



# **Institutional review**

**University of Wales, Newport**

**November 2010**

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## **Abbreviations used in this report**

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| ADPC  | Academic Development and Planning Committee  |
| AME   | Annual Monitoring and Evaluation   |
| ASC   | Academic Standards Committee   |
| CELT  | Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching                                       |
| CPG   | Collaborative Partnerships Group   |
| CQFW  | Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales  |
| FDL   | Flexible and distributed learning  |
| FHEQ  | Framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland |
| LIS   | Learning and Information Services  |
| LTC   | Learning and Teaching Committee  |
| PGR   | Postgraduate Research  |
| PSRB  | Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies  |
| QAU   | Quality Assurance Unit   |
| QRS   | Quality and Registry Services  |
| RKEC  | Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee  |
| SGAR  | Standing Group on Academic Review  |
| SQAEC | School Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee                                   |
| UHOVI | Universities Heads of the Valleys Institute  |
| UoW   | University of Wales  |

## Introduction

A team of reviewers visited the University of Wales, Newport (the University) to carry out an Institutional review in November 2010. QAA conducted a preliminary visit to the University in February 2010 to discuss operational aspects of the review. QAA received the University's self-evaluation document in July 2010.

On 22 to 24 September 2010, the review team visited the University to explore - with the Vice-Chancellor, senior members of staff and student representatives - matters relating to the management of quality and standards raised by the self-evaluation document and other supplied documentation provided for the team. During this briefing visit the team identified a number of themes for the review visit and developed a programme of meetings, which was agreed with the University.

Between 14 and 16 October, subgroups of three members of the review team visited three collaborative partners of the University. Each partner delivers one or more programmes of study, which result in successful students gaining module credit or an award of the University. During these visits the subgroups of the team met with both staff and students.

The review visit took place from 8 to 12 November 2010. The review team was:

Professor Sue Frost  
Ms Charlie Leyland  
Professor Hastings McKenzie  
Professor Colin Raban  
Dr Catrin Thomas  
Ms Rachel Lucas (review secretary)

The review was coordinated by Professor Peter Hodson, Assistant Director in the Reviews Group. To arrive at its conclusions, the review team spoke to members of staff throughout the University and to current students, and read a wide range of documents about the ways in which the University manages the academic aspects of its provision.

## Summary of review findings

A review team appointed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) carried out an Institutional review of the University of Wales, Newport in November 2010. The review checked how effectively the University's procedures:

- establish and maintain the standards of its academic awards
- maintain the quality of learning opportunities in the programmes of study that lead to those awards
- secure the reliability of published information.

The review looked at all the University's provision and collaborative arrangements leading to its awards.

## Judgements

The review team's investigations led it to take the following view of the University:

- confidence can be placed in the soundness of the institution's current and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards
- confidence can be placed in the soundness of the institution's current and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students.

## Features of good practice

The review team noted the following features of good practice:

- the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching's contribution to teaching and learning, which has a significant impact on the learning experience (paragraphs 3.2 and 5.4)
- the University's commitment to the Student Mentor system (paragraph 3.5)
- the University's strategic approach to the development of research (paragraph 6.2)
- the use of postgraduate research 'learning logs' to inform supervisory discussion and progression management (paragraph 6.3).

## Recommendations

### Advisable actions

The review team advises the University to:

- consider whether the effectiveness of the deliberative processes, and therefore institutional oversight, are undermined by the nature and volume of business assigned to its committees (paragraphs 1.7, 3.3 and 5.3)
- ensure that its published information reflects the particular characteristics of individual programme variants (paragraph 7.4).

## **Desirable actions**

The review team would like to see the University:

- clarify its expectations in relation to key roles performed by academic staff and students in the management of taught provision (paragraph 1.9)
- ensure that its arrangements for the approval and assurance of articulation arrangements and standard accreditation are robust and fit for purpose (paragraph 4.3)
- consider whether its monitoring arrangements are effective in identifying emerging issues and ensuring timely and appropriate action (paragraph 4.8).

## Review findings

### 1 Academic management framework

#### Committee and managerial structure

1.1 The University's committee structure is designed to provide a clear separation between the oversight of academic quality and business development. The structure consists of an Academic Board, supported by four subcommittees: the Academic Development and Planning Committee (ADPC), the Academic Standards Committee (ASC), the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC), and the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC).

1.2 ASC is supported by its own subcommittees: the Collaborative Partnerships Group (CPG), the Regulations Committee and the Standing Group on Academic Review (SGAR). Each of the University's schools has a School Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (SQAEC), whose minutes are sent to both the Academic Board and the ASC.

1.3 Overall responsibility for a school's academic provision rests with its Dean, supported by Associate Deans with responsibility for academic development and planning, learning and teaching, and research and enterprise. Institutional-level responsibility for the development and maintenance of the University's quality assurance procedures lies with the Director of Quality and Registry Services (QRS) and the University's Quality Assurance Unit (QAU).

1.4 The University documents clearly its procedures for the approval, monitoring and review of its higher education provision, and these are in line with the expectations of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice)* published by QAA. The University places a high value on external participation in curriculum development, and the review team was able to confirm that external experts are used at programme approval and reapproval, with validation and revalidation panels routinely including two external experts.

1.5 The review team examined a number of internal validations and revalidations and found that, while there is some variation in the format of paperwork, the processes are effective and provide appropriate central oversight.

1.6 The University's approach to programme monitoring is particularly rigorous. The process begins with the identification of two enhancement themes to be considered at each level of reporting. Annual Monitoring and Evaluation (AME) reports are prepared at four different levels. All the departmental AME reports and a sample of the programme-level AME reports form the basis of an institutional AME overview report. Each Associate Dean (Learning and Teaching) uses the departmental and programme-level reports and the institutional oversight report to prepare a school AME report, in which responses are made to issues identified. At each level, the AME reports identify and prioritise action necessary to address areas of concern. They also identify good practice for dissemination.

1.7 The review team recognises that the University has put a great deal of effort into the AME process. However, the process produces lengthy reports, and the team considers that this limits the opportunity for debate, particularly at the University level. The team notes that the University is intending to review the AME process. This is a timely proposal and the team **advises** the University, as an outcome of this internal review, to ensure that the nature and volume of business assigned to its committees does not undermine the effectiveness of the deliberative processes and institutional oversight (see also paragraphs 3.3 and 5.3).



1.8 The University currently operates four distance learning programmes and intends to increase provision in this area. Approval of distance learning follows standard procedures. The requirement for additional information focuses on the assurance of the quality of those elements delivered through a flexible and distributed learning (FDL) arrangement. While the existing FDL provision was limited, it was apparent to the review team that the University was developing platforms for the effective delivery of such provision. This activity is supported by a Technology Enhanced Learning Group, which reports to LTC.

### **Student and employer representation on committees**

1.9 The broad range of students studying at the University, which includes many part-time and work-based students, presents particular challenges for providing student feedback opportunities. The review team learnt that in relation to the Universities Heads of the Valleys Institute (UHOVI) there was a perceived absence of student representation, but the team understood that arrangements were being developed. Student representation on committees, while comprehensive, is not always productive, and the team found evidence of representatives neither attending nor contributing to meetings. The University has recognised this and has funded, from 2010-11, a new Course Representative Coordinator to develop and promote student engagement in the representative system. The team found that there was some lack of clarity regarding the role and responsibilities of representatives and also on the expectations of some academic staff on how student representatives should be supported. The team acknowledges that some steps were already being taken to improve engagement with the representative system. However, the team considers it **desirable** for the University to take further action to clarify expectations in relation to key roles performed by academic staff and students in the management of taught provision.

1.10 The University works closely with a range of employers and Sector Skills Councils to identify and respond to market needs. Employer links are overseen by the University's Research and Graduate Studies. The review team found that employers are able to influence the curriculum design and saw evidence of satisfaction from employers regarding their interaction with the University.

### **Use of the Academic Infrastructure**

1.11 The University states that external reference points, including the Academic Infrastructure, are one of the key means by which it ensures the equivalence of standards and determines quality. Where relevant, University policy is guided by the Academic Infrastructure, for example in relation to Assessment and Award Regulations. The review team found that programme specifications are published on the University's website and include reference to subject benchmark statements. The Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW), *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and subject benchmark statements are used as part of validation and revalidation. The AME process requires explicit consideration of how the programme under review relates to the relevant subject benchmark statements. The team did note, however, that there was variability in how thoroughly this was done across the University. It appears that, in the case of some programmes which are delivered in several locations, there is only one version of the programme specification and it is largely written from the perspective of the home-campus-based students (see paragraph 7.4).

1.12 The review team also found that the University systematically maps its own procedures against the *Code of practice* published by QAA, and that this process is formally overseen by SGAR. However, in the University's initial consideration of the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)* in 2004, it identified areas for action in relation to Part B on flexible and distributed learning (FDL), including e-learning. The documented evidence of recent subsequent mapping of the

revised version of *Section 2* was limited to Part A, so that the team was unable to confirm whether the initial issues had been addressed, but noted the routine operation of FDL was successful.

## Conclusion

1.13 In the light of the full range of evidence considered, the review team was able to confirm that the University makes systematic and appropriate use of the Academic Infrastructure. The team also verified that the University has mapped its processes against the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education's *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*.

## 2 Academic standards

### Effectiveness of institutional procedures for securing the standards of awards

2.1 The University has a range of methods for securing the standards of its awards. External experts (from the academic and, where appropriate, the professional and industrial sectors) advise on programmes as they are developed and validated. The process of approval includes the production of a programme specification, which details broad content, the assessment strategy and the learning outcomes of the award. The programme specifications are published on the University website and in student handbooks. This process of developing and validating programmes establishes the standards of the University's awards.

2.2 The majority of the University's provision is subject to review by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). The review team concluded that the University responds appropriately to issues raised by external bodies. The team noted that the University achieves the highest level of recognition in some areas when meeting the requirements of external accreditation bodies.

### Assessment

2.3 The assessment policies, regulations and procedures that govern the University's awards are published in the University's Assessment and Award Regulations. The regulations have been mapped against the *Code of practice*. They are also clearly referenced against the CQFW and reflect the requirements of the many PSRBs with whom the University interacts. Students are directed to the regulations via student handbooks and through the 'my Learning Essentials' website portal. The regulations are monitored by the Regulations Committee to ensure they continue to be fit for purpose, and the Committee regularly advises ASC on recommended changes. One monitoring method used is an annual audit of the operation of Examination Boards.

2.4 The review team saw evidence of the activity of the Regulations Committee and agrees with the University's view that the committee is proactive in reviewing the regulatory framework, which forms a sound basis for securing and maintaining standards.

### External examiners

2.5 Once a programme has been approved the ongoing maintenance of that programme's standards is monitored by external examiners and through the AME process. External examiners' reports are reviewed at institutional, school and programme levels via the AME process to establish the external comparability of standards and the appropriateness of the awards in relation to the Academic Infrastructure. External examiners

are also asked to confirm that assessment processes are sound, consistent and fair and that action has been taken in response to previous reports.

### **Management information**

2.6 In addition to feedback from external examiners, the AME process includes consideration of statistical data. The information about recruitment, intake, retention and withdrawal, and student achievement is provided to programme teams. In addition to considering its own data, the University also routinely evaluates data drawn from other sources, and compares its performance against Higher Education Statistics Agency benchmarks and the annual Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education survey.

2.7 The University has recognised the need to develop further its management information systems to support the consistent availability of comprehensive data. The review team nevertheless found that the University makes systematic use of management information to inform decision making at institutional, school and programme levels.

### **Conclusion**

2.8 The review team found that the University was operating with appropriate regard for the *Code of practice* and formed the view that confidence can be placed in the soundness of the institution's current and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards.

## **3 Quality of learning opportunities**

### **Effectiveness of institutional procedures for supporting learning**

3.1 The Learning and Information Services (LIS) department coordinates the University's learning resources, comprising student services, library services and IT and media support. Academic support is also mainly provided centrally through LIS. This includes the Study Advice Service, which offers study skills support in the English language and also works with the computer services to help students with technological difficulties. The review team found that students considered the Study Advice Service to be particularly helpful. The library was considered to be well stocked, and no significant variations were identified between the levels of support available at the different campuses. The team were made aware of individual arrangements for LIS services with some work-based learners from UHOVI.

3.2 The University's Learning and Teaching Strategy outlines objectives intended to locate teaching within a culture of research and scholarship. The Associate Deans (Learning and Teaching) have a specific remit for this, and the University has made a significant investment in the establishment of the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching (CELT). The review team found evidence of both strategic and operational commitment to this strategy. The team also found that CELT plays a pivotal role in the development of teaching excellence, including offering staff a considerable range of teaching development activities and participation in funded research projects. The team saw evidence that CELT also strengthens and supports the contribution to teaching and learning made by the support services. The team concluded that CELT is a sector-leading development that constitutes a feature of **good practice**.

### **Research-informed teaching**

3.3 Oversight of research-informed teaching has been one of the AME annual enhancement themes. However, the review team found that at ASC and LTC level there had

been no analysis of how research-informed teaching actively enhances the learning environment for students. The team considers it **advisable** for the University to streamline its reporting system in order to support more substantial debate and action planning through its central committees (see paragraphs 1.7 and 5.3).

### **Study tutors and student mentors**

3.4 The University has made a commitment that each student will have a study tutor, who provides the first point of contact for personal support and guidance. The review team found that this is implemented inconsistently across the institution, although the team was told that different terminology might account for this in part. The team did not find evidence of an institution-wide policy on the role of a study tutor, aside from meeting with students at least four times a year. Accepting potential differences in terminology, the team concluded that a clear role specification for study tutors would further promote the concept that every student has access to individual academic support.

3.5 The University also has a network of student mentors who operate as a point of contact for other students. Each school has a staff Student Mentor Coordinator. The Student Mentor system was identified as an example of good practice in the 2004 QAA Institutional review. The review team found that it has since been further strengthened through intensive training and the development of a wider network of student mentors. The team viewed the continuing commitment as a feature of **good practice**.

### **Feedback**

3.6 The University uses feedback from students to reflect on the effectiveness of its procedures for supporting learning. It gathers this information through a number of channels, including student representation on committees at departmental, school and university level. The University makes full use of the National Student Survey, Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey and Postgraduate Research Experience Survey, and also runs its own biennial student satisfaction survey. The agenda for revalidation panels includes a meeting with students. While recognising that there is a need for continued improvement, the University believes that feedback from students makes a positive contribution to the assurance of the quality of the learning experience. The review team saw evidence that the University responds actively to the surveys, with the help of the Students' Union, and that student feedback does indeed make a positive contribution.

3.7 The University is developing ways to obtain feedback from the broad diversity of its students. The most recent example is a change to the Student Satisfaction Survey so that it includes the views of students on courses run in collaboration with partner institutions.

### **Conclusion**

3.8 The review team concluded that confidence can be placed in the soundness of the institution's current and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students. However, the team draws the University's attention to the recommendation made in paragraph 3.3 on streamlining the reporting system.

## **4 Collaborative arrangements**

4.1 In all its forms of collaborative arrangements, the University has 18 partnerships within the UK and 15 overseas. It has a strategic commitment to maintaining and building upon these arrangements.

4.2 Collaborative arrangements are overseen on behalf of the Academic Board by the Collaborative Provision Group (CPG). The Partnership Strategy Panel has responsibility for business development and reports to the University's Management Board. The mechanisms for assuring the quality and standards of collaborative provision are the same as those in place for University provision, with additional mechanisms to address the particular challenges presented by collaboration. The procedural arrangements are published in the Collaborative Partner Operations Manual, which the review team found to be comprehensive and accessible.

4.3 The review team found some lack of clarity in relation to articulation arrangements. Articulation arrangements are regarded as an area of potential growth, supporting the University's intention to recruit more international students. The distinction between articulation arrangements, accreditation and accreditation of prior learning was unclear and there was, as a result, some lack of clarity about which quality assurance procedures applied. The team noted that the issue has been recognised by CPG and considered it **desirable** that in taking action the University should ensure that its arrangements for the approval and assurance of articulation arrangements and standard accreditation are robust and fit for purpose.

### **Selection and approval of partners**

4.4 Initial approval of collaborative programmes and partnerships includes an initial report on the potential partner, due diligence enquires and a validation process to check that the partner is able to deliver the proposed curriculum. This process includes the approval of the staff who will teach on the programme.

### **Partnership operation**

4.5 Once the collaboration is established, partners are expected to complete the same quality assurance and enhancement processes as those used by the University. In addition, proposed student assessments must be approved by the responsible University school and assessments are moderated by University staff. Where programmes are assessed in languages other than English, a sample of scripts is translated into English and a further sample is checked by an independent translation service. The review team found that the University's arrangements for securing the standards of assessment in its collaborative programmes are appropriate and effective. The team concluded that the arrangements could be improved by requiring all external examiners to visit partners and by ensuring the external examiner reports include separate comments about each partner.

4.6 All partners are assigned link coordinators who are responsible for ensuring the franchised programme operates in line with University requirements and for facilitating the approval of any new staff teaching on the University programmes. Summaries of reports from link coordinators are considered by the Collaborative Partnerships Group annually. The review team concluded that the link coordinators were generally effective and valued by partner institutions.

4.7 Collaborative students have access to the home campus resources via LIS, and the review team found that LIS was effective in communicating access to its library services to students and in enabling collaborative students access to those services when on campus. However, the team did find some uncertainty among the students it met about the nature and extent of their entitlement to broader University resources. Students had also experienced delays gaining access to the University's online resources due to delays completing their registration with the University. In one partnership, having identified an ambiguity in the relationship between the University programme and the programme on

which the students had been previously enrolled, it seemed possible to the team that that the comments expressed by students were based on a period during which they were not formally registered with the University, but were on a programme which gave advanced standing.

### **Monitoring in collaborative provision**

4.8 The University has identified that overseas collaborative provision is not as prominent in its Annual Monitoring and Evaluation (AME) reporting process as it would like. The review team found that some action had been taken to address this but that, in overseeing both home and overseas collaborative provision, the Academic Standards Committee (ASC) continued to be reliant on reports from departments and schools, which the team found to vary in quality. The University's recent and planned actions to strengthen the periodic review of its partnerships will enhance the quality of information available. This will enable ASC to fulfil its responsibility for monitoring and evaluating the academic standards and quality of collaborative programmes. The team considered it **desirable** that the University, in its planned review of the AME process, should consider whether its monitoring arrangements are effective in identifying emerging issues and ensuring timely and appropriate action.

### **Conclusion**

4.9 The review team found that, overall, the University has a sound framework for its collaborative arrangements and that it operates with appropriate regard for the *Code of practice*. However, the team draws the University's attention to the recommendations made in paragraphs 4.3 and 4.8.

## **5 The institution's management of quality enhancement**

5.1 The University has defined quality enhancement as 'the process of taking deliberate steps to improve the quality of the student experience' and sees enhancement as a priority activity. It believes its approach to quality enhancement emphasises the relationship between quality management through university-level committees and senior staff and the promotion of good practice within schools and departments.

5.2 Structurally, the University has supported its approach to quality enhancement through the development of SQAECs, which aim to integrate quality assurance and enhancement, and through a move to place quality enhancement at the centre of the AME procedure. The CELT also plays an important role in supporting and developing quality enhancement through a range of activities, including teaching and learning grants, teaching fellowships and the production of nationally recognised publications.

5.3 The University sets two enhancement themes for consideration in AME each year. When these have been considered in each department and school, the summarised outcomes contribute to an annual Quality Enhancement Report for LTC. The review team found that the AME process generates considerable evidence in its efforts to highlight good practice and innovations in teaching and learning. As a result, SQAECs are able to focus on positive features of practice. The team found less evidence of debate at university-level committees about the impact of quality enhancement on the student experience. The systematic reporting through committees produces substantial summary reports for consideration at central committees. A more streamlined reporting system would support more extensive debate and action planning through the central committees. The team considers it **advisable** that the University should consider whether the effectiveness of the deliberative processes, and therefore institutional oversight, are undermined by the nature

and volume of business assigned to its committees and whether a more streamlined reporting system would support more productive debate and action planning through its central committees (see paragraphs 1.7 and 3.3).

5.4 The review team noted that CELT plays a key role in supporting quality enhancement. It offers staff a considerable range of teaching development activities and opportunities to take part in funded research projects. Its conferences, seminars and publications result in findings that are disseminated within the University and used by staff to inform their teaching practice. CELT also monitors research-informed teaching and reports regularly to the Management Executive and to the Learning and Teaching Committee. The team found that activities facilitated and led by CELT made a significant difference to the learning experience of students both on campus and in some partner institutions. The team concluded that the contributions of CELT were a feature of **good practice**.

## Conclusion

5.5 The review team found that the University was actively engaging the schools in the implementation of its agenda to enhance the student experience. However the team draws the University's attention to the recommendation made in paragraph 5.3 on streamlining the reporting system.

## 6 Arrangements for postgraduate students

6.1 At present, research degree awards delivered at the University are made by the University of Wales, which retains overall responsibility for standards. The University of Wales, Newport has made a strategic decision to achieve research degree awarding powers and intends to expand its provision of postgraduate programmes, as part of its mission to increase student numbers. It has a set of research degree regulations that operate within the overarching regulations of the University of Wales. The University's policies have been developed in line with the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*, published by QAA, and are clear about entry qualifications, admission, induction, and arrangements for monitoring and supervision. Reporting mechanisms, together with the annual monitoring and evaluation process, ensure that the University has clear oversight of its research degree students.

6.2 The University is conscious that its research student numbers are relatively small and because of this has taken a strategic approach to the development of its research culture and environment. Its research strategy has focused on existing strengths and experience, supporting knowledge exchange and research with the local public and private sectors. The development of an active research culture for students has been strengthened by the establishment of nine research centres, the first phase in plans to develop a Graduate School. The review team found that this strategic approach to developing the University's research environment has established strong support for research students, including opportunities for skills development, interaction with other students and access to research facilities. It was judged to be a feature of **good practice**.

6.3 Research supervisors are the students' primary point of contact within the University, responsible for monitoring student progress and detailed reporting back to the University on this progress. Attention has been given by the University to the development of supervisory staff, and student feedback is very positive about the quality of supervisory teams. Students are expected to complete a personal log book that is used both to record personal development planning and to monitor progress formally. The review team found that both staff and students valued the personal log book. The team concluded that the University's approach to informing supervisory discussion and managing student

progression, through the use of learning logs, was a feature of **good practice** in that it facilitates learning and enhances the quality of research.

## Conclusion

6.4 Overall, the review team found that the University has a sound framework for its arrangements for postgraduate students. The relevant policies and procedures are clearly defined in the Research Degree Assessment and Award Regulations and the Research Student Handbook. The research environment and postgraduate research experience meet fully the expectations of the *Code of practice, Section 1*.

## 7 Published information

7.1 The review team found that the University has procedures in place to check the accuracy of published information, and that it evaluates the effectiveness of its public information through routine student feedback. All students receive a student handbook, which provides the essential information on studying at the University, and are directed towards webpages containing additional information including the Assessment and Award Regulations. The institutional handbook is produced by the Marketing and External Affairs Department and reviewed annually by the working group on enrolment and induction.

7.2 The review team noted that most students found the information provided accurate and helpful, although occasional lapses in accuracy occurred, especially where courses are undergoing major development.

7.3 In relation to collaborative provision, the University has recently approved a revised set of procedures for the monitoring and approval of promotional materials and for checking the accuracy of student handbooks. The new protocol assigns various responsibilities to the Partnerships Administrator, International Office, Marketing and link coordinators with activity being coordinated by the Quality and Registry Services. Public information, publicity and promotional materials relating to the Universities Heads of the Valleys Institute (UHOVI) require the approval of the UHOVI core team.

7.4 The University publishes programme specifications containing information that it regards as a primary benefit for prospective students. The published programme specifications do not, however, reflect any local variation in delivery when the programme is franchised to a partner institution. In one case, this resulted in students studying at a partner of the University being unclear about the exact nature of the programme to which they had been admitted. The review team **advises** the University to ensure that its published information reflects the particular characteristics of individual programme variants (see paragraph 1.11).

7.5 The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales has issued guidance on the full publication of course costs. Though course costs are not included in the current prospectus, initial work within student services has resulted in the compilation of rough estimates, to be published alongside money tips for students. The Marketing and Sales Department has developed an approach to help departments in compiling this information before their handbooks go to publication.



## Conclusion

7.6 The review team found that the information published by the University is accurate, comprehensive and reliable. The University has a published Welsh Language Scheme and complies with the *Welsh Language Act 1993*. However, the team draws the University's attention to the recommendation in paragraph 7.4 on individual programme variants.

## **Annex A: The University of Wales, Newport and its mission**

The University of Wales, Newport (formerly University of Wales College, Newport) came into existence in 1996 through the admission of Gwent College of Higher Education to the University of Wales as a University College, following its acquisition of degree awarding powers. Gwent College of Higher Education had itself been formed in 1975 through the merger of three institutions: Caerleon College, Newport College of Art, and the Newport and Monmouthshire College of Technology. In 2003 the institution was given Constituent Institution status by the University of Wales and, as a consequence, in 2004 the Privy Council granted permission to change its name to 'University of Wales, Newport'.

The University has held taught degree awarding powers since 1995 but has placed them in abeyance. Since the closure of the Council for National Academic Awards, all degrees and associated interim awards at the University have been University of Wales (UoW) awards. Under arrangements introduced by UoW in 2005, full responsibility for quality and standards is devolved to member institutions when they have acquired degree awarding powers at the appropriate level. In respect of research degrees, the University is operating under 'interim arrangements' with UoW until it gains research degree awarding powers. Under these arrangements, the University carries responsibility for the quality of its research degree provision but UoW retains responsibility for academic standards, and has put in place a number of mechanisms relevant to this role.

Academic provision at the University of Wales, Newport is managed through four academic schools: Newport School of Art, Media and Design; Newport Business School; the Newport School of Education; and the Newport School of Health and Social Sciences. There is also a Centre for Community and Lifelong Learning. The University currently operates on two main campuses in Newport, Allt-yr-yn and Caerleon. There is a venue for community-based delivery at Tredegar, and a major new City Campus opened in January 2011.

### **Mission statement**

The University's mission, set out in its Strategic Plan, is to 'inspire and enable individuals, organisations and communities to succeed through innovation in high quality learning, research and enterprise'. The mission reflects the University's tradition of widening access and providing higher education opportunities for communities in the five counties of South East Wales, together with its role in leading and supporting the establishment of a vibrant, socially inclusive, knowledge-based economy in Newport's city region. The mission is consistent with the Welsh Assembly Government's key priorities for Higher Education in Wales.

### **Collaborative provision**

In May 2009-10 the University had around 9,280 student enrolments, including more than 1,000 on programmes franchised to further education colleges across Wales. The student profile is characterised by a large percentage of part-time students and a significant proportion of young entrants from state schools and colleges, National Statistics socio-economic classifications 4, 5, 6 and 7, and low-participation neighbourhoods. The University's Portfolio Strategy sets out the specific aim of raising the number of student enrolments to around 10,000 by December 2015.

## **Developments since the previous academic quality review**

The previous Institutional review was conducted in November 2004, and expressed confidence in the soundness of the University's current and likely future management of the quality of its academic programmes and the academic standards of its awards.

In 2006 the University participated in the QAA audit of overseas collaborative provision in China. The report concluded by identifying two features of good practice: the approach to security of the assessment process, including the use of external invigilators; and the care taken to establish a University presence at its partner, engendering in the students a clear sense of identity with the University. It was also recommended that the University should consider the codification and documentation of existing practice, with particular reference to the approaches to delivery and assessment in Chinese and the approval of outreach centres, and that it should review its approach to the wording on the award certificate indicating the language of delivery and assessment. The University has responded in full to the recommendations of the QAA audit of its partnership links in China.

Since the last Institutional review, the University has participated in QAA's special review of postgraduate research programmes. This concluded that the University's ability to secure and enhance the quality and standards of its postgraduate research provision was satisfactory.

Other significant developments since the last Institutional review include the appointment of a new Vice Chancellor in January 2007, the merger of several schools, the creation of two new senior management posts, and improvements to the University's estate and facilities.

## Annex B: QAA and its Institutional review process

The primary responsibility for academic standards and quality in UK higher education rests with individual universities and colleges, each of which is independent and self-governing. QAA checks how well they meet their responsibilities, identifying good practice and making recommendations for improvement. QAA also publishes guidelines to help universities and colleges develop effective systems to ensure students have a high-quality experience.

One of QAA's core functions is to carry out reviews and report to the public on how universities and other higher education providers maintain the quality of the learning opportunities they offer to students and the academic standards of the awards they make. In Wales, this process is known as Institutional review. QAA operates similar but separate processes in England and Northern Ireland, and in Scotland.

### Institutional review

The aims of Institutional review are to meet the public interest in knowing that universities and colleges are:

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

### Judgements

The Institutional review team makes judgements about the institution based on:

- the confidence they can place in the soundness of the institution's current and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards
- the confidence they can place in the soundness of the institution's current and likely future management of the quality of its programmes.

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

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

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

## Nationally agreed standards

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

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), which include descriptions of different higher education qualifications
- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*
- subject benchmark statements, which describe the characteristics of degrees in different subjects
- guidelines for preparing programme specifications, which are descriptions of what is on offer to students in individual programmes of study, and which outline the intended knowledge, skills, understanding and attributes of a student completing that programme. They also give details of teaching and assessment methods and link the programme to the FHEQ.

## The review process

Institutional reviews are carried out by a team comprising academics and one student member, who review the way in which institutions oversee their academic quality and standards.

The main elements of Institutional review are:

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

## The evidence for the review

To get the evidence for its judgement, the review team carries out a number of activities, including:

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

## Institutional review

The review team also gathers evidence by focusing on examples of the institution's internal quality assurance processes at work using 'thematic trails'. These trails may focus on how well institutional processes work at local level and across the institution as a whole.

Institutions are required to publish information about the quality and standards of their programmes and awards in a format recommended in document 04/05 *Information on quality and standards in higher education*, published by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales.

## **Annex C: Response from the University**

The University of Wales, Newport welcomes the report of QAA's Institutional review in November 2010, which covers both academic programmes offered in Newport and at the University's collaborative partner institutions. We welcome in particular the review team's judgement of confidence in the soundness of the University's current and likely future management of the academic standards of awards and the quality of learning opportunities for students. We are pleased that the review team identified several features of good practice, including the University's strategic approach to the development of research, and we will be building on these in the future as we take forward our strategic objectives, including the submission of an application for research degree-awarding powers. We have noted the recommendations of the review team and actions to address them are either already in progress or will be taken forward over the next few months.

The University found participation in the review to be a worthwhile process, particularly in terms of the opportunities created for institution-wide reflection on the effectiveness of arrangements for enhancing quality and maintaining standards, and we would like to thank the review team for the constructive manner with which it conducted its inquiries.

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