues to be the Management Committee, but it introduces a sub-structure of three sub-committees: the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC), which existed previously under the designation 'the Quality Assurance Group'; the Business and Planning Committee (BPC), established specifically in response to the AVA's internal review; and the Staff Development Committee (SDC).

### The Management Committee

29 The Management Committee holds responsibility for the AVA licence. It has formal responsibility for the governance and management of the AVA and the *Constitution* stipulates that 'all policy and strategic decisions' are made by the Management Committee. The *Constitution* states that the Management Committee is also responsible for 'the financial health of the agency and the hiring and dismissal of staff including those contracted as Moderators'. While most of these responsibilities are supported by extensively detailed and appropriate terms of reference, there is no explicit reference to the hiring and dismissal of staff, although the terms of reference of the BPC and QAC include responsibilities for recommending action on

these matters to the Management Committee. In addition, although the terms of reference of the relevant sub-committee, the BPC, include 'recommending fees for the provision of goods and services to the AVA', the terms of reference of the Management Committee do not include the explicit power to engage in formal arrangements to secure the supply of goods and services necessary for its operation as a licensed AVA. Given the significance of these matters for an unincorporated association where the members of the governing body have liability for the organisation's contractual obligations, the review team considered that the AVA should include such a power in these terms of reference.

30 Membership of the Management Committee, as described in the *Constitution*, (see also paragraphs 19-20, above) is divided between those who may vote and those who may not. The first category includes 'one institutionally nominated representative from each of the member institutions', although the membership list includes two representatives where an institution delivers both a Hampshire Scheme programme and a stand-alone programme. The *Constitution* notes that Committee members are normally 'the coordinators from an Access provider, nominated by the provider's senior management, and nominated representatives from receiving institutions'. However, the process for the nomination of representatives to the Committee was unclear to the review team. The External Advisor is also a voting member. The second category includes 'representatives from each of the associate members'; 'invited moderators and other Access practitioners'; and 'the chair of the Examinations Board'. This gives the Committee a current membership of 26. In addition, the *Constitution* specifies that each 'member institution' has 'one representative and thus one vote but may send more than one person to Management Committee meetings, if considered appropriate, up to a maximum of three', giving a potential attendance of over 50.

31 The review team heard that this provision existed for several reasons: the wish to be inclusive, where colleges wished to send more than one individual because of a spread of provision, and also as a consequence of the merger of institutions, but that it was rarely utilised. Minutes of the Management Committee for recent years demonstrated that this was indeed the case, except in the particular case of the University of Portsmouth which, as well as being a receiver (and an 'HE member'), is also a provider of both a stand-alone programme and a Hampshire Scheme programme (and thereby also a 'delivering member'). As the Chair of the Examination Board and both Senior Moderators are represented on the Management Committee, all of whom are currently employees of the University of Portsmouth, the actual

membership of the current Management Committee includes six individuals from this particular institution.

32 The *Constitution's* membership specification suggests that the Committee's officers (a Chair, Deputy chair and Treasurer) are members in addition to the representatives from members' institutions, although they are, in fact, drawn from among those representatives. The Chair has particular responsibilities specified in the *Constitution*, including designation as 'the senior administrative officer' as well as responsibility for 'links between the Management Committee and the Administration'. These responsibilities are indicative of the close and active involvement of the Management Committee in the operational management of the AVA.

33 The evidence available to the review team indicated that the Management Committee conducted its business properly, although as the revised structures had given the Committee revised responsibilities, evidence of its effective operation under its new terms of reference was necessarily limited. The team would recommend that, in view of the issues already identified regarding the lack of distinction between membership of the AVA and membership of the Management Committee, the AVA considers the Management Committee's membership at the same time as it addresses the clarification of membership of the AVA itself. The AVA should also clarify the relationship of membership of the AVA to membership of the Management Committee and, as a further condition of licence, formalise the process of nomination of member institutions' representatives to the Management Committee.

#### The sub-committee structure

34 The *Constitution* makes reference to the sub-committees' responsibility for 'the implementation of strategy and policy' and their terms of reference are detailed and appropriate to their respective areas of responsibility. The QAC has specific responsibilities in relation to the validation of new centres and new programmes; the periodic review of member centres; monitoring, through receipt of reports from moderators and from centre coordinators; the appointment of moderators; and the examination and review of the quality of the service offered by the AVA to its members. It also has the authority to 'deal with all quality and curriculum issues and all matters outside the remit of the other sub-committees'

35 The responsibilities of the BPC cover preparation and updating of strategic and financial plans, receipt of financial reports; dealing with all financial matters including recommending fees, honorariums and any fees for the provision of goods and services to the AVA;



recommendation of the appointment, contract and remuneration of the Administrator to the Management Committee; management of the AVA's needs in relation to insurance and legal advice; management of registration documentation and provision of annual statistics to QAA; maintenance of a reserve sufficient to enable the AVA to discharge its obligations; and arranging an annual appraisal of the Administrator in collaboration with the Chair of the Management Committee. The review team formed the view that these terms of reference provided the basis for the efficient conduct of the AVA's business. As the sub-committee met for the first time in March 2002, however, it was not possible for the team to make a judgement about its effective operation.

36 The terms of reference of the SDC feature the development and provision of a programme of staff development; organisation of an annual staff development conference; organisation of moderator training with provision of suitable materials; and development of suitable induction materials for new staff delivering HAVA modules. This sub-committee met for the first time in April 2002 with the 'primary aim' being 'to discuss the forthcoming HAVA Staff Development Conference'. The review team was therefore unable to make a judgement about the effectiveness of this sub-committee.

37 The membership of each sub-committee is drawn from the set of full voting members of the Management Committee. For the QAC, the membership is a Chair, normally the Deputy Chair of the Management Committee and four additional (voting) members of the Management Committee. In the case of the BPC, the membership is a Chair, normally the Treasurer, plus three other (voting) members of the Management Committee, and in the case of the SDC the membership consists of three voting members of the Management Committee, one of these as Chair.

38 Although the Management Committee, as currently constituted, has a large membership from which to appoint members to its sub-committees, the Management Committee's membership was specified to provide democratic representation of members, rather than to provide appropriate experience for the particular needs of its sub-committees. The review team noted that although both the QAC and the BPC were able to include the contribution of other individuals by invitation to meetings, the requirement that members be drawn from the voting membership of the Management Committee necessarily restricted the opportunities for the AVA systematically to ensure appropriate expertise on these sub-committees. In view of the low staffing base of the AVA, the professional oversight of the AVA's affairs by its committees is of particular importance. In addition, although each

sub-committee has a responsibility to report to the Management Committee, as sub-sets of that committee they are essentially reporting to themselves. The AVA will wish to ensure that its sub-committee structure provides it with the specialist advice it requires and protects the organisation from any potential conflicts of interest.

39 The review team concluded that, with the recent adoption of the new *Constitution*, and, in particular, the establishment of the BPC, HAVA now had an appropriate structure of sub-committees with appropriate remits and demarcation lines between respective areas of responsibility, delegated from the Management Committee. The team noted a technical, but nonetheless important, omission from the terms of reference of the Management Committee (see paragraph 29, above), to be addressed as a condition of renewal of licence. The team considered that, with this structure in place, the organisation had governance structures which could allow it to discharge its AVA responsibilities securely. However, noting the link to the previously identified need for a formal means of expression of institutional commitment to HAVA, the team also identified the need for formalisation of the process by which institutions nominate their representative on the Management Committee, and considered that this also should be a condition for renewal of licence. As regards the membership of sub-committees, the team identified a need for the AVA to ensure appropriate expertise on these sub-committees, either through extending membership beyond members of the Management Committee or by allowing appropriate co-options; again this should be a condition for renewal of licence. The review team also recommends that the AVA monitor the function and performance of its new committee structure in order to ensure its effectiveness.

### Principle 3

**The organisation is aware of and in a position to meet its legal and public obligations**

40 HAVA's decision in November 2001 (see paragraph 11, above) to maintain its status as an unincorporated association has, in most respects, been supported by appropriate actions to allow it to meet its legal and public obligations.

41 The contract between HAVA and the University of Portsmouth (see paragraph 24, above) contains an indemnity clause whereby each of the parties 'undertakes to indemnify the other Party in respect of any and all losses, costs, demands, claims, liabilities and expenses of any nature whatsoever incurred by the other Party arising as a consequence of any negligent act or omission as a breach hereof or otherwise'. Given

that the liability of HAVA as an unincorporated association rests with the members of its governing body, the review team was reassured to note that the limitation of its liability was appropriately addressed in the remits of the Management Committee and the BPC.

42 In terms of relevant action to discharge this responsibility, the review team noted that action had been taken to purchase Professional Indemnity/Directors and Officers Liability Insurance, and that the AVA intended to seek further advice to ensure that HAVA was fully covered in the event of a claim against the organisation. The team noted, however, that the projected annual budgets for 2002-03 to 2005-06 did not allow for expenditure through payments of insurance premiums. The team also heard that HAVA had now recognised the need, when renegotiating the contract with the University of Portsmouth, for independent legal advice, which would require costing in to the budget. The team concluded that submission of appropriately revised budgets should be a condition for renewal of licence.

43 As noted above (see paragraph 22), although the *Constitution* states that HAVA provides (for members) 'the necessary infrastructure for the delivery of successful Access programmes' in members' institutions there is no explicit power in the terms of reference of the Management Committee to engage in the necessary formal arrangements.

44 The existing contract between HAVA and the University of Portsmouth stipulates, 'The finances of HAVA are managed by an elected Treasurer. Accounts are audited by the Treasurer's home FEC'. The review team noted that the most recent set of HAVA annual accounts, for 2000-01, had been independently examined by a member of a recognised supervisory body, but that this individual was not the auditor for the treasurer's home FEC but, instead, an individual known personally to the treasurer. The team further noted that the AVA's Financial Procedures specify that the 'Treasurer, working in conjunction with the Business and Planning Committee, will be responsible for recommending auditors to the Management Committee'. The team concluded that there was a need for the AVA to ensure that this procedure was adopted.

45 In summary, therefore, the review team concluded that, in order to meet the licensing criteria under Principle 3, and as a necessary part of addressing its legal and public obligations, the AVA should take the following actions: represent within the remit of its governing body the explicit power to engage in the formal arrangements necessary for its operation as a licensed AVA; submit revised budgets appropriately including expenditure relating to costs of legal advice and insurance premiums; and ensure that the AVA's

auditor(s) for its accounts are fully approved by the AVA's governing body.

## Principle 4

The organisation is able to manage effectively its AVA responsibilities and the structure which supports them

### Aims and strategic planning

46 HAVA's mission statement expresses commitment 'to enhancing learning opportunities and progression to Higher Education for individuals, especially those belonging to sectors of the community hitherto under represented in Higher Education. It aims to develop, maintain and reinforce Access provision in the area covered by its centres and to provide individuals with the opportunity of progressing to Higher Education within the region and elsewhere in the UK'. The review team considered that this statement represented aims that were congruent with the aims of the *Recognition Scheme*.

47 HAVA has recently strengthened its business and strategic planning capacity with the establishment of the BPC, although its current *Rolling Strategic and Operational Plan 2001-06* was developed by the QAC. This plan specifies appropriate aims relating, for example, to the adequacy of administrative support; the engagement of HEIs in the management and development of Access; the enhancement of the moderation process; support for tutors; engagement with local HEIs' widening participation agendas; assisting members in targeting under-represented groups; developing vocational modules; and updating modules in line with HE requirements. While the plan includes some generally expressed targets in pursuit of these aims, the actions planned to bring about these developments are not always specified. In addition, responsibility for the different actions is not allocated to any individual or group and, particularly in view of the AVA's low staffing base, it was unclear to the review team who might be expected to carry out the necessary actions for achievement of the AVA's aims. In this context, the team also noted the absence of any costing of this plan.

48 The review team heard from the BPC that one of its priorities was to ensure that the AVA's strategic plan was fully coordinated and that it had very clearly identified action points. The team concurs with the BPC's views of necessary actions, and considers that these matters should be conditions of licence. The AVA is required to reconsider and review the current *Rolling Strategic and Operational Plan* to ensure that it contains specific targets related to meeting its declared objectives for Access to HE, and clearly identifies specific actions to lead to the achievement of targets. It must also demonstrate that it

has the means to meet its targets and specify appropriate arrangements for monitoring, evaluation and reporting on the achievement of targets including the use of statistical and other data.

### Financial management

49 The scale of HAVA's financial operation, where expenditure in 2000-01 was £20,969, is a reflection of the fact that premises are provided free of charge and currently only one part-time officer is employed (see paragraphs 52-55, below). HAVA is funded through student registration fees. The AVA has approved an increased fee for 2002-03 to cover, in particular, increased moderation costs and clerical support/secretarial provision. Allowance for these increased costs is made in the projected annual budget.

50 The accounts for the financial year ending 30 June 2001 record a small surplus for the year of £1,341 and funds of £53,708. This level of funds demonstrates the AVA's success in building up reserves sufficient for it to operate for the minimum of one financial year should the fee income stream fail.

51 The BPC was introduced to address a perceived weakness in formal business planning and the review team considered that the BPC's terms of reference, together with the financial procedures detailed in the *Procedural Guide*, are appropriate to HAVA's task to operate a systematic and rigorous approach to the management of its financial affairs.

### Staffing

52 Currently, HAVA has one member of staff, a half-time Administrator, who is engaged through a formal, five-year contract between HAVA and herself. This contract explicitly addresses employment conditions and procedures. The relevant clause states that 'HAVA shall pay the University of Portsmouth funds sufficient to cover the agreed salary and on-costs of the employment of the Administrator. For employment purposes, the Administrator will be an employee of the University appointed by the University upon HAVA's recommendation and working for HAVA. HAVA accepts the employment conditions and procedures of the University of Portsmouth'. The annual appraisal of the Administrator is arranged by the BPC in collaboration with the Chair of the Management Committee, and this responsibility is specified in the BPC's terms of reference.

53 The responsibilities of the Administrator are clearly stated in the contract and in the *Constitution*, and include the registration of students; invoicing of member institutions; servicing committees; collation of annual monitoring and evaluation reports;

arrangement and issue of certificates; maintenance of database of programmes and modules; making preparations for validation and review events; and liaison with member organisations.

54 With reference to the current level of staffing, the *Account* comments, 'this was sufficient when the University of Portsmouth representative on HAVA was in an adjacent office and when the then Pro-Vice-Chancellor agreed that 10 per cent of the representative's time could be devoted to work in collaboration with the AVA'. The AVA recognises that since this position no longer exists, it will have to take measures to improve the staffing base of the AVA, although it has not yet finally determined what form this should take. It has considered increasing the Administrator's hours or employing 'some clerical back-up'. An alternative proposal being explored is for some seconded time to be obtained from the member institution which employs the AVA's Chair, although this latter option could only be an interim measure in that the current Chair could serve only for one more year. The review team noted that the option of additional clerical support was already represented in the proposed budgets, and discussions with the AVA suggested that this option was the most likely to be adopted.

55 The evidence available to the review team suggested that the Administrator's responsibilities are properly addressed, and that the administrative functions of the AVA are effectively and efficiently carried out. While these administrative structures and practices are well established, HAVA does not provide explicit staff support for the overall management and strategic development of the AVA itself, nor for the development of the volume, nature or quality of Access Provision. While the AVA's committees may undertake activities related to these areas of the AVA's work, for example the role of QAC members in supporting centres which are developing new programmes, the AVA does not provide central systematic support for the development and enhancement of the AVA's Access provision as a whole. Noting this, and recalling HAVA's aim expressed in its Mission Statement 'to develop, maintain and reinforce Access provision', the team concluded that, as a condition for renewal of its licence, HAVA should demonstrate its ability to fulfil its responsibilities for development and enhancement of Access provision, either through an increased staffing base or through other clearly identifiable specified means.

### Operational procedures

56 The *Procedural Guide* clearly and comprehensively details operational procedures covering registration, validation, moderation and assessment procedures (including examination arrangements) with specific reference to both the Hampshire Scheme and stand-alone

programmes. This further appropriately specifies appeals procedures, advanced standing and APL arrangements and the process for Access certification.

57 HAVA's systems enable it to provide information to satisfy QAA's reporting requirements. Beyond these, HAVA aims to develop and improve systems for tracking student performance in HE.

58 The review team concluded that HAVA had adopted clear procedures for the AVA's operational management. With regard to the management of other AVA responsibilities, the team considered that the AVA needed to address matters relating to strategic planning and development, and that it should review the level of staffing available to meet the full range of its responsibilities as a licensed AVA.

## Principle 5

**The organisation is able to assure the quality and fitness for purpose of Access to HE programmes at the point at which they are granted formal recognition**

59 HAVA's validation and approval processes are detailed in its *Procedural Guide* and reflect the nature of the organisation of Access provision in HAVA providers. There are specific procedures for the validation of new subject modules, and these operate independently of the procedures for the approval of new centres which apply to deliver the Hampshire Scheme. Both elements are involved in the process for the approval of Hampshire Scheme programmes. In addition, there are procedures for the validation of stand-alone programmes, which have elements in common with the separate module and centre validation processes.

### Programme development

60 New subject modules are developed either by centres or by Curriculum Working Parties (CWPs), which are responsible for the design, assessment and quality assurance of subject modules or cognate groups of subjects in the Access curriculum. Representation from all centres delivering a particular module is required on CWPs, so they provide a strong body of expertise and experience about what might be required for the successful design of a new module. Advance formal notification of new module development must be given to the QAC. HE advice is required during development, but the *Account* comments that the system is 'in need of modification because modules need to take more account of developments in HE'. This need refers to the difference in the likely extent of HE advice available to developments within existing subject specific CWPs, where an HE subject specialist is

automatically involved through membership of the CWP, and the development of modules in new disciplines, where there is no pre-existing CWP to provide the same level of support and advice.

61 There are currently no formal requirements for programme development by a new centre or a centre developing a new stand-alone programme, but the *Account* explains that new members seeking validation 'have the opportunity' to review their application with a nominated member of the QAC who 'effectively acts as the Development Officer'. The AVA states that, in future, 'this will be compulsory prior to formal validation', a development that the review team would support.

62 The AVA regards the limited number of further education colleges, and their current involvement in Access, as a necessary limitation on the possibility of further development, and stresses its reluctance to compete with neighbouring AVAs. While the review team accepted that this situation would influence the priority given to procedures for programme development, it was concerned to note that the AVA's perception of possible areas for the development of Access programmes was restricted to the inclusion of more further education colleges, and would suggest that the AVA explores other possibilities to meet its aim to develop Access provision.

### Module approval

63 As already indicated (see paragraph 60, above), HAVA operates a system of module development and approval through the CWPs. It is the CWP that is charged with ensuring appropriate and coherent programmes within the specific subject area. Modules operate with a consistent structure across all HAVA subjects and are all made up of three units designed to enable students to progress from a formative introduction to the subject to the development of knowledge and skills necessary for preparation for study in higher education. Assessment is also designed with a common structure, with consistent weightings given to the three units within each module, and common requirements for the award of the Access to HE certificate. These requirements constitute a clear and specific set of criteria to allow the consistent assessment of Access to HE submissions at the subject level.

64 Following the development of a new module specification, it is presented to the QAC, which may propose revisions. The QAC then recommends specifications to the Management Committee for approval. It is the responsibility of the QAC to monitor satisfactory outcomes of any conditions, with the ultimate sanction of suspension of HAVA approval of any centre failing to comply.

65 Specifications of existing modules are reviewed annually and, as CWPs include HE subject moderators, the evolution of the modules can reflect the changing demands of higher education and developments in academic disciplines. Any recommendations for change are subject to agreement between the CWP and the subject moderator, prior to approval by the QAC and ratification by the Management Committee.

66 This rigorous system creates a consistency of subject content and assessment across the Hampshire Scheme and is a key mechanism in maintaining consistency of outcomes. After discussion with the AVA's representatives and scrutiny of the AVA's documentation, the review team agreed that the system of module development and approval was a strength in the Hampshire Scheme.

### Centre approval

67 Procedures and appropriate criteria for centre approval are fully detailed in the *Procedural Guide*, including requirements relating to programme aims, targeting of under-represented groups, intended outcomes for students, equal opportunities, course management and course organisation. These criteria ensure a comparability of student experience, adding a further layer of coherence to the student experience in addition to that provided by the component subject modules undertaken by any individual student, with common requirements in relation, for example, to admissions procedures, guidance on total course hours, monitoring and evaluation, student handbooks, assessment, study skills, tutorial support, monitoring of student progress and appeals procedures. The review team noted, however, that some of the essential requirements for the delivery of the Hampshire Scheme, such as the number of modules to be taken, or allowable combinations, were not clearly delineated in the *Procedural Guide* or other formal documentation. Though HAVA has generally liberal policies with regard to such matters, which allow centres to determine which modules they wish to offer, and Access course coordinators and students to determine pathways for particular progression routes, the team would recommend that when the *Procedural Guide* is next revised, amendments are made which clarify the parameters set by the AVA in relation to expectations and permissible variations in course composition.

68 Validation panel membership is confirmed by the QAC and is made up of at least four members including at least one QAC member, an HEI representative, and one member external to HAVA. (The review team noted that the definition of 'external' for this purpose would need clarification, following the clarification of membership by the AVA.) The panel submits a report, prepared by the chair, to the QAC,

stipulating conditions, recommendations and timescales for implementation. Following its approval by the QAC, the report is endorsed by the Management Committee, and outcomes are reported to the head of the institution and Access coordinator. The QAC is responsible for monitoring conditions, on advice from the chair of the Validation Panel, with final ratification by the Management Committee, and the *Procedural Guide* is clear on the consequences of non-compliance.

69 The review team considered that the process of centre approval complemented the module approval process effectively to ensure that the totality of the Access programmes delivered in each centre is considered and formally approved by the AVA.

### Stand-alone programmes

70 Validation procedures for college-devised stand-alone programmes are the same as those for new centre approval, but also include requirements relating to course content. In these cases, it is the responsibility of the Centre Course Board, rather than CWPs, to set summative assessments and examinations that are subject to approval by the Programme Moderator. The QAC requires prior notification of any major changes to modes of delivery or attendance, curriculum content and assessment criteria, and approval must be given before any changes may be made.

71 The review team considered that the licensing criteria relating to the recognition of Access to HE programmes had been met by HAVA, and that the model adopted provided particular strengths at the module level.

## Principle 6

**The organisation is able to safeguard the continuing quality of Access to HE programmes, and to secure the standards of achievement of students awarded the Access to HE certificate**

### Moderation procedures

72 The system of moderation for the Hampshire Scheme involves subject moderators, each responsible for a particular subject module and attached to the relevant CWP, and two Senior Moderators (one drawn from the Arts, Humanities or Social Sciences and the second from the Sciences) who operate independently of the CWPs and are responsible for the adjudication of problem cases. During 2001-02, a system of Centre Moderation was also piloted to provide an overview of Hampshire Scheme programmes, complementing the work of the subject moderators to create a model comparable to HAVA's two-stage model for validation.

Stand-alone programmes have an equivalent model of moderation in which single moderators are responsible for moderating all aspects of a stand-alone programme.

73 Subject moderators, in conjunction with CWPs, approve common examination papers for all centres, and are then involved in the cross moderation of assessments and examination scripts undertaken by CWPs. The moderation procedures require the review of course work and formal examination work and, because of the common assessment loading, there is consistency between modules. Borderline cases are considered, with final arbitration referred to Senior Moderators. The review team considered that this represented a robust system of standardisation, providing consistency of marking across centres offering a given module, and contributing to objectivity and equity in the assessment process. Because CWPs are made up of subject practitioners across centres, it also makes an important contribution to ongoing professional development for practitioners, and provides a major contribution to the induction of new staff into the system. The current system clearly addresses issues of quality, comparability and fitness for purpose. There has been a particular emphasis on the verification of standards, and the review team recognised this as an area of strength within HAVA systems for the moderation of the Hampshire Scheme.

74 In discussion with moderators, there was a recognition that, although a good system existed for monitoring academic standards within individual modules, there was a need for moderation at institutional level. The review team heard that, following evaluation of the pilot of Centre Moderation (see paragraph 72, above), it was likely that the system would be introduced across all centres delivering the Hampshire Scheme, with the intention to have centre moderators in place for the academic year 2002-03. The review team considered that the development of centre moderators was a critical development in the quality assurance of HAVA provision to ensure regular external monitoring of quality and fitness for purpose of Access provision at the programme level, and monitoring student experiences and verifying standards in relation to programme delivery and management. In view of the importance of these areas of quality assurance, the review team considered that it should be a condition of licence that centre moderation, or an alternative system designed to achieve equivalent ends, be implemented across all Hampshire Scheme centres.

#### **Moderator selection, appointment and induction/training**

75 HAVA has consistently used moderators from higher education working within the relevant subject disciplines. It is the responsibility of the QAC to appoint moderators, and moderators must be approved as part

of the validation procedure. A letter of appointment, now supported by the *Information Pack for Moderators*, is issued to moderators as confirmation of their appointment.

76 HAVA is aware of what it describes in its *Account* as 'a degree of commendable longevity in the service of Subject Moderators', and the AVA has recently decided to limit appointments to three years, with an option for a renewal of appointment for a further three years. The QAC is responsible for recommending renewal or termination of moderator contracts.

77 There is no process for initial training or induction, beyond the issue of the recently introduced *Information Pack for Moderators*, a useful overview document providing an outline of roles and responsibilities through relevant extracts from the *Procedural Guide* and copies of standard forms. Moderators' membership of CWPs provides a good informal mechanism through which moderators become acquainted with HAVA's systems, but this has no formal training function. The current system of training revolves largely around the AVA's annual conference at which there are workshops on a range of matters which may be relevant to moderation. While the conference provides a useful opportunity for moderators to be updated on topics of current concern to HAVA, it is a practitioners' conference and is not arranged specifically to meet the needs of moderators. Moderators are not required to attend and, although popular, the timing of the conference has increasingly caused difficulties for attendance, as the June date clashes with other demands within the academic cycle. The review team considered that the AVA currently did not have effective mechanisms for training moderators.

78 The *Account* recognises that 'the processes of moderator training need to be enhanced' and the review team would concur with this view. The AVA will need, in particular, to give consideration to the separate needs of subject and centre moderators once the pilot has been evaluated and the specific role of centre moderators has been finalised. The team concluded that HAVA needed to enhance and formalise its system of moderator training in order to meet the licensing criteria relating to moderation.

#### **Monitoring and responding to moderator output**

79 The QAC receives and scrutinises all moderator reports. It is responsible for ensuring that Access programmes reach their target groups and deliver high standards of provision in accordance with stated objectives and for ensuring that the quality of those reports allows that function to be achieved. The QAC prepares an annual report for the Management Committee that includes a summary of moderator

reports and recommendations. The QAC is also charged with making recommendations for quality improvement for adoption by the Management Committee. Issues of concern arising out of the moderation process are reported to heads of centres with the ultimate sanction being the withdrawal of approval to run programmes if centres do not comply. The system of dealing with reports is well established and coherent and the documentation scrutinised by the review team demonstrated that the receipt of centre reports, moderator reports and CWP reports was a well-established QAC agenda item at the beginning of the academic year, and reports were analysed and reviewed, and issues referred to the Management Committee appropriately.

#### **The award of the Access to HE certificate**

80 HAVA has clear guidelines about the function and process of final assessment. Each centre conducts an internal examination board which receives all moderated assessment marks, following which, all students' mark profiles are forwarded to the final HAVA Examination Board. The Examination Board comprises the External Advisor/Assessor, the Senior Moderators, one representative from each Hampshire Scheme centre, one representative from each stand-alone programme and the Chair of the Examination Board.

81 The meeting of the full Examination Board is preceded by a series of pre-meetings, involving each centre's coordinator, the Senior Moderators, External Advisor and Chair of the Board, at which problematic cases and individual students' mitigating circumstances are considered. The Examination Board ratifies the list of student achievements and recommendations for the award of the Access to HE certificate are agreed. The Examination Board approves the issue of Access certificates and reports to the Management Committee.

82 The emphasis on externality and objectivity is an obvious feature of the Examination Board and this is further enhanced by the attendance of the External Advisor (to be designated 'External Assessor' from September 2002) from outside the Hampshire Scheme, who comments on examination processes and procedures. The review team considered that the procedures for the award of the Access certificate adopted by HAVA were thorough and equitable and were conducted according to principles of good practice.

#### **The issue of Access to HE certificates**

83 Access certificates are issued by the HAVA Administrator from the lists agreed and are forwarded to centre Access coordinators, who have responsibility for their local distribution. Certificates are signed by the Chair of the Examination Board and indicate the successful completion of a recognised Access course.

The design of HAVA Access certificates is in line with QAA requirements, with no reference to grades included. Centres are encouraged to issue records of achievement, and information about grades received may be recorded there.

84 Consistency of format for the Hampshire Scheme, and commonality of marking schemes and grading, ensures that local higher education institutions which are familiar with the AVA are able to be clear about the requirements for student achievement for the award of the Access to HE certificate on all HAVA-recognised Access courses.

85 The review team concluded that current systems for assessment and moderation were well-established and properly conducted, according to clear criteria, but that there was a need for a more formal system of moderator training to be introduced in order for the AVA to meet the licensing criteria in this area. There has been a weakness in moderation at the programme level, and, although the AVA is aware of this and has begun to take measures to address it, the team considered that, in view of its importance for the assurance of quality on Access programmes, the implementation of the new system should also be a condition for the renewal of the AVA's licence.

### **Principle 7**

**The organisation is underpinned by structures and processes which enable it to review, evaluate and develop Access to HE provision for which it has responsibility**

#### **Monitoring the quality of Access programmes**

86 All HAVA-approved centres are required to nominate an Access coordinator. The coordinator is required to ensure the consistency of centre practices with HAVA policies and procedures, and is responsible for the maintenance of quality within the institution. This includes the monitoring of agreed assessment procedures and ensuring that internal verification is carried out fairly and consistently. The coordinator prepares the annual report that is submitted to the QAC, which is intended to initiate a process of self-assessment of Access to HE programmes, with providers reviewing and monitoring the quality and success of their programmes in meeting the objectives of targeting, achievement and progression.

87 As described above (see paragraph 65), CWPs are also involved in reviewing, evaluating and developing provision as all centres are required to send staff to the CWP meetings, and they can act as a forum for the regular exchange of experience in running modules.

This constitutes an effective and immediate mechanism to identify areas of concern, including those arising through the moderation process. The establishment of the centre moderators should also ensure that provision is being monitored to assure its continuing quality and fitness for purpose.

88 The QAC receives centre, moderator and CWP reports and makes recommendations for quality improvements that arise out of these. The QAC monitors whether Access programmes have reached their target groups and has responsibility for quality of delivery. Issues of moderation are dealt with in this forum and referred to the Management Committee, with recommendations as appropriate. The functions are clearly laid down in the HAVA *Constitution* and the review team was able to identify the process through which issues arose, were considered and could be fed into the production of the AVA's strategic plan.

### The revalidation of Access programmes

89 HAVA operates a policy of quinquennial review of centres. Review panels are made up of three HAVA members, chaired by a member of the QAC, and one external member from HE or another AVA, and the QAC chair, who confirms the appointment of the panel. The process for centre review follows the process for initial centre approval, similarly resulting in a report which includes any conditions or recommendations with appropriate timescales for implementation. Commendations are also recorded in the report as features of good practice. The QAC receives the report that is then ratified by the Management Committee, and outcomes are notified to the head of institution and the centre coordinator. Conditions set through the review process are monitored by the QAC. Documentation available confirmed to the review team that periodic reviews addressed a range of factors relevant to a consideration of the quality of Access provision, and that matters arising from reviews were appropriately monitored.

90 The review team concluded that HAVA met the licensing criteria relating to the review and evaluation of the Access to HE provision for which it has responsibility.

### Conclusions

91 Hampshire Authorised Validating Agency (HAVA) has its roots in a scheme established almost twenty years ago between the University of Portsmouth and a number of local further education colleges. Over that period it has maintained the essential model of its approved Access to HE provision and consolidated the scale of its operation. It has been able to remain a

relatively low-cost and efficient operation through sustaining a slim administrative structure, with support from the University, and through the cooperation of providers in its practitioner-led operation. At all levels of the AVA's structures, there is a high degree of involvement by practitioners from both further and higher education institutions, and their commitment has made a substantial contribution to the AVA's continued operation.

92 Within the last two years, HAVA has reviewed many aspects of the AVA's organisation, and produced new documentation describing its revised structures and procedures. A new constitution introduced at the end of 2001 has introduced improved structures for effective management and governance and has led to greater clarity and transparency about the AVA's structures and procedures. Many of the new structures have, as yet, to be fully tested, however, and there are a number of matters of detail which will need to be addressed as the AVA works with its new committee structures and implements the accompanying new procedures.

93 In particular, there is more work to be done to resolve issues which centre on the concept of membership employed by the AVA. While the commitment of those who work with the AVA is undoubted, this has not been confirmed through formal arrangements for institutional membership. Although the new constitution provides some information about eligibility for membership and an indication of HAVA's basic expectations of its members and of the members' expectations of HAVA, there is no clear statement of rights and responsibilities; no defined process for admitting organisations into membership of the AVA; and no means by which an explicit commitment is made by either party. Common usage of the term 'member' within the AVA assumes that an institution's membership of HAVA is identified through membership of a representative from that institution on the Management Committee. Although the AVA is aware that there has been some confusion about this in the past, it has not yet, apparently, recognised the risks to its own operation and the uncertainty of decision-making of a consortium in which membership has not been confirmed by any formal process. While the commitment of 'members' may be implicit through the involvement of staff in the AVA's quality assurance procedures and financial or other contributions made to HAVA, for example through the payment of fees, it is not a commitment on which the AVA can depend for making any medium or long-term plans which require institutional involvement and cooperation, and it gives limited protection to the AVA as an organisation. The AVA will need to address a number of constitutional matters in order to be able to meet the licensing criteria which



relate to membership, including the requirement that an AVA must have at least two higher education institutions in membership.

94 In contrast to the constitutional changes which it has made, the AVA has made relatively few recent revisions to the distinctive model through which the HAVA-approved Access provision itself is developed, approved, assessed and monitored. The model of a number of AVA-specified modules, common in their delivery and assessment across the AVA, from which different centres construct their separate Access courses - the Hampshire Scheme - has been a core part of its operation since the AVA was first established. In practice, this is not very dissimilar from the model which is becoming increasingly common elsewhere of programmes devised by centres which may draw on a central bank of approved units. The strength of the HAVA model, however, lies in the central importance of the Curriculum Working Parties to the development and assessment of modules: the required involvement of representatives from all centres delivering any particular subject module and their respective higher education moderators makes a strong contribution to the comparability of provision and consistency of standards at the subject level, while retaining practitioner control over curriculum content and development. In the past, this emphasis on consistency of standards at the subject level has not been mirrored by equivalent attention given to the approval and monitoring of quality at the programme level. HAVA has now begun to address this, however, and the introduction of centre moderation, in addition to subject moderation, provides the potential for a strong quality assurance framework.

95 In view of the evident strengths of the model and the AVA's commitment to it, it is unfortunate that the AVA is not engaged in any significant strategic attempts to extend the reach of its work either within or beyond its traditional further education provider base, or to develop further its principal model of provision, or alternative models, in order to attract more potential students from its target groups. This kind of development work requires active engagement and liaison with a range of bodies and individuals, including both those who are currently involved with HAVA and its work, and those who are not; it requires the development of specific policies and strategies, with clear corresponding aims and targets. The AVA is not currently active in this way, and its target to 'assist members targeting under-represented groups', for example, is not accompanied by any clear mechanism through which this might be achieved, beyond a requirement that this be addressed by centres and considered through the centre approval process.

96 Consideration of these matters begs the question of where and how such development might take place, and, as it considers how it can best meet these broader AVA functions more fully, HAVA might need to look again at the operation of its governance structures to see whether the substantial management responsibilities of the Management Committee will allow it to address its policy and strategic responsibilities equally fully, particularly in the absence of professional officer support for these functions.

97 HAVA's only professional officer support at this stage is provided by a single part-time administrator. In the past this was supplemented by staff support from the host institution, and HAVA recognises in its plans that further resources will have to be made available to cover this loss. However, the professional support which has been lost to the AVA contributed not only to the administrative functions but also to the management of the AVA, and this will need to be taken into account when the AVA is considering how to meet the need it has identified for additional staffing. This would be an appropriate point for HAVA also to address the current lack of a staffing support for the wider development responsibilities of a licensed AVA under the terms of the *QAA Recognition Scheme for Access to Higher Education*.

### Commendations

98 HAVA is commended for the work of its Curriculum Working Parties and the consistency of standards that their work brings to Access provision validated by HAVA.

## The AVA licence

### Review outcome

97 The Hampshire Authorised Validating Agency is awarded a conditional renewal of its AVA licence, with conditions stipulated below to be addressed by the dates specified.

### Conditions

98 The AVA's licence will be renewed on condition that the AVA:

- i demonstrates the institutional commitment to the AVA of its members through the introduction of a formal article of membership, or equivalent, which specifies the rights and obligations of members (paragraph 21);
- ii demonstrates that at least two HEIs are formal members of the AVA (paragraph 23);

- iii includes in the remit of the Management Committee the explicit power to engage in the necessary formal arrangements to operate as a licensed AVA (paragraphs 29 and 43);
  - iv formalises the process by which institutions nominate their representatives on the Management Committee (paragraph 33);
  - v ensures appropriate expertise on the AVA's sub-committees either through extending their membership beyond members of the Management Committee, or by allowing appropriate co-options (paragraph 38);
  - vi submits appropriately revised budgets (paragraph 42);
  - vii ensures that the auditor of the AVA's Accounts is formally appointed by the AVA's governing body (paragraph 44);
  - viii reconsiders and revises the current ***Rolling Strategic and Operational Plan*** to ensure that it provides specific targets, allocated responsibilities and target dates (paragraph 48);
  - ix makes arrangements for monitoring, evaluating and reporting on achievement of targets using appropriate statistical and other data (paragraph 48);
  - x ensures that the AVA is able to fulfil its responsibilities for the development and enhancement of Access provision either through an increased staffing base or through other identifiable, specified means (paragraph 55);
  - xi introduces either the proposed system of centre moderation or an alternative mechanism for ensuring regular external monitoring of Access provision at programme level (paragraph 74);
  - xii establishes a system of moderator training for all moderators (paragraph 78).
- iii considers the Management Committee's membership in the light of the necessary clarification of the distinction between membership of the Management Committee and membership of the AVA itself (paragraph 33);
  - iv monitors the function and performance of its new committee structure in order to ensure its effectiveness (paragraph 39);
  - v explores possible ways in which the AVA might meet its aim to develop Access provision, beyond the inclusion in membership of additional further education colleges (paragraph 62);
  - vi makes amendments to the ***Procedural Guide*** which clarify the parameters set by the AVA in relation to expectations and permissible variations in course composition (paragraph 67).

Conditions to be met by **31 March 2003**

### Recommendations

- 99 The review team recommends that the AVA:
- i represents separate centre delivery of the Hampshire Scheme as separate programmes in statistical returns to QAA (paragraph 16);
  - ii considers the influence of any changes to membership, brought about by the fulfilment of Conditions i and ii, on its definitions of 'externality' throughout the AVA's processes (paragraph 26);

## Appendix

### Aims and objectives of AVA review

The aims of the system of AVA review are:

- i. to provide the basis for an informed judgement by the ARLC about the fitness of the AVA to continue as a licensed agency;
- ii. to promote public confidence in Access to HE as a properly regulated and respected route into higher education by assuring:
  - the quality and adequacy of AVAs' systems and procedures;
  - the quality, comparability and range of AVAs' operations;
  - the adequacy and comparability of AVAs' standards for approval, moderation and monitoring of programmes;
  - consistency across AVAs in the operation of criteria for the granting of the Access to HE award;
- iii. to stimulate reflective and self-critical perspectives within AVAs, as an instrument to promote quality enhancement;
- iv. to provide an opportunity to identify and disseminate good practice of AVA operations;
- v. to provide a mechanism for ensuring necessary, and encouraging desirable, improvements and developments in AVAs.

The objectives of each AVA review are:

- i. to examine, assess and report on:
  - the development of, and changes in, the AVA since its last review or initial licence, and its plans and targets for the future;
  - the organisation's continuing viability and robustness and the ways in which the AVA demonstrates sound governance;
  - the efficiency and effectiveness of the AVA's operational and quality assurance systems;
  - the range and scope of the AVA's activities, and the appropriateness and value of these activities;
  - the ways in which the AVA approves and monitors programmes and the ways in which these processes take account of the need for consistency and comparability;
  - the ways in which the AVA satisfies itself of the adequacy and comparability of standards achieved by students gaining the Access to HE certificate;

- the evidence available to indicate the AVA's success in achieving its aims and targets;
- ii. to identify and report on:
    - strengths and good practice in procedures and operations;
    - areas which would benefit from further development;
    - areas requiring attention.

