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Introduction

A team of auditors from the Quality Assurance for Higher Education (QAA) visited Bournemouth University (the University) from the 1 to 5 December 2008 to carry out an Institutional audit. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the quality of the learning opportunities available to students and on the academic standards of the awards that the University offers.

Outcomes of the institutional audit

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

- 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
- 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.

Institutional approach to quality enhancement

Overall, the audit team found that the University's institutional approach to quality enhancement was informed by clear strategic direction and was leading to systematic improvements in learning opportunities. In the last two years the University has conducted a number of major initiatives to enhance the support for all its students and its staff in the areas of learning, teaching and research.

Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

The University has invested significantly in strengthening the support for its postgraduate students. Overall, the audit team found that the arrangements for postgraduate research students were appropriate and satisfactory and met the precepts of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice), Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*.

Published information

The audit found that reliance could reasonably be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the University publishes about the quality of its educational provision and the standards of its awards.

Features of good practice

The audit team identified the following areas of good practice:

- the University's planned, systematic and reflective approach to the review of its processes and structures (paragraph 17)
- the peer-assisted learning scheme, in its development opportunities for student mentors and in the additional support it provides for first-year students (paragraphs 61, 107)
- the peripatetic roles for liaison, advice and support, which operate between the University and its partner institutions, serving not only to disseminate information but also to enhance the student experience wherever delivered (paragraph 106)
- the fully integrated support mechanisms for research students operating across all areas of the University (paragraph 134).

Recommendations for action

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

Recommendations for action that the audit team considers advisable:

- to ensure that the impact of the development of its programme frameworks does not detract from its current ability to maintain appropriate oversight of the standards of awards and the quality of the student experience in individual programmes (paragraphs 15, 31, 97).

Recommendations for action that the audit team considers desirable:

- to clarify the balance of activity relating to quality assurance and to quality enhancement within the University's deliberative committees (paragraphs 16, 63, 99)
- to ensure that the development of annual monitoring fulfils its potential with respect to the enhancement of student learning opportunities across the University (paragraphs 41, 77)
- to monitor carefully the impact of the University's Releasing Potential initiative upon the student experience (paragraph 82).

Section 1: Introduction and background

The institution and its mission

1 The University traces its origins to the early part of the twentieth century with the foundation of the Bournemouth Municipal College. Its more recent history flows from the formation of the Dorset Institute of Higher Education in 1976. This was redesignated as Bournemouth Polytechnic in 1990 and incorporated as Bournemouth University in 1992. The University is located on two campuses within the Bournemouth and Poole conurbation. At the time of the audit, the University had approximately 16,500 students, of which 11,200 were full-time undergraduates, 3,500 part-time undergraduates, and 1,700 postgraduate students. Of these, approximately 2,700 students were studying at a partner institution of the University.

2 The academic provision of the University is largely based in its six schools: the Business School, the School of Conservation Sciences, the School of Design, Engineering and Computing, the School of Health and Social Care, the Media School and the School of Services Management. The Anglo European Chiropractic College is a quasi-School. The University offers a wide range of undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes in these subject areas, together with awards for postgraduate research.

3 The University, as set out in the Corporate Plan 2006-2012, envisages the ongoing development of the University to be a strongly internationally oriented institution, characterised by a student-centred environment that emphasises both intellectual achievement and employability and offering a range of high-quality academic programmes geared to the professions.

4 The Briefing Paper drew attention to the presentation in the Corporate Plan of a framework for the transformation of the University to a more academically-led institution. Its strategy includes the development of the academic staff profile to strengthen the research, enterprise and professional practice dimensions of the University's achievement. This has involved a range of initiatives, including significant recruitment of new academic staff, investing in the potential of existing staff through substantial development programmes, and a major PhD scholarship programme. In particular, the audit team noted the strategic commitment to a 'fundamental change in the nature and engagement of our staff', moving from a staff base of predominantly 'teachers' to one of 'academics'.

The information base for the audit

5 The University provided the audit team with a Briefing Paper and supporting documentation, including that related to the sampling trails selected by the team. The index to the Briefing Paper provided detailed reference to sources of evidence, which served to demonstrate the University's approach to managing the security of the academic standards of its awards and the quality of its educational provision. The team had electronic access to all documents referenced in the Briefing Paper, and to many in hard copy; in addition the team had access to the University's intranet and its student and staff portals.

6 The Students' Union produced a student written submission setting out the students' views on the accuracy of information provided to them, the experience of students as learners and their role in quality management.

7 In addition, the audit team had access to:

- the report of a special Review of research degree programmes, conducted by QAA, July 2006
- the report on a Major review of healthcare programmes, Bournemouth University and the Dorset and Somerset Health Authority, June 2005
- the report of a Foundation Degree review for Equine Studies, Bournemouth University and Kingston Maurward College, May 2005
- the University's one-year follow-up report to QAA in response to the Institutional audit report, 2005
- an audit report on the University's collaborative provision, December 2006
- the report of Institutional audit, March 2004
- notes of meetings with staff and students.

Developments since the last audit

8 The last Institutional audit in 2004 found that broad confidence could be placed in the soundness of the University's current and likely future management of the quality of its academic programmes and the academic standards of awards. A number of features of good practice were identified.

9 The recommendations of the Institutional audit (2004) and Collaborative provision audit (2006) focused consideration upon:

- review of the Senate committee structures related to collaborative provision
- improvement of the central and consistent oversight of the authority for quality assurance of collaborative provision
- taking appropriate steps to ensure that the Academic Standards Committee is both adequately informed of, and exercises its authority over, decision-making within schools and the Partnerships, Access and Community Engagement section, relating to individual partnerships
- taking appropriate steps to ensure that both the processes and practices of approval, monitoring, review and accreditation of prior learning are fully completed and compliant with the University's quality assurance arrangements
- strengthening of the mentoring of new academic staff, including participation in an appropriate teaching qualification

- engagement with the Academic Infrastructure, particularly the *Code of practice*
- completion of the University's quality improvement agenda for the Learning Environment
- review its strategies and processes in order to incorporate employer and graduate input.

10 In response, the University has:

- relocated the management of collaborative provision within schools
- strengthened the strategic focus of partnership boards
- developed summary reporting of approval and review processes for the Academic Standards Committee
- enhanced opportunities for new full-time staff to participate in a Postgraduate Certificate in Education Practice and made it a requirement for the completion of probation to be dependent upon completion of the first 20-credit unit. This fulfils the requirements for Associate Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy and made improvements to staff induction and mentoring processes
- worked to strengthen links with employers and ensured that emphasis is placed upon greater development of employability skills within and outside the curricula
- taken action to ensure it continues to focus upon the employability of its graduates
- convened an employability steering group
- identified the need for, and approved the resourcing of, investment in the refurbishment and renewal of the estate, including investment in partner institutions.

11 The audit team examined the extent to which these developments had been firmly embedded within the University's structure and found that they were, in the main, making an active impact upon engagement between the University and its partner institutions and the opportunities given to staff to develop their careers. There was more limited evidence of the impact of employer engagement at all levels within the University, especially within partner institutions.

Institutional framework for managing academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities

12 Overall authority for the management of academic standards and quality lies with the University's Senate. It is served by the Academic Standards Committee (ASC), which has the remit for the development of quality processes and the monitoring of their effectiveness. Processes are generally developed, introduced and monitored centrally, but implemented at school level (this now including the management of academic standards and quality for all collaborative provision), with school academic boards and school quality assurance and enhancement committees having responsibility for oversight at programme level. The central quality-related committees and the schools are supported by the Office for Academic Development and Quality, which also provides policy development and administrative resources for the University's quality system.

13 The University has a comprehensive quality assurance framework (QAF). The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group provides independent members for internal and external evaluation panels, Boards of examiners, academic offences panels and internal audits. It includes all members of Senate and ASC, together with nominated members with recognised experience in this area. The University has recently undertaken a multisided quality assurance framework review, which reported in May 2008. The review was linked to the review of the deliberative committee structure (the 'Husband Review'), which reported in 2007-08. Both these reviews have led to revisions, both to the QAF and to the operation of the deliberative committee structures of

the University, and these changes were being implemented in the 2008-09 academic year. A good example of such a revision, as an outcome of the QAFR review, is the decision to take a variable approach to the scale of programme reviews, based on the perceived level of risk.

14 The University Academic Policies and Regulations and the associated Academic Procedures have also been recently reviewed. The latter provide guidance on the operation of all processes connected with the management of academic standards and quality, and are designed to ensure a uniformity of approach at school level. They cover, among other things, approval, monitoring and review procedures, modification processes, standard assessment regulations, monitoring of progression and completion rates, the independent marking process, engagement with key external reference points and the use of external examiners.

15 The audit team looked at the relationship between University processes and their iteration and implementation at school level and found that there was clear evidence that an integrated approach was being developed, which provided opportunities for the dissemination of information from programmes, through schools, to University level. This was particularly evident for example in school quality reports, which represented a significant development over the previous model of a 'synoptic report'. The University now intended to widen the development of a 'framework' approach to academic programmes, across all schools. This involved the grouping together of programmes in cognate disciplines so that they could be dealt with together for a range of academic management and quality assurance purposes. The team understood from the University that the ongoing introduction of these frameworks across its academic programme structure had already brought advantages with regard to the more effective management of information. The team nevertheless found evidence that, with regard to aspects of assessment and monitoring, there were some operational aspects of the new frameworks which remained to be fully addressed (see paragraph 31). The team was concerned that review and reporting through frameworks had the potential to limit the oversight by the University's committees of academic standards and quality at the programme level. This could particularly be the case where there were larger cohort sizes within frameworks. The team advises the University to keep the ongoing development and operation of its programme frameworks under careful review so as to ensure that opportunities remain to focus on the academic standards and quality of individual awards throughout the annual monitoring and periodic review processes.

16 The University has recently implemented a review of the operation of Senate and its subcommittees (the 'Husband Review') which has, among other things, led to the dissolution of the Research Degrees Committee and the Academic Development Committee, (with some of those committees' work transferring to ASC) and the establishment of an education enhancement committee (EEC). In examination of committee papers and minutes, and in its meetings with staff across the University it was apparent to the audit team that the remit of ASC had expanded considerably as a result of this review, with a concomitant resultant increased workload for that committee. The minutes for the last two years indicated both that it had full agendas and that issues were discussed in detail. At the same time, the University recognised that the role of EEC was still emergent, and that the balance of the relationship between that committee and ASC would take a little time to become firmly established. The team considered that the University should keep this matter under review, in order to ensure that opportunities to have a greater strategic oversight of quality assurance and enhancement were not weakened by imbalances in the remit and workload of these two committees within its deliberative framework.

Section 2: Institutional management of academic standards

17 In its Briefing Paper, the University explained that its quality assurance framework (QAF) for ensuring that academic standards are secured consists of: its procedures for approval, monitoring and review, which include the involvement of external personnel; its assessment policies and regulations; the monitoring of progression and completion rates; its engagement with external reference points; and the use of external examiners. A wide-ranging review of this framework was conducted in 2008. Based on the work of eight subgroups, the review report found the framework to be fit for purpose and recommended a number of modifications. These were discussed in detail at a series of Academic Standards Committee (ASC) meetings, and agreed changes were then incorporated in the Academic Policies and Regulations and Academic Procedures. An updated action plan tracked the progress of other recommendations in the review report. Procedures relating to collaborative partnerships were part of the QAF review, which has similarly given rise to an action plan. As already noted, a review of the University's committee structure has also been undertaken and resulted in substantial changes. Each of these review groups reflected on practice at other higher education institutions (HEIs) and one of the reviews was supported by a consultant with extensive higher education experience. In addition to these specific reviews, the University conducts regular annual reviews of both external examiner reports and programme evaluations. The resulting recommendations and action plans are reported to ASC and are tracked through the subsequent annual review. From its examination of the documentation relating to these reviews and from its enquiry in discussions with staff, the audit team concluded that the University has a planned, systematic and reflective approach to reviewing its operations.

Approval, monitoring and review of award standards

18 The University's Academic Procedures state that the process of evaluation for the approval or periodic review of programme frameworks has three stages: the planning phase during which proposals for new or revised framework developments are approved by the School Academic Board and ASC with the resources required for any new provision being signed off by the relevant dean; the design phase, which is the responsibility of the school and will consider curriculum, resources and transitional arrangements for students; and an evaluation phase which is conducted by a panel appointed by the Office of Academic Development and Quality (ADQ). For this last phase, a panel is appointed comprising one or more internal members independent of the proposing school, and one or more external panel members independent of the University. For Foundation Degree evaluations, the panel will always include a practitioner in the relevant field and additional requirements may also be specified for evaluations involving professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). The Academic Procedures stipulate that the framework of programmes must be designed and evaluated with reference to the subject benchmark statements and Foundation Degree benchmarks, published by QAA, the FHEQ and other professional and industry guidance. The outcomes of the evaluation are reported to ASC once any conditions have been met to the satisfaction of the approval panel. Partner programme proposals are channelled through the host school and subject to the same approval and review process, save that for new partnerships, approval is for three years as opposed to the six-year period for internal university and existing partnership programmes.

19 The audit trails enabled the audit team to examine the approval process for an undergraduate framework, a postgraduate framework and a Foundation Degree. The detailed documentation confirmed that the process was thorough and conformed with the Academic Procedures. The initial briefing papers explained the framework rationale, and included evidence of consultation with external examiners and employers. The design phase was found to give detailed consideration to a wide range of issues including resources, student experience and employability, alignment with FHEQ, and learning and teaching strategy. The minutes of the design phase meetings demonstrated a reflective approach leading to both conditions and recommendations. The minutes of the evaluation phase meetings provided evidence of the participation of the full range of external panel members and a thorough discussion of key issues.

The documents submitted included external examiner reports, annual reports on programme monitoring, design and briefing papers, and framework specifications. The panel's conditions and recommendations led to dialogue between the framework teams and external panel members, with final approval being given only when the panel had signed-off the team's response.

20 Where changes are made to a programme that are not at the sufficient level to require a full review, the written agreement of 75 per cent of the students affected by the change must be obtained prior to implementation. The audit team examined a trail of three such programme modifications, one for a proposal that was agreed, one that was rejected and one that was changed as a result of a consultation process involving the external examiner. It was clear from these trails that proposals for modification were carefully considered and that where students were affected, their signed agreement was secured. With regard to the cessation or withdrawal of a programme, the Academic Procedures outline the procedure for a programme closure review. This requires the panel to confirm that the quality of learning opportunities are being effectively managed and are likely to be maintained until the final cohort of students have graduated. The reviewing panel are required to meet groups of students representing all current cohorts on the programme.

21 The University stated that it evaluates the effectiveness of its approval and review process annually with ADQ providing an annual report and action plan to ASC which may lead to incremental changes in the relevant procedures. The audit team examined the 2008 ADQ annual report, which noted a number of operational difficulties. To address these, an action plan was included: for ADQ to provide staff development, and for deputy deans (education) to ensure the timely working of the process. ASC agreed the plan, making further suggestions as to employer engagement and the approach to be taken to framework review. Staff told the audit team that staff development was being provided and that ADQ had provided much support and guidance in the operation of the review process. The University's review of its quality framework in 2008 also considered the approval and review process. After having researched procedures at a number of other HEIs, a working group suggested operational improvements, and after consideration by ASC these were incorporated in the Academic Procedures. From the evidence of the audit trails, the team concluded that the programme approval procedures were rigorously applied and effective in terms of outcome. Their efficiency was enhanced by the level of support from ADQ and the process of annual and periodic review which ADQ had led.

22 The Academic Procedures give details of the process for the annual report on programme monitoring (ARPM). This consists of an action plan and short programme leader's report, supported by an electronic folder of all relevant monitoring data and including the reports of, and responses to, external examiners. The ARPM is checked by a school reader, who reports to the School Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (SQAEC) on whether the monitoring data is complete and is accurately reflected in the ARPM. SQAEC then considers the strengths and weaknesses of the action plan and report, and agrees appropriate actions. The school reports the outcomes of monitoring to ASC through a school quality report (SQR) summarising achievements, strategies for solving problems and identifying issues which lie outside the school. The Briefing Paper described the SQRs as a comprehensive mechanism by which ASC can be satisfied that schools are carrying out their responsibilities for the management of academic standards and which enables SQAECs to supply a timely synopsis of the outcomes of framework monitoring so as to inform the annual revision of the University's Educational Enhancement Strategy.

23 The monitoring process for three frameworks was examined as part of the audit trails. The ARPMs provided a detailed and reflective commentary on a range of monitoring data, covering learning, assessment and resources, work-based learning, student progression and achievement, programme meeting minutes, programme leaders' reports and feedback from students, employers and external examiners. The action plans succinctly identified issues to be addressed and the proposed actions; the source of the issue (such as an external examiner's report); the deadline for action; the person responsible for action and the progress to date. The plans also noted progress against previous plans. Staff reported that the programme teams

were actively engaged in the ARPM process and that the system had been improved by changes introduced in 2007-08, which had resulted in a less time consuming but more timely reporting process. The Briefing Paper stated that the ARPM process will be further streamlined so that framework teams can maintain a 'live action plan' update during the year. Action plans will be discussed with student representatives and more accessible data from the University's management information system, InfoBU, will facilitate cohort analysis. The team was told that this system was now already being operated by one programme team with action points being added following a team meeting, which included students, and that this system was also being trialled at a partner college. The team considered this a positive initiative which could provide for more rapid responsiveness at the level of delivery, but its effectiveness had yet to be fully demonstrated.

24 The school reader reports seen by the audit team effectively summarised the ARPM commentary and provided a check on the supporting evidence. The ARPMs were scrutinised at the SQAEC meetings with some being returned for further work by the reporting teams. The team noted that SQAECs also reflected on the effectiveness of the process as a whole. Staff members of SQAECs reported that training for their role had been provided by ADQ. At the time of the audit, SQRs had been drafted for the two schools examined by the team. These reports provided a higher level overview of issues arising across the schools' frameworks. They also included action plans identifying areas of concern, level of risk, proposed school-level actions and actions needed at University level. The risk section specifically identified issues putting standards at risk such as a poor record of returning work to students. The reports also commented on a range of standard quality-related information, including monitoring data from the ARPM process, PSRB activity where applicable, data from student unit evaluation and the National Student Survey (NSS); progression and completion rates, and assessment turnaround. Draft SQRs are circulated among staff for comment and then reported to SQAEC and the School Academic Board prior to submission to ASC. SQRs were yet to be considered by ASC at the time of the audit but the team was told that they would also be considered by the Education Enhancement Committee (EEC); that good practice would be identified and fed into the University's enhancement strategy. Feedback to schools would be provided via the deputy deans (education), who were members of both committees. The team considered, for those draft reports seen, the evaluative content of the SQRs and the process by which they are considered, provided both an effective basis for maintaining standards and the potential to enhance the quality of student learning opportunities.

25 The schools' management of the ARPM process is subject to a periodic desk-based audit. The University cited the example of the Business School audit, which was brought forward to meet shortcomings identified by the school. The internal audit panel was appointed by ASC and comprised two academic members of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (QAEG) and two members of ADQ. It audited five framework ARPMs and while reporting general confidence in the monitoring and commending particular features, it made recommendations for actions at School level; it also recommended that the University ensure that best practice in completing unit monitoring reports is followed and good practice in ARPM drafting is recorded. An annual summative report on audits serves to identify common themes and is submitted to ASC; this has resulted in improvements, for example to the format of school readers' reports. The QAF review recommended that the current audit process be replaced with a broader periodic audit considering all school quality assurance procedures including monitoring the operation of SQAECs, programme development and assessment processes. The team concluded that the annual monitoring process was thorough and effective, and that its impact was likely to be enhanced both by the new SQR process and the introduction of internal audits with a wider remit.

External examiners

26 The University stated that considerable emphasis is placed on the input of external examiners in the management and maintenance of its academic standards. The criteria for appointment are detailed in the Academic Policies and Regulations, and guidance to examiners is provided in the Academic Procedures. External examiner nominations are reviewed by QAEG

members and appointments are approved by ASC. Schools nominate candidates and, to reflect the University's strategy of enhancing the academic standing of programmes, Schools have been encouraged to place more emphasis on a research profile when making nominations. The evidence suggested that this was the case. The Academic Procedures provide that new external examiners will be briefed on their role and responsibilities by ADQ, Schools and the chairs of boards of examiners. The audit team noted the details of the programme for the one day briefing seminar for examiners and was told that 85 per cent of new external examiners had attended. The remainder were briefed individually by ADQ and the host School.

27 The Academic Procedures provide that every programme leading to an award of the University must have one external examiner and that where there are a team of externals for one or more programmes, a chief external examiner may be appointed. It is expected that external examiners will approve both examination papers and the design of course work assessments. They will review a range of marked assessed work and are required to participate in all boards of examiners meetings at which decisions on awards are made. They are entitled to make recommendations for the moderation of marks that must be taken into account by boards. Their decision on a matter of principle must be accepted by the board, subject to a reference to Senate. The audit trails provided evidence that external examiners did approve examination papers and also coursework where this constituted 100 per cent of the unit assessment, and that they were satisfied with the conduct and decision of the examination boards.

28 External examiners are invited to give an oral report at the board of examiners meeting and are required to submit a written report on a standard electronic form to ADQ, preferably within two weeks of the meeting. The form requires comments on standards, assessment and the performance of the programme and asks examiners to consider a number of issues under each heading including student performance in relation to the FHEQ and subject benchmarks. An examination of the reports in the audit trails showed that external examiners reported at length under each of the headings, focusing in particular on the performance of the students. While there were some critical comments, the balance of these reports was positive and the report summaries confirmed that the standards set for the awards were appropriate and the standards of student performance was comparable with that in other HEIs.

29 Once completed, reports are considered by framework/programme teams, who are expected to provide a response. Whilst the University's monitoring systems provided substantial evidence of such responses, the University had noted that some programme teams had not responded, and in such cases the deputy deans (education) had been asked to follow up, drawing attention to the programme leader's responsibility for responding. The external examiner report and the response to it together form part of the ARPM. This report is scrutinised by the SQAEC and feed into the SQR reported to ASC. External examiners are invited to submit an overview report at the end of their term and may also report to the Vice Chancellor at any time on matters of serious concern but the team were told that neither form of report had been made in recent years.

30 The External Examining Review Group (EERG) conducts an annual analysis of external examiner reports which is then reported to ASC. The EERG review for 2007 noted while 287 reports were positive as to the standard of awards and student performance, three reports were negative and that the relevant school deputy dean and the Head of ADQ were addressing the issues raised. The audit team examined the response made by schools to these issues. One case involved a minor complaint relating to documentation, where the external examiner had received an appropriate response from the school. The other two concerned standards on a Foundation Degree programme. In both cases the programme leader, working with ADQ, had responded with detailed comments and an action plan to achieve improvement. In the most serious case, the same external examiner reporting in the subsequent year congratulated the programme team on making significant improvement and confirmed that 'the programme was demonstrating the appropriate features of an FdA with students showing significant improvement'. The team considered that this evidence demonstrated that the University has in place an effective process for taking action, should any threats to standards be identified by external examiners.

31 As already noted (paragraph 15), the curriculum architecture theme of the Strategic Plan has required schools to develop a curricular plan to bring all taught programmes within frameworks. As a result of a most intensive period of validation and review activity in 2007-08, some 90 per cent of postgraduate and 54 per cent of undergraduate provision has been aligned within the new frameworks. The audit team found that both the QAF Review and ASC had noted issues that had arisen in the process of adjusting programme procedures for evaluation, monitoring and assessment to the new framework format. In the case of review, it had been noted that the nomination of panel members and the scale of the larger framework review events had given rise to problems. ASC had proposed that smaller break-out meetings be arranged to allow discipline-level discussions to take place. The scale of framework meetings was also a problem and this had led to the suggestion that sub-framework/programme meetings should take place. ARPMs are to be renamed annual reports on framework monitoring. The framework leader will be responsible for convening a review meeting and producing a report within three weeks of the examination board. ASC has noted the importance of appointing good framework leaders to ensure this runs smoothly. ASC had also noted that with the introduction of shared units across frameworks and schools, careful allocation of external examiners and the appointment of a chief external examiner were needed. The team was told that steps would be taken to ensure individual pathways would be overseen by a single external examiner, as would any shared units and that work was also in progress in relation to annual reports on monitoring. While the team recognised that ASC was monitoring the implementation of frameworks carefully, it also considered that some of the above operational challenges of the new structures, still to be fully resolved, clearly had implications for the security of quality and standards. The team therefore advises the University to act in a timely manner to adjust its quality assurance procedures to the new curriculum architecture.

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

32 The FHEQ and relevant QAA subject benchmark statements are explicitly considered in the design of provision. At the evaluation stage of approval external panel members are asked to focus on the FHEQ and benchmarks and the audit team noted that reports that it scrutinised made clear reference to both. External examiners are asked to consider student performance in relation to the FHEQ and benchmarks and there was evidence to demonstrate this was taking place. The University stated that alignment with all the sections of the *Code of practice* had been progressively considered through ASC and that the *Code* had prompted new initiatives. An examination of the ASC minutes confirmed this, with the policies related to academic offences, appeals, admissions, placements and credit frameworks all having been recently considered against the relevant *Codes*. The QAF review exercise in 2008 had also made extensive reference to the sections of the *Code* and to the practice of other HEIs.

33 All programme teams are encouraged to consider possible professional body accreditation and that while ADQ holds a central record of accreditations, schools generally act as the key point of contact with the PSRB and depending upon its requirements, may agree a joint approval and review process. The audit team was told that schools report to ASC on PSRB engagement through the SQR. As the SQRs examined by the team concerned frameworks with no PSRB engagement, the team was not able to confirm this. The team saw evidence that the University had engaged constructively with the European dimension and the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) framework. Accordingly it has issued a guidance note in relation to international student exchange, and amended the Academic Procedures section on International Mobility programmes. The University provides graduates Diploma Supplements, including reference to ECTS credits.

Assessment policies and regulations

34 The University's independent marking protocol is set out in its Academic Policies and Regulations. The protocol outlines the principles governing double-marking, single-marking and moderation. Following the comments of some external examiners as to the lack of evidence of moderation or second-marking and the report from the QAF review assessment working group,

the QAF review proposed a revised procedure which clarified the school-level responsibility for signing off a framework and marking plan. This identifies the number and nature of assessments for each unit, timescales for submission and arrangements for independent marking. A policy for anonymous-marking had been rejected as there was concern as to mistakes arising if data against student numbers rather than names were used. The QAF review and ASC also decided on a limit to the number of summative assessments per unit, to be introduced incrementally through the review process. Staff reported that marking plans were clear and effective and students reported that assessment criteria were also clear. Schools have protocols covering the assessment of group work and, where applicable, provide students with detailed information about the assessment of work placements. When submitting work for assessment, students are required to complete a declaration form regarding the authenticity of their work. Students are guided in this respect through the online Epigem plagiarism tutorial and referencing support in addition to support provided by the University's academic staff and tutors.

35 From the documentary evidence of the QAF review deliberations and the ASC discussions, together with the reports from staff and students, the audit team concluded that the University had appropriate procedures and evaluative arrangements in place for the framing and implementation of its assessment policies and regulations.

Management information - statistics

36 The University considered that the scrutiny in schools of progression and attainment data along with the results of the NSS and the student unit evaluation allows programme teams to consider relevant issues as part of the programme monitoring process. The audit team examined evidence of the use of such data in the audit trails. The 2006-07 ARPMs were supported by comprehensive central monitoring and unit evaluation in hard copy whereas for 2007-08, the evaluative data has been held electronically, with the hard-copy ARPM focused on commentary. The SQRs seen commented on progression and completion data along with NSS data, and also considered data on assignment turnaround time. The data was then discussed at SQAECs. School strategic plans also considered a range of such data under the section dealing with education excellence. Staff confirmed that degree standards were monitored in the light of the statistical data and that staff reflected on such data in relation to the units with which they were involved. The QAF review working group on management information reported that the extensive data available to programme teams were adequate but recommended that it be made more readily available to enable teams to track year-on-year developments. It had also recommended that EEC should produce an annual data analysis report for senior management, schools and professional services. The team agreed that this would be an appropriate and desirable role for EEC. On the basis of the evidence seen, the team was satisfied that the University was making effective use of a range of statistical information in managing academic standards and that it was actively seeking to enhance the use of the data related to educational performance.

Section 3: Institutional management of learning opportunities

37 In considering the University's management of learning opportunities, the audit team examined the role of engagement with employers, in particular through the extensive work-placement programme; the links between research and learning opportunities; the engagement with students through formal processes; the use of feedback and performance data; and the role of the monitoring and review in relation to these areas. As already noted (paragraphs 32 and 33), in all of these areas, and in their incorporation into the design and approval of programmes, the University makes systematic reference, wherever relevant, to the *Code of practice*, published by QAA.

Approval, monitoring and review of programmes

38 The University had recently been involved in substantial approval and review activity in order to address the introduction of the new curriculum architecture based on programme frameworks. This is a key aspect of the University's 2008 Educational Enhancement Strategy (EES), in which the emphasis is on enhancing the quality of the student experience by enabling innovative combinations of areas of study to be introduced, based on research excellence and the sharing of expertise between schools. The curricular design process was supported by a learning technology theme which identifies the virtual learning environment, MyBU, as a core element integrating education, employability and international capability into the student experience. The framework reviews examined by the audit team expressly considered curricular design including the use of placements, learning and teaching, resources and quality enhancement. They resulted in conditions and recommendations under a number of those headings. The evidence of the programme team's response and the the office for Academic Development and Quality (ADQ) overview of the process demonstrated that action was taken to satisfy the review teams.

39 The Academic Procedures state that annual reports on programme monitoring (ARPMs) are the primary mechanism by which schools assure the quality of their programmes, through which the University monitors that quality. The ARPMs examined by the audit team required comment on issues relating to the quality of learning opportunities such as placements, study support, assessment strategy, resources and the use of the virtual learning environment (VLE). They contained extensive discussion of these issues and the action plans detailed where improvements were required. The section of the action plan dealing with progress on the prior year's plan confirmed that the process had a positive impact on the student experience. The school quality reports (SQRs) provided higher level action plans which in addition to identifying cross-school actions to improve the student experience, noted actions required of the University in relation, for example, to the VLE. The learning issues raised in these reports and action plans are then discussed at school level, in both school quality assurance and enhancement committees and school academic boards.

Management information - feedback from students

40 The University utilises National Student Survey (NSS) data and its own student unit evaluations (SUE). Schools report back to the Academic Standards Committee (ASC) on responses at School and university level. At a University level, the EES has set a four-year target for improvement in enrolment qualifications, progression rates, graduate employability and NSS scores. Feedback-related evaluative reports from 2008, examined by the audit team, showed that a wide range of issues related to the quality of learning opportunities had been considered, with communication, curriculum organisation and feedback to students being common themes across schools.

41 The University considered that despite promotional efforts, the student response rate to SUE in 2007-08 was disappointing and that although the feedback was informative and qualitative feedback was available to unit leaders in real time, the quantitative data was not always in a user friendly form. The Centre for Excellence in Media Practice (CEMP) has undertaken focus groups in order to better understand the outcomes of SUE, and has identified some organisational issues. Reports on these evaluations are sent to the Education Enhancement Committee (EEC). The SUE Steering Group has responsibility for overseeing and monitoring implementation of SUE developments and produced a detailed report on the SUE Survey 2007-08. This provided an overview of these issues, and subsequently ASC has considered a number of means of improving the participation rates, including alternative survey tools based on the VLE. The audit team would encourage further work on unit evaluation to enable the annual monitoring process to fulfil its potential.

42 Programme team meetings have student feedback as a standard agenda item and these meetings, which include students, provide an effective form of feedback to programme teams with the minutes being an important element of the data considered in the ARPM process. The audit team was able to check this through the audit trails. It found that ARPMs consistently commented on student feedback at formal and informal team meetings, through unit evaluations and unit tutors. The minutes of some team meetings also provided evidence of attendance by student representatives and discussion of their reports and the ARPM action plans. At some team meetings no student representatives had been present but their reports were discussed. Minutes of student representative meetings at school level also provided evidence of both detailed discussion of learning issues and school responses. The team found positive evidence that the relevant sections of Academic Services received and responded to qualitative information from SUE and in ARPMs. ASC, school, and programme team meetings have student feedback as a standing agenda item, and provide an effective form of feedback to programme teams and students.

43 The audit team formed the view that the University was taking a comprehensive and thorough approach to student feedback, with evaluative review systems in place which could identify areas for improvement, as necessary. Overall, its arrangements for the management and consideration of student feedback were effective at University, committee and programme levels.

Role of students in quality assurance

44 The University has established procedures to ensure that students participate in policy and decision making procedures. Students sit on a range of university-level committees including Senate, ASC, partnership boards and the Student Experience Committee (SEC). Students are made aware of all levels of representation through myBU and through the work of Students' Union officers.

45 The audit team saw evidence, from the minutes, of the representation of the Students' Union President and Union officers on these bodies, and noted that student representation had been further strengthened by developments since the recent review of committees. In addition, the deputy deans (education) and associate deans meet school-wide groups of students at formal meetings to gain a full school view from student representatives. In each school, an associate dean is now identified as being a key contact and 'champion' for student representatives. As chair of SEC and EEC, the Dean of Student Experience has a central role in coordinating feedback on the quality of learning opportunities. The Dean manages the Graduate Employment Service (GES) and Personal Support Services, coordinates academic support to students and works closely with the Students' Union. The minutes of the first two meetings of the newly established Student Experience Committee, chaired by the Dean, provided evidence of his coordinating role.

46 The Briefing Paper stated that as part of the second stage of revising the monitoring process, greater attention is being given to recording and responding to student feedback acquired through team meetings. The minutes of programme level meetings, including students, are an important element of the data considered in the ARPM process. The 2007 Partnership Standing Group report noted that improvement was needed in both student attendance and reporting in programme meetings at some partner institutions. Students working at a distance are consulted through web-based surveys and in person through link tutors and visits to the University. Students who met with the audit team reported on the general effectiveness of these systems for representation for all students, in full and part-time and distance-learning modes of study.

47 The Students' Union provides training for committee representatives, and this is evaluated and reviewed on an annual basis. Further developments are in place to increase awareness of the training and to formalise the student representation system. An evaluation of the work of student representatives carried out by the Students' Union indicated that students value this role and this was further confirmed by students in all modes of study who met with the audit team. The student written submission also described the level of student representation at the University in positive terms and considered that the University provides many opportunities to its students to

give feedback on their experience. The University reports on student participation in its formal processes: ASC minutes record student participation in validation and monitoring procedures as a standing item; school board minutes record student participation in strategic planning processes and curricular development discussions; student participation in programme review is mandatory; University and school strategic plans make reference to the importance of student participation in the development of the University. The team also noted from the myBU pages the ways in which the University regularly involves students in working groups and projects. Postgraduate students are regarded as professionals, and encouraged to participate in staff discussions on research and other related matters.

48 The audit team saw evidence that the University reviews the operation, level and effectiveness of student representation. The Report on SUE Survey 2007-08 provided an overview of several student representation issues and ASC has considered a number of means of improving the participation rates including greater use of myBU. The team's view is that the University's arrangements for student involvement and representation in its quality management processes are effective.

Links between research or scholarly activity and learning opportunities

49 The University's Strategic Plan 2007-2012 contains several references to supporting a transition in which academic staff were supported to progress further 'from teachers to academics'. Human resource and staff development strategic plans also refer to staff development opportunities designed to increase staff research and scholarly activity. To support this strategic direction, the University's change management process has focused extensively on a 'Releasing Potential' agenda. The various strands of this initiative combine personal research development with the development of student learning opportunities, resulting in explicit links between research and student learning. In addition, the Educational Development Service (EDS) is responsible for the development of pedagogical practice and research. The research-related aspects of the strategy are discussed in more detail below (paragraph 120).

50 Professors, deans and deputy deans (education) have responsibility for overseeing the development of the curricula and its relationship with research. The CEMP has provided cross-university leadership in developing the relationship between learning and creativity, demonstrated by the new modes of learning under development. The annual Education Conference held in 2008 focused on the development of the University's 'Curriculum 2012' which has fed into the development of the Education Enhancement Strategy. Partner institution staff are encouraged to attend this and other conferences and to engage with the University-wide doctoral programme initiative.

51 Through documents and discussions with staff, partner institution staff, and students, the audit team were able to identify new developments to programmes which provided further evidence of the strengthening relationship between research activity and learning and teaching. It was clear to the team that the strategic approach of the University to developing its profile in this area was beginning to produce observable changes.

Other modes of study

52 The University provides a wide spectrum of learning opportunities for its students. This includes an appropriate mix of academic and non-academic experiences and relevant extra-curricular activities. Learning is supported by well integrated online resources, allowing both pure distance learning and the incorporation of e-learning into the broader curriculum. MyBU, the student virtual learning environment, provides programme materials online in a flexible anytime, anywhere study facility. In meetings with the audit team, University representatives emphasised this commitment to a range of student learning opportunities and acknowledged that some are more established than others. The majority of undergraduate programmes feature work-placements ranging in duration from four weeks to a full year in programmes where work-based learning is

integral. The learning experience from the placement feeds into subsequent modules in the final year of study. Guidelines are provided for staff and students through programme handbooks, together with support by placement development advisers. While the support arrangements for placements are managed at school level, the overall process is monitored at programme, school and university levels.

53 The University's Strategic Plan 2007-2012 recognises the need for investment in new technology-based learning, and a number of programmes were currently being developed and piloted, based on advice from CEMP. The University already makes wide use of e-learning through myBU and is able to build on practice in the Business School. Currently the University delivers seven programmes solely by distance learning and incorporates varying levels of blended learning in many more. The Students' Union is involved in evaluating the effectiveness of e-learning and the embedding of the virtual learning environment, myBU. Partner institutions are guided in determining the appropriate use of technology by link tutors and University information technology staff.

54 The audit team's view is that the University's arrangements for other modes of study are effective.

Resources for learning

55 The Strategic Plan 2007-2012 took note of the benchmarked position of the University with regard to investment in estate and to information and communication technology (ICT); this placed the University at the lower end of the sector. An evaluation of need by a resource working group (2006) resulted in subsequent investment in library and ICT facilities. E-journals and e-books are provided for all students. Librarians liaise with academic staff through school-based mechanisms to ensure that student needs are addressed. During a period of significant change, this has not been without difficulty, and the team heard evidence from students that there had been some concerns relating to library provision. Librarians and academic staff are addressing these issues through the EEC and ASC.

56 As reported in the Strategic Plan, ICT resources have improved at a faster pace with the University central services, schools, and partner institutions providing resources for staff and students on-campus and for those located at a distance. All students have full access to the University's virtual learning environment, myBU, which has been developed in consultation with staff and students. All lecture notes are placed on the VLE, alongside access to support material and guidance. Students are inducted to the VLE through school-based staff. Partner institutions are responsible for providing ICT resources on local sites, guided by link tutors and ADQ.

57 The audit team saw evidence that learning resources are monitored at programme, school and university levels through SUEs, ARPMs and student surveys, all of which are reported to school and University committees. Students, with whom the team met, valued the services provided and the opportunity to contribute to future developments. The team concluded that, while some areas will benefit from further development, the University's arrangements for the provision, allocation and management of learning resources are effective.

Admissions policy

58 The University's admissions regulations are published in its Academic Policies and Regulations. The policy provides for admissions decisions to be devolved to schools with the Registry having responsibility for ensuring consistency across the University. The procedures have been revised in light of recommendations from the 2006 review of processes set against the *Code of practice*. To support the process, a series of workshops are held annually for academic and support staff. The audit team noted that a number of improvements were in progress with schools being advised and supported in taking greater responsibility for the quality of admission procedures. Students particularly welcomed the approach taken by the University regarding

clarity of information and support prior to registration. The team are of the view that the University operates a sound admissions policy in a consistent manner.

Student support

59 The University's Strategic Plan states that education is its top priority. The University regards itself as a student-centred institution, and as such has invested significantly in academic and pastoral support for all students. Recent developments in this area included central guidance on admissions (2008), revised guidance on programme handbooks (2007); the introduction of the askBU enhanced students service in 2007, and with it the website 'askBU online', providing access to advice on financial, facilities and services matters.

60 Student entitlement is communicated to staff and students in the student survival guide and through programme handbooks. Academic staff are provided with training on student expectations during induction and staff development sessions provided by Human Resources. Study support is delivered through a range of academic services about which information is accessible throughout myBU. Students may self-refer or be advised to attend support sessions. International students are supported from induction to completion by the schools and the International Support Team. The Additional Learning Needs Service provides comprehensive support for those with disabilities, learning disorders or health problems working on-campus or at a distance. The University reviews student support through the ARPM processes, and through the Students' Union, ASC student representation and in its consideration of the NSS data.

61 Peer-assisted learning (PAL) is a centrally run University service supported by the Students' Union whereby students mentor first-year students in learning groups. Established in 2006, PAL has been positively reviewed by first-year students and mentors; students are paid as mentors and the experience is valued by all who participate. A PAL Handbook supports mentors inducted into the role. PAL is being introduced to partner institutions. The audit team considered this initiative to be an example of good practice in its contribution to the quality of learning opportunities at the University.

62 The University's Briefing Paper explained that engagement with employers is sought through their involvement in programme approval and review, meetings of advisory panels and feedback from placement employers. A panel engagement with employers involved in delivery of a programme is now a mandatory part of any Foundation Degree review. The audit team examined the review of an FdA and noted that the review panel included an employer, had met with a group of local employers and in its report, commended the programme team for inclusion of qualification awards for the relevant PSRB. However, the team noted that a 2007 internal University review of the programme evaluation process reported that such a level of employer engagement was not necessarily always the case. The team also examined employer engagement documentation supplied by two of the sampling trail schools and from this it was evident that there was a high level of engagement involving consultancy, collaboration and guest lectures.

63 The inclusion of work-based learning through placements is an integral part of the majority of undergraduate programmes and it ensures that students reflect on and record their development enabling them to build skills and enhance employability. A system of placement development advisers supports students during the placement year and assists the University to build long-term relationships with employers. The audit team examined the sections of school handbooks related to placements and found that students were given full information about both the purpose of placement, administrative arrangements and the role of placement advisers. Briefing notes provided by the schools provided the team with further information and examples of the use of placement personal development logs. There was some variability in the format and role of placements with some being credit bearing and others not. The length of the placement might also vary. The team was told that all schools consider placements to be a major element of the provision and that the role of placement advisers was now linked into employability. Students confirmed that placements were regarded highly but also that there was some variability in support from the University.

The GES annual report provides an overview of the working of the placement scheme and noted that about 20 per cent of students return to their placement company as a graduate. It was reported to the former Academic Development Committee (ADC) that GES would be providing annual placement reports and getting a 'much better handle' on monitoring data. The team was also told that the GES was now coordinating a meeting of placement advisers to enable the sharing of good practice and that it is anticipated through the SQRs, school placement experience will be reported through to the EEC. This proposal, which followed on the abolition of ADC to which GES had previously reported, confirmed the view of the team that it would be helpful to clarify further the responsibilities of the University's deliberative committees in relation to, and with regard to, managing and overseeing the quality of the student experience through placements.

64 The University offers a comprehensive range of services to support its students, and information relating to support is readily available. The audit team found that staff and students were aware of the services provided, and students were familiar with the routes to gain access to any specialist support as needed. The audit team concluded that the University has effective arrangements for student support.

Staff support (including staff development)

65 The Strategic Plan highlighted the need to invest in staff in order to achieve the University's vision. The Releasing Potential initiative, which commenced in 2006, is at the heart of the management of change. The audit team observed that a range of central policies and staff development programme level initiatives reflected this investment. Thus recruitment and induction procedures have been established which are subject to review within the context of the human resource policy and annual reporting. Appraisal mechanisms and staff development activities have been subject to revision to take into account the Releasing Potential projects. The major changes involved have been subject to staff consultation and comprehensive communication strategies at university and local levels.

66 Accompanying the new framework agreement the University has introduced changes to the career structure for academic staff, providing for associate professor and professorial grades. Promotion is based on achievements across an identified range of performance in education, research, enterprise and professional practice. Schools are responsible for peer observation and annual appraisals, and both of these are being strengthened and put on a more systematic basis. The University has recognised that heavy teaching loads had in the past inhibited staff involvement in research and enterprise activities, and in response a code of practice on academic balanced workloads has been developed and introduced which aimed to ensure that academic staff have the necessary time to engage in professional development and research activity. Staff are rewarded for their enterprise and expertise within the appraisal scheme where points are awarded for teaching excellence, outstanding performance is also recognised in the Vice-Chancellors annual awards.

67 New staff are required by the University to undertake the Postgraduate Certificate in Education Practice, and completion of part of this is linked to probation. The University encourages and supports all academic staff in becoming Associate Fellows of the Higher Education Academy. It has introduced other postgraduate programmes to develop teaching and academic knowledge and skills, including the supervision of research students.

68 The Briefing Paper outlined how academic staff are supported in their work through a range of services. The Releasing Potential (Education) initiative has supported staff in pedagogic innovation, for instance developing online learning through 'myBU'. The EDS provides advice and support on pedagogic practice, and in particular on the ongoing development of e-learning. Many resources are made available to support staff online, including a dedicated web area 'myBU Staff Help'. In addition, the University's CEMP, maintained an 'outward looking' overview of excellence across the higher education sector within the media subject area. The work of CEMP has served to inform University practice in a number of key areas, such as developments in online

learning and communication and its work on better improving the analysis of the information gained from student unit evaluations.

69 The Releasing Research/Enterprise Potential Programme is designed to increase staff confidence and competence in research and enterprise. In a programme facilitated by senior management and professorial colleagues, staff have access to workshops and master classes on personal and management development, and on a range of research-related topics such as bid writing and getting published. In the course of the audit, the audit team met many staff who expressed strong appreciation of these initiatives and considered that they made a genuine contribution to supporting change.

70 The audit team considered the University's arrangements for staff support and development in relation to academic staff engaged in teaching and the supervision of research students to be effective.

Section 4: Institutional approach to quality enhancement

71 In its Briefing Paper, the University presented a picture of a gradual movement away from quality control and (once it is firmly embedded) quality assurance towards an enhancement-led approach to the quality of student learning opportunities. The University considers that this development is founded upon a growing self-confidence and is dependent on a number of other aspects, the use of management information being a key element. It also considers that a confidence in the security of academic standards has led to greater concentration on the enhancement of learning opportunities.

72 The Briefing Paper explained that the Strategic Plan, and the major initiatives for releasing potential which had flowed from it, and which have been discussed elsewhere in this Annex, were all focused on creating an environment and ethos which encourage enhancement of student learning opportunities. The clearly defined commitment to self-review and change was evident to the audit team in many aspects of the University's work, for instance in the full and detailed review of the quality assurance framework, the curriculum restructuring work, and most notably in the determination to transform the academic culture. All of these must be considered major enhancement initiatives at the highest strategic level.

73 More specifically in relation to its educational provision, the University has developed an Education Enhancement Strategy, which has recently been augmented by the inclusion of an action plan for 2008-09. This document confirms the University's vision of the central importance of education within its structures, presenting a framework for the enhancement of student learning, focused around the Education Enhancement Committee, the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group and school quality assurance and enhancement committees. Schools, in their turn, have developed school enhancement strategies, which provide a focus for activity in the following areas:

- Curriculum Architecture
- Role of the First Year in the student journey
- Assessment and Feedback
- Employability and Entrepreneurship
- Internationalisation and Global Perspectives
- Role of Learning Technologies.

74 Alongside these developments, the University indicated that the position of the Dean of Student Experience was of central importance to the oversight and coordination of enhancement, and identified this as a developing role within the University. The Briefing Paper suggested that

the Dean 'takes a panoramic view of the experience from application to employment that includes issues of accommodation, the students' experience as learners, pastoral support such as counselling, the social context of studying at Bournemouth and employability'. The audit team was therefore surprised at more recent developments in the context of the re-structuring of the University's professional services, responsible generally for student support. These included the statement that 'the principally academic post of Dean of Student Experience is outside the scope of this review'. The audit team discussed this changing role with the University and learned that, while still considered of importance, the exact nature of the role was still uncertain. However, the University provided assurance in meetings with the team that the future nature and functions of the Dean's role would receive attention in the short-to-medium term, and this intention was supported by the team.

Management information - quality enhancement

75 Through the audit sampling trails, it was apparent to the audit team that the University was developing strong processes which facilitated the gathering of information and the effective upward reporting of local programme matters through to school, and University, level. School quality reports (SQRs) offered a good opportunity both to focus on enhancement and to identify issues that were important to the more general University community. It was less apparent, however, both from the sampling trails and from discussion with staff across the University that processes were firmly established which allowed for the dissemination of action as a result of reporting, back to programme level, though this may emerge once a full cycle of activity has taken place under the new Academic Procedures.

76 In addition to the SQRs, the University uses Student Unit Evaluation (SUE - standardised as an online process across the University) and the National Student Survey (NSS) as key points of reference for the management of quality and standards. It was particularly evident, from annual reports on programme monitoring (ARPMs) seen as a part of sampling trails, that programme teams paid careful attention to NSS data and that these were responded to fully. As an example, the University has taken considerable trouble to address concerns around the prompt return of assessments to students and this is clearly evidenced within the ARPMs present within trails.

77 In the greater development of academic programme frameworks across the University, ARPMs will be, themselves, developed to have a focus across an entire framework, rather than the individual programmes therein. In meetings with staff across the University it was uncertain as to the extent to which such reporting would retain the clear focus upon each programme within each framework and may, thereby, weaken opportunities for the University to identify and disseminate good practice from one academic area to another. While the audit team recognises that these processes have not yet been fully implemented, it would urge the University to keep this implementation under careful scrutiny and to reflect on the impact of framework development upon the use of management information across the University, particularly with respect to enhancement activity.

Good practice

78 Within the committee structure, the University's Education Enhancement Committee and school quality assurance and enhancement committees operate to capture good practice, through annual monitoring and periodic review processes, and to disseminate this across the University. In particular, the audit team found that the identification of good practice is an inherent feature of SQRs. Additionally, the University runs an annual learning and teaching conference, which focuses to disseminate new initiatives more widely across the University.

79 In meetings with staff from across the University the audit team heard that, in addition to the role of Dean of Student Experience, the deputy deans (education) played a valuable part in capturing and disseminating good practice, both through day-to-day activity and through the operation of University processes. Deputy deans (education) met together on a monthly basis

and these meetings served as a semi-formal forum for discussion around a wide range of topics. There are also a number of structural or role-based operations which work across all areas of the University, serving to act as focal points for the capture and dissemination of good practice, mentioned elsewhere in this report, notably the peripatetic roles that work across partner institutions of the University, capturing and learning from experience within a range of partners, and the Graduate School, which augments the operational role played by the academic schools in the support and training of postgraduate research students.

Staff development and reward

80 In recent years, the University has invested much time and effort in supporting staff in developing their professional practice and research potential. All staff who are new to higher education are required to participate in the Postgraduate Certificate in Education Practice, which is also available to staff of partner institutions. There is also a peer observation of teaching scheme that operates at school level.

81 In particular, staff engagement with professional development is supported through the Releasing Potential initiative. As already noted, this had focused activity in a number of areas, such as the balanced workloads project. The interim report from another project within this overall initiative, pointed to the success in encouraging academic staff to enter onto the University's doctoral track, the initial 30 places rising rapidly to 70, due to demand.

82 During the visit, the audit team heard much from staff of the investment, which they felt the University was making in developing a full academic culture within all schools. However, there were also some concerns from students that their contact time had been reduced as a result of staff activity in other areas. While the team was reassured by staff that this was not the case and, indeed, were given good examples of initiatives aimed at supporting formal class-contact time in a number of ways, the team considered that the University would be wise to keep this aspect of its new initiatives relating to staff under review, so as to ensure that students do not feel that they are disadvantaged as a result of competing University demands upon staff time.

83 In all, the audit team was shown a developing picture of enhancement activity across the University, with many examples of positive practice. As structures become more firmly embedded (particularly the relationship between Academic Standards and Education Enhancement Committees) there will undoubtedly be opportunities for these practices to become more firmly embedded across the University. While at this early stage, the University will benefit from maintaining a careful overview of process, to ensure that every opportunity is taken to establish a strategic approach to enhancement at an institutional level.

Section 5: Collaborative arrangements

84 Bournemouth University has a wide collaborative portfolio. In 2007-08, from a total student population of 16,419, there were 2,670 students studying for awards of the University at partner institutions. The University's collaborative provision includes partners outside the UK, where 226 students are studying for the University's awards. The University's Strategic Plan 2007-2012 emphasises the ongoing importance of collaborative working with partners. The University identifies three categories of partner institution with which it works. They are the regional further education colleges, bi-lateral partnerships where a single school links with a partner institution, and the category of associate college. At the time of the audit, there was only one partner institution in this last category, the Anglo European Chiropractic College (AECC). The AECC can be viewed as a quasi-School and as such it has its own Academic Standards and Quality Committee, which includes in its membership a University representative, from Academic Development and Quality. The AECC is itself represented on University Senate committees.

85 In response to the recommendations made by the Collaborative provision audit in 2006, conducted by QAA, the University restructured its arrangements for the management of its collaborative provision. From 2007-08, every programme, including those in the collaborative provision, is located in one of the schools or transferring to other institutions. The University's key principle is that the collaborative provision adheres to the same quality assurance framework as the campus-based provision. Consequently, the general management of the collaborative provision and the associated quality assurance reporting procedures are aligned with those of the school. The quality management of programmes operated at partner institutions is considered by the relevant school committees.

86 From 2008-09, collaborative provision is a standing agenda item for school academic boards and school quality assurance and enhancement committees. These operate in accordance with the Academic Procedures, which refer to the management of the collaborative provision throughout. Until 2008-09, there were a series of handbooks for the different models of collaborative provision but these have been consolidated into a single handbook included in the Academic Procedures. The Office for Academic Development and Quality (ADQ) maintains a partner register of all collaborative partnerships. This includes details of all the programmes in approval at partner institutions, the linked school, student numbers, the collaborative model being used and the date of the next periodic review.

87 In discussions with the audit team, the University recognised that there was some variation in the detailed reporting requirements that schools have with their partner institutions. This was not an issue where the partner institution was only linked with one school, and a single local reporting format was followed. Where a partner institution had links with more than one school, there was a potential for misunderstanding of the reporting requirements. In such cases, the arrangement was for the peripatetic Partnerships Academic Administration Manager to liaise with the partner institution and with each of the schools concerned, so as to ensure that the partner institution was working to a single consistent set of documentation policies.

Changes in the management of collaborative provision

88 In 2007, the University established a major review of all aspects of its collaborative provision (the Dimpleby Partnership Review) and this reported in January 2008. The review recommended several changes to the management of collaborative provision. The Collaborative Provision Working Group of the quality assurance framework (QAF) review subsequently focused on the quality assurance related actions from the review. The Dimpleby report recommendations included the formation of a regional strategic partnership board, with reporting lines to Senate. This board acts as a strategic forum through which the six regional partnerships and the University can share good practice and articulate a collective response to developments and issues.

89 The relationship with each partner institution is overseen through several mechanisms. A strategic view of the collaborations with each partner institution is taken by its partnership board. Partnership boards have been given a greater strategic focus as part of the changes to the management of the collaborative provision. Each partnership board is chaired on a rotation basis by a relevant dean of school or the college principal. The board includes both senior staff from the partner institution and student representation. A typical agenda included discussion of recruitment, academic planning, consideration of the Partnership Standing Group's report and University developments such as the Senate Review and QAF review. Protocols for the approval of staff curricula vitae were discussed as were the new procedures for the review of annual reports on programme monitoring (ARPMs) at partner institutions. These include senior management review of the ARPM in the partner institution before it is submitted to the University. Partnership board minutes are submitted to the Academic Standards Committee (ASC) and to the relevant school quality assurance and enhancement committees (SQAECs). Relevant issues are taken for consideration at the Regional Strategic Partnership Board. All partnership agreements must be approved by the ASC. The post of Director of Partnerships and Widening Access had been

established to act as a link between partner institutions and schools. The Director meets with higher education managers in the partner institutions at the start of the academic year. The Bournemouth University Partner Institution Administration Team meets termly and is coordinated by the Partnerships Academic Administration Manager.

90 The International Strategy Group is a subcommittee of the ASC and one of its objectives is the establishment of an International Collaboration and Partnership Group. This includes in its remit the scrutiny and possible recommendation of international partnerships to ASC. This group also provides a forum for sharing good practice relating to international collaborations. As with other collaborative activity the management of international collaborations is embedded within the schools.

91 The University expressed the view that these changes, together with a greater direct involvement of senior staff at partner institutions with quality assurance, will give the necessary oversight and authority over collaborative provision to the ASC, as had been recommended by the 2006 QAA Collaborative provision audit. Given their recent introduction it was difficult for the audit team to determine the effectiveness of the new arrangements. However, based on documentation seen by the team and meetings with staff, early indications were that these changes had served to strengthen the University's systems and that, as they bed in, they should provide the necessary level of security for ASC.

Partnership and programme approval

92 All prospective partner institutions must undergo a partnership approval procedure. This involves two stages; development and institutional approval. The development stage incorporates a risk assessment conducted by the school and the preparation of a development proposal. This proposal is submitted to ASC. If approved, a memorandum of understanding is signed and the approval events are planned. Programme approval may run alongside institutional approval if agreed by ASC. The institutional approval stage includes appropriate 'due diligence' investigations. Clear protocols are stipulated for the approval event and institutional approval can only be granted by ASC. The approval of individual programmes at the partner institution then follows. New programmes at a new partner institution are only approved, in the first instance, for three years. In line with the recommendations of the QAF Report, the current three-year maximum period of initial approval for programmes at existing partners has been extended to six years, to reflect a increased level of confidence in the management of the provision, and also so as to be consistent with the campus-based provision and to accommodate a move to framework provision. From the sampled evidence, the audit team was able to confirm that partner institution programme approval was a full and thorough process and was carried out in accordance with the University's procedures.

93 The University's collaborative provision includes a large number of Foundation Degrees operating at partner institutions. Each Foundation Degree has a defined progression route to top-up to an honours degree award. In most instances an appropriate top-up programme is available at the University, but for some of the Foundation Degrees appropriate top-up programmes are only available at other higher education institutions. Evidence seen by the audit team confirmed that for the programme approval of Foundation Degrees, relevant employer representatives are included on the evaluation panel. Partner institutions, through recommendations identified at programme approval and review, are advised or required to form employer advisory boards. In a meeting with staff it was reported that in some cases partner institutions were invited to join school industry advisory groups.

94 Through partner institutional review and programme approval events, learning resources at partner institutions are subject to regular review. Partner institutions are responsible for their own ICT provision and the audit team saw evidence that their comparability with the provision at the University campuses is considered during reviews. A review of the approval and review process is conducted annually. The review submitted to the ASC in October 2007, provided a

clear analysis of the issues arising during programme approvals and identified those issues that were of particular significance for the management of collaborative provision. The review highlighted that for collaborative provision, 60 per cent of events had identified resourcing issues and 45 per cent of the events had resulted in conditions or recommendations relating to work-based learning and industry advisory panels. In three events industry links were commended.

Periodic review

95 The QAA 2006 Collaborative provision audit recommended as desirable the establishment of a schedule for institutional review of partner institutions. The University has put in place a schedule of partner institutional reviews for all of its collaborative partnerships. The periodic review process was piloted with BPC in March 2008. The subsequent report was considered at ASC in May 2008. The report noted that the communication between the two partners had improved since the creation of the Partnerships Academic Administration Manager role. The report also noted the work of the Bournemouth University Partner Institution Administration Team, and the contributions of former management liaison meetings, and partnership boards as having been useful communication fora. The review recorded that the curricula vitae of new staff teaching on University programmes were received by the appropriate school but that written approval was not deemed necessary. This appeared to the audit team to contradict the guidance given in the Academic Procedures and it was acknowledged as an area of inconsistency in the University's Briefing Paper. The University will wish to establish a consistent approach here.

Link tutors, School link tutors

96 The link tutor role has been developed with the introduction of school partnership coordinators for whom a key function is to oversee all collaborative provision within a school. Within the new structure it is acknowledged that for some collaborations subject specific link tutors may also be required to provide support at programme/framework level. The school link tutor still maintains overall responsibility and reports to the deputy dean (education). It is expected that the school link tutor will visit each partner a minimum of three times each year and each programme may require up to three further days of support. School link tutors are expected to prepare reports for the SQAEC and are also members of the school link tutors group. The aim of this group is to discuss, share good practice and identify areas of collaborative provision requiring consideration. The minutes of the group are received by the SQAEC. The effectiveness of the link tutor role is scrutinised as part of a partner institutional review and the audit team noted that its importance for good communication was emphasised in meetings and partner institutional review reports. The team were informed of cases where the link tutor sat in on programme team meetings at a partner institution.

Annual monitoring

97 Programme leaders in partner institutions produce annual reports on programme monitoring (ARPMs) in line with University Academic Procedures. These ARPMs are initially checked by the partner college and then considered by the relevant SQAEC. The operation of the collaborative programmes for each school is reviewed in the School Quality Report which is considered by the ASC. The AECC, which operates as a quasi-School, submitted a school quality report in 2008, that related to those programmes delivered by the AECC as an associate college of the University. The audit team was able to confirm that, within the new quality assurance framework, ARPMs would still be prepared for programmes/frameworks in partner institutions. With the move to frameworks it is important the University, through linked schools, maintains a detailed view of the student experience at programme level in the collaborative provision.

98 Since 2002, following risk analysis by the University, the Partnerships Standing Group (PSG) has provided an additional level of scrutiny for partnership ARPMs and has reported directly to ASC and partnership boards. The audit team observed that the PSG did not operate fully in 2007-08, but the ASC had received the PSG's report summarising partner college ARPM reader's reports for 2006-07. The audit team understood that the PSG would continue to operate in the short term while the new processes for the quality assurance of all collaborative provision were bedding in within the schools.

99 The audit team noted the broad and detailed agenda addressed by the ASC. This includes the overview of the collaborative provision and it is clear from the committee minutes that this is being considered in appropriate detail. As already noted (paragraph 16 above), the audit team would recommend that the balance of work for this important committee be kept under review to ensure that it does not become overloaded.

100 Partner institutions, in line with the new procedures, were asked to produce ARPMs earlier in the cycle from 2007-08 onwards. The audit team noted from the minutes of school academic boards that this was not achieved by all partner institutions, but the intention to adopt the new procedures was confirmed to the team by representatives from partner institutions with whom it met. The Dimpleby Partnership Review recommended that senior management in partner institutions take greater responsibility for local quality assurance through their quality assurance procedures. There had been some variation in the approach taken to this but there was evidence that partner institutions have engaged with the spirit of this initiative. Student representation and involvement in the quality management operates in much the same way as for the campus-based provision. There are student representatives on partnership boards and at programme or course team meetings.

101 The University plans to further streamline the annual monitoring process from 2008-09 so that framework teams will maintain a 'live' action plan that will be updated during the year as relevant information becomes available. It has been reported at ASC that partner institutions were now engaging in the modified ARPM process.

Admissions

102 Partner institutions are responsible for their student admissions but are required to refer any non-traditional applications to the link tutor. All applications involving accreditation of prior learning must also be referred to the link tutor. Admissions and recruitment are reviewed as part of a partner institutional review.

External examining and assessment

103 Partner institutions are responsible for implementation of the assessment processes as detailed in the Academic Procedures including adherence to the independent marking policy. An independent marking plan is produced for each programme and should identify University moderators where this function is not undertaken by the link tutor. In meetings with staff, the audit team confirmed that the link tutor plays an active role in moderation. The degree of moderation to be applied may be reviewed by the programme team after the first two or three years of operation. However, all agreements in relation to the extent of moderation are made in consultation with the school link tutor at the beginning of each session. Partner institutions are now invited to use a standard assessment feedback forms.

104 The boards of examiners for collaborative programmes are normally chaired by the dean of the relevant school and operated in the same way as the campus-based provision. External examiners for the collaborative provision are appointed by the University. The ADQ receives the external examiners' reports and forwards them to the partner institution. Partner institutions are required to reply to external examiners reports and copy the school academic administration managers.

105 The External Examiners Review Group conducts an independent analysis of external examiner reports including those relating to collaborative provision. The report submitted to ASC in 2008, identified three negative reports relating to programmes delivered at three separate partner institutions. The audit team confirmed that action plans had been drawn up where appropriate and subsequent external examiner reports had commented on the improvement.

Staff development and support

106 The University's internal staff development activities are open to staff from partner institutions but, to make these more accessible, some sessions are delivered in partner institutions. The Senior Lecturer Staff Development (Partnerships) has a remit to support higher education-related staff development in partner institutions. The audit team was informed that this included offering staff induction and other sessions at partner sites to maximise access to staff development. The team noted from Partnership Board minutes that staff from partner institutions had attended the University's Education Conference in May 2008 and had valued this opportunity. It was also confirmed that additional peripatetic staff are responsible for coordinating the delivery of other services including additional learning needs and library services. The Partnerships Academic Administration Manager provides direct support to partner institutions improving communication between partner institutions and the University. The role also supports sharing good practice across partner institutions and ensures that each partner institution is given consistent documentation protocols. The team views these peripatetic roles as examples of good practice.

Student support and feedback

107 It was confirmed in a meeting with students that tutorial support was in line with the campus-provision. Students from partner institutions were particularly complimentary about the support they received. The audit team understood that the remit of the Dean of Student Experience included liaising with partner institutions. For example the Dean of Student Experience arranged for the counselling staff from partner institutions to visit the University to discuss issues that arose when counselling higher education students. The University's Education Enhancement Strategy has as one of its objectives that, by 2012, peer learning is provided for all first-year undergraduates. There has been a limited introduction of peer-assisted learning (PAL) at Weymouth College and this is also to be piloted at BPC in 2008-09. The team were able to confirm that this pilot was being conducted in the FdA Tourism Management framework at BPC. The pilot will be reviewed as part of the annual monitoring of PAL activities and it is the intention to explore links with the 'buddy' scheme introduced with the School of Services Management for Level H top-up students. The team considered that the University's initiative in PAL, including its extension to its collaborative partners, constituted an example of good practice (see also paragraph 61).

108 Each partner institution has a local complaints procedure but there is an opportunity for the complainant to take unresolved issues on to the University. Partner institution academic appeals are considered by the institution itself in conjunction with school staff in the first instance. If the appellant is not satisfied then an appeal may be submitted to the University, he or she will use the same procedure as campus-based students.

109 Students at partner institutions can register to use the University library and electronic learning resources. They normally also have access to the VLE, myBU, which provides a wide range of learning materials. While the University recognises that partner institutions may have their own VLE, students are also encouraged to use myBU. The Briefing Paper noted that partner institutions had made little use of myBU thus far, but the development of its use by partners is a priority area for 2008-09.

110 The engagement with the online use of student unit evaluations (SUE) has been variable at partner institutions in line with the experience for campus-based programmes (see paragraph 41). One partner institution reverted to paper-based evaluations to gather student feedback during 2007-08. It was noted in the Partnership Standing Group report for 2006-07 that the limited response to SUE may be attributable to the issue of access to myBU.

Good practice

111 The enhancement agenda for the University includes partner institutions. Good practice is shared across the collaborative provision through the Regional Strategic Partnership Board, the Partnership Coordinators Forum, the Director of Partnerships and Widening Access, and the work of the Partnerships Academic Administration Manager and the Senior Lecturer Staff Development (Partnerships). At meetings with staff examples were given where good practice has been fed from the partner institutions back to the University. For example, staff from partner institutions attend and contribute to enhancement conferences, some partner institutions run research days to which University staff are invited and partner institutions have a greater awareness of 14-19 diploma work, and are feeding this back into workshops at the University.

Publicity

112 Publicity for programmes at partner institutions is governed by the University protocols, either the publicity protocol (UK) or the publicity protocol (international). The University produces two student handbooks, one for students studying at partner institutions and one for students studying at the main University campuses.

Flexible and distance learning

113 The University distinguishes between blended learning, which includes both face-to-face and online learning, and distance learning, which is delivered entirely online. Four schools in the University offer a total of seven programmes by distance learning. The QAF review group which reviewed flexible and distance learning recommended some adjustments to the approval of programmes with a substantial element of distance learning. These proposals include a requirement that the review samples learning materials as part of the review process. The audit team confirmed that the annual monitoring procedures were being applied appropriately and noted that external examiner comments and student feedback were largely supportive. In order to support online delivery tutor guides are available for some programmes and it was reported that good practice in e-learning was being shared across the schools. In part, this was orchestrated by carefully selecting panel members for the approval panels of distance-learning programmes.

114 The audit team found that the University had reviewed and was progressively strengthening its management of collaborative provision. Particular improvements had been made in arrangements for reporting, and for the communication and support of its partners. Overall, the team considered that the University was managing its collaborative provision according to the precepts in the *Code of practice, Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distance learning (including e-learning)*.

Section 6: Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students

115 The University offers programmes of supervised study, leading to the degrees of Master of Philosophy and Doctor of Philosophy (by thesis, creative or performance work and publication), as well as professional doctorates (DBA and DProf). Since the review of the work of Senate and its subcommittees (the 'Husband Review') responsibility for the quality and standards of research degrees has been delegated, by Senate, to the Academic Standards Committee, chaired by the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education).

The research environment

116 During the audit briefing visit, the team learned of the University's determination to embrace research and scholarship at all levels. This determination has concentrated upon staff development and engagement with research together with a 'substantial PhD Studentship scheme' within which over 90 fully-funded studentships have been made available since 2005. This initiative is focused on developing greater research activity amongst staff and on developing more of a research culture within the University, including development of a 'pan-University Graduate School'.

117 Recent discussion of the restructuring of Professional Services within the University has included consultation on the location and nature of the Graduate School. The final report on phase 1 of this restructuring concluded that 'it is recognised that having a graduate school is important to give focus for graduate activity both externally and internally. It is also recognised that the focus on graduate activity and the academic leadership of developments in this area is important'. The Graduate School runs a Postgraduate Certificate in Research Degree Supervision programme as well as training for independent chairs and examiners. The University recognises, however, that '[m]ost postgraduate research (PGR) support will be at School level and the primary source of academic support will be the supervisory team'; postgraduate research students, met by the team, affirmed that their schools were their 'homes', with deputy deans (research and enterprise) and postgraduate research administrators being important and valuable sources of authority, advice and guidance.

118 The University has also established 22 research centres across its six schools. Postgraduate research students who met with the team affirmed that these centres provided a useful locus of additional research support for them, over and above their direct supervisory teams. In some schools, research centre meetings offered opportunities for research students to present their work in progress to colleagues and receive valuable feedback.

Selection, admission and induction of students

119 The University retains an open application policy for postgraduate research students who are invited to make proposals to any of the six schools, via the postgraduate research administrators. In discussion with postgraduate research students the team learned that in addition to this open application route, the University also offered competitive research scholarships in some areas, as well as inviting application to larger projects, particularly in the sciences, where a research student might gain their doctorate through such participation.

120 The University has a central goal to broaden the engagement of academic staff with research and enterprise activity, which forms a focus of one project within the University's broader 'Releasing Potential Initiative': 'Releasing Research and Enterprise Potential'. Among other aspects of this project is an ambition to increase staff opportunities to engage with research, and to have more academic staff with research degrees. An interim report on this project noted that '[i]n October 2006 Deans were asked to nominate staff for a 30 participant programme. Owing to overwhelming enthusiasm from staff, 70 participants actually ended up joining the programme, representing approximately 15 per cent of the academic workforce. Seventy other staff participated in the workshops. If we include internal facilitators and mentors, however, the participation figure rises to around 38 per cent of academic staff'. Current reports on the University's portal for research students, myBUILD, show there to be 338 students currently registered for research degrees at the University.

121 All postgraduate research students receive, each year in hard copy, the University's Code of Practice for Research Degrees, which augments and clarifies both the regulations for the award of research degrees and the processes around induction, progression and examination. This is also available to students electronically, via the University's website. Students met by the audit team confirmed that this was the most important source of published information and guidance

for them. Admission criteria for each level of research award are outlined in the Code of Practice for Research Degrees.

Supervision

122 The University appoints supervisory teams for postgraduate research students. Teams must 'contain two active researchers with expertise in the relevant subject or discipline area, one of whom must have successfully supervised one or more PGR to completion'. Supervisors must also have completed a Postgraduate Certificate in Research Degree Supervision. No supervisor may supervise more than six postgraduate research students at any one time, although the Briefing Paper noted that 'it has sometimes proved difficult to cap supervisions at this level'.

123 The audit team scrutinised records of supervision on myBUILD, the University's research student portal, and found that these demonstrated that some supervisors do, indeed, have more than six supervised PGRs. The team would suggest that a strategy be put into place to address this imbalance between aspiration and reality. At the same time, students met during the visit commented favourably upon the quality and engagement of their supervisors and reflected that, in a time of much staff movement at the University, arrangements for the transfer or re-assignment of supervisors had been handled carefully and sensitively. Postgraduate research students also affirmed that, if deemed desirable, supervisors could be assigned from outside the University (an example being where a member of academic staff moves to another institution), though the Code of Practice for Research Degrees stipulates that the primary supervisor may not be from outside the University.

124 Students met by the audit team were unanimously appreciative of the dedication and expertise of their supervisory teams. The team found that the postgraduate research portal, myBUILD, although still in early stages of development, provided an important support to supervisory activities. Interactive elements of myBUILD ensure that, once a relevant form is completed by a research student, their supervisory team is automatically notified.

125 Having reviewed both the current and planned range of information that it offered, the audit team considered that it will enable the University to retain central oversight of the experience of supervision and the progression of research students in all its schools.

Progress and review arrangements

126 After admission onto a research programme, postgraduate research students are expected to complete an initial review, after four to eight months, depending on their status. All postgraduate research students are then required to complete an annual review report and an annual training needs analysis, both of which must be approved by their supervisory team. Confirmation of their eligibility to re-enrol is dependent upon this approval. Students met by the audit team affirmed that these processes afforded them useful opportunities for reflection and were taken very seriously within the University.

127 The Graduate School monitors progression of all postgraduate research students within the University and, from 2008-09 it will 'receive and undertake an annual analysis of examiners' preliminary and final reports with the aim of disseminating good practice through the PGCert Research Degree Supervision and other channels and providing an overview to ASC'. A feature of the upgrade process from MPhil to PhD status within the University is that postgraduate research students 'undergo a transfer viva voce and review their skills training needs'. This viva voce examination includes appropriately qualified academic staff from outside the student's home school.

Development of research and other skills

128 Induction is through a mandatory induction programme, offered twice yearly. All postgraduate research students complete regular training needs analyses and the outcomes of these are recorded in the 'interactive log document' on the virtual learning environment. These data are used to 'inform Graduate School support for PGRs'. There is also a Research Methodology & Roberts' Skills Programme operating across the University. Progress and review arrangements, tracked through myBUILD, ensure that these processes are implemented and monitored, and students are not able to progress from one year of research to another, or between stages of their studentship, without fulfilling these requirements. Research students, met during the audit visit, confirmed that both the generic support available to them, and the support that could be arranged to cater for more specific research-related requirement, were appropriate to their needs. All postgraduate research students who undertake teaching duties within the University are required to complete a three-day University learning and teaching induction programme. Students met by the team who fulfilled teaching roles confirmed that they had participated in the programme.

Feedback mechanisms

129 The Briefing Paper stated that postgraduate research students 'have a variety of formal and informal mechanisms to provide feedback to the University on their experience'. These include the use of representatives (Graduate School and school research and enterprise committees), the evaluation through the VLE and exit surveys. Each school research and enterprise committee has one postgraduate research student representative and the team learned that the Graduate School organises separate meetings which allow these representatives to meet together, as a collective, to discuss the experience of research students across the University.

130 Postgraduate research students, met by the team, confirmed that Students' Union support and training for student representatives was available to them. All students reflected that they were very much involved as staff members within their individual schools, being invited to staff meetings and given opportunities to feed back on their experience in this way. Students very much appreciated their move, as they saw it, from 'postgraduate research students' to 'postgraduate researchers'.

Assessment

131 Assessment policies for research degrees are outlined in the Code of Practice for Research Degrees. Prior to submission of their final thesis, postgraduate research students will normally have gone through an upgrade process, including a transfer viva voce examination. Submission of the final thesis and arrangements for examination are tracked through myBUILD and the submission process is outlined in the 'Key Milestones' section. Arrangements for examination, including the appointment of appropriate examiners, is coordinated by the Graduate School with examiners being nominated by the supervisory team. There must be at least two examiners, of whom one is external to the University. Full details of the appointment of examiners may be found in the University's Code of Practice for Independent Chairs, Internal and External Examiners of Candidates for Research Degree Awards. Postgraduate research students may submit for examination by creative or performance works and members of the University staff may submit for examination by published works.

Complaints and appeals

132 The University's Code of Practice for Research Degrees includes full details of procedures relating to complaints, appeals and academic misconduct and students who met the audit team were confident that they would know how to operate the processes. Students referred to the 'open door' policy operating within the Graduate School, which was seen as a useful supplement

to supervisory and school support mechanisms. Postgraduate research students were also unanimous in their appreciation of the work of postgraduate research administrators within the six schools, identifying them frequently as an invaluable source of advice and guidance.

Summary

133 The audit team recognised that the University had put much effort into ensuring that there was a fully-integrated support mechanism for its research students, working across supervisory teams, the six academic schools and the Graduate School, and that this provided an excellent experience for these researchers. The developing use of myBUILD, as a web portal for postgraduate researchers, is a significant initiative. When fully embedded this will allow for a proactive engagement with postgraduate student experience across all schools, and support its monitoring at university level.

134 The University's Releasing Research and Enterprise Strategy, designed to increase confidence and expertise in research and scholarly activity, provides a planned process for engagement in doctoral study. In 2007-08, over 50 per cent of the academic staff were engaged in the process as participants or as supervisors. Staff development to support PhD study includes a 'doctoral track', which introduces staff to doctoral practice prior to embarking on a programme of study leading to a PhD award. In one reflection on the development of support for research, in the course of a 'mock RAE audit' in the Media School, a university report commented that '[t]he Investment in Research funding has supported the research student culture, not only by providing bursaries and infrastructural support, but also by providing a budget that allows the students to attend conferences and seminars, encouraging them to see their own work as contributing to and integrating with the national research environment. This, together with the establishment of the Graduate School, has had a subtle but distinct impact on the research student culture, which has slowly been modifying into a community.' In general, the audit team were able to confirm this positive view of the University's progress in developing and supporting its postgraduate research culture, and considered that taken together the wide-ranging support initiatives constituted good practice.

135 Through scrutiny of the strategies, policies, regulations and procedures relating to research and the administration of research degrees within the University, the audit team confirmed that the University's arrangements for postgraduate research students were appropriate and satisfactory and met the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*.

Section 7: Published information

136 The University and its partner institutions publish a wide range of marketing, admissions, induction, course and regulatory information in hard-copy and online. The University has clearly defined guidance and protocols for the preparation and approval of published material. This includes formal oversight of published information through the annual report from the Publications Steering Group to the Academic Standards Committee.

137 The University's programme database 'Course Search', is populated from Unit-e, the University's student record system. It serves to integrate the programme development process into the programme communication process. It provides online access to course details for prospective students. The accuracy of essential information such as programme overview, content, entry requirements, subject and title is ensured by only publishing such information online when the programme has been approved and this approval has been recorded by the Office for Academic Development and Quality, a procedure clearly set out in the University's course communication process.

138 The University's undergraduate prospectus is now divided into two separate publications, one focused on honours degree courses and the other on Foundation Degree courses. The Foundation Degree prospectus emphasises partner institution facilities and resources while the honours degree prospectus highlights campus-based resources. A separate prospectus is devoted to postgraduate provision, and a separate international prospectus is being trialled for 2009-10. The production planning process is clearly delineated through a general planning process for hard copy published material and a specific prospectus production process. Input for the prospectuses comes from three main sources: International and Corporate Relations (ICR), the programme leaders and school marketing development managers. It is the view of the University that the application of these processes has raised the quality of the prospectuses. The audit team judged the processes for producing the prospectus to maintain the necessary checks to be effective.

139 The University's central new media team authors and publishes website content for internal clients. The University is moving towards having all web development work being signed off by that team. Materials produced by the schools and professional services are subject to local sign-off processes. Within the schools the school marketing manager is responsible for the quality of published information. The University has a website strategy that was published in 2007. A website quality review, carried out in 2007, identified a need for a review of the University's publishing model, and this was in process at the time of the audit.

140 All applicants to the University receive the University welcome pack. The University Handbook, which includes web-based material, provides a variety of information including details of plagiarism and associate penalties. The audit team noted that in both the student written submission and the Partnership Institutional Review report some students had expressed concern that it was not always clear whether a programme was being offered at the University or partner institutions. The University has taken action to address this. Sample prospectus and website material that was seen by the audit team makes this distinction clear, as does the decision to produce separate handbooks issued for the University, for partner institutions and for Bournemouth and Poole College. International Students also receive a special welcome guide. Much of this material is available online.

141 The Publications Steering Group offers advice and guidance for the production of publications. This group produces an annual report for the Academic Standards Committee. The report covers partner publicity (UK and overseas), print publications, and the website. To support the operation of the Publications Steering Group, key roles have been identified to act as points of contact for partner institutions. For UK partners, the Partnerships Marketing Manager within the marketing team of ICR takes this role and for non-UK partners or partners whose target markets are exclusively outside the UK it is the International Partnerships Manager. The International Publications and Web Officer is also a contact for publicity issues. One of the tasks for the Partnerships Marketing Manager is to ensure that marketing information on partner institution websites would be kept up to date and correct.

Teaching quality information

142 It is a University requirement to produce programme/unit handbooks. Generally there are effective local arrangements to monitor the annual update of these handbooks. However, the University acknowledged that the arrangements for checking partner institution handbooks have been less consistently followed. Accordingly, the importance of this process has been emphasised in the latest version of the Academic Procedures.

143 From 2008-09, programme teams are required to discuss external examiner reports at the first appropriate programme team meeting. However, the audit team found that few of the students with whom it met were as yet aware of this expectation. In meetings with staff, it was acknowledged that there was no formal process in place that would make the external examiner reports available to the student representatives. It was noted that students could request copies of reports.

144 Programme and unit specifications are available electronically in a central location where they can be accessed by all staff. The programme specification forms the core of the programme handbook for students. The key aspects are included and supplemented with operational and 'student-friendly' guidance. Unit specifications are provided to students either through the programme handbook, level handbook or unit guide, as appropriate to the programme. The University began uploading programme specifications onto the website during 2007-08. The programme specifications uploaded so far are available through the portal, thus allowing public access. During 2008-09, Academic Services will develop MyBU to ensure a minimum information presence for all units. This involves the inclusion of unit specifications. In general, students felt that information they would need concerning programme, unit or regulatory matters was available through the student handbook, myBU or the website.

145 The University makes the appropriate returns to the Higher Education Statistics Agency regarding student numbers. These are subsequently uploaded onto the Unistats site. The University has not yet chosen to provide the optional commentary on these statistics.

146 The audit team found that reliance could reasonably be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the University publishes about the quality of its educational provision and the standards of its awards.

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