QAA

University of Warwick

November 2008

Annex to the report

Contents

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.

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.

Institutional arrangements for 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 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 student experience provided by the Centre for Lifelong Learning and the University's commitment to opportunities for part-time students (paragraphs 90, 100, 115)

- the student representation framework including the student-staff liaison committee (SSLC) system, the support for, and training of, student representatives, and the SSLC portal and handbook (paragraphs 93, 162)

- 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 97)

- the comprehensive and thorough preparation for, and support of, study abroad (paragraph 99)

- the academic and support infrastructure and policies which support the enhancement of undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research student skills development (paragraphs 126, 185)

- the comprehensive information, including Academic Statistics, available for staff and students on Insite, the University's intranet (paragraph 194).

Recommendations for action

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

Recommendation for action that the audit team considers advisable:

- to review its management of joint honours courses, including the application of additional credit to such courses (paragraphs 58, 78, 90, 116).

Recommendation for action that the audit team considers desirable:

- to review the operation at departmental level of the new central guidelines on personal tutoring with a view to enhancing consistency of implementation (paragraph 117).

Section 1: Introduction and background

The institution and its mission

1   The establishment of the University of Warwick was given approval by the government in 1961 and received its Royal Charter of Incorporation in 1965. The University is situated on a campus of some 700 acres on the boundary between the City of Coventry and the County of Warwickshire. The University incorporated the former Coventry College of Education in 1979 and has extended its land holdings since its establishment.

2   The University sees itself as a leading campus university which plays a prominent role in its locality and on the national and international scene. As a relatively young institution the University considers that it has preserved the innovative, responsive and entrepreneurial approach that characterised the early phase of its development.

3   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; at postgraduate taught level this amounts to 39 per cent. Each year there are 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).

4   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. Collaborations are likely to increase as the new University strategy is implemented, especially at postgraduate research level as the University seeks to double postgraduate research student numbers (see paragraph 171).

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 was referenced to sources of evidence to illustrate the institution's approach to

managing the security of the academic standards of its awards and the quality of its educational provision. The team had an electronic copy of all documents referenced in the Briefing Paper; in addition the team had access to the institution's intranet which it found to be exceptionally comprehensive and accessible.

6   The Students' Union produced a student written submission (SWS) setting out the students' views on the experience of students as learners and their role in quality management.

7   In addition, the audit team had access to:

- the report of the previous Institutional audit 2004

- reports of reviews by QAA at the subject level since the previous Institutional audit

- reports produced by other relevant bodies (for example, Ofsted and professional, statutory or regulatory bodies (PSRBs))

- the institution's internal documents

- the notes of audit team meetings with staff and students.

Developments since the last audit

8   A new Vice-Chancellor was appointed by the University in 2006 and, in July 2007, a new strategy was launched: Vision 2015. This sets out goals in five key areas of research and scholarship; the teaching and learning experience; the international profile; reputation with stakeholders and effective income generation. The central aim of the strategy is for the University to be placed in the top 50 world universities by 2015.

9   A new Teaching and Learning Strategy was agreed by Senate in July 2008 and identifies four strategic themes: teaching and learning methods and organisation; employability and skills; diversity and internationalisation; physical and virtual learning spaces.

10   In 2005, periodic review of courses and quinquennial review of research and resources were merged into a Strategic Departmental Review (SDR) process. This process is discussed further in paragraph 30 onwards.

11   Two Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning: the Creativity and Performance in Teaching and Learning (CAPITAL) Centre and the Reinvention Centre for Undergraduate Research, have been established at the University. The CAPITAL Centre, a collaboration with the Royal Shakespeare Company, provides studio and performance spaces, and promotes performance skills and experience as part of the core curriculum. It brings internationally renowned playwrights, directors and actors to the University and has built teaching collaborations with departments such as Law, Medicine and Education. The Reinvention Centre for Undergraduate Research, which Warwick leads in collaboration with Oxford Brookes University, seeks to integrate research-based learning into the undergraduate curriculum by enabling students to become involved in the research cultures of departments. The work of the Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs) is discussed further in paragraphs 95, 130, 133, 141 and 145.

12   The Centre for Academic Practice has become the Learning and Development Centre with a 'more precise and extensive remit for staff support' (paragraphs 128 and 143).

13   Skills provision for undergraduate and postgraduate students has been consolidated within a new Centre for Student Development and Enterprise (CSDE) in 2007. CSDE is now merging with the Careers Centre 'to facilitate further synergies in their operations'. In September 2008 the University launched Warwick Advantage, a remodelling of the personal development planning system combined with personal tutoring (paragraphs 118, 121, 123, 178 and 179).

14   A new committee structure has been established since 2004. The Briefing Paper notes in particular the merging of two prior committees to form the Collaborative, Flexible and Distributed Learning Sub-Committee (CFDLSC) of Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) (see Section 5).

15   The Quality Task Group and AQSC were tasked with considering the findings of the previous audit. The 2004 audit report recommended that the University reviews, its assessment conventions with the aim of removing inconsistencies in the assessment regimes across faculties and departments. The Briefing Paper notes that progress in this area was delayed because the University was awaiting the report of the Burgess Committee. 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 paragraphs 54 onwards.

16   The University has responded to the recommendation of the previous audit team to encourage wider adoption of external advice in the development and planning of new programmes. A report from an external adviser is now required as part of approval documentation (paragraphs 25 and 71).

17   Oversight of PSRB accreditation now takes place through AQSC which considers all PSRB reports (paragraph 67). The University was granted independent medical degree awarding powers in 2007, with the consequent decoupling of the Leicester/Warwick Medical Schools.

18   The Briefing Paper notes that the University has endeavoured to build on a number of the features of good practice identified in the 2004 report. The Warwick Skills Certificate and Warwick Teaching Certificate have been expanded, the latter into a Postgraduate Certificate in Academic and Professional Practice. These developments are discussed in more detail in paragraphs 123, 124 and 187.

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

19   The Senate, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, holds overall responsibility for management of academic standards. It delegates responsibility for monitoring of standards to AQSC and to the Board of Undergraduate Studies, the Board of Graduate Studies (BGS), and the faculty boards, whose chairs all sit on AQSC. Leadership in policy matters rests with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC) (Teaching and Learning) who also chairs AQSC. The Steering Committee, on behalf of Senate, approves all qualifications awarded by the University. The Steering Committee, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, includes all chairs of faculty boards, PVCs, the Chair of BGS, senior administrators and the Students' Union President. It meets weekly to consider emerging issues.

20   The student-staff liaison committee (SSLC) system is a joint enterprise between the University and the Students' Union. Four SSLC coordinators (two academic staff and two students) oversee the system, assisted by a member of staff from the Teaching Quality (TQ) section of the Academic Office and one from the Students' Union. Both staff coordinators and one of the student coordinators (the Students' Union Education Officer) sit on AQSC.

21   Committees may set up standing or temporary working groups to address particular issues. Among these, the most significant for enhancement work are the Quality Enhancement Working Group, the e-Learning Steering Group and the Student Skills and Development Steering Group, all of which report to AQSC.

22   The TQ section of the Academic Office oversees the University's systems and processes for teaching quality assurance, and are involved in a number of teaching enhancement projects and activities. The section provides the secretariat for AQSC and a number of other committees and working groups.

23   Where the University's framework for the management of collaborative provision and postgraduate research provision differs from that for the rest of its provision, these differences are described in Sections 5 and 6, respectively.

24   The audit team found that the institutional framework was making an effective contribution to the management of academic standards and the quality of student learning opportunities.

Section 2: Institutional management of academic standards

Approval, monitoring and review of award standards

25   Proposals for new courses generally originate in departments and, if appropriate, are developed with reference to professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). The University utilises course and module approval forms which are applicable to both new and restructured provision. Forms differ slightly for undergraduate, postgraduate taught and Open Studies awards but all require 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 and this may include the views of employers. The University states that the forms are in line with the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review*, and from its scrutiny of completed approval forms in the audit trails and committee papers, the audit team concurred with this view.

26   Proposals for courses and/or modules are considered initially at faculty level by their undergraduate or postgraduate committees, as appropriate. If approved, courses are then considered at university level by the Board of Undergraduate Studies (BUGS) or the Board of Graduate Studies (BGS), on behalf of Senate. Collaborative and distance-learning course receive additional scrutiny at Collaborative, Flexible and Distributed Learning Sub-Committee (CFDLSC). Issues of principle both concerning module or course approval are considered by faculty boards and the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC). The University does not have a re-approval process, considering that this is dealt with through revisiting provision at Strategic Departmental Review (SDR) or through the restructuring process for courses.

27   The University view is that the current undergraduate courses approval system, while effective, is heavily paper-based and a computer-based system is being developed. BGS is also considering a more streamlined system for postgraduate module and course approval.

28   The audit team, through its audit trails and from the committee papers that it saw, came to the view that the approval procedures contribute effectively to the management of academic standards.

29   Routine monitoring of courses is carried out through the Annual Course Review (ACR) process. An ACR meeting, convened by the course leader, considers a range of information relevant to the course, including student feedback, student assessment results, external examiner reports, subject and/or PSRB reports, and previous ACR reports. The meeting also reflects on course data on progression and completion rates, course specifications and subject benchmark statements. A standard report template is then completed for each course and reviewed at departmental level. Department ACR reports are summarised for faculty committee scrutiny, faculty summary reports are produced for BUGS and BGS, with further summary reports being considered by AQSC. Feedback to courses and departments can come from any of these committees. From documentation it saw and discussions with staff, the audit team was able to confirm the University view that reports of ACRs are effective in monitoring academic standards. However, the University believes some reports could be more reflective, a view also shared by the team.

30   Periodic review is departmentally based through the quinquennial SDR process. All of a department's activities (undergraduate, postgraduate taught, postgraduate research courses) are subject to an evaluation by a review panel which includes a judgement on the appropriateness of academic standards and quality of the courses it provides. This panel has a majority of external (to the University) reviewers who are invited to participate by the Vice-Chancellor. Usually, at least one panel member will be an overseas academic of international standing and the chair must be a recognised leader in his or her own field. The panel meets students and staff, as well as scrutinising documentation in the form of a department self-evaluation document (SED). The SED is accompanied by previous periodic reviews, ACR reports, external examiners' reports, student-staff liaison committee (SSLC) annual reports, student handbooks and, where applicable, PSRB reports.

31   Review reports are initially received by the Vice-Chancellor and are then considered at two successive meetings of the Steering Committee, at the second of which the Head of Department presents a departmental response and action plan. Follow-up is determined by the Steering Committee and overseen by the Academic Resourcing Committee. In addition, AQSC and either BUGS or BGS consider teaching and learning issues and ensure actions are carried out. This new method encountered some early teething problems concerning inadequate focus on teaching and learning issues, but the University has acted to remedy these problems and review of SDR documentation during the audit visit indicated that the University is now ensuring adequate coverage of learning and teaching within SDR.

32   The audit team, through its scrutiny of the audit trails, was able to confirm the robustness of the SDR process and concurs with the University's view that SDR is an important feature of its processes to assure and maintain its academic standards.

33   The University is of the view that its processes of approval, monitoring and review provide for appropriate external assurance of academic standards through their use of external examiners, external participation in course approval and SDRs and, for relevant courses, PSRBs. It also takes the view that the course design process sets appropriate standards which are suitably monitored in the assessment process and reviewed through ACR and SDR. From the evidence available to it from committee papers, discussions with staff and the audit trails, the audit team concurs with this view (paragraphs 73 to 79).

External examiners

34   The University sees the external examiner system as one of the principal means of checking academic standards of its awards. Regulations for their appointment and details of their duties are to be found in the Examination and Degree Conventions. These cover both undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision. Appointment of examiners for postgraduate research degrees is discussed in paragraph 190.

35   Departments propose external examiners to the Academic Registrar's Office which forwards proposals to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC) (Teaching and Learning). The PVC (Teaching and Learning) reviews proposed external examiners to ensure they are of an appropriate quality and that eligibility criteria are met, as well as ensuring that conflicts of interest or reciprocal arrangements are avoided. The Steering Committee considers nominations for approval from the PVC (Teaching and Learning) and approves appointments on behalf of the Senate. Through committee minutes that it saw and its discussions with staff, the audit team was able to confirm that the appointments process worked effectively.

36   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 (TQ) website. No formal university-wide training is provided.

37   Every degree has at least one external examiner and, if there is an equivalent diploma or certificate course, these normally share examiner(s) with the degree course. Until the current academic year (2008-09), the Open Studies certificates have not had an external examiner, but one is now to be appointed. Some external examiners are appointed to modules, others to courses. For joint honours courses there will typically be two external examiners.

38   An annual report is required from external examiners and they are expected to comment on design and structure of assessments, curriculum aims, content and development, the quality of teaching and learning and on the academic standards set and achieved. If relevant, external examiners are also specifically asked to comment on any element of collaborative provision. Specific templates are provided for undergraduate, postgraduate taught and 2+2 degree courses. Reports seen by the audit team confirmed external examiners make full use of the report template, although sometimes their comments can be sparse.

39   The Deputy Vice-Chancellor scrutinises external examiner reports on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor. Departments are then required to provide formal responses to external examiners which are considered, along with annotated reports, by a subcommittee of BUGS (undergraduate) or the Chair of BGS (postgraduate). These are summarised into a digest of issues and actions required for consideration by BUGS or BGS. Chairs of BUGS and BGS follow up outstanding issues with departments. Where a course includes collaborative provision, the external examiner report is also considered by CFDLSC. The audit trails carried out by the audit team confirmed this process is working appropriately.

40   The ACR process requires departments to confirm they have considered and acted upon external examiner comments. External examiner reports also form part of the evidence at SDR. The audit team was able to see examples of departments responding to external examiner comments in a timely manner.

41   External examiner reports are made available to students through departmental committees or SSLCs. This process, however, was not clear to some students that the audit team met.

42   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.

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

43   The University's Senate, Steering Committee and AQSC are responsible for ensuring that University regulations and policies for undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision are in accordance with the Academic Infrastructure. In its Briefing Paper the University details how elements of the Academic Infrastructure are used, and how their use is monitored. It also states that the University has adopted *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), published by QAA, as set out in its local credit and module framework.

44   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 AQSC reviews alignment at a university level.

45   Programme specifications, required for each course, are known as 'course specifications'. They are available electronically, accessible through the TQ website. They are also included in many departmental handbooks. Course specifications are considered both through the approval process and the departmental review process. Students seen by the audit team, although aware of course specifications, described using module specifications and other information in departmental handbooks instead, these being more relevant to their needs.

46   Subject benchmark statements (SBS) must be identified in new course specifications. The chairs of BUGS and BGS, through their scrutiny of external examiner reports, investigate any issues of course alignment with SBSs. SBSs are also reflected upon as part of the SDR process. As and when SBSs are updated, departments are advised and are asked to respond to any changes.

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

48   It is the University's view that its awards are in accordance with the expectations of the national Academic Infrastructure. The audit team concurs with this view having found extensive evidence of the University's engagement with and response to the Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points (paragraphs 25, 64 to 68).

Assessment policies and regulations

49   Assessment regulations for undergraduate and postgraduate provision are set out in the University Calendar and the University's Examinations and Degree Conventions, which codify Senate resolutions, including honours degree classification conventions.

50   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. The University has recognised a need for transparency, equity of treatment for students, the necessity for a single assessment regime to facilitate multi and interdisciplinary courses, and a desire to reward excellent performance appropriately as further drivers for these changes. In 2008, Senate approved final proposals for a new marking scheme (the 17-point marking scheme) and a classification convention which is to be applied to all first-year courses from autumn 2008.

51   Examination boards operate according to rules given in the Examinations and Degree Conventions and University Regulations available in the University Calendar. The University operates course year boards for its full-time provision and course-level boards for its part-time provision. In addition, faculties have a first-year board of examiners to ensure that all students reach a comparable threshold to proceed to honours level (a second-year board of examiners operates in the case of 2+2 degrees). Part-time course-level boards consider a student's fitness to progress to the next level. While boards generally operate effectively, external examiners have commented on how 'special case' evidence is dealt with at the boards and the University is currently designing new guidelines for this.

52   Assessment requirements are detailed in course handbooks. In 2004 the University harmonised penalties for late submission of assessed work, using separate scales for undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses. Review of programme documentation during the audit visit and responses from students in meetings indicated that this new system is well embedded, with programme handbooks providing information consistent with the new penalties, and students being aware of these and accepting the system as fair. Students seen by the audit team confirmed the clarity of assessment regulations, which they typically accessed through handbooks, and the consistent application of late submission penalties.

53   Plagiarism regulations are set out in the University Calendar and reinforced through the Students' Union, the International Office, at induction and in student handbooks. Resources, such as 'Plagiarism Teaching Online', are also provided. Students seen by the audit team confirmed that the University made strenuous efforts to educate its students about the issues of plagiarism.

54   At undergraduate level, some departments allow students to take extra credit within a year of study and allow this to count 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).

55   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, from which course that extra credit might be taken. 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. In meetings, students expressed their dissatisfaction with the variability in entitlement to take extra credit and, in some cases, the lack of information available to them.

56   Student progression rules are articulated in the University Calendar. For each course they are given in handbooks and students confirmed the clarity of these rules and the ease with which they were able to access appropriate information. Where particular requirements relate to PSRBs, they are accommodated within the University's regulations and detailed in appropriate handbooks.

57   When assessment regulations are revised, the University takes care to ensure that the introduction of changes is managed in a fair and equitable manner, as evidenced by the plans and timetable for the introduction of the new 17-point marking scale.

58   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 (paragraph 55). Other issues concerning joint honours courses are noted in paragraphs 78, 90 and 116. In view of this the University is advised to review its management of joint honours courses, including the application of additional credit to such courses. In doing so, both the entitlement to take extra credit and the effects that this might have on assessment marks should be considered with a view to ensuring equity of treatment for all students.

Management information - statistics

59   The University has a well-established database of management information, Academic Statistics, which is available to students and staff through Insite, the University's intranet. The Steering Committee, the Council and the Senate are provided with a statistical analysis, carried out by the Planning and Management Information team, which looks at key trends in student numbers, demographics, graduate destinations and continuation rates. One specific set of statistics that the University has already monitored, degree classes awarded, has already yielded some differences between departments. The University has tried to address this through encouraging departments to heed external examiners' advice to utilise the full marking scale, and further to this, it has formed part of the motivation for the University's commitment to the new marking scheme.

60   In ACR, departments consider statistical information concerning admissions, progression, non-completion and qualifications, with faculty committees providing further scrutiny. While a number of ACRs seen by the audit team included reflection on this statistical information, the level of analysis and reflection was variable across departments. The University sees development of standardised statistical reports as a way of facilitating more consistent reflection by departments, and the audit team would encourage this development.

61   The University recognises it could make more effective use of the data which it collects. A set of key performance indicators is under development and, in 2009, a comprehensive review is to take place with the aim of providing a revised suite of management information which will better inform policy development.

62   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.

Section 3: Institutional management of learning opportunities

63   The University sees its major strategic goal of sustaining a student experience of distinction as being at the heart of its institutional management of learning opportunities. It defines these opportunities as the combined effect of academic curriculum delivery; academic and personal support of students; and provision for the development of student skills and employability. Departments, through their heads and academic staff, and in consultation with student-staff liaison committees (SSLCs), bear responsibility for ensuring these opportunities are appropriate and are continuously available to students, as well as informing the University of any deficiencies.

Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points

64   The Senate, Steering Committee and the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) have responsibility for ensuring the University's regulations for undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision are in accordance with the Academic Infrastructure.

65   The University, as part of its preparation for audit, carried out a review of its alignment with the *Code of practice*. Different sections of the *Code* were considered by relevant committees and groups (for example, the Collaborative, Flexible and Distributed Learning Sub-Committee (CFDLSC) considered *Section 4: External examining*, and Placement Learning Coordinators considered *Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*). Reports were received by AQSC which took the view that the University's processes and procedures reflected the *Code*.

66   A process for considering revisions to the *Code of practice* is also in place. A relevant officer brings formal recommendations for any necessary changes to processes or procedures to AQSC and other committees as appropriate. The University is currently reviewing minor differences it has identified between its procedures and practices and the second edition of the FHEQ.

67   The University has approximately 100 courses which are accredited, validated or otherwise recognised by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs). Departments are seen as the most appropriate conduit for contact with PSRBs and are responsible for managing their relationships with PSRBs, central support being provided by the Teaching Quality section. PSRB reports are considered at departmental level through Annual Course Review (ACR) and Strategic Departmental Review (SDR). At university level, AQSC oversees the outcomes of accreditation visits and monitors responses to recommendations.

68   Overall, the University makes effective use of the *Code of practice* and other external reference points, and the audit team agreed with the University's view that its processes and procedures were broadly in alignment with the expectations of the *Code*.

Approval, monitoring and review of programmes

Course approval

69   The University utilises a module and course approval process for its undergraduate and postgraduate provision, whether that provision is new or subject to revision (restructured); details having been given earlier (paragraphs 25 and 26). In the audit trails the audit team was able to see the process of module and course approval for both new and restructured provision. Details of the process are accessible through the Teaching Quality (TQ) website where relevant templates can also be found.

70   The University uses a template (slightly different for undergraduate, postgraduate taught and Open Studies) for submission for new and restructured provision approval. The template 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. Documents seen by the audit team confirmed that departments complete these templates and their appendices (course specifications) rigorously, and the minutes of faculty committees, Board of Undergraduate Studies (BUGS) and Board of Graduate Studies (BGS) and AQSC provide evidence of considerable scrutiny, with examples of follow-up actions apparent where needed. The faculty committees have representation from all constituent departments and BUGS and BGS have members from each faculty, allowing each of them to act as a vehicle for the sharing of good practice across the University. In the audit trails and in committee minutes, the audit team was able to see examples of good practice being highlighted.

71   The submission of new provision requires evidence of consultation with external sources. This input can be varied, ranging from collaborative design and co-delivery, through involvement in advisory boards to informal intelligence gathering. The audit trails confirmed external input at an appropriate level in examples of new and restructured provision.

72   The audit trails and other documentation seen by the audit team allowed it to confirm that the University's management of changes to courses, and development of new courses, was effective in managing the quality of learning opportunities.

Annual and periodic programme monitoring

73   The University requires that departments review all courses annually and that a periodic review, including strategic review of all taught provision, takes place on a five-year cycle. Details of these processes can be found earlier (paragraphs 25 to 33).

74   Annual course review for undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision is intended to allow a formal vehicle at department level to consider external examiner reports, student feedback from module questionnaires and from SSLCs, data on admissions and progression, examination results and module literature. The course leader is responsible for convening an ACR meeting. Departments are recommended to involve students, for example by inviting them to the relevant meeting. The meeting reviews the documentation noted above and, following the meeting, an annual review report is produced. This is then sent to the Head of Department and onward through the appropriate faculty committee to BUGS or BGS, which are required to report to AQSC that all reports have been received. If any issues concerning the quality of learning opportunities are identified, these are actioned by the appropriate committee or referred back to the department for action. Examples of good practice are also identified. In the audit trails, the audit team saw examples of necessary follow-up actions to issues raised in these reports.

75   Periodic review is carried out through the relatively new SDR process. SDR is intended as an holistic review of a department's activities and includes review of all its taught provision. The review panel is made up of a majority of external (to the University) members and senior internal members of staff. It considers both academic and resource issues. A template, including possible key questions, an aide-memoire for course review issues, and an outline schedule for the three-day event, is part of the guidance given to panels.

76   Where SDR 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 (ARC). ARC is guided in its responses by the University's annual five-year planning process and the University's overarching financial plan. Follow-up on teaching and learning issues is delegated to AQSC. The audit trails and discussions with staff provided the audit team with evidence of a robust SDR process, following the procedures set out by the University and contributing to effective support for the management of learning opportunities.

77   From its scrutiny of the evidence in the audit trails, discussions with staff and its consideration of other documentation, the audit team concluded that the processes of annual and periodic review contributed positively to the University's management of learning opportunities.

78   The University had 2,757 joint or multidisciplinary degree course undergraduate students in the academic year 2007-08. These courses are managed by a 'home' department, one of the departments involved in the major provision of the course. There are no special quality assurance or enhancement arrangements for these courses, the procedures used being those of the home department. While staff told the team of examples where departments worked together in the management of joint and multidisciplinary courses (for example, attending SSLCs, joint personal tutoring schemes), the team was also told that this cooperative approach between departments was not universal. In discussions with students, the team was made aware of concerns of lack of communication between departments, these leading to, for instance, timetabling problems. This reinforced the views expressed in the student written submission (SWS), and already raised in SSLC overview reports regarding the management of joint honours courses.

79   The University, through BUGS and AQSC, has recently set up a working group to review the University's approach to managing joint and multidisciplinary degree courses. Its aims include addressing issues of timetabling, communication between departments, access to staff and definition of responsibilities. The audit team agrees with the University that there is a need for a review of its management of joint and multidisciplinary degree courses and advises this be carried out expeditiously.

Management information - feedback from students

80   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 SSLC structures. Student opinion is sought through a number of surveys, including university-wide surveys, the National Student Survey (NSS) and other external surveys.

81   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 ACR reports.

82   The main university-wide survey is the Academic Satisfaction Review (ASR), conducted by Quad Research. Results are reported at university, faculty and department level and are published on the TQ website. Undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students are surveyed separately and asked to indicate their levels of satisfaction with a wide range of issues covering all aspects of the student experience, and to indicate the importance they attach to the issues. The results are then used to prioritise actions, as can be seen in departmental action plans. Departmental action plans are considered at a university level by AQSC.

83   Administrative and central service departments also use surveys to gather student feedback with the library providing a 'You say, We say' board for comments, queries and responses, and the Careers Centre using online polls and focus groups.

84   2007 was the first year in which the Students' Union supported participation in the NSS. From the results, TQ compiled a digest of tables and written comments for each department to consider. After the results were reviewed by the Steering Committee, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC) (Teaching and Learning) and the Students' Union Education Officer asked departments to discuss their results with students. Departments carried this out through SSLCs. One Faculty (Science) convened a working group, including student representation, to consider the departmental action plans. Issues identified in the NSS regarding undergraduate joint degree liaison between departments have been taken forward by BUGS.

85   Students also take part in the International Student Barometer and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey. The audit team saw examples of actions emanating from the results of these surveys including a project to improve the clarity of some lecturers' spoken English and improvements in IT provision.

86   The increasing number of surveys has led the University to consider how best to make use of their results. It acknowledges that, at present, the University does not fully exploit the results of surveys: a view expressed particularly in relation to feedback on assessed work, by students that the audit team met. A working group is currently reconsidering the survey cycle and ways in which surveys can better inform decision-making. The team concurs with the University's view and 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.

87   The audit team also agreed with the view that 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.

Role of students in quality assurance

88   Student representation occurs at every level in the University committee structure including the Senate, the Council and the Steering Committee. The Students' Union Education Officer is the primary representative on most of the teaching-related committees. The Deputy Registrar chairs the Students' Union Liaison Group which allows discussion of key issues between sabbatical officers and University staff.

89   The University considers that a well-resourced SSLC system has been the key to student representation at the University since 1972. The SSLC system is supported by a comprehensive web portal which contains all information relevant to the system. The audit team heard from the students that student representation arrangements were working well and that they felt the student voice was valued. The student representatives commended the SSLC web portal and confirmed that they were fully supported. Additional support is provided on the web portal, including a training video, participant's guidelines, the SSLC handbook and the minutes of all meetings. Training for student representatives is provided by the Students' Union and, from 2008-09, this will be compulsory. The SSLC representatives are supported by an Academic Representation Coordinator who is employed by the Students' Union. During the audit visit it was clear that the Academic Representation Coordinator played a crucial role in coordinating and supporting SSLC representatives. Examples of this included attendance at SSLC meetings, reminders about deadlines/scheduling of meetings and advice on how to pursue issues raised at SSLC meetings.

90   Generally, the SSLC system was seen as highly effective by students who confirmed that meetings were held regularly and provided opportunity to address course-specific issues. There is some customisation of the process for students on collaborative or distance-learning courses (paragraph 162). 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. However, the SWS noted communication issues between departments offering joint honours degrees which have been reported by SSLCs on a yearly basis without satisfactory resolution. As noted previously (paragraph 79), the University has set up a working group to consider the current practice for the management of the student learning experience on joint honours and multidepartmental degrees, and the terms of reference include reviewing the communication between departments.

91   Two members of academic staff and two students serve as University-wide SSLC co-coordinators. Both staff coordinators and one of the student coordinators are members of the AQSC. Departments must ensure that all students are represented through an SSLC, although the precise composition of these committees varies between departments. Each SSLC produces

reports which are summarised by the SSLC co-coordinators into undergraduate and postgraduate reports which are considered by AQSC annually. The audit team saw evidence that these reports were considered at BUGS, BGS and AQSC.

92   Students also have the opportunity to raise issues of concern at breakfast meetings with the Vice-Chancellor, PVC (Learning and Teaching) and the Deputy Registrar.

93   The audit team concluded that the University values the student contribution to quality assurance, and the team considers the student representation framework including the SSLC system, the support for, and training of, student representatives, and the SSLC portal and handbook to be a feature of good practice.

Links between research or scholarly activity and learning opportunities

94   In its Briefing Paper the University states that links between research and teaching are strong and shape the University's courses. However, the SWS identifies this as an area in which the University needs to develop by further enhancing the link between teaching and research that could become a unique selling point for the University. While some staff stated that research was embedded in the curriculum, and provided examples of how research had led to module redesign, this was not universally apparent to students and other staff, although some undergraduate students had taken the opportunity to engage in initiatives to gain experience of research while studying.

95   Indeed, one of the two HEFCE-funded Centres for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETLs) 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. An online student-edited journal is produced to promote research-based learning in the undergraduate curriculum and to promote research-led teaching methods.

96   The University Learning and Teaching Strategy further articulates the University's aim of 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. This scheme enables students to get directly involved in research groups, allowing them to develop their research skills, and is supported by an established infrastructure and extensive website which provides details of all projects since its introduction. In addition, 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.

97   Overall, the audit team concluded that the University's infrastructure and approach to supporting the development of the links between research and teaching has 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.

Other modes of study

98   The University offers only a small number of distance-learning courses. The University has chosen not to prioritise extensive distance learning development as it believes that the experience of learning on the Warwick campus and within the Warwick community is important. The largest

and only significant distance-learning course is the Distance Learning MBA (up to 500 enrolments each year). However, there has recently been a growth in courses involving blended learning and these programmes are subject to the standard University procedures for approval, monitoring and review. External examining arrangements and, where possible, the same board of examiners consider distance-learning courses with similar on-campus University courses. These programmes are subjected to additional scrutiny by CFDLSC which reviews the new course proposals, ACR reports and external examiner reports.

99   Placement learning opportunities are available to students and may be mandatory or optional. They include 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, ACR and periodic review. The University provides a Good Practice Guide on Placement Learning and placement learning co-coordinators are required to attend an annual meeting to share good practice and discuss issues. The audit team reviewed several study abroad handbooks and spoke with students who commented very positively on the support that 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.

100   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 (CLL) and these can be used at a later date to count towards a part-time degree. The audit team heard that significant numbers of students did progress to part-time degrees. The team found the support offered to part-time students by CLL (paragraphs 90, 115) to be a feature of good practice.

Resources for learning

101   The Briefing Paper states that the University takes an integrated approach to the annual strategic and financial planning of information support as demonstrated by the membership of the Librarian and Director of IT Services on the Information Policy and Strategy Committee. The University has a planned approach to investment in building and IT resources, and the overarching theme has been to address the needs of the multiple study style adopted by students, including private and group study, technology enhanced learning, and the specific needs of postgraduate students, international students and students with varying work commitments.

102   Academic departments annually assess teaching space and facilities as part of the annual accommodation round. Assessments are reviewed by the Capital Planning and Accommodation Review Group, chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor which prioritises capital planning and the allocation of space. The SWS and students affirmed that, generally, the University 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, and notes that it has a responsive and prioritised plan to address this. Recent improvements in response to student comments include provision of dedicated space and computing facilities for postgraduate students in the Humanities Building.

103   The University does not have a separate e-learning strategy, e-learning being 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 AQSC. The University Challenge funds (partly 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 steer. As the demand on e-learning advisers and e-learning resources grows the University may need to consider how this area is supported.

104   The library strategic plan builds on the previous strategy 'toward a Digital Library' and there has been significant investment in information resources with a commitment to maintaining and enhancing the campus provision. More silent, group and flexible study spaces, enhanced IT provision and increased space to store greater book provision were provided in the library remodelling in response to issues raised by SSLCs.

105   The Learning Grid that was opened in 2004 provides a student managed learning environment allowing continuous access to reference collections, private and group study space, sophisticated technological resources and support from student advisers. Students are supported in the Learning Grid by student advisers who are trained in the use of learning technologies as well as coaching skills. Students were unanimous about the learning opportunities afforded by the Learning Grid and praised other department-located systems including the BioMed Grid. The University was aware of student opinion on the role and impact of the Learning Grid as it was the subject of a review in 2008.

106   The students whom the audit team met felt that the access to computers was normally adequate except when assignments were due in. 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. IT Services (ITS) are represented on the University's Resources SSLC. Although it was recognised that ITS were undertaking much positive work, the student body as a whole retained concerns over the IT service levels provided.

107   In 2002 ITS set up the e-lab division with a dedicated e-Learning Advisor Team (ELAT) which develops web materials and online resources (paragraph 142). The success of this model was reinforced by one of the ELAT being recognised as a National Teaching Fellow in 2008.

108   The audit team concluded that the University was aware of student feedback on learning resources and that, generally, the approach to the management of learning resources was making a satisfactory contribution to the quality of the learning opportunities.

Admissions policy

109   Undergraduate and postgraduate admissions and student recruitment are overseen strategically by the Steering Committee, BUGS and BGS and operationally by the Student Admissions and Recruitment Office. The Undergraduate Admissions Statement is the responsibility of the Director of Student Admissions and Recruitment. The Undergraduate Admissions Statement takes account of the precepts and reflects the principles of fair admissions in the *Code of practice*. Academic course selectors are provided with detailed written guidance on admissions procedures; a dedicated set of online resources; a 'link' officer to support and guide their decision-making; an annual briefing event; and a checklist for new course selectors to supplement the work of the link officer.

110   Applications from students with disabilities or other special needs are considered on the same academic criteria, but the University Disability Co-coordinator advises applicants on the suitability of the campus or course to the students' needs.

111   All postgraduate applications are considered by a nominee of the head of the relevant academic department, but the admission of all applicants who do not meet the normal academic criteria must be presented as a special case to the chair of BGS. Feedback is provided to unsuccessful applicants on request.

112   The procedures by which applications are considered by course selectors in academic departments, or centrally by professional undergraduate admissions officers, are overseen by the PVC (Teaching and Learning). The central admissions team quality assure each decision and

ensure 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.

113   The audit team considered that the University had committed itself to widening participation, as evidenced by setting up 2+2 degrees with local colleges for students without formal qualifications, the development of Open Studies modules and 2+2 degrees in the CLL, and also through national initiatives such as Aim Higher and Pathways to Law (paragraph 156). The University is close to its location adjusted widening participation benchmarks.

Student support

114   The Personal Tutor system is led by the University Senior Tutor who works with departments to develop and enhance the effectiveness of personal tutoring while providing direct support and guidance in serious academic student matters. In 2008, the Personal Tutor system was reviewed by a Student Support and Guidance Working Party comprising the University Senior Tutor, representatives from all faculties, the Students' Union and the Centre for Student Development and Enterprise (CSDE). The outcome of this review was a new set of guidelines (endorsed by Senate) which more clearly explain what is expected of both the Personal Tutor and tutee, although the implementation across the faculties is variable.

115   It is the responsibility of departments to allocate all undergraduate and postgraduate students a named personal tutor and each tutor is required to see their tutees at least once a term. Mandatory staff development sessions on the 'Role of the Personal Tutor' are provided to probationary staff, and other staff development sessions are provided for all staff to raise awareness of the needs of particular groups of students. 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. Open Studies students in CLL are not included in the personal tutoring system but are supported by their module tutors and Open Studies Senior Tutor. Feedback from student meetings indicated that students within CLL were extremely satisfied with the personal and academic support that they received.

116   The student feedback on personal tutoring was variable and while all students were aware of their entitlement, considerable variation in engagement was reported. Some students were required to attend regular tutorials organised by their tutors while other students had not engaged in the process at all. The personal tutoring experience that students received depended on their course and the department in which their course resided, and students identified that the arrangements for joint honours students were variable depending on the department and the tutors concerned.

117   The personal tutoring system is monitored through the ACR and SSLC 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.

118   CSDE is the home of the undergraduate skills programme, the Graduate School programme, and the Personal and Academic Development programme; it also runs enterprise activities. Following consultation with students and staff 'Warwick Advantage' was launched in October 2008 to improve uptake in personal development planning (PDP) by integrating it into the personal tutoring system. The audit team encourages the University to continue to develop and monitor PDP to ensure appropriate uptake and engagement by students.

119   Following a review of Student Support Services in 2007 a more integrated approach to student services was adopted, including a one-stop Student Reception and a one-stop Student Support Services web portal. The new Student Support Service covers all services provided by either the University or the Students' Union. All non-academic issues relating to Student Services are the responsibility of the Director of Student Support and Residential Life, and the PVC

(Campus and Community) represents Student Services on the Senate. Academic related issues are the responsibility of the University Senior Tutor. The current development of the Students' Union building is expected to further improve the quality and diversity of student social and welfare opportunities.

120   Students are provided with clear and appropriate information on the Student Support Service Portal which provides details on personal tutoring, roles of the Director of Student Support and Senior Tutor, residential life, the Counselling Service, Disability Services, mental health, the Health Centre, Chaplaincy, Student Advice Centre, student funding, security and external services.

121   The University provides an extensive induction programme coordinated by CSDE. This induction, branded Intr08, is supplemented by departmental and course induction for undergraduate students and is the first phase of a project that will be extended next year. The students whom the team met 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.

122   International students were highly supportive of the opportunity to engage in a four-day residential orientation programme 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.

123   In addition to support for international students in the UK, the International Office and CSDE 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.

124   The 30-credit Warwick Skills Certificate is available to develop students' study skills, personal development skills, academic and employability skills and is free and available to all Warwick undergraduates. It receives positive student evaluation and uptake continues to rise by about 15 per cent annually (further information concerning skills provision for research students can be found in paragraph 185).

125   The University supports other programmes such as Warwick Volunteering. This service provides opportunities for students and staff to assist the local community and to develop their skills-set. Warwick volunteers currently comprises five full-time members of staff, the Student Executive Committee, over 20 project leaders and 2,000 volunteers, although only 850 are active this year.

126   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.

127   As a result of a review by the Director of Student Services, the Careers Service is being restructured into a single division to assist in the delivery of the new Employability Strategy 2008- to 2011 which will be monitored through the Administrative and Service Department Annual Review process. Career education, information and guidance are fully informed by the *Code of practice*. The students were generally positive about the central and departmental provision of careers advice, but postgraduate students were less satisfied due to their need for highly specialised careers advice.

Staff support (including staff development)

128   University support for teaching staff is located in the Learning and Development Centre (LDC). The Academic Staff Committee, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor, oversees all matters relating to academic and teaching staff. All new University staff are entitled 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 LDC website relating to their role as new academic staff.

129   While the support for teaching staff is provided by the LDC, staff development needs are identified at departmental level by feedback from undergraduate and postgraduate teaching committees, peer observation, analysis of module questionnaire feedback, ACR and SSLC reports. In 2008-09 annual review will replace the appraisal system and this will be used to inform staff development activities.

130   The recently developed Teaching Grid provides further opportunity for reflective teaching practice and both CETLs provide additional opportunities for staff development. The provision of staff development is monitored by the Director of LDC in discussion with the heads of departments and is open to all part-time staff and staff from partner institutions.

131   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'. Several funding opportunities are available centrally or through CETL Fellowships. Around 10-14 staff are recognised annually by the Warwick Awards for Teaching Excellence which reward staff who have made an exceptional impact on the student experience. These are assessed by the Quality Enhancement Working Group and the top finalists are put forward for a National Teaching Fellowship. Indeed, the University has secured five National Teaching Fellowships since 2005. Faculty learning and teaching forums are used to disseminate project outcomes.

132   Probationary staff attend mandatory sessions on the role of the Personal Tutor and complete a 60-credit Postgraduate Certificate. which meets the Higher Education Academy's (HEA) Professional Standards Framework. Mandatory training on aspects of teaching and learning is a requirement for all research students teaching more than 20 hours per year and teaching allocations are overseen by either the Head of Department or Director of Postgraduate Studies.

133   In 2008, the Teaching Grid was opened to provide a focus for the dissemination and discussion of teaching practice across the University using bookable experimental and flexible teaching space. The CETLs also represent significant developments in learning spaces and the Capital Centre established a Space, Performance and Pedagogy Group in 2008 which reflects and disseminates good practice in the use of teaching space. Use of the Teaching Grid by staff and postgraduate students who teach is variable but the University is aware of this.

134   The Wolfson Research Exchange opened in 2008 and is the newest facility aimed at supporting the University strategy of stimulating interdisciplinary collaboration amongst researchers across the University.

Section 4: Institutional approach to quality enhancement

135   The University Strategy, 'Vision 2015', approved by Council in 2007, 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.

136   The Learning and Teaching Strategy (2008-2011) is central to Warwick's stated approach to enhancement, which includes among its aims and objectives: flexibility in the curriculum; international and inter-cultural dimensions; more effective use of learning spaces, and developments in methods of assessment; technology-enhanced learning; quality of feedback; and skills and employability. A key component for the implementation of the Learning and Teaching Strategy will be a major curriculum review, to be held during 2009-10, which will address assessment and feedback, internationalisation and the need to stretch students more. The University's Employability Strategy (2008-2011) states that enhancement of student employability is a 'key priority' and that there should be a 'pro-active approach' to achieve this.

137   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. The University has highlighted the significant progress made since 2004 in all of these areas. Developments include: funding initiatives for staff and students, including the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Fund (TALEF), the Reinvention Centre Small Grants fund and the URSS; 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.

138   The Quality Enhancement Working Group (QEWG) (which reports to the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC)) reviews and evaluates the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund and locally-funded teaching and learning projects, and has special responsibility for identifying and disseminating good practice and teaching and learning enhancement in general. Links with the Higher Education Academy (HEA) subject centres are acknowledged to be 'patchy' at departmental level, and QEWG will seek to encourage the University to make better use of the HEA Subject Centre network. The introduction of Faculty Learning and Teaching Forums during 2007-08, with open meetings in the Teaching Grid, has provided a local platform for the development of ideas and the dissemination of good practice. A Teaching Grid-HEA event is planned to help inform future directions for development of teaching and learning spaces. 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 meeting.

139   Since 2004, a more systemic framework for quality enhancement has been developed with the formulation of a central policy and structures for its promotion. The University has embedded enhancement in its approach to the management of teaching and learning, both through its committee structure and through 'continuous and systemic reflection' in 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 within the context of all departmental activities. This has enabled a more integrated approach to the development of strategies for teaching, research and resourcing.

140   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 the 'need to address multiple study styles'. The opening of the Learning Grid (paragraph 105) in 2004 provided one such opportunity for staff and students to experiment with different styles of teaching and learning. A particular feature of the Learning Grid is its staffing with a team of trained student advisers for peer-based learning at the individual and small-group level.

141   The launch of the Teaching Grid (paragraph 133) in March 2008, consisting of both a physical and an online facility, 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.

142   There has been continued investment by the University in e-learning support, following 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 commercial institutional 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, which includes the chairs of faculty IT committees, the Director of e-Lab and representatives from the library, advises on the development of IT facilities within the framework of the Learning and Teaching Strategy.

143   The University's Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF) 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, and TQEF funding has also been used to train students as e-learning assistants for staff. Dissemination of the findings from e-learning projects takes place by various means, including annual e-learning showcase days, faculty IT committees, e-learning lunches and the Teaching Grid, which works with e-Lab and the Learning and Development Centre to develop academic communities of teaching practice.

144   The University's view is that there is 'an excellent infrastructure of technical support and developmental opportunities'. 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 scaleable, 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 also discussed this organic approach at the level of department and individual academic staff, and 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.

145   The University provides a variety of incentives to enhance learning opportunities through research-led teaching, including various grant schemes and other incentives for both staff and students (paragraph 94). Emphasis is placed on engaging and rewarding staff taking on responsibility for teaching policy and innovation, and involving students as active partners in learning through the concept of the 'undergraduate researcher'. The Reinvention Centre provides particular opportunities for staff and students to develop the relationship between research and the curriculum. It is anticipated that the Strategic Departmental Review process will act as a vehicle for further strengthening this relationship. Examples of module design were provided to the audit team and staff engagement with the Reinvention Centre was reported to be increasing. The examples provided to the team by staff and students suggest that links between research and teaching are largely focused on the final year of undergraduate courses, and its adoption across the University is variable.

146   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

147   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. Collaborations are likely to increase as the new University strategy is implemented, especially at postgraduate level as the University seeks to double postgraduate numbers.

148   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'.

149   In 2007, QAA carried out an audit of the collaborative link of the University's Warwick Manufacturing Group with Hong Kong Polytechnic University. The audit team considered that the University was operating the partnership with an appropriate regard for the *Code of practice* and expressed confidence in Warwick's stewardship of academic standards and the quality of

learning in its overseas collaborative provision. The audit found no evidence that indicated that these findings should not be extrapolated to the University's other collaborative arrangements.

150   The report for the Hong Kong audit identified eight points for the University to consider. Although the Briefing Paper notes some areas of disagreement with the auditors in this regard, the audit report was comprehensively followed up, with the establishment of a subgroup of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC) being set up in December 2007 and reporting to AQSC in February 2008.

The institution's framework for managing academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities particular to collaborative arrangements

151   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 (CFDLSC).

152   In response to a recommendation from QAA's overseas audit team, the collaborative courses register is available online so that the University community is informed and aware of the collaborative work carried out across the University. Various forms of collaboration are identified, including validations, franchises, distance delivery, and 2+2 degrees.

153   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). Collaborations covering only one module of 30 credits or less offered by a collaborative institution may, subject to approval by the chair of the CFDLSC, make use of a lighter touch collaborative module approval process. This seems an appropriate approach to lower risk activities.

154   Examples of innovative use of learning technology appropriate to the programme of study on a collaborative course were provided to the audit team in the meeting with postgraduate students and by a programme director in a meeting with staff.

Approval of collaborative arrangements

155   Initiation of collaborations is at departmental level and thus based on teaching and research expertise and possibly on existing research links. 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). This procedure applies to new collaborative awards with an overseas partner or with a private organisation whether overseas or UK-based.

156   Since the last audit, two prior committees have been merged to form the CFDLSC of AQSC. In addition to the normal procedures for the approval of any new programmes, all proposals for collaborative provision are subject to approval by the CFDLSC. The Briefing Paper notes that the terms of reference for this Committee remain under review, and the chair of the Committee noted in the audit visit meeting that they were perhaps too extensive. Nevertheless, the audit team noted that the consideration of all collaborative agreements through one University committee, to include both international provision and provision focusing on local part-time study, reflected the strength of the University's commitment to the latter as part of its Widening Participation Strategy.

157   Guidelines for the procedure for establishing a new collaborative award are available online. Documentation in a trail area confirmed that all steps set out in the Academic Planning Chronology were followed.

Monitoring and review of collaborative arrangements

158   All validated courses are subject to an Annual Course Review by their Validation Group which is required to submit an annual report to the CFDLSC. Minutes of the CFDLSC and of collaborative programme reviews included in the audit trail indicated that issues raised, for example via external examiners' reports or student feedback, were responded to appropriately.

Assessment, external examining and student transcripts (oversight of delegated responsibility)

159   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 (CLL) indicated that no issues of concern had been raised under this heading. A typical report within the audit trail is the external examiner's report on the Foundation Degree in Post-Compulsory Education and Training, and the Foundation Degree in Basic Skills Education and Training for the academic year 2004-05: 'This is the great strength of this programme. The collaboration between the HEI [higher education institution] and colleges is outstanding'.

160   The head of the department writes the response to the external examiner's report and this 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 CFDLSC.

Role of students in quality assurance (oversight of arrangements in partner organisations)

161   There is a student representative on CFDLSC.

162   A paper setting out principles of good practice and general guidelines for student liaison arrangements on collaborative, flexible and distance-learning courses was considered by CFDLSC on 23 May 2008, and then by AQSC. The student-staff liaison committee (SSLC) coordinators developed this into summary guidance which is incorporated in the SSLC Handbook for 2008-09. University representatives whom the audit team met highlighted that the SSLC 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 audit team demonstrate that the University works with partner institutions to adapt student involvement in quality assurance to fit the needs of specific structures and environment. University modules delivered via collaborative provision are subject to the standard module feedback questionnaire process, and collaborative programmes are subject to standard annual review.

163   A review of the audit trail documentation indicated that a student representative of the CLL SSLC is generally invited to attend departmental or centre meetings for the discussion of SSLC business. With one exception, departmental Annual Course Review (ACR) reports for collaborative programmes in the CLL record student representatives as being present at the review meetings.

Management information - feedback from students

164   A summary of ACR reports for collaborative provision is passed on to the International Committee and a digest published on the Teaching Quality website for wider dissemination.

165   SSLC annual reports note follow up (or otherwise) of points raised in the previous year's report.

Learning resources (including staffing and staff development)

166   No issues were identified during the audit with regard to the quality of staff teaching or student support on collaborative programmes. The opportunities for students to be involved in the review of such programmes and to feed back on their experience indicate a mechanism which could identify such issues. 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.

167   The review of external examiners' reports and of departmental ACR reports and SSLC annual reports raised no significant issues with learning resources and collaborative programmes, and any concerns that were raised were responded to appropriately.

Student support and information (including complaints and appeals arrangements)

168   A standard handbook template is used and programme handbooks are subject to approval by the University course coordinator. Standard University regulations apply to all collaborative arrangements other than validated courses.

Publicity and marketing material (oversight of information produced by partner organisations)

169   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 the wording 'validated by the University of Warwick', 'franchised by the University of Warwick', 'in collaboration with the University of Warwick' or other wording as applicable. 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 ACR. Staff whom the audit team met indicated that this process was happening, giving 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

170   The University offers a range of master's and doctoral degrees by research and four professional doctorates, one of which (DClinPsych) is a joint programme with Coventry University. There were 1,273 enrolled research students in July 2008: 1,058 full-time and 215 part-time. The QAA Review of postgraduate research degree programmes 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 the Review.

171   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 postgraduate research student numbers by 2015. This target for increasing research student numbers led to the review of many aspects of the provision during 2007-08 including the Regulations and Guidelines for Postgraduate Research Students, which are fully aligned with the *Code of practice*.

172   The Graduate School maintains research student records, manages student funding, the administration of complaints and appeals procedures, and runs the Graduate School skills programme. BGS, acting on behalf of Senate, has oversight of admission to, and delivery of, postgraduate research programmes. The Chair of the Board of Graduate Studies (BGS) is also

Chair of the Graduate School and is a member of the Academic Quality and Standards Committee (AQSC), the Steering Committee, Senate and various other committees. The Chair of BGS has oversight of external examiner reports. The Strategic Departmental Review (SDR) process (paragraph 30) has strengthened external oversight of postgraduate research student arrangements.

173   Following the Administrative and Services Department Annual Review (ASDAR) in 2007, administrative arrangements in the Graduate School were enhanced to support the policy of increasing research student numbers and are now managed by the Deputy Academic Registrar. The Graduate School Office, a component part of the Academic Office, is responsible for all aspects of administration relating to research students and scholarships. The recommendations of the ASDAR 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 accessible online.

The research environment

174   The University provides a strong research environment. Research income increased 185 per cent from 2000-01 to 2006-07, and it is the University's ambition '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 postgraduate research student provision, four project officers have been appointed, one for student recruitment, one for funding sources, and two for skills training, including one for Arts and Social Sciences. The University plans to increase substantially the number of Warwick postgraduate research student scholarships awarded annually. There is also a new Collaborative Postgraduate Research Student Scholarship Scheme with matching external contributions.

175   'The University seeks to improve continuously the quality of its research environment.' 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. Similar plans for the Humanities Building and extra space for Arts research students will be provided in a newly purchased building; a social facility is under construction.

Selection, admission and induction of students

176   The admissions policy is available on the Graduate School Portal. Postgraduate admissions are overseen strategically by the Steering Committee and BGS and operationally by the Student Admissions and Recruitment Office. The University aims to admit students of the very highest potential, irrespective of background. Applicants for research degrees should normally possess at least an Upper Second class honours degree or its equivalent, and/or a master's degree or its equivalent.

177   At departmental level, directors of graduate studies are responsible for the management of the selection of research students and the allocation of supervisors. All applications for research degrees are considered by two members of staff and an experienced lead supervisor must be identified at this stage together with provision for supervision throughout the period of registration. The admissions procedures have been discussed with departments in relation to implementation of the University's Strategy and are to be reviewed by a newly appointed Postgraduate Research Student Recruitment Project Officer.

178   Induction of research students to the University is organised centrally by the Graduate School in conjunction with the Centre for Student Development and Enterprise (CSDE). 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.

179   Two PhD student inductions are held in October for Science/Medicine and Arts/Social Studies, which include an introduction to University guidelines and regulations from the Graduate School, student and supervisor views on being an effective research student, information on University services, short skills sessions and a session on working with your supervisor. A second central induction programme is offered later in the year. Central induction is not compulsory for postgraduate research students as it is not felt to be required for all students, and a multilayered approach, involving the Graduate School, faculty and department is actively encouraged.

180   Postgraduate research students are also invited to familiarise themselves with the Wolfson Research Exchange, a dedicated space for researchers in the main library, and are recommended to explore the opportunities available through the Graduate School Skills Programme. The audit team was told by staff that the Research Exchange is already well used. CSDE holds weekly drop-in sessions for research students to discuss issues and seek guidance and training in any area relating to academic study. E-Portfolios provide an online record of students' academic life with about 38 per cent take up. Insite was cited by students as the first point of call for information.

Supervision

181   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 Review of postgraduate research degree programmes.

182   There is a mandatory half-day training session 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 postgraduate 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 last revised in September 2007 and are available via the Graduate School Portal. Only non-probationary academic staff may normally act as the lead supervisor; probationary staff and recently retired staff can act as second supervisors. The University is considering further revisions to 'emphasise departments' responsibilities in relation to appointment of second supervisors or other cover when a replacement is needed'.

Progress and review arrangements

183   The Annual Review of each doctoral student by a panel that does not include the supervisor(s) was commended as good practice by QAA's Review of postgraduate research degree programmes. Since 2006, the University has introduced a variety of changes aimed at further improvements in the monitoring and review arrangements, published in the revised Guidelines on the Supervision and Monitoring of Research Degree Students. Where problems are highlighted in annual reviews to the Graduate School or through other routes, the Chair of the BGS may intervene. There are revised guidelines for the use of postgraduate research students in teaching and assessment and revised University regulations relating to higher doctorates. A comprehensive review of higher degree Regulations has been initiated. In some areas of the University research students are registered directly for a PhD rather than for an MPhil. 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.

184   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, as part of revised annual reviews of postgraduate research programmes, to improve reporting by departments to the Graduate School on student progression.

Development of research and other skills

185   There are a number of skills sessions for new researchers. These are run through the Graduate School by the Skills Manager and the CSDE, and include the UK Grad course 'Effective Researcher' aimed at students in their first 18 months of study. 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 (SWS) as an area that could be improved for research students. Students who met the audit team referred to a departmental-based approach to careers support.

186   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.

187   University Regulations and Guidelines require prior assessment of postgraduate research students who wish to teach. All teaching by research students is channelled through the head of department or the Director of Postgraduate Studies. 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, Introduction to Academic and Professional Practice. Nearly all students who teach, do teach this amount and all students are offered training. Students who teach more than 20 hours each year are assigned a local departmental teaching mentor and additional support is provided by the teaching forums and the Teaching Grid. Research students who teach can also access central coaching and mentoring, and can access Postgraduate Certificate in Academic and Professional Practice seminars (paragraph 18).

Feedback mechanisms

188   The University provides guidance on research student representation. Research students are represented on postgraduate student-staff liaison committees (SSLCs) and in SDRs. Students also complete an Annual Review Document with open and confidential sections. The Graduate School External ASDAR in July 2007 noted that 'there was limited engagement between the Student Union and the Graduate School' and that the faculty graduate studies committees did not always have time to discuss items from research students' representatives. The audit team was told that these committees had a high workload and tend to be dominated by taught postgraduate business. Consideration is being given to ways in which the committees can redress this issue.

189   Postgraduate research student response rates to the University's Academic Satisfaction Review were poor, and this was replaced in 2008 by the HEA 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 SWS, 58 per cent of research students who responded felt that they either always, or mostly, had a voice at Warwick, and that it was listened to.

Assessment

190   Appointment of all examiners is scrutinised by the Chair of the BGS. Assessment procedures are provided in the Guide to Examinations for Higher Degrees by Research. Since 2005, departments have been advised to consider whether an independent examination adviser should be appointed. This is mandatory in cases where there are two external examiners. Where the internal examiner has limited experience of supervision and examination at this level, departments will usually be asked to appoint a more experienced colleague as examination adviser. The supervisor cannot be an examiner.

191   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 (where applicable). 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 Review of postgraduate research degree programmes. All postgraduate appeals and complaints are considered by the Chair of the Graduate School. Annual summative reports are considered by BGS.

192   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 Graduate School Board and its Chair, who sits on the AQSC, 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 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

193   All corporate communications, internal and external, hard copy and electronic, 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 169).

194   Comprehensive information, including academic statistics, is available for staff and students on Insite, the University's intranet. Insite is easy to navigate with an excellent search engine which allows academic and administrative staff and students to access a wide variety of information. University Regulations appear in the University Calendar and online. The audit team considers that the comprehensive information, including academic statistics, available for staff and students on Insite, is a feature of good practice.

195   Programme handbooks and other web-based documentation reviewed during the audit visit were found to include accurate information or reference to central University sources on regulations and procedures. For example, the changed penalties for late submission of coursework, and the new marking scale for students starting their programmes from autumn 2008 onwards, were easily accessible. Although the student written submission did not include specific discussion of information available to students, meetings with students during the audit visit confirmed that they were aware of how to access course regulations and handbooks

196   The audit team confirmed that 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*. The University also makes course (programme) specifications available online (paragraph 45).

197   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.