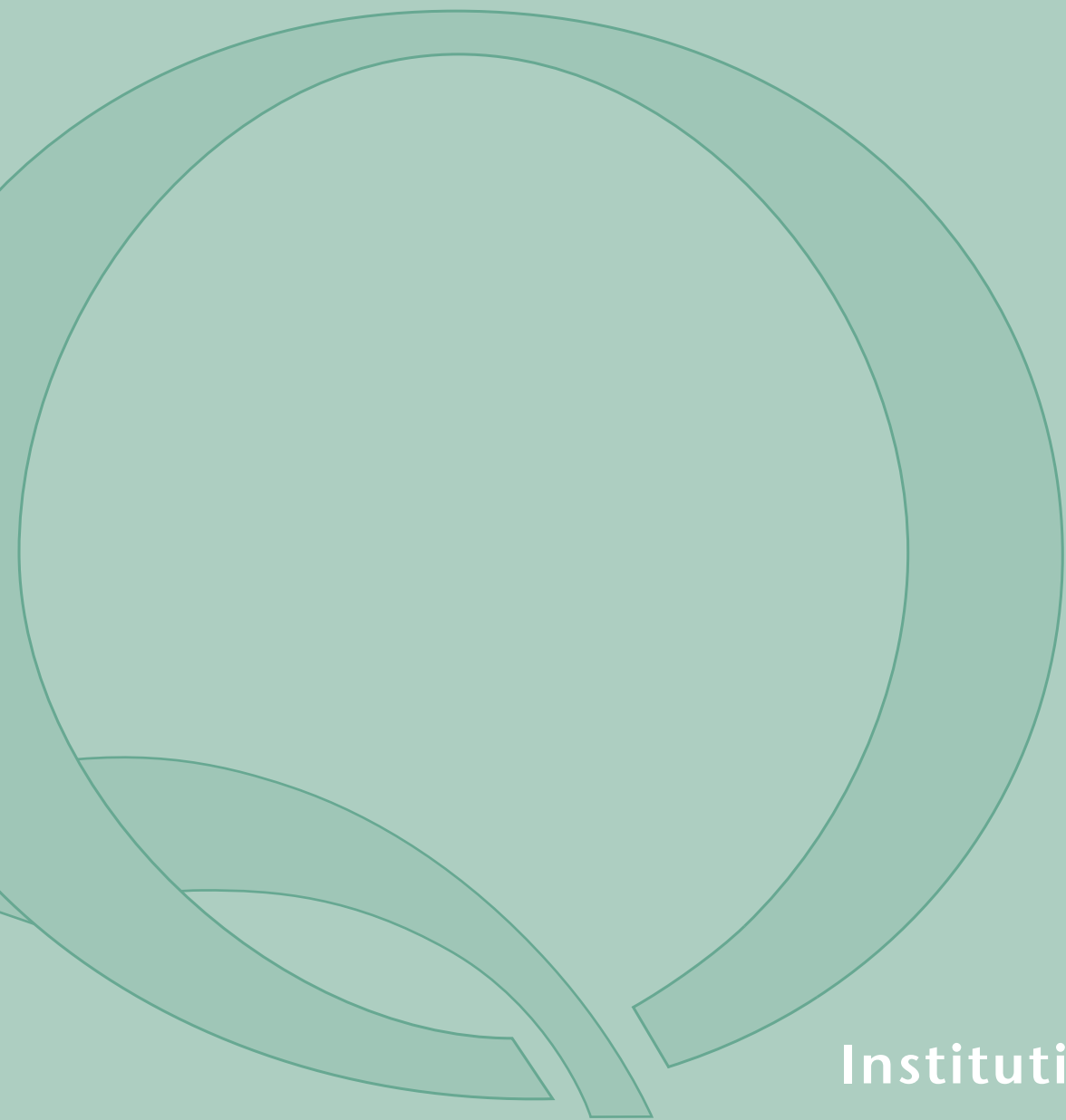




**QAA**



# Institutional audit

**University of Warwick**

NOVEMBER 2008

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## Preface

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's (QAA) mission is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications and to inform and encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education. To this end, QAA carries out Institutional audits of higher education institutions.

In England and Northern Ireland, QAA conducts Institutional audits on behalf of the higher education sector, to provide public information about the maintenance of academic standards and assurance of the quality of learning opportunities provided for students. It also operates under contract to the Higher Education Funding Council in England and the Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland to provide evidence to meet their statutory obligations to assure the quality and standards of academic programmes for which they disburse public funding. The audit method was developed in partnership with the funding councils and the higher education representative bodies and agreed following consultation with higher education institutions and other interested organisations. The method was endorsed by the Department for Education and Skills (now the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills). It was revised in 2006 following recommendations from the Quality Assurance Framework Review Group, a representative group established to review the structures and processes of quality assurance in England and Northern Ireland, and evaluate the work of QAA.

Institutional audit is an evidence-based process carried out through peer review. It forms part of the Quality Assurance Framework established in 2002 following revisions to the United Kingdom's approach to external quality assurance. At the centre of the process is an emphasis on students and their learning.

The aim of the revised Institutional audit process is to meet the public interest in knowing that universities and colleges of higher education in England and Northern Ireland have effective means of:

- ensuring that the awards and qualifications in higher education are of an academic standard at least consistent with those referred to in *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* and are, where relevant, exercising their powers as degree awarding bodies in a proper manner
- providing learning opportunities of a quality that enables students, whether on taught or research programmes, to achieve those higher education awards and qualifications
- enhancing the quality of their educational provision, particularly by building on information gained through monitoring, internal and external reviews, and feedback from stakeholders.

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

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

Audit teams also comment specifically on:

- the institution's arrangements for maintaining appropriate academic standards and quality of provision of postgraduate research programmes
- the institution's approach to developing and implementing institutional strategies for enhancing the quality of its educational provision, both taught and by research

- the reliance that can reasonably be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the institution publishes about the quality of its educational provision and the standards of its awards.

If the audit includes the institution's collaborative provision the judgements and comments also apply, unless the audit team considers that any of its judgements or comments in respect of the collaborative provision differ from those in respect of the institution's 'home' provision. Any such differences will be reflected in the form of words used to express a judgement or comment on the reliance that can reasonably be placed on the accuracy, integrity, completeness and frankness of the information that the institution publishes, and about the quality of its programmes and the standards of its awards.

### **Explanatory note on the format for the report and the annex**

The reports of quality audits have to be useful to several audiences. The revised Institutional audit process makes a clear distinction between that part of the reporting process aimed at an external audience and that aimed at the institution. There are three elements to the reporting:

- the **summary** of the findings of the report, including the judgements, is intended for the wider public, especially potential students
- the **report** is an overview of the findings of the audit for both lay and external professional audiences
- a separate **annex** provides the detail and explanations behind the findings of the audit and is intended to be of practical use to the institution.

The report is as concise as is consistent with providing enough detail for it to make sense to an external audience as a stand-alone document. The summary and the report, without the annex, are published in hard copy. The summary, the report and the annex are published on QAA's website. The institution will receive the summary, report and annex in hard copy (*Handbook for institutional audit: England and Northern Ireland, 2006* - Annexes B and C refer).

## Summary

### Introduction

A team of auditors from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) visited the University of Warwick (the University) from 10 to 14 November 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.

To arrive at its conclusions, the audit team spoke to members of staff throughout the University and to current students, and read a wide range of documents about the ways in which the University manages the academic aspects of its provision.

In Institutional audit, the institution's management of both academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities are audited. The term 'academic standards' is used to describe the level of achievement that a student has to reach to gain an award (for example, a degree). It should be at a similar level across the United Kingdom (UK). The term 'quality of learning opportunities' is used to describe the support provided by an institution to enable students to achieve the awards. It is about the provision of appropriate teaching, support and assessment for the students.

### Outcomes of the Institutional audit

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

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

### Institutional approach to quality enhancement

The audit team found that the institutional approach to quality enhancement has helped to engender an ethos across the University that expects and encourages enhancement of learning opportunities and provides the means for opportunities for enhancement to be identified, supported and disseminated.

### Postgraduate research students

The audit team found that the University has a sound infrastructure in place through the Graduate School and its constituent Office to ensure satisfactory arrangements for postgraduate research students. Institutional oversight is provided by the Board of Graduate Studies and its Chair, who sits on the Academic Quality and Standards Committee, the University's Steering Committee and Senate. The University has taken appropriate action following the report of QAA's *Review of postgraduate research degree programmes in England, Northern Ireland and Wales* in 2006. The research environment and postgraduate experience meet in full the expectations 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 by QAA.

### Published information

The audit found that, overall, 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 as being good practice:

- the student representation framework including the student-staff liaison committee system, the support for, and training of, student representatives, and the committee portal and handbook
- the academic and support infrastructure and policies which support the enhancement of undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research student skills development
- the comprehensive and thorough preparation for, and support of, study abroad
- the opportunities afforded through the Undergraduate Research Scholarship Scheme and the Reinvention Centre for Undergraduate Research for students to become involved in research activities
- the comprehensive information, including academic statistics, available for staff and students on Insite, the University's intranet
- the student experience provided by the Centre for Lifelong Learning and the University's commitment to opportunities for part-time students.

## Recommendations for action

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

The team advises the University to:

- review its management of joint honours courses, including the application of additional credit to such courses.

It would be desirable for the University to:

- review the operation at departmental level of the new central guidelines on personal tutoring with a view to enhancing consistency of implementation.

## Reference points

To provide further evidence to support its findings, the audit team investigated the use made by the University of the Academic Infrastructure which provides a means of describing academic standards in UK higher education. It allows for diversity and innovation within academic programmes offered by higher education. QAA worked with the higher education sector to establish the various parts of the Academic Infrastructure, which are:

- the *Code of practice*
- the frameworks for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and in Scotland
- subject benchmark statements
- programme specifications.

The audit found extensive evidence of the University's engagement with and response to the Academic Infrastructure indicating that it took due account of the elements of the Infrastructure in its management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students.

## Report

1 An Institutional audit of the University of Warwick (the University) was undertaken during the week commencing 10 November 2008. The purpose of the audit was to provide public information on the University's management of the academic standards of the awards that it delivers and of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students.

2 The audit team comprised Ms Julia Clarke, Dr Richard Gadsden, Dr Richard Tong and Professor Denis Wright, auditors, and Mrs Louise Walmsley, audit secretary. The audit was coordinated for QAA by Dr Gillian King, Deputy Director, Reviews Group.

### Section 1: Introduction and background

3 The University of Warwick received its Royal Charter of Incorporation in 1965. The University sees itself as a leading campus university which plays a prominent role in its locality and on the national and international scene.

4 In July 2007 the University adopted a new strategy, 'Vision 2015'. Developed as a result of an extensive consultation process involving staff, students, alumni and lay members of the Council, the strategy sets out goals in five key areas, involving regional, national and international engagement. The strategy's ambition is 'to take Warwick into the top 50 world universities - as measured by the quality of research output and the strength of student demand - by the University's 50th birthday in 2015'.

5 The University has a total full-time equivalent student population of 16,646; a high proportion of these are postgraduates (7,009), of which 5,668 are on taught postgraduate programmes; 4,348 students (around 20 per cent) are from overseas (39 per cent of postgraduate taught students). There are also annually over 8,000 registrations on the University's Open Studies programme. There are 5,168 members of staff, of whom 1,800 are academic and research staff, spread across 30 departments and over 50 research centres. Warwick is a research-led university: over 91 per cent of academic staff work in departments with research ratings of 5 or 5\* (Research Assessment Exercise 2001). Students are split across the four faculties as follows: Arts (14.6 per cent of students), Medicine (7.6 per cent), Science (31.5 per cent) and Social Studies (46.2 per cent). The University has extensive collaborative arrangements, with 18 of the 30 departments participating in teaching collaborations.

6 Since the last Institutional audit a new Vice-Chancellor has been appointed (2006), Vision 2015 launched (2007), and a new Learning and Teaching Strategy agreed (2008). Periodic review of courses and quinquennial review of research and resources have been merged into one process of Strategic Departmental Review. A new review process for administrative departments, the Administrative and Service Departments Annual Review has been instituted. Two Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning, the Creativity and Performance in Teaching and Learning Centre and the Reinvention Centre for Undergraduate Research, have been established. The University was granted independent medical degree awarding powers in 2007, with the consequent decoupling of the Leicester/Warwick Medical Schools.

7 The 2004 audit report recommended that the University review its assessment conventions with the aim of removing inconsistencies in the assessment regimes across faculties and departments. A pilot of a new marking scale was carried out during academic year 2007-08 with the new system being implemented university-wide for students commencing their programmes from autumn 2008 onwards. While the issue of the marking scale has been addressed, the audit identified continued varying practices across faculties in regard to additional credits and this is discussed further in Section 2.

8 The previous audit also recommended the University to encourage wider adoption of external advice in the development and planning of new programmes, and a report from an external adviser is now required as part of approval documentation.

## Section 2: Institutional management of academic standards

9 The Senate, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, holds overall responsibility for management of academic standards. It delegates responsibility for monitoring of standards to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee and to the Board of Undergraduate Studies, the Board of Graduate Studies, and the faculty boards. Leadership in policy matters rests with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Teaching and Learning) who also chairs the Academic Quality and Standards Committee. The Steering Committee, on behalf of Senate, approves all qualifications awarded by the University.

10 Proposals for new courses generally originate in departments and, if appropriate, are developed with reference to professional, statutory and regulatory bodies. The University utilises course and module approval forms which are applicable to both new and restructured provision and requires departments to specify entry requirements, aims (module and/or course), learning outcomes, assessment and monitoring and evaluation methods, as well as how external involvement in the proposal was sought. External advice must be sought for all new and restructuring proposals.

11 Proposals for courses and/or modules are considered initially at faculty level. If approved, courses are then considered at university level by the Board of Undergraduate Studies or the Board of Graduate Studies, on behalf of Senate. Collaborative and distance-learning courses receive additional scrutiny at the Collaborative, Flexible and Distributed Learning Sub-Committee.

12 Routine monitoring of courses is carried out through the Annual Course Review process. An annual course review meeting, convened by the course leader, considers a range of documentation relevant to the course, including student feedback, student assessment results, external examiner reports, subject and/or professional, statutory and regulatory body reports, previous Annual Course Review reports, as well as reflecting on course data on progression and completion, course specifications and subject benchmark statements. A standard report template is then completed for each course and reviewed at departmental level. Department Annual Course Review reports are summarised for faculty committee scrutiny, and faculty summary reports are produced for the Board of Undergraduate Studies and the Board of Graduate Studies, with further summary reports being considered by the Academic Quality and Standards Committee. The University believes some individual reports could be more reflective, a view shared by the audit team.

13 Periodic review is departmentally based through the quinquennial Strategic Departmental Review process. All of a department's activities are subject to an evaluation by a review panel which makes judgements on appropriateness of academic standards and the quality of courses provided. This panel has a majority of external (to the University) reviewers. The panel meets students and staff, as well as scrutinising documentation in the form of a department self-evaluation document. The self-evaluation document is accompanied by previous periodic reviews, Annual Course Review reports, external examiners' reports, student-staff liaison committee annual reports, student handbooks and, where applicable, professional, statutory and regulatory body reports.

14 Strategic Departmental Review reports go initially to the Vice-Chancellor and are then considered by the Steering Committee. The Head of Department is required to provide a departmental response and action plan. Follow-up is determined by the Steering Committee and overseen by the Academic Resourcing Committee. In addition, the Academic Quality and Standards Committee and either the Board of Undergraduate Studies or the Board of Graduate Studies consider teaching and learning issues and ensure actions are carried out.

15 The University sees the external examiner system as one of the principal means of checking academic standards of its awards. Regulations for appointment of external examiners and details of their duties are to be found in the Examination and Degree Conventions. On appointment, external examiners receive details of their role and functions and regulations concerning external examiners, as well as materials specific to the degree(s) being examined.



Induction is carried out by the appropriate department with further support and information being provided by the Teaching Quality website. No formal University-wide training is provided.

16 An annual report is required from external examiners and, in their reports, they are expected to comment on design and structure of assessments, curriculum aims, content and development, the quality of teaching and learning, and the academic standards set and achieved. If relevant, external examiners are also specifically asked to comment on any element of collaborative provision. External examiners make full use of the report template but, in some instances, responses can be sparse on detail.

17 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor scrutinises external examiner reports on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor. Departments are required to provide formal responses to external examiners. External examiner reports are summarised for consideration by the Board of Undergraduate Studies or the Board of Graduate Studies whose chairs follow up outstanding issues with departments. Where a course includes collaborative provision, the external examiner report is also considered by the Collaborative, Flexible and Distributed Learning Committee. External examiner reports are made available to students through departmental committees or student-staff liaison committees. This process, however, was not clear to some students that the audit team met.

18 Overall, the audit team was able to confirm the University has clear and robust processes for operation of its external examiner procedures and it makes use of appropriately independent external examiners in assuring the standards of its awards.

19 The University's Senate, Steering Committee and the Academic Quality and Standards Committee are responsible for ensuring University regulations and policies for undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision are in accordance with the Academic Infrastructure. The University states that it has adopted *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), as set out in its local Credit and Module framework. In the course approval process all new and restructured courses are required to show alignment with this framework as part of the course approval process. Faculty undergraduate and postgraduate committees monitor alignment and the Academic Quality and Standards Committee reviews alignment at a university level.

20 Programme specifications are known as 'course specifications'. These are required for each course and are available electronically on the Teaching Quality website as well as being incorporated in many departmental handbooks. Course specifications are considered both through the approval process and the departmental review process.

21 Subject benchmark statements must be identified in new course specifications. The Chairs of the Board of Undergraduate Studies and the Board of Graduate Studies, through their scrutiny of external examiner reports, investigate any issues of course alignment with subject benchmark statements. Subject benchmarks are also reflected upon as part of the Strategic Departmental Review process.

22 The University keeps abreast of the Bologna Process and is discussing with subject organisations European recognition of integrated master's degrees. It is working toward issuing diploma supplements from 2009.

23 The University has approximately 100 courses which are accredited, validated or otherwise recognised by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies. Departments are seen as the most appropriate conduit for contact with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies and are responsible for managing their relationships with them, but with central support as required. Professional, statutory and regulatory body reports are considered at departmental level through Annual Course Review and Strategic Departmental Review. At university level, the Academic Quality and Standards Committee oversees the outcomes of accreditation visits and monitors responses to recommendations.

24 Assessment regulations for undergraduate and postgraduate provision are set out in the University Calendar and the University's Examinations and Degree Conventions. In the last audit (2004) attention was drawn to assessment conventions and the University has since been working towards a harmonised marking convention accompanied by a harmonised approach to marking. In 2008 Senate approved final proposals for a new marking scheme (the 17-point marking scheme) and classification convention which is to be applied to all first years from October 2008.

25 Assessment requirements are detailed in course handbooks. In 2004 the University harmonised penalties for late submission of assessed work with separate scales for undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses. Students confirm consistent application of these late submission penalties. Student progression rules are articulated in the University Calendar and are given in course handbooks.

26 Plagiarism regulations are set out in the University Calendar and reinforced through the Students' Union, International Office, at induction and in student handbooks. Resources are also provided online such as 'Plagiarism Teaching Online'. It is clear that the University has made strenuous efforts to educate its students about the issues of plagiarism.

27 At undergraduate level, some departments allow students to take extra credit within a year of study that counts for assessment purposes. Each course sets its own maximum for the extra credit load allowed, subject to an overall maximum credit load applicable across the University. Where students opt to take such extra credit, their mark for that year's study is adjusted using the 'Seymour formula', a formula which potentially increases the student's overall year mark provided they achieve a minimum threshold mark in their extra module(s). Different departments operate differing rules as to how much extra credit may be attempted within a year. In single honours handbooks departments explain, to varying levels of detail, the effect of the Seymour formula and warn, again to varying degrees, of the potential dangers of studying extra credit. For joint honours students it is not always clear whether they are entitled to take extra credit, and if they are, where that extra credit might be taken from. Further, there is considerable variation in the extent to which joint honours handbooks detail the applicability of the Seymour formula and its potential effect on marks. Students expressed their dissatisfaction with the variability in entitlement to taking extra credit and, in some cases, the lack of information available to them.

28 Overall, the audit team concluded that the University's provision for assessment of single honours and postgraduate taught students was appropriate. However, for joint honours students there is potential for inequitable treatment of students and, as part of a wider review of how joint honours programmes are managed, the University is advised to review both the entitlement to take extra credit and the effects this might have on assessment marks, to ensure equity of treatment of students.

29 The University has a well-established database of management information, Academic Statistics, which is available to students and staff through Insite. The Steering Committee, Council and Senate are provided with a statistical analysis, carried out by the Planning and Management Information Team, which looks at student numbers, demographics, graduate destinations and continuation rates allowing monitoring of key trends.

30 In Annual Course Review, departments consider statistical information concerning admissions, progression, non-completion and qualifications, with faculty committees providing further scrutiny. While a number of Annual Course Reviews seen by the audit team reflected on this statistical information, the level of analysis and reflection was variable across departments. The University, while recognising it could make better use of data it collects, sees development of standardised statistical reports as a way of facilitating more consistent reflection by departments.

31 The audit team found the University has a comprehensive database of statistical information and would encourage the University to continue to develop the ways in which it makes use of this rich source of information.

32 In summary, the audit found that the University's processes of approval, monitoring and review are thorough and provide for appropriate external assurance of academic standards, that the University has clear and robust processes for operation of its external examiner procedures, engages with the Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points, and has appropriate assessment processes. The audit concludes that confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards.

### Section 3: Institutional management of learning opportunities

33 As described in the previous section, there is a module and course approval process for undergraduate and postgraduate provision. This involves a department submitting a template that requires identification of academic teaching, student support and guidance resources to support the provision, in addition to specifying course entry requirements, aims, learning outcomes, assessment and monitoring and evaluation methods. Faculty committees, the Board of Undergraduate Studies and the Board of Graduate Studies scrutinise the templates and may require follow-up actions. The faculty committees have representation from all constituent departments, and the Board of Undergraduate Studies and the Board of Graduate Studies have members from each faculty, allowing each of them to act as a vehicle for the sharing of good practice across the University.

34 During Annual Course Review (paragraph 12) if any issues concerning the quality of learning opportunities are identified, these are actioned by the appropriate committee (faculty, the Board of Undergraduate Studies or Board of Graduate Studies) or referred back to the department for action. Examples of good practice are also identified.

35 Periodic review is carried out through the relatively new Strategic Departmental Review process (paragraph 13). Strategic Departmental Review is intended as an holistic review of a department's activities and includes review of all its taught provision and considers both academic and resource issues. Where Strategic Departmental Review reports identify questions or issues regarding physical resources for the support of learning, student and staff numbers, these are followed up by the Academic Resourcing Committee. The Committee is guided in its responses by the University's annual five-year planning process and the University's overarching financial plan.

36 The University had 2,757 joint or multidisciplinary undergraduate students in the academic year 2007-08. Such courses are managed by a 'home' department, one of the main providers of the course. The quality assurance and enhancement arrangements of the home department are used for this provision. Staff met by the audit team gave examples of cooperative working between departments but also said this was not always the case. Students, in meetings and documentation, highlighted a lack of communication between departments in the provision of some joint and multidisciplinary courses leading to, for example, timetabling problems. The University has recently set up a working group to review its approach to managing joint and multidisciplinary degree courses. The team agrees with the need for such a review and advises this be carried out expeditiously.

37 The University, as part of its preparation for audit, carried out a review of its alignment with the *Code of practice*. Reports from relevant committees were drawn together by the Academic Quality and Standards Committee which concluded that the University's processes and procedures were in line with the *Code*. A process for considering revisions to the *Code* is also in place.

38 The University sees its approach to managing standards and quality as embracing strong student involvement through extensive student representation on all University committees, and through the student-staff liaison committee structures. Student opinion is sought through a number of surveys, including university-wide surveys such as the Academic Satisfaction Review, the National Student Survey, the International Student Barometer and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey. The audit team saw examples of actions emanating from the results of these surveys.

39 All modules for undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision are required to seek feedback, which is often through a module feedback questionnaire. Typically, the results are considered by departmental teaching subcommittees and must be addressed in Annual Course Review reports.

40 The increasing number of surveys has led the University to consider how best to fully exploit their results, and a working group is currently reconsidering the survey cycle and ways in which surveys can better inform decision-making. The audit team would encourage the University to develop its strategy for collecting and using survey data so that it can better exploit the results to monitor and enhance the student experience.

41 A well-resourced student-staff liaison committee system has been the key to student representation at the University since 1972. The audit team heard from the students that student representation arrangements were working well and that they felt valued. The student representatives commended the student-staff liaison committee web portal and reported that they were fully supported by the Academic Representation Coordinator who is employed by the Students' Union.

42 Generally, the student-staff liaison committee system was considered highly effective and students confirmed that meetings were held regularly and provided an opportunity to address course-specific issues. There is some customisation of the process for students on collaborative or distance-learning courses which contributes to the identification of the support for part-time students by the Centre for Lifelong Learning as a feature of good practice. Rather than taking a one size fits all approach to student representation, the University has varied its processes for student representation, as appropriate, so that they meet the needs of students on part-time courses, open studies and collaborative programmes, enabling these students to have an active role in quality assurance.

43 However, the students raised communication issues between departments offering joint honours degrees which have been reported by student-staff liaison committees on a yearly basis without satisfactory resolution. This will be addressed through the University's working group to consider the management of joint honours and multidepartmental degrees.

44 Two members of academic staff and two students serve as university-wide student-staff liaison committee co-coordinators. Both staff coordinators and one of the student coordinators are members of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee. Each student-staff liaison committee produces reports which are summarised by the student-staff liaison committee co-coordinators into undergraduate and postgraduate reports which are discussed annually by the Academic Quality and Standards Committee and then by a number of other committees, including the Board of Undergraduate Studies and the Board of Graduate Studies. Students also have the opportunity to raise issues of concern at breakfast meetings with the Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) and the Deputy Registrar.

45 The audit team concluded that the University values student representation and that the student representation system contributes significantly to the quality assurance of learning opportunities. The team considers the student representation framework including the student-staff liaison committee system, the support for, and training of, student representatives, and the student-staff liaison committee portal and handbook to be a feature of good practice.

46 The University Learning and Teaching Strategy states that the University is aiming for excellence in both teaching and research such that each activity enhances and is enhanced by the other. The infrastructure to support the development of research in the curriculum is well resourced and, in 2001, the University established an Undergraduate Research Scholarship Scheme that provides students with the opportunity to gain experience of research while studying as an undergraduate. Additionally, the Reinvention Centre Small Grants Fund provides students with financial support enabling them to undertake research projects consolidating the links between research and teaching. Furthermore, staff are able to apply for Reinvention Centre

Academic Fellowships of up to £10,000 to develop the link between teaching and research. While the infrastructure and funding mechanisms available are well established, the University is aware that engagement could be enhanced across all faculties.

47 One of the two Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at the University, the Reinvention Centre for Undergraduate Research (in collaboration with Oxford Brookes University), is an example of integrating research into the undergraduate curriculum. The Reinvention Centre has dedicated learning space designed to enhance experimental and research-led teaching methods, and produces an online student-edited journal promoting research-based learning in the undergraduate curriculum.

48 Overall, the audit team concluded that the University's infrastructure and approach to supporting the development of the links between research and teaching had a positive impact on the quality of the students' learning experience. The opportunities afforded through the Undergraduate Research Scholarship Scheme and the Reinvention Centre for Undergraduate Research for students to become involved in research activities are a feature of good practice.

49 The development of distance-learning provision at the University has not been considered as a priority, and the largest and only significant distance-learning course is the Distance Learning MBA (up to 500 enrolments per year). However, there has recently been a growth in courses involving blended learning and these programmes are subject to scrutiny by the Collaborative, Flexible and Distributed Learning Sub-Committee, in addition to the standard University procedures. External examining arrangements and, where possible, the same Board of Examiners consider distance learning courses with similar University courses.

50 Placement learning is available with courses offering both mandatory and optional opportunities including study abroad, intercalated years in industry, professional and clinical experience, work-based learning and experiential learning. The University approves, monitors and reviews placement learning through the course approval process, annual course review and periodic review. The University provides a Good Practice Guide on Placement Learning and the placement learning co-coordinators are required to attend an annual meeting to share good practice and discuss issues.

51 The audit team reviewed several study abroad handbooks and students commented positively on the support they received both in preparation for, and during, their study abroad. This support included languages provision, mentoring by previous students, meetings with staff (for example in Paris or in a residential weekend in a German castle) during the placement year, extensive briefing prior to placement and a student written guide. This comprehensive and thorough preparation and support is considered a feature of good practice.

52 The Open Studies programme attracts over 8,000 registrations annually and consists of freestanding accredited modules. Open Studies certificates comprise three of these modules and carry 30 credits at FHEQ level 4. A wide range of Open Studies certificates is available from the Centre for Lifelong Learning and these can be used at a later date to contribute to a part-time degree. The University was committed to widening participation as evidenced by setting up 2+2 degrees with local colleges for students without formal qualifications. The audit team found the support offered to part-time students by the Centre to be a feature of good practice.

53 The University has a planned approach to investment in building and information technology (IT) resources and the overarching theme has been to address the needs of the multiple study styles adopted by students. The student written submission and students confirmed that the University generally has good facilities, but identified the need for the University to upgrade teaching and research facilities for the Arts Faculty, with the Humanities Building being described as 'insufficient'. In the Briefing Paper the University acknowledges that the teaching accommodation varies in quality but does have a responsive and prioritised plan to address this.

54 While the University does not have a separate e-learning strategy, e-learning is embedded in the University Learning and Teaching Strategy. The e-Learning Steering Group oversees the development of IT facilities for teaching and learning and reports to the Information Policy and Strategy Committee and to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee. The University Challenge funds (partly the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund, partly the University's money) are used to support e-learning, and each faculty has a centrally funded e-learning adviser. Staff provided several examples of how e-learning had grown organically at department level without a central strategic drive. However, as the demand on e-learning advisers and e-learning resources grows, the University may need to consider how this area is supported.

55 A 24/7 student-managed learning environment, the Learning Grid (operated by the library), is open every day except Christmas Day allowing continuous access to reference collections, private and group study space, sophisticated technological resources, and support from student advisers who are trained in the use of learning technologies as well as coaching skills. Students were unanimous about the high quality of the learning opportunities afforded by the Learning Grid and praised other departmental services systems such as the BioMed Grid.

56 The University recognises that the network is ageing and is criticised by some students and has instigated a Network Replacement Project to update the University IT network. Although it was recognised that IT Services were undertaking a lot of positive work, the student body as a whole retained concerns over the IT service levels provided.

57 The Undergraduate Admissions Statement is the responsibility of the Director of Student Admissions and Recruitment, but undergraduate and postgraduate admissions and student recruitment are overseen strategically by the Steering Committee, the Board of Undergraduate Studies and the Board of Graduate Studies, and operationally by the Student Admissions and Recruitment Office. The Undergraduate Admissions Statement takes account of the precepts and reflects the principles of fair admissions in the *Code of practice*.

58 The central admissions team quality assures each decision and ensures that University admissions requirements are satisfied. The admissions procedures are robust with course selectors being briefed annually and new course selectors being supported by a central link admissions tutor.

59 Applicants with disabilities or other special needs are considered on the same academic criteria, but the University Disability Co-coordinator advises them on the suitability of the campus or course to the students' needs. There is a clear commitment to widening participation at the local level with the development of Open Studies modules and 2+2 degrees in the Centre for Lifelong Learning, but also through national initiatives such as Aim Higher and Pathways to Law. The University is close to its location-adjusted widening participation benchmarks.

60 The role of the personal tutor and personal tutee was revised in 2008 following a review of the personal tutor system by the Student Support and Guidance Working Party. The new system is led by the University Senior Tutor but it is the responsibility of departments to implement the personal tutor system. All information relating to personal tutoring is provided to staff and students via the University website and a new personal tutor handbook was produced in 2008.

61 The range of student feedback on personal tutoring was variable and while all students were aware of their entitlement, considerable variation in engagement was reported. Students indicated that the arrangements for joint honours students were not always satisfactory. The personal tutoring system is monitored through the Annual Course Review and student-staff liaison committee annual reporting process, and the University is aware of the variation in practice between departments. However, the audit team considers it desirable that the University reviews the operation at departmental level of the new central guidelines on personal tutoring with a view to enhancing the consistency of their implementation.

62 Following consultation with students and staff, 'Warwick Advantage' was launched in October 2008 to improve uptake in personal development planning by integrating it into the personal tutoring system. The audit team encourages the University to continue to develop and monitor personal development planning to ensure appropriate uptake and engagement by students, especially joint honours students.

63 Open Studies students in the Centre for Lifelong Learning are not included in the personal tutoring system but are supported by their module tutors and the Open Studies Senior Tutor. Feedback from student meetings indicated that students within the Centre were extremely satisfied with the personal and academic support they received.

64 A one-stop Student Reception and a one-stop Student Support Services web portal were introduced in 2007 to provide a more integrated approach to student services, and a new induction programme coordinated by the Centre for Student Development and Enterprise was launched in 2008. The students found the induction useful and commended the high quality of the information on the website, but considered that they needed more time to allow them to become familiar with all of the information provided prior to commencing their studies.

65 The four-day orientation programme offered to international students was highly recommended by the students, but the success of this programme has led to some segregation of international students from home students. However, the University is aware of this from its internal evaluations and is considering how to provide a more integrated induction from 2010.

66 In addition to support for international students in the United Kingdom, the International Office and the Centre for Student Development and Enterprise support Warwick students on nearly 50 exchange agreements with universities in 12 countries. The University also has over 200 Erasmus links around Europe. Furthermore, all students are eligible to undertake language modules or to take a module in Language Learning Skills and Strategies as part of the Warwick Skills Certificate; many can do so as part of their course. The 30-credit Warwick Skills Certificate receives positive student evaluation, and uptake continues to rise by about 15 per cent annually. This allows students opportunities to develop their personal development, academic and employability skills, and is free to all Warwick undergraduates. Staff and students are also afforded opportunities to assist the local community and to develop their skills-set via Warwick Volunteers.

67 The academic and support infrastructure and policies which support the enhancement of undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research student skills development, as evidenced above, are considered by the audit team to be a feature of good practice.

68 All new University staff are entitled and encouraged to attend the Warwick Induction Event and to attend various sessions on specific areas of the University. New staff are supported by a comprehensive web portal which provides links to areas of information on the Learning and Development Centre website relating to their role as a new academic member of staff. The recently developed Teaching Grid provides further opportunity for reflective teaching practice and both Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning provide additional opportunities for staff development. Probationary staff attend mandatory sessions on the role of the Personal Tutor and complete a 60-credit Postgraduate Certificate in Academic and Professional Practice which meets the Higher Education Academy Professional Standards Framework. Mandatory training on aspects of teaching and learning is a requirement for all research students teaching more than 20 hours each year and the allocation of teaching is overseen by either the head of department or Director of Postgraduate Studies.

69 In 2008-09, annual review will replace the appraisal system and this will be used to inform staff development activities. The provision of staff development is monitored by the Director of the Learning and Development Centre in discussion with the heads of departments, and is open to all part-time staff and staff from partner institutions. Promotion opportunities require a high level of competence in, and commitment to, teaching supported by the evidence of a 'Teaching

Profile' and a personal chair is available based partly on the criterion of 'acknowledged excellence in teaching'.

70 Several funding opportunities are available centrally or by Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning Fellowships, and 10 to 14 staff are recognised annually with the Warwick Awards for Teaching Excellence which reward staff who have made an exceptional impact on the student experience. The University has secured five National Teaching Fellowships since 2005.

71 In summary, the audit found that the University's processes for the management of changes to courses and development of new courses, the processes of annual and periodic review, and engagement with the *Code of practice* and other external reference points all contributed positively to the University's management of learning opportunities. The University has a planned approach to provision of learning support, is aware of the student opinion of their learning resources and, generally, the approach to the management of learning resources is making a satisfactory contribution to the quality of the learning opportunities. The University places a high degree of importance on obtaining strong student involvement in its approach to managing standards and quality of its provision, an approach appreciated by students. The audit concludes that confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of the institution's present and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students.

#### **Section 4: Institutional approach to quality enhancement**

72 The University Strategy, Vision 2015, includes Warwick's commitment to skills, the synthesis of research-led teaching with career-related personal development, and the enrichment of the overall learning experience through developments in learning resources. The Learning and Teaching Strategy (2008 to 2011) includes among its aims and objectives, flexibility in the curriculum, international and intercultural dimensions, more effective use of learning spaces, and developments in methods of assessment, technology-enhanced learning, quality of feedback and skills and employability. The University's Employability Strategy (2008 to 2011) states that enhancement of student employability is a 'key priority' and that there should be a 'pro-active approach' to achieve this.

73 The University's various activities in quality enhancement were noted in the 2004 Institutional audit, including three high priority areas for further development: e-learning, skills, and research-based learning. Notable developments since 2004 include funding initiatives for staff and students, the work of e-Lab, and the redevelopment of physical spaces in the main library and elsewhere, including the Learning Grid, the Teaching Grid and the BioMed Grid.

74 The Quality Enhancement Working Group, which reports to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee, has special responsibility for identifying and disseminating good practice and teaching and learning enhancement in general. The introduction of Faculty Learning and Teaching Forums during 2007-08 has provided a local platform for the development of ideas and the dissemination of good practice. Collaboration between service departments, academic staff and students in the development of innovative approaches to teaching and learning was marked by a recent Students' Union-University Innovation Summit.

75 The University has embedded enhancement in its approach to the management of teaching and learning, both through its committee structure and through its review processes. The merger of the Periodic and Quinquennial Reviews into the Strategic Departmental Review process in 2005 has provided the framework for teaching to be viewed more holistically, enabling a more integrated approach to the development of strategies for teaching, research and resourcing.

76 A major theme in the University's approach to investment in buildings and other resources has been the intention 'to improve the quality of the student experience' and to 'address multiple study styles'. The opening of the Learning Grid (paragraph 55) in 2004 has enabled staff and students to experiment with different styles of teaching and learning. The launch of the Teaching Grid (paragraph 68) in 2008 has provided academic staff with increased resources to explore new



methods of teaching in a collaborative environment with other academic staff and support services. The Creativity and Performance in Teaching and Learning Centre and, in particular, the Reinvention Centre, also assist in enhancement of the learning environment across the University through their contribution to interdisciplinary collaboration, and the strengthening of links between research, professional development and teaching practice.

77 There has been continued investment by the University in e-learning support, following the establishment of the e-Lab Division of IT Services in 2002. There is a team of faculty-based e-learning advisers, and the Communications Office also contributes to the development of learning technology. The University does not have a formal institution-wide virtual learning environment. Instead, e-Lab creates in-house web tools for use by academic staff who create support materials. The e-Learning Steering Group advises on the development of IT facilities within the framework of the Learning and Teaching Strategy. The University's Teaching Quality Enhancement Challenge funds, Education Innovation Fund, and Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund, supported from its own resources, have been used to support e-learning projects across the institution. The Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund has also been used to train students as e-learning assistants. Dissemination of the findings from e-learning projects takes place by various means, including e-learning showcase days, faculty IT committees and the Teaching Grid.

78 In 2007, an external evaluation report on e-learning initiatives concluded that, 'The overall impression...is the environment for the development of e-learning at Warwick is multi-faceted and dynamic with developments being made appropriate to the needs of particular individuals and departments. The use of tools developed in-house means that the support and advice areas can be largely responsive to needs as they arise. Whilst there might be a concern that this level of support is not scalable, the insights from this study would suggest that the organic process of development means that there are unlikely to be rapid or substantial increases in demand'. Meetings with staff and students supported the view that the roll out and use of e-learning technology had not been uniform across the University. Students reported that access to IT facilities also varied across the University. Vision 2015 takes on board key recommendations from the evaluation report on ways of enhancing e-learning development.

79 The audit team found that the institutional approach to quality enhancement has helped to engender an ethos across the University that expects and encourages enhancement of learning opportunities, and provides the means for opportunities for enhancement to be identified, supported and disseminated.

## **Section 5: Collaborative arrangements**

80 The University has extensive collaborative arrangements with 18 of the 30 departments participating in teaching collaborations. The majority of collaborative arrangements lead to Warwick awards although there are a small number of joint awards. There are in place a few collaborations with employers. The University expects that such courses are likely to expand and anticipates that it will need to review processes to ensure they remain responsive yet rigorous.

81 In 2007, QAA's audit of the collaborative link of the University's Warwick Manufacturing Group with Hong Kong Polytechnic University expressed confidence in Warwick's stewardship of academic standards and the quality of learning in its overseas collaborative provision. The report for the Hong Kong audit was comprehensively followed up.

82 The University defines a collaborative course as one where a substantial component is delivered and/or supported and/or assessed through an arrangement with a partner organisation outside the University. In addition to the normal scrutiny processes for approval and monitoring, these programmes are considered by the Collaborative, Flexible and Distributed Learning Sub-Committee of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee. There is a student representative on the Collaborative, Flexible and Distributed Learning Sub-Committee.

83 Details of the procedures for the approval and monitoring of most of the forms of collaboration are contained in Procedures for the Approval and Monitoring of Collaborative Courses (excluding 2+2 degrees). Overall responsibility for the coordination and oversight of the implementation of the procedures for establishing a new collaborative award resides with the Senior Assistant Registrar (Teaching Quality).

84 All collaborative courses are subject to an Annual Course Review which is reported to the Collaborative, Flexible and Distributed Learning Sub-Committee. External examiners' reports include a box which external examiners are asked to complete for collaborative programmes on the functioning of the collaboration between the University and partner institution(s). The external examiners' reports and responses contained in documentation for the Strategic Departmental Review of the Centre for Lifelong Learning indicated that no issues of concern had been raised under this heading. The response to the external examiner's report, together with the report itself, is considered by a subcommittee either of the Board of Undergraduate Studies (undergraduate) or the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies (postgraduate). In addition, these reports and responses for collaborative programmes are also considered by the Collaborative, Flexible and Distributed Learning Sub-Committee.

85 Principles of good practice and general guidelines for student liaison arrangements on collaborative, flexible and distance-learning courses are included in the student-staff liaison committee handbook. Student-staff liaison committee annual reports note follow-up (or otherwise) of points raised in the previous year's report. University representatives the audit team met highlighted that the student-staff liaison committee system did not necessarily sit naturally with all types of institution and may be alien to certain cultures. Examples of good practice seen by the team demonstrate that the University works with partner institutions to adapt student involvement in quality assurance to fit the needs of specific structures and environments.

86 Staff on collaborative programmes have access to web-based support (for example, via the Teaching Grid online provision) and there are opportunities for staff on collaborative programmes to access appropriate staff development. The audit team heard examples of innovative and appropriate use of learning technology to the programme of study on a collaborative course from students and staff.

87 All material used to advertise or inform prospective students about the validated, franchised or other collaborative courses is required to make clear the role of the University in the course by using appropriate wording. The precise wording must be agreed in advance and noted in the collaborative agreement or contract. University course coordinators are asked to monitor the quality and accuracy of promotional material on at least an annual basis and a sample should be considered within the Annual Course Review. The audit team heard evidence that this process was happening, noting the example of a collaborative partner being asked to make changes when review of their website indicated that this was needed.

## **Section 6: Institutional arrangements for postgraduate research students**

88 The University offers a range of master's and doctoral degrees by research and four professional doctorates. QAA's report of a Review of postgraduate research degree programmes in England, Northern Ireland and Wales at Warwick in July 2006 concluded that the 'institution's ability to secure and enhance the quality and standards of its postgraduate research degree provision was appropriate and satisfactory'. Monitoring and review procedures were commended as good practice by this Review.

89 Postgraduate research student numbers increased by 36 per cent in the four years to 2007-08 but, at 7 per cent of the total, student population remains relatively low compared with other Russell Group universities, and also compared with postgraduate taught students at Warwick (31 per cent of total student population). It is the University's strategy to double research student numbers by 2015. There are comprehensive regulations and guidelines for research students which are fully aligned with the *Code of practice*.

90 The Graduate School maintains research student records, manages student funding (working with the Student Finance section), the administration of complaints and appeals procedures and runs the Graduate School skills programme. The Board of Graduate Studies has oversight of admission to, and delivery of, postgraduate research programmes. The Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies is also Chair of the Graduate School and has oversight of external examiner reports. The Strategic Departmental Review process has strengthened external oversight of research student arrangements.

91 Following the Administrative and Service Department Annual Review in 2007, administrative arrangements in the Graduate School were enhanced to support the policy of increasing research student numbers. The Graduate School Office is responsible for all aspects of administration relating to research students and scholarships. The recommendations of the Annual Review are being taken forward with an emphasis on meeting the University's strategy to double research student numbers by 2015. The University's policies and regulations are readily accessible online to both staff and students.

92 The University provides a strong research environment and it is the University's ambition is 'to take Warwick into the top 50 world universities, as measured by the quality of research output and strength of student demand, by 2015'. To take forward initiatives to increase the research student provision, project officers have been appointed for student recruitment, funding sources and skills training. The University plans to substantially increase the number of postgraduate research scholarships awarded.

93 Study space is a particular concern of research students, especially in Arts and Social Studies. There is evidence of recent improvements in the infrastructure, for example the Wolfson Research Exchange in the library and two new interdepartmental study rooms in Social Studies. Extra space for Arts research students will be provided in a newly purchased building.

94 Admissions are overseen strategically by the Steering Committee and Board of Graduate Studies and operationally by the Student Admissions and Recruitment Office. The admissions policy is available on the Graduate School Portal. Departmental directors of graduate studies are responsible for the management of the selection of research students. All applications for research degrees are considered by two members of staff.

95 Induction of research students to the University is organised centrally by the Graduate School in conjunction with the Centre for Student Development and Enterprise. There are also separate induction events for research students in departments and in the Arts Faculty. The Graduate School Portal has recently been revamped with a range of new features, providing a more effective introduction to the services and support available to postgraduate students. Induction and international student orientation were viewed positively by postgraduate students, particularly at departmental level.

96 The emphasis at the University on research students taking responsibility for their own learning, combined with procedures in place to ensure continuity of supervision were commended as good practice by QAA's report of the *Review of postgraduate research degree programmes in England, Northern Ireland and Wales*.

97 There is mandatory supervision training for probationary staff and all new supervisors. Consideration is being given to the training needs of established supervisors within the context of the University's strategy to double research student numbers. Guidelines on the Supervision and Monitoring of Research Degree Students, and Guidelines on the Supervision of Students based away from the University were revised in September 2007 and are available via the Graduate School Portal. Only non-probationary academic staff may normally act as the lead supervisor.

98 Since 2006, the University has introduced a variety of changes aimed at further improvements in the monitoring and review arrangements. There are revised guidelines for the use of research students in teaching and assessment and revised University Regulations relating to

higher doctorates. A comprehensive review of higher degree Regulations has been initiated. The audit team heard from students that the process of transferring from an MPhil to a PhD registration was smooth and well regarded, with good support available from the Graduate School. The Annual Review of each doctoral student by a panel that does not include the supervisor was commended as good practice by QAA's report of the *Review of postgraduate research degree programmes in England, Northern Ireland and Wales*.

99 The Graduate School monitors submission rates. All departments currently meet Research Council targets, but the University has relatively poor qualification rates overall which are below the HEFCE benchmark. This has led to a more rigorous application of submission policy, including the granting of extensions. It is planned to improve reporting by departments to the Graduate School and Board of Graduate Studies on student progression through Annual Course Review.

100 There are a number of skills sessions for new researchers. These are run through the Graduate School by the Skills Manager and the Centre for Student Development and Enterprise. Development of research skills is the responsibility of departments and, from 2006-07, the Annual Report form has included a training needs analysis. From 2008 greater emphasis is being placed on individual career support, highlighted in the student written submission as an area that could be improved for research students.

101 There is an 'extensive Graduate School Skills Programme' on development of generic skills and a well-established programme in the Arts Faculty. About 50 per cent of students completed one or more sessions of the Skills Programme in 2006-07. Attendance at skills sessions is checked at Annual Review, although it is not compulsory for students to do such training. Students who met the audit team were aware of the opportunities available for skills development but said that take-up was variable.

102 University Regulations and Guidelines require prior assessment of postgraduate research students who wish to teach. Research students who teach more than 20 hours each year have to attend a training workshop with the option for taking an accredited postgraduate award and are assigned a local departmental teaching mentor. Additional support is provided by the Teaching Forums and the Teaching Grid. Research students who teach can also access central coaching and mentoring, and Postgraduate Certificate in Academic and Professional Practice seminars (paragraph 68).

103 The University provides guidance on research student representation. Research students are represented on postgraduate student-staff liaison committees and in Strategic Departmental Reviews, and feedback is also available via annual reviews. Research student response rates to the University's Academic Satisfaction Review were poor, and this was replaced in 2008 by the Higher Education Academy Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (40 per cent response, with 88 per cent favourable). Feedback after vivas with examiners is now provided to students. In the student written submission, 58 per cent of research students who responded felt they either always or mostly had a voice at Warwick, and that it was listened to.

104 Appointment of all examiners is scrutinised by the Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies. Assessment procedures are provided in the Guide to Examinations for Higher Degrees by Research.

105 Appeals and complaints procedures are set out in detail in the University Regulations and now include an appeal procedure if a student fails the upgrade to a PhD. Assistance available is set out in a pro forma which, together with the information provided to students on the right to appeal and on the outcome of appeals, was cited as good practice in QAA's report of the *Review of postgraduate research degree programmes in England, Northern Ireland and Wales*. All postgraduate appeals and complaints are considered by the Chair of the Graduate School. Annual summative reports are considered by the Board of Graduate Studies.

106 The audit team found that the University has a sound infrastructure in place through the Graduate School and its constituent office to ensure satisfactory arrangements for postgraduate research students. Institutional oversight is provided by the Board of Graduate Studies and its Chair, who sits on the Academic Quality and Standards Committee, the University's Steering Committee and Senate. The University has taken appropriate action following the report of QAA's *Review of postgraduate research degree programmes in England, Northern Ireland and Wales* in 2006. The research environment and postgraduate experience meet in full the expectations of the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*.

## Section 7: Published information

107 All corporate communications are overseen by the Communications Office which also oversees the University intranet, Insite. All material used to advertise or inform prospective students about validated, franchised or other collaborative courses is required to make clear the role of the University in the course, and must be approved in advance (paragraph 87).

108 The University makes available the information detailed in Annex F of HEFCE's document 06/45: *Review of the Quality Assurance Framework: Phase two outcomes*. University Regulations appear in the University Calendar and online. Comprehensive information, including Academic Statistics, is available for staff and students on Insite which allows staff and students to access a wide variety of information including programme handbooks, assessment regulations and committee minutes. The audit team considers the comprehensive information, including Academic Statistics, available for staff and students on Insite to be a feature of good practice.

109 The audit found that, overall, 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.

## Section 8: Features of good practice and recommendations

### Features of good practice

110 The audit team identified the following features of good practice:

- the student experience provided by the Centre for Lifelong Learning and the University's commitment to opportunities for part-time students (paragraphs 42, 52 and 63)
- the student representation framework including the student-staff liaison committee system, the support for, and training of, student representatives, and the committee portal and handbook (paragraph 45)
- the opportunities afforded through the Undergraduate Research Scholarship Scheme and the Reinvention Centre for Undergraduate Research for students to become involved in research activities (paragraph 48)
- the comprehensive and thorough preparation for, and support of, study abroad (paragraph 51)
- the academic and support infrastructure and policies which support the enhancement of undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research student skills development (paragraphs 67 and 100)
- the comprehensive information, including Academic Statistics, available for staff and students on Insite, the University's intranet (paragraph 108).

## **Recommendations for action**

111 The audit team makes the following recommendations. It is advisable for the University to:

- review its management of joint honours courses, including the application of additional credit to such courses (paragraphs 28, 36, 43 and 61).

112 It would be desirable for the University to:

- review the operation at departmental level of the new central guidelines on personal tutoring with a view to enhancing consistency of implementation (paragraph 61).

## Appendix

### The University of Warwick's response to the Institutional audit report

The University of Warwick welcomes the report of the QAA Institutional audit, and its confirmation of our own evaluation that Warwick delivers a high-quality learning experience to its students, and has effective processes for ensuring that its standards remain very high.

We are pleased that the audit team highlighted some of the many things we do at Warwick which we think are examples of good practice and which rely on close working relationships between students and staff, the Students' Union, academic departments and administrative and support services.

As one of the UK's leading research universities our courses are underpinned by research of international significance, and our students have opportunities to share in research activities across all levels of undergraduate, taught postgraduate and research postgraduate study.

We are also pleased that a number of other innovative and exciting developments are mentioned in the report, including:

- the development by the Library of innovative facilities to support learning and teaching - the Learning Grid, the BioMed Grid, the Teaching Grid and the Wolfson Research Exchange
- our initiatives to develop students' awareness of good academic practice and issues of plagiarism
- the University's clear commitment to widening participation
- our very successful Orientation programme for international students
- our dynamic e-learning environment.

The two recommendations both relate to issues which the University had identified before the Audit and brought to the attention of the auditors as work in progress. We are continuing to address these issues. A Working Group on Joint Honours and Cross-Departmental Courses has made a number of recommendations for improving the management of these courses which we are already implementing, and we are working closely with the Students' Union and Student-Staff Liaison Committees to monitor the implementation of the new guidelines for Personal Tutors.

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