



University of Kent

Audit of collaborative provision

November 2010

Contents

Introduction.....	1
Outcomes of the Audit of collaborative provision	1
Institutional approach to quality enhancement	1
Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students studying through collaborative arrangements	1
Published information.....	1
Features of good practice.....	1
Recommendations for action.....	2
Section 1: Introduction and background	2
The institution and its mission	2
The information base for the Audit of collaborative provision	3
Developments since the last audit.....	4
The awarding institution's framework for the management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities	4
Selecting and approving a partner organisation or agent.....	6
Written agreements with a partner organisation or agent.....	7
Section 2: Institutional management of academic standards	7
Approval, monitoring and review of award standards.....	7
Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points	9
Assessment policies and regulations	10
External examiners.....	10
Certificates and transcripts.....	11
Management information - statistics.....	11
Overall conclusions on the management of academic standards	12
Section 3: Institutional management of learning opportunities	12
Approval, monitoring and review of programmes	12
Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points	13
Management information - feedback from students	13
Role of students in quality assurance.....	14
Links between research or scholarly activity and learning opportunities	15

Other modes of study	15
Resources for learning	15
Admissions policy.....	16
Student support.....	16
Staffing and staff development.....	17
Overall conclusion on the management of the quality of learning opportunities.....	18

Section 4: Institutional approach to quality enhancement in collaborative provision..... 18

Section 5: Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students studying through collaborative arrangements..... 19

Section 6: Published information 22

Introduction

An audit team from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) carried out an Audit of collaborative provision at the University of Kent (the University) in the week of 8 November 2010. The purpose of the Audit was to provide public information on the quality of the institution's management of the academic standards of its awards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students through collaborative arrangements.

Outcomes of the Audit of collaborative provision

As a result of its investigations, the audit team's view of the University of Kent is that in the context of its collaborative provision:

- **confidence** can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the academic standards of the awards that it offers
- **confidence** can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students.

Institutional approach to quality enhancement

The audit team concluded that the University has a suitable framework for quality enhancement through its Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Strategy, which is supported by its annual and periodic quality assurance mechanisms as well as its staff support arrangements. There is, however, scope for all of the Strategy's aims to be more fully reflected in its work with partners.

Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students studying through collaborative arrangements

The audit team concluded that the University's arrangements for securing the quality and standards of its collaborative research degree provision are sound and reflect the expectations of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*, published by QAA.

Published information

The audit team concluded that, while most of the information published about the University's collaborative provision was accurate and reliable, it should consider adopting a systematic approach for checking the accuracy and completeness of the information that partner institutions publish on their websites about the University and its awards.

Features of good practice

The audit team identified the following areas of good practice:

- the written guidance for partner institutions, including 'Collaborative Provision: Policies and Procedures' and supporting handbooks and newsletter (paragraph 20)
- the structures and liaison posts to support partner institutions, including the Validation Forum, the HE in FE Forum, Partnership Development Officers and School Liaison Officers (paragraphs 23 and 93)

Recommendations for action

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

Recommendations for action that the team considers advisable:

- consider whether the constitution of conjoint approval panels adequately protects its interests (paragraph 25)
- ensure that all external examiner reports are completed in sufficient detail to fulfil their role in safeguarding the standards and quality of provision at partner institutions (paragraph 51).

Recommendations for action that the team considers desirable:

- consider formalising the specific requirements to be applied in the management of programmes that are taught and/or assessed in a language other than English (paragraphs 32 and 112)
- review the processes by which it identifies and considers potential conflicts of interest for external examiners, both on their appointment and during their tenure (paragraph 48)
- pursue greater consistency in the implementation of its requirements regarding staff/student liaison committees at partner institutions (paragraph 67)
- review the mechanisms by which it oversees the feedback from students reported by partner institutions (paragraph 68)
- consider how its strategic aim of fostering and supporting research-led teaching might apply in partner institutions (paragraph 73)
- review processes for the termination of partnership arrangements to ensure that the interests of students are protected (paragraph 103)
- share external examiner reports with students (paragraph 125)
- consider adopting a systematic approach for checking the accuracy and completeness of the information that partner institutions publish on their websites about the University and its awards (paragraph 126).

Section 1: Introduction and background

The institution and its mission

1 The University of Kent (the University) was granted its Royal Charter in 1965 as the University of Kent at Canterbury, and admitted its first students in October of that year. In 2003, the University changed its name to the University of Kent to reflect its expansion at other campuses.

2 Most of the University's provision is delivered on a 300-acre campus close to Canterbury city centre. It also has campuses in Tonbridge, Brussels (known as the University of Kent at Brussels) and Medway (shared with the University of Greenwich, Canterbury Christ Church University and MidKent College).

3 Teaching and research take place across a broad range of disciplines, which are organised into 18 schools, grouped into three faculties: the Faculty of Humanities, the Faculty of Sciences and the Faculty of Social Sciences.

4 In 2009-10, there were 5,033 students registered for programmes provided in collaboration between the University and its partner institutions. Most of these partners are in

the UK. The University has some collaborative arrangements with institutions outside the UK, including where the primary language of instruction and assessment is not English.

- 5 The University engages in four main types of collaborative provision:
- validation, where the University validates programmes of study at other institutions, where the other institution devises and delivers the programme to its own students and that students who successfully complete the programme of study are awarded a Certificate, Diploma or Degree by the University
 - franchised provision, where the University franchises delivery of programmes of study to its associate/partner colleges, and the other institution is responsible for delivery of a programme of study, normally either of its own or Edexcel's devising, to students of the University
 - dual awards, which are a single multi-partner programme involving the separate certification of students by the University and the partner institution(s)
 - joint awards, where a single certificate is issued bearing the insignia of the University and the partner institution(s).

Students on franchised, dual and joint programmes of study are designated University students, while students on validated programmes are not.

6 In addition, the University has links to academic centres, which are external institutions approved to host the delivery of a University of Kent-devised or University of Kent-approved programme leading to a University award and/or the award of Kent credit. The academic centre provides facilities and tutoring, but has limited engagement with assessment. The University also has a number of co-supervision arrangements allowing for research students to divide their time between the University and another institution. Co-supervised students are examined under conjoint examination arrangements and, if successful, graduate with separate awards from the two partners.

7 Information concerning the University's collaborative partners is publicly available on its website and links are provided to partners' websites.

8 According to the University's Institutional Plan 2006-09, 'The University of Kent provides higher education of excellent quality...enlarges knowledge by research...is an intellectual and cultural focus for Kent and Medway, supports national and regional economic success, builds vigorously on its close ties within Europe and continues to develop wider international relationships.'

The information base for the Audit of collaborative provision

9 The University provided the audit team with a Briefing Paper and supporting documentation both in hard copy and electronically. The index to the Briefing Paper was referenced to sources of evidence to illustrate the University's approach to managing the security of the academic standards of its awards and the quality of its collaborative provision. The team also had access to the University's intranet.

10 The Kent Union produced a student written submission covering the accuracy of the information provided for students registered at some of the University's partner colleges, their experiences as learners and their involvement in quality assurance processes. The audit team wishes to thank the Kent Union for its efforts in providing this information.

11 For each of the four partner institutions visited, the audit team was provided with additional documentation, again illustrative of the University's approach to the management

of the quality and standards of partner provision. The team is grateful to the students and staff of these partner institutions for meeting members of the team and for the documentary evidence provided.

12 The audit team also had access to:

- the report of the previous Institutional audit (November 2008)
- the report of the QAA Review of research degree programmes (July 2006)
- the University's internal documents
- the notes of audit team meetings with staff and students at both the University and at selected partner institutions.

Developments since the last audit

13 The University's collaborative provision was last reviewed as part of the QAA Institutional audit in 2004. The audit report made no specific recommendations about the University's collaborative arrangements. The report observed that the University's Credit Framework did not apply to collaborative provision; the University has since extended the Framework to cover it. The report also noted as a feature of good practice the University's successful integration of the quality management processes of associate colleges with its own.

14 In its Briefing Paper, the University highlighted a number of important developments since the 2004 audit. These included: the creation of a fifth college for its postgraduate students (Virginia Woolf College); the establishment of a Graduate School, with a remit to work in partnership with academic schools, faculties and central service departments to develop all areas of postgraduate study across all campuses; and the appointment of a College Master to oversee student development on the Medway campus (including for students studying for joint awards with the University of Greenwich and franchised provision with MidKent College). In addition, the faculty deans have assumed responsibility for areas of strategic institutional responsibility and, therefore, become more involved in the work of the University's senior management team, Executive Group.

The awarding institution's framework for the management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities

15 The Code of Practice for Quality Assurance is the University's primary quality assurance document. It sets out the principles, structures and procedures through which the University monitors academic standards, improves the quality of its programmes and defines the responsibilities of individuals, schools, faculties and of the institution as a whole for standards and quality. The Code applies to all programmes leading to an award by the University of certificates, diplomas and degrees at all levels, regardless of how, where and by whom the programme is delivered. The Code is separated into two parts: the Code of Practice for Quality Assurance for Taught Programmes (Taught Code) and the Code of Practice for Quality Assurance for Research Programmes (Research Code).

16 The University's Senate has ultimate responsibility for the standards and quality of the University's academic programmes. Until the end of 2008-09, it delegated strategic and operational responsibility for taught and research programmes, including programmes delivered in collaboration, to the Learning and Teaching Board (LTB) and the Board for Research and Enterprise (BRE) respectively. However, in June 2009, Senate agreed to establish a revised committee structure in which responsibility for the institutional management of the standards and quality of all postgraduate provision, including taught

programmes, passed to the newly created Graduate School Board (GSB). Thus, LTB retains responsibility for undergraduate provision only.

17 The quality assurance of undergraduate taught programmes is delegated to individual schools. For each programme or group of cognate programmes, there is a Director of Studies and a Board of Studies (or, in the case of joint and dual programme of study, a Joint Board of Studies) with responsibility for day-to-day quality management. Boards of Studies report to a School Learning and Teaching Committee, which is responsible for ensuring that the school discharges its responsibilities as described in the University's Taught Code. School Learning and Teaching Committees, in turn, report to Faculty Learning and Teaching Committees, which are responsible for discharging faculty-level responsibilities for standards and quality (such as reviewing schools' annual monitoring reports and organising periodic reviews). Faculty Learning and Teaching Committees report to Faculty Boards, which report to LTB.

18 The structure for the quality assurance of taught postgraduate programmes mirrors that for undergraduate provision: School Graduate Studies Committees report to Faculty Graduate Studies Committees, which report, in turn, to the Graduate School Board. The structure for the quality assurance of research programmes is described in Section 5.

19 Collaborative programmes of study leading to awards of the University are subject to the University's regulations, Code of Practice and Credit Framework conventions. In order to emphasise, clarify and elaborate on those parts of the University's regulations, policies and procedures that apply to collaborative programmes, it publishes a number of other documents. Chief among these is Collaborative Provision: Policies and Procedures, which defines the various types of collaborative provision on offer, describes the procedures for the development of new collaborative provision and collates the University's policies and procedures for the approval and subsequent management of collaborative activities. There is also a Validation Handbook that brings together the information that staff at validated institutions need about the University's administrative processes and procedures and quality assurance arrangements; a HE in FE [higher education in further education] Handbook, which performs the same function for staff running franchised programmes at partner colleges; and an International Partnerships Handbook to support Kent staff in developing links overseas. Changes to these documents are communicated to partners in a regular newsletter from the Office of Quality Assurance and Validation.

20 The audit team regarded the documentation published by the University in support of its management of collaborative provision as clear, comprehensive, accurate, well-targeted and likely to be of great benefit to users, particularly those in partner institutions. The team, therefore, identified as a feature of good practice the written guidance for partner institutions, including Collaborative Provision: Policies and Procedures and supporting handbooks and newsletter.

21 Franchised provision is supported by the Partnership Development Office, which provides a range of services to staff and students at local partner colleges such as training for examiners and advice on student representation. In addition, each higher education programme in the partner colleges is supported by a School Liaison Officer - a member of academic staff who undertakes to visit the college regularly during the year and provide academic support and advice to teaching staff. For cognate programmes, the Liaison Officer normally also chairs the Board of Examiners for the programme. For non-cognate programmes, the University uses external programme advisers to provide expert curricula advice and guidance. Validated partners, meanwhile, benefit from a contact in the Office for Quality Assurance and Validation, who can provide any advice and guidance they require.

22 To supplement the support from its staff, the University convenes a number of groups including, for franchised partners, the Associate College Board, a Partner Colleges Advisory Group and HE in FE Forum, with the latter providing an annual forum for the sharing of good practice and updating partners on amendments to quality assurance procedures. There is an equivalent annual meeting for validated partners - the Validation Forum.

23 The audit team discussed the University's support for collaborative partners with staff from partner institutions and saw evidence associated with the groups outlined above, such as minutes of the annual forums. The team took the view that the support provided reflected the comprehensiveness and efficacy of the written guidance. The team, therefore, identified the structures and liaison posts to support partner institutions, including the Validation Forum, the HE in FE Forum, Partnership Development Officers and School Liaison Officers, as a feature of good practice.

Selecting and approving a partner organisation or agent

24 The University enters into collaborative partnerships that are conducive to meeting its strategic objectives and the fulfilment of its mission. The first part of Collaborative Provision: Policies and Procedures is dedicated to the development of new collaborative provision; it sets out the principles and procedures for developing new partnerships and includes templates for each stage of the approval process. All proposals for new partnerships must be considered by the Executive Group on the basis of a statement of the proposal's strategic benefit to the University compiled by the proposing school, along with a due diligence questionnaire and risk assessment prepared by the University's Office for Quality Assurance and Validation. If the Executive Group approves the proposal, then the Office for Quality Assurance and Validation will normally take the lead in developing a memorandum of understanding for the link. Once the agreement is signed, then the associated programmes proceed through the relevant approval procedures (normally beginning at the School Learning and Teaching Committee). A memorandum of agreement may not be signed until the associated programme(s) have proceeded through the approval process. These procedures differ according to the type of collaboration; Appendix A to Collaborative Provision: Policies and Procedures gives full details. Ultimately, the Programme Approvals Sub-Committee (PASC), which comprises the faculty directors of learning and teaching and the faculty directors of graduate studies, approves new programmes of study to run at partner institutions under delegated authority from LTB and GSB. Section 2 provides further details on the programme approval process.

25 Commencing in 2009-10, the University agreed that it would permit the faculties to establish conjoint approval panels for proposed new validated programmes of study where such programmes are subject to approval by a third party, such as a professional, statutory or regulatory body (PSRB) or, more specifically, by the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama, six of whose eight affiliates offer the University's awards. Two such conjoint panels were held in 2009-10, each comprising two members from the University, two from the Conservatoire (including the Chair) and two external members. The reports of both panels were considered and approved by PASC. The audit team took the view that the composition of the conjoint panels risked weakening the University's authority over the approval of its own awards. That the chairmanship of the panels resided with the partner institution, rather than with the University, was regarded by the team as particularly risky. The team considers it advisable, therefore, for the University to consider whether the constitution of conjoint approval panels adequately protects its interests.

Written agreements with a partner organisation or agent

26 Every collaboration is subject to a memorandum of agreement that must be signed before the associated provision commences. The audit team saw several examples of the memoranda and confirmed that they met the expectations of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, published by QAA, with respect to the establishment of the rights and obligations of both parties. The obligations on the partner include adherence to the University's regulations, Code of Practice and Credit Framework, except insofar as they may legitimately be varied for individual partnerships.

Section 2: Institutional management of academic standards

27 The University's Code of Practice for Quality Assurance describes its procedures for assuring academic standards and the reporting structures through which the management of these standards is secured. Alongside the Code, the University's Credit Framework for Taught Programmes sets out the conventions for assessment, marking, progression, classification and the award of credit for students on taught programmes of study. The Code applies to all programmes leading to an award of the University, including those delivered by partner institutions; the Credit Framework also applies to all programmes of study taught at and by the University and its partners and leading to awards of the University, although joint awards are only within the Credit Framework when the University takes its turn as the primary administering university.

Approval, monitoring and review of award standards

Programme approval

28 The start of the programme approval process is contingent on the approval of the partner institution, as described in Section 1. The process varies according to the type of partnership, but all types comprise several stages, based on the principle of discrete, successive layers of responsibility for quality assurance. This process is very similar to that for home provision, but with additional safeguards as described below.

29 All proposals for new programmes begin at the Executive Group, then progress to detailed scrutiny by the School Learning and Teaching Committee or the School Graduate Studies Committee, for undergraduate and postgraduate programmes respectively. The school committees consider the intended learning outcomes of each module, an assessment of the potential partner's own quality assurance systems and student support services, the past education and employment of teaching staff, marking and assessment criteria, draft programme or student handbooks and confirmation of the language or languages of instructions and assessment. Externality is provided by an external adviser, who should be an academic in a relevant discipline, a member of a professional or statutory body or a key person from business or industry.

30 The school's report is sent to the appropriate committee at faculty level, which may decide to set up a faculty panel to discuss the proposal in detail, except in the case of validated programmes where such panels are mandatory. In the case of proposed dual, joint or validated programmes of study, such panels may be deemed to be conjoint with the proposed partner.

31 The faculty further scrutinises the partner's conformity with the University's quality assurance procedures and determines whether suitable learning resources and student

support are available. The faculty's report is then sent to the Programme Approvals Sub-Committee (PASC) for final consideration and approval (with or without conditions) on behalf of the Learning and Teaching Board (LTB) or the Graduate School Board (GSB).

32 The audit team saw several examples of the approval of programmes delivered collaboratively, which demonstrated that the process operated in accordance with the University's Code of Practice. The team noted, however, that while the published process requires the proposing school to confirm the language of instruction and assessment, it does not encourage participants to consider the implications for quality assurance where that language is not English. The team, therefore, regards it as desirable for the University to consider formalising the specific requirements to be applied in the management of programmes that are taught and/or assessed in a language other than English. The team also had reservations about joint approval panels, which are discussed in Section 1.

Annual monitoring

33 Annual monitoring of collaborative provision is again based on the procedure for home provision, with minor variations according to the type of partnership. For validated and franchised provision, the Deputy Chair of the Board of Examiners is responsible for producing an annual report, drawing on a range of evidence specified by the Code, including student feedback, external examiner comments, progression and achievement rates and module reports (although module reports are required only where one or more risk indicators are triggered, for example, where the proportion of students passing the module falls below a specific threshold). In the case of franchised arrangements, the report is accompanied by a School Liaison Officer Report (from the cognate school in the University) or a Programme Advisor Report (in cases where there is no cognate provision at the University).

34 For dual awards, the joint Board of Studies of the University and its partner prepares the annual report. In the case of joint awards, the report is prepared according to the procedures employed by whichever partner is the primary administering university at the time.

35 School learning and teaching committees receive and consider annual programme reports for all the undergraduate programmes under their purview, normally at their first meetings of the academic year. They are responsible for highlighting any important issues for the attention of the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee, which may, in turn, report these to LTB. The process for taught and postgraduate programmes is similar: school graduate studies committees report to faculty graduate studies committees, which report, in turn, to the GSB. The audit team's scrutiny of committee minutes confirmed that this process was operating according to the University's published procedures and that information was passed on effectively as the results of annual monitoring were reported through the committee system, with the exception of feedback from students studying at partner institutions. This is discussed in Section 3.

36 Changes to any collaborative programme are approved through the normal University processes. Where programme aims or learning outcomes are affected, changes must be approved by school and faculty level learning and teaching or graduate studies committees as appropriate, followed by PASC. Minor modifications, where there is no change to learning outcomes, require school approval only.

37 In addition to the annual monitoring of programmes, the University also requires its academic centres to complete an annual report about their continued financial viability and any changes in the resources available to students and to the teaching staff.

Periodic review

38 The University conducts periodic reviews at maximum intervals of six years. The reviews cover all taught and research programmes of study offered to undergraduate and postgraduate students in a school, including programmes delivered by a partner college for which the school has cognate responsibility, as well as those programmes offered as part of an arrangement for a dual or joint award. Where there is no cognate school, the University reviews the programme on a subject basis.

39 Periodic review serves the primary purposes of providing assurance about the standards of the school's programmes, its effectiveness in delivering them and supporting students, identifying areas of good practice and suggesting any areas for improvement. The reviews are conducted by a panel appointed by the relevant faculty dean, and include two members external to the University and one student. Reviews normally last two days and include three themed meetings with school staff on teaching, learning and assessment, quality of learning opportunities and the maintenance and enhancement of quality and standards.

40 The outcome of periodic review is a written report, which culminates in a recommendation as to whether or not the programme or programmes under review should continue, and whether any partner institutions should be re-approved to deliver the programmes for a further six years. To coincide with the review, the University also repeats due diligence checks on partner institutions, including an assessment that the partner remains of sound financial standing. Following the review, the partners review the existing memorandum of agreement to ensure that it remains fit for purpose, with a view to renewing the agreement for a further period of collaboration.

41 The head of school must respond to the review report within three months. The report and the response are considered by school and faculty learning and teaching committees and reported to LTB.

42 Periodic reviews of institutions delivering programmes of study validated by the University are undertaken separately from the review of their host school. They also incorporate a repeat of the due diligence checks and a review of the memorandum of agreement. Collaborative academic centres are subject to a review every five years to reassess the quality and suitability of teaching staff, learning resources and other support for students. This is a separate review from that of the periodic review of the programme(s) and culminates in a recommendation as to whether the centre should be re-approved.

43 The audit team saw examples of periodic reviews incorporating collaborative provision, and concluded that the process operated effectively.

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

44 The University's engagement with the Academic Infrastructure is evident in the mapping of modules and programmes to *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), the use of subject benchmark statements as a standard point of reference in programme approval and periodic review, and in the publication of programme specifications in a standard University format for all programmes (except those where the University was not the primary administering university at the point of approval).

45 Other than for validated provision, the faculties maintain version control of programme specifications. The specifications for validated provision are published online

along with the institutional profile for these partners on the Office for Quality Assurance and Validation website.

46 Few of the University's collaborative programmes are subject to accreditation by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies (PSRBs). The most notable example is the MPharm offered at the Medway School of Pharmacy, which must satisfy the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. Schools are asked to signal significant issues raised by PSRBs through annual monitoring as described in Annex E of the University Code of Practice. The Office for Quality Assurance and Validation offers support to schools in preparing for accreditation reviews.

Assessment policies and regulations

47 The University has internalised the qualification level descriptors expressed in the FHEQ in its Credit Framework. The descriptors provide benchmarks for the overall threshold generic standards that students have to reach in order to be successful in modules and programmes. Strategies for assessing student achievement at an appropriate level are contained in individual module and programme specifications and detailed grading criteria are provided by schools and partner institutions. To date, the University has sought not to impose its marking scale on all its partnerships; the Credit Framework allows for validated institutions to seek approval for using alternative scales (such as the 15 point marking scale employed by two of the affiliates of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama). In addition, with regard to franchised Higher National awards made under licence from Edexcel, the University is obliged to return marks that are consistent with the pass, merit or distinction classifications.

48 The University appoints annually a Board of Examiners for each collaborative programme of study. The membership of the Board includes at least one external member. For validated and franchised provision, the Board must also include at least one member of the University from the home school, who is appointed as Chair, and examiners from the partner institution, one of whom, normally the Programme Director, is appointed as Deputy Chair. The detail of the membership requirements for boards of examiners for programmes leading to dual or joint awards is set out in the relevant memorandum of agreement.

49 The Board of Examiners is responsible for agreeing the marks to be awarded to students, for deciding whether students may progress to the next stage of a programme of study and for recommending the award of qualifications to students. With the exception of those Boards conducted by validated institutions or for joint awards where the University is not the primary administering university, which use collated mark-sheets derived from their own student record systems, the University's Course Management Student Data System will normally be used for managing the integration of results from different elements of assessment, the verification of marks and the provision of composite mark sheets for meetings of boards of examiners.

External examiners

50 The University appoints at least one external examiner to all programmes leading to an award, including collaborative programmes. Annex K of the Taught Code describes the University's expectations of its external examiners, the criteria for their nomination and appointment and their roles and functions in securing the academic standards of taught programmes. Collaborative Provision: Policies and Procedures supplements the Code by collating the additional requirements specific to collaborative provision, such as the arrangements for the oversight of work by students studying for joint awards.

51 External examiners are nominated by the partner institutions, considered by the Head of the cognate school and confirmed by the Dean of the home faculty and the Senior Deputy Vice Chancellor. The Code of Practice offers some guidance to avoid the nomination of examiners with conflicts of interest, but inevitably this guidance does not deal with every eventuality and the audit team saw two examples where the impartiality of the external examiner might be called into question. The first example was an examiner who was managing a programme at a third institution to which the students might progress, should they achieve the University award; the second an examiner who had been involved with the partner institution in other capacities over almost 20 years. The audit considers it desirable for the University to review the processes by which it identifies and considers potential conflicts of interest for external examiners, both on their appointment and during their tenure.

52 The University informs external examiners about their roles and responsibilities through a dedicated part of the University website, which has discrete sections for validated and franchised programmes. In addition, all external examiners are encouraged to attend annual training sessions provided by the Unit for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching in the spring term, although attendance is not compulsory.

53 External examiners are required to submit an annual report via the online External Examiners Report Submission System within four weeks of the meeting of the Board of Examiners. Reports should be considered by the School Learning and Teaching Committee or the Graduate School Committee, as appropriate. The response to the report is then checked by the Faculty Officer. The Faculty Office produces a summary of external examiners' reports, for consideration by the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee and forwarding to LTB and GSB.

54 The audit team saw a range of external examiner reports for collaborative programmes. Most were completed comprehensively, but a minority was not. The team also observed that the University lacked a formal mechanism for rejecting incomplete or unsatisfactory reports. The team, therefore, considers it advisable for the University to ensure that all external examiner reports are completed in sufficient detail to fulfil their role in safeguarding the standards and quality of provision at partner institutions.

Certificates and transcripts

55 Degree certificates for collaborative programmes of study identify the place of study and the principal language of instruction and assessment where this is not English. The audit team saw several examples of degree certificates for collaborative programmes, which each contained all the relevant information.

56 With the exception of programmes offered by validated institutions and those joint programmes where the University is not the primary administering university, the production of transcripts and European Diploma Supplements is automated using data submitted by schools or partner colleges. The University plans to automate the process for students on validated programmes too, but some technical obstacles remain, such as the use of alternative marking scales by some validated partners. In the meantime, students on validated programmes may obtain transcripts and supplements on request.

Management information - statistics

57 The University keeps records of all students on its courses and updates its register of collaborative provision as appropriate. The nature of the reporting mechanism between partners and the University depends on the type of arrangement. However, it is a requirement that any changes to a student's status must be reported within one month.

Other management information, such as the progression of students through their course, is held by the partner institution. The University's Progression Analysis Tool, which allows all members of staff with suitable access to its Student Data System to analyse trends in student progression without the need for specialist training or knowledge of the system, remains focused on home students.

Overall conclusions on the management of academic standards

58 The audit team concluded that, in the context of its collaborative provision, confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the University's present and likely future management of the academic standards of the awards that it offers.

Section 3: Institutional management of learning opportunities

59 The University's Code of Practice for Quality Assurance provides the structure for the management of learning opportunities. It stipulates that students are provided with good quality teaching and supervision, a suitable learning environment, a Personal Academic Support System (PASS) and opportunities to give feedback on their learning experiences. The day-to-day management of these responsibilities for students on collaborative programmes is delegated to partner institutions. The University maintains oversight through external examining, annual monitoring, periodic review, student feedback and reports from its own officers (such as school liaison officers) and other bodies, such as professional, statutory or regulatory bodies (PSRBs).

60 Students on franchised, dual or joint programmes of study, as University students, enjoy the same rights of access to the University's central services as students on home programmes. Students on validated programmes, who are not University students, normally do not have access to central services of the University; the memoranda of agreement with validated partners make clear that the partner has responsibility for providing all the teaching and support services. These services are subject to the University's oversight through the processes outlined in paragraph 59.

Approval, monitoring and review of programmes

61 The University's procedures for programme approval, annual monitoring and periodic review, described in Section 2 of this annex, each expect programme teams, and external experts where they are involved, to consider the availability of learning opportunities for students, alongside academic standards. Features salient to collaborative provision include:

- the due diligence checks employed during the approval of partner institutions, which include an appraisal of the physical, learning and human resources available to support students in their learning
- the requirement within programme approval for an external adviser to provide comments before the proposal is submitted to the School Learning and Teaching Committee
- the convening of discrete periodic reviews for validated provision, which are normally held at the partner's premises so as to allow the panel to assess the learning environment and support services available to students
- the use of periodic reviews of approved academic centres, conducted separately to the periodic review of the associated programme(s), to reassess the quality and

suitability of teaching staff, learning resources and the infrastructure of other support for students.

62 The audit team's scrutiny of a range of documents associated with these procedures confirmed that they were operating effectively, with the exception of part of the annual monitoring procedure, which is discussed in paragraph 68.

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

63 The Learning and Teaching Board (LTB) is responsible for receiving revised sections of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, published by QAA, and normally refers them to the relevant subcommittee for detailed advice about whether and how the University should adapt its own procedures in response. Where changes are necessary, partner institutions are informed through the Office for Quality Assurance and Validation newsletter, the HE in FE Forum and the Partnership Development Office. The audit team saw examples of this procedure working effectively.

64 Section 2 of this annex describes how the University manages and supports the engagement of its schools with PSRBs. PSRB reports are received by LTB, so that any matters of significance to the whole institution may be addressed at that level. Again, the audit team saw examples of this approach operating effectively.

Management information - feedback from students

65 Annex M of the Code of Practice for Quality Assurance for Taught Programmes (the Taught Code) describes the University's expectations regarding the identification of the views of students on learning and teaching and for consideration of these views. The Code identifies two main vehicles for identifying students' views: module evaluation questionnaires and staff/student liaison committees. It stipulates that module evaluation questionnaires should cover a range of areas, including advance information, teaching methods, timeliness of marking and feedback and the provision and achievement of intended learning outcomes; and directs partner institutions to establish at least one staff/student liaison committee or equivalent, to include at least one student from each stage of the programme or group of programmes falling within the committee's purview, and which should meet at least once per term.

66 That partner institutions are expected to follow Annex M of the Taught Code is implied by their obligation to comply with all parts of the Code; there is no further guidance in the Code regarding feedback from students on collaborative programmes except that, in Annex O, partner colleges should obtain and consider students' views in accordance with their normal procedures. Collaborative Provision: Policies and Procedures and the standard memoranda of agreement make no reference to student feedback either. The Briefing Paper stated that, in practice, the diversity of arrangements for managing student feedback reflected the diversity of the partners themselves, the size and demographic of the student body and the nature of the learning environment. Mechanisms for the review and evaluation of teaching, learning, assessment are set out in the programme specification document and approved by the University.

67 The audit team raised the issue of student feedback through staff/student liaison committees with several groups of students on collaborative programmes, including some who were members of these committees. The team's findings confirmed the diversity described in the Briefing Paper; although all students recognised the existence of a formal staff/student liaison committee, the team heard from some representatives that they felt unprepared for the role, that the administration of committee meetings was sometimes

unsatisfactory, with agendas and other paperwork being unavailable in advance, and that some representatives were excluded from certain parts of meetings for reasons that were not immediately clear to them. Against this backdrop, the team regards it as desirable for the University to pursue greater consistency in the implementation of its requirements regarding staff/student liaison committees at partner institutions.

68 According to the Briefing Paper, however students' views are obtained, any issues reported in student feedback should become visible to the University through annual monitoring. The audit team noted, however, that the responsibility for analysing and summarising student feedback lay with the University's partners. Thus, any themes apparent in student feedback would only become visible to the extent that the partners reported them. The team took the view that by tending not to assure itself that the summaries of student feedback reported by partners were an accurate synopsis of the raw data, the University's oversight in this area was lacking. The team saw one example of this in the annual monitoring report of a dual programme, which did not reflect the results of an internal student survey. The team, therefore, regards it as desirable for the University to review the mechanisms by which it oversees the feedback from students reported by partner institutions.

69 In addition to the student feedback reported through annual monitoring, the University gathers feedback from students on franchised programmes through surveys including, for students engaged in HEFCE-funded undergraduate collaborative provision, the National Student Survey (NSS), and a University student questionnaire, which reflects the structure of the NSS but asks more detailed questions. Most students at partner colleges have tended not to respond to these surveys, and so there has often been insufficient data available to carry out a reliable analysis. However, when the response rates have breached the threshold for analysis, the results have shown that students are very satisfied with their learning experiences. The University acknowledges that it needs to do more to promote the participation of students on franchised programmes in these surveys.

70 Students registered on validated programmes or joint programmes where the University is not the primary administering university are given opportunities to provide feedback through internal surveys designed and run by the partners. The results are reported back to the University through annual monitoring and, where relevant, joint boards of studies.

Role of students in quality assurance

71 Beyond the mandatory convening of staff/student liaison committees, the arrangements for student representation within partner institutions tend to reflect the diversity of the partners themselves. The University provides some support to its partners, in particular through the work of the Advice and Outreach Worker, who is responsible for developing student representation at the local partner colleges. In addition, the Kent Students' Union organises course representative elections for higher education students in college settings and offers the elected representatives training and support. The University acknowledges that it needs to do more in partnership with the Kent Union to strengthen the link between the representative systems on the campus and in partner colleges.

72 The University adopted student panel members for periodic review in 2008, following successful trials. The Office for Quality Assurance and Validation, in partnership with the Kent Union, identifies a pool of students each year to participate in the reviews. In January 2010, a student from one of the University's validated programmes took part in a periodic review at another partner in the same subject area. Similarly, the periodic review of

the joint programmes at the Medway School of Pharmacy benefited from the participation of a student member.

Links between research or scholarly activity and learning opportunities

73 Part of the University's mission is to '...provide higher education of excellent quality informed by research and scholarship.' For the University's collaborative provision, the audit team noted that this part of the mission was largely limited to the design of programmes, rather than their delivery, and a few examples of research-active staff visiting partners to give guest lectures or similar. The University makes no requirements of its partners with respect to the research or scholarship activities of their academic staff. The team regards it as desirable for the University to consider how its strategic aim of fostering and supporting research-led teaching might apply in partner institutions.

Other modes of study

74 While the University makes no specific demands of its partners with respect to the provision of e-learning resources, most of its partner colleges make use of the University virtual learning environment (VLE), and many of its validated partners provide platforms of their own. The audit team noted that the periodic programme reviews of Construction at two partner colleges exemplified some good practice by those colleges in the use of the University VLE.

75 The aims of the University's Flexible Learning Strategy include the development and promotion of flexible work-related collaborative provision. The most notable examples of this provision are a Foundation Degree by online distance learning, provided by a validated partner, and a postgraduate certificate by distance learning provided by the joint Medway School of Pharmacy. The audit team noted that the validation panel for the Foundation Degree in 2006 reported to the University that it had been highly impressed by the effectiveness of the online delivery system.

76 Annex Q of the University's Taught Code deals with work-based and placement learning. A number of collaborative programmes contain a work-based element and are, therefore, subject to Annex Q. The University monitors adherence to its requirements largely through the work of external examiners, who are asked to comment on the opportunities provided to students in the workplace for realising learning outcomes, the engagement and contribution of employers to the programme and the effectiveness of the integration between work-based learning and academic study. The audit team saw evidence of work-based learning being considered appropriately in programme approval and external examiner reports.

Resources for learning

77 The capacity of partners to provide adequate learning resources is one of the standard considerations in both the approval of new collaborative provision and its subsequent review. The initial assessment of a potential partner's resources for learning is part of the due diligence process. Once the partnership and associated programme(s) are approved, operational responsibility for providing learning resources is delegated to the partner (reflecting the University's broader approach to the management of learning opportunities in collaborative provision) and this is made clear in the memorandum of agreement and in the information given to students. The University assures itself that its partners are discharging this responsibility properly, mainly through annual monitoring,

periodic review and external examiner reports. The audit team found that the provision of learning resources was satisfactory.

78 In addition to the resources provided by the partner, students on franchised programmes, or on dual or joint programmes where the University is the primary administering University, have standard access to the learning resources provided from the University's own campuses. These include the Drill Hall Library at the Medway campus, which hosts students studying for the joint programmes in Pharmacy and the franchised programmes at MidKent College.

79 The audit team discussed learning resources with all of the students, whom it met, including students on validated programmes who do not have access to services provided by the University. In general, students' views were very positive, regardless of the type of partnership. Indeed, the students at one of the validated partners that the team visited were extremely complimentary about the local learning resources provided by the partner. According to the Briefing Paper, the Kent Union has reported that students on some of the franchised programmes feel they would benefit from the provision of a courier service for library resources, similar to that operating between two of the University's campuses. This proposal remained under consideration at the time of the audit.

Admissions policy

80 Candidates who meet the requirements for admission to a validated or franchised programme of study may be admitted to the programme by the partner without reference to the University. Where a validated or franchised institution wishes to admit a candidate who does not meet the approved entry requirements, it must apply to the Office for Quality Assurance and Validation, which will then seek approval from the relevant Dean of Faculty. Students applying to study for a dual award are subject to the admissions procedures agreed jointly by the partners. The primary administering University manages the admission of students wishing to register for a joint programme.

81 Regardless of the type of partnership arrangement, all partners are expected to use the *Code of practice, Section 10: Admissions to higher education* as a benchmark for their own procedures. The operation of these procedures is scrutinised during partner and programme approval, and their effectiveness is checked during periodic review.

82 The audit team scrutinised the guidance to partner institutions on admissions and discussed the operation of the procedure with the staff of the partners that it visited. It noted that the guidance to partners was clear, partners understood the guidance and they knew who to contact at the University should they require further assistance, for example with applicants who do not meet the standard entry requirements. The team concluded, therefore, that the University's arrangements for the admission of students to collaborative programmes were satisfactory.

Student support

83 Annex G of the Taught Code, which all collaborative partners are obliged to follow, stipulates that each school (or, in this case, partner institution) should '...establish and publicise a clear system of academic support and advice on progress for all its students', which must, at a minimum, '...ensure that students can consult named officers in the school', on a range of themes including module choices, study skills, learning resources and academic problems. This system is known as the Personal Academic Support System (PASS).

84 The requirement for partners to comply with the Code and adopt PASS is manifest in the standard memoranda of agreement, although the team noted the existence of one memorandum associated with a dual degree programme that did not make reference to the Code. In this case, the partner institution seemed to have complete discretion over the student support provided.

85 The Code does not prescribe precisely how PASS should operate, and different partners have responded in different ways to its requirements according to their size and learning environment (as indeed have schools within the University itself). For instance, partners with very small numbers of students tend to operate a more informal 'open-door' policy for access to academic support, whereas one of the partner colleges has identified an academic mentor to supplement the advice given by teaching staff. Whatever the exact nature of the system employed, students should be made aware of the support on offer through programme handbooks and the audit team saw evidence that this information was being disseminated effectively. The University maintains oversight of PASS mainly through annual monitoring and periodic review and the team also saw evidence that this was happening effectively.

86 Students on franchised, dual or joint awards are eligible to access support provided by the University's Student, Learning and Advisory Service (SLAS), the European and International Offices, Student Services (for career advice, disability support and counselling) and the Financial Aid Office. One of three partnership development officers, in conjunction with the Kent Union Advice and Outreach Worker, arranges induction sessions for students on franchised programmes about the range of support services provided. SLAS also offers study skills sessions for students based in partner colleges, as well as one-to-one advice at the University, by email or telephone.

87 The validated institutions are solely responsible for providing their students with access to student support services. The University monitors the effectiveness of these services primarily through programme review.

88 Most students whom the audit team met spoke positively about the arrangements for student support provided by their home institution. Those on franchised, joint or dual award programmes were also reassured to have access to support from the University should they need it. Students on one dual programme felt that the support available from the University was superior to that provided by its partner, although survey data indicated that this did not detract from their overall satisfaction with the programme. All students were familiar with the arrangements for making appeals and complaints, most referring to the information provided in student handbooks. The audit team concluded that the arrangements by which the University oversees the support provided to students were satisfactory.

Staffing and staff development

89 The University reviews potential partners' proposals for who should teach the associated programmes as part of approval, and maintains oversight of the past education and employment of new staff, for whom there are minimum discipline and teaching qualification requirements. Teaching staff are given bespoke written guidance on the application of the University's rules and regulation in the form of the documents mentioned in Section 1, which the audit team regarded as a feature of good practice.

90 The written documentation is supplemented by training and advice on both academic and administrative matters from University staff. The latter takes the form of specific briefing events in procedural matters, organised by the partnership development officers and professional development opportunities held at the University and organised by

the Unit for the Enhancement of Learning and Teaching, including an accredited teaching programme. The University is also developing a bespoke staff training programme in concert with the affiliates of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama for staff new to teaching in the performing arts.

91 Annual meetings between University and partner staff involved in collaborative programmes are also held, through the HE in FE Forum and Validation Forum events. These events are well-attended and appreciated by the attendees from partner institutions.

92 Each partner is supported by a Partnership Development Officer or member of the Office for Quality Assurance and Validation. Most, although not all, programmes also receive discipline-specific advice from either a Schools Liaison Officer or, for non-cognate provision, a Programme Adviser. The audit team regarded the staff support structure within the University as a feature of good practice.

Overall conclusion on the management of the quality of learning opportunities

93 The audit team concluded that, in the context of its collaborative provision, confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the University's present and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students.

Section 4: Institutional approach to quality enhancement in collaborative provision

94 The University's approach to the management of quality enhancement in collaborative provision is described in the Briefing Paper as '...both strategic and developmental...', defined as seeking to meet the high level strategic objectives of the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy through a series of bespoke activities designed to ensure the enhancement of provision provided by partners. The Briefing Paper also highlights the role of the University's quality assurance mechanisms, such as annual monitoring, as vehicles for enhancement primarily through the identification and dissemination of good practice.

95 Turning first to the role of the University's existing quality assurance mechanisms, the audit team noted that the annual monitoring report template directs staff to identify good practice in both the student learning experience and the content and delivery of the programme. Examples of good practice identified through this process may be disseminated in various different ways. In the faculties of Humanities and Sciences, staff from partner colleges are members of the Faculty Learning and Teaching Committee, and so are party to the annual discussion of schools' monitoring reports, including good practice. The partnership development officers also attend these two faculty committees as well as that for the Faculty of Social Sciences, which ensures that they are also party to any discussion of good practice. The audit team noted from the minutes of these committees that good practice did indeed form a prominent part of the discussion of annual monitoring. However, the good practice discussed was exclusively from home provision; the University may wish to consider if there is evidence of good practice among its partners that could usefully be disseminated among its home schools.

96 The audit team also noted that periodic review panels are asked to evaluate the effectiveness of the procedures for enhancing the quality of provision (such as peer observation, appraisal and staff development). Here, it was less obvious to the team how any good practice identified might be disseminated beyond the home school and its

immediate partners. The University might, therefore, wish to consider the possibility of incorporating the dissemination of good practice into the action plans arising from periodic review, which currently tend to focus on remedial action.

97 Beyond the University's standard quality assurance mechanisms, the audit team also noted the role of the HE in FE Forum (for franchised awards) and Validation Forum (for validated awards) in disseminating good practice among the University's partners. Staff whom the team met attested to the utility of these meetings in promoting enhancement, but also noted that the Validation Forum was held too soon after the deadline for the submission of annual monitoring reports to allow for the discussion of any good practice identified in these reports. The University may wish to consider convening the Forum slightly later in the year.

98 The developmental element of the University's approach to enhancement is manifest in a number of bespoke activities, including: the work of the partnership development officers, part of whose role is to support partners in the development of their curricula and teaching staff; the secondment of staff to and from partners, to support work such as the development of new Foundation Degrees; and the development of a bespoke staff training programme in concert with the affiliates of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama for staff new to teaching in the performing arts.

99 The University's strategy for the enhancement of teaching and learning is exemplified in a formal document, *the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Strategy 2009-12*. The strategy contains five aims, covering the realisation of students' ambitions, the enhancement of their employment prospects, reward for excellence in research-led teaching, strengthening the learning and teaching infrastructure and encouraging participation by all who can benefit from the University's experience. The implementation of the strategy is facilitated through school implementation plans, which should identify local measures to enhance the student learning experience. Progress is monitored and supported through annual monitoring and planning at faculty level.

100 The audit team saw the University's review of institutional-level achievement against the strategy in 2009-10 and the faculty plans for 2010-11. The team noted that any discussion of collaborative provision tended to be confined to the aim of encouraging wider participation among students drawn from underrepresented groups.

Section 5: Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students studying through collaborative arrangements

101 The Senate delegates strategic and operational responsibility for research degree programmes to the Graduate School Board (GSB). Pursuant to its terms of reference, GSB is charged with ensuring that all research programmes, including those delivered in collaboration with partner institutions, comply with the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*, published by QAA. The regulatory framework and quality assurance structures for research programmes are laid out in the University's research regulations and the Code of Practice for Quality Assurance for Research Programmes (the Research Code), supplemented by the additional guidance in Collaborative Provision: Policies and Procedures.

102 The University engages in three types of collaborative research degree provision: validation, co-supervision, and joint awards.

103 At the time of the audit, the validated provision comprised about 60 students at three UK partners. All of it was in the process of running out owing to the acquisition by two partners of powers to award their own research degrees, and the decision by the third to discontinue provision at this level. The audit team scrutinised the arrangements for the phasing out of the collaboration. It noted that the recent QAA Institutional audit report of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama concluded that the run-out arrangements for the partner that had discontinued research degree provision were satisfactory. The team also noted, however, that the exit arrangement between the University and one of the partners that had acquired its own powers stipulated that students already registered were now entitled to receive the award of the partner rather than that of the University, unless they expressed their preference in writing to continue studying for the University's award. The team learned that at least one student had been transferred to the partner's award, having missed the deadline for expressing their wish not to. While the team noted this problem was unlikely to reoccur given the University's withdrawal from this type of collaborative relationship, nevertheless it considers it desirable for the University to review its processes for the termination of partnership arrangements to ensure that the interests of students are protected.

104 The University has co-supervision links to about 10 institutions in other European countries, wherein a single research student spends at least a year of their degree at each institution, is examined under conjoint examination arrangements and, if successful, graduates with separate awards from the two partners. The audit team was satisfied that the appropriate contractual agreements were in place to clarify the roles and responsibilities of partners and students.

105 Joint awards at this level are confined to the joint Medway School of Pharmacy, where about 30 students were studying for research degrees at the time of the audit. There is a dedicated set of regulations for this provision jointly developed by the partners, and the audit team saw evidence that the University had given due consideration to the need to assess and respond to the opportunities for research students at the Medway campus. However, although the provision is recorded in the University's Collaborative Register, the team found that some of the people involved, including a supervisor, did not understand it to be collaborative. This may point to a need for the University to review the classification and management of its joint awards at this level.

106 The strength of the University's environment for research degree provision is evident in its Graduate School, dedicated Graduate College and in the research activity of its academic staff (at the 2008 Research Assessment Exercise, the University was placed 24th out of 159 institutions in terms of the best, or 4*, research). However, the audit team found little evidence that the University's own research environment made much contribution towards the environment inhabited by research students on validated provision. The University may wish to reflect on how it might strengthen the links to partner institutions if it enters into any new validations at this level.

107 Admissions procedures for research students on collaborative programmes follow the requirements in the University's Research Code. While the validated programmes were accepting students, admissions decisions were made either at meetings of the relevant Research Degrees subcommittee or were submitted by the partner to the University for consideration. Decisions about the admission of co-supervised research candidates are made within the relevant school by the Director of Graduate Studies and a member of staff with relevant academic expertise who is normally also the proposed supervisor.

108 The audit team heard of problems with admissions to validated programmes, whereby formal approval of the registration was delayed for several months during which students were unable to register for and access library and other learning resources.

The University may wish to reflect on these delays if it decides to enter into any new validations at this level.

109 Induction arrangements are multi-layered. The University provides information on support services and the Graduate School is responsible for the provision of transferable skills training. The partners offer training in subject-specific research techniques.

110 The Research Code strongly encourages team supervision. Teams comprise a main supervisor, who is the student's main point of contact, and a Supervisory Chair, responsible for ensuring that the programme meets the requirements of the Code. For the validated provision, the approval of chairs is made by the Programme Approvals Sub-Committee. The audit team saw evidence of this requirement being fulfilled.

111 For co-supervision, the University and its partner each accept responsibility for ensuring that candidates have access to a suitable level of supervision. The main supervisor at the University is appointed in the normal way; the supervisor proposed by the partner is approved by the relevant faculty following consideration of the proposed supervisor's past education and employment, normally before the student concerned enrolls.

112 Most of the co-supervisory research programmes are studied and assessed both in English and the language spoken at the partner institution. The audit team learned that the supervisors for these programmes were not obliged to be proficient in both languages. The team took the view that this could impede the ability of the University supervisor to engage fully with the research and so was likely to limit the effectiveness of the supervisory arrangements. This contributed to the team's conclusion that it was desirable for the University to consider formalising the specific requirements to be applied in the management of programmes that are taught and/or assessed in a language other than English.

113 Annex K of the University's Research Code outlines the key stages of induction, probation, upgrading and submission. The arrangements for the review of progress made by co-supervised students mirror those for students on campus: faculty graduate studies committees consider an annual report on the progress of each student, drawing on report forms completed by both supervisors and students. Where progress is unsatisfactory, students meet the School Director of Graduate Studies. If problems persist, the Faculty Director of Graduate Studies or the Dean may become involved.

114 For the validated provision, the progression of students is a standing agenda item for Research Degree Sub-Committee meetings, with decisions either confirmed by Kent staff attending the meetings or endorsed later when GSB receives the relevant set of minutes.

115 The audit team saw evidence of the progression and review of research students on validated and co-supervised provision and was satisfied that the arrangements were consistent with the *Code of practice* and operating properly.

116 The audit team saw evidence that opportunities for the development of both research and teaching skills were available to research students at the University and at validated partners. The University's revalidation of one of its validated partners in 2009 recommended some revisions to the research training programme to better accommodate the needs of part-time students, and these were subsequently adopted. Research students from Medway School of Pharmacy participate in the Graduate School's transferable skills training programme and will be able to access a suite of online skills training courses from 2010-11.

117 The University is in the process of enhancing feedback and representation mechanisms for its postgraduate students. GSB currently has three postgraduate members

to represent each faculty and plans to increase that number. The University has participated in the biennial Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) since 2008. Research students at partner institutions are eligible to participate in PRES, but the audit team found that the University had not considered the responses of collaborative students discretely.

118 The general University regulations for assessment of research students demand a minimum of two examiners, one of whom must be external. For dual awards, a different set of regulations applies that allows for a minimum of three, and a maximum of five, examiners. The audit team saw and heard evidence that students and staff were aware of the relevant regulations.

119 Complaints and appeals procedures are covered by the University's Standing Orders Governing Research Appeals, which make explicit reference to students at named validated partners. Students that the audit team spoke to reported an awareness of complaints and appeals procedures.

120 Overall, the audit team concluded that the University's management of its research degree programmes met the expectations of the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*.

Section 6: Published information

121 Information for applicants to joint, dual or franchised programmes is provided through the University's own prospectus. The validated institutions are responsible for producing their own prospectuses and other promotional material. The University anticipates that by September 2011 its online prospectus will also incorporate the validated provision.

122 Applicants may also find useful information in programme specifications, which the University publishes for all programmes (except those joint programmes where it was not the primary administering University at the point of approval). Other than specifications for validated provision, which are hosted on the Office for Quality Assurance and Validation website, copies of all collaborative programme and module specifications are published on the website of the relevant faculty.

123 The University acknowledges that its programme specifications are used primarily as tools for the approval, monitoring and review of award standards, and, as such, possess only limited appeal to students. In practice, therefore, students tend to acquire from student handbooks most of the information they need about their courses, including assessment arrangements, appeals and complaints procedures and details of support services. All partners are obliged to publish student handbooks, and the Quality Assurance and Validation Office requests copies of handbooks in advance of publication to ensure that information is accurate, complete and up to date.

124 The audit team read several handbooks published by partner institutions. The information therein met the University's requirements, with the exception of some of the information about one of the dual awards. The general view among the students whom the team met was that student handbooks were extremely useful, accurate and complete.

125 The Code of Practice for Quality Assurance for Taught Programmes (Taught Code) identifies staff/student liaison committees as the primary means of sharing external examiner reports with students. However, the audit team found that the liaison committees at partner institutions had not discussed these reports. The team, therefore, regards it as desirable for the University to share external examiner reports with students at partner institutions.

126 The University has relied on its schools, faculties and administrative departments to ensure that any publicity and marketing material published by partners is accurate and complete. Although the University, mainly through the Office for Quality Assurance and Validation, exercises some oversight of this material, it does not check all material systematically or in advance of publication. This approach was reflected in several examples of inaccurate and outdated material on partner institutions' websites, particularly in respect of validated provision. In this connection, the audit team regards it as desirable for the University to consider adopting a systematic approach for checking the accuracy and completeness of the information that partner institutions publish on their websites about the University and its awards.

RG 690a 04/11

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2011

ISBN 978 1 84979 245 5

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000

Fax 01452 557070

Email comms@qaa.ac.uk

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

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786